

Beginnings of Judaism

Parts I & II

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Dr. Isaiah M. Gafni is the Sol Rosenbloom Professor of Jewish History at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he received his Ph.D. and has taught for more than 40 years. He was formerly the director of the Mandel Center of Jewish Studies at The Hebrew University and also previously served as Director of Graduate Studies at the university's Rothberg International School. Dr. Gafni has been a visiting professor at numerous universities—including Harvard, Yale, and Brown—and was honored as the Louis Jacobs Fellow in Rabbinic Thought at Oxford University, where he delivered a series of lectures on the Jewish Diaspora in the Greco-Roman period.

Dr. Gafni has written or edited more than 15 books on aspects of Jewish history in late antiquity. Two of these, for which he was awarded the 1992 Holon Prize in Jewish Studies, discuss the history of the Jews in Talmudic Babylonia. Dr. Gafni's more recent work, *Land, Center and Diaspora: Jewish Constructs in Late Antiquity*, addresses the complex relationships between the Jews of the Diaspora and the Land of Israel in late antiquity and deals with topics such as Jewish self-definition and communal authority in a post-Temple context. He has written extensively on a broad range of topics relating to the social, religious, and cultural history of the Jews in late antiquity (including more than 100 entries in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*), with a particular emphasis on aspects of Jewish self-identity and relations with other ethnic and religious communities.

Dr. Gafni has devoted much effort to the dissemination of Jewish historical knowledge on a popular level as well. He wrote the first course in Jewish Studies at Israel's Open University ("From Jerusalem to Yavne") and was chairman of the publications committee of the Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, an extension of the Historical Society of Israel devoted to the enhancement of Jewish historical consciousness in Israel and abroad. In 2003 he wrote and presented the "Introduction to Judaism" course, part of a series on *The Great World Religions* produced by The Teaching Company.

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Beginnings of Judaism

Scope:

Traditional Jews attribute the most minute details of their religious tradition to God's revelation to Moses on Mt. Sinai. As formulated by the rabbis: "Whatever an established student is destined to teach has already been revealed to Moses at Sinai." How striking, then, that these same rabbis would tell the following legend: Moses, they claimed, was granted the privilege of visiting, incognito, the future houses of learning that would be devoted, thousands of years after his death, to the study of the very same Torah (book of learning) that he received at Sinai. Sitting in a back row at the academy of Rabbi Akiva, the most prominent sage of the 2nd century C.E., he hears the sage and his disciples animatedly discussing "his" Torah, and—quite frankly—cannot comprehend what they are saying! Making matters even worse, when the specific source for one statement is uncertain, Akiva himself has no problem declaring: "This was a law given to Moses at Sinai"!

This legend provides a strikingly candid admission on the part of the rabbis. All tradition must ultimately be grounded in the Torah, but Judaism was destined to undergo sweeping developments and innovation. The tension between a fervent belief in continuity and the need to address challenges brought about by a rapidly changing world affected almost every facet of Jewish intellectual life, as well as the practical religious behavior of Judaism's adherents. The ongoing and dynamic revision of Judaism in the first thousand years after the completion of the last books of the Hebrew Bible serves as the focus of this course.

We will focus on the period between the destruction of the First Jerusalem Temple (586 B.C.E.) at the hands of the Babylonians and the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.) after a fierce Jewish uprising against the Roman rulers of the Province of Judaea. After the first destruction the people of Israel found themselves, for the first time in their life as a nation, without a central cultic institution, wherein sacrificial worship—the scripturally-ordained manner for serving God—might be carried out. At the same time, major portions of the nation were led into captivity, setting the stage for the phenomenon of Jewish Diaspora. A Second Temple was rebuilt and dedicated in 516 B.C.E., some 70 years after the destruction of the First Temple, but the political frameworks that accompanied *this* Temple were vastly different from those of the Israelite community in the historical books of the Hebrew Bible. The nature and development of "Second Temple Judaism" will be addressed throughout our lectures, which begin with a chronological overview.

Following the historical introduction, we turn to the completion and canonization of the Hebrew Bible. The final books of this corpus were written decades, and in a few cases even centuries, after the dedication of the Second Temple. Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora also produced a wide variety of other literary works throughout the Second Temple period. These works provide invaluable historical material and also shed light on the diversity of religious thought and beliefs prevalent among Jews in relation to theodicy (understanding God's administration of justice), eschatology (the end of time and the future world), and messianism. Biblical stories were constantly retold and prophetic teachings continually reinterpreted in line with processes that evolved hundreds of years after the completion of the Bible. Surrounding cultures helped shape the beliefs, fears, and expectations embraced by different groups of Jews, particularly those in the vibrant Jewish communities that flourished in the Diaspora.

In the second part of the course, this vitality of religious expression is examined in relation to the political and social history of the Jewish people. While restoration of a grand national past attracted some segments of the community and played a role in motivating a series of Jewish uprisings, other Jews were far more drawn to sublime images of a perfect future world. These included the Dead Sea Sect as well as others, some of whom played a part in the emergence of Christianity.

The final portion of the course focuses on events leading to the destruction of the Second Jewish Temple and the subsequent emergence of rabbinic Judaism. Synagogues existed, in Israel and in the Diaspora, prior to the destruction, but their role expanded as prayer replaced sacrifice as the primary mode for communicating with God. Two additional Jewish uprisings, one in the Hellenistic Diaspora (114–117 C.E.) and the other led by Bar Kokhba in Israel (132–135 C.E.), marked the last attempts by Jews in the ancient world to achieve their dreams through political and military activism. Their failure made way for the rise of the more spiritualized rabbinic alternative, which we examine in relation to the larger question of this course: How—and why—did Judaism survive?

Lecture One

The Beginnings of Judaism—Biblical Roots

Scope: Throughout history, Jews have referred to the Bible as the ultimate authoritative source for their religious history, beliefs, and practices. Yet much of Judaism as we know it today developed after the completion of the last books of the Hebrew Bible. The statutes of Mosaic Law, believed by all Jews to have been revealed on Mt. Sinai, remained over the years the standard for Jewish behavior but underwent significant reinterpretation. The political, social, and cultural environments in which Jews found themselves in the centuries following the canonization of the Bible required a constant revision and reconsideration of what it meant to be Jewish. Innovations were treated as if each new practice or belief had already been incorporated in the divine revelation to Moses at Sinai.

Outline

- I. Religions commonly designate a corpus of writings as sacred scriptures, to serve as the basis for the faith's central beliefs and practices. As new manifestations of the faith emerge, attempts are made to show that they are grounded in the original scriptures.
 - A. The Jewish religion successfully adapted to new realities and was also willing to accept a measure of diversity within its ranks.
 - B. Jewish leaders attempted to make Judaism accessible to broad segments of the Jewish community as well as to non-Jewish circles.
- II. Throughout history, Jews have identified their roots in the Hebrew Bible, where they could read about their history, locate the major tenets of their faith, and find a comprehensive legal system to guide their behavior. The Bible was deemed endowed with divine authority, and while all subsequent generations would submit the Bible to sweeping interpretations and adaptations, at no time was it relegated to anything less than the ultimate source of all Jewish existence.
- III. Despite the critical role of the Bible in shaping Judaism, the beliefs and practices of many Jews today differ radically from the guidelines of the biblical faith.
 - A. Even though the Bible mandates worship conducted through an elaborate system of sacrifices in which animals are slaughtered and burnt on an altar, Jews have refrained from such sacrificial worship for almost two thousand years.
 - B. Even though worship was to be conducted in only one sanctified location (the Temple in Jerusalem) and any decentralization was prohibited, for two thousand years Jews have worshiped in synagogues wherever a Jewish community might be located.
 - C. The most visible form of religious leadership among Jews today is the rabbinic model, even though the Bible makes no mention of rabbis.
 - D. Jews throughout much of history believed in a utopian future, wherein their nation would be restored to its ancient grandeur and led by a figure known as a messiah, even though nowhere in biblical literature is this process articulated.
 - E. Many Jews believe in a framework of divine rewards and punishment, determined by each individual's behavior. This presupposes the eternal preservation of that individual's soul, a belief that finds no explicit formulation in biblical literature.
- IV. These innovations in the millennia that followed the original emergence of the biblical corpus were treated as if each new practice or belief had already been incorporated in the divine revelation to Moses at Sinai.
 - A. The Bible never ceased to be reread and reinterpreted by all generations of Jews.
 - B. The challenges of an ever-changing world required continual retellings and reinterpretations of the biblical text.
 - C. Jews produced a varied corpus of post-biblical literature, including translations of the Bible and historical and fictional works that contributed to the shared self-identity of Jews.

- D. Historical processes played a critical role in shaping Jewish behavior and religion. During the centuries that followed the biblical period, Jews found themselves ruled by the Persian kingdom, Hellenistic monarchies, Rome, and for a limited period even a Jewish priestly monarchy.
- V. These lectures commence with the destruction of the First Jewish Temple in 586 B.C.E., beginning a process that brought an end to the 1,400-year biblical period.
- A. Israelite history and religion both began with the patriarch Abraham, who was rewarded for his faith by a series of covenants with God.
 - B. The historicity of the patriarchal epoch cannot be confirmed by external testimony, but the migration alluded to in Genesis has been dated by scholars to a period between the 20th and 16th centuries B.C.E. (Before Common Era).
 - C. The second critical stage in Israel's emergence as a nation was the bondage of Abraham's descendants in Egypt, which ended with their miraculous liberation from Egypt somewhere in the 14th or 13th centuries B.C.E.
 - D. Wandering in the desert following their liberation, the tribes of Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai, where Moses received from God the complete system of laws and instruction he transmitted to the people of Israel, known in Hebrew as the Torah.
 - E. After 40 years in the desert, the Israelites, under Moses's successor, Joshua, entered and conquered the land of Canaan, thus fulfilling God's promise of the land to Abraham. Described in the biblical book of Joshua, this conquest can be roughly dated to the 12th century B.C.E.
 - F. Following a period of consolidation under a series of judges, David, the second king of Israel (early 10th century B.C.E.), founded a monarchal dynasty that would rule Israel for four centuries, until the fall of the Kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C.E. to the Babylonians.
 - G. David moved the capital of the kingdom to Jerusalem, which assumed a dual role as the political capital of the Jewish people and their sole legitimate religious center. Following David's death (c. 967 B.C.E.), it was left to his son Solomon (c. 967–928 B.C.E.) to complete his father's dream and build the First Jewish Temple.
 - H. The period of the Jewish monarchy coincides with the activity of the great prophets of Israel. Their teachings, stressing the moral and ethical imperatives of the nation and its rulers, came to serve as a cornerstone of the Jewish faith and of Christianity as well.
- VI. The stages of biblical history cited above coincide with the three components of the Hebrew Bible.
- A. The Torah, or Five Books of Moses, begins with the creation of the world and the emergence of the patriarchs and concludes with the death of Moses.
 - B. The Prophets consists of two distinct types of works. A series of historical books describes the conquest of the land; the establishment of the Israelite monarchy, Jerusalem, and the Temple; and the conquest of the kingdom by the Babylonians. The works of the prophets themselves contain moral teachings for each generation.
 - C. The Writings collect various literary genres, including wisdom literature, religious poetry, and the final books of the Bible, which describe how the kings of Persia granted permission for exiled Jews to return to their homeland.
 - D. All three components were destined to become not only the Holy Scriptures of Judaism, but also the point of departure for all future intellectual and literary endeavors among Jews. The stories of the patriarchs would be retold in later generations, and both wisdom literature and liturgical poetry would be emulated by centuries of subsequent Jewish authors. No less vital in the shaping of Judaism were the elaborate legal codes that evolved from the biblical source.

Essential Reading:

Schiffman, L. H., *From Text to Tradition*.

VanderKam, J., *An Introduction to Early Judaism*.

Supplementary Reading:

Bright, J., *A History of Israel*, pp. 47–175.

Kaufmann, Y., *The Religion of Israel, From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*.

Questions to Consider:

1. In post-biblical literature, Jewish authors often describe the patriarchs as keeping the biblical Commandments, even though the Torah was only revealed at Sinai centuries after the patriarchs lived. Why do you think these authors drew such an anachronistic picture?
2. Must the earliest stories of the Bible be corroborated by external evidence, such as archaeological discoveries, for adherents of the biblical legal codes to consider these laws as absolutely binding and relevant even today?

Lecture Two

New Challenges in the Late Biblical Period

Scope: The development of Judaism can only be understood within the historical contexts of the period. The destruction of Jerusalem and the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. constituted the final blow to the Davidic monarchy. Jews living in exile were challenged to find ways to maintain their identity in their uprooted circumstances. From the moment the Second Temple was consecrated in 515 B.C.E. until its destruction in 70 C.E., there were four major stages of political control in the Land of Israel; the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Empires, as well as the short-lived Jewish kingdom founded by the Hasmoneans, each made a unique contribution to the internal life of Jews under their control, in Israel as well as in the Diaspora. Many of the dilemmas encountered by Jews living today in the Diaspora were addressed by their ancestors in the post-biblical period.

Outline

- I. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C.E. was the final blow in a long series of events that contributed to the weakening of the Davidic monarchy.
 - A. Following the death of King Solomon (928 B.C.E.), the Israelite kingdom was split in two. The southern portion (capital, Jerusalem) came to be known as the Kingdom of Judah; its subjects were known as Judeans, or Jews, and were ruled by descendants of the House of David.
 - B. The northern, breakaway kingdom of Israel, named after the dominant local tribe of Ephraim, was founded by Jeroboam, who had already mounted an unsuccessful rebellion under Solomon.
 - C. While the southern kingdom embraced a monotheistic religion, the northern kingdom was more acculturated into the pagan, polytheistic environment of the region.
 - D. The two monarchies existed alongside each other for two centuries, often on opposing sides of regional alliances. In 722 B.C.E. the northern kingdom (capital, Samaria) was conquered by the Assyrian armies of King Sargon II, and most of its population was exiled to Assyria.
 - E. The Assyrians under King Sennacherib attempted to subdue the southern kingdom and in 701 B.C.E. laid siege to Jerusalem. The attempt failed, and the Assyrians had to retreat from the western portions of the Fertile Crescent.
 - F. The Kingdom of Judah was granted a respite of one century, but ultimately fell to the Babylonians, who captured Jerusalem in 597 B.C.E. and exiled King Jehoiachin, together with ten thousand Judaeans subjects, primarily the aristocracy of the nation: priests, officers, respected families, and “all the warriors, numbering seven thousand” (2 Kings 24:16). Among the exiles was the prophet Ezekiel, whose prophecies serve as our primary source of knowledge for the earliest history of the Babylonian Jewish exile.
 - G. The Babylonian onslaught continued under King Nebuchadnezzar, and in 586 B.C.E. Jerusalem and its Temple were destroyed. Zedekiah, the last King of Judah, was captured and exiled to Babylonia after witnessing the slaughter of his sons.
- II. The Jews exiled to Babylonia settled in separate communities yet maintained their unique identity in their uprooted state. They pined for their devastated homeland, and, following the Persian conquest of Babylonia in 538 B.C.E., were granted permission to return.
- III. After the destruction of the First Temple, some Jews fled to Egypt, where Jeremiah claims they reverted to pagan cultic practices.
 - A. Aramaic papyri discovered on the island of Elephantine in southern Egypt in the late 19th and early 20th centuries attest to a Jewish garrison there in the service of the Persian Empire. The settlement contained a Jewish temple, where the God of Israel was worshipped alongside other deities. The settlers kept the Sabbath and Passover and maintained a highly developed legal system.
 - B. The community appears to have flourished during the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.E., until it was destroyed c. 410 B.C.E. Jews of Elephantine vainly sought help and advice from the priests of Jerusalem, where a new temple had been consecrated in 515 B.C.E.

- IV. The fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and the removal of Jews into captivity raised questions that threatened the very survival of the nation.
- A. Did the destruction of the Temple suggest a defeat of the deity to which it was dedicated?
 - B. How was God to be worshiped without the physical frameworks required by biblical law?
 - C. What new institutions would be required to maintain Jewish identity in an alien environment?
 - D. Could Jews survive as a nation without the geographical and political trappings of nationhood? What would continue to bind the diverse Jewish communities into remaining one entity?
 - E. What political stance should Jews embrace towards the governments of those lands in which they now reside?
- V. The Bible presupposes a Jewish nation living on its land and worshipping in a central sanctuary, but the new realities of post-Temple Judaism required solutions not always supplied by scripture. The threat of Israelite dispersion had originally appeared in biblical imagery as a punishment to be avoided at all costs. But prophetic warnings had now materialized, and they demanded immediate remedies if the nation was to survive.
- A. The prophet Jeremiah (c. 627–585 B.C.E.) told the exiled Jews of the Babylonian captivity that the Lord wished them to take wives and multiply in their new home, and to seek the welfare of the city where he had sent them into exile.
 - B. After the destruction of the First Temple, a far-flung Jewish Diaspora flourished, in addition to a restored major concentration of Jews in their historic homeland.
- VI. Many of the dilemmas encountered by Jews living today in the Diaspora were addressed by their ancestors of the post-biblical period.
- A. Can Jews be loyal subjects of their current lands of residence, while simultaneously supporting a Jewish center in the historic homeland? Is it possible to talk about dual homelands—one current, the other historic? Can one homeland serve the purposes of ongoing livelihood, while the other represents a religious center?
 - B. If dispersion was the result of sin, as the Bible suggests, does that cast an aspersion on those Jews who continue to reside abroad?
 - C. The new realities of post-biblical times were rendered even more unstable by the succession of political powers that gained control over the regions of the Near East.

Essential Reading:

Bright, J., *A History of Israel*, pp. 179–373.

Shanks, H. (ed.), *Ancient Israel*, pp. 1–149.

Supplementary Reading:

Porten, B. *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Were it not for Jeremiah’s advice to the Jewish captives in Babylon to settle down, lead normal lives, and seek the welfare of the local government, might these captives have embraced radically different attitudes towards the perpetuation of Jewish identity?
2. Why did the “Ten Lost Tribes” attract so much attention in later Jewish history, and why was the belief in the tribes’ ongoing existence such a popular myth?

Lecture Three

Jews under Persian Rule—The Return to Zion

Scope: Persian rule over Israel lasted for about two hundred years, from 539 B.C.E. until the conquests of Alexander the Great in 333–331 B.C.E. Under Cyrus, the descendants of the Jewish captives who had been forcibly removed by the Babylonians from Judea were allowed to return to the land and to build a new Temple on the site of the destroyed one. Some of the final books of the Hebrew Bible describe how these Jews rebuilt Jewish communal life in their homeland. Under the leadership of Ezra (c. 458 B.C.E.), the Law of Moses was publicly read and interpreted before a gathering of Jews at the Temple. Ezra also set out to redress the phenomenon of widespread Jewish intermarriage with surrounding populations. He and his successor, Nehemiah (445–432 B.C.E.), both encouraged a vigorous religious revival aimed at rectifying a perceived general laxity in the observance of biblical commandments. Under Nehemiah, special attention was also given to the fortification and repopulation of Jerusalem, and to alleviating the plight of the poor through the cancellation of debts.

