

Were the Galileans “religious Jews” or “ethnic Judeans?”

Markus Cromhout (Johannesburg)¹

Research Associate: Faculty of Theology
University of Pretoria

Abstract

This article focuses on an investigation into the ethnic identity of first-century Galileans. Its aim is to argue that the Galileans were not descendents of northern Israelites but were mostly descendents of “Jews” who came to live in the region during the Hasmonean expansion. The article demonstrates that this thesis is supported by Josephus and also by archaeological evidence. From the perspective of this thesis, the article contends that the term “Jew” does not apply to Galileans. First-century Galileans should rather be understood as “ethnic Judeans”.

1. INTRODUCTION

Who were the Galileans in the first century CE? The nature of their identity, needless to say, is important to various aspects of New Testament scholarship. Galilee was the heartbeat of Jesus’ ministry, and many, if not most of his initial followers, came from this region. What is important therefore is how the people of Galilee related to Judeans/“Jews” and Jerusalem in the south; was their culture similar or different? Was the culture from Judea a foreign import, or was it part of their cultural heritage? Were they descendents of Northern Israelites, a hybrid of various peoples, “Jews”, or perhaps, more accurately, Judeans (in the ethnic-cultural sense)?

It can be mentioned that the situation of Galilee was very different in the early history of Israel. Originally it was the territory of the tribes of Naphtali, Zebulun and probably Issachar as well (Jdg 5:7-21). In time they became subordinated to the monarchy and Temple in Jerusalem, and after Solomon’s

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death (931 BCE), became part of the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Ki 12), although there was persistent rebellion against kingly rule (Horsley 1995:23-25). What is of critical importance is what happened to these tribes after the conquest of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser in 733/2 BCE. Did many of these Israelites remain behind and survive across the generations until the first century CE?

Two main streams of scholarship will be investigated here. On the one hand there is the view that Galileans were descendents of northern Israelites. A recent advocate of this view is Richard Horsley and we will interact with his work on this perspective. On the other hand, there is the view that the Galileans were “Jews”, being descendents of those who came to live in the region during the Hasmonean expansion to the north. Working our way through these two approaches, it will become clear that the second view is better supported, by both Josephus and archaeological evidence, in that the Galileans – at least the vast majority of them – were descendents of people who relocated to Galilee from Judea. The second view also has a weakness however. It will be argued that the implication of the second view is that Galileans should no longer be referred to or be understood as (religious) “Jews”, but rather as (ethnic) *Judeans*. Following recent voices on this issue and on the proper translation of Ἰουδαῖος, we should discard the terms “Jews” (and “Judaism”) with regards to the people of Judea, the Diaspora, and Galilee as well, since these terms are anachronistic and misleading for the historical situation in question. Understanding Galileans therefore as ethnic Judeans would be an important analytical adjustment in more ways than one. But let us first turn our attention to the argument in favour of Galileans being descendents of northern Israelites.

2. THE GALILEANS AS DESCENDANTS OF NORTHERN ISRAELITES

Horsley (1995, 1996) is one scholar in particular who understands the people of Galilee in our period as descendants of northern Israelites. He is aware of surface surveys (see further below) that seem to demonstrate that after the campaigns of Tiglath-pileser III, Lower Galilee was devastated and that virtually the entire population was deported. “Yet continuity of the Israelite population seems far more likely, despite the fragmentary evidence and often inferential interpretation on which the hypothesis is based” (Horsley 1995:26).

Horsley argues that the Assyrians primarily deported skilled scribes, artisans and military, as well as the ruling families and/or royal officers of a given region. The majority of the peasant population was normally left behind. The same would have occurred in Galilee. Horsley goes further, however, and suggests the people deported from Galilee would have been Syrian officers

and their dependents, as Galilee and much of Israel was under Syrian control (cf 1 Ki 15:17-21; 2 Ki 10:32-33; 13:3, 7, 22). So Horsley argues that the vast majority of the (northern-) Israelite peasantry would have been left behind.

Horsley continues by constructing a picture of a separate historical development of Galilee from Judeans in the south and Israelites in the central hill country until it came to be part of the Hasmonean, and eventually Roman political system (Horsley 1995:27-157). Throughout this period, so Horsley suggests, the Israelites of Galilee would have cultivated their own oral traditions. Josephus also ordinarily distinguishes between “the Galileans” and “the Judeans”, and in certain instances he even indicates that the Galileans were a separate *ethnos* from the Judeans (War 2.510; 4.105).² In the time of the Hasmonean expansion, they were subjected “to the laws of the Judeans”, but even long after this annexation there is evidence that the distinctive Galilean traditions and customs continued. But kinship and shared traditions would have been factors in the incorporation of Galileans under the Hasmonean-Judean Temple state. Horsley (1995:50-51) argues that as

descendants of northern Israelite tribes the inhabitants of Galilee would have shared with the Judean temple-state traditions such as the exodus story, the Mosaic covenant (including the sabbath), stories of independent early Israel prior to the Solomonic monarchy and its temple, and certain traditions akin to some of those subsumed in the Judean Torah and early sections of the Deuteronomic history (including circumcision, ancestor legends, victory songs) ... Nevertheless, even as descendants of Israelites, the Galileans would have found “the laws of the Judeans” different from their own indigenous customs and traditions ... [T]hey had undergone more than eight centuries of separate development.

So the Judean Temple, its dues, and the role of the high priest was something foreign to the Galileans and was superimposed on their own customs. This means that for the Galileans to have been incorporated into the Judean Temple-state, it would have required an intense program of social engineering. “For that to have happened, the officers or retainers of the Hasmonean government ... would have had to undertake a program of resocialization of the Galileans into the Judean laws as well as a detailed application of the Judean laws to local community life”.

