

Suicide at Masada and in the World of the New Testament

Daniel K. Judd

One of the most problematic issues surrounding the story of Masada is the reported mass suicide of 960 men, women, and children. Assuming that the suicides actually occurred, were they expressions of courage, selfish acts of cowardice, or blind obedience to authoritarian rule? Were the inhabitants of Masada faithful and devout Jews defending their homeland and families, or were they terrorists using political and religious justifications for their selfish deeds? Because the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus are the only primary sources of information concerning the events at Masada, definite answers to these questions are impossible to ascertain. Thus, the intent of this paper is only to provide religious and philosophical background information suggesting possible motives and explanations relevant to the morality of the reported suicides.

Historical and Religious Contexts

Late in the autumn of 63 B.C., the Roman army conquered Jerusalem, ending a nearly one-hundred-year period of Jewish independence.¹ At the beginning of their occupation of Jerusalem, the Romans were “content to rule” through local appointees. However, in A.D. 6, Rome responded to Jewish requests to bring an end to the chaos of Archelaus’s rule and appointed a Roman governor. This more “direct rule,” combined with an increased emphasis on taxation, “led to the first Jewish revolt against Rome.”² A glimpse of these tumultuous times is given in the New Testament writings

of Luke concerning an early Jewish tax protestor, Judas of Galilee: “Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing . . . drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed” (Acts 5:37). Judas the Galilean is identified by Josephus as the founder of a Jewish revolutionary movement that came to be known in later generations as the Sicarii.³ Judas has also been identified as being an ancestor of Eleazar ben Yair, the leader of the people of Masada at the time of their demise.⁴

Understanding the relationships between Judas of Galilee, Eleazar ben Yair, and the Sicarii is essential to understanding the events and suicides at Masada. While some modern scholars and writers have labeled the Sicarii as “patriots” and “freedom fighters,”⁵ Josephus clearly viewed them as robbers and assassins:

It happened that Judea was afflicted by the *robbers*, while all the *villages were set on fire, and plundered* by them. And then it was that the *Sicarii*, as they were called, who were robbers, grew numerous. They made use of small swords . . . but somewhat crooked, and like the Romans *sicæ* [or sickles], as they were called: and from these weapons these robbers got their denomination, and with those weapons they slew a great many.⁶

In addition to being the name used to identify this specific group of revolutionaries, the word *sicarii* also portrays their modus operandi. Sicarii comes from the Latin, *sica*, which means “small dagger.”⁷

In the initial period of their existence, the Sicarii may have been motivated by a zealous desire to live the law of Moses by promoting social equality; however, it is apparent from the historical accounts that the Sicarii adopted terrorist tactics of assassination and arson and in the end resorted to suicide in carrying out their fanatical agenda.⁸ Not only did the Sicarii engage in acts of violence against the Romans, but they also terrorized fellow Jews who willingly submitted to Roman rule. While the Sicarii claimed to be justified in these acts of aggression toward those whom they saw as guilty of treason, Josephus asserted that their accusations were only a cover for their evil deeds: “Now, this [claims of treason against fellow Jews] was in reality no better than a pretence, and a cloak for the barbarity which was made use of by them, and to colour over their own avarice.”⁹

At the beginning of the Jewish War, the Sicarii under the leadership of Menahem (son of Judas of Galilee) seized Masada from a

small post of Roman guards and took over their arsenal of weapons.¹⁰ With these weapons, the Sicarii were able to take over the leadership of the revolutionary forces in Jerusalem. But Menahem was soon killed, and his followers fled back to Masada, where they were then led by Eleazar ben Yair. Josephus records that after the Sicarii fled from Jerusalem to Masada they had little to do with the other Jewish revolutionary factions and did not participate in the defense of Jerusalem. Josephus also wrote that the Sicarii attacked the Jewish settlement of En Gedi (a settlement near Masada) and killed hundreds of people, including women and children.¹¹ These facts support the argument that the Sicarii were more oriented to their own extreme political agenda than toward defending the freedom of the Jewish people as a whole, and to this extent, their suicides should be seen primarily as an act of political desperation rather than a deed motivated by religious principles or objectives.