Outline

- I. Only 70 years (586–516 B.C.E.) passed between the fall of the Judean Kingdom and Jerusalem, and the consecration of a Second Jewish Temple.
 - A. Following the death of King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian monarchy was weakened by internal dissent. During the reign of the last of the Babylonian kings, Nabonaid (556–539 B.C.E.), the Kingdom of Persia took control of vast regions throughout the Near East.
 - B. In the year 550 B.C.E., Cyrus, a Persian prince and vassal of the King of Media, rebelled against his master and founded the Kingdom of Persia and Media, which conquered the Babylonians and emerged as the last great monarchy of the Ancient Near East.
 - C. Cyrus cultivated congenial relations with disparate religious and ethnic groups in the conquered kingdom, allowing them to revert to earlier religious cults that had been threatened by Nabonaid.
 1. Cyrus's benevolent attitude toward the Jews is attested in two declarations preserved in the biblical book of Ezra.
 2. The first of these proclamations was probably issued just after the Persian conquest of Babylon, in the year 538 B.C.E., and attributes to Cyrus the words, "The Lord God of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and has charged me with building Him a house in Jerusalem."
 3. Some scholars in the past have doubted the authenticity of this document, but modern scholarship almost uniformly supports the authenticity of the text. Cyrus's policy throughout the new empire was to permit the reestablishment of Temples that had been destroyed or closed, including those of the Babylonian god Marduk. The book of Ezra also reports that the leader of those Jews who returned to Judea, the Davidic scion Sheshbazzar, was permitted to take with him the vessels of the First Temple that had been removed by the Babylonians.
 4. Another Persian declaration, preserved in the book of Ezra in its original Aramaic form, records the following: "Let the house be rebuilt, a place for offering sacrifices, with a base built up high. Let it be sixty cubits high and sixty cubits wide. . . . The expenses shall be paid by the palace."
 5. The order to build the Temple using royal funds was repeated by Cyrus's successor, Darius, who stipulated that prayers be said in the Temple for the wellbeing of the king and his sons.
- II. The Cyrus Declaration set into motion a return to Zion on the part of some Jews, but many others remained in Babylon.
 - A. Led by Sheshbazzar, the Babylonian returnees encountered a devastated landscape and tense relations with those Israelites who had remained in the land after the fall of Jerusalem. Hostility towards the new arrivals was also rampant among those non-Jewish elements who had populated portions of northern Israel following the Assyrian conquest.
 - B. Sheshbazzar was succeeded by his nephew Zerubbabel, also a descendant of the Davidic family, and the book of Ezra credits him with the completion of the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem.

- C. The project seems to have taken longer than expected, hindered by the difficult economic conditions encountered by the returnees, and possibly due in part to the Persian wars with Egypt during the years 527–522 B.C.E.
 - D. Two of the last prophets of Israel, Haggai and Zechariah, encouraged the disenchanting Jewish settlers to complete the project, and under Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the Temple was joyfully consecrated in March of 515 B.C.E.
 - E. This event ushered in what is commonly referred to in Jewish history as the Second Temple period. This period lasted until 70 C.E., when the Second Temple was destroyed by the legions of the Roman Empire, following a Jewish uprising against Roman rule in Judea.
- III. Little is known about developments in Judea for approximately 70 years after the Temple was reopened. The next major stage in the Jewish revival took place in the mid-5th century B.C.E., with the arrival in Jerusalem of two great leaders, Ezra and Nehemiah, who enjoyed a close relationship with the Persian government.
- A. Ezra arrived in Judea during the reign of King Artaxerxes I (465–424 B.C.E.) and was charged by the Persians with a variety of administrative duties.
 - 1. Ezra attempted to revitalize the social and religious behavior of the Jewish community in Judea.
 - 2. Ezra was a priest but is also described as “a scribe of the Law of Moses which the Lord God of Israel had given.” When he arrived in Jerusalem in 458 B.C.E., he had the entire Torah read and explicated publicly for seven days during the festival of Tabernacles, possibly laying the foundation for the subsequent regular reading of scripture on Sabbaths and holidays in Jewish synagogues.
 - 3. Ezra tried to fortify the social fabric of the Jewish settlers by stressing the religious barriers that separated them from “the people of the land” and calling on them to desist from mixed marriages and to divorce all foreign women.
 - 4. Foreigners were permitted to join the Jewish community in the Passover festival if they accepted the community’s religious tenets. Conversion became a more widespread practice during the Second Temple period.
 - B. Nehemiah, son of Hacaliah, was a Jewish official who enjoyed close relations with the Persian court; he is referred to as the king’s cupbearer, and was appointed by the king to serve as governor in the province of *Yehud*, as the land of Judea was then known.
 - 1. Nehemiah’s reforms significantly improved the economic conditions of the descendants of the returnees, particularly the poorer people of Jerusalem.
 - 2. Nehemiah required 10 percent of the Jewish population of Judea to resettle in Jerusalem. He completed the fortification of the city and reinforced the biblical requirement to remit a wide array of tithes and “first fruits” to the Temple. This assured a constant flow of food to the city and set a precedent for universal Jewish support of the Temple.
- IV. The sweeping religious and social revitalization under Ezra and Nehemiah laid the groundwork for a broad definition of Judaism for subsequent generations.
- A. The nation committed itself to follow the divine teaching revealed to Moses and to observe carefully all the commandments of the Lord.
 - B. The seventh day was reestablished as a day of rest, on which all commercial activity was prohibited. Observance of the Sabbath came to be recognized throughout the ancient world as a custom separating the Jews from the surrounding population.
 - C. This separation was reinforced by a renewal of the commitment to refrain from intermarriage, but conversion was not precluded.
 - D. The periodic public reading of the Torah, accompanied by explication, evolved into a form of worship that provided an alternative mode of religious expression when sacrificial worship ceased hundreds of years later.
 - E. The role of Jerusalem as a city belonging to all members of the Jewish faith began to assume practical expressions, primarily through the establishment of international support for the city and the Temple.

Essential Reading:

Bright, J., *A History of Israel*, pp. 374–460.

Shanks, H., ed., *Ancient Israel*, pp. 151–175.

Supplementary Reading:

Davies, W. D. and L. Finkelstein (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism. Introduction: The Persian Period*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Many modern scholars see in the guidelines established during the Persian period a framework for Judaism in the post-Temple period and up to the present day. What aspects of the period tend to support this approach?
2. Are there any significant differences between the activities of Ezra and those of Nehemiah? Of the two, whose activities seem aimed at solving immediate problems, and whose focus might be on addressing issues that will have a long-standing impact on the nature of Judaism and its future development?

Lecture Four

The Challenge of Hellenism

Scope: In the summer of 332 B.C.E., Alexander the Great marched through Palestine and incorporated it into the emerging Hellenistic world. Hellenism represented not only the new political reality in the Near East, but also reflected a new social and cultural order, as barriers between East and West began to fall. In the vast common civilization that now engulfed scores of previously diverse ethnic communities, different groups found themselves speaking a common vernacular; adopting similar modes of dress, architecture, and education; and even embracing similar philosophical systems. Through a process of religious syncretism, ancient Eastern deities were now identified with the classical Greek gods. This spirit of common acculturation or outright assimilation posed a critical challenge to notions of Jewish separateness espoused by biblical scripture and reinforced by the strictures enacted under Jewish leaders of the Persian period. The challenge of Hellenism to Jewish identity was destined to remain a constant factor in the lives of Jews for centuries to come.

Outline

- I. Jews under Persian rule did not experience the assimilatory pressures of a surrounding culture, but that changed with the conquests of Alexander the Great.
- II. In 334 B.C.E. Alexander, King of Macedonia, embarked on the final onslaught of the Greek world against the Persian Empire. His father, King Philip II, had already made his way to the western boundaries of the Persian Empire, and Alexander brought the process to a speedy and decisive conclusion, ushering in a new political reality and a sweeping cultural upheaval. This new environment, commonly referred to as Hellenism, was destined to pose one of the greatest challenges to Jewish survival.
- III. Alexander's victories are often viewed as those of the Greek world, but this requires a certain qualification:
 - A. The military victory was that of the Macedonian Kingdom, situated north of Greece and populated not only by Greeks but also a tribal mix that included Thracians, Illyrians, and numerous other groups.
 - B. The language spoken by the Macedonians was a Greek dialect, but hardly the classic Greek of Athens; even the Greeks were hard pressed to understand the Macedonian dialect.
 - C. The Macedonians were ruled by monarchs, while the Greeks had abolished that form of government long ago.
 - D. These three components—an ethnic mix, a Greek dialect influenced by external elements, and monarchy—characterized the Hellenistic monarchies that would rule over much of the Near East in the wake of Alexander the Great's conquests.
 - E. In 333 B.C.E. Alexander invaded Syria and pushed the Persian armies eastward across the Euphrates River, enabling a rapid Greek conquest of the Near East. In 332 B.C.E. Judea came under Alexander's control, and one year later Alexander had conquered all of Egypt, establishing the city of Alexandria as the new capital.
 - F. Following Alexander's death in 323 B.C.E., his commanders fought over the spoils of his empire. By the year 301 B.C.E. most of the territories of Alexander's Asian conquests had fallen into the hands of Seleucus; the emerging Seleucid Empire established its capital at Antioch in Syria. Egypt fell to another commander, Ptolemy; the smaller Ptolemaic Empire, which included Alexandria, would rule over Judea for the next century (301–200 B.C.E.).
- IV. The social and cultural results of Alexander's conquests rivaled his political achievements.
 - A. The Macedonian victory served as the catalyst for a flood of new travelers into the area. In the new Hellenistic empires, local residents were counterbalanced by Greek settlers who became the core citizenry of the numerous Greek cities that were founded, primarily by the Seleucid monarchs.
 - B. These migrants came into contact with a variety of eastern cultures and ethnic communities. The cultural and social fusion that emerged is generally referred to as Hellenism.
 - C. Hellenistic culture had many expressions.

1. The lingua franca of the Near East was Greek, but it underwent a process of orientalization that led to the creation of a dialect known as “common Greek” which was significantly removed from the classical Greek of earlier centuries. The Hellenistic world defined as Greek (Hellenes) anyone who could speak in this dialect. All others were considered “barbarians.”
 2. Hellenistic culture contributed to a wide range of scientific, literary, and legal frameworks throughout the new Greek territories. The Stoic philosophy became dominant in many circles, with its stress on the proper moral behavior of the individual and the unity of the human race, where all must strive to live in peace with the laws of nature.
 3. A process of religious syncretism, whereby ancient eastern deities would now be identified with the classical Greek gods, became widespread.
- D. By 30 B.C.E., with the conquest of Egypt, the entire Hellenistic East had fallen either to Rome or to the Parthian Empire east of the Euphrates River, but Hellenism survived as a cultural phenomenon for many centuries. Judea found itself at the center of the Hellenistic world, situated precisely between the Seleucids to the north and the Ptolemies to the south. Vast numbers of Jews resided in other lands where Hellenism had emerged as the dominant culture of the aristocracy.
1. The challenge confronted by Jews was evident: How might they preserve their way of life within a social environment that praised universalism as the new standard for mankind?
 2. Unwillingness to merge into the new social fabric of the Hellenistic world was deemed by some Greek (and later Latin) authors as a sign of misanthropic behavior.
 3. To the extent that the recognition of various deities was considered an expression of loyalty to the state, maintaining a separatist position was interpreted as a lack of local allegiance.
- E. Jews nevertheless became an integral part of the Hellenistic world.
1. For Jews throughout the Hellenistic East, Greek became a second language, and for many of those living outside of Judea, Greek became their primary language for daily discourse and literary activity.
 2. Many of the works produced by Jews were not only written in Greek (beginning with the translation of the Bible itself into Greek) but took the form of Greek literary genres as well.
 3. Jewish authors embraced the Greek genre of literary fictions, as well as wisdom literature. The growing stress in Jewish circles on the study of Torah as a means of worship reflected the Greek commitment to the pursuit of knowledge.
 4. Jewish literature of the Second Temple period reflects the turn toward the needs of the individual in Hellenistic thought, and even the hope held out by Stoic philosophy for an independent existence of the soul after death.
 5. Many of the expository techniques for interpreting the Scriptures employed by Jews throughout the Second Temple period and by rabbis of the post-Temple period were derived from approaches used by the Greeks in their literary activity.
 6. Hellenistic culture affected the development of Rabbinic Judaism to the extent that some rabbis held that the Bible could only be translated into one language, Greek.
 7. One rabbi claimed that a man is permitted to teach his daughter Greek, because it is “an adornment.” The rabbi assumed that a son should study Torah all day and have no time for Greek.
 8. The rabbinic text known as the Talmud was produced in two different countries. One Talmud was produced in the Land of Israel in a Greco-Roman environment, and the other Talmud was produced in the East, in Babylonia. The western Talmud is replete with Greek words, and in certain cases we even encounter rabbis reciting riddles in Greek.
- V. After one hundred years under Ptolemaic rule, Judea was conquered by the Hellenistic kingdom to the north, the Seleucid Empire. Within a few decades, Jews and Greeks would find themselves on opposing sides of a cultural clash that eventually erupted into physical violence.

Essential Reading:

Cohen, S. J. D., *From the Maccabees to the Mishna*, pp. 26–50.

Levine, L. I., *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence*.

Supplementary Reading:

Hengel, M., *Judaism and Hellenism*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Would it be fair to say that all Jews, even those most loyal to the Jewish religion, were in many ways part of the Hellenizing process that enveloped all of the Near East?
2. What aspects of Judaism might have been the most objectionable in the eyes of the Hellenistic world?

Lecture Five

The Maccabees—From Rebels to Kings

Scope: Tensions between the Jews and the Hellenistic empire of the Ptolemies were minimal, but relations deteriorated once Judea was conquered by the Seleucid armies. The challenge of Hellenism devolved into a violent physical confrontation when one of the Greek rulers of Syria (which included Judea), Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.E.), introduced a form of religious and cultural coercion aimed at achieving concomitant political quiescence. The revolt of the Hasmoneans, a family of Jewish priests led by Judah the Maccabee, ultimately led to the establishment of an independent Jewish state that would survive until the Roman conquest of Judea in 63 B.C.E. Major sects and divisions within Jewish society appeared during the Hasmonean period, including the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. Traditional Jews may have found the Hasmoneans too Hellenized, while the surrounding Hellenistic population may have found their nationally motivated conquests antithetical to the cosmopolitan spirit of the age.

Outline

- I. During the time Judea was ruled by the Hellenistic empire of the Ptolemies (301–200 B.C.E.), tensions between that empire and the local Jewish population were minimal.
 - A. The Ptolemies ruled primarily over Egypt, which they inherited as a historically unified entity.
 - B. The Seleucid Empire inherited the vast territories of Alexander’s eastern conquests; they established their rule by creating a network of Greek cities and institutions to create a sense of common interests.
 - C. Following a series of clashes between the two Hellenistic empires of the Near East, Judea was finally conquered by the Seleucid armies, under King Antiochus III the Great (223–187 B.C.E.) in 200 B.C.E.
 1. At first, relations between the new rulers and the local Jewish population were cordial, and Antiochus III proclaimed that the Torah would serve as the law of the land for the Jewish population.
 2. Relations between the Seleucids and the Jews of Judea took a sharp turn for the worse in 189 B.C.E., when the Seleucid armies suffered a humiliating military defeat at the hands of the Romans at Magnesia, in Asia Minor. The ensuing peace treaty required the Hellenistic monarchy to relinquish territory and transfer large sums of money as reparations to the Roman Republic. Now strapped for funds, the Seleucid Empire looked to temples throughout the kingdom as possible sources of income.
 3. The first open clash between Jews and Greeks in Jerusalem occurred when Antiochus III’s successor, Seleucus IV (187–175 B.C.E.), dispatched one of his officers in a failed attempt to sack the Jerusalem Temple.
 4. The attempt to sack the Temple appears to have come at the instigation of supporters of the Seleucid monarchy within the Jerusalem aristocracy.
 5. Priests and other leading families in Jerusalem slowly found themselves divided along political (pro-Ptolemaic and pro-Seleucid) and cultural lines. Opposed to the traditional values of the High Priest Onias, a growing party of priests began to push for a more rapid Hellenization of the city.
 6. With the ascension of a new king in Syria, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.E.), the pro-Greek party replaced Onias with his brother, Jason, who turned Jerusalem into a Greek polis, named “Antioch” in honor of the king.
 7. New institutions were introduced into the city, including a gymnasium and an *ephebion* for the paramilitary training of young citizens. In 172 B.C.E., Antiochus IV deposed Jason from the high priesthood in favor of Menelaus, a more radical Hellenizer.
 8. The lines were now drawn between the conservative elements of the Jewish community, who still adhered to the Torah in its strict interpretation, and the pro-Hellenist party, who considered their reforms to be the best possible vehicle for introducing the Jewish nation into the mainstream of Greek social and political life.
- II. Events in Judea deteriorated rapidly. In 168 B.C.E. Antiochus invaded Egypt, only to be forced by a brutal Roman ultimatum to retreat.

- A. After Antiochus's retreat from Egypt, traditionalists in Jerusalem deposed Menelaus. Riots broke out, and Antiochus dispatched a military force to quell opposition. Soldiers of the Greek garrison established in the city introduced their pagan rites into the Temple itself.
 - B. The Syrian monarch unleashed a series of persecutions, outlawing Jewish observances such as circumcision and the maintenance of dietary laws.
 - C. Jews saw these attempts to reestablish political stability as a threat to their very existence as a distinct religious community.
 - D. A rebellion broke out in the countryside, led by a family of priests known as the Hasmoneans. Their leader was Mattathias, and upon his death in 167 B.C.E., the uprising was led by his son Judah the Maccabee ("Hammer"). For three years Judah prevented the Syrians from sending reinforcements to their garrison in Jerusalem, and in December of 164 B.C.E. the city was taken by the rebels, who purified the defiled Temple.
 - E. In 161 B.C.E. Judah entered into a mutual defense treaty with the Roman Republic. Judah died a year later, and his brothers Jonathan (160–142 B.C.E.) and Simon (142–135 B.C.E.) succeeded him as leaders of the revolution. The Seleucids continued to attack the Jewish forces, but dissension within their own empire weakened their persistence.
 - F. The Hasmonean brothers were adept at playing off the various contenders to the Greek throne against one another, and the constant shifting of their support from one contender to another ultimately began to pay significant political dividends.
 - G. By 142 B.C.E. King Demetrius II officially freed Judea from any payment of taxes to the Empire, effectively recognizing the independence of the Jewish state.
 - H. Simon convened an assembly of the priests and the people on the Temple mount in 141 B.C.E., and the people recognized Simon and his sons as a new dynasty, to serve as political leaders (but not yet as kings) as well as High Priests "until a true prophet shall arise."
- III. Jewish political independence came to an abrupt conclusion with the conquest of Judea by the legions of Rome in 63 B.C.E.**
- A. The Hasmoneans were keenly aware of the needs of a viable state.
 1. Prior to the uprising, Jews resided in a relatively small portion of Judaea. During much of the Hasmonean period additional territory was acquired, ultimately establishing borders that were almost identical with the biblical boundaries of the Davidic Kingdom.
 2. The port city of Jaffa came to serve as the Hasmoneans' main outlet to the Mediterranean, a critical factor in their economic self-sufficiency.
 3. When the Hasmonean leader John Hyrcanus I (134–104 B.C.E.) conquered the southern territory of Idumea, he required its population to convert to Judaism; one of the descendants of this converted population was King Herod the Great.
 4. The Hasmoneans tried to involve Diaspora Jews in critical events of the national homeland. The second book of Maccabees opens with a letter from Jerusalem to the Jews abroad, inviting them to observe the new feast of Hannukah.
 5. The Hasmonean state was not proclaimed a monarchy until the last stages of its existence. The first ruler formally to declare himself king was Hyrcanus' son Aristobulus I, who ruled for only one year (104–103 B.C.E.). He was succeeded by his brother Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 B.C.E.). The Hasmoneans slowly assumed the trappings of the Hellenistic monarchies, including the Greek language and symbols on coins, mercenary soldiers, and an autocratic court.
- IV. The internal turmoil of the Hasmonean period led to the emergence of distinct groups and parties.**
- A. Two of the more famous sects were known as the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Another group that emerged at this time produced the scrolls that were discovered in 1947 at Qumran, on the western shores of the Dead Sea.
 - B. Following Jannaeus's death, the country was ruled by his widow Alexandra Salome (76–67 B.C.E.). A few years after the queen's death, in 63 B.C.E., the country was conquered by the Roman army under Pompey.

