

THE FIRST JEWISH BID FOR WORLD POWER

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FOREWORD.

Recent years have seen a stirring among the dry bones of history and some attempts to rectify errors and supply omissions. The strange reticence of historians generally as to the part played by the Jews, especially in the Roman Republic and Empire, has led inevitably to grave misconceptions. It has come to be believed that the Jewish people, after their partial return to Judæa from the second captivity, innocently incurred the hostility of Rome, which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and their final dispersion. We have been induced to imagine that they subsequently found themselves in scattered groups, frequently exposed to unmerited persecution, which demands the sympathy of civilised mankind. This impression, which is eminently advantageous from the Jewish point of view, especially at the present time, is absolutely false. The Jews were spread in large colonies over territories which were or came under the control of Rome long before the Diaspora, and had made themselves distinctly formidable politically and otherwise. The remnant, dispersed from Judæa, doubtless, in great part, joined existing long-established communities, and their descendants continue to pursue methods inherited during at least twenty-five centuries.

An important recent work (1927) of 366 pages, profusely illustrated, finely printed, published by the Oxford University Press, and highly commended,* aptly illustrates the causes of these persistent misconceptions. The following are the *only* allusions to Jewish activities in the Roman world:—

Pompey satisfied the knights by adding to the Eastern Provinces. . . Judæa and Jerusalem (p. 133).

This [the strengthening of the Euphrates frontier] policy . . . led in the reign of Nero to a long and bloody conflict in Judæa. The conquest

* "A History of the Ancient World. Vol. II. Rome." Translated from the Russian of M. Rostovtzeff, Hon. D.Litt. (Oxon), and Professor of Ancient History at Yale University.

of Judæa was carried out by Vespasian and, after he had been proclaimed Emperor, by his son Titus (p. 223).

Trajan's further designs in the East were arrested by a rebellion in Mesopotamia, a rising of the Jews in Syria and Egypt, and also complications in Africa and Britain (p. 237).

The trade carried on within the [Roman] Empire . . . grew steadily; the class of traders grew larger, and the Semites—Syrians, Jews and Aramæans—became more prominent members of it (p. 302).

When the dispersion of the Jews took place in the Hellenistic Age, the Jewish communities spread far and wide and were followed, under the [Roman] Empire, by Christianity (p. 340).

The exchange of commodities [in the later Roman Empire] still went on. . . . Trade . . . dealt chiefly with articles of luxury imported from Eastern countries, and naturally fell into the hands of Eastern merchants—Syrians, Levantines, and Jews (p. 354).

This and no more! Who could gather from these bare allusions that the Jews were able to challenge the might of Rome and to raise widespread revolts of the most dangerous character?

In the hope of drawing attention to facts, pregnant with meaning to the Gentile world at the present time, the following brief synopsis has been written.

THE FIRST JEWISH BID FOR WORLD POWER.

The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, supplies some interesting information regarding the period just before the great rising of his race which for a time challenged the might of Rome. Although Josephus suffered from a characteristic tendency to boastfulness, his works must be accepted as throwing light on Jewish activities at this critical period, which have been most imperfectly presented by historians. The following passage is specially significant :—

“ When I was twenty-six it happened that I went up to Rome on the occasion which I shall now describe. At the time when Felix was Procurator [or High Commissioner] of Judæa, there were certain priests of my acquaintance, very excellent persons, whom on a small and trifling charge, he had put in irons and sent to Rome to plead their cause before Cæsar [Nero]. These I was desirous to procure deliverance for . . . I arrived at Rome after great peril by sea. . . . I became intimate with Aliturus, an actor much beloved by Nero, and a Jew by race, and through his interest became known to Poppæa, Nero’s wife, and speedily effected, through her influence, the liberation of the priests. And having obtained many presents from Poppæa besides this favour, I returned home [Jerusalem]. And now I perceived that we were on the eve of revolution, and that many were elated at the idea of a revolt from the Romans. . . . I therefore endeavoured to put a stop to these tumultuous persons, and to persuade them to change their minds. . . . I foresaw that the end of such a war would be most unfortunate for us. But I could not persuade them, for the madness of desperate men carried the day.”*

* *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, §§ 3 and 4. (Whiston’s translation revised by Shillito.)

