

## THE JEWISH-CHRISTIANS' MOVE FROM JERUSALEM AS A PRAGMATIC CHOICE

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According to the Church Fathers Eusebius and Epiphanius, the members of the Church of Jerusalem were commanded by an oracle to leave the Holy City before its destruction in 70 C.E. and to take refuge in the city of Pella on the east bank of the Jordan River. This episode, which is known as the “Flight to Pella,” is considered to be a central issue in the historiography of Jewish-Christianity in the post-apostolic period. R. Pritz has written in this connection: “any attempt to treat the post-New Testament history of Jewish-Christianity must first decide on the historicity of the reported flight of the Jerusalem Church to Pella.”<sup>1</sup> The fate of the Jewish-Christian community of Jerusalem during the First Jewish War has been a much debated question ever since 1951 when S. G. F. Brandon published his contentious work *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, where he opposed the dominant historiographic consensus about the historicity of the “flight to Pella”. He maintained, indeed, that the Jewish-Christian congregation remained in Jerusalem throughout the war and vanished (together with the Zealots) during the destruction of the city.<sup>2</sup> The objections lodged by Brandon appear to have had sufficient validity to force a reconsideration of the reliability of the Pella tradition and to enable a revision of the traditional view of Jewish-Christianity. Moreover his work has provided a basis for further discussion of this issue. In the aftermath of this survey, other scholars have come to the conclusion that this tradition had to be discounted as unhistorical.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. Pritz, “On Brandon’s Rejection of the Pella Tradition,” *Immanuel* 13 (1981), 39–43, (39).

<sup>2</sup> S. G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, (1951; 2nd ed.; London: SPCK, 1957) 167–184.

<sup>3</sup> G. Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudo-Klementinen*, (1958; 2nd ed. rev; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981) 229–231; J. Munck, “Jewish-Christianity in Post-Apostolic Times,” *New Testament Studies* 6 (1959–60), 103–104; L. Gaston, *No stone on Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1970), 142 n. 3; G. Lüdemann, “The Successors of pre-70 Jerusalem Christianity: A Critical Evaluation of the Pella-Tradition,” in *Jewish and Christian*

The refutation of the trustworthiness of the account of the “flight to Pella” is based either on the apparent historical inconsistencies it contains or the obscure origins of its sources. In response to this, several scholars have attempted to respond to the arguments raised against the authenticity of the tradition of the flight to Pella.<sup>4</sup> The current discussion of this issue, however, has to avoid a twofold pitfall. The first of these is the tendency to accept the tradition as it has been handed down to us in order to preserve the traditional view of early Christianity, for such a stance usually derives from motives other than historical accuracy.<sup>5</sup> In contradistinction, one must avoid the refutation of the “flight to Pella” outright simply on the grounds that it served the apologetic interests of subsequent Christian writers.<sup>6</sup>

However, in our opinion the significance and the implications of this occurrence (whether one admits its authenticity or not) may need to be considered and qualified still further. Unlike Brandon and his followers, we do admit that the Christian Community of Jerusalem (or at least a part of it) left the Holy City in the course of the Great Revolt. However, in light of Josephus’ accounts, we suggest that the so-called “flight to Pella” was the consequence of the Jewish-Christians’ surrender to the Roman authorities, who subsequently settled this odd group in a pagan city far from the battlefield. Our thesis, which concurs with the proposition advanced by R. Pritz and F. Blanchetière,<sup>7</sup> intends not only to reconstruct the course of events of the Jewish-Christians’ move to Pella but also to set this event strictly within the political context of

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*Self-Definition*, (edited by E. P. Sanders. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press 1980), vol. 1 161–173; J. Verheyden, “The Flight of the Christians to Pella,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, vol. 66 Issue 4 (1990), 368–384.

<sup>4</sup> S. Sowers, “The Circumstances and Recollection of the Pella Flight,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 26 (1970), 305–320; M. Simon, “La Migration à Pella; Légende ou Réalité?” in *Judéo-christianisme-Recherches historiques et théologiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou, Recherches de science religieuse*, (Paris, 1972), 37–54; B. C. Gray, “The Movements of the Jerusalem Church During the First Jewish War,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 24 (1973), 1–7; J. J. Gunther, “The Fate of the Jerusalem Church, The Flight to Pella,” *Theologische zeitschrift* 29 (1973), 81–94; R. Pritz, “On Brandon’s Rejection,” 39–43; C. Koester, “The Origin and Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51 (1989), 90–106; F. Blanchetière and R. Pritz, “La migration des ‘Nazaréens’ à Pella,” in F. Blanchetière and M. D. Herr (ed.), *Aux origines juives du Christianisme*, (Cahiers du Centre de recherche français de Jérusalem vol. 2; Paris-Louvain: Peeters, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> P. H. R. van Houwelingen, “Fleeing forward: the departure of Christians from Jerusalem to Pella,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* 65/2 (2003), 181–200.

<sup>6</sup> J. Verheyden, “Flight.”

<sup>7</sup> F. Blanchetière and R. Pritz, “Migration.”

Jerusalem in the late spring 68 C.E. Furthermore, it aims at assessing the real implication this occurrence had on later Jewish-Christianity.

### THE SOURCES

The denial of the historicity of the flight to Pella is broadly based on the study of the literary sources which refer to this story, since the explicit references to this tradition are both sparse and relatively late. The proponents of the historicity of the Pella tradition assume that earlier pieces of evidence attest the authenticity of the Christians' flight from Jerusalem. There has, however, been sharp disagreement about the reliability of these alleged implicit witnesses. We shall therefore begin by reviewing both the explicit statement and the implicit references used as evidence for the Pella tradition.

The earliest account directly related to the migration to Pella occurs in the third book of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* (III, 5, 2–3), which dates back to the first third of the fourth century (c. 324 C.E.).<sup>8</sup> The story of the flight to Pella appears in Eusebius' work after a statement related to the martyrdoms of several apostles (Stephen and the two James). Citing the Jewish persecutions of the first Jewish-Christian community enables the author to create a cause-and-effect relationship between these events and the outbreak of the Jewish War. According to Eusebius' understanding of history, he presents the ruin of the Jewish nation as the expression of Divine wrath against this wicked people. He adds, however, that the Church of Jerusalem was previously warned by an "oracle" to leave the Holy City "before the war" and to settle in the city of Pella. Thus, in his view, the flight of the Jewish-Christians was a pre-condition for carrying out the Divine punishment; so that the war broke out only after "those who believed in Christ... removed from Jerusalem, as if holy men had entirely abandoned the royal city itself, and the whole land of Judaea." Eusebius did not specify the source of this information, so that the issue of the origin of this account remains a moot question.

It has been argued, therefore, that Hegesippus (c. 110–c. 180 C.E.) was his source since Eusebius drew from the latter's work, the *Hypomnemata*, an extensive data-set related to the early Palestinian

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<sup>8</sup> This account is to be found in Appendix I.

Church.<sup>9</sup> However Brandon, G. Strecker and others have cast doubt on the likelihood of this suggestion. Strecker, for instance, claimed that this tradition was unknown to Hegesippus, for Eusebius, who usually cites Hegesippus by name when quoting his statements, does not mention him in his account of the migration to Pella. In Strecker's view, since Hegesippus lived in Palestine in the first half of the second century C.E., it is most unlikely that he should not have known of such an event, if it really occurred. Strecker then adds that Eusebius relates this tradition only on one occasion, which highlights the thinness of this data. M. Simon has already shown the inconsistency of this thesis, which is mainly grounded on arguments *ex silentio*.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, O. Irshai has rightly remarked that, even if Hegesippus did know the Pella tradition, he would certainly have chosen to ignore it. Indeed, since he was involved in the struggle against the "emerging heresies", Hegesippus sought to prove the continuity of the "genuine" Christian doctrine in the apostolic churches; thus, a tale reporting a break in the history of the Church would undoubtedly have embarrassed him.<sup>11</sup>

It has also been proposed that Eusebius must have derived his information from the writings of Aristo of Pella (mid-second century C.E.).<sup>12</sup> G. Lüdemann, for instance, argues that this tradition originated at Pella within a Jewish-Christian community which claimed a relationship with the apostles, and thus considers Aristo to be the most likely source for Eusebius. This suggestion is based on the fact that Eusebius' report of the Bar Kokhba revolt is based on Aristo's writings (*HE* IV, 6, 3); it was therefore assumed that the latter's work included an account of the First Jewish War. However, this suggestion appears to be based mainly on Aristo's presumed origin. In any case,

<sup>9</sup> H. J. Lawlor, *Eusebiana*, (Oxford: Oxford University, 1912), 30–31; R. W. Funk and H. N. Richardson, "The Sounding at Pella," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. XXI, n° 4 (Dec. 1958), 82–98 (86); B. C. Gray, "Movements," 2; J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, (London: SCM Press, 1976), 17.