- C. Traditional Jews at the time probably felt the Hasmoneans were too Hellenized, while the surrounding Hellenistic population considered their nationally motivated conquests antithetical to the cosmopolitan spirit of the age.

Essential Reading:

Bickerman, E. *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees*.

Tcherikover, V. *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*.

Supplementary Reading:

Bickerman, E. *The God of the Maccabees*.

Stern, M. "The Hasmonean Revolt and its Place in the History of Jewish Society and Religion," in Ben-Sasson, H. H. and S. Ettinger, eds., *Jewish Society through the Ages*, pp. 92–106.

Questions to Consider:

1. Was the Maccabean uprising primarily the result of internal dissension between rival factions of the Jewish community, or a Jewish uprising against an occupying Hellenistic empire?
2. The Jewish festival of Hannukah commemorates the rededication and purification of the Temple in Jerusalem by Judah Maccabee. Why do you think this festival is celebrated today by secular as well as traditional Jews?

Lecture Six

The Canonization of the Hebrew Bible

Scope: The tripartite canon of sacred texts comprised of Torah, Prophets, and Writings emerged at different intervals during the Second Temple period. The historiographical works of Ezra, Nehemiah, and the book of Chronicles were completed in the Persian period, along with the final books of the prophets. By the end of the Persian period, most Jews believed that prophecy had ceased. The book of Daniel was completed in the Hellenistic period. Jewish authors, both in Judaea and the Diaspora, now felt they were part of a post-classical era in which they no longer *produced* sacred works. Instead, they devoted their energy to the study, interpretation, translation, imitation, and retelling of the extant sacred scriptures.

Outline

- I. During the period from the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. to the fall of the Hasmonean state in 63 B.C.E., literary activity flourished, culminating in the emergence of the Hebrew Bible as we know it today.
- II. The critical period of transition, moving from the composition of the last books of the Hebrew Bible to the first stages of canonization, was the Persian period (538 B.C.E.–333 B.C.E.).
 - A. The literary contributions of the Persian period can be divided into two distinct components: historiography and the last books of the Prophets.
 1. The major historiographical works of the Persian period are the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the book of Chronicles.
 2. Ezra and Nehemiah describe two major stages in the Jewish resettling in Judea under the Persians: the years from Cyrus’s Declaration (538 B.C.E.) until the consecration of the Temple (516–515 B.C.E.), followed by the activities of Ezra and Nehemiah in Jerusalem.
 3. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah reaffirm the Law of Moses, but include no allusion to an “end of days” and no references to the Davidic monarchy.
 4. Originally one book, today the book of Chronicles is divided into I and II Chronicles. I Chronicles covers the period from Adam until the death of King David, and II Chronicles continues from that point to the destruction of the Second Temple, and then on to the Cyrus Declaration.
 5. Chronicles retraces the histories described in the books of Samuel and Kings, in one of the earliest examples of a “re-reading” of the Bible.
 6. Chronicles shows an obvious preference for the Davidic monarchy, attributing to David himself the establishment of an altar in Jerusalem where sacrifices were offered to and accepted by God.
 7. In contrast to Ezra and Nehemiah, who excluded all Israelites who were not part of the community of returnees from Babylon to Zion, Chronicles recognized all: returnees, Israelite remnants in the land, and a variety of converts and others who attached themselves to Israelite history.
 - B. The final books of the Prophets were also written during the Persian period.
 1. The last three prophets included in the Hebrew Bible were Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The first two can easily be dated to somewhere around 520 B.C.E., since both allude to the doubts and hesitations just prior to the completion of the Second Temple. The book of Haggai exhorts the people to complete the project, promising them that the glory of this Temple will outshine that of its predecessor.
 2. In addition to saying that God’s house shall be rebuilt, Zechariah also prophesies that completion of the Temple and reestablishment of the Davidic monarchy will usher in an ultimate redemption.
 3. Malachi, the last of the prophets, focuses on everyday transgressions: God will act against those “who practice sorcery, who commit adultery, who swear falsely, who cheat laborers of their hire, and who subvert the cause of the widow, orphan, and stranger” (Mal. 3:5).
- III. By the end of the Persian period, most of the books that became part of the Hebrew Bible had already been written, although the book of Daniel was completed in the Hellenistic period.
 - A. When applied to a literary corpus, the term “canon” usually implies a body of written materials that are recognized as authoritative; a religious canon is also recognized as divine or sacred, to the exclusion of all others.

- B. By the Persian period, a group of authoritative texts had emerged, but it differed from the canon that today comprises the Old Testament.
 - C. Some of the books found in the second component of the Hebrew Bible, commonly referred to as Prophets but also containing historiographical works, were already known to authors of the late Persian period.
 - D. Most Jews came to believe that prophecy had ceased by the end of the Persian period and the appearance of Alexander the Great in Judea (332 B.C.E.).
- IV. By the 2nd century B.C.E., Jews were already relating to a known corpus of authoritative works, or what we might call a literary canon.
- A. Around 180 B.C.E., Joshua Ben Sira, a prominent priest and author in Jerusalem, wrote that the wise man must “devote himself to the Torah of the most high, seek the wisdom of the ancients, and ponder the prophecies.” Less than two generations later (c. 130 B.C.E.), his grandson translated this Hebrew work into Greek, stating that his grandfather devoted himself to “the reading of the Law and the Prophets and other books of our fathers,” a formulation strikingly close to what we might interpret as a tripartite corpus.
 - B. The discovery of biblical as well as extra-biblical works at Qumran suggests that different groups of Jews may have possessed a variety of canons. The early translations of the Bible into Greek also contain works not found in the Hebrew Bible today. Josephus refers to 22 sacred books, while the post-Temple rabbis assume a canon of 24 books.
 - C. Sacrificial worship had been reinstated during the Second Temple period, but Judaism was gradually evolving into a “book religion.” Jews now felt they were part of a post-classical era in which they could no longer produce sacred works; instead, they devoted their energy to the study, interpretation, translation, imitation, and retelling of the extant sacred scriptures.

Essential Reading:

Cohen, S. J. D., *From the Maccabees to the Mishna*, 2nd ed., pp. 167–204.

MacDonald, L. M., *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, pp. 1–94.

Supplementary Reading:

Chapman, S. B., *The Law and the Prophets, A Study in Old Testament Canon Formation*.

Halbertal, M., *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning and Authority*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Was there a connection between the growing belief among Jews in the cessation of ongoing prophecy by early Hellenistic times and the process of biblical canonization?
2. What criteria do you think might be applied in trying to explain why some books made it into the biblical canon, while others remained outside the Hebrew Bible?

Lecture Seven

Translating the Bible—The Septuagint

Scope: If the Bible was to be made accessible to all Jews, a translation of the Hebrew text was required for the Greek-speaking Jews dispersed throughout the Hellenistic world. The Greek version of the Bible that emerged, in stages, is known as the Septuagint (Latin for “seventy”). The Septuagint was one of the most ambitious translating projects in all of antiquity, and the first case of a major translation from an Eastern dialect into Greek. The challenge confronting all translations is whether to strive for a literal rendition or to allow for a more free-flowing but looser translation that preserves the spirit and meaning of the original. Once the transition was embraced by the early Christian Church as the authoritative text of the Bible, discrepancies between the standard Hebrew version and the Greek translation assumed major significance.

Outline

- I. As Judaism evolved into a religion of “the book” with a canon of sacred texts at its core, access to those texts by all Jews was essential. For Hebrew-speaking Jews, the Second Temple and post-Temple periods produced a library of extra-biblical interpretation, retelling, and elaboration of the Hebrew Bible. For the growing number of Greek-speaking Jews dispersed throughout the Hellenistic world, a Greek translation was required.
 - A. The earliest known translation of the Bible is the Greek translation commonly referred to as the Septuagint. Its origins are shrouded in legend; it reached its final form centuries after the initial submission of the first component of the Hebrew Bible (the Law, or Torah) to Greek.
 - B. A late 2nd century B.C.E. work, known as the Letter of Aristeas, relates that the Hellenistic King of Egypt, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 B.C.E.), commissioned 72 scholars from Judea to come to Alexandria and translate the sacred text of the Jews into Greek. A later version of the story, preserved by the 4th century C.E. Christian author Epiphanius (320–403 C.E.), claims that 36 pairs of elders were placed in 36 isolated rooms, but miraculously produced, word for word, the very same Greek rendition.
 - C. The historical veracity of the account provided by the Letter of Aristeas has often been challenged, on the grounds that it is a Jewish apologetic work, stressing the high regard in which the Jewish Torah and its Greek translation were held by Ptolemaic royalty and intellectuals. Possibly the translation met the needs of the local Jewish community of Alexandria, who needed a Greek version not only for purposes of study but also as part of the liturgical activity of their synagogues, where the reading of the Torah played a central role.
 - D. The text that was initially translated, according to the Letter of Aristeas, was only the Torah (the first of the three components of the Hebrew Bible). The Prophets were probably translated only during the 2nd century B.C.E., followed by the Writings some years later.
 - E. The Septuagint became the standard text of the Bible known to Jews throughout the Greek-speaking world. Subsequent 1st century C.E. Jewish authors, most notably Philo of Alexandria and Josephus, relied on it, and the early Christian church adopted it as the authoritative text of the Old Testament.
- II. The challenge confronting all translations is whether to strive for a literal rendition or to allow for a more free-flowing but looser translation that preserves the spirit and meaning of the original.
 - A. The Ancient Near East used two systems of translation: in matters of daily life such as legal and commercial documents, translations were as precise as possible, but the translation of literary works allowed for a greater degree of freedom. The Septuagint appears to have aimed for a middle path.
 - B. The Septuagint was one of the most ambitious translating projects in all of antiquity, and the first case of a major translation from an Eastern dialect into Greek.
 - C. Different books of the Bible were originally translated by different authors, who not only used different vocabularies but also varying techniques of translation.
 - D. Identical Hebrew words that appear in different books of the Bible are often given different equivalents throughout the Septuagint.
 1. Some words were not translated into Greek at all, probably because their Hebrew or Aramaic forms were familiar even to Greek-speaking Jews.

2. The vocabulary used in the Hebrew Bible took on new meanings in post-biblical times, and by employing these new usages the translators often departed from the original intentions of the Bible.
 3. Translating brings about a meeting of cultures, not just languages; a particular word might represent one thing in one culture, and something else in another. By translating the Bible into Greek, the translators actually rendered new meaning to Greek words.
 4. Translators sometimes steered away from anthropomorphic descriptions of God. Where the Hebrew version of Exodus 24:10 reads: “And they saw the God of Israel,” the Septuagint translates: “And they saw the place where the God of Israel stood.”
- E. The nature of these discrepancies plays a major role in understanding the importance of the Septuagint for biblical scholarship. The once-popular assumption that wherever the Septuagint diverges from the standard Hebrew text it attests to an earlier reading must be significantly qualified. Translators are not only conduits of their sources, but also interpreters.
1. While discoveries at Qumran have provided us with some Hebrew texts of the Bible that may have served as sources for a number of Septuagint divergences from the standard Hebrew Bible, many others reflect the social and religious contexts of the translators themselves.
 2. Once embraced by the early Christian Church as the authoritative text of the Bible, the discrepancies between the standard Hebrew version and the Greek translation assumed major significance. The most famous of these is the Greek translation of Isaiah 7:14. Whereas the Hebrew reads: “Behold a young woman (Hebrew *alma*) shall conceive and have a son,” the Septuagint provides us with “the virgin (Gr. *parthenos*) shall conceive.”

Essential Reading:

Jobes, K., and M. Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*.

Swete, H. B., *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*.

Supplementary Reading:

Orlinsky, H., “The Septuagint and its Hebrew Text,” in Davies, W. D. and L. Finkelstein, eds., *The Cambridge History of Judaism, vol. 2: The Hellenistic Age*, pp. 534–562.

Questions to Consider:

1. The Septuagint emerged as the accepted version of the Scriptures for the early Christian church, while many Jews continued to read the Old Testament in the original Hebrew. How do you think this played out in early polemics between the two communities, and what arguments would have been employed by each of the two sides?
2. If Jews in Judea read their Bible in Hebrew, and Jews in the Hellenistic Diaspora read theirs in Greek, did this create significant gaps, and even tension, between the two sections of the Jewish community?

Lecture Eight

Adding to the Bible—The Apocrypha

Scope: In its final form, the Septuagint includes not only the earliest complete translation of the Bible, but also 14 or 15 texts not found in the Old Testament. These are commonly referred to as the Apocrypha (Latin for “hidden”). Almost all these additional works were produced after the books of the Hebrew Bible, either in the last two centuries B.C.E. or the 1st century C.E. Otherwise there is really very little that they all have in common. Some are of a distinctly historical nature, such as I and II Maccabees; others, while purporting to present historical episodes, are in fact fictional novels with heavy moralistic agendas. These include the books of Tobit, Judith, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon. Two other books, Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon, are works of Wisdom, much in the style of the biblical Proverbs or Ecclesiastes.

Outline

- I. The Septuagint is far more than a Greek rendition of the Hebrew Bible. Its books are arranged differently, and it contains an additional collection of works produced by Jews which are not included in the Hebrew canon.
 - A. The three components of the Hebrew Bible—Torah, Prophets, and Writings—are arranged according to the chronological order of their canonization. Jewish tradition ascribed varying degrees of divine inspiration to each of the sections; the earlier the canonization, the greater the sanctity.
 - B. The Septuagint follows a different system of organization, based on genre rather than historical stages:
 1. Legal and historical works (beginning with the Torah)
 2. Poetry and wisdom
 3. Prophets
 - C. Within each of these sections the arrangement of the books differs from that of the Hebrew Bible.
 - D. In addition to the books of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint also includes 15 books that are not part of the Hebrew canon.
- II. These additional books are commonly referred to as the Apocrypha.
 - A. The word “apocrypha” means “hidden” in Greek. A secret text might be of some esoteric nature, to be read only by those worthy, equipped with special knowledge or proper spiritual behavior. Conversely, the fact that some books were “hidden” may suggest some problematic aspect that precluded their canonization.
 - B. It is not clear why the 15 books added in the Septuagint to the Hebrew Bible were designated as “apocryphal,” since there are no hidden or esoteric elements in most of them. Some are historical or quasi-historical, with the latter purporting to relate some real episode while in fact being works of fiction that contain moral lessons.
 - C. Of the two “Books of Wisdom” in the Apocrypha, the more widely circulated appears to be the Wisdom of Ben Sira, written in Hebrew c. 190–180 B.C.E. by Joshua Ben Sira; it is one of the very few Second Temple books whose author is known by name.
 1. While Ben Sira maintains high regard for sacrifice as a primary mode of worship, he introduces the pursuit of wisdom as the ultimate quest. Ben Sira is possibly the first to attest to the establishment of Jewish student circles around a teacher, and his phrase for school, *Bet-Midrash*, came to be used as the name for the rabbinic academies.
 2. The “fathers” for whom Ben Sira has the greatest praise are those who were “wise in their words of instruction.”
 3. Ben Sira recognizes that all members of society need wisdom, but he does not call for the democratization of learning that will become evident under the rabbis centuries later.
 4. In contrast to the Greek notion of fate, Ben Sira warns that man is responsible for his actions and that God takes note of one’s sins—two principles that emerge in later rabbinic Judaism.
 5. Ben Sira paints a picture of Jewish life as seen by its upper class, and reveals the class tensions that spread through Jewish society prior to the Maccabean uprising.
 - D. A unique literary genre found in the Apocrypha consists of additions to existing biblical stories.

1. The book of Daniel describes how three Jews (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) were thrown into a furnace after refusing to worship an image. The addition known as “The Prayer of Azariah” (Abednego’s Hebrew name) and the “Song of the Three Young Men” describes the way they may have prayed for their salvation.
 2. Another addition to Daniel is the “book of Susanna,” 63 verses that have been called the earliest detective story ever written, featuring a pious and beautiful woman falsely accused of adultery.
 3. Greek additions to the story of Esther elaborate on details that add to the drama, but also insert prayers where they must (or “should”) have taken place.
- III.** The most important sources for the dramatic events of the 2nd century B.C.E. in Judea are I and II Maccabees, which describe the events from two radically different perspectives.
- A. I Maccabees was written in Hebrew, in Judea, and describes events from the ascension of Antiochus IV Epiphanes to the Seleucid throne in 175 B.C.E., through the establishment of an independent Jewish state in 141 B.C.E., ending in 135 B.C.E. It reads almost as an official account of the Maccabean uprising, and assumes the reader knows the Bible. The book is overtly political, and reaches its crescendo with the nation’s recognizing the Hasmonean dynasty as its rightful leaders.
 - B. II Maccabees was written in Greek by a Jewish author living in the Hellenistic Jewish Diaspora. While I Maccabees proudly projects a willingness to take up arms and fight for a restoration of Jewish religious practices, II Maccabees is one of the first Jewish books to articulate an ideology of martyrdom. The series of martyr stories includes some of the earliest explicit references in Jewish literature to a belief in resurrection.
 - C. II Maccabees, the more “devout” of the two books, was written in Greek in the accepted style of Hellenistic historiography. Influenced by the norms of Greek literary practice, the author aims to shock, employs pathos to stir his reader whenever possible, and is well versed in the use of speeches.
 - D. II Maccabees is the first book to employ the terms “Hellenism” and “Judaism.” The author sees the Maccabean war as a clash between two cultures rather than a war between nations.
- IV.** Why did these books, written by devout Jews, remain outside the Hebrew canon? No conclusive answer exists, save for the fact that they were written after the books that did make it into the canon. Many of the noncanonical books address new realities of the Second Temple period and focus on dilemmas for which the Old Testament could not provide practical solutions, such as how Jews could continue to live as Jews in the Diaspora.