Assuming the facts of this simple story to be accurate, they are peculiarly significant. A young Jew starts for Rome to obtain the release of his fellow tribesmen, and immediately discovers another Jew who seems to have been most influential at Nero's Court. Poppæa takes him in hand and gives him "many presents." Whether Josephus was acting for the Sanhedrim and, to facilitate his mission, took a large sum of money with him, which was shared with the persons who were instrumental in carrying out his purpose, we are not told. It does not seem probable that these "very excellent" Jewish "priests" had been sent to Rome by Felix on "a small and trifling cause," and the method by which they were released is not unknown in the present day.

The fierce persecution of Christians by Nero anticipated by nineteen centuries those of the Bolsheviks; but the Casars never perpetrated any pogroms on the Jews, who were numerous in many cities of the Empire at this period. It has been held that the marked immunity enjoyed by the Jews was due to their being regarded as non-political, and therefore not a danger to the State, while the Christian sect was accused of the burning of Rome. It would be exceedingly interesting to discover how these myths originated in days when the Jews projected and carried out great rebellions.

Josephus states that, on his return to Palestine, he found the Jews "on the eve of a revolution," and "elated" at the prospect. It is most unlikely that he was unaware of the existence of this far-reaching movement before he started for Rome; but he may have been surprised by its progress during his absence, and at this stage the efforts which he claims to have made to calm the "tumultuous persons" would necessarily be futile.

The events described by Josephus must have occurred about A.D. 65, very shortly before the outbreak of the formidable Roman-Jewish War ending with the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. By a curious coincidence, the first of the great civil wars which shook the Roman Empire and caused the deaths of four emperors, immediately followed.

Gibbon thus describes the period during which the Jews made determined attempts for world power:—

"From the reign of Nero to that of Antoninus Pius, the Jews discovered a fierce hatred of the dominion of Rome, which repeatedly broke out in the most furious massacres and insurrections. Humanity is shocked at the recital of the horrid cruelties which they committed in the cities of Egypt, of Cyprus, and Cyrene where they dwelt in treacherous friendship with the unsuspecting natives."

Gibbon quotes Dion Cassius, who stated that 220,000 Greeks were

massacred by the Jews in Cyrene, 240,000 in Cyprus, and "a very great multitude" in Egypt, and adds some horrible details. Cassius had a most distinguished career, becoming Roman Proconsul of Africa, and Governor successively of Dalmatia and Upper Pannonia; but only about one-third of his history has descended to us intact. While the authority of Cassius on matters which occurred in his lifetime can be respected, these dreadful figures may not be exact; but it is certain that in these years the Jews committed wholesale massacres, unparalleled until the Marxian achievements in Russia some 1,900 years later. The total Bolshevik figures far exceeded those recorded by Cassius, but were spread out over several years, and are still mounting.

The idea that the "Judæans" inhabited Palestine alone is pure illusion. At the beginning of the Christian era they had powerful communities widely scattered. The massacres of Greeks which Gibbon records prove not only that they must have been numerous, but that they acted on some common plan. The Jewish historian, Professor H. Graetz,* gives much valuable information as to their wide dispersion, and supplies details which Gibbon omits. The numbers of Judæans about A.D. 50 were "even greater" in the Parthian Empire than in Europe, Syria, and Africa.

"They owned large tracts of country in Mesopotamia and Babylonia. . . . Just as Naarda and Nisibis became the central points for the countries of the Euphrates, there arose in every land a central nucleus from which Judæan colonies spread themselves . . . from Asia Minor on the one side towards the Black Sea; on the other, towards Greece and the Islands. Athens, Corinth, Thessalonica, and Philippi contained Judæan communities. There is no doubt that from Rome Judæan colonies went forth westward to the South of France and Spain." (Vol. II., pp. 203-4.)