<sup>10</sup> M. Simon, "Migration," 37–43.

<sup>11</sup> O. Irshai, "From the Church of the Circumcised to the Church of the Gentiles: The History of the Jerusalem Church up until the Fourth Century," in Y. Tsafrir & S. Safrai (ed.), *The History of Jerusalem: The Roman and Byzantine Periods (70–638 C.E.)*, Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1999), 61–114, (74–77), (Hebrew).

<sup>12</sup> A. Schlatter, *Synagoge und Kirche bis zum Barkochba-Aufstand. Vier studien zur Geschichte des Rabbins und der jüdischen Christenheit in den ersten zwei Jahrhunderten*, (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1966), 154; G. Lüdemann, "Successors," 166; C. Koester, "Origin and Significance," 92.

these considerations are not decisive and are not enough to settle that Aristo was the source of Eusebius. Other scholars have proposed that Eusebius owed his information to Julius Africanus (early third century C.E.).<sup>13</sup> An original proposition has been put forward by J. Verheyden, who suggested that Eusebius contrived the Pella tradition for the needs of his apologetic presentation of the Jewish War: he was thereby able to demonstrate that the faithful Christians were saved from God's punishment.<sup>14</sup> This assertion is grounded on two facts: we do not know of any direct reference to a flight to Pella prior to Eusebius, and there are no indications that the latter was dependent upon a source. However Verheyden is unable to provide any convincing motives for Eusebius' choice of Pella as a destination. Furthermore, even though Eusebius' writings are apologetic, this does not necessarily imply that he invented them.

The most that can be said in this connection is that it is difficult to determine the source whence Eusebius derived his account of the flight to Pella. This does not, however, mean that Eusebius' data are to be dismissed out-of-hand. In this context, B. Isaac considers that Eusebius' accounts are trustworthy, since he lived in Palestine and was therefore certainly acquainted with local traditions.<sup>15</sup> This assertion is strengthened by the fact that Eusebius, according to his own testimony, patronized both the libraries of Aelia Capitolina and Caesarea (*H.E.*, VI, 20, 1; 32, 3). In light of those considerations, we tend to uphold the reliability of Eusebius' statement, even though we suspect him to have altered the chronology of the Jewish-Christians' flight for his own purposes; we shall discuss this point below.

Subsequent explicit mentions of a flight to Pella are to be found in Epiphanius' work. Epiphanius, who wrote in the second half of the fourth century C.E., refers to the migration to Pella three times in all

<sup>13</sup> A. Harnack suggests that Eusebius derived this tradition either from Hegesippus or from Julius Africanus; *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, (1902; 2nd ed., Leipzig: Hinrich 1906), vol. 2, 78.

<sup>14</sup> J. Verheyden, "Flight;" this thesis was accepted by R. M. Grant in his review published in the *Journal of Theological Studies* 41/2 (1990), 664–665 and by W. Kinzig, "Non-Separation: Closeness and Cooperation between Jews and Christians in the Fourth Century," *Vigiliae Christianae* Vol. 45/1 (1991), 27–53 (50 n. 59).

<sup>15</sup> B. Isaac, "Jerusalem from the Great Revolt to the Reign of Constantine, 70–312 C.E.," in Y. Tsafrir & S. Safrai (ed.), *The History of Jerusalem: The Roman and Byzantine Periods (70–638 C.E.)*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1999), 1–13 (4), (Hebrew).

in his writings.<sup>16</sup> Both of the accounts which appear in the *Panarion* (XXIX, 7, 7–8; XXX, 2, 7) are related to the appearance of heterodox Jewish-Christian sects, the Nazoreans and the Ebionites, in Peraea, following the relocation of the Church of Jerusalem to Pella. The third mention of the flight of the Jewish-Christians appears in his treatise *On Weights and Measures* (xv), where Epiphanius reports Aquila's encounter with that "the disciples of the disciples of the apostles" who had previously returned from Pella to Jerusalem. The main features of Eusebius' data are present in Epiphanius' writings: namely the miraculous warning (although Epiphanius attributes this both to "the Christ" and to an angel on different occasions), the escape from Jerusalem and the settlement in Pella. It has been argued, therefore, that Epiphanius' accounts are based on Eusebius.<sup>17</sup>

However, although both authors certainly used the same sources, we are inclined to believe that Epiphanius does not depend on Eusebius, for there are at least two important differences between their respective statements. First, the use of this tradition does not have the same purpose in both reports. As mentioned above, Eusebius integrates this data in a global vision of history in which the Jews are chastised by God on account of their impiety, while the Christians are miraculously saved from the destruction. In contrast, Epiphanius' records of the flight to Pella are more neutral and of less importance, for they occur incidentally and constitute digressions within unconnected accounts. Secondly, it is noteworthy that Epiphanius, in each of his statements, dates the flight to Pella to shortly before the siege of Jerusalem, whereas Eusebius claims that it occurred "before the war". In general, it is quite difficult to evaluate the reliability of Epiphanius' writings, for his work remains confused and imprecise in many respects. In spite of these considerations, G. Alon concludes that Epiphanius' writings cannot be disregarded "for they are a vast storehouse of reports and traditions".<sup>18</sup> In fact, since Epiphanius lived for many years in Eleutheropolis in Judaea, we may conclude that he would have been familiar with local traditions. A further indication of his reliability lies in the fact that,

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix II, III and IV.

<sup>17</sup> This opinion is shared by G. Strecker (*Judenchristentum*, 229), M. Simon, ("Migration," 38), G. Lüdemann, ("Successors," 164), F. Blanchetière and R. Pritz, ("Migration des 'Nazaréens,'" 97) and J. Verheyden, ("Flight," 376–379).

<sup>18</sup> G. Alon, *The Jews in their land in the Talmudic Age*, translated by G. Levi (Magnes Press: Jerusalem, 1980; reprint. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 442.

as pointed out above, Epiphanius recounts the flight to Pella in passing; thus it would seem that he had no apologetic interest in relating this account and merely reported a tradition that he had previously received. There is sufficient reason in light of these considerations to regard the data conveyed by the bishop of Salamis as reliable.

We shall now survey the writings which may implicitly refer to the flight to Pella. In the first place we shall turn to the *Pseudo-Clementines*. Numerous scholars agree that these texts, which were composed in the fourth century C.E., are partly grounded on much older material that goes back to the second or the third century C.E. and which may have originated in Syria. The *Pseudo-Clementine* literature consists of the *Clementine Homilies*, which has come down to us in its original Greek version and the *Clementine Recognitions*. Unfortunately, we only know the Latin translation of this work made by Rufinus (c. 345–410 C.E.) and a partial Syriac rendition. These writings relate the peregrination of Clement of Rome, who follows Barnabas to Judaea after he has heard his preaching about the miracles of “Jesus Christ.” At Caesarea he meets with the apostle Peter and decides to accompany him on his way to Rome. In addition, the narrative describes how Clement reunites his scattered family in the course of his journeys.<sup>19</sup>

H. J. Schoeps was the first to propose that two passages of the *Recognitions* allude to the escape of the Christians from Jerusalem, although they do not explicitly mention Pella.<sup>20</sup>

Chapter 37 reports a sermon of Peter, in which the apostle predicts the outbreak of a war and the impending destruction of the Temple. Peter claims, however, that those who believe in Jesus as the true prophet and who have been baptized will be rescued; the Syriac version reads that the latter would be gathered to “a safe place of the land” (1, 37, 2). Later, we read in both versions that the faithful believers will be saved from the war (1, 39, 3).<sup>21</sup> Although he denies the authenticity of the flight to Pella, Strecker does consider that these writings refer to this tradition. In his view, the Jewish-Christians who lived in

<sup>19</sup> For a review of the research on the Pseudo-Clementine literature, see F. S. Jones, “The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research,” *Second Century* 2 (1982), 1–33, 63–96 and F. Manns, “Les Pseudo-Clémentines (Homélies et Reconnaissances). Etat de la question,” *Liber Annuus* LIII (2003), 157–184.

<sup>20</sup> H. J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-P. Siebeck, 1949), 47–48, 267.

<sup>21</sup> The full accounts are to be found in Appendix V, VI and VII.

the area of Pella produced this document in order to claim that they were the genuine heirs of the “Mother Church;” thus “a safe place of the land” would have been understood by these communities as a reference to Pella.<sup>22</sup> Lüdemann, who upholds a similar view, considers that the geographical origin of the writings from which these passages stem strengthens the impression of a physical limitation of the Pella tradition to the areas east of the Jordan. C. Koester also maintains that these passages reveal clear similarities with the explicit references to the flight to Pella, for they retain the main elements of the tradition (the escape of the righteous, their relocation and the destruction of Jerusalem). Moreover, Koester convincingly demonstrates the superiority of the Syriac version of the *Recognitions* over their Latin translation: in his view the Syriac rendering best conveys the genuine Jewish-Christian character of these writings.<sup>23</sup> He agrees therefore with Strecker that these passages once circulated among the Christian communities east of the Jordan. However Koester rejects the view that the Pella tradition was used to legitimate the claim of the local Jewish Christians to apostolicity.