Essential Reading:

Nickelsburg, G. W. E., *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishna*.
 Skehan, P. and A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*.

Supplementary Reading:

Delcor, M., “The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Hellenistic Period,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, vol. 2: The Hellenistic Age*, pp. 409–503.
 Stone, M. E. ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, pp. 33–84; 171–183; 283–313.

Questions to Consider:

1. The books of the Apocrypha, attached to the Greek Bible, were never formally recognized as sacred by the Jewish community. Catholics came to consider these books “deuterocanonical” (comprising a secondary canon), but Protestants preferred the designation “apocryphal,” suggesting a lesser degree of sanctity. Do you think that historians of different religious persuasions attributed different degrees of historical veracity to these books (e.g. I and II Maccabees), based on their religious affiliations?
2. The book of Ben Sira is one of the very few books written by a Judean Jew in Hebrew for which the author’s name is given. Why do you think most books written at this time were produced anonymously or with false attribution (pseudepigrapha), while Ben Sira chose to identify himself as the author of his work?

Lecture Nine

Tobit—A New Path of Righteousness

Scope: One of the books of the Apocrypha, the book of Tobit, is not only a delightful novel on the merits of righteousness, in many ways it points to a new or reinforced set of religious and ethical values that became particularly relevant for Jews in the Second Temple period. Living in the Mesopotamian Diaspora, Tobit and his son Tobias exemplify the way Jews, no longer living in proximity to the Temple and able to serve God through sacrificial worship, can nevertheless adhere to the biblical Commandments incumbent on all members of the faith. No less intriguing are the roles filled by the angel Raphael and the demon Asmodeus, as well as a series of supernatural subplots that accompany our heroes from start to finish. Until the 20th century the work was only known in the Greek versions of the Septuagint, but the discovery of Aramaic and Hebrew fragments of Tobit at Qumran suggest an Eastern provenance.

Outline

- I. The literature produced by Jews during the Second Temple period never doubted that complete adherence to all the commandments of the Torah was absolutely necessary, but many of these authors were also committed to universal aspects of ethical piety. Grafting the moral teachings of Judaism onto popular motifs of general folklore produced some of the most beautiful stories in the ancient Jewish library.
- II. One of the most popular books of the Apocrypha is the book of Tobit, which circulated widely in numerous ancient translations.
 - A. The book of Tobit is a charming story that delivers moral and practical lessons through a well-developed plot.
 1. The hero of the story is Tobit, whose name is derived from the Hebrew root *tov* (good). A Galilean from the tribe of Naphthali, Tobit was among the captives of the Ten Tribes who were transported by the Assyrian King Shalmaneser to Nineveh (c. 722 B.C.E.).
 2. In Nineveh, Tobit was made a purchasing agent in the court of the king, but his high position did not prevent him from acts of kindness toward his less fortunate brethren. When King Sennacherib succeeded Shalmaneser, Tobit was forced to flee, because the new king objected to Tobit's burial of the dead. Only after the king's assassination was Tobit restored to his position at the court.
 3. Because contact with a corpse renders one ritually impure, Tobit was once forced to sleep outdoors so as not to defile his house. Droppings from a sparrow fell on his eyes, blinding him. Physicians could not heal him, so his wife was forced to work to make ends meet. When he suspected her of stealing, the couple got into a nasty fight and Tobit begged God to take his life.
 4. Meanwhile, in Ecbatana in Media, another family of Israelite captives had its own troubles. Sarah, the daughter of Raguel, had been wed to seven husbands, all of whom had been slain by the demon Asmodeus before the marriages could be consummated. Scorned by her maids, Sarah also prayed to God to take her life.
 5. Tobit, remembering that money was owed him by a certain Gabael of Media, dispatched his son Tobias to collect the debt. Tobias was accompanied by a relative named Azarias, who, unknown to all, was really the healing angel Raphael.
 - B. Here the author inserts one of his central didactic exhortations, contained in Tobit's instructions to his departing son on what is possibly his deathbed. After an initial reminder to honor his soon-to-be widowed mother, Tobias is told to turn from all wrongdoing and immorality, to give food to the hungry and clothing to the naked, to love his brethren, and to marry a woman of his father's tribe.
 - C. After this first installment of moral instruction, the author returns to the story.
 1. Tobias and Raphael embark on their trip. Camping overnight near the Tigris River, Tobias is attacked by a giant fish. The angel helps Tobias catch the fish, then instructs him to cut it open and remove its heart, liver, and gall. The first two of these, the angel explains, are useful for fending off demons, while the gall can be used to heal blindness.
 2. When the travelers reach Ecbatana, the angel advises Tobias to marry Sarah. Tobias asks for her hand; her parents are overjoyed, but warn the prospective bridegroom about the menacing demon. The

- marriage begins, the groom is instructed to “take her according to the Law of Moses,” and the young couple is left together in a separate room.
3. The demon appears but is driven away by the smell of the burnt fish, and the young couple offers a beautiful prayer to God. On the morrow all are amazed that Tobias is still alive, and a 14-day marriage feast ensues.
 4. Tobias, Sarah, and Raphael start out for home, after Raphael retrieves the debt owed Tobit. Back at Nineveh, Tobit is overjoyed to be reunited with his son, who heals his father’s blindness by rubbing the gall of the fish on his eyes.
 5. Tobit wishes to pay Raphael for his services, still not realizing his companion’s true identity. The angel reveals himself and explains that it was only because of Tobit’s good deeds and prayers that everything turned out right.
- D. Tobit then offers a long prayer to God. The author of this prayer is possibly the first to suggest that the dispersion of Israel was not just a punishment for sins, but also a means of spreading the knowledge of God among the nations.
- E. In the final chapter, Tobit emerges as a prophet. He foresees the destruction of Nineveh and proclaims that the scattered of Israel will return from their captivity to rebuild Jerusalem and its Temple in splendor.
1. This final allusion to Jerusalem closes a circle, for Tobit begins the book by noting that he alone went to Jerusalem for the feasts and gave tithes to the priests at the altar, while other members of his tribe worshiped idols.
 2. Some scholars have suggested that these allusions to Jerusalem at the beginning and the end of the book are later additions. The author may have wanted to place what is essentially a Jewish family story into a broader historical and tribal context.
 3. What is striking is the instruction offered for maintaining a proper lifestyle in dispersion. Whereas in Jerusalem Tobit was strict about keeping the particular laws and rituals, he is far more attentive to ethics and a universal set of virtues when he instructs his son on his deathbed.
 4. Two other elements underscored in Tobit reappear elsewhere as mainstays of Jewish existence during the Second Temple period: the care to eat “kosher” food and the avoidance of intermarriage.
- F. Up to the 20th century, many scholars believed that the Greek version of the Septuagint preserved the original language, and thus it was assumed that Tobit was a product of the Hellenistic period.
1. At Qumran at least five Aramaic fragments of Tobit have been discovered, along with one Hebrew text. A consensus now exists that the original language of the book was Aramaic.
 2. The jury is still out on the dating and provenance of Tobit. Some of the folkloristic motifs incorporated in Tobit, such as the rewards of the “grateful dead” (buried by Tobit) and the “dangerous bride” who kills off all her husbands, are so widespread as to preclude any precise location.
 3. Some elements suggest a Persian provenance: Zoroastrians of the late Persian period considered the ground one of the sacred elements, not to be defiled by burying dead bodies therein. Hundreds of years later the Babylonian Talmud would encounter the same opposition to Jewish burial on the part of local Persian priests.
 4. The emphasis on outlawing intermarriage and encouraging endogamous relationships (marriage within the clan or extended family) may be understood in light of the subsequent self-identity of Babylonian Jews in the post-Second Temple era. The Jews of Persia were convinced they had preserved a genealogical pedigree superior to that of other Jewish communities, including Judea itself.
 5. The demon who killed off Sarah’s husbands goes by the Iranian name Asmodaeus, which means roughly “the demon of anger.” The same Asmodaeus appears hundreds of years later in the Babylonian Talmud (but not in the Palestinian Talmud).

Essential Reading:

Moore, C. A., *Tobit: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*.

Otzen, B., *Tobit and Judith*, pp. 2–66.

Supplementary Reading:

Fitzmeyer, J. A., *Tobit*.

Xeravits, G. G. and J. Zsengeller, eds., *The Book of Tobit: Text, Tradition, Theology*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think that the book of Tobit sets out primarily to provide answers for the unique dilemmas confronting Diaspora Jews, or is its focus on the new core values of Judaism in the post-biblical period?
2. Should Tobit be compared with the biblical book of Job, devoted primarily to a justification of God's frequently incomprehensible harsh treatment of the righteous (theodicy), or is it more a practical handbook on how Jews ought to conduct their daily lives?

Lecture Ten

Retelling the Bible—The Book of Jubilees

Scope: The canonization of the Bible opened the way for Jews to begin retelling the biblical stories, with new interpretations read into ancient characters and situations. One of the most impressive expansions of the biblical narrative is the revised rendition of Genesis and Exodus supplied by the 2nd century B.C.E. book of Jubilees. The title alludes to that book's system of dating biblical events according to cycles of seven and 49 years. In Jubilees, the commandments of the Torah, including even the celebration of Israel's festivals, were all carefully observed by the nation's biblical patriarchs—notwithstanding the fact that these holidays were intended to commemorate events that transpired hundreds of years later. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs represents a different genre of retelling, wherein a parent imparts deathbed wisdom and prophecy to his children. Beginning in the Hellenistic period, Jewish authors used these scenes to place their own aspirations into the mouths of dying biblical characters.

Outline

- I. Canonization of the Bible effected a dual process in the literary and religious development of Judaism. A designated corpus of books assumed sanctity, precluding an open-ended increase in the sacred collection. New theological concepts, as well as legal and ritual innovations, would now be read into the existing literature, attributed to personalities and texts that were above reproach.
 - A. The retelling of the Bible began within the biblical corpus itself, as when the author of Chronicles reworked the books of Samuel and Kings in line with his own political and religious priorities.
 - B. A few of the books of the Apocrypha also contain retellings of Biblical accounts, such as the Greek additions to Esther inserted to show God's active presence, which is missing in the biblical Esther.
 - C. Later in the Second Temple period, large sections of the biblical account were refashioned in line with a particular group's religious agenda, as in the book of Jubilees.
- II. The book of Jubilees rewrites the biblical story from the account of Creation (Genesis) until the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt (Exodus). When Moses went up to Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah, according to this author, he was granted an additional revelation, partially from God but primarily through the medium of an angel.
 - A. This historical account is organized into cycles of seven years ("weeks") and 49 years (jubilees).
 1. Noah's ark was built "in the 22nd jubilee of years, in the fifth week, in the fifth year" (Jub. 5:22). Abraham, the first Israelite patriarch, died "in the first week of the 44th jubilee in the second year" (of that week; Jub. 22:1).
 2. The revelation at Sinai took place after 49 jubilees, one week and two years from the creation of Adam. At Sinai, Moses is informed that the people of Israel still have 40 years to learn the Commandments; their entrance into the land of Canaan would thus take place precisely at the end of the 50th jubilee, the Jubilee of Jubilees.
 - B. The author of Jubilees adhered strictly to a solar calendar and vehemently opposed any reckoning of months based on lunar calculation.
 1. The Jewish calendar has historically functioned in a lunisolar fashion. The months of the Jewish calendar are lunar, based on the renewed conjunction of the moon with the sun. A lunar year (12 lunar months) extends to approximately 354 days.
 2. A solar year, determined by a complete circle of the earth around the sun, lasts for approximately 365 days. The 11-day differential is crucial.
 3. The seasons of the year are determined by the solar year. The holidays of the Jewish calendar commemorate the seasons and agricultural status of the fields. Passover, a spring festival, begins on the 15th of the lunar month of Nisan.
 4. If the yearly cycle were determined only by counting 12 lunar months, the first day of Passover would slowly creep back from spring into winter, at the rate of 11 days a year. To solve this problem, a 13th month is added to the Jewish calendar every few years, pushing Passover back into spring.

- C. For the author of Jubilees, solar reckoning was critical. The definition of a year as precisely 52 weeks of seven days not only allows for four equal seasons of 13 weeks, but determines that holidays will always fall on the same day of the week. Scholars are divided on whether the solar calendar embraced in Jubilees ever functioned as the determining one in either the First or Second Temple periods.
- III.** The biblical account presented in Jubilees embellishes the original story, presenting the patriarchs as models of virtue and strict observers of the Mosaic Law. Such embellishment is similar to the homiletic activity of the rabbis centuries later known as *midrash*.
- A.** One characteristic of *midrash*, applied throughout Jubilees, is the updating of the biblical account and its insertion into the present; for example, the patriarchs follow the commandments even before they are given by God to Moses at Sinai.
1. The laws of purity after childbirth are already being kept by Adam and Eve.
 2. Abraham celebrates the feast of Tabernacles (commemorating the booths built in the desert following the exodus from Egypt, which took place hundreds of years later); Ishmael and Isaac likewise celebrate the festival of Shavu'ot (Pentecost).
 3. Levi, the progenitor of the priestly clan that would serve in the Tabernacle and Temple, already fills the role of priest in the days of his father Jacob.
- B.** The patriarchs not only keep the laws of the Torah, they speak its language as well.
1. Abraham returns to the use of the Hebrew language, "the tongue of creation," and copies his father's books, also written in Hebrew.
 2. Prior to the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, not only do Adam and Eve speak Hebrew, but "all the beasts and cattle and birds ... used to speak with one another with one speech and one language" (3:28), and apparently that language too was Hebrew.
- C.** Jubilees attributes all sorts of exemplary behavior to the patriarchs. For example, at the age of 14, Abraham separates from his father Terah "so that he may not worship idols with him," and some years later he burns down a house of idols.
- D.** In typical Hellenistic fashion, later embraced by the rabbis in *midrash*, Jubilees loves to insert details into the text.
1. The author knows the names of all the wives married to the descendants of Adam.
 2. Noah's Ark rests on the top of Lubar, one of the mountains of Ararat.
 3. Cain is punished by having his house collapse on him: "He was killed by its stones because he killed Abel with a stone" (4:31).
- IV.** The book of Jubilees evinces strict adherence to all the Mosaic laws.
- A.** The author stresses that God did not sanctify any other people to keep the Sabbath.
- B.** Numerous other laws and prohibitions emphasized by Jubilees are understood as a means for separating Israel from the nations.
1. Jews are forbidden to uncover themselves as the gentiles do.
 2. Jews must not eat with gentiles or have any marital ties with them.
 3. The author knows that a time will come when the people of Israel "will not circumcise their sons," thereby making themselves "like the gentiles" (16:33–34).
- C.** Fragments of Jubilees found at Qumran have been dated to the early 1st century B.C.E., and references to the work in some of the Dead Sea Scrolls suggest the book of Jubilees was written somewhere in the mid-2nd century B.C.E.
- D.** While there is an affinity between Jubilees and some of the central beliefs of the Dead Sea Sect, nothing in Jubilees suggests the author is part of a breakaway group or a priest with no access to the Temple and Jerusalem.
- V.** Another popular literary genre focused on last testaments in the Bible, wherein a parent imparts deathbed wisdom and prophecy to his children. Beginning in the Hellenistic period, Jewish authors used these scenes to place their own aspirations into the mouths of dying biblical characters. The most important of these works are the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.
- A.** The conclusion of Genesis describes how Jacob blessed his 12 sons just prior to his death: "Come together that I may tell you what is to befall you in days to come."

- B. Authors of the Second Temple period Testaments assumed that each of the 12 sons must have emulated his father in blessing his tribe just prior to his own death. They employed poetic license in writing these Testaments of the Patriarchs.
- C. In most of these works, the first portion presents a historical retrospective of the hero's life based on the biblical account. This is followed by ethical and moral enhancements drawn from each son's own experience.
- D. The third element in the Testaments is prophetic. The dying father informs his sons of the ensuing pattern that will mark their future: They will sin, be punished or scattered abroad, and ultimately be restored or saved.
 - 1. A number of Testaments single out Levi and Judah as the two prominent tribes. The prominence of Levi probably derives from the enhanced position of the priesthood in Second Temple times, especially when the Hasmonean priests assumed political as well as religious authority. The Testaments connect each of these two tribes with a messianic figure, suggesting there may be two messiahs: a royal one from the House of David (Judah) and a priestly one from the Levite tribe.
 - 2. The messianic hopes expressed in the Testaments are often accompanied by a description of the future resurrection.
 - 3. The version of the Testaments in our possession clearly underwent a Christian revision. The dual messiah becomes one ("From the lineage of Judah and Levi"; Test. of Benjamin, 11:2) as Christ.

Essential Reading:

Vanderkam, J. C., *The Book of Jubilees*.

Wintermute, O. S. "Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction," in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, pp. 35–142.

Supplementary Reading:

Stone, M., ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, pp. 89–156.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you think it was so important for the author of Jubilees to project the Patriarchs as having already known, and kept, all the commandments of the Torah, which had yet to be revealed in their time? Many years later the rabbis, in their post-Temple literature known as *midrash*, will also present the Patriarchs as devoted to the study of Torah. Do you think their reasons were different from those of Jubilees?
2. Jubilees is one of numerous examples wherein post-biblical authors retold the Bible. Do you think there were any limits on this sort of embellishment, or did these authors feel free to add whatever they wished?

Lecture Eleven

Revealing the Unknown

Scope: In classical biblical prophecy, God's messages and plans for the future were delivered through the medium of a prophet. By the late Persian or early Hellenistic period, Jews believed that ongoing prophecy in its biblical form had been discontinued. But mankind's thirst for knowledge of the innermost secrets of the world was not quenched, and this information was now supplied by a new literary genre, known as apocalyptic writing (from the Greek, "to reveal" or "uncover"). The authors of these works, as opposed to the prophets of the Bible, rarely claim to have been privy to revelations by God, but instead are usually informed by some sort of angelic intermediary or have a vision explained to them by one of the angels. Some of these visions are cosmological, revealing secrets of the universe and of nature. Others relate to the historical realm of God's plans, whether on a national level with their implications for the future of the people of Israel, or on a universal scale.