But Horsley continues. “A survey of the subsequent history of the Hasmonean regime and its governing activities suggests that little such effort could have been made in Galilee” (Horsley 1995:51, 52). Indeed, even the

² In his other major work on Galilee, Horsley (1996:27) actually states that ordinarily “Josephus makes clear distinctions between the Galileans and Idumeans and Judeans as separate *ethnoi* or peoples.”

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period after Hasmonean rule would not have been conducive for “the law of the Judeans” to take a firm hold over Galileans. The Galileans continued to assert their independence from the principal institutions of Jerusalem rule such as the revolt that occurred after Herod’s death. Even during the Great Revolt, high priestly-Pharisaic council in Jerusalem through Josephus commanded little authority in Galilee. Horsley (1995:156) basically concluded that there is little evidence to indicate that either the Judean Temple-state, or the Temple and Torah “established a defining importance for life in Galilee during the time of Jerusalem rule.”

3. GALILEE AFTER THE ASSYRIAN CONQUEST

The critical issue is what happened in Galilee after the campaigns of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III in 733-32 BCE. Were there indeed some northern Israelites that continued living in the area, as Horsley suggests? 2 Kings 15 claims that Tiglath-pileser III conquered Hazor, as well as Gilead, Galilee and the land of Naphtali, and led the population into exile in Assyria (2 Ki 15:29). Fragmentary Assyrian texts offer the complete names of Hannathon and Merom, and give four numbers of people being exiled from Galilee (625, 650, 656, and 13 520) (Reed 2000:28). This evidence in itself is ambiguous, but a recent surface survey of Lower Galilee, “when coupled with the results of stratigraphic excavations in Upper and Lower Galilee, paint a picture of a totally devastated and depopulated Galilee in the wake of the Assyrian campaigns of 733/732 BCE” (Reed 2000:29; cf 1999:90-95). The survey of Lower Galilee found no evidence of occupation from the seventh to sixth centuries (Iron Age III) at any of the eighty or so sites inspected.³

Surveys also illustrate that even Upper Galilee was not spared by the Assyrians. This leads to the conclusion that Galilee was depopulated in the wake of the Assyrian conquest. This appears to be the assumption of Josephus as well (Ant 9.235), yet the Tanak does suggest that some people

³ The chronological periods employed by archaeologists and historians are as follows (cf Reed 2000:21):

Iron II	1000 – 733/32 BCE
Iron III	733/32 – 586 BCE
Persian	586 – 332 BCE
Early Hellenistic	332 – 167 BCE
Late Hellenistic	167 – 63 BCE
Early Roman	63 BCE – 135 CE
Middle Roman	135 – 250 CE
Late Roman	250 – 363 CE

did remain behind. It is said in 2 Chr 30:10-11 that in the time of Hezekiah (ca 727-699 BCE), members of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. Horsley's (1996:23) objection that the sites where the surface surveys have been conducted were not subjected to systematic excavations is legitimate, although other stratigraphic excavations conducted appear to confirm that Galilee was abandoned in the seventh and sixth centuries. Conflagration layers dated to the end of the eighth century are found at many sites in and around Galilee. A few sherds have been found at Gush Halav, otherwise the evidence is limited to a few structures in Hazor (the Huleh Valley) and Tel Chinnereth (north-western shore of the Sea of Galilee) which were probably Assyrian military or administrative buildings. But there is no evidence for a surrounding population (Reed 2000:30-31).

An Assyrian-style decorated bronze cup further points to an Assyrian presence in Kefar Kanna (Chancey 2002:33). Generally, however, Reed (2000:32) explains there

was simply an insufficient amount of material culture in Galilee following the campaigns of Tiglath-pileser III for serious consideration of any cultural continuity between the Iron Age and subsequent periods ... There are no villages, no hamlets, no farmsteads, nothing at all indicative of a population that could harvest the Galilean valleys for the Assyrian stores, much less sustained cultural and religious traditions through the centuries.

In contrast with the view of Horsley, Reed argues that the above picture is in keeping with Assyrian policy which often deported *all classes of people* to Assyria or other regions for agricultural labour. Reed (2000:34) concludes that the position of Horsley that an Israelite village culture spanned the Iron Age to Roman periods "must be abandoned". Chancey (2002:34) refers to various texts that assume the presence of Israelites in Galilee (2 Chr 30:10-11; 34:6; 2 Ki 21:19; 23:36) in addition to the archaeological evidence for Assyrians, but he too concludes that for the most part Galilee was unpopulated. Claims of a continuity between the pre-Assyrian conquest and the Second Temple population "are difficult to maintain" (Chancey 2002:34). Archaeological evidence further illustrates that Galilee was resettled during the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods, but even here the evidence is limited and the ethnic identity of the people is difficult to determine (Reed 2000:35-39). Josephus' description of John Hyrcanus' (134-104 BCE) defeat of Scythopolis may suggest that Galilee was open for resettlement, which implies that no other major defensible Gentile sites were present in Galilee, or alternatively, that it had a small population (*Ant* 13.275-81; *War* 1.64-66). Chancey (2002:36) similarly argues that the interior of Galilee "was still relatively sparsely populated on the eve of the Maccabean campaigns."

4. THE SETTLEMENT OF GALILEE IN THE LATE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

We now move ahead to the history of Galilee during the Late Hellenistic period, particularly to that of the Maccabean military campaigns. According to 1 Maccabees, news came from Galilee that Galilean Israelites were persecuted by people from Ptolemais, Tyre, Sidon and *πᾶσαν Γαλιλαίαν ἄλλοφύλων*, “all Galilee of the foreigners” (1 Mac 5:14-22).⁴ It is said that the Judeans deliberated on how they should help “their brothers” (τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς αὐτῶν; 1 Mac 5:16). 1 Maccabees explains that Judas sent Simon to help these Galileans and defeated the Gentiles with three thousand men. The people of Galilee, but evidently not all of them (cf Chancey 2002:41), were brought back to Judea (1 Mac 5:23), although Horsley (1995:40; but see 243) expresses doubt as to the historical veracity of this incident.