In spite of the wide consensus that the *Recognitions* refer to the Pella tradition, J. Verheyden considers this evidence to be unsatisfactory. He argues that the mentions of “a safe place of the land” (Rec 1, 37, 2 Syriac) is too opaque to be identified as Pella. Moreover, Verheyden emphasizes the fact that in the Latin translation the “place” has an immaterial meaning and refers to “God’s wisdom.”<sup>24</sup>

In spite of these arguments, we are inclined to support the opposite position. It is clear that the statements recorded in the *Recognitions* present certain similarities with Eusebius’ account, for they emphasize the opposition between the believers who are spared from the destruction, and the impious people who are chastised because of their sins. It is noteworthy, though, that the dichotomy present in the *Pseudo-Clementines* separates the Jews who believe from their brethren who do not believe (in the messianism of Jesus), whereas Eusebius’ statement

<sup>22</sup> G. Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 231; this view is also accepted by J. L. Martyn, “Clementine Recognitions 1, 33–71, Jewish-Christianity and the Fourth Gospel,” in *God’s Christ and his People. Studies in Honor of Nils Alstrup Dahl*, (ed. J. Jervell & W.A. Meeks; Oslo: Universitetsforlaget 1977), 265–295.

<sup>23</sup> C. Koester, “The Origin and Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition”, 97–103. This position is shared by F. S. Jones, *An Ancient Jewish-Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1. 27–71*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 46.

<sup>24</sup> Verheyden, “Flight,” 371–375.



clearly opposes Jews and Christians. Likewise, it is remarkable that the translation made by Rufinus reads that the devastation of the war threatens the “unbelieving nation” (i.e. the Jews), whereas the Syriac version merely mentions the impending destruction of “those who are not persuaded” (*Rec.* 39, 3). In this respect it should be recalled that Rufinus, according to his own testimony, emended some of the writings that he translated with the twofold aim of expounding the unclear passages and of making them fit the principles of the Latin Church.<sup>25</sup> It is reasonable to think that the *Pseudo-Clementines* represent an earlier stage of the tradition which links the flight to Pella to the chastisement of the unbelievers. This interpretation would have first circulated within the Jewish-Christian groups, and was subsequently adapted and altered by Eusebius for the needs of his demonstration.

We shall now consider the question of whether it is possible that certain passages of the New Testament also refer to the Pella tradition. Several scholars who contest the historicity of the flight to Pella insist on the fact that the direct mentions of this tradition are relatively late. In this connection, both Strecker and Lüdemann claim that none of the writings of the New Testament actually refer to the Pella tradition, although some of them were written shortly after the fall of Jerusalem and the supposed move of the Jewish-Christian community. Other scholars maintain that the Pella flight may be alluded to in certain New Testament passages. We shall therefore turn to those New Testament texts which may reflect knowledge of the fate of the Palestinian Christians during the First Jewish Revolt.

There is reason to think indeed that several sayings ascribed to Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels refer to the fate of Jerusalem in the course of the First Jewish War: we find in the first instance Matthew XXIV, 15–20 and Luke XXI, 20–24, which both depend on Mark XIII, 14–18. This pericope belongs to Jesus’ prophecy concerning the apparition of the “desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be”.<sup>26</sup> Since it is widely admitted that Mark’s Gospel was composed prior to the destruction of the Second Temple, many scholars believe that Mark XIII, 14 refers to an earlier event.<sup>27</sup> Composed in the late first century,

<sup>25</sup> C. Koester, “Origin and Significance,” 103.

<sup>26</sup> All quotations from the Bible are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>27</sup> It has been argued that the eschatological discourse in Mark XIII is related to the “Caligula crisis,” which was provoked by the Emperor’s order to erect a statue of himself in the Jerusalem Temple (39–41 C.E.); see for instance N. H. Taylor, “Palestinian

Matthew's and Luke's accounts would then be a rewriting of Mark's data in light of the new circumstances: that is to say, the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. Although this specific issue has been extensively studied, we wish to make several comments here. Matthew's main addition to Mark's text concerns the place where the "desolating sacrilege" was to be seen, namely "ἐν τόπῳ ἄγίῳ". This data, which is not fortuitous, must certainly refer to a specific event that occurred in the course of the war (we shall discuss this point later). It is, however, very conspicuous that the Gospel of Matthew, which was particularly popular among the Jewish-Christian communities of Syria-Palestine, does not deal explicitly with the fate of the congregation of Jerusalem (whether the flight to Pella occurred or not). If we admit that the Jewish-Christians left the Holy City in the course of the Great Revolt, it is possible to infer that the Jewish-Christian communities, who carried on living in a Jewish environment following the War, did not wish to emphasize the flight of the "Mother Church" from Jerusalem, but this inference must be qualified for many other Jews escaped from Jerusalem during the Great Revolt.<sup>28</sup> In any event, although the Gospel of Matthew may look back to specific events from the Jewish War, it seems that analyzing it would add little to our knowledge of the flight to Pella.<sup>29</sup>

It is noteworthy that the Gospel of Luke, which originates from a heathen milieu, provides the most extensive depiction about the fate of Jerusalem. Although it contains two passages which refer to the forthcoming destruction of the city; viz. XIX, 42–44 and XXI, 20–24, we shall pay more attention to the latter account which seems more

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Christianity and the Caligula Crisis. Part II. The Markan Eschatological", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 62 (1996); Vol. 18, No. 62, 13–40 and G. Theissen, *The Gospels in context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic tradition*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 125–165. However, few scholars agree that Mark was written after the destruction of the Temple. In this connection, J. Marcus proposes that the warning in Mark XIII, 14 to flee from Judaea to the hills when the "desolating sacrilege" appears, may possibly allude to the flight to Pella; "The Jewish War and the Sitz im Leben of Mark", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111/3 (1992), 441–62 (461 n. 97).

<sup>28</sup> In this respect A. Tropper proposes that the Pella tradition was portrayed some time after of the flight itself because of the disapproval it met; "Yohanan ben Zakkai, Amicus Caesaris: A Jewish Hero in Rabbinic Eyes," *JSIJ* 4 (2005) 133–149 (140 n. 19).

<sup>29</sup> Several scholars suggest however, that the command "to flee into the mountains" in Matthew XXIV, 16 alludes to the flight of the Christians to Pella; see W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1997), vol. 3, 347.

relevant to our investigation.<sup>30</sup> We would like to stress several points with regard to Luke's additions to Mark XIII, 14–16. We first remark that, contrary to Matthew's and Mark's accounts, Luke's data clearly refers to the people "inside the city," i.e. the congregation of Jerusalem; moreover Luke states that the latter had to leave the city. The text specifies that their flight was supposed to have occurred after the city was surrounded ("κυκλουμένη") with armies, but prior to its destruction (Luke XXI, 24). Koester, who admits that this passage reveals several similarities to the Pella tradition, objects however that Luke's chronology is contradicted by Eusebius' account according to which the flight occurred before the war. It appears though, that Luke's data corresponds to the chronology given by Epiphanius which we prefer to Eusebius. We shall comment this issue below. Finally, we suggest that the warning addressed to the people in the country not to take refuge in Jerusalem could echo the flow of refugees who poured into the capital as Vespasian subdued the surrounding areas (*JW* IV, 106–107). Scholars who oppose the suggestion that Luke XXI, 20–24 alludes to the Pella tradition note that these verses do not specify the destination of the flight of "those inside the city." Verheyden explains the many connections between this statement and the Pella tradition by the fact that Eusebius, who in his view contrived this tale, took inspiration from Luke's account.<sup>31</sup> Although this issue is very difficult to assess, we agree with Koester that the least one can say is that the author of Luke XXI, 20–24 did know of people who fled from Jerusalem during the First Jewish War. In this regard, Simon recognized that the New Testament writings strengthen the hypothesis of the historicity of the flight to Pella, rather than undermining it.<sup>32</sup> Thus, if Luke's Gospel does indeed contain a genuine account of the fate of the Jewish-Christian community of Jerusalem, his statement constitutes the most ancient record of their escape from the Holy City during the Great Revolt.

Two other writings possibly relevant to the question of the flight to Pella will now be considered. The 12th chapter of the *Book of Revelation* is thought by some scholars to have preserved an allusion to the flight of the Jewish-Christians from Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup> According to this

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix VIII.

<sup>31</sup> "Flight," 381.

<sup>32</sup> "Migration," 40.