The number of Judæans in Rome itself was so great that the Emperor Claudius, Nero's predecessor, determined to expel them, and was "only deterred through fear." In Egypt there were "nearly a million." Cyrenaica contained large numbers. At Antioch they "formed a considerable proportion of the population," and there were 10,000 at Damascus. At the Feast of the Passover in A.D. 66 there were "nearly three millions" in Jerusalem. These most important facts, usually ignored by historians, clearly show that when the Jews challenged the Roman power they were extremely formidable. Professor Graetz even thought, that "the Daughter of Zion" might have "gained the victory"

* His *History of the Jews* was translated by Bella Löwy.

over Rome if "she had waited for a more favourable moment," and if there had not been internal dissensions.

According to Graetz, the rising which, as we have pointed out, Josephus found to be imminent was directed against Florus, the Roman Procurator, who left Jerusalem with part of the garrison. A violent revolutionary outbreak at once followed, the Jews having

"already formed an alliance with the princely house of Adiabene [a buffer State between the Roman and Parthian Empires], and having likewise managed to interest the Parthian-Babylonian community in their cause." (Vol. II., p. 257.)

Thus early were revolutionary Jews able to enlist Gentiles for their purposes.

The remnant of the Roman garrison at Jerusalem was killed, and the "expected help" from Adiabene and Babylon was forthcoming. Cestius Gallus having led "more than 30,000 experienced soldiers from out of Antioch against Judæa," was repulsed before Jerusalem, and retreated.

Nero now selected Flavius Vespasian, the future Emperor, to replace Gallus, who had died or was killed; but at Rome

"so great was the alarm felt . . . that Licinius Mucianus was specially chosen as Governor of Syria . . . and ordered to quell all dangerous symptoms of disaffection among the Parthians."

In A.D. 68 the Roman Empire was threatened by the risings of Vindex, in Gaul, and of Galba, in Spain, which curiously coincided with the dangerous Jewish revolt in the Near East. Galba became Emperor, and was killed, being succeeded by Otho, who committed suicide after his defeat by Vitellius. Vespasian now assumed the purple, and his son Titus captured Jerusalem, destroyed the fortifications, and the Temple was burned to the ground. The Empire had weathered this Judæan storm; but a more dangerous effort quickly followed.

When the Carthaginians withstood the might of Rome in the Punic Wars, they may be said to have disappeared as a nation after the destruction of Carthage by Scipio. The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus was followed by a much more dangerous rising of the Judæans, who for a time seemed "in imminent danger of falling to pieces. There now appeared a man [Jochanan, the son of Zakkai], who seemed made to restore some strength to the nation."* During the siege of Jerusalem he went over to the Romans, and—

*Graetz, Vol. II., p. 327.

"Titus received the fugitive in a friendly manner. . . . Jochanan modestly requested that he might be permitted to establish a school at Jamnia [near Joppa.] . . . Titus had nothing to urge against the harmless wish of Jochanan, for he could not foresee that by this unimportant concession he was enabling Judaism . . . to outlive Rome . . . by thousands of years."*

Thus was the Jewish base of operations transferred by the unsuspecting Titus, who anticipated the "Balfour Declaration" in yielding to an astute proposal. At Jamnia, Jochanan "formed a sort of Synhedrion of which he was at once recognised as the President," and the Jews were again organised for war, their greatest effort against Rome.

In A.D. 115 Trajan invaded Parthia apparently with the object of gripping the trade with India and the East, not only to increase the supply of luxuries, probably stimulated by the large Jewish colony in Rome, but in the hope of securing precious metals, of which, as Tiberius and the Elder Pliny deplored, the Empire was being depleted. Rome at this period depended upon her regular army, of the rigid discipline and organisation of which Josephus gives interesting particulars. The Legions were on the Rhine, and the Danube, and in Britain, while Rome was defended mainly by the Prætorian Guards, and was not then fortified. Of the population of the Empire, probably from 100 to 150 millions, about half were slaves generally ready to revolt. The colossus was none too strong, and had the army in Mesopotamia been cut off by a great rising behind it, Trajan might have suffered the fate of Crassus at Carrhæ. This was the greatest opportunity of the Jews. Trajan, who ultimately reached the Persian Gulf, found himself at once involved in a most dangerous Jewish war.