The Fall of Masada and the Suicide Narrative

Soon after the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in A.D. 70, Masada became the last stronghold of Jewish resistance. In the winter of A.D. 72, Flavius Silva ordered the Roman Tenth Legion to gain control of Masada. One source estimates the Roman forces to be six thousand in number.¹² After a siege of several months, the Romans finally entered the fortress to find 960 of the 967 inhabitants of Masada dead.¹³ Josephus reports that, as the Romans entered the inner confines of Masada,

[they] saw nobody as an enemy, but a terrible solitude on every side, with a fire within the palace, as well as a perfect silence. . . . They [the Romans] came within the palace, and so met with the multitude of the slain, but could take no pleasure in the fact, though it were done to their enemies.¹⁴

As with much of the story of Masada, the accuracy of the information concerning the events surrounding the mass suicide are dependent on the contested, but assumed, reliability of the writings of Josephus.¹⁵ Josephus reports that when Eleazar ben Yair came to the realization that Masada was going to fall to the Romans, he called his most loyal companions around him to propose a plan.¹⁶ An analysis of the first speech attributed to Eleazar

reveals that his initial argument was threefold: (1) Eleazar reasoned that since he and his followers had promised to serve God and not the Romans, God had now given them the right to die in freedom; (2) he asserted that death at their own hands would be a better choice than death or captivity at the hands of the Romans; and (3) he also insisted that killing themselves would be fulfilling God's will as punishment for their sins:

Wherefore, consider how God hath convinced us that our hopes were in vain, by bringing such distress upon us in the desperate state we are now in . . . we are openly deprived by God himself of all hope for deliverance. . . . This was the effect of God's anger against us for our manifold sins, which we have been guilty of in a most insolent and extravagant manner with regard to our own countrymen; the punishments of which let us not receive from the Romans, but from God himself as executed by our own hands.¹⁷

When Eleazar saw that most, but not all, of his followers were swayed by his first speech, he made a second attempt using a different logic. This time his reasoning began with a philosophical perspective that was more consistent with Greek philosophy than Jewish belief:

It is life that is a calamity to men, and not death; for this last affords our souls their liberty, and sends them by a removal into their own place of purity, where they are to be insensible to all sorts of misery; for while souls are tied down to a mortal body, they are partakers of its miseries . . . for the union of what is divine to what is mortal, is unsuitable. . . . Souls, when the body does not distract them, have the sweetest rest.¹⁸

Josephus's account of Eleazar's second speech ends by his returning to the Hebrew "persuasion" that their deaths were necessary because of God's judgments upon them and that death at their own hands was better than death, torture, or slavery at the hands of the Romans:

But put the case that we had been brought up under another persuasion, and taught that life is the greatest good which men are capable of, and that death is a calamity: however, the circumstances we are now in ought to be inducement to us to bear such calamity courageously, since it is by the will of God, and by necessity, that we are to die; for it now appears that God hath made such a decree against the whole Jewish nation. . . . Let us make haste to die bravely. Let us pity ourselves, our children, and our wives, while it is in our own

power to shew pity to them; for we are born to die, as well as those were whom we have begotten. . . . But for abuses, and slavery, and the sight of our wives led away after an ignominious manner, with their children, these are not such evils as are natural and necessary among men.¹⁹

Eleazar also detailed some of the torture his followers could expect at the hands of the Romans:

Some of them have been put upon the rack, and tortured with fire and whippings, and so died. Some have been half devoured by wild beasts, and yet have been reserved alive to be devoured by them a second time, in order to afford laughter and sport to our enemies; and such of those as are alive still, are to be looked on as the most miserable, who being so desirous of death, could not come at it.²⁰

Josephus then reports that toward the end of the final speech “they all cut him [Eleazar] off short, and made haste to do the work.”²¹ Josephus describes the executions of the women and children:

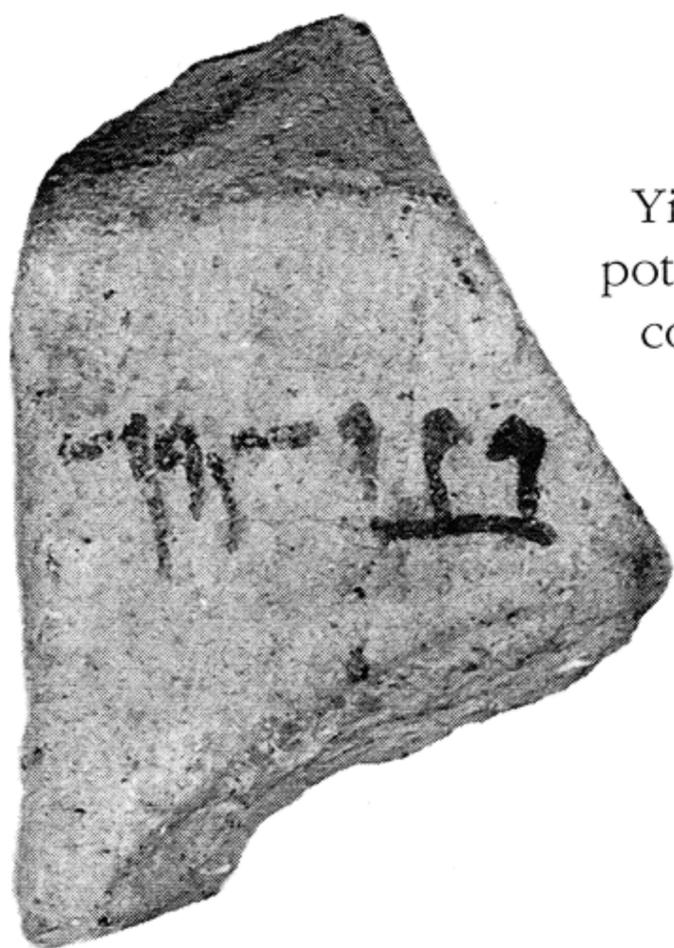
While yet everyone of them still retained the natural passion of love to themselves and their families, because the reasoning they went upon appeared to them to be very just, that they were doing what was best to those that were dearest to them; for the husbands tenderly embraced their wives, and took their children into their arms, and gave the longest parting kisses to them, with tears in their eyes. Yet at the same time did they complete what they had resolved on, as if they had been executed by the hands of strangers. . . . Nor was there at length anyone of these men found that scrupled to act his part in this terrible execution, but everyone of them dispatched his dearest relations. Miserable men indeed were they! whose distress forced them to slay their own wives and children with their own hands.²²

After burning all of their personal possessions, those who yet survived selected ten men to carry out the final execution:

They then chose ten men by lot out of them, to slay all the rest; every one of whom laid himself down by his wife and children on the ground, and threw his arms about them, and they offered their necks to the stroke of those who by lot executed that melancholy office.²³

The ten executioners then cast lots to select the final individual who would in turn slay them. Josephus records:

The nine offered their necks to the executioner, and he who was the last of all took a view of all the other bodies, lest perchance some or



Ostracon from Masada.

Yigael Yadin speculates that this potsherd, which reads “ben Yair,” could be one of the lots spoken of in the account written by Josephus. Yigael Yadin, *Masada: Herod’s Fortress and the Zealots’ Last Stand*, trans. Moshe Pearlman (Jerusalem: Steimatzky’s Agency, 1966), 201.

other among so many that were slain should want his assistance to be quite dispatched, and when he perceived that they were all slain, he set fire to the palace, and with the great force of his hand ran his sword entirely through himself, and fell down dead near to his own relations.²⁴

The Logic of Suicide

Josephus’s report of Eleazar’s arguments for the deaths of himself and his followers are manifold and sometimes contradictory. While this internal tension has led some to question the authenticity of Josephus’s description,²⁵ Eleazar’s use of contradictory Hebrew and Greek thought may be evidence of his desperate willingness to use any argument that would justify his own position and persuade his followers to submit to his desires and die willingly.

Greco-Roman Perspectives. Eleazar may have been aware of several precedents from Greek philosophy and history that would have justified or supported his decision to lead his group to commit suicide. “Greek literature as early as Homer” contains accounts of suicide.²⁶ Some Greek philosophers accepted suicide, but their justifications differed. Zeno believed that suicide was appropriate, but “a person must not kill himself until god sends some necessity

upon him”; however, such a “necessity” could be as minor as a broken finger (a toe in some accounts) that was a sign from god that one’s work was complete.²⁷ On the other hand, Seneca emphasized the “right to die” as evidence that a man is free and cannot be held against his will:

In any slavery the way lies open to freedom. . . . Wheresoever you cast your eyes there lies an end to affliction. Look at that precipice—down it runs the way to freedom. Look at the sea there, the river, the well—at its bottom lies freedom. . . . Are you asking for the road to freedom? Take any vein you like in your body!²⁸

Greco-Roman philosophy has had a profound influence on both Hebrew and Christian theology. One scholar has suggested that the Hellenization of Hebrew and Christian culture brought with it a fascination (if not preoccupation) with suicide.²⁹ How much direct influence these philosophies had on the inhabitants of Masada is unclear, but distinct ideas found in Eleazar’s speeches such as the reported enmity between body and spirit, the freedom gained through death, and the justification of suicide through “necessity” are consistent with Greco-Roman perspectives. While Eleazar’s arguments may have been influenced by Greco-Roman thought, another possibility is that Josephus, in his attempt to recreate the final words of Eleazar, used both Hebrew and Greek arguments in an attempt to appeal to both Jewish and Greco-Roman audiences.