<sup>33</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, (London: SCM, 1991), 233; J. J. Gunther, "Fate," 87; S. Sowers, "Circumstances and Recollection," 315–316; F. Manns,

view, the woman who flees pursued by the great red dragon, and seeks refuge in “the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God” would represent the Church fleeing to Pella (XII, 6). This theory was rejected, notably by Brandon, who emphasized the apocalyptic imagery of the account in order to deny it any historical value.<sup>34</sup> Although it is not our intention to deal with the exegesis of the Apocalypse, we wish to comment on this. If we take for granted that this account constitutes a genuine mention of the flight to Pella (which is far from certain), it should be noted that its presentation of facts differs from the other sources. In an earlier statement we stressed that both the *Pseudo-Clementines* and Eusebius emphasize that the aim of the flight was to spare the righteous believers from the chastisement of the wicked. In such a configuration, the Roman armies constitute an element of secondary importance, for they only represent the instrument by means of which the impious are punished. It is remarkable that in the *Book of Revelation*, the Roman Empire, which is depicted as a great red dragon, appears to be the Church’s main enemy. Thus the flight of the woman (the Church of Jerusalem) is the direct consequence of the persecutions of the dragon (the Roman Empire). If we were to accept that *Revelation* XII, 6 alludes to the flight to Pella, we could infer that it conveys a parallel tradition related to escape of the Jewish-Christian community from Jerusalem, which was in circulation within different Christian streams.

Finally we should mention a verse taken from the *Ascension of Isaiah*, a pseudepigraphical text dating from the second century C.E., which relates that the believers “flee from desert to desert, awaiting the coming of the Beloved” (IV, 13). This flight to desert places has been identified by few scholars with the Christians’ migration to Pella.<sup>35</sup> However, this theory is not universally accepted, for the account is too obscure.

In light of this survey, we are disposed to consider that two sources anterior to Eusebius can be used as evidence for the Jewish-Christians’

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*Essais sur le judeo-christianisme*, (Jerusalem: Franciscan Print Press 1977), 68; C. R. Smith, “The Structure of the Book of Revelation in Light of Apocalyptic Literary Conventions”, *Novum Testamentum* 4 (1994), 373– 393 (391).

<sup>34</sup> *Fall of Jerusalem*, 176–177.

<sup>35</sup> J. J. Gunther, “Fate,” 87; S. Sowers, “Circumstances and Recollection,” 314–315; B. Pixner, “Church of the Apostles found on Mt Zion,” *BAR* 16 (May/ June 1990), 16–35, 60 (25).

move from Jerusalem in the course of the Jewish War, viz. Luke XXI, 20–24 and *Recognitions* I, 37, 2 (Syr.); I, 39, 3 (Syr. & Lat.).

### THE CHOICE OF PELLA

We shall consider at this point the actual details of the Pella tradition, for they raise several intricate questions. Brandon was the first to call attention to the historical difficulties of the flight to Pella. His arguments were subsequently taken up and developed by other scholars.

The first element for consideration concerns the choice of Pella as asylum. Brandon has cast doubt on the likelihood of the Jewish-Christians deciding to seek refuge in Pella. In his view, it seems very unlikely indeed that this community, which was scrupulous and inflexible about matters of law, should have chosen to settle in a city with strong pagan features. We suggest that the theory of a Jewish-Christian surrender to the Roman armies may explain this apparent anomaly. Josephus mentions on numerous occasions the desertions of Jerusalemite Jews, who then sought refuge with the Roman soldiers. This phenomenon seems to have increased once the Roman legions had completely surrounded Jerusalem. Indeed, the Romans themselves made many efforts to encourage the surrender of the Jews. After they had surrendered, some of the deserters appear to have been settled in relatively distant cities by the Roman authorities. As Josephus writes:

For Titus went from Gischala to Cesarea, and Vespasian from Cesarea to Jamnia and Azotus, and took them both; and when he had put garisons into them, he came back with a great number of the people, who were come over to him, upon his giving them his right hand for their preservation (*BJ* IV, 130).<sup>36</sup>

It is reasonable to assert that this policy towards deserters was widely extended, and that it represented an important part of the Roman war strategy. It is noteworthy that not only Vespasian (*BJ* IV, 444) acted in such a way, but also Titus (*BJ* VI, 115) and Placidus (*BJ* IV, 438). Indeed, doing this would have enabled the Romans to keep Jewish deserters under guard away from the battlefield.<sup>37</sup> In addition, it

<sup>36</sup> All citations of Josephus are taken from the translation by W. Whiston in Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works* (1867; Reprint. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publication, 1960).

<sup>37</sup> This remark is particularly valid for the first stage of the war as Vespasian submitted the areas surrounding Jerusalem; J. Price, who considers that "the Romans'

should be stressed that the Romans only sent their prisoners to pagan or mixed cities. Thus, when Josephus relates the surrender of several important priests towards the end of the war, he writes that the latter were sent to Gophna, for Titus was aware that “they would not willingly live after the customs of other nations” (*BJ* VI, 115). This tendentious statement, which was aimed at underlining Titus’ alleged magnanimity, points out that the important priests benefited from preferential treatment. Consequently we may conclude that Jewish deserters were usually settled in a pagan milieu. In this context G. Alon has demonstrated that Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai (hereafter RYbZ), after he had fled from Jerusalem and surrendered to the Roman authorities, was compelled to settle in Iamnia [Yavneh].<sup>38</sup> Josephus mentions twice that Azotus and Iamnia were used for settling the Jewish deserters (*BJ* IV, 130; IV, 444); but it appears that other towns were devoted to this purpose as well. In this context, we must look with particular attention at Josephus’s account of the conquest of Peraea. According to the latter, Placidius, toward the end of his military campaign:

fell violently upon the neighboring smaller cities and villages; when he took Abilas, and Julias, and Bezemoth, and all those that lay as far as the lake Asphaltitis, and put such of the deserters into each of them as he thought proper...insomuch that all Peraea had either surrendered themselves, or were taken by the Romans, as far as Macherus (*BJ* IV, 438).

Here the Romans, in accordance with their own policy, settled Jewish deserters in the cities, towns and villages of the subdued areas, in this case in Peraea. It is thus permissible to infer that at a later stage, after

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policy on deserters was above all practical”, notes that Titus’ treatments of fugitives during the siege of Jerusalem was less consistent, and oscillated between gestures of mercy and acts of cruelty (*Jerusalem Under Siege: The Collapse of the Jewish State, 66–70 C.E.*, [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992], 293–297).

<sup>38</sup> G. Alon, “Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai’s removal to Jabneh”, in *Jews, Judaism and the Classical world*, (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1977), 269–313. This specific point of Alon’s thesis has been accepted by several scholars; S. Safrai, “New investigations into the question of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai’s status and acts after the destruction” in *Essays in Jewish History and Philology in Memory of Gedaliahu Alon*, (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Hameuchad, 1970), 203–226, (204), (Hebrew); A. J. Saldarini, “Johanan ben Zakkai’s Escape from Jerusalem: Origin and Development of a Rabbinic Story,” *JSJ* 6:2 (1975), 189–204 (204). It appears, though, that the rest of his proposal regarding both RYBZ’ status and authority and the alleged-intent of the Romans to lead war against the Jewish people as a whole has been seriously challenged (S. Safrai, “Investigations”; J. Neusner, *A Life of Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai*, [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970], 124–125). We shall return to the question of RYBZ’s egress from Jerusalem below.

the Romans had completely surrounded Jerusalem, Jewish deserters from the metropolis were settled in Peraea, while others were sent to the cities of Paralia, like RYbZ.

Finally, we wish to lay stress on the fact that Epiphanius' *Panarion*, a relatively late source it is true, may echo a peculiar aspect of the Romans' policy on deserters; we read thus in XXX, 2, 7: "ἐπειδὴ γὰρ πάντες οἱ εἰς Χριστὸν πεπιστευκότες τὴν Περαιάν κατ' ἐκεῖνο καιροῦ κατόκησαν τὸ πλεῖστον ἐν Πέλλῃ τινὶ πόλει καλουμένη τῆς Δεκαπόλεως τῆς ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ γεγραμμένης." This account, which suggests that not all the Jewish-Christians were sent to Pella, corresponds well with Josephus' text stating that Placidius settled deserters all over Peraea.

Thus the difficulty in question could be overcome by considering that the Jewish-Christians did not choose to take refuge at Pella but were settled there by the Roman authorities.

