

Food for Thought and Book Club Discussion Guide

The Scroll shows how Jews and the first Christians responded to Rome's heavy heel on the Holy Land. You'll learn through the eyes of Miriam, a survivor of Masada, and her descendants, about the cultures and beliefs of both faiths and how they faced some of their greatest challenges. While writing *The Scroll*, I placed myself in that time to discover how I might face those challenges. How would you? I believe there are important lessons for today's Jews and Christians in this story. As you read *The Scroll*, on your own or with your book club friends, I hope you'll find the questions below thought-provoking and enriching.

1. Which group of people in *The Scroll* do you identify with the most and why—Pharisees, Sadducees, rebels, or Early Christian believers?
2. When Elazar decided to have his followers take their own lives, he may have thought they were the only Jews left in the world. Put yourself in Elazar's sandals to imagine other reasons for his decision. Are there any circumstances in which you would consider his solution?
3. The ancient Jewish sages tried to understand why their beloved Second Temple had been destroyed. Their answer? "Because groundless hatred prevailed." The ancient Jewish sources also present a story epitomizing "groundless hatred" called "Kamza and Bar Kamza." You can download and read this story in the blog section of my website. Every year on the anniversary of the Temple's destruction, the relevance of "groundless hatred" is widely discussed in Israel in the media, schools and other forums. Can such a discussion be applied to your community or country?
4. After you read *The Scroll*, you'll know its characters well. Here are some junctions where they made fateful decisions. What do you think their options were? What would you do under the same circumstances?
 - (a) Mordechai of Tekoa rejects Miriam

- (b) Miriam decided to return to Judea
- (c) Jacobides rejects his son Menachem
- (d) Gabriel allows his daughter to leave with Samuel
- (e) The families of Ein Gedi follow Itamar and Rebecca to the caves

2. Read my article on “baseless hatred” and the story of Kamza and Bar Kamza. The wealthy man in the feast was not the only “bad guy” in the story; action does not always lead to disastrous results – sometimes inaction does. Who do you think are the “bad guys” in The Scroll? What were their actions or inactions?

5. Find the places in “The Scroll” where early Christians interact with Jews. What do these encounters say about Christians at the time? What do they say about Jews?

6. What do you imagine happened after the end of The Scroll?