More likely, Eleazar was familiar with numerous instances in the Hellenistic world when men, facing certain defeat and horrible torture, enslavement, or death, voluntarily killed their women and children and either committed suicide or charged hopelessly into certain death in battle. One historian has identified sixteen separate examples of groups under siege (540–35 B.C.) who were reported to have preferred death to surrender or enslavement. In eleven of the sixteen cases, men took their own lives as well as the lives of their wives and children. In the other five cases, the men killed the women and children and then died in battle with the enemy.³⁰

Hebrew Perspectives. Another often-discussed problem in Eleazar’s arguments for suicide is the fact that the taking of one’s life was strongly condemned in Jewish literature.³¹ It is not clear, however, when Jewish thought began to take a strong stand

against suicide in cases such as those faced by the defeated warriors at Masada.

The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) does not contain a specific prohibition against suicide but makes the intent of personal accountability for one's own life clear. The book of Genesis states, "And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting" (NIV, Gen. 9:5). The sixth commandment reads, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13). In addition to the sanctity of life, the Hebrew scriptures also portray a reverence for the body: "Ye are the children of the Lord your God: ye shall not cut yourselves" (Deut. 14:1).

Hebrew scripture contains six recorded incidences of suicide: Abimelech (Judg. 9:54), Samson (Judg. 16:29-30), King Saul and his armor-bearer (1 Sam. 31:4-5; compare 1 Chr. 10:4-5), Ahithophel (2 Sam. 17:23), and Zimri (1 Kgs. 16:18). While the people at Masada might have considered these scriptural incidents of suicide as honorable precedents that might make suicide acceptable under extreme conditions, it is important to note that the majority of the individuals described in these accounts were not faithful to the covenants they had made with God. Abimelech's death was described as God's punishment for his "wickedness" (Judg. 9:56). Samson, while having periods of faithfulness and devotion, was also guilty of serious sins (see Judg. 14:19; 16:1). King Saul, chosen by God to institute the monarchy, was later found guilty of disobedience and lost his divine sanction (1 Sam. 15:22-23). Ahithophel, once King David's respected counselor, eventually rebelled and sought the king's life (2 Sam. 15:12; 17). Zimri became king after murdering his predecessor (1 Kgs. 16:10), and his suicide is described in scripture as punishment for "doing evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kgs. 16:18-19). Of the six recorded incidences of suicide in the Hebrew scriptures, five of the accounts provide ample evidence that the individuals described have been guilty of serious sins (there is no evidence either way concerning Saul's armor-bearer). While Samson, Saul, and Ahithophel demonstrated periods of faithfulness, it appears that each of them died outside their covenants with God. The scriptural evidence suggests that none of these individuals was worthy of emulation—in life or in death.

In the ensuing years, orthodox rabbinic writers took a strong stand against suicide, as is represented in the statement, "One who

destroys oneself wittingly has no share in the world to come.”³² The only exceptions were in cases of *kiddush hashem* (to sanctify God’s name). According to the Talmud, one may accept death when faced with the alternative of being forced to commit idolatry, incest, or murder.³³ Some scholars have asserted this was the case for the inhabitants of Masada, as they were willing to die rather than be forced to live under Roman rule, which they considered to be an act of idolatry.³⁴

Josephus records an incident from his own life that may be more representative of the Hebrew attitude toward suicide in the first century. During the early stages of the Roman-Jewish war, Josephus was the commander of Jewish forces in the town of Jotapata in Galilee. Josephus reports that he saw little hope in continuing to fight against the Roman troops led by Vespasian and thought it best that they surrender. His troops refused, Jotapata eventually fell, and Josephus escaped to a cave where forty of his soldiers were already hiding. By Josephus’s report, the Jewish soldiers favored a mass suicide, but he strongly argued against it:³⁵