#### THE DATE OF THE MIGRATION TO PELLA

Brandon's strongest argument against the authenticity of the flight to Pella is grounded on the very obscure chronology of this story. He concludes therefore that the Jewish-Christians' move from Jerusalem could not have taken place at any time during the course of the Jewish War. According to Eusebius' data, the migration to Pella occurred "before the war", in other words before Cestius Gallus' campaign in 66 C.E. Now Josephus states that Pella was destroyed by the Jewish rebels in retaliation for the slaughter of the Jews of Caesarea during the summer 66 C.E. (*BJ* II, 458). Consequently Brandon asserts that if the Jewish-Christian community of Jerusalem were already living there "it would seem unlikely that they, a party of renegades, would have survived the vengeance of their ferocious country men."<sup>39</sup> In his view, it is also improbable that the Jewish-Christians moved to Pella afterwards, for they would not have been welcomed by the heathen survivors. Finally, Brandon thinks that such a group would have scarcely survived Vespasian's campaign in Peraea (which took place in the spring of 68 C.E.), for the Roman troops would have slaughtered both Jews and Jewish-Christians indiscriminately.

<sup>39</sup> *Fall of Jerusalem*, 170.

Unlike Eusebius, Epiphanius links the flight to Pella to the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem. Brandon also objects to the latter's accounts and rises three objections to such a chronology. First, it is very unlikely that such an important group could have succeeded in escaping the attention of the Zealots, who held harsh control over Jerusalem and prevented anyone from fleeing. Secondly, it is hard to conceive that they would have managed to travel with their goods through the Roman lines. Lastly, it is improbable that the Jewish-Christians would have managed to settle and to live safely in a heathen city like Pella, among a hostile gentile population.

Brandon's arguments appear to be valid as far as the first stage of the Jewish War is concerned. The destruction of Pella by the Jewish rebels in the late summer of 66 and the stubborn hostility of the pagan inhabitants towards the Jews make it unlikely that the Jewish-Christians settled in this city before 68 C.E. Scholars who uphold the authenticity of the flight to Pella have advanced several arguments in order to solve this difficulty. It has been proposed, therefore, that there was an established community of Gentile Christians at Pella, who may have taken in and defended the refugees from Jerusalem. In this connection Mark V, 1–20 (which reports Jesus' healing of a demoniac in the "country of the Gadarenes") would attest to the early presence of a Christian mission in this area.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, these scholars have emphasized the fact that the reactions of various pagan cities to the reprisal expedition led by the Jews were quite different; thus, we read in *BJ*, II, 480 that the Gentiles at Gerasa not only left their Jewish fellow citizens in peace, but also aided them. According to this view, inasmuch as Josephus does not state that Jews were slaughtered at Pella, one can conjecture that there was no retaliation there.<sup>41</sup> However it seems to us that Josephus singled out the case of the Jews of Gerasa because their fate was exceptional; it is thus reasonable to think that he would have reported the rescue of the Jews at Pella if the latter had been spared. In this respect it needs to be recalled that, in the reign of Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 B.C.E.), Pella had been captured and destroyed because its inhabitants refused to convert to Judaism (*AJ* XIII, 397); although these events had occurred a century and half earlier, they

<sup>40</sup> R. Pritz, "On Brandon's Rejection," 41–42.

<sup>41</sup> S. Sowers, "Circumstances and Recollection," 309–310.



would certainly have left a bitter memory of the Jews in the minds of the gentile residents of Pella.

Consequently, the relocation of the Jewish-Christians in Pella appears on *a priori* grounds very improbable as far as the two first years of the war are concerned. However, in our opinion, the subjection of Galilee by Vespasian and the subsequent conquest of Peraea (in the course of spring 68 C.E.) would have modified these circumstances. Accordingly all of Brandon's objections could be resolved if the Jewish-Christian community of Jerusalem were to have left the city in the course of spring 68 C.E., as the Roman forces completed the subjection of the areas surrounding Jerusalem.

We shall look first at the general circumstances which prevailed following the submission of Galilee, in order to demonstrate that the new situation could have precipitated the Christians' flight. Our investigation, which is mainly based on Josephus' works, will focus on the fate of the Jewish deserters who managed to escape from Jerusalem as the net was closing around the Holy City. Contrary to Brandon's assertion, it appears that the phenomenon of desertions from Jerusalem increased as Vespasian completed the surrounding of the city. Although Josephus emphasizes the difficulties of escaping from Jerusalem (certainly in order to present the Jewish revolutionaries in a bad light), we read on numerous occasions that large numbers of people fled from the city in order to seek refuge with the Romans. The first mention of such surrenders occurs in *BJ* IV, 377, when Vespasian is beginning to plan the conquest of Jerusalem, in late 67 C.E. Subsequent statements (*BJ* IV, 397; 410) point to an increase in this trend, at least until the summer of 68 C.E. This phenomenon most likely arose for a number of reasons. First, it is very probable that the subjection of Galilee by the Roman troops reduced the motivation to fight among the Jewish moderates who had joined the rebels after their first military success. Besides, as mentioned earlier, it seems that the Romans encouraged the Jews to surrender. There is reason to think that this policy was a major part of the Roman strategy aimed at leading to the submission of the area in general, and Jerusalem in particular. In this respect, Josephus mentions on many occasions that the Romans were ready to negotiate with the Jews and to give guarantees to deserters. In this way, following the pacification of Galilee, Vespasian (as pointed above) conquered Iamnia and Ascalon in order to settle there "a great number of the people, who were come over to him, upon his

giving them his right hand for their preservation” (*BJ IV*, 130). We shall discuss the terms of such guarantees below. Finally, it is obvious that internal political upheavals lead to the departure of many Jews from Jerusalem. Indeed, the submission of Galilee caused many Galileans to seek refuge in Jerusalem: Josephus writes that at the same time “the captains of these troops of robbers” got into the capital city (*BJ IV*, 135). This flood of people strengthened the position of the most radical revolutionaries and increased the intensity of the civil war. These considerations make it likely that many Jews wished to flee from Jerusalem at this precise moment. Besides, in light of these events, Vespasian decided to postpone the siege of the city in order to let the Jews tear each other to pieces. Josephus adds that “...and it was soon discovered how wise an opinion he (Vespasian) had given. And indeed many there were of the Jews that deserted every day, and fled away from the Zealots, although their flight was very difficult...” (*BJ IV*, 377).

It is clear, then, that in spite of the difficulties in fleeing, and contrary to Brandon’s view, it was still possible to escape from Jerusalem at least until the summer 68 C.E. (*BJ IV*, 490).

At this point, we shall attempt to establish the exact reasons which drove the Jewish-Christians to escape from Jerusalem at this time, although inevitably such a demonstration can only be based on speculations. At the beginning of the fourth book of the *Jewish War*, Josephus gives an extensive account of the rebels’ atrocities and impious behavior. He mentions in particular that the revolutionaries who occupied the Temple appointed a “rustic” man, Phannias son of Samuel, as high priest in violation of the religious law for he was “unworthy of the high priesthood” (*BJ IV*, 155). We now turn to the Slavonic version of the *Jewish War*, for this rendering links this specific event to the apparition of an “abomination in the holy place”; a description which is very close to Matthew XXIV, 15. Although the origin of the Slavonic additions is very obscure, it is very likely that this passage constitutes a Christian interpolation and that it was included by a Christian copyist. Accordingly, we can say that there was a Christian tradition (which is hard to date) which connected the Zealots’ impieties and sacrilege to the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy about the “Desolating Sacrilege.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> For a survey of the scholarship on this issue, see the introduction of H. and K. Leeming, *Josephus’ Jewish War and its Slavonic Version*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), 1–105.

We must also note that some scholars think that Matthew XXIII, 35:

So that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.

refers to the slaughter of Zacchariah ben Baris mentioned by Josephus in *BJ IV*, 335.<sup>43</sup> If this supposition is correct, it would strengthen the impression that the synoptic Gospels preserve a bitter memory of some of the Zealots' misdeeds. It is therefore likely that the Jewish-Christian community, following the example of many other Jews, suffered harshly at the revolutionaries' hands. As Josephus writes in this context "and indeed there was no part of the people but they found out some pretense to destroy them" (*BJ IV* 363). Finally, we should stress the fact that at this time the Zealots' main opponent was the High Priest Ananus ben Ananus. According to Josephus, in the year 62 C.E., the latter orchestrated the murder of James, the leader of the Jewish-Christian community (*AJ XX*, 200). Although Ananus took the leadership of the revolt as early as 66 C.E., it is reasonable to suppose that the Jewish-Christians decided to leave the city when they were threatened from both sides.

Now that we have briefly described the general context of the spring of 68 C.E., we shall attempt to specify more accurately when the Jewish-Christians fled from Jerusalem. Therefore we shall first endeavor to define our *terminus post quem*. If we are right in believing that the Jerusalem Jewish-Christians were established in Pella by the Roman authorities subsequently to their surrender, it is reasonable to believe that their move there only happened after the absolute submission of Peraea. Here it is relevant to note that the settlement of Jewish deserters in the cities of Peraea occurred towards the end of Placidus' military campaign in the area (*BJ IV*, 438). Although no precise dating is given, it seems that the conquest of Peraea, which started with the capture of Gadara on March 21, 68 C.E. (*BJ IV*, 414) was completed shortly before the taking of Jericho on June 21, 68 (*BJ IV*, 450).

