

# Damnably Defiant: Archaeology, Theology, and the Siege of Masada

עיון ארכאולוגי וטאולוגי בענין המצור על מצדה

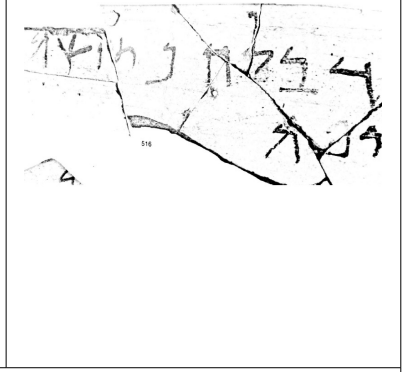
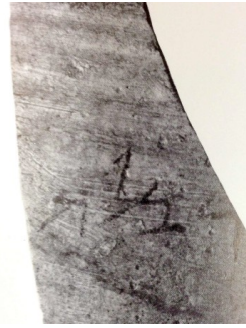
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## Archaeology

### 1) Herod's Stores and Armory

All these [foodstuff stored by Herod] Eleazar, when he with his Sicarii became through treachery master of the fortress, found in perfect condition and no whit inferior to good recently laid in. (Josephus, *Judean War*, 7.297 – ca. 79 CE)

At this time a certain Menahem son of Judas...took his acquaintances and withdrew to Masada. There, after he broke open the armory of King Herod and fully armed the different bandits as well as the commoners...he returned to Jerusalem... (Josephus, *Judean War*, 2.433-4)



### 2) Roman Assault on Masada

...In addition a sixty-cubit tower was constructed entirely cased in iron, from which the Romans by volleys of missiles from numerous quick-fireres and ballistae quickly beat off the defenders on the ramparts and prevented them from showing themselves. (Josephus, *Judean War*, 7.309)



### 3) Lots

...Then, having chosen by lot ten of their number to dispatch the rest, they laid themselves down each beside his prostrate wife and children, and, flinging their arms around them, offered their throats in readiness for the executants of the melancholy office. (Josephus, *Judean War*, 7.395)



## Literary-Theological

### 1) *The Cause of Destruction* (written retrospectively, ca. 79 CE)

I shall faithfully recount the actions of both combatants; but in my reflections on the vents I cannot conceal my private sentiments, nor refuse to give my personal sympathies scope to bewail my country's misfortunes. For, that it owed its ruin to civil strife (*stasis*), and that it was the Jewish tyrants (*turannoi*) who drew down upon the holy temple the unwilling hands of the Romans and the conflagration, is attested by Titus Caesar himself, who sacked the city... (Josephus, *Judean War*, 1.10)

### 2) *Rise of the Sicarii* (ca. 52-59 CE; procuratorship of Felix)

Now when the country was cleared, a different type of bandit (*leiston*) sprang up in Jerusalem, the so-called *Sicarii*, murdering people in the middle of the city in broad daylight. Especially during the festivals they would mix with the crowd, hiding small daggers in their garments, and stab their opponents... And so Jonathan the high priest was the first to be slain by them, but after him many were done away with each day. The fear was worse than the misfortunes because hour by hour each person expected to die, just as in battle. (Josephus, *Judean War*, 2.254-7)

### 3) *Sicarii support Menahem son of Judas* (ca. 64 - 66 CE; eve of Revolt)

At this time a certain Menahem son of Judas – the one called the Galilean, a most formidable sophist who had berated the Judeans back in the time of Quirinius [legate governor of Syria, 6 CE] because they were subjecting themselves to the Romans after God – took his acquaintances and **withdrew to Masada**. There, after he broke open the armory of King Herod... he returned to Jerusalem quite like a king (*basileus*) and, after becoming commander of the civil strife (*stasis*), he began organizing the siege [of the loyalists in the palace of the Upper City]... Both the reduction of the secure places and the death of the high priest Ananias deluded Menahem to the point of savagery: thinking that he had no rival in affairs, he was an unbearable tyrant (*turannos*). (Josephus, *Judean War*, 2.433-4, 442)

### 4) The Raid at *En Gedi*

The so-called *Sicarii* had captured [Masada] but up to this time did nothing more than make raids in the surrounding areas to get supplies. For because they were afraid, they held back from wide-scale robbery. But when they learned that the Roman army was not moving... they set upon greater crimes. During the Feast of Passover – when the Jews celebrate the saving deeds at that time when they put aside slavery to the Egyptians... - at night they slipped by those in the way and overran a small town called Engaddi. They scattered and drove out of town those who were able to defend it before they could grab their weapons and gather together, but they killed those less able to flee: over 700 women and children. Then, after plundering the homes and gathering the ripest of the crops, they took them back to Masada... (Josephus, *Judean War*, 4.398-405).

### 5) *Who Conquered Masada?*

Then, suddenly changing direction just as by divine providence, a south wind blew full force in the opposite direction against the wall, and now it was burning through and through... The Romans, thus blessed by God's aid, returned rejoicing to their camp, with the determination of attacking the enemy on the morrow... (Josephus, *Judean War*, 7.318-9)

### 6) *Eleazar's 1<sup>st</sup> Speech*

Maybe, indeed, we ought from the very first – when having chosen to assert our liberty... - we ought, I say, to have read God's purpose and to have recognized that the Jewish race, once beloved of Him, had been doomed to perdition. (Josephus, *Judean War*, 7.327-8)

7) Eleazar's 2<sup>nd</sup> Speech

Do not attach to the blame to yourselves, nor the credit to the Romans, that this war with them has been the ruin of us all; for it was not their might that brought these things to pass, but the intervention of some more powerful cause has afforded them the semblance of victory. (Josephus, *Judean War*, 7.360).