Josephus in describing this incident actually writes that Judas sent Simon to go and help the Ἰουδαῖοι in Galilee (*Ant* 12.332, 334). Around the same time it is said that the Ἰουδαῖοι on the borders of Gilead fled into cities of Galilee (*Ant* 12.336), suggesting Galilee could function as a safe refuge.

It could well be that these Galileans helped by Simon settled in the area sometime after the Babylonian exile. Gamla, located in the Golan Heights, was resettled in 150 BCE after being uninhabited for centuries. Syon (1992) conjectures that the settlers of Gamla were “Jews” from Babylon and we may infer a similar situation for the people of Galilee (Josephus, however, speaks of Gamla’s conquest by Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE); (*War* 1.103-5; *Ant* 13.393-97).

1 Maccabees 11:63-74 and Josephus (*Ant* 13.158-62) relate that later on Demetrius III encamped at Kedesh in the western part of Upper Galilee (ca 144 BCE). Josephus (*Ant* 13.154) specifically says that it was Demetrius’ intention to draw Jonathan to Galilee, as the latter would not allow the Galileans, “who were his own people, to be attacked”. Jonathan in response attacked the forces of Demetrius twice; once in the plain of Hazor in Upper Galilee pursuing them back to Kedesh, and at Hammath in Lebanon (1 Mac 11:24ff). If these sources are trustworthy, not all the people of Galilee were

⁴ *Γαλιλαία ἄλλοφύλων* also appears in LXX Joel 4:4. Along with 1 Maccabees 5:15, this phrase refers to the coastal regions that surrounded Galilee which were dominated by Gentiles. In the LXX, *ἄλλοφυλος* is frequently used to translate “Philistine”, although literally it means “foreigner”, and was later used for “Gentile” (e.g. *Ant* 1.338; 4.183; *War* 5.194; *Ac* 10:28) (Chancey 2002:37-39). This phrase is probably an allusion to *גּוֹיִם הַלֵּיל* (*galil ha-goyim*), “circle of the peoples”, in Isaiah 9:1 (*Γαλιλαία τῶν ἐθνῶν* in LXX *Is* 8:23). According to Horsley (1995:20), “circle of the peoples” was likely “a reference to the ‘peoples,’ ‘city-states,’ and other rulers who surrounded and competed for political-economic domination in the area”. When it comes to the region of Galilee itself, the Hebrew term *ha-galil* was probably a shortening of *galil ha-goyim*. “Galilee of the Gentiles” occurs very rarely in ancient literature and the single word “Galilee” was the region’s common name (Chancey 2002:170-172).

evacuated by Simon. And Josephus, when you look at his overall descriptions of the Maccabeans and their activities in this region, appears to have understood the Galileans to be of similar ethnic stock to those living in Judea.

It was much later when the Hasmoneans took actual control of northern Palestine, especially referring here to their campaign against the Itureans. Horsley (1995:36) explains that the Itureans, who were also in the process of expanding their territory, extended their control over much of Galilee, Gaulanitis, Auranitis, and Batanea towards the latter part of the second century BCE. It is said that Aristobulus I (104-103 BCE) “made war on the Itureans and acquired a good deal of their territory for Judea and compelled the inhabitants, if they wished to remain in the country, to be circumcised and to live in accordance with the law of the Judeans.” Josephus here is also informed by Strabo (who follows Timagenes), who says that Aristobulus “brought over to [the Judeans] a portion of the Iturean nation” (*Ant* 13.318-19). According to Horsley (1995:41), the “territory acquired for Judea” must have been (part of) Galilee. But were there Itureans based in northern Galilee? Josephus does not specify Galilee as the locale and the archaeological evidence does not support the presence of Itureans in Upper Galilee, their settlements being limited to the Hermon Range and the Lebanon Range and the northern Golan. According to Reed (2000:38-39, 54) this means that the conversion of the Itureans is not an important factor for assessing the ethnicity of the Galileans.

In this scenario Horsley suggests an alternative interpretation, however, in that Josephus might be “correcting” his source(s) Strabo-Timagenes who assumed that Galilee was Iturean because it was ruled by Itureans. “Josephus’ ‘correction’ distinguishes between ‘the inhabitants ... in the land’ (*chora*) and their previous rulers, ‘the Itureans,’ on whom Aristobulus made war and from whom he wrested territory for Judea” (Horsley 1995:41). Building on the supposition that the Galileans were basically descendents of northern Israelites, Horsley subsequently understands the passage of Josephus (*Ant* 13.318-19) in that the Galileans were “subjected” in a political-economic-religious sense to the Hasmonean high priesthood in Jerusalem. The requirement of “(re-)circumcision” – what this means is not clear – for Galileans “is comprehensible as a sign of being joined to the [Judean] ‘body-politic’” and so the Hasmoneans “were now requiring peoples of subjected areas to accept new laws, the laws of the Judeans” (Horsley 1995:48, 49).

It is hard to detect any “correction” on the part of Josephus to his source(s). If this passage is relevant to a Hasmonean takeover of Galilee it might well be that it was relevant to some *Gentiles* that lived in Galilee (cf Horsley 1995:243-44). Chancey (2002:43-44, 47), who states that no archaeological finds indicate a massive influx of Itureans into Galilee, suggests that the Galilean population was a matrix of some Itureans,

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Phoenicians, and “Jews” (be they northern Israelites or more recent immigrants). Based on his analysis, it is possible that the already circumcised Itureans who chose to remain behind subjected themselves to Hasmonean rule. Phoenicians and peoples of other Gentile stock were compelled to undergo circumcision, though many, based on the archaeological evidence chose to leave. The “Jews” presumably welcomed Hasmonean rule.