We now need to define our *terminus ante quem*. To this end, we shall turn to the several sources which refer to the migration to Pella. We should stress that we consider Epiphanius' accounts more reliable here than those of Eusebius. As noted earlier, Eusebius' account of the

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<sup>43</sup> J. Wellhausen, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien*, (1905; 2nd ed.; Berlin: G. Reimer, 1911), 118–123; it must be said, though, that nowadays this hypothesis is viewed negatively by most scholars.

flight to Pella is part of a global vision of history, in which the Jews are punished by God for their impiety and misdeeds. Thus Eusebius states that this punishment occurred after “those that believed in Christ” had removed not only from Jerusalem, but also from “the whole land of Judaea”. The removal of the Jewish-Christians who lived all over Judaea (and not only in Jerusalem) was therefore a precondition to the chastisement of the Jews. The logical corollary of this condition is that the flight to Pella cannot have taken place after the outbreak of the revolt which devastated the whole province, but only, as Eusebius writes “πρὸ τοῦ πολέμου”. In light of this consideration, we suspect the chronology of this account to have been altered for the purposes of Eusebius’ own theological demonstration.

In contradistinction, we regard Epiphanius’ chronology as more reliable than that of Eusebius, for two reasons:

First, because Epiphanius’ accounts, unlike Eusebius’, are devoid of any theological aim and appear to be quite incidental in his work.

Secondly, because his three statements relating to the Jewish-Christians’ migration to Pella, in spite of their few differences, point out that the flight occurred when Jerusalem was about to be besieged. Although such an assertion cannot be a proof of the truthfulness of Epiphanius’ data, it does strengthen the impression of reliability of these particular accounts.

Moreover, it would seem that Epiphanius’ chronology tallies with Luke XXI, 20–21.

Read literally, such a statement seems to describe the very last stage of Jerusalem’s siege; but if we understand more widely, it could also refer to the submission of the areas around Jerusalem. In this context we note that Josephus writes that after the conquest of Jericho on June 21, 68 C.E. (*BJ* IV, 450), and before Vespasian was informed of Nero’s death (on June 9, 68 C.E.):

And now the war having gone through all the mountainous country, and all the plain country also, those that were at Jerusalem were deprived of the liberty of going out of the city; for as to such as had a mind to desert, they were watched by the Zealots; and as to such as were not yet on the side of the Romans, their army kept them in, by encompassing the city round about all sides (*BJ* IV, 490).

Such a statement cannot be considered as an absolute *terminus ante quem*, for some Jews managed to flee from Jerusalem afterwards. However it is clear that escaping from the Holy City was made very

difficult by the Zealots after they took over the city in the late spring of 68 C.E.

Here we should turn to the semantic value of the verb: “ἐκ-χωρέω” which describes in Luke’s account the escape of those “inside the city.” ἐκ-χωρέω can be understood as “to remove from” in the sense of “fleeing from;” in such a case it has the same value as φεύγω which is related earlier to the fate of “those in Judaea” (this sentence occurs in the other synoptic Gospels). However, it can also mean “to go away, to depart from, to emigrate;” in such a case it may well indicate that the community left Jerusalem at a time when such an enterprise was not too perilous, in other words, when Ananus’ men were still in control of the walls and the gates (*BJ IV*, 236; 275).

Thus, in light of all these considerations, we conclude that the Jewish-Christians must have left Jerusalem in the late spring of 68 C.E., following the submission of Peraea and before the Zealots’ takeover of Jerusalem, when Vespasian had succeeded in completely surrounding the city (June 68 C.E.).

#### THE MATERIAL DIFFICULTIES

Brandon also tries to demonstrate that numerous material difficulties would have prevented the Jewish-Christians from escaping to Pella. He first maintains that the flight itself was improbable, for in his opinion, it is very unlikely that the Jewish-Christian community (which certainly included children, women and old men) would have managed to travel safely through Peraea, which had been successively devastated by the Jewish rebels and the Roman troops. However, if we assume that the Jewish-Christians actually surrendered to the Romans, this difficulty is overcome. In this regard we shall examine the statement quoted above (*BJ IV*, 130), which refers to the fate of deserters following the fall of Galilee. We understand from this passage that the Jewish refugees, after they had negotiated their surrender, were escorted by the Roman troops to their new places of residence. This precaution was aimed not only at watching those who had surrendered, but also protecting them from both the seditious Jews and the heathen inhabitants. We note, besides, that the Romans apparently encouraged the Jews to surrender in groups (*BJ VI*, 384). In light of both of these accounts, the Jewish-Christian community’s move to Pella does not seem physically improbable.

Brandon then states that it is unlikely that the Jewish-Christians would have settled in Pella, because the city was destroyed by the rebels in reprisal for the slaughter of their brethren in Caesarea in summer 66 C.E. (*BJ* II, 457). Several scholars tend to qualify Josephus' statement, and estimate that the extent of sacking at Pella was much smaller.<sup>44</sup> In their excavation report dated to 1958, R. W. Funk and H. N. Richardson concluded that Pella was destroyed either at a late Hellenistic date or early in the Roman period; they thus hesitated to attribute the devastation of the city to Alexander Jannaeus or to the Jewish insurrectionists in 66 C.E.<sup>45</sup> Since then, it has been established that the traces of demolition are to be ascribed to the Hasmonean king. Thus, so far as it seems, the archeological excavations in Pella have not revealed any evidence of destruction from the late first century C.E.<sup>46</sup> Apart from this, it should be remembered that in the course of his military campaign Vespasian ordered the reconstruction of many cities that had been devastated (*BJ* IV, 440). And although Josephus does not mention any of the cities which were rebuilt by name, it is reasonable to suppose that the Romans would have restored Pella (if the city really had been destroyed) on account of its relative importance.

Finally, in Brandon's view it is very unlikely that the heathen survivors of the Jewish sacking would have let a Jewish group settle in Pella. Here Simon agrees with Brandon.<sup>47</sup> In our opinion, however, the strong presence of Roman troops would have enabled this sort of coexistence, in spite of the deep hostility that prevailed between Jews and pagans. Josephus refers on many occasions to the settling of Roman forces in numerous conquered towns. In this context, we should emphasize that in *BJ* IV, 130 the settlement of the Jewish deserters in Iamnia [Yavneh] and Azotus was preceded by the installation of garrisons there. Moreover, we read in *BJ* VI, 113 that Jewish notables who surrendered to Titus during the siege of Jerusalem were subsequently sent to Gophna.

<sup>44</sup> M. Simon, "Migration," 45–46; R. Pritz, "On Brandon's Rejection," 41–42.

<sup>45</sup> R. W. Funk and H. N. Richardson, "The Sounding at Pella," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 21 (1958), 82–98 (94–95 n. 33).

<sup>46</sup> R. H. Smith and L. P. Day, *Pella of the Decapolis, Volume 2: Final Report of the College of Wooster Excavations in Area IX, the Civic Complex, 1979–1985*, (Wooster, Ohio: College of Wooster, 1989), 3–7; A. W. McNicol, P. C. Edwards, J. Hanbury-Tenison, J. B. Hennessy, T. F. Potts, R. H. Smith, A. Walmsley, P. Watson, *Pella in Jordan 2: The Second Interim Report of the Joint University of Sydney and College of Wooster Excavations at Pella 1982–1985*, (Sydney: Meditarch, 1992), 119–122.

<sup>47</sup> M. Simon, "Migration," 42.

It is likely that their settlement there was not fortuitous, for Vespasian had previously provided Gophna with Roman troops (*BJ* V, 50). Thus, Josephus adds that these notables “retired to that small city...in complete security.” The Roman authorities appear to have proceeded very methodically within the framework of their policy towards deserters. On at least three different occasions, Josephus mentions that Vespasian (*BJ* IV, 130), Placidus (*BJ* IV, 438) and Titus (*BJ* VI, 113) supervised the installation of Jewish deserters in pacified and secured areas.

Thus in spite of Brandon’s arguments, a Jewish-Christian settlement in Pella during the course of the Great Revolt is physically possible, if we concede that it was under the supervision of the Roman authorities.

### RECONSTRUCTION

In light of our demonstration above, we thus propose that the Jewish-Christian community of Jerusalem did not flee prior to the war, but remained in the Holy City at least until the beginning of 68 C.E. Then, as the Roman legions advanced in the vicinity of Jerusalem, the members of the community, or at least some of them, like many other Jews, escaped from the city and surrendered to the Roman authorities. It is likely that this flight occurred in the late spring of 68 C.E., following the submission of Peraea and prior to the Zealots’ absolute takeover of Jerusalem. Although this proposal can only be based on speculation, we shall now attempt to reconstruct the unfolding of the flight itself.