According to Graetz:—

"Only the Jews . . . under the leadership of the Prince of the Captivity . . . offered resistance to the Roman conqueror. The Babylonian Jews . . . armed themselves as if for a holy war. . . . Nisibis . . . could only be subdued after a lengthy siege. . . . The King of Adiabene . . . fought bravely against Trajan, but was overcome. . . . Hardly had Trajan set out . . . to carry into effect his long-cherished plan of conquering the Jews . . . than the conquered people on the twin rivers [Euphrates and Tigris] fell away. The Jews had a great share in this uprising; they spread anarchy through a great portion of the Roman Empire."

It was at this period that the appalling massacres, recorded by

* Graetz.

Gibbon, and confirmed by Graetz, were perpetrated upon the "unsuspecting natives" in—

"Egypt, Cyrenaica, Lybia, and the island of Cyprus . . . with the idea of shaking off the Roman yoke. . . . Such unanimous action presupposes a concerted plan and a powerful leader. . . . Trajan had to oppose the Jews on three sides, and had they united and mutually supported each other, the colossal Roman Empire would perhaps have received a deadly blow."*

Trajan died in A.D. 117, and was succeeded by Hadrian, who—

"was inclined to be yielding, and appears to have granted the Jews their harmless requests. . . . Jerusalem was to be rebuilt, but as a pagan city. . . . As long as Hadrian remained in Syria,"*

further Jewish revolts, "for which they had probably been long preparing," were postponed.

"Hadrian, lulled into security, only discovered the conspiracy when it broke out at the various points of the Roman Empire, so skilfully had the Roman spies been deceived. . . . The chief hero of the revolt was Bar-Cochiba. . . . It appears that the whole of Judæa, together with Samaria and Galilee, were evacuated by the Romans."

These provinces were reconquered by Severus, selected as the best available general of Rome, and the city of Ælia Capitolina was built on the site of Jerusalem.

Yet another revolt took place in the last year of the Emperor Antoninus Pius, the successor of Hadrian. This was organised in connection with the Parthians, on whose assistance the Jews frequently relied; but it "was soon repressed," and with the end of the long Jewish wars the Roman Empire reached the period of rest which Gibbon has described in well-known phrases.

In the previous pages it has been shown that the Jews at the dawn of the Christian era, possessing large colonies in many parts of the Roman Empire, able to act on a common plan and to make alliances with the enemies of Rome, were nearly successful in wresting the sceptre from the then mistress of the world. If this had happened, all history would have been changed. It is, therefore, most remarkable that these vitally important facts are inadequately treated in our histories. Macaulay's schoolboy would give an excellent account of the Punic Wars; but would make a poor showing of the, as dangerous, "Judæan" Wars which began some two centuries later.

Jewish power was, however, manifested in the affairs of Rome

* Graetz.

long before the sanguinary revolts which ended in the days of Antoninus Pius. It is possible here only to give brief examples of the far-reaching influence exerted by the Jewish people in these long distant times. "The Judæans [in Babylonia] followed the victories of Cyrus with great anxiety."* Babylon was captured by the Persians in B.C. 539, and Cyrus "permitted the Jews to return to their own country, rebuild Jerusalem, and restore the Temple" ** ; but the

"disfavour into which the Judæan nation had fallen with the last Persian king was turned to account by their malevolent neighbours."*

At this early period, therefore, the Jews had come to be regarded with hostility, and they may have helped in the conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great, who,

"by introducing Hellenic culture into Syria and Egypt, had probably more influence on the development of Judaism than any one individual not a Jew by race."†