Yet, the question must remain: Did the campaign against the Itureans have anything to do with Galilean territory? Josephus speaks of Hyrcanus (134-104 BCE) allowing Alexander (Jannaeus) to be brought up in Galilee (Ant 13.322) to supposedly prevent him from becoming the future heir. Does this suggest that Galilee was already under the control of the Hasmoneans? According to Freyne (1999:52-53) Josephus does not give information on the Hasmonean expansion into Galilee, and the “Judaization” of Itureans used to account for the event has no adequate basis in either the literary or archaeological evidence.

The above text of Josephus and the various interpretations that are offered are inconclusive in of themselves. Simplifying matters is that who the original population was in Galilee is probably not that important as what occurred when the Hasmoneans took over the region. As already mentioned, investigations of Galilee suggest that the area was thinly resettled during the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods, after the bulk or all of the inhabitants had been deported by the Assyrians. The archaeological evidence for the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods, however, paint a different picture. It would appear that during the period of Hasmonean expansion the region began to experience an increase in sites and overall population. According to Reed (2000:40-41):

The vast majority of stratigraphically excavated sites from the Roman-Byzantine Period contain their earliest recoverable strata, that is to say the earliest architecture and first significant pottery assemblage, from the Late Hellenistic Period or first century BCE. This is the case at Capernaum, Hammath Tiberias, Horvat Arbel, Yodefat, Khirbet Shema, Meiron, Nazareth, and Sepphoris ... The population of Galilee continued to increase through the Early Roman period, and several stratigraphically excavated sites reveal initial settlement around the turn of the millennium or in the first century C.E. This is the case at Beth Shearim, Nabratein, Chorazin, and of course, Herod Antipas’s Tiberias.

The numismatic evidence is also quite instructive in that beginning in the early first century BCE, a significant amount of Hasmonean, particularly Jannaeus, coins were used by the people of Galilee, in addition to Tyrian coinage. This means that Galilee was economically and politically orientated towards Judea

and that Galilee's population growth was connected to Hasmonean policies (Reed 2000:41-43; Chancey 2002:46).

Overall, the Hasmonean expansion northwards to Galilee must have been part of restoration hopes and the "greater Israel" ideology as encountered in Ezekiel 40-48. The Tanak relates that the northern tribes failed to occupy the territories allotted to them (Jos 13:4-5; 11:8; cf Jdg 3:3). When Jonathan campaigned in the north against Demetrius, he went as far as Hammath, situated on the ideal border of the "greater Israel". Freyne (2004:79) explains: "What the northern tribes had failed to accomplish, Jonathan, like a new Joshua, was achieving by military prowess in the name of reclaiming the allotted land". Eupolemus, akin to Ezekiel, held hopes for an enlarged land. Combined with the military exploits of the Maccabees as set out in 1 Maccabees, Freyne (2004:79) argues that these samples of writers "indicate that the notion of 'the land remaining' was highly pertinent to the thinking and ideological legitimation of the Hasmonean expansion ...".

The Phoenicians to the north, and Rome's advance in the east, however, made it impossible to realise the ideal boundaries as articulated by Ezekiel (Freyne 2001:301; 2004:80). But this land ideology, combined with the archaeological evidence for a depopulated Galilee, has led Freyne (2004:62; 1990:73-74) himself to abandon his earlier position (Freyne 1988:170) of a continued northern Israelite presence in Galilee, and says that by

the first century CE the successors of these Hasmonean settlers constituted the bulk of Galilean Jews, even if other elements, Jewish and non-Jewish, had entered the mix as a result of the conquests and rule of Herod the Great and his son, Antipas. It is important to acknowledge, therefore, contrary to several modern claims about Galilean opposition to Jerusalem, that there was a strong attachment to the mother-city, its temple and customs, among Galilean Jews of Jesus' day.

(Freyne 2004:82)

5. THE CULTURAL CONTINUITY BETWEEN JUDEA AND GALILEE

What do the archaeological excavations in Galilee tell us about its people's ethnic identity in the Early Roman period? Importantly, the "Galilean's ethnic identity in the first century can be best determined by examining the material culture inside domestic or private space, since it indicates the populace's behavior and selection of artefacts". Reed (2000:44) continues by saying that the "archaeological artifacts found in Galilean domestic space are remarkably similar to those of Judea". Indeed there are four indicators pointing to a "Jewish" religious identity: 1) the chalk or soft limestone vessels, 2) stepped

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pools or *miqva'ot*, 3) secondary burial with ossuaries in *loculi* tombs, and 4) bone profiles that lack pork (Reed 2000:44-51; 1999:95-102). The stone vessels indicate a concern for purity as the Mishnah prescribes that vessels made of stone can not contract impurity (m.Kel 10:1). Stone vessels are ubiquitous in Jerusalem and Judea, in Galilee and the Golan.

Reina, a village north of Galilee, has also been identified as a centre of production for limestone measuring cups and other vessels (Chancey 2002:68). The stepped pools similarly indicate a concern for ritual purity.⁵ Of the 300 plus *miqva'ot* discovered so far in Palestine (Sanders 1992:222-229), they are most frequent in Judea, Galilee and Golan, but only a few have been found along the coast and are basically absent in Samaria. These two indicators, along with secondary burial in *kokhim* or *loculi* tombs were distinctively “Jewish”. The absence of pork in the bone profile is not evidence for “Jewish/Judean” (as opposed to northern Israelite) ethnicity in itself, but when combined with the other indicators they form strong evidence for cultural continuity between Judea and Galilee. The archaeological profile of private space of sites outside Galilee and Golan also lack the four religious-ethnic indicators discussed above. The conclusions for the ethnic identity of Galileans seem to be self-explanatory. So the settlement of Galilee during the Hasmonean period in the first century BCE and the Galilean material culture which match that of Judea, Reed (2000:53) explains

essentially rules out the possibility that Galileans were descendants of either [northern] Israelites or Itureans. Because of the evidence within domestic space, Hasmonean rule in Galilee should not be construed as a political-economic or administrative veneer over an indigenous Galilean population; wherever archaeologists have excavated, Jewish religious indicators permeate Galilean domestic space in the Early Roman period.