It is reasonable to suppose that the Jewish-Christians, after fleeing from Jerusalem, would have encountered the Roman forces east of the Holy City, probably in Jericho where we know that Vespasian placed garrisons (*BJ* IV, 486). This could explain why the Jewish-Christians were subsequently sent to Peraea, unlike many other deserters who were settled in the coastal cities. Although they were considered as defeated persons, we think it is likely that the Jewish deserters did negotiate the terms of their surrender with the Roman authorities. Thus we shall examine with particular attention the account that tells of the desertion of Jewish notables during the siege of Jerusalem (*BJ* VI, 113–116).

According to this account, Titus, after he was informed that the “Daily Sacrifice” in the Temple had been interrupted, commanded Josephus to address the besieged rebels. Reporting Caesar’s message, Josephus emphasized that surrender was still possible. Although the

rebel leader John of Gischala and his soldiers remained inflexible, he writes, “a great many of the better sort” were influenced by his words; some of them (including high priests and noblemen) even managed to flee, and sought refuge with Titus. Josephus adds here

Now Caesar not only received these men very kindly in other respects, but, knowing they would not willingly live after the customs of other nations, he sent them to Gophna and desired them to remain there for the present, and told them, that when he was gotten clear of this war, he would restore each of them to their possessions again; so they cheerfully retired to that small city which was allotted them, without fear of any danger.

The tendentiousness of Josephus’ works is obvious and Titus’ kindness toward the Jews is undoubtedly exaggerated; however we wish to stress several points here.

First, it is noteworthy that Titus himself led the discussions with the deserters; such a configuration is not unlikely, for on other occasions Vespasian is said to have personally interfered in the issue of the Jewish deserters (*BJ* IV, 130, 410).

Secondly, Josephus seems to indicate that those Jewish notables benefited from preferential treatment (clearly on account of their nobility): in spite of the Roman practice of settling Jewish deserters in pagan cities, these were sent to a Jewish town. Moreover, Titus assured them that their stay in Gophna would only be temporary and that they would eventually recover their possessions. Thus we conclude that this statement reflects the terms of a negotiation drawn up between these deserters and the Roman authorities. Titus’ efforts to encourage the Jews to surrender make it likely that the Romans were disposed to accept some of deserters’ requests (*BJ* VI, 117). It is reasonable to infer that this passage echoes the guarantees given by Vespasian to the “great number of people” whom he subsequently led to Jamnia and Azotus (*BJ*. IV, 130).

We shall now turn to look at to the rabbinic literature, and particularly the passages which refer to RYbZ’s move to Yavneh.<sup>48</sup> Despite its legendary features and the relatively late date of its final literary form, the tale of RYbZ’s surrender certainly contains some authentic mate-

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<sup>48</sup> *Avot de R. Nathan*, version A, iv, (ed. Schechter, 22–24), version B, vi, (ed. Schechter, 19); *Lamentations Rabbah* i, 5, (ed. Buber, 65–69); *BT Gittin* 56a-b; *Midrash Proverbs* xv, (ed. Buber, 79–80).



rial. In this connection, J. Neusner has remarked that “the comment of Rabbi Akiva on the alleged conversation between Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai and Vespasian” appears to demonstrate that the tradition was known very early.<sup>49</sup> So, in spite of the inconsistencies they contain, we wish to point out to a number of similarities between these accounts and the statement of Josephus quoted above. We remark first that RYbZ is said to have met Vespasian in person. Some scholars have rejected the story of this encounter outright as being completely lacking in historical foundation. It has been argued, for instance, that the authors of this tradition were influenced by the narrative of Josephus’ surrender.<sup>50</sup> However, in spite of these considerations, there is reason to believe that these accounts convey a nucleus of genuine tradition. Although the historicity of the dialogue between RYbZ and Vespasian is highly challengeable, it is not unlikely, as we have shown above, that the former negotiated his surrender with some high Roman official. Secondly, it is noteworthy that all the accounts agree in saying that Caesar granted him a favour, whether it was the gift of Yavneh itself or the permission to establish a study centre there. Finally, we note an odd correlation between the sentence “תן לי יבנה וחכמיה ושושילתא דרבן גמליאל” attributed to RYbZ in BT Gittin 56b, and the use of the expression “εἰς τὸ δοθὲν πολίχνιον” in the account that refers to the Jewish deserters’ removal to Gophna. It is unlikely that these cities (Yavneh/Iamnia and Gophna) were actually given to the Jewish deserters, but this consideration could indicate that they benefited from some rights. G. Alon believes, however, that RYbZ, like other Jewish prisoners, was held in custody at Yavneh [Iamnia] under hard conditions. In his view, the treatment of the deserters by the Romans (which he believes to have been particularly harsh) was part of their general policy that aimed at “the suppression and annihilation of the (Jewish) people.”<sup>51</sup> Although we agree that the Jewish deserters were settled either in pagan or in mixed cities by the Roman authorities, we tend to assume that their conditions were not as severe as G. Alon has proposed for two main reasons. First, since the Romans generally sought to encourage the

<sup>49</sup> BT Gittin 56b. See: J. Neusner, “In quest of the historical Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai,” *Harvard Theological Review* 59 (1966), 393.

<sup>50</sup> G. Alon, “Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai,” 276; J. Price, *Jerusalem Under Siege*, 264–270; A. Tropper, “Yohanan ben Zakkai, Amicus Caesaris,” 148. Other scholars are indecisive with regard to the historicity of the encounter between Vespasian and RYBZ; see A. J. Saldarini, “Johanan ben Zakkai’s Escape,” 204.

<sup>51</sup> “Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai,” 291.

Jews to surrender as part of their war strategy; they were therefore inclined to consent to some of the deserters' requests: as stated above, *BJ* VI, 113–118 is very revealing in this regard. Secondly, the Roman generals most likely had in mind to preserve a reliable infrastructure for the post-war local leadership. Thus, although the historicity of the personal encounter between Vespasian and RYbZ remains a moot question, it is still reasonable to suppose that this tradition preserves the memory of the latter's surrender and of its negotiation with the Roman authorities.

In light of these considerations, we propose that the Jewish-Christians did negotiate the terms of their surrender. Thus, following the example of the Jewish high priests who surrendered to Titus, they might have received the assurance that their stay at Pella would be temporary and that they would eventually recover their possessions. The Jewish-Christians would presumably have surrendered in a group, since they were all members of the same community. Such a conjecture is strengthened by the memory preserved by the Christian tradition, and it also corresponds to the Roman efforts to encourage group flight. Afterwards, in accordance with their agreement with the Imperial authorities, the Jewish-Christians would have settled in Pella under the Romans' supervision and remained there in safety, for garrisons were established all over the conquered areas.

Can we infer from this survey that the members of this community were officially allowed to live in Jerusalem and to recover their goods and properties shortly after the war? Here we shall consider the main sources that refer to the presence of a Jewish-Christian Church in Jerusalem following the destruction of the Temple. The most wide-ranging collection of accounts related to this community is to be found in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. According to Eusebius' own words, his material derived from various ancient writings and traditions, and notably from the works of the second century writer Hegesippus. Eusebius first hints at the presence in Jerusalem of a Jewish-Christian congregation after the Jewish War by relating the election of Symeon of Clopas to the Episcopal throne. Thus he writes that, following the destruction of Jerusalem, "the apostles and disciples of the Lord... and those that were related to the Lord according to the flesh" gathered "from all directions" in an unspecified place, and choose Symeon, the son of Clopas to be James' heir (*HE* III, 11). In the following state-

ments it becomes clear that Symeon ruled the Church of Jerusalem (*HE* III, 22; 33).<sup>52</sup>

According to some scholars these accounts, which make it seem as if there always had been a Church in Jerusalem, stand in conflict with the alleged flight of the Christians from the city. In fact, in Lüdemann's opinion, the Pella tradition is not likely to have reported the return of the heirs of the "Mother Church" to Jerusalem since it was part of the foundation story of the community at Pella. It appears, though, that the material conveyed by Hegesippus (as it has come down to us through Eusebius' writings) is silent about the period between James' martyrdom (which preceded the revolt; *HE*, II, 23) and the election of Symeon to the head of the Church of Jerusalem after the war (*HE*, III, 11). As previously said, this obscure gap could be explained by the fact that Hegesippus was driven by apologetic considerations and merely sought to emphasize the continuity of the Church and the genuineness of its tradition; thus, it would seem likely that he did not wish to mention the least disruption in the "Mother Church's" history. In any event, one could say at most, that no account explicitly ascribed to Hegesippus is known to us regarding the fate of the Jerusalem Church during the Jewish War. Furthermore, we do not know any tradition which contradicts the flight to Pella and clearly certifies that the Jewish-Christians remained in the besieged city. So, it turns out that the above-mentioned set of traditions does not cancel out the hypothesis of a temporary exile of the Jewish-Christians from Jerusalem.