Outline

- I. In classical biblical prophecy, God's messages and plans for the future were revealed through the medium of a prophet, whose messages were revealed to them directly by God.
 - A. In addition to uncovering God's plans for the future, the prophet's message tended also to encourage people to repent and change their behavior.
 1. Ezekiel quotes God explicitly on this: "It is not my desire that the wicked [person] shall die, but that the wicked turn from his [evil] ways and live" (Ezek. 33:11).
 2. The behavior demanded by God through his prophet sometimes related to a particular political position, and in these cases the message required total clarity, without any mystical symbolism to obscure what it was that God required.
 - B. By the late Persian or early Hellenistic period, Jews began to accept that ongoing prophecy in its biblical form had ceased. Knowledge about the future and the innermost secrets of the world would henceforth be supplied by a new literary genre, known as apocalypse.
 1. "Apocalypse" is a Greek word meaning "to reveal" or "uncover," and the revelation in this type of literature usually involved the disclosure of secrets relating to the nature of the world or some future event.
 2. Scholars sometimes use the term "apocalypse" to describe a literary genre, while others employ it as a religious attitude dealing with the end of time and history.
 3. While biblical prophets imparted their messages through the spoken word delivered openly to the public, apocalyptic revelations were produced as literature. Their authors usually hid behind assumed identities, attributing their writings to respected figures of the biblical period such as Enoch, Moses, Baruch, and Ezra. Such false attributions are commonly called "pseudepigrapha."
 4. Although some scholars refer to "the Pseudepigrapha" as a fixed collection of works, there is no formal collection.
 5. Anonymity might have been a wise choice for some writers whose work clearly attacked people in positions of power, but this theory cannot explain all the cases of pseudoepigraphical attribution.
- II. The apocalyptic book of Daniel purports to describe events of the Babylonian period, but was clearly completed much later, in the days of the Maccabean uprising (167 B.C.E.).
 - A. The first part of the book describes how Daniel and three companions were brought up in the court of the Babylonian kings and remained steadfast in their adherence to Judaism even at the price of suffering a series of life-threatening punishments. The second section contains a series of visions revealed to Daniel, some using the symbolism of animals to describe different rulers or kingdoms. The Hellenistic realities of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires are described by allusions to "the kingdom of the north" and "the kingdom of the south."
 1. Antiochus IV invaded Egypt for the second time in 168 B.C.E., only to be forced to retreat by a blunt ultimatum issued to him by the Romans. During his retreat back to Syria, riots broke out in Jerusalem. Syrian forces were dispatched to the city and introduced pagan rites into the Jewish Temple.

2. According to Daniel: “At the appointed time he will again invade the south, but the second time will not be like the first. . . . Forces will be levied by him; they will desecrate the Temple, the fortress; they will abolish the regular offering and set up the appalling abomination” (Dan. 11:29–31).
- B.** These events were already known to the author’s contemporaries, but they were presented as a prophecy of the future to enhance the credentials of the seer.
1. Daniel provides a series of dates for an ultimate redemption. In one case, the angel Gabriel informs him “precisely” how many years must pass before a new era of eternal righteousness will begin.
 2. Daniel goes on to talk about the appearance of an anointed leader or messianic figure. Such eschatological prophecy became a staple of apocalyptic literature throughout the Second Temple period.
- C.** Apocalyptic visions were often linked to early biblical figures. The most popular of these was Enoch, who met an atypical death:
- “Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, for God took him” (Gen. 5:24). Otherworldly revelations were deemed suitable for a figure like Enoch, whereas wisdom literature would more naturally be attributed to Solomon as the alleged author.
- D.** Two books, commonly designated I Enoch and II Enoch, are products of the Second Temple period. A third book, III Enoch, is a much later work of Jewish mysticism, and can be dated to the 5th or 6th century C.E. I Enoch had the greatest impact on subsequent generations.
1. I Enoch is the oldest of the books attributed to Enoch. The text itself was considered lost by the Middle Ages, but in the 18th century it was discovered, preserved by the Abyssinian Church in translation to Ethiopic from an earlier Greek text. The book was originally written either in Hebrew or Aramaic.
 2. In its earliest stages, I Enoch was a composite of numerous works, some dating to as early as the 3rd century B.C.E. The book begins with Enoch imparting “a holy vision from the heavens which the angels showed me.”
 3. Enoch addresses some of the most central religious ideas of all faiths, such as the origin of evil. Based on chapter six of Genesis, Enoch goes into great detail about the fall of the angels, the illegitimacy of their relations with humans, and their dissemination of damaging knowledge, such as how to prepare weapons of destruction. Enoch is one of the earliest Jewish works to introduce a bevy of angels in God’s service, appointed to carry out specific missions on His behalf.
 4. At one stage, Enoch himself serves as negotiator between the fallen angels and God, traveling between heaven and earth. His journey takes him throughout the universe, where he sees the cornerstones of creation, the pillars of heaven, the throne of God, and the final place of judgment for the evil spirits.
 5. I Enoch had a profound effect on messianic imagery and the various expectations of events destined for “the last day.” The messiah in Enoch is understood as a primordial being who will ultimately pass judgment on all beings.
 6. The Day of Judgment is one of the most important messages of I Enoch: “Earth shall be rent asunder, and all that is upon the earth shall perish. And there shall be judgment upon all, including the righteous. To all the righteous he will grant peace . . . (but) he will destroy the wicked and censure all flesh on account of everything they have done.”
 7. Enoch and Daniel are the first books in Jewish tradition to elaborate on a judgment after death leading to an ultimate resurrection, although the groundwork had been laid by earlier books.
 8. This belief would begin to play a decisive role in Judaism; by the mid-2nd century B.C.E. martyrs described in II Maccabees sacrificed themselves in the knowledge that their bodies would be restored to them. The belief in resurrection would soon emerge as a cardinal tenet among certain groups of Jews, ultimately to be embraced by the post-Temple rabbis as one of the supreme articles of the Jewish faith. It also assumed a central role within the Christian Church.
 9. Calendar and chronology also played major roles in apocalyptic literature. Enoch, like Jubilees, subscribed to a solar calendar of 364 days.
 10. Writers of the Second Temple period plotted out a detailed future history, believing they were creeping ever closer to the end of days. The Dead Sea Sect seems to have believed that they were at the very edge of the last stage of history.

Essential Reading:

Collins, J. J., *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*.

Stone, M. E., "Apocalyptic Literature," in Stone, M. E., ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, pp. 383–441.

Supplementary Reading:

Charlesworth, J. H., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*.

Nielsburg, G. W. E., *1 Enoch 1*.

Questions to Consider:

1. The prophets of the Hebrew Bible and the authors of apocalyptic literature in the Second Temple period seem to have had different motivations for producing their literature. Can you cite or suggest some of these differences?
2. What effect on human behavior might a belief in an imminent apocalyptic reshaping of this world have had? Do you think that a belief in these apocalyptic projections affected the early Christians in a different manner than the influence these visions had over broad segments of the Jewish population?

Lecture Twelve

“Judaism” or “Judaisms”?

Scope: During the Second Temple period, access to biblical texts and related literature created a plurality of opinions on almost every aspect of theological reflection. Literature produced in these times reveals practical as well as ideological divisions between groups. All the differences notwithstanding, the vast majority of the Jewish people in Judea as well as the Diaspora ascribed to some common principles, including the existence of a single God who acted in history, a single Temple in Jerusalem as the focal point of religious activity, and a law given by God to Moses to govern human behavior. Most Jews observed the Sabbath, gathering in synagogues to hear the law read. As Judaism evolved into a religion “of the book” and became more accessible, diversity of opinion naturally increased. Religious disputes led to sectarianism, with each group convinced that it alone observed the law properly.

Outline

- I. Why do we encounter such a wide variety of Jewish groups, or even sects, precisely at this stage of Jewish history? This question relates not only to the nature of Judaism as it was developing, but bears enormous implications for the emergence of Christianity from within the Jewish community and its religion.
- II. The vibrancy and variety of Jewish literary activity in post-biblical times reflect the social and religious vitality that marks Jewish development in the Second Temple period, but serious divisions within the Jewish people were apparent at almost every stage.
 - A. In the Persian period, Jewish returnees from Babylon considered the various local groups they encountered upon their return to Zion to be the impure “people of the land,” contaminated by intermarriage.
 - B. In the Hellenistic era, those who adhered to the traditional practices and beliefs of post-biblical Judaism were socially divided from the Hellenized factions of the Jewish population who pushed for greater assimilation into the “new world” established by Alexander the Great and his successors. This conflict, no less than the religious persecution inflicted by the Seleucid monarchy, pushed Judean Jewry into a prolonged military confrontation with the Hellenistic Empire that ruled over much of the Near East.
 - C. Literature produced in post-biblical times reveals ideological and practical divisions between certain groups, such as the dispute over the use of lunar and solar calculations to regulate the calendar and thereby determine when festivals would be celebrated.
 - D. How cohesive was the Judaism of Second Temple times? Can we assume that the hard core of the Jewish religion was relatively uniform, with only minor disputes among different factions about the details? Or were the divisions so deep that it might be more correct to talk about “Judaisms” at this time?
- III. One popular school of thought among scholars today maintains that, all the differences notwithstanding, it would be accurate to refer to a “common Judaism” to which the vast majority of the Jewish people in Judea as well as the Diaspora ascribed.
 - A. Most Jews appear to have accepted the existence of a God who acts in history and is different from the pantheon of pagan deities worshiped in much of the ancient world. Some syncretistic expressions were apparent among Jews, especially in the Persian period and in certain isolated cases among Hellenistic Jewish authors, but the predominant belief of Jews was monotheistic.
 - B. Jews believed in the Law given by God to Moses, which they were to obey. They accepted their books as sacred scripture, although some divisions emerged among different groups as to how the Law was to be interpreted. As the Second Temple period progressed, more and more Jews expressed a willingness to die for the Law.
 - C. Jews in Judea and the Diaspora looked toward a single Temple in Jerusalem as the focal point of their religious activity, where the centralized worship of the one God was maintained by a support system that functioned throughout the Jewish world.
 - D. Jews gathered in synagogues to hear the Law read and explained. At some stage, synagogues also began to function as places for prayer, as an additional means of worship alongside the sacrificial mode practiced in the Jerusalem Temple.

- E. Gathering in synagogues took place mainly on the Sabbath, and the maintenance of the Sabbath appears to have been one of the most recognizable signs of a person's Jewish connection.
 - F. Jews practiced circumcision of their sons, and attempts to hide this fact would be considered apostasy.
 - G. Jews adhered to the laws of purity listed in the Scriptures. Contracting impurity would limit the possibility of entering the Temple or eating portions of the Temple sacrifices. Impurity was also associated with a woman's menstrual period, during which time sexual relations were forbidden.
 - H. The Scriptures regulated what foods could be eaten by Jews. Certain animals are permitted, based on a series of signs (those that chew the cud and have cloven hoofs), while most others are forbidden. Even among the permissible animals, certain portions of the animal are forbidden, such as the blood and fatty portions.
- IV. The recognition of these criteria as the basis for the existence of a "common Judaism" can be found not only in Jewish texts of the Second Temple period, but also in works attributed to Greek and Latin authors.
- A. A text attributed to Hecataeus of Abdera, a Greek author writing around 300 B.C.E., attributes to Moses the following: "He had no images whatsoever of the gods made for them, being of the opinion that God is not in human form; rather that Heaven that surrounds the earth is alone divine, and rules the universe."
 - B. One of the earliest references to the Jewish Sabbath by a non-Jewish author may be found in the words of Agatharcides of Cnidus, a 2nd century B.C.E. Hellenistic historian: "The people known as Jews, who inhabit the most strongly fortified of cities, called by the natives Jerusalem, have a custom of abstaining from work every seventh day; on those occasions they neither bear arms nor take any agricultural operations in hand, nor engage in any other form of public service, but pray with outstretched hands in the temples until the evening."
 - C. Horace, the famous Roman poet (1st century B.C.E.), alludes in one of his works to a specific day being the Sabbath, on which he must refrain from doing something lest he offend "the circumcised Jews."
 - D. Tacitus, the noted Roman historian (56 C.E.–120 C.E.), cites a number of signs that scholars consider components of the Common Judaism of antiquity, including abstaining from pork, resting on the seventh day, and avoiding sexual contact with outsiders.
- V. The existence of a "common Judaism" notwithstanding, all sorts of Jewish groups and ideologies flourished in Second Temple times. What elements in the Judaism of the post-biblical period might have contributed to such a diverse Jewish self-identity? Why were there so many disputes between different Jewish groups on how to carry out the practical requirements of the Torah?
- A. While the Temple and its ritual worship provided a unifying force in Jewish life, Judaism was slowly evolving into a religion focused on the Law and sacred scripture, a religion of "the book." Beginning with Ezra and Nehemiah, an alternative authority structure emerged, based not on lineage or proximity to the Temple but on knowledge of the Scriptures. As more Jews gained access to those sacred texts, a greater diversity of interpretation was to be expected. A number of scholars claim that it is precisely at this time that more and more Jews learned how to read.
 - B. New criteria for Jewish identity in the Second Temple period contributed to a plurality of opinions and groups. In the biblical period, Israelite identity was defined primarily through ethnic background, but by the Second Temple period it was possible to become Jewish by a process of conversion.
 - C. The development of Judaism into a religion, or way of life, encouraged a variety of opinions as to what that way required. Religious disputes led to sectarianism, with each group convinced that it alone observed the Law properly and was thus worthy of recognition as the true Israel.
 - D. By the Hasmonean period, identifiable groups of Jews were divided on a whole series of ritual issues as well as issues surrounding central matters of faith.

Essential Reading:

Dunn, J. D. G., *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism, and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, pp. 18–36.

Sanders, E. P., *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 B.C.E.–66 C.E.*, pp. 45–303.

Supplementary Reading:

Neusner, J., *The Way of Torah: An Introduction to Judaism*, pp. xi–xvii.

Questions to Consider:

1. Does the fact that certain divisions existed among Jews in post-biblical times, such as the degree of their Hellenization or the varying systems of calendrical calculation that they embraced, warrant the claim that we are confronted by different “Judaisms”?
2. Our notion of a “common Judaism” in antiquity seems to be supported by the descriptions or references to Jews in Greco-Roman literature. Do you think that these descriptions are the result of firsthand knowledge and close contacts with Jews, and might they possibly have been colored by certain ideological agendas?

Lecture Thirteen

Sectarianism—Pharisees and Sadducees

Scope: At some stage of Hasmonean rule in Judea, distinct divisions within the larger body of the Jewish community emerged, according to Josephus Flavius, the Jewish historian of the late Second Temple period. He refers to three of these groups as Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, but uses a somewhat ambiguous terminology in defining the nature of the groups as “schools of thought.” While they embraced different opinions about God’s relationship to this world, it is clear that they were no less divided along political and social lines of demarcation. Complicating matters even more, at least two of these groups are also mentioned in rabbinic and Christian sources, with each literary corpus projecting different aspects of the respective group’s identity or behavior. The Pharisees and Sadducees were not sects in the modern sense of the term, in that neither of them separated from the larger Jewish community.

Outline

- I. By the mid-2nd century B.C.E. the Jews of Judea, led by the priestly Hasmonean family, succeeded in attaining political freedom from the Seleucid Hellenistic empire. First, traditional worship in Jerusalem was restored to the Temple, ending the brief introduction of pagan rites into the Jewish sanctuary (164 B.C.E.). This stage was accompanied by the nullification of religious persecution inflicted by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, but total sovereignty was only achieved two decades later, in 141 B.C.E.
 - A. No heightened sense of communal unity accompanied the revived Jewish national polity.
 1. Writing in Greek just after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., Josephus notes there are three sects among the Jews (Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes), who have different opinions concerning human actions.
 2. The translation of the Greek *haeresis* (“school of thought”) as “sect” is not quite accurate. Two of the three groups mentioned by Josephus, the Pharisees and Sadducees, continued to function within the larger society of Second Temple Jewry.
 3. The three most important sources on the ideological and social features of these groups are the writings of Josephus, the New Testament, and rabbinic sources.
 4. All three of the above sources were produced generations after the initial appearance of the groups cited by Josephus, and each had a specific agenda.
 5. Josephus, writing for a Greek-reading audience, was interested in projecting the different schools of Jewish thought as “philosophies,” noting their disputes on issues of human affairs and the nature of the soul. The New Testament, with its social and moral calling, referred to Pharisees and Sadducees within the context of their influence among the people at large. Rabbinic sources reflected on the legal and ritual disputes that divided the groups.
 6. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in the mid-20th century, also represent a major source of information on the different groups.
 - B. In noting philosophical differences between the various schools of thought, Josephus writes that the Pharisees say some but not all events are the work of Fate, while Essenes believe that Fate is the mistress of all things. The Sadducees do away with Fate altogether, believing that all things lie within human control.
 1. The Pharisaic belief in a just system of divine reward or punishment rested on the assumption that man has at least a share in the process that determines his choice of action.
 2. According to the Pharisees, souls survive death. There are rewards and punishments “under the earth”; evil souls are imprisoned eternally and good souls are given easy passage to a new life.
 3. This system of theodicy (justification of God’s dealings with man) continues Ben Sira’s line of thought in relation to free will. But unlike the Pharisees and the rabbis who came after them, Ben Sira did not articulate a belief in the hereafter, wherein human beings would be recompensed for their actions.
 4. The Sadducees, according to Josephus, believed that man has free will and that the soul perishes with the body. In his comparison of the various Jewish groups with the noted Hellenistic philosophies of the day, the Pharisaic belief in a soul that survives death resembles the Stoic philosophy, whereas the Sadducean denial of such ongoing life for the soul reflects the teachings of the Epicureans.

5. Pharisees and Sadducees disputed not only the issue of continuing life for the soul after death, but also resurrection for the worthy. According to the Book of Acts, the Sadducees did not believe in any kind of resurrection, “neither angel, nor spirit,” but the Pharisees embraced both.
 6. Unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees believed that the written Law of Moses was accompanied by an oral tradition which interpreted and elucidated the entire Torah. This principle—that the written Torah is accompanied by an oral Torah transmitted from generation to generation, preserved and taught by an unbroken chain of spiritual leaders going all the way back to Moses—was a central tenet of rabbinic Judaism, and post-Temple rabbis considered themselves to be contemporary links in that ongoing chain.
- II.** The social background of these groups is far from clear.
- A. Most scholars believe the name “Sadducee” derives from Zadok, the name of the chosen high priest in the days of Solomon, and by the late First Temple period the “sons of Zadok” became synonymous with legitimate priests. The Qumran group also stressed its Zadokite lineage.
 - B. Josephus presents the Sadducees as an aristocratic group, comprised of priests or those with strong marital connections to that social class. The Sadducees had no following among the populace, while the Pharisees had the support of the masses.
 - C. The Pharisees were a significant factor in Jewish society, making them a primary target of polemics in the Gospels: According to Matthew, they occupied the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogue.
 - D. The two ideological parties reflect the dual sources of authority in the Second Temple period. Those of priestly pedigree derived power and social position from the central position of the Temple and the priesthood in Jewish life throughout this era.
 - E. The Pharisees clearly gained power from the enhanced position of the Law, its observance and interpretation, as a definitive blueprint of Jewish life and faith.
 - F. Later rabbinic literature suggests that the Pharisees controlled life and ritual service in the Temple, but there is a trend in such literature to present its system of beliefs and practices as the normative Jewish model of all prior generations.
 1. Rabbinic literature lists a number of disputes between Pharisees and Sadducees, mostly revolving around laws of ritual purity, which had a direct impact on Temple procedure.
 2. One of the Qumran texts, known as the Halakhic Letter, lists 22 legal disputes the author had with those in control of Temple procedure at the time. Many of them attribute to the controlling faction in Jerusalem precisely those opinions maintained later by the rabbis and their spiritual predecessors, the Pharisees, while the author of the letter seems to embrace positions attributed by the rabbis to the Sadducees.
- III.** The Pharisees and Sadducees were not sects in the modern sense of the term. One did not join either of these groups, and neither of them separated from the larger community.
- A. Both groups were involved in the political activity of the period, and the reigning Jewish leaders during the Hasmonean period entered into coalitions with each group at various times.
 - B. Under at least two Hasmonean leaders, John Hyrcanus I (135–104 B.C.E.) and Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 B.C.E.), the Sadducees appear to have played a major role in the royal court and the city of Jerusalem.
 - C. Jannaeus’s widow, Salome Alexandra (76–67 B.C.E.), chose to align herself with the Pharisees.
 - D. According to the book of Acts, both groups were represented in the Jerusalem council known as the Sanhedrin when Paul was brought before that body. A few years later, just prior to the outbreak of the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66 C.E., some Pharisaic leaders tried (unsuccessfully) to convince the revolutionaries of the futility of war against the mighty Roman Empire.
 - E. This ongoing involvement in the social and political life of the larger Jewish community was totally shunned by a third group of Jews, known as the Essenes, who were quite likely connected to some of the scrolls found at Qumran in the mid-20th century.