This archaeological profile corroborates the understanding that it is more likely that Judeans colonised the Galilee during the Hasmonean expansion (cf

⁵ According to Kloppenborg (2000:231-34, 257), *miqva'ot* in Galilee and its environs were restricted to places of priestly settlement, a few private homes, synagogues (e.g. Gamla and Chorazin) and sites identified with olive oil production (e.g. Mansur el-Aqeb, Gamla and Yodefah). Galileans resisted or ignored an extension of purity practices. Chancey (2002:118) lists Sepphoris and Jotapata as places where *miqva'ot* have been found. Reed (2000:49-51) speaks of *miqva'ot* at Sepphoris, Tiberias, Yodefah, Nazareth, Gamla, Chorazin, Beit Yinan, Beth-Shearim, Har Arbel, Khirbet Shema and Sasa. No *miqva'ot* have been found at Capernaum, but according to Reed (2000:50, 157-58) this can be attributed to the fact that the lake could be used for suitable immersion (*m.Mik* 1:1; 1:6) – indeed, with the exception of Tiberias, there is virtually a complete absence of immersion pools around the shore of the lake (Reich 1990). Objections have been raised that the pools in Sepphoris be identified as *miqva'ot* (Eshel 2000), but it seems to be generally accepted that the pools are such (Meyers 2000; Reich 2002). According to Chancey (2002:105), the claimed first century miqveh (and synagogue) at Chorazin (cf Strange & Shanks 1990) post-date the time of Jesus.

Freyne 2001:299) and/or overwhelmed the few prior inhabitants, regardless of who they were, but the point is that Galilee's population "adhered to or adopted patterns of behavior in private space that is also found in Jerusalem and Judea, so that in terms of ethnicity, the Galileans should be considered Jewish" (Reed 2000:53). Also the view that Galilee had many Gentiles (e. g. Fitzmyer 1992) must be abandoned. Any significant Gentile presence in the first century is not attested by the archaeological record. This stands in glaring contrast to the surrounding regions which were predominantly Gentile, although which also had "Jewish" minorities (Chancey 2002:117-19, 165).

Overall, the archaeological evidence combines to suggest that from the Hasmonean annexation of the territory, "Jews" dominated the region (Chancey 2002:62). "Galilean Jews had a different social, economic and political matrix than Jews living in Judea or the Diaspora ... but they all were Jewish" (Reed 2000:55). This also means that they lived according to the broader pattern of "common Judaism", and along with other "Jews" lived out their identity as a form of protest against foreign cultural influences (Richardson 2004:20-21, 71, 73).⁶

Horsley (1995:87-88) places great stock in the fact that the Galileans were continuously suspicious of Josephus and that the high priestly-Pharisaic council in Jerusalem could not assert their authority in Galilee during the Great Revolt. This can not be used as evidence, however, that the Galileans

⁶ Other evidence, mainly from Josephus, supports this. (1) Josephus speaks of the Sabbath being observed in Galilee (*Ant* 13.337-338; *Life* 159). (2) Judas the Galilean, in collaboration with Zaddok the Pharisee, spearheaded a rebellion in response to the requirement of Roman taxes (*War* 2.117f; *Ant* 18.1-10), using the slogan "no Master but God". Josephus actually says that Judas and his group followed Pharisaic rulings (*Ant* 18.23). (3) Gischala appears to have been the location of the production of olive oil that satisfied the demands of ritual purity. Judeans/"Jews" of Ceasarea-Philippi were supplied since they wanted to avoid Gentile food production (*Life* 74; *War* 2.591-93). (4) Galileans evidently had a measure of attachment to the Temple in Jerusalem. When Gaius wanted to erect a statue of himself in the Temple in Jerusalem, Judeans and supposedly Galileans as well (Chancey 2002:54) protested by leaving their lands unsown, and so no harvest and payment of tribute would be possible (*Ant* 18.263-72; *War* 2.192-93). The Galileans showed concern for the sanctity of the Temple, and certainly far more is involved here than merely making common cause "with the Judeans when faced with a threat to the basic covenantal principles they shared from ancient Israelite tradition" (Horsley 1995:71). According to Kloppenborg (2000:227), whose understanding of the Galileans is similar to that of Horsley, Tobit 1:6-8 suggests that most Galileans did not participate in pilgrimages. But Josephus takes for granted that a priest representing the Temple, being born in Jerusalem, and being well versed in the Law would have status among Galileans at the outbreak of the revolt. Josephus also states that he refused priestly tithes offered to him by the Galileans (*Life* 63, 80, 195-98) (cf Freyne 2001:300; Chancey 2002:55-56). (5) A Jesus son of Sapphias, the magistrate of Tiberias, took "the laws of Moses" (a Torah Scroll) into his hand whom he accused Josephus of betraying. Josephus himself states that he was suspected that his ultimate intention was "to betray the country to the Romans", and that some Galileans attempted to kill him (*Life* 132-48; *War* 2.598-610). Here Galileans were accusing Josephus of betraying their "common Judaism". (6) Tiberias boasted a "prayer-house", which was a regular feature of Judean communities in the Diaspora (*Life* 277, 280, 290-303), and to this can be added the existence of a synagogue at Capernaum (Strange & Shanks 1990; Chancey 2002:104). (7) When Antipas built his new capital, Tiberias, on the site of a graveyard on the western shore of the lake in 18 CE (*Ant* 18.37-38), Josephus explains that Antipas forced peasants from the surrounding villages and countryside to live in the new capital or otherwise offered people land. This also illustrates that the local population was Judean/"Jewish" as they did not desire to be in a constant state of ritual impurity. (8) Josephus explains that Gischala was under the leadership of John ben Levi, who later became his most important rival for the control of Galilee. Josephus describes John as a not so observant Levite (*War* 7.264), which nevertheless, still makes him a Judean/"Jew". More evidence is discussed below.