Soon after the death of Alexander the Macedonian (B.C. 323) his empire was split up into the kingdoms of Macedonia, Syria, and Egypt. The Jews then passed under the rule of the Ptolemies, Macedonian rulers of Egypt, who, after the defeat of Pyrrhus, were in friendly relations with the Romans. Josephus gives an interesting account of the power wielded by one Joseph, who accumulated great wealth under the Ptolemies, and Jews may evidently have reached Rome before the outbreak of the First Punic War. They had been in close contact with Tyre, the metropolis of Carthage, in the time of David (*circ.* B.C. 1050), and they may have assisted the Carthaginians, as did the Greeks. In B.C. 202 they came under the rule of the Macedonian kings of Syria. Antiochus Epiphanes

"attacked Jerusalem (B.C. 169) . . . forced his way into the Temple . . . removing all the treasures. . . . When the bloody persecution of the Judæans had reached a height . . . a change took place. It was brought about by the family . . . of the Maccabees."

Judas Maccabæus recovered Jerusalem in B.C. 165, and was the forerunner of the militant Jewish leaders who challenged the power of Rome. He

"heard of the fame of the Romans, that they were valiant men . . . how they had acquired the mines of silver and gold in Spain."‡

Josephus confirms the Judæo-Roman entente, and states that

*Graetz.

† Jewish Encyclopædia.

‡ 1 Maccabees, 8.

the Senate received the ambassadors of Judas, and made a decree that—

“If any people attack the Jews, the Romans shall assist them. . . . If any people attack the Romans, the Jews shall assist them.”

Jerusalem was nevertheless taken by Pompey in B.C. 63, and Palestine was placed under a Roman Governor, while the Temple was pillaged by Crassus before he invaded Parthia. In the war between Cæsar and Pompey, the Jews supported Cæsar, the democratic leader, and helped to save him when he was besieged at Alexandria, receiving in return many privileges.

Herod, whose father was either a Jew or a Judaised Arab, married a princess of the family of the Maccabees, and was made King of Judæa by Antony, in B.C. 37, displacing the Maccabean dynasty. He became intimately associated subsequently with Augustus and Agrippa, the founders of Imperial Rome, and according to Josephus, when these “two men governed the Roman Empire,”

“Augustus preferred no one to Herod after Agrippa, and Agrippa made no one his greater friend than Herod except Augustus.”

It is certain that in the time of Cicero (B.C. 106-43) the Jews had become a formidable political force in Rome itself. Flaccus having prohibited the Jews from collecting gold in his Province for the Temple and sent it to Rome instead, was promptly attacked for oppressing the Jews, and was defended by Cicero, who recorded his speech in *Pro Flacco*. Graetz thus explains the circumstances :

“The Roman Judæans were intensely interested in this trial, and many of them appeared in Court amongst the audience. The cowardly Cicero was so much afraid of them that he would have liked to speak in a whisper in order to have been heard by the Judges alone, but not by the Judæans, . . . ‘It requires great decision of character,’ he said, ‘to oppose the barbaric and superstitious Judæans for the good of our country, and to show proper contempt towards these seditious people, who invade our public assemblies.’ ”*

“A year later,” writes Graetz, “Cicero found his retribution in banishment . . . and his villas were razed to the ground.”

Thus early was “the fear of the Jews” present even in Republican Rome, and Cicero plainly suggested that they exercised strong political and seditious influences.

* This is a fair rendering of the original Latin in “Pro Flacco.”

These brief historical notes serve to prove that most of our histories require to be rewritten, and that the Jews were a powerful force some time before the Christian era. How far they deflected Roman policy, helped to promote revolts, and contributed, by the methods explained in the Protocols, to the economic downfall and general decadence which led to the Germans and Huns over-running the Empire may yet be revealed. We know enough to have grounds for suspecting more.

The later bids of the Jews for world-power are becoming more clear. Mrs. Webster has thrown much light on their part in the French Revolution,* and Disraeli claimed for them a dominant rôle in the European revolutionary movements of the nineteenth century. Readers of THE PATRIOT will not fail to realise their world-wide activities to-day and the immense impetus given to their schemes by the capture of the resources of Russia. And "cowardly" Ciceros, who would like "to speak in a whisper," or not at all, where Jewish matters are concerned, were never more abundant!

* "World Revolution" (Constable.) "Secret Societies" (Boswell).

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