Essential Reading:

Cohen, S., *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, pp. 119–166.

Schiffman, L. H., "Jewish Sectarianism in Second Temple Times," in Jospe, R. and S. Wagner, eds., *Great Schisms in Jewish History*, pp. 1–46.

Supplementary Reading:

Baumgarten, A., *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation*.

Neusner, J., *From Politics to Piety*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Were the disputes between the Pharisees and Sadducees primarily of a legal, theological, or social and political nature? Do these differences warrant referring to Pharisees and Sadducees as "sects"?
2. The New Testament appears to aim the major thrust of its criticism at the Pharisees, although the beliefs of that group were quite close to those of the earliest Christians. Why do you think this is the case?

Lecture Fourteen

Out of the Caves—Discovery at Qumran

Scope: In the winter of 1947 a young Bedouin shepherd entered a cave south of Jericho, on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea, setting into motion the most spectacular archaeological discovery of the 20th century. The library discovered at Qumran contains far more than the sectarian literature commonly referred to as the Dead Sea Scrolls. The biblical manuscripts and fragments discovered at Qumran are far and away the earliest versions of the Hebrew Bible in our possession. Along with them, a wide range of books, primarily apocryphal or pseudepigraphical (and hitherto either totally unknown or preserved in translation), were now uncovered in their original Hebrew or Aramaic form. The third component of this library, and arguably the most fascinating, are the idiosyncratic writings of a unique group that appears to have embraced a sectarian lifestyle and concomitant eschatological mindset.

Outline

- I. The discovery of ancient manuscripts in caves just off the northwestern shores of the Dead Sea in 1947 set into motion a frenzy of scholarship, leading to the publication of many hundreds of books and thousands of articles, touching on almost every aspect of ancient Judaism and the rise of Christianity.
- II. When he described the three schools of thought that appeared during the Hasmonean period, Josephus devoted only a paragraph or two to the Pharisees and Sadducees, but devoted whole pages to the Essenes.
 - A. Both Josephus and Philo of Alexandria claimed that the Essenes numbered only around four thousand. Scattered around numerous settlements in Judea, they seem to have avoided the larger cities. The Roman author Pliny the Elder said the “solitary tribe” lived on the west side of the Dead Sea, north of Ein Gedi—extremely close to the site of Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered.
 - B. A person wishing to join the Essenes had to endure a three-year period of gradual initiation. Those allowed to join as full-fledged members took a series of oaths to observe piety towards God and justice towards men, to hate the unjust, and to reveal none of the secrets of the group to outsiders, even if tortured to death. Thereafter, it was forbidden to use God’s name to take oaths.
 - C. Only adult males joined the sect, which was celibate, but they adopted children and taught them to behave as sect members. Josephus notes that there was another group of Essenes that did take wives. Those who joined their ranks relinquished all private property to the sect.
 - D. A strict hierarchal administration ran the sect, and all earnings were handed over to officials who distributed funds according to the needs of each member.
 - E. The group was extremely particular about the laws of purity, and their lives were taken up with ritual ablutions. These preceded communal meals and followed any action that might have rendered a member impure, such as contact with outsiders. Because they believed that the laws of purity were not properly observed in the Temple of Jerusalem, they refrained from offering sacrifices at that site.
 - F. The Essenes were strict believers in fate or predestination, according to Josephus. Like the Pharisees, they believed in the immortality of the soul.
 - G. The Essenes did not survive the Great Revolt against Rome (66–73 C.E.). During the war, they withstood torture rather than blaspheme God or partake of forbidden food, according to Josephus.
- III. In the winter of 1947, a young Bedouin shepherd climbing the cliffs overlooking the northwest shore of the Dead Sea in search of a lost goat ventured into a cave where he found a row of jars; some were empty, while others contained scrolls wrapped in rags.
 - A. At first, seven scrolls were discovered; three were purchased by Professor Eleazar Sukenik of the Hebrew University. Four others were sold to the head of St. Mark’s Syrian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, and later offered for sale in the United States through an advertisement in *The Wall Street Journal*.
 - B. Following a cloak-and-dagger saga, these four scrolls were purchased by an Israeli archaeologist, Yigael Yadin (the son of Professor Sukenik), and ultimately found their way back to Jerusalem.
 - C. Within a short period of time, many hundreds of manuscripts and fragments were discovered in a series of caves at Qumran. More than 800 manuscripts have since come to light, with over 500 discovered in one

cave alone. Archaeological, paleographic, and carbon-dating evidence suggest that most of the texts were copied (but not necessarily composed) in the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.E. A very few manuscripts may predate that era, while a small number may have been written in the 1st century C.E.

IV. The caves contained three distinct types of literary material.

- A.** The first group of texts contains the most familiar material, namely portions from all the books of the Hebrew Bible, save from the book of Esther.
- B.** The second group of texts contains books heretofore referred to in our course as “apocryphal.” These works, like those of the Bible, were not originally produced by the sectarian group that lived at Qumran, but were either copied by them or brought to Qumran from unknown locations. Books such as Tobit, Enoch, Jubilees, and the Testaments of the Patriarchs that had been known only in translated versions (mostly Greek) now for the first time came to light in their Semitic originals, some in Hebrew and others in Aramaic.
- C.** The third kind of texts discovered at Qumran were original works produced by the group itself: beliefs maintained by the sect, rules for joining and living in its midst, its laws and prayers, and a unique type of biblical exegesis produced by the sect called a *peshet*.
 - 1.** Two texts in particular describe the rules of the community, the “Damascus Covenant” (or Zadokite Document) and the “Rule of the Community.”
 - 2.** The Damascus Covenant claims the group emerged upon the completion of 390 years of God’s wrath following the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem; this period was intended to be in accordance with a prophecy that appears in Ezekiel 4:5. Now representing those entering into a new covenant, the sect believed it was on the verge of a revolutionary stage of history defined by God’s reembracing of the people, a stage that had begun with the appearance of a new leader called the Teacher of Righteousness.
 - 3.** A copy of the Damascus Covenant was discovered in the late 19th century in what is known as the Cairo Genizah, a synagogue repository for discarded texts that served the Cairo community for hundreds of years.
 - 4.** The Damascus Covenant describes the communal lifestyle of the group and the role of an overseer who was responsible for accepting and teaching new recruits as well as regulating the commercial ties of the community with outsiders.
 - 5.** The Rule of the Community (or the Manual of Discipline) also contains the bylaws of the sect. Although the Damascus Covenant seems to allow for marriage, the Rule appears to require celibacy.
 - 6.** The Rule of the Community describes a general assembly of the sect known as the Council of the Many. The Council operated according to strict rules (no talking out of turn, no interrupting another member’s speech, and no spitting) and was responsible for examining and admitting new members. The Rule describes the communal meals of the group, the strict maintenance of purity, and a belief in predestination and dualism in which the forces of God are aligned against the forces of Belial, the lord of evil.
 - 7.** This dualistic vision of the world is laid out in another sectarian scroll, known as “The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness.” Only God’s intervention on the side of Light will ultimately determine the final outcome.
 - 8.** The sect produced a unique system of biblical exegesis known as the *peshet*. The *pesharim* were designed to show that biblical prophecy was unfolding in the contemporary world of history. Events alluded to by the prophets were taken to refer to particular people, but these are rarely named in the scrolls; instead they are known by names such as the Man of Lies, the Lion of Wrath, the Wicked Priest, or the Seekers of Smooth Things.
 - 9.** Some of the sect’s ideas can be found in other books of the Second Temple period. Following the book of Jubilees, the Qumran sect also embraced a solar calendar of 364 days, divided into exactly fifty-two weeks of seven days.
 - 10.** The bulk of the literary corpus found at Qumran predates the appearance of the first Christians, but many scholars have noted similarities in the two groups: the communal organization, the importance attached to baptism, the contemporizing exegesis (interpreting biblical prophecy in light of current realities), terms employed by the sect (such as “the New Covenant”), and the messianic imagery and vocabulary.

Essential Reading:

Schiffman, L., *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*.

VanderKam, J. C., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*.

Supplementary Reading:

Garcia Martinez, F. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*.

Vermes, G., *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why was the 20th century Christian world at first more interested than Jewish scholars in the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls?
2. The exegetical system employed by the sect and known as the *peshet* is critical for an understanding of the sect's self-image and its role in history. Can you explain why?

Lecture Fifteen

The End of Days—Messianic Eschatology

Scope: The post-biblical period introduced some major changes into the entire range of eschatological contemplation. Whereas the prophets spoke primarily of God administering a just system of rewards and punishments in this world, in Second Temple times the focus moved to a future world, or, regarding individuals, to a stage following death. The beneficiaries of this system of justice were no longer always the people of Israel alone, for it became obvious that all of mankind would naturally be affected by a sweeping revolution of the rules governing the entire cosmos. Alongside this utopian image of a new perfect world, beliefs in the ultimate restoration of Israel, led by an anointed king (messiah) from the House of David, were not totally abandoned. Many Jews continued to believe in a future (and possibly even imminent) ingathering of the tribes of Israel, accompanied by a restoration of Jerusalem and its Temple to their rightful status among the nations.

Outline

- I. Apocalyptic tendencies were already apparent in the last books of the Hebrew Bible, most notably the book of Daniel. Subsequent literature, such as the books of Enoch and Jubilees, continued to develop images of an impending “end of time.” Eschatological reflection became a staple of Second Temple Judaism.
 - A. Judaism and Christianity share a belief in a future world that will be radically different from current historical reality, but they developed this belief in different ways. Central to both religions was the belief that a descendant of the House of David known as the messiah would play a major role in a new world order.
 - B. The word “messiah” (*mashiah*) means “anointed” in Hebrew. The phrase is applied in the Hebrew Bible primarily as a designation for kings, although there are a few cases where the anointed figure is a High Priest. King David applied the title to his own person.
 - C. The House of David was not only anointed, it was also assured of the monarchy for all time, according to the prophet Nathan.
 - D. Later books of the Hebrew Bible stress the eternal choice of the Davidic line and apply wondrous imagery in describing the dynasty.
 - E. After the cessation of the Davidic monarchy with the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E., such prophecies were reiterated by Jeremiah.
 - F. The last prophets of the Hebrew Bible believed briefly that Zerubbabel (a Davidic descendant allowed by the Persians to return to Jerusalem) might represent the culmination of these messianic prophecies, but soon afterwards Zerubbabel was removed from the scene.
 - G. Biblical prophecy also produced the doctrine of “the day of the Lord,” a catastrophic end to the world as we know it, accompanied by a total elimination of evil from the new order. Biblical prophecy embraced this idea alongside messianic expectations, but the two beliefs were still independent of one another in the Hebrew Bible and up until the time of the Second Temple period.
- II. Although the seeds of a messianic idea had been planted in the Hebrew Bible, the idea played no active role in determining events on the ground until the latter portions of the Second Temple period.
 - A. Ben Sira, writing around 200–180 B.C.E., asked God to gather the tribes of Jacob and to have mercy on Jerusalem, but he did not himself link these phenomena to a messianic leader nor even to the re-establishment of the Davidic monarchy. For Ben Sira, the everlasting priesthood of the descendants of Phineas, son of Eleazar, was more important.
 - B. The books of Maccabees did not employ messianic fervor as a rallying point in support of the Hasmonean uprising and subsequent establishment of the Jewish state. The Hasmoneans were not of the House of David, and the greater their role in the political arena, the more they were likely to be perceived as usurpers, taking for themselves what rightfully was the patrimony of the Davidic family.
 - C. While the Dead Sea Sect anticipated a future messianic era, texts that discuss the *founding* of the sect (such as the Damascus Covenant) do not cite an existing messianic figure as the cause of their rupture from the

larger body of Israel. This role was allotted instead to the Teacher of Righteousness, who will accurately interpret the Law, precisely in line with the new direction of Judaism in the Second Temple period.

- III. When the messianic belief was revived during the Second Temple period, it assumed two very distinct images, restorative and utopian.
- A. The restorative model focuses inward, playing on a nostalgic wish to reestablish the grandeur of ancient Israel. It looks to the reappearance of a descendant of David who will lead the armies of Israel to victory against the heathen, reconquer Jerusalem, gather the dispersed of Israel back to the homeland, and reestablish the Davidic monarchy as part of the historical world.
 - B. The utopian model of a messianic future is radically different. Borrowing from the biblical image of an end of days, it suggests the entire world will be purged of wickedness and evil through a dramatic, catastrophic reshaping of the cosmos. This is a reality that truly never was (*atopos*); it is entirely in the realm of the miraculous future, with the messianic figure more spiritual than military.
 - C. This cataclysmic future is not always connected to a specific messianic figure. “The Assumption (or Testament) of Moses,” written in the early 1st century C.E. and purporting to quote God’s last words to Moses just before the latter’s death, ends with a futuristic vision of a renewed Israel, as well as the total realignment of the entire natural world.
- IV. The messianic idea underwent all sorts of variations and adaptations, with different communities and individuals seeking corroboration for their particular worldviews.
- A. The Dead Sea Sect adopted a dual messianic formula: two messiahs would reign simultaneously, a priestly “messiah of Aaron” and a royal “messiah of Israel.” This dual model may have its roots in the collaboration between the earliest rulers of the Israelite nation, Moses, the political leader, and Aaron, founder of the priestly dynasty.
 - B. Many have sought the precursor of Christianity’s unique messianic image in the literature of the Second Temple and, specifically, in the writings of the Dead Sea Sect. The Aramaic text known as “4Q246” (fragment 246 from cave number 4 at Qumran) elaborates on the biblical vision of Daniel and refers to the “Son of God” who will have an everlasting kingdom, judge the earth, and make peace.
 - C. Scholars are still divided, but some do read this as the prediction of a messianic king. The phrase “Son of God” will appear later in the New Testament, when the angel Gabriel informs Mary that she will give birth to one who will be called “Son of God” (Luke 1:35).
- V. Simon Bar Kokhba and Judah the Patriarch embodied different images of the messianic model. Representing the “restorative” model, Bar Kokhba devoted his life to fighting the Romans on the battlefield. Two generations later, Judah the Patriarch, on excellent terms with the Romans, reflected the more spiritualized messianic model characteristic of rabbinic Judaism.

Essential reading:

Schiffman, L., “Mysticism, Messianism and the End of Days,” in *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 315–350.

Schuerer, E., *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, vol. 2, pp. 488–554.

Supplementary Reading:

Horbury, W., *Messianism among Jews and Christians*.

Schiffman, L. H., “Messianism and Apocalypticism in Rabbinic Texts,” in Katz, S. T., ed., *The Cambridge History of Judaism, vol. 4: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, pp. 1053–1072.

Questions to Consider:

1. Jews believed that the messiah would be a descendant of the House of David. Do you think this meant that any claimant to the messianic role would first have to prove that he was a descendant of David’s? What other process could have served to legitimize one’s messianic claim?
2. Some ultra-Orthodox Jews today oppose the modern national movement of the Jews known as Zionism, claiming that this is a false-messianic phenomenon. Of the various models of ancient messianism that we have discussed, which model do these opponents seem to have embraced?

Lecture Sixteen

Other Lands, Other Jews—The Diaspora

Scope: While the messianic future frequently assumed an ingathering of all Jews back to their homeland, realities on the ground were quite different. One of the most significant departures of post-biblical Judaism from its earlier biblical days was the establishment of a widespread Jewish Diaspora. What the prophets had considered the ultimate punishment for sins had now become reality. Yet Jewish communities were thriving throughout the Hellenistic-Roman world, as well as east of the Euphrates River. Jews living abroad eventually came to outnumber their brethren residing in Judea, and questions of Jewish identity took on new meaning, now that Jews had to find a way to worship God without having access to the Temple of Jerusalem. While taking part in the activities of the lands where they lived, Jews universally recognized the Temple in Jerusalem as the center of religious activity.

Outline

- I. The messiah was expected to gather the exiled Israelites back to their land, from the four corners of the earth, as prophesied by Isaiah.
 - A. During most of the biblical period, the dispersion of the tribes of Israel represented a threat, punishment for as-yet-uncommitted sins. Moses warned the people on the verge of entering the promised land that if they failed to observe the Torah, they would be scattered from one end of the earth to the other.
 - B. Threats are meaningful only if they have not yet become reality. Once they materialize, the “punished” learn how to get by with their new condition, which is precisely what transpired for the Jews of the Second Temple period.
 - C. The Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel (722 B.C.E.) and then the Babylonian conquest of the southern kingdom, including Jerusalem and its Temple (586 B.C.E.), led to the first major chapters of Jewish captivity. The first wave of forced migrants assimilated, but the Babylonian community maintained its own identity for centuries, eventually providing the Jewish world with the Babylonian Talmud.
 - D. Second Temple times witnessed the constant numerical growth and territorial expansion of the Jewish Diaspora.
 1. The conquests of the Hellenistic armies, beginning with Alexander the Great, removed boundaries between ancient states and tribes that had existed for centuries. This created vast new territories where the same language and culture existed, facilitating travel and trade from one land to another.
 2. With each successive conquest of Judea by foreign armies—first under the two Hellenistic empires (the Egyptian Ptolemies and then the Syrian Seleucids) and followed by the legions of Rome—Jews were taken into captivity and forcibly removed to foreign lands. Often the exiles began their existence abroad as slaves, but were later purchased and redeemed by the local Jewish community.
 3. Jewish communities abroad also expanded by virtue of widespread conversion. Some gentiles who came in contact with monotheistic teachings converted outright. Others accepted the central tenets of monotheism, abandoned pagan idol worship, and observed a limited number of Jewish customs, such as refraining from work on the Sabbath and attending Jewish synagogues. These semi-converts are referred to in ancient literature as “God-fearers.”
 - E. Jews living abroad eventually came to outnumber their brethren residing in Judea. The oldest and one of the largest Jewish communities during the Second Temple period was Babylonia, which included territories now part of modern-day Iraq as well as portions of Iran.
 - F. The other major cluster of Diaspora Jewish communities was in the Greco-Roman world. The most important of these was the Jewish community of Hellenistic (and then Roman) Egypt, particularly Alexandria.
 - G. A major concentration of Jews in Asia Minor, known today as Turkey, provided massive financial support for the Temple of Jerusalem.
 - H. Contiguous to the Jewish population of Judea were major Jewish concentrations in Syria and modern-day Lebanon. During portions of the late Second Temple period, Roman governors of Syria were responsible for maintaining order in Judea, and this encouraged a sense of linkage between the two adjacent districts.