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were not Judeans/“Jews” and were striving for independence. Even those of Judea were suspicious of some of their priests in Jerusalem and even killed them. It is also noticeable that nowhere are there reports in Josephus’ accounts that “the Galileans” attacked any local “Judeans”. They attacked the Greeks in Tiberias and also participated in conflicts with Gentiles in the regions surrounding Galilee (Chancey 2002:56, 132). After Galilee was taken by the Romans, some Galileans even went to Jerusalem to join the resistance there. Before the Great Revolt, the Galileans were also involved in conflict with the Samaritans⁷ at times (*Ant* 20.118; *War* 2.232), as one of more of them were killed while going to Jerusalem. Nowhere do our sources suggest that Galileans and Samaritans ever made common cause against a common ideological enemy, namely, the “Judeans”. The hostility between Galileans and Samaritans is better explained if cultural and ethnic continuity existed between Judea and Galilee. Josephus’ description of the Galileans also contrast with that of the Idumeans who were forcefully converted during the Maccabean campaigns (*Ant* 13.257-58; cf *War* 1.63). Their “conversion”, however, is doubtful, as the appointed governor of Idumea, Costobar, in the time of Herod refused for the Idumeans to adopt the customs of the Judeans (*Ant* 15.253-55). Nothing like this is said of Galileans. When seen in conjunction with the archaeological evidence, it is difficult to accept that there was any attempt by Galileans to assert independence from Jerusalem or “the laws of the Judeans”.

6. WERE THE GALILEANS RELIGIOUS “JEWS” OR ETHNIC JUDEANS?

If the Galileans were of the same ethnic stock as those of Judea, that is, they were Ἰουδαῖοι (singular Ἰουδαῖος), we also need to take into consideration recent arguments on the proper translation and content of the term. As we saw above, Freyne, Reed and Chancey support the view that the inhabitants of Galilee were not descendents of northern Israelites and they refer to the people in question as “Jews” or “Jewish”. Freyne (1999:50-51) also criticizes Horsley’s narrowing of the term “the Judeans” (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι) as a “geographico-political reference to the Judean temple-state and does not acknowledge its more extended, religious significance in terms of a worshipper at the Jerusalem Temple, irrespective of place of origin.” Associated with this is the acceptance of the customs, rituals and practices with this worship. So Freyne understands Ἰουδαῖοι as having *religious* significance; the Galileans as Ἰουδαῖοι are sharing in the *religious* customs relating to the *worship* in the Temple in Jerusalem (cf 1999:54); that is why

⁷ It can be noted that Josephus never refers to Samaritans as Ἰουδαῖοι (Freyne 1999:52).

Freyne (1999:55) can also speak of a “Jewish Galilee”, “Galilean Jews”, and “Jewish practices” found in the Gospels (as sources for reconstructing Galilean life in the first century). As we saw above, Reed speaks of “religious indicators” or of “Jewish religious identity” being found in Galilee; the Galileans were “Jewish”. These approaches have affinity with the arguments of Cohen (1999:70-136; cf 1990:204-23) who stated that prior to the Hasmonean period Ἰουδαῖος should always be translated “Judean”, never as “Jew”. But there was a shift from purely an ethno-geographical term to one of a more “religious” significance, first evident in 2 Maccabees 6:6 and 9:17. Here Ἰουδαῖος for the first time can be properly translated as “Jew”. In Greco-Roman writers Ἰουδαῖος was first used as a religious term at the end of the first century. Dunn (2003:262-263), who follows Cohen, also sees “ambivalence” between the ethno-geographical identity and religious identity by the use of the term Ἰουδαῖος. He argues this ambivalence and shift to a more religious significance allowed for non-Judeans to become (religious) “Jews”, such as in the case of Izates, king of Adiabene, without the need for circumcision (*Ant* 20.38-46).

There are two problems with the views outlined here. First, Freyne is right to say οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι has extended significance, but it is not so much “religious” as it is *ethnic*. Similarly, Reed’s “religious indicators” is better described as “ethnic indicators”. As Esler (2006:27) has argued, “to focus on ‘Jews’ as representatives of a religion ‘Judaism’ is both anachronistic and grossly reductionist and does little justice to the identity of first century Judeans.” The point is, it is more appropriate to understand Ἰουδαῖοι (and the singular Ἰουδαῖος) as an ethnic term with ethnic content rather than a religious term with religious content.

The first problem is naturally related to the second, where “Jew(s)/Jewish” is used as the preferred translation. The term Judean (Ἰουδαῖος) of course begins as a way to identify someone from Judea (Ἰουδαία) (*Ant* 11.173). But Cohen’s argument for a switch from “Judean” to “Jew” based on a so-called shift to a more “religious” significance is highly questionable. His argument cannot be accepted since for first century Judean ethnicity – here particularly ethno-geographical identity – was inseparable from religious identity. These various elements of Judean identity were always part and parcel of the same “system”. This is something which Dunn himself also suggests since he refers to Judea as a Temple state. Esler also points out, however, that in antiquity it was common practice to name ethnic groups in relation to the territory from which they came. Speaking of the Greeks and Romans he writes that one “would expect them to connect [Ἰουδαῖοι] with the territory called Ἰουδαία that this people inhabited, and that is what we usually find” (Esler 2003:63).