Epiphanius was the first to explicitly mention the return of the Jewish-Christians to the holy city. Thus we read in his treatise *On Weights and Measures* (XV) that "the disciples of the disciples of the apostles" came back from Pella after the War, and from then on lived and taught in Jerusalem. Irshai considers that Epiphanius merely tried to harmonize the different traditions found in Eusebius' writings.<sup>53</sup> However, if we conclude that the bishop of Salamis did not rely on Eusebius, it is reasonable to suppose that his source did report the return of the Christians from Pella to Jerusalem.

<sup>52</sup> Other references to the presence of a Jewish-Christian congregation at Jerusalem before the Bar Kokhva Revolt are to be found elsewhere in Eusebius' work: *HE* III, 35; IV, 5, 3; 6, 4; *Demonstratio Evangelica* III, 5; *Theophania* V, 45 (Syriac version).

<sup>53</sup> "From the Church of the Circumcised," 76.

Lastly we should note an interesting statement of the tenth-century Patriarch of Alexandria, Eutychius, who reports that the Christians came back to Jerusalem under the leadership of Symeon the son of Clopas in the fourth year of Vespasian (73–74 C.E.).<sup>54</sup>

Thus, there is a reasonable *a priori* case for supposing that the Jewish-Christians returned to Jerusalem following the suppression of the revolt.

#### SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The theory of a Jewish-Christian surrender to the Roman forces during the spring of 68 C.E. allows us to draw several conclusions. First, it must be stated that the migration to Pella did not lead to the religious separation between the Jewish-Christians and their Jewish brethren as several scholars have proposed.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, according to Josephus, many Jews surrendered to the Roman forces in the course of the war. Their desertion took place for different reasons, but it cannot be considered as an abandoning of their Jewish identity or of their religious beliefs. Apostasy on the part of the Jewish-Christian fugitives would have implied their renunciation of the law of the fathers in the manner, for instance, of the prefect of Egypt Tiberius Alexander about whom Josephus writes that he “did not continue in the religion of his country” (*AJ* XX, 100–103). There is no reason to believe that the move of the Jewish-Christians from Jerusalem entailed such a development; indeed, this event does not pose the question of their religious identity.

Furthermore, it should be remembered that RYbZ, in spite of his flight from Jerusalem during the siege, took over the leadership of Palestinian Judaism after the destruction of the Temple. Some scholars have advanced the hypothesis that the latter was widely reproached by his contemporaries for having escaped from Jerusalem.<sup>56</sup> Although the most extremist elements of the people undoubtedly condemned this

<sup>54</sup> Eutychius of Alexandria, *Annales*, (Mignes, PG 111 col. 985).

<sup>55</sup> P. E. Davies, “Early Christian Attitudes Towards Judaism and the Jews”, *Journal of Bible and Religion*, 13 (1945), 72–82 (73–75); W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 44–45; M. R. Wilson, *Our father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 76–77.

<sup>56</sup> A. J. Saldarini, “Johanan ben Zakkai’s Escape,” 203; A. Tropper, “Yohanan ben Zakkai, Amicus Caesaris,” 140.

sage, it appears that many Jews adopted a moderate position towards the Romans; in this connection J. Neusner writes that "Yohanan' act of surrender must have appeared neither unique nor treasonable to very large number of Jews."<sup>57</sup> Likewise, it would appear very improbable that the surrender of the Jewish-Christians set them apart from the rest of the people.

We may also wonder about the significance of the Jewish-Christians' presence within Jerusalem until 68 C.E., which might possibly indicate that the Jewish-Christians did not condemn the Jewish uprising at its start. Indeed, many of the Jews who were opposed to the revolt left Jerusalem as early as November 66 C.E., right after Cestius' defeat (*BJ* II, 556). Does this consideration allow us to state that the Jewish-Christians did support the Jewish revolt to some extent? At any event, their commitment must have been quite restrained since, as we argue, they dissociated themselves in a later stage from the most extreme rebels and sought to escape from the Zealots' growing power. We note besides that desertion to the Roman side was not the only way to escape the Zealots' yoke: we read for instance in *BJ* IV, 574 that some Jerusalemite Jews found refuge with Simon Bar-Giora, another rebel leader, when he was still outside the city. It is possible to deduce from this data that surrender to the Romans was a considered step, rather than a desperate act. However it cannot be inferred from their move from Jerusalem that the Jewish-Christians did not share any of their brethren's national aspirations. Their decision to leave the city was a pragmatic one; it responded to the specific political developments which occurred in Jerusalem in the course of the year 68 C.E. Thus it would appear that the implications of the removal of the Jerusalemite Jewish-Christians to Pella were less far-reaching than is usually thought; in any event, this occurrence can by no means be considered as a watershed in the relations between Jews and Jewish-Christians.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *A Life*, 105.

<sup>58</sup> Here we would agree with D. Boyarin and G. Hasan-Rokem that the escape of the Jerusalem church cannot be cited "as evidence for a break between 'Christianity' and the Jewish people." D. Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 136 n. 19.

## APPENDIX

I *Ecclesiastical History III, 5, 3*

“The people of the Church in Jerusalem were commanded by an oracle given by revelation before the war to those in the city who were worthy of it to depart and dwell in one of the cities of Perea which they called Pella. To it those who believed on Christ traveled from Jerusalem, so that when holy men had altogether deserted the royal capital of the Jews and the whole land of Judaea, the judgement of God might at last overtake them from for all their crimes against the Christ and his Apostles, and all that generation of the wicked be utterly blotted out from among men.”

English translation by K. Lake in the Loeb Classical Library (1926; Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2001), 201.

II *Panarion XXIX, 7, 7*

“This heresy of the Nazoraeans exists in Beroea in the neighbourhood of Coele Syria and the Decapolis in the region of Pella and in Basanitis in the so-called Kokaba, Chochabe in Hebrew. For from there it took its beginnings after the exodus from Jerusalem when all the disciples went to live in Pella because Christ had told them to leave Jerusalem and to go away since it would undergo a siege. Because of this advice they lived in Perea, after having moved to that place, as I said. There the Nazoraean heresy had its beginning.”

English translation by A. F. J. Klijn and G. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish Christian Sects*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1973), 173.

III *Panarion XXX, 2, 7*

“After all those who believed in Christ settled down about that time in Perea, the majority (of them) in a city called Pella of the Decapolis<sup>59</sup> of which it is written in the Gospel that it is situated in the neighbourhood of the region of Batanaea and Basanitis, Ebion’s preaching originated here after they has moved to this place and had lived there.”

English translation by A. F. J. Klijn and G. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 177.

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<sup>59</sup> We have altered the translation of Klijn and Reinink, which reads: “After all those who believed in Christ *had generally come to live in Perea*, in a city called Pella of the Decapolis”.

IV *De Mensuris et Ponderibus XV*

“So Aquila, while he was in Jerusalem, also saw the disciples of the disciples of the apostles flourishing in the faith and working great signs, healings, and other miracles. For they were such as had come back from the city of Pella to Jerusalem and were living there and teaching. For when the city was about to be taken and destroyed by the Romans, it was revealed in advance to all the disciples by an angel of God that they should remove from the city, as it was going to be completely destroyed. They sojourned as emigrants in Pella, the city above mentioned in Transjordan. And this city is said to be of the Decapolis. But after the destruction of Jerusalem, when they had returned to Jerusalem, as I have said, they wrought great signs, as I have already said.”

Translation by J. E. Dean, *Epiphanius' Treatise on Weights and Measures. The Syriac Version*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 30–31.

V *Recognitions I, 37, 2 (Syriac)*

“And all this he [Moses] contrived for them, that . . . those who believed in him (Jesus), in the Wisdom of God, would be led to a secure place of the land that they might survive and be preserved from the war, which afterward came upon those who did not believe, because of their division for their destruction.”

Translation by C. Koester in “Origin and Circumstances,” 98–99.

VI *Recognitions I, 39, 3 (Syriac)*

“So that when they pleased God in his ineffable wisdom, they would be saved from the war which was about to come for the destruction of those who were not persuaded.”

Translation by C. Koester in “Origin and Circumstances,” 100–101.

VII *Recognitions I, 39, 3 (Latin)*

“And then, moreover, a clear indication of this great mystery is provided, namely, that everyone who, believing in this prophet who was foretold by Moses, would be baptized in his name, would be kept unhurt from the destruction of the war which hangs over the unbelieving nation and the place itself.”

Translation by C. Koester in “Origin and Circumstances” 100–101.

VIII *Luke XXI, 20-24*

“When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it; for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is written. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people; they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of Gentiles are fulfilled.”