- I. Other, smaller Jewish communities were situated throughout the Mediterranean—in Greece and Macedonia, on the nearby islands of Crete and Cyprus, in Rome, and even in some areas of Spain.
- II. Even though the Bible considered dispersion a divine punishment, it is not clear that Jews living abroad felt they were living in an ongoing state of retribution. There was nothing to prevent most Jews from moving to Judea if they so desired.
 - A. Jews of the Diaspora were encouraged to participate in activities of the re-sanctified Temple, but were not castigated or stigmatized by their brethren in Judea for their failure to return.
 - B. The author of the apocryphal book of Judith, probably writing in the early Hellenistic period, recognizes that the Israelites had been led into captivity for their sins, but believes they have returned to their God and to their sanctuary in Jerusalem.
 - C. The third book of Maccabees, written by a Jew in Hellenistic or early Roman Egypt (c. 1st century B.C.E.), suggests that geography is not a factor in God’s protection of the Jewish people. When the Egyptian Hellenistic King Ptolemy IV threatened to annihilate Jews in Egypt unless they agreed to accept Alexandrian citizenship (with pagan implications), most Jews remained steadfast in their faith. They were about to be martyred when their prayers were answered by God, and the king recognized that they were among the most loyal of his subjects.
 - D. Realizing that the ongoing presence of Jews outside their land would be interpreted by the Greek-speaking world as cause for contempt, Philo of Alexandria (1st century C.E.) wrote that Jewish settlers abroad were not “wrongdoers”—their nation had grown so large, a single country could not contain it.
 - E. Jewish presence abroad was now a sign of God’s benevolence toward the Jewish people. Having promised their patriarch Abraham that his seed would multiply like the sand and the stars, God fulfilled this promise; there simply was no longer enough room for all Jews in the Land of Israel.
 - F. As for Greek stigmatization, Philo noted that the “Greeks” of cities like Alexandria were the descendants of Macedonians who had also left their homeland. If they were “colonizers,” so were the dispersed Jews.
- III. While Jews in the Diaspora accepted their presence abroad as legitimate, they nevertheless grappled with issues of identity.
 - A. Jews living in Greek cities like Alexandria did not necessarily wish to become citizens, given the potential for pagan involvement. Some scholars have argued that Jews were organized in an internal association (*politeuma*) which allowed them to enjoy equal civic rights without having to accept full-fledged citizenship.
 - B. By maintaining links with Jerusalem and the Hasmonean rulers of Judea, Jews might have been considered outsiders in their native cities. However, the Hellenistic world did recognize the possibility of a person’s maintaining dual loyalties. Many Jews were comfortable thinking of Jerusalem as their mother city and the land in which they currently lived as their fatherland.
- IV. Jews of the Second Temple period universally recognized Jerusalem as the focal point of Jewish religious activity.
 - A. Jews from all the Diaspora communities contributed regularly to the Temple in Jerusalem. Josephus noted that Jews throughout the habitable world, even those only partially converted, had long contributed to the wealth of the Temple.
 - B. Cicero testifies that it was customary to send gold yearly to Jerusalem on the order of the Jews from Italy and from all the provinces.
 - C. Large numbers of Jews arrived in Jerusalem for the three pilgrimage festivals every year, taking the Temple for their haven and refuge “from the bustle and great turmoil of life,” according to Philo of Alexandria.
 - D. Josephus wrote that it was good that Jews from around the world gathered together in their shared institutions, thereby getting to know one another.

Essential Reading:

Barclay, J. M. G., *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora, From Alexander to Trajan (323 B.C.E.–117 C.E.)*.

Gruen, E. S., *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans*.

Supplementary Reading:

Levine, L. I., “The Hellenistic-Roman Diaspora C.E. 70–C.E. 235: The Archaeological Evidence,” in Horbury, W., W. D. Davies, and J. Sturdy, eds, *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3: *The Early Roman Period*, pp. 991–1024.

Stern, M., “The Jewish Diaspora,” in Safrai, S. and M. Stern, eds., *The Jewish People in the First Century*, vol. 1, pp. 117–183.

Questions to Consider:

1. In what ways do you think that Diaspora Jewry affected the lives of Jews living in Judea? Conversely, how were the lives of Diaspora Jews influenced by the political events in Judea?
2. What role did the widespread dispersion of Jews in the Hellenistic-Roman world play in the early spread of Christianity?

Lecture Seventeen

Judaism in the Hellenistic World

Scope: Jewish literary activity flourished in the Greek-speaking world, and especially in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. Jews adopted almost every literary genre in their attempts to present Judaism to the Greek mind. These included works of historiography, poetry, and even the rendering of biblical tales into Greek tragedy. Sadly, many of these works were lost, and some were preserved only in fragmentary form as isolated quotations in later Greek and Christian literature. Many of the works of Jews in the Hellenistic world were preserved in Greek in their entirety, such as the Septuagint; the second, third, and fourth books of Maccabees; and the greater portion of the writings of Philo of Alexandria. Philo left behind a virtual library of Jewish philosophical thought as well as biblical exegesis, and even produced two historical monographs.

Outline

- I. The Maccabean uprising in reaction to the Hellenizing processes introduced into Jerusalem in the early 2nd century B.C.E. might suggest a Jewish aversion to all things Greek, but in fact Judaism flourished in the Hellenistic world. During the acculturation process, Jews found ways to maintain their unique religious identity while partaking of the cultural environment that enveloped them.
 - A. Until recently, scholars assumed that Jews living in Judea clung to a strict, unadulterated form of Jewish behavior, while their co-religionists in the Greek Diaspora slowly embraced a Judaism tempered and “diluted” by the assimilatory pressures of their immediate Hellenistic surroundings.
 1. The Jews of Judea produced the vast majority of their literature in Hebrew or Aramaic, while Jews in the Hellenistic Diaspora (primarily Egypt) wrote almost exclusively in Greek. Even in Hellenistic surroundings, Diaspora Jews often went out of their way to maintain a Jewish profile, stressing religious commitment.
 2. I Maccabees, written in Judea in Hebrew, is replete with Hellenistic imagery, reflecting a creeping Hellenization within the Hasmonean ranks.
 3. II Maccabees was written in the Hellenistic Diaspora by a Greek-writing Jew who was sufficiently well-versed in Hellenistic historiography to employ the tricks of that trade (speeches, pathos, and biography as a literary genre) and yet committed to strict adherence to all the Jewish practices that had been threatened under the Hellenistic regime.
 4. In the rabbinic literature that came later, hundreds of Greek phrases were used in the deliberations of the rabbis, notwithstanding their belief that they themselves represented historic, “unadulterated” Judaism. The rabbis even used Greek systems of text interpretation in their own biblical exegesis, and declared that Greek was the only language of translation that could preserve the true spirit of the biblical text.
 - II. Many of the works of Jews in the Hellenistic world were preserved in Greek in their entirety, such as the Septuagint; The Letter of Aristeas; the second, third, and fourth books of Maccabees; and the greater portion of the writings of Philo of Alexandria. These were included in larger collections for which the Christian Church served as the primary conduit.
 - A. Jews of the Hellenistic-Roman period who wrote in Greek appear to have written solely about Jewish themes. Works by Jews on general history, philosophy, or other literary topics were rare before the Byzantine period (from the 4th century C.E.).
 - B. Egypt was the center for much of the literary activity of Jews in the Greek language, but Jewish authors from other lands, and even Judea, sometimes wrote in Greek.
 1. Ben Sira’s grandson, born in Judea, translated his grandfather’s work into Greek. Lysimachus, a Jew from Jerusalem, translated the book of Esther into Greek and added his own comments, after which the book was taken to Egypt. Near the end of the Second Temple period, two Jewish historians born in Judea chose to write in Greek: Justus of Tiberias and Josephus (whose actual writing took place after he had taken up residence in Rome following the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E.).
 2. The extant second book of Maccabees is based on a larger history written by a Jew named Jason, from the ancient Greek city of Cyrene on the northern coast of Africa. Even though he was steeped in the Greek language and the cultural atmosphere of the Hellenistic world, he considered adherence to the Commandments of Moses to be the essence of Judaism.

III. Jewish-Hellenistic literature embraced almost every known genre, including some with an apologetic ring. Jews knew that others were casting aspersions on their national origins, history, and behavior, which often appeared antithetical to Hellenistic norms.

- A. Philo the Epic Poet (3rd to 2nd century B.C.E.) chose poetry as the vehicle for presenting Jewish tradition to his readers. The poetic fragments of his work include 24 hexametric verses telling biblical stories in the learned style of Greek poetry.
- B. Ezekiel the Tragedian (2nd century B.C.E.) told the story of Moses in Greek tragedy, the accepted theatrical form of his day.
 - 1. Ezekiel based his story on the biblical account he found in the Septuagint, just as the Greek dramatists based their works on the Greek epic stories. In his five-act work called *The Exodus*, the first act contains a monologue by Moses on how the Israelites became enslaved in Egypt.
 - 2. Ezekiel dramatizes biblical episodes, such as Moses standing before the burning bush, and invents additions, including testimony of an Egyptian messenger who managed to survive the destruction of Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea.
 - 3. Jews found a variety of ways to tell their story and convey their self-image in language and style that would resonate within groups acculturated into the Hellenistic world.
- C. Jews took up apologetics when they felt maligned in Hellenistic circles for their "otherness."
 - 1. In a book entitled *Against Apion* (Apion was a leading Greek intellectual in 1st century C.E. Alexandria), Josephus collected false representations of Judaism and attempted to refute them one by one.
 - 2. Many of these attacks alleged that the early Israelites brought nothing but devastation to Egypt, destroying the local cults and contributing nothing to the advancement of the indigenous populations.
 - 3. Artapanus in the 3rd or 2nd century B.C.E. wrote one of the earliest works of competitive historiography. Arguing that Jews had contributed to the civilization of Egypt since antiquity, he focused on three great Israelites: Abraham, Joseph, and Moses.
 - 4. Abraham taught the King of Egypt astrology. After 20 years, he returned to Syria, leaving behind many of those who had come with him originally.
 - 5. Joseph reorganized the agricultural life of the country, making barren land arable and alleviating the plight of the poor. He also "discovered measurements."
 - 6. Moses, the teacher of Orpheus, "bestowed many useful benefits on mankind, for he invented boats and devices for stone construction, Egyptian arms, implements for drawing water and for warfare, and philosophy." He also appointed the gods to be worshipped in each of the 36 districts of Egypt, defended the monarchy, and "was beloved by the masses."

IV. Two and a half centuries later, Hellenistic Jewry produced its most impressive scholar, Philo of Alexandria. When riots between Greeks and Jews in Alexandria broke out in 38 C.E., Philo was sent to Rome to represent the Jewish cause before the Emperor Gaius Caligula. Philo produced two important historical monographs describing these events.

- A. More than two thousand pages of Philo's writings have survived, dealing with the nature of God and the "logos" or "speech of God," i.e., the manifestation of the divine as perceived by humans. By projecting the "logos" as the firstborn son of the deity, Philo's work was destined to become extremely popular in certain Christian circles.
- B. Philo's main achievement was his exegesis of the Bible, especially his allegorical interpretations. When God commands Abraham to leave his homeland for another land, the story is only literally about an actual migration: According to the laws of allegory, Philo claims, the story is really about "a virtue-loving soul searching for the true God" and abandoning astrology.
- C. Philo wrote a systematic exposition of the Laws of Moses, the ideal lawgiver. Because Moses was perfect, his Torah represents the perfect law for all of mankind. The patriarchs were able to observe all the laws even before they were put in writing because Moses's law coincided perfectly with nature, the ultimate requirement of Stoic philosophy.
- D. Philo was steeped in Greek education as well as all things Jewish, and his goal in his writing was to show how these two cultures shed light on each other. For all his philosophical and symbolic interpretations of the Bible, he nevertheless remained a strict observer of Jewish law.

- E. In each verse of the Scriptures, Philo claimed, there is the literal meaning of the text as well as a higher, symbolic, inner meaning. This spiritualized understanding of the Bible was espoused by the Church Fathers (who preserved much of his work), but rabbinic Judaism felt threatened by this approach.
- F. Philo is one of numerous witnesses to testify to the growing importance of the synagogue in the religious lives of Jews.

Essential Reading:

Collins, J. J., "Hellenistic Judaism in Recent Scholarship," in Collins, J. J., *Jewish Cult and Hellenistic Culture, Studies on the Jewish Encounter with Hellenism and Roman Rule*, pp. 1–20 (all the chapters in this book are highly recommended).

Feldman, L. H., *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian*.

Supplementary Reading:

Collins, J. J., *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Almost all of the literature in Greek produced by Jews of the Hellenistic and Roman periods was preserved by the Christian Church, and not in the internal Jewish libraries and educational curricula of Late Antiquity. Why do you think this is the case?
2. Why do you think the rabbis were so wary of applying allegorical methods to their interpretation of the Bible, even though they permitted themselves an enormous degree of exegetical freedom in elaborating on the biblical text?

Lecture Eighteen

Changing God's Address—Temple to Synagogue

Scope: The Second Temple period represents a major turning point in Judaism's self-image. While the primary focus of religious expression was still the Temple of Jerusalem, an alternative institution began to appear that led to a major decentralization and democratization of Jewish religious behavior. The synagogue was ubiquitous, and it was not controlled by a small cadre of priests. In the Land of Israel, its original function seems to have been as a communal center, providing for the public reading of the Torah and portions from the prophets, accompanied by their explication or some form of sermon. The Temple continued to attract myriads of Jews from Israel and abroad, especially during periods of pilgrimage. Nevertheless, the spread of synagogues prior to the destruction of the Temple afforded Jews with an immediate alternative once sacrificial worship in Jerusalem was violently and abruptly discontinued in the year 70 C.E.

Outline

- I. The return from Babylon to Zion in Persian times symbolized the process of ingathering or re-centralization within Judaism, while the continuing growth of a widespread Diaspora persisted and became one of the defining symbols of Second Temple Jewry. A parallel two-way process emerged in the religious and communal life of post-biblical Judaism. It was in the Second Temple itself, and save for very isolated exceptions only there, that the biblically-ordained worship of God through sacrifices was permitted. Jews from Judea and the Diaspora supported the Temple financially, with many also seeking to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem at least once in their lives. And yet, one of the most revolutionary developments in Judaism at this very same time was the emergence of the synagogue as a legitimate alternative for religious activity.
 - A. The word "synagogue" comes from the Greek, literally "place of gathering" or "coming together." In Greek and Roman times the phrase was sometimes used to refer to the community rather than to a particular institution or building.
 - B. Synagogues are not mentioned anywhere in the Bible, which clearly frowns on any decentralization.
 - C. Assigning a date for the earliest synagogues is an exercise in futility and is best divided into two questions: When do synagogues appear for the first time in *literary* sources, and what is the earliest *archaeological* evidence of their existence?
 - D. One common theory, now discounted, is that synagogues emerged in the exiled community of Babylon following the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. But it is not clear that synagogues originally appeared as an alternative place of worship; at least in Judea, the early functions of the synagogue may have served as a complement to Temple activity rather than as an alternative.
 - E. One-time assemblies, such as the gathering at the Temple Mount in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah or in 140 B.C.E., do not represent an early appearance of the synagogue. Our search is for evidence of regular and recurring gatherings away from the Temple, where certain procedures repeat themselves and suggest an established ritual.
- II. The earliest solid archaeological evidence of structures that provided a place for activities normally associated with synagogues comes from the Jewish Diaspora in Egypt.
 - A. Two dedicatory inscriptions from the 3rd century B.C.E. give a date, a link to Jews, and the designation of a building as a place of prayer.
 - B. Similar inscriptions have been discovered in Egypt dating from the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.E., and this information is augmented by a number of papyri discovered in communities throughout Egypt.
 - C. By the 1st century C.E. Philo attests to the existence of many synagogues in each of the districts of Alexandria, and describes one of exceptional beauty in great detail.
 - D. Although the use of the word *proseuche*, especially in Egypt, suggests that one of the earliest functions of these sacred buildings was as a place for Jews to gather in prayer, nothing is known about the nature of these prayers, their content, or the manner in which they were conducted.
- III. Literary evidence describing the functions of the synagogue in the Egyptian Diaspora appears only in the 1st century C.E., primarily in the writings of Philo. By that time, the institution had taken on an additional role, for it was here that most Jews received instruction in what it meant to be Jewish.

- A. Philo provides a detailed description of synagogue activity in 1st century Alexandria: A priest or one of the elders read the holy laws aloud and expounded upon them point by point until the congregation departed in the late afternoon, having advanced in piety as well as in knowledge of the law.
 - B. Rather than pointing to prayer, Philo stresses the reading of the Law and its exposition (possibly some sort of sermon), which were the major activities in Judean synagogues, at least until the destruction of the Second Temple.
 - C. Philo noted that in Rome, Jews met as a body in *proseuche*, particularly on the Sabbath, when they received “training in their ancestral philosophy.”
- IV. Literary and archaeological evidence points to the establishment of synagogues in Second Temple times throughout the Jewish Diaspora. Paul’s travels throughout the Diaspora inevitably brought him to synagogues.
- A. The book of Acts makes 19 references to synagogues in cities such as Damascus, Salamis, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth.
 - B. Acts supplies important details regarding synagogue activity:
 1. Gathering almost always takes place on Sabbath.
 2. The main activity in the synagogue is the reading of the law.
 3. Some large cities seem to have more than one synagogue.
 4. The leader of the synagogue goes by the title of “archisynagogos.”
 5. Gentiles, both men and women, frequent Jewish synagogues.
- V. The designation *proseuche*, common in the Diaspora and especially in Egypt, hardly ever appears in Judea, where the common designation is “synagogue.” Prayer seems to have been part of synagogue activity in the Diaspora, but it is almost never mentioned in Judea prior to the destruction of the Temple.
- A. One of the most important inscriptions for the history of the Judean synagogue was discovered in Jerusalem in 1913, in excavations in the City of David, south of the Temple Mount.
 - B. The inscription engraved on the dedicatory stone of a nearby synagogue and dating to sometime in the 1st century C.E. (before the destruction of the Temple), says the synagogue was built for the reading of the law, for the teaching of the Commandments, and to provide a guesthouse for the lodging of needy strangers. There is no mention of prayer in the inscription, probably because proximity to the Temple made it more natural to worship through the established medium of sacrifice.
 - C. Almost all stories about synagogues in the New Testament confirm that the reading of the Torah (and sometimes the Prophets as well) followed by an exposition were the main activities that took place on Sabbath in the synagogue. This is precisely how Luke (4:16–21) describes Jesus at the synagogue of Nazareth, where he apparently read from the Torah, continued to read from the Prophets, and then sat down to deliver a sermon.
- VI. The emergence of the synagogue represented a major innovation in Judaism, with four elements pointing to the revolutionary aspect of its function within the Jewish community as compared to the Temple:
- A. Synagogues were not limited to any specific location. They were established wherever a community might require them, making it possible for all members of the community to participate in religious and social functions.
 - B. The synagogue was not given to the leadership of a specific group based on genealogy, in the manner that priests controlled the Temple. Religious activities were performed by anyone with the requisite knowledge, making synagogues a major factor in the democratization of Jewish society. Intellectual access to the sacred scriptures became an important part of the educational activity to which synagogues were now devoted.
 - C. In continuing the process of democratization, all those present in the synagogue might participate in its various functions. This was in stark variance to the passive role of almost all who came to the Temple, save for the priests and those who would participate in the offering of a sacrifice.
 - D. Synagogues provided an alternative to the religious expression that had been limited up till now to Temple worship. Prayer made its way in stages into the synagogue, assuming a primary role at first in the Diaspora, and only after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., reaching an equivalent status in the synagogues of Judea. Communicating with God was ultimately available to everyone, everywhere, and no longer required mediators.