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The attachment between the people and the land is even closer in Judean sources (cf Esler 2003:64-65). Dunn (2003:262-263) himself admits that “even in later usage, referring, for example, to Jews long settled in the diaspora, the basic sense of ‘the Jews’ as the nation or people identified with the territory of Judea is still present”. Esler (2003:70) also states that Cohen “seems to assume that from the first century BCE onward it is possible to speak of ‘religion’ existing as a realm of human experience distinct from other realms such as kinship, politics, and economics in a manner similar to modern understandings of religion”, but “in the Mediterranean world of the first century CE the features that we refer to as ‘religious’ ideas and institutions were primarily embodied in structures of the political and domestic realms.” It must be said, however, that Cohen does appreciate the “Jews” as constituting an *ethnos*, and that religion is but one of several aspects that make a cultural group distinctive (Cohen 1999:7-9, 137). It is therefore unfortunate that he emphasizes the “religious” import of Ἰουδαῖος, and that it somehow justifies translating it as “Jew”.⁸

What particularly convinced Esler to translate Ἰουδαῖοι as “Judeans” is a passage from Josephus (*War* 2.43ff; cf *Ant* 17.254), which describes that “the people”, that is Galileans, Idumeans and Pereans, and people from Judea itself (ὁ γνήσιος ἐξ αὐτῆς Ἰουδαίας λαός) came to Jerusalem in response to the actions of Sabinus, the Roman procurator of Syria, an event dated to 4 BCE. Esler (2003:67) argues that the “critical point in this passage is that the existence of a segment of this people who lived in Judea itself was irrelevant to the fact that all those of its members who came to Jerusalem were Ἰουδαῖοι”. Josephus, Esler (2003:72) suggests, distinguishes this group of Judeans from others with the use of a periphrastic explanation, literally “the people by physical descent from Judea itself” although Esler prefers to translate it as “the membership of the people from Judea itself”.

Pilch also argued that it is anachronistic to speak of “Jews” in the Biblical period, and the Greek word Ἰουδαῖοι should be translated as Judean, a designation which the Israelites accepted during the Second Temple Period (520 BCE – 70 CE). The religion of that period (in all its diversity) is also properly called Judean or Judaic, and “Judaism” is not a proper term for it did not yet exist. Only from the sixth century, can we speak of Rabbinic “Judaism” and from when it is proper to use the term “Jews” (Pilch 1997). In similar vein,

⁸ Apart from the preference for “Jew”, Cohen also argues that Ἰουδαϊσμός analogous to Hellenism developed to become a function of religion and culture; the religious definition supplemented the traditional ethnic definition. “Jewishness” (which he proposes as a translation for Ἰουδαϊσμός) became an “ethno-religious identity”. But it is better to regard Ἰουδαϊσμός as a summary term for an entire cultural system, where “religion” must not be preferred above other cultural aspects. As such, Ἰουδαϊσμός was a term for a cultural system that already existed, being territorially rooted in Judea. And in agreement with the BDAG (2000), the proper translation for Ἰουδαϊσμός is Judeanism, or perhaps more accurately as Elliott claims, “*Judean way of life/behaviour*” (cf Elliott 2007:136, 142, 150, 153).

BDAG (2000) argued consistently that “Judean” is the best translation. For our purposes therefore a Judean refers to an “Israelite” inhabitant of Judea (and Palestine generally), or any “Israelite” who followed the Judean way of life and therefore had ethnic connections to Judea (cf Duling 2005).

These arguments should naturally be seen as relevant to the Galileans. The passage of Josephus which Esler refers to includes people from Galilee. The implications are that he understood the Galileans to be (ethnic) *Judeans*. According to Horsley (1995:60), however, the Galilean presence in Jerusalem that Josephus refers to was an attempt to assert their independence. Their joining the protests in Jerusalem “indicates that Jerusalem (and the temple courtyard as the public gathering place) was important to Galileans at least as the locus of political power, as the capital from which they were ruled.” But this ignores Josephus’ description of subsequent events, where he refers to the people involved in the conflict as οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (Ant 17.254-58). Evidently, this includes the people that gathered in Jerusalem from outside of Judea, including Galileans, and this is something that Horsley overlooks (Freyne 1999:54).

Josephus also refers to Galileans as “Judeans” in other places. A Judean (Ἰουδαῖος) of Galilee by the name of Eleazar, who had a reputation of being very strict when it came to “the ancestral laws”, required the circumcision of the king of Adiabene after his conversion (Ant 20.34-48). Josephus also writes that the Galileans visited the Temple and travelled through Samaria, “as was their custom” (Ant 20.118), suggesting the visits were regular enough from this region. Here Josephus is speaking of some Galileans, or alternatively, only one, that was killed by Samaritans while en route to Jerusalem. In the parallel account Josephus actually speaks of “a great number of Ἰουδαῖοι” that went up to Jerusalem for the feast (War 2.232). In both accounts it is also explained that the people in Jerusalem marched out against the Samaritans in retaliation, while in *Antiquities* specifically this occurred on the request of the Galileans.