O my friends, why are we so earnest to kill ourselves? And why do we set our soul and body, which are such dear companions, at such variance?³⁶ . . . It is a brave thing to die in war; but so that it be according the law of war, by the hand of conquerors. . . . Now, self-murder is a crime most remote from the common nature of all animals, and an instance of impiety against God our Creator. . . . And do you not think that God is very angry when a man does insults what he hath bestowed on him? For from him it is that we have received our being, and we ought to leave it to his disposal to take that being away from us. . . . The souls of those who have acted madly against themselves, are received by the darkest place in Hades.³⁷

The soldiers ignored the counsel of Josephus, cast lots, and executed one another. Only Josephus and one other soldier were left alive. The two of them chose to remain alive as long as possible by delivering themselves up to the Romans.³⁸

The contrast between Josephus and the majority of his soldiers at Jotapata are representative of the differences between most other Jews (such as the Pharisees) and the Sicarii. Josephus did not believe that he had the right to take his own life; in all likelihood, neither did the majority of Jews believe that one had the right to take one’s own life but believed that the right to give and take life

was in the hands of God. Josephus did not regard the acceptance of Roman sovereignty as a sin to be avoided even at the cost of one's life—the Sicarii obviously did.

A New Testament Perspective. While the writings in the New Testament do not have a direct connection to the events of Masada, they represent a contemporary perspective. With respect to suicide, the New Testament contains only one specific incidence—the death of Judas Iscariot:

Then Judas, who had betrayed him [Jesus Christ], when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood. And they said unto him, What is that to us? See thou to it; thy sins be upon thee. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went, and hanged himself on a tree. And straightway he fell down, and his bowels gushed out, and he died. (JST, Matt. 27:3-6).³⁹

In addition to Luke's account of the Apostle Paul preventing the "keeper of the prison" from committing suicide (see Acts 16:26-31), the New Testament also contains a poignant account of Paul's own thoughts of death:

For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. (Philip. 1:23-26; italics added)

Paul's words show that he was willing to submit his own will to the needs of others and ultimately to the will of God. He was willing to live for God and neighbor as opposed to die for self. Early Christian theology was compatible with its Hebrew counterpart but was in direct conflict with much of Greek philosophy and popular morality in the Roman empire.

Concluding Thoughts

One modern philosopher has written, "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide."⁴⁰ Not only is this comment representative of the present philosophical debate over suicide, but it is also indicative of the ideological conflicts concerning the events of Masada.⁴¹

The evidence suggests that although the Sicarii at Masada were faithful and devout Jews⁴² they may have taken their devotion beyond what God had commanded. In the words of the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob, the Jews as a people were guilty of “looking beyond the mark” (Jacob 4:14). Perhaps the intentions of the Jews of Masada to live a life faithful to God may have become distorted into a fanatical desire for death. The story of the inhabitants of Masada may be, if the historical sources are accurate, an important commentary on the consequences of rejecting God. The following biblical prophecy of Moses speaks about the consequences of such a rejection:

The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young. . . . And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. . . . And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the Lord thy God. (Deut. 28:49-50, 52, 62)

Latter-day Saint literature also provides insight into what may have been the early LDS perspective on the events at Masada. The July 15, 1841, edition of the official Latter-day Saint publication *Times and Seasons* included an article concerning the events of Masada. Editors Don Carlos Smith (Joseph Smith’s brother) and Robert B. Thompson wrote the following note preceding the article:

The following thrilling account of the self devotedness of the Jews, scarcely has its equal on the pages of history. *Although such a course must be condemned*, it shows their attachment to their ancient religion, the God of their fathers, and also their abhorrence of the Romans.⁴³

While acknowledging the drama of Masada, the editors condemn the actions of Eleazar and his followers. In the body of the article, the editors also describe Eleazar as possessing “most stubborn fanaticism.”⁴⁴

While the evidence suggests that the suicide at Masada was unjust and possibly the consequence of fanatical religious zeal, there are no definite answers concerning the morality of the motives of

the individual men, women, and children who died. For some, their deaths may have been acts of selfishness, for others, their dying may have been a type of martyrdom—only an omniscient God can judge. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

While one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard. . . . He is a wise Lawgiver, and will judge all men, not according to the narrow, contracted notions of men, but, ‘according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil,’ or whether these deeds were done in England, America, Spain, Turkey, or India. . . . We need not doubt the wisdom and intelligence of the Great Jehovah; He will award judgment or mercy to all nations according to their several deserts, their means of obtaining intelligence, the laws by which they are governed, the facilities afforded them of obtaining correct information, and His inscrutable designs in relation to the human family; and when the designs of God shall be made manifest, and the curtain of futurity be withdrawn, we shall all of us eventually have to confess that the Judge of all the earth has done right.⁴⁵

Daniel K. Judd is Assistant Professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University.