At the time of the Great Revolt, Josephus relates that when two renegade royal officials from Agrippa II sought to remain in Sepphoris in 66-67, “the Judeans” (Ἰουδαῖοι) demanded that they be circumcised and so conform to the customs of their hosts (Life 112-113, 149-154). Josephus also says that the inhabitants of Sepphoris were prohibited from joining with the Ἰουδαῖοι in the war (Life 346), which here must be a reference to Galileans. When the Romans under Vespasian began their campaign in Galilee during the Great Revolt, Josephus interchangeably refers to the inhabitants as Galileans or οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, especially in connection with the Roman siege of Jotapata and the events that transpired at Japha (War 3.127ff). Josephus

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specifically refers to a “certain Ἰουδαῖος” called Eleazar who was a native of Galilee (*War* 3.229). After the defeat of Jotapata Josephus relates he was encouraged to commit suicide as a commander of the Ἰουδαῖοι (*War* 3.359). Josephus also speaks of John of Gischala as referring to Jerusalem as their “mother-city” (μητρόπολις) (*War* 4.123).

Horsley’s argument that in certain instances Josephus designates Galileans as a separate *ethnos* from the Judeans (*War* 2.510; 4.105) cannot therefore be allowed to stand. The Greek term had a wide semantic range and could be used to refer to any kind of grouping (human, animal, regional) of almost any size (Duling 2005:129; Saldarini 1994:59-60). Josephus’ use of *ethnos* in these cases is a *regional* “ethnic” designation. According to Feldman (1996:117-18) Josephus uses *ethnos* mostly in references to the “Jewish” nation as a whole, or the surrounding peoples who ethnically were not “Jews”. For example, Josephus relates that in the time of Gabinius, the Roman proconsul of Syria, he ordained five councils and distributed “the nation/people” (τὸ ἔθνος) into five districts, who were governed from Jerusalem, Gadara, Amathus, Jericho, and lastly, Sepphoris (*Ant* 14.91; *War* 1.170).

Modern anthropological studies also demonstrate that people can have more than one ethnic identity at once. Depending on their social situation, people can move from one ethnic reference group to another, such as being a member of a local village or city, a local region or province, or a nation state, which in itself can also be the more encompassing identity, but the latter can also extend beyond your country of residence, where people living in different areas belong to the same ethnic group. This has been referred to as a “hierarchy of nested segments”, where a person’s ethnic identity is divided into distinct parts, yet also fits – can be nested inside – a more encompassing identity (Esler 2003:49-50; Johnson Hodge 2005:274-75). For our purposes here, a person living in Galilee can be identified as a Sepphorean, Galilean, Judean, with the more encompassing identity alternatively being Judean and/or Israelite.⁹ This more encompassing identity is something which Josephus refers to when he writes he acted as a commander for those “among us that are named Galileans” (*Apion* 1.48). This is similar to what ethnicity theorists call a “we” *aggregative* self-definition, in reference to like-minded, like-practiced peers (Duling 2005:127).

⁹ According to Dunn, Israel was used as the preferred self-designation (cf Elliott 2007), as opposed to “Jew(s)”, which was used by others to distinguish them from other ethnic and religious groups. So “Israel(ite)”, denotes self-understanding and is used by the insider or participant (with reference to its internal history, election, and as heirs of the promise made to the patriarchs), whereas “Jew” denotes an outsider or spectator view, which was nevertheless used by “Jews” themselves (Dunn 2003:263-64; 1991:145).

If we bring the above together, descriptions of Galilee and its inhabitants such as a “Jewish Galilee”, “Galilean Jews”, and “Jewish practices”, “religious indicators”, of “Jewish religious identity” being found in Galilee, or the Galileans were “Jewish”, should be abandoned. *Galileans were ethnic Judeans*. Of course they, along with other Judeans would mainly have seen themselves as Israelites. But scholarship on the historical Jesus, on Galilee, on Q and the Gospels, or on any other relevant field of study should refer to the area and people in question as a “Judean Galilee”, or “Galilean Judeans”, or of “Judean ethnic identity” being evident in Galilee and so forth. Being of the same ethnic stock as those living in Judea, Galileans were people who lived out their Judean ethnic identity, of which “religion” was a part, alongside others,¹⁰ but not in itself adequate to describe the whole. To reiterate: Galileans were not “Jews” who practiced a “religion” called “Judaism”. When Jesus, the Galilean, was crucified as the “king of the Judeans” (ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων; Mt 27:37; Mk 15:26; Lk 23:38; Jn 19:19), it was a profound and highly offensive statement against Judean ethnic identity. It devalued and belittled what most of the people held dear.

7. SUMMARY

At first, we traced two lines of thought on the identity of Galileans in the first century CE. It was argued here that understanding Galileans as descendents of Judeans who relocated there during the Maccabean campaigns is better supported by both Josephus and the archaeological evidence. They were “Jews” in this sense, as opposed to being descendents of northern Israelites. It was also argued, however, that if they were of the same ethnic stock as those living in Judea, it is historically more accurate to understand them as *ethnic Judeans*, being the proper translation of Ἰουδαῖοι (singular Ἰουδαῖος), which in itself must be seen as an *ethnic term* which holds *ethnic content*. Galileans were also Israelites, which along with Judean can be seen as their more encompassing identity. In a “hierarchy of nested segments”, their Galilean “ethnic” identity was “nested” inside this more encompassing identity.

¹⁰ Ethnicity theory (part of social or cultural anthropology) has broadly recognised several cultural features that are important for ethnic identity. The cultural features include the following: 1) *name*, a corporate name that identifies the group; 2) *myths of common ancestry*, the group claims to be descendents of a particular person or group/family; 3) *shared “historical” memories*, the group points to common heroes and events of the past; 4) *land*, the group has actual or symbolic attachment to an ancestral land; 5) *language*, or local dialect; 6) *kinship*, members of the group belong to family units which in turn, demonstrate communal solidarity with the local community or tribe, and with the group as a national entity; 7) *customs* identifiable with that group; and 8) also its *religion*. To this may be added 9) *phenotypical features*, which refer to genetic features (Duling 2005:127-28; Esler 2003:43-44).

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