NOTES

¹Peter Schäfer, “The Hellenistic and Maccabean Periods,” in *Israelite and Judaeon History*, ed. John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 604.

²David L. Barr, *New Testament Story: An Introduction*, 2d ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1995), 281.

³Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, in *The Complete Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995), 7.7.1.

⁴Arthur J. Droge and James D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 92.

⁵Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Myth-making in Israel* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 180.

⁶Josephus, *Antiquities*, in *The Complete Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995), 20.8.10; italics added.

⁷Ben-Yehuda, *Masada Myth*, 35.

⁸David Rhoads, "Zealots," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:1048.

⁹Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 8.1.

¹⁰Josephus, *The Jewish War*, trans. Geoffrey Arthur Williamson, rev. E. Mary Smallwood (New York: Penguin, 1981), 2.408, 433-34.

¹¹Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 4.7.2.

¹²Christopher Hawkes, "The Roman Siege of Masada," *Antiquity* 3, no. 10 (1929): 195-213.

¹³Josephus recorded that there were two women and five children who had concealed themselves in underground caverns during the events of Masada. These survivors were reported to be the source of information concerning the events that transpired. See Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 7.9.1.

¹⁴Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 7.9.2 .

¹⁵Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Masada: Literary Tradition, Archaeological Remains, and the Credibility of Josephus," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33, no. 1-2 (1982): 385-405.

¹⁶Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 7.8.6.

¹⁷Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 7.8.6.

¹⁸Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 7.8.7.

¹⁹Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 7.8.7.

²⁰Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 7.8.7.

²¹Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 7.9.1.

²²Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 7.9.1.

²³Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 7.9.1.

²⁴Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 7.9.1.

²⁵Cohen, "Masada," 396-97.

²⁶Arthur J. Droge, "Suicide," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:226.

²⁷Droge and Tabor, *Noble Death*, 31.

²⁸Lucius Seneca, "On Anger," in *Seneca/Moral and Political Essays*, ed. and trans. John M. Cooper and J. F. Procopé (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.15.3-4.

²⁹Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933), 197-98.

³⁰Cohen, "Masada," 386-88.

³¹Leon D. Hankoff, "Judaic Origins of the Suicide Prohibition," in *Suicide: Theory and Clinical Aspects*, ed. Leon D. Hankoff (Littleton, Mass.: PSG Publishing, 1979), 3-20.

³²Reuven P. Bulka, "Rabbinic Attitudes towards Suicide," *Midstream: A Monthly Jewish Review* 25, no. 8 (1979): 44.

³³Matthew Schwartz and Kalman J. Kaplan, "Judaism, Masada, and Suicide: A Critical Analysis," *Omega* 25, no. 2 (1992): 127-32.

³⁴I. Jacobs, "Eleazar Ben Yair's Sanction for Martyrdom," *Journal for the Study of Judaism: In the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 13, nos. 1-2 (1982): 183-86.

³⁵Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 3.8.1, 4.

³⁶Notice the distinctly Hebrew theology of the compatibility of the body and the spirit.

³⁷Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 3:8:5.

³⁸Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 3.8.6-7.

³⁹One scholar asserts that the Greek word *Iscaiot* becomes *sicarius* in Latin. See Neil Elliot, review of *Judas Iscaiot and the Myth of Jewish Evil*, by Hyam Maccoby, *Bible Review*, 10 (February 1994): 14-15.

⁴⁰Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Random House, 1955), 3, quoted in Droge and Tabor, *Noble Death*, 17.

⁴¹Droge and Tabor, *Noble Death*, 17.

⁴²Yadin, *Masada*, 164-67.

⁴³"Fall of Herodio [*sic*]—Machaerus—Masada—Fate of Josephus—Agrippa—Bernice," *Times and Seasons* 2 (July 15, 1841): 476; italics added.

⁴⁴"Fall of Herodio," 477.

⁴⁵Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 218.