- E. Although this revolutionary process began before the destruction of the Second Temple, it explains how rabbinic Judaism would later succeed in convincing a post-Temple Jewish community that its religious vitality can survive even without a Temple in Jerusalem.

Essential Reading:

Cohen, S. J. D., “The Temple and the Synagogue,” in Horbury, W., W. D. Davies, and J. Sturdy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3, pp. 298–310.

Levine, L., *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*.

Supplementary Reading:

Fine, S., *This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synagogue during the Greco-Roman Period*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why don't we hear of any opposition to the establishment of synagogues throughout the Jewish world, even as the Second Temple stood, in the same manner that we encounter such vehement opposition to all worship outside the Temple in biblical times?
2. What role did synagogues play in advancing the development of Judaism into a text-oriented religion?

Lecture Nineteen

Rome Arrives in Jerusalem

Scope: Jewish independence under the Hasmoneans came to an abrupt conclusion with the Roman conquest of the land in 63 B.C.E. The Romans experimented with different approaches in attempting to establish their control over what eventually became the Province of Judaea. The second of these stages saw the appointment of Herod the Great as King of Judaea (37–4 B.C.E.), who played a critical role in redefining much of the social and cultural character of the kingdom and also achieved a lasting place in the annals of the nascent Christian community. With the Roman dismantling of the Herodian monarchy, Judaea came under direct Roman rule (6 C.E.). This phase introduced a process of deteriorating relations with the rulers of the land, one that ultimately exploded into outright anarchy, a violent uprising, and the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple.

Outline

- I. The final stage of Second Temple history, commencing with the Roman conquest of Judea in 63 B.C.E., paved the way toward a defining event in the development of Judaism and the rise of Christianity. This story began decades before the first Roman legionnaire set foot in Jerusalem, back in the final days of the Hasmonean chapter of Jewish history.
- II. The rise of the Hasmonean state coincided with the initial thrusts of the Roman republic into the Hellenistic Near East. Rome and the Jewish state shared a common interest in weakening the Hellenistic empires; the Jews saw an opportunity to assert their national aspirations, and the Romans realized that undermining Hellenistic power in the Near East would facilitate Roman conquest of those regions. Beginning with Judah Maccabee in 161 B.C.E., almost every Hasmonean leader renewed the mutual defense treaty between Judea and Rome, which served the initial interests of both parties.
 - A. By the 60s of the 1st century B.C.E., Roman armies under the command of Pompey had conquered Syria and rendered it a Roman province. The slow incorporation of the eastern Mediterranean into the Roman republic had now begun, and the Jewish state was reduced from the status of an ally to that of a territory ripe for subjugation.
 - B. While Rome completed its occupation of Syria, the Hasmonean kingdom was in the final throes of a lethal civil war that hastened its downfall.
 1. Following the death of Queen Alexandra Salome (67 B.C.E.), her two sons, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, stepped up their ongoing dispute over succession.
 2. The Romans chose Hyrcanus II, who served as high priest from 63 to 40 B.C.E. The new order established under him spelled the end of Jewish independence.
 - C. After full-fledged Jewish independence was terminated, the Jewish High Priest was granted a measure of local autonomy.
 1. The territorial dimensions of the Jewish autonomous region were reduced to those areas populated primarily by Jews. All the Greek territories and cities throughout Israel which had been conquered by the Hasmonean leaders were removed from Jewish control and either annexed to the adjacent Syrian province or rendered semi-independent cities.
 2. The ultimate test for Roman recognition of any Jewish leader would heretofore be total allegiance to the Roman government.
 3. Persons loyal to the new Roman presence in the Near East now made their way to the court in Jerusalem and slowly assumed positions of power alongside the Hasmonean High Priest. Antipater the Idumean was appointed *procurator* (governor) of Judea. His son Phasael was made governor of Jerusalem. Another son, Herod, was appointed governor of Galilee, and showed himself to be a cruel and unbending enforcer of the new order.
- III. In 40 B.C.E., the Parthians invaded Syria and conquered Judea as well. For a brief period, a new Hasmonean monarchy was established under Mattathias Antigonus, the son of Aristobolus II. Hyrcanus II was removed from his position and deported to Babylonia. Of Antipater's two sons, only Herod survived. He found refuge in Rome, where he convinced the Senate that only he was equipped to reconquer Judea. With their armed help, he succeeded, and in 37 B.C.E., Herod became King of Judea.

- IV. Herodian rule in Judea lasted until 6 C.E., primarily under Herod (37–4 B.C.E.) and then for a brief period under his son Archelaus (4 B.C.E.–6 C.E.). Rome then realized it would have to submit Judea to direct Roman rule, and in 6 C.E. Judea became a province.
- A. Herod was king by Roman decree, but his monarchy had no links to the historically Jewish monarchy of the House of David or even to the monarchy of the Hasmoneans.
 - B. Herod enjoyed unqualified Roman support and was totally loyal to the Roman ruler.
 - 1. Herod maintained law and order through measures shocking in their cruelty. He had no qualms about executing opponents to his rule, real or imagined, including members of his own family. After murdering his wife Mariamme, according to a rabbinic tale, Herod preserved her body in honey to prove he had married a Hasmonean princess.
 - 2. Augustus was quite satisfied with Herod’s maintenance of stability in Judea, even though he is quoted as saying sarcastically, “better to be the pig of Herod than to be his son.”
 - 3. Herod could not serve as High Priest, given his background as a descendant of Idumean converts. For the first time in centuries, political rule over the Jewish population of Judea was not in the hands of a priestly family.
 - C. Herod was one of the great Judean builders, and the archaeological remains from his reign testify to a concerted effort to refashion the kingdom in the image of the surrounding Hellenistic-Roman world.
 - 1. Many of Herod’s building projects were situated on previous monumental sites, including fortresses and palaces that had served the Hasmoneans.
 - 2. He remodeled the city of Jerusalem into a typical Greco-Roman city, with a theater, amphitheater, hippodrome, and a series of royal palaces.
 - 3. Herod built two major cities, the port of Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast and Sebaste in the inland region of Samaria, both named after the emperor (“Sebaste” is a Greek form of “Augustus”).
 - 4. Herod’s army and administration were based almost exclusively on the Hellenized portions of the land. Preferential treatment of the non-Jewish population contributed to a growing sense of disenfranchisement on the part of the Jewish element, and this unease increased with the introduction of direct Roman rule in 6 C.E.
 - 5. A gesture toward the Jewish population was needed, so the Temple and the mount on which it stood were totally rebuilt.
 - D. In addition to reshaping the physical dimensions of Judea, Herod destroyed the aristocracy (primarily Hasmonean) that preceded him and filled the vacuum with a new social order.
 - 1. Herod required a priesthood that would be subservient to his policies, and turned to the Hellenistic Diaspora of Egypt as a primary supplier of priests.
 - 2. Herod consciously cultivated a relationship with certain Diaspora communities, and intervened on their behalf when they complained about strained relations with their Greek neighbors.
 - 3. Herod may have also turned to the Babylonian Diaspora for support. He convinced a cohort of Babylonian Jewish soldiers who had made their way into Syria to settle on the northeastern border of Judea, providing them with land and an exemption from taxes.
 - 4. One of the foremost Pharisees of the Second Temple period, Hillel the Babylonian, made his way to Jerusalem during Herod’s rule.
- V. Herod died in 4 B.C.E. and was succeeded in Jerusalem by his son Archelaus. The heir apparent to the throne, Herod’s eldest son Antipater, was executed by his father five days before his own death.
- A. Herod’s final action before his death reflects the degree of cruelty that marked his rule. He had 70 notables locked up in the hippodrome at Jericho, with orders that upon his death they be slain, lest he depart without proper mourning.
 - B. Herod was succeeded by his son Archelaus, whose reign was curtailed by the Romans. From 6 C.E. on, Judea was ruled directly by Roman governors. Portions of the north, such as Galilee and the Golan, continued to be ruled by two other sons of Herod: Herod Antipas ruled Galilee until 39 C.E., and Philip ruled over the northeastern reaches of the land until 34 C.E.
 - C. In the wake of Herod’s death and his son’s failure to maintain order, disturbances broke out in Jerusalem and throughout the kingdom.
 - D. A series of local rebels not only took up arms but even placed crowns on their heads, a portent of messianic phenomena to come.

Essential Reading:

Goodman, M., *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations*.

Richardson, P., *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*.

Supplementary Reading:

Kasher, A., *King Herod: A Persecuted Persecutor*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Had the Romans turned Judea into a province immediately upon conquering the land, rather than relying for decades on the services of Jewish priests or vassal kings such as Herod, might the history of Judaism and Christianity have evolved differently? Would Jews have preferred outright foreign rule to the quasi-Jewish autonomy that Rome established during the initial stages of its rule over Judea?
2. Under Herod the Judean economy appears to have flourished, major areas throughout the land were built up as never before, relations with the Romans appear to have been amicable—and yet this stage of Judean history appears as the precursor to outright war and ultimate destruction. Why is this the case?

Lecture Twenty

Parting with the Temple

Scope: Religious ideologies were not always limited to the spiritual world of contemplation, but frequently served to motivate individuals or groups towards political involvement and even military action. At least some elements of the growing violent opposition to Rome in the 1st century C.E. can be attributed directly to ideologies formulated during the late Second Temple period. Some groups, for instance, motivated by messianic and eschatological fervor, claimed that subservience to foreign rulers was tantamount to idolatry, thereby raising the call for political independence to a religious level. A willingness to prefer death to subjugation, so famously exemplified by the celebrated Masada episode, can only be understood in the context of those religious ideologies.

Outline

- I. In the year 6 C.E., Rome established Judea as a province to be ruled directly by its own civil governors. The governor of Syria, Quirinius, was sent to Judea to make an assessment of the property of the Jews. This led to organized and ideological opposition to Rome, outright rebellion in 66 C.E., and the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 70 C.E.
 - A. With the introduction of direct Roman rule in Judea, two Jewish leaders in the north, Judah of Gamala and a Pharisee named Saddok, argued that the assessment carried with it a status amounting to slavery and appealed to the nation to make a bid for independence.
 - B. In time, some Jews also knew that Roman emperors came to be considered gods, and consequently opposition to Rome could be justified in terms of a religious ideology, claiming that subservience to Rome and its emperor was equivalent to idolatry. Josephus calls this approach a “Fourth Philosophy,” alongside the beliefs of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. Its critical tenet was an unconquerable passion for liberty.
 - C. The 1st century C.E. witnessed growing turmoil in Judea, attributable to the corrupt Roman administration and to the rebels’ belief that their cause was part of an “end of days” scenario.
- II. Direct Roman rule in Judea can be divided into three distinct periods.
 - A. The first stage of direct rule lasted from 6 to 41 C.E. A series of governors was sent to rule the new province. The northern portions of the land were still ruled by members of the Herodian dynasty, including Herod’s son Antipas.
 - B. During the years 41–44 C.E., Judea was ruled by Agrippa I, a grandson of Herod and his Hasmonean wife Mariamme. Agrippa’s public display of reverence for traditional Jewish values and behavior led to a brief respite in the tense relations between Jews and Rome.
 - C. Agrippa died suddenly in 44 C.E., and Rome restored Judea to the rule of its governors. Relations between Jews and the local administration deteriorated rapidly in the next decade, and control over the countryside fell into the hands of rebels or simple brigands.
- III. Not all Jewish groups and individuals believed that salvation was to be achieved by armed resistance.
 - A. From among the first group of Roman governors (6–41 C.E.), Pontius Pilate stands out as an exceptionally callous ruler.
 - B. During Pilate’s governorship, Herod Antipas, Herod’s son and ruler of Galilee, had John the Baptist executed (c. 29 C.E.).
 - C. The image of John the Baptist in the Gospels, his stress on baptism as a precursor for repentance, and even the connection in the Gospels between John and a verse in Isaiah (40:3) that is also quoted in the Dead Sea Sect’s Manual of Discipline, have led some scholars to search for a link between the earliest Christians and the Qumran sect.
 1. There is no definitive proof to substantiate such a claim, but the emergence of the first Christians at this time in Judea dovetails with the atmosphere of the period.
 2. The Qumran texts and other literary works indicate that large segments of the population believed in an imminent “end of days,” coupled with the appearance of a messianic figure who would redeem Israel from its current plight.

3. Just as the Qumran sect considered itself to be living on the cusp of a revolutionary upheaval, so the earliest Christians, as Jews embracing those same beliefs, also anticipated an imminent fulfillment of these hopes.
 4. Josephus, in his *Jewish War*, claims that the rebels were incited by an ambiguous oracular scripture claiming that one from their country would become ruler of the world at that time.
- D.** Closer to the actual outbreak of war, false prophets began to appear, each with his own unique promise of miraculous deeds.
1. During the governorship of Fadus (44–46 C.E.) an impostor named Theudas was slain after he persuaded some 400 people to follow him to the Jordan River where he would part the waters.
 2. Some years later, when the Roman governor Felix ruled over Judea (52–60 C.E.), various prophets led large numbers of believers into the desert to show them “marvels and signs.”
 3. One prophet who gained a following of thousands claimed that at his command the walls of Jerusalem would be destroyed. When Felix ordered his soldiers to attack the crowd, hundreds were slain; the prophet managed to escape.
- IV.** The strife and chaos that preceded the Great Revolt had religious overtones, but the messianic belief took on many forms.
- A.** The Christian community of Jerusalem resembled the Qumran sect in many ways. Both featured a communal lifestyle, with shared property, communal meals and prayer, and a heightened stress on baptism and repentance.
- B.** Unlike the passive stance of these two groups in their confrontations with the Romans, the rebels who led the nation into war exhibited a more militant, “restorative” brand of messianic fervor.
1. In describing the “Fourth Philosophy” that emerged at first in Galilee, Josephus stresses the activist component of their appeal, namely the need not to shirk from bloodshed.
 2. When the revolt finally broke out in 66 C.E., Menahem, a descendant of one of the founders of the Fourth Philosophy, entered Jerusalem like a king.
 3. Not all the Jewish rebels came to the cause out of messianic zeal. Class tensions between different Jewish sections of the population were increasingly evident.
 4. Adding to these internal strains were tensions within the priestly class. The high-priestly families were perceived more and more as political appointees, and elements of the broader priesthood came to consider themselves disenfranchised.
- V.** Adding to internal Jewish strife and a common hatred of Rome was yet a third factor. For years the relations between Jews and other segments of the Judean population, particularly the Greeks, had deteriorated.
- A.** Josephus claims that a dispute between Jews and Greeks in Caesarea was the spark that ignited the war in 66 C.E.
- B.** Hostilities between Jews and Greeks quickly spread to many of the mixed cities in the entire region, even as far away as Alexandria.
- C.** The rebellion itself broke out in 66 C.E. with a symbolic act: The daily sacrifice for the welfare of the Emperor ceased to be offered. The Roman governor of Syria, Cestius Gallus, was dispatched to quell the rebellion, but the rebels had taken over Jerusalem.
1. In the winter of 66–67 C.E., the rebels prepared for full-fledged military invasion. They divided the country into districts, each under the command of a specific military leader.
 2. The Galilee fell to the command of Josephus, who proved to be an absolute failure. After defeat in his one major battle, Josephus crossed over to the Roman side and eventually made his way to Rome, where he produced his various histories.
- D.** Rome could not accept anything less than a total suppression of the uprising.
1. Three full legions were dispatched to the province, led by Vespasian, who chose first to overcome the pockets of rebel resistance in the outlying districts. By the autumn of 67 C.E., the Galilee had fallen to Roman forces; one year later most of Judea was in their hands.
 2. As each section of the country fell under Roman control, the remaining rebels and other fugitives sought haven in Jerusalem, where mutual hatred among the groups probably equaled the common enmity shared towards the Romans.

- E. A respite in the fighting took place in the summer of 68 C.E. with the death of the emperor Nero. When Vespasian returned to Rome as emperor a year later, he left the completion of the Judean war in the hands of his son Titus.
- F. On Passover of the year 70 C.E., Titus laid siege to Jerusalem, confident that much of his work was being accomplished through the internecine strife within the walls of the city. By August of that year the Temple itself was taken and immediately destroyed. Mopping-up operations continued for another three years, until the fall of the last rebel outpost, the fortress of Masada.
- G. The Romans spread the news of the end of the war through coins inscribed “Judaea Capta” (Judea has been captured).

Essential Reading:

Goodman, M., *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome, A.D. 66–70*.

Rhoads, D. M., *Israel in Revolution: 6–74 C.E.*

Supplementary Reading:

Stern, M., “Zealots,” in *Encyclopædia Judaica Yearbook*, pp. 135–152.

Questions to Consider:

1. While many Jews shared a hatred for Rome, the Great Revolt of 66–70 C.E. appears to have been a different war, with variegated motivations, for different segments of the Judean population. Can you explain this?
2. Why do you think the upper classes and established leadership of the Jews failed to convince the zealots of the futility of going to war against the Roman Empire?

Lecture Twenty-One

From Jerusalem to Yavne—Rabbinic Judaism

Scope: Rabbinic legend describes how one of the sages, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, succeeded in escaping a besieged Jerusalem just prior to the destruction of that city and its Temple in 70 C.E. Appearing before the Roman military commander, Yohanan convinced him to grant permission for the establishment of a small rabbinic conclave at Yavne, a small town off the southern coast of Palestine. This foundation myth sets out to explain how a religious community that suddenly found itself bereft of its historic cultic center nevertheless succeeded in establishing totally new systems and contexts for the maintenance of Judaism as a vital religion. As Judaism evolved more and more into a “book religion,” teachers or interpreters of the sacred texts slowly assumed a position of prominence alongside the traditional priesthood. Removal of the Temple gave those teachers (rabbis) an unchallenged position of spiritual authority.

Outline

- I. Why is the Judaism that most of us recognize today so radically different from the religious beliefs and behavior discussed throughout this course? How and when did the synagogue come to replace the Temple? Who is responsible for instituting prayer as an alternative to sacrificial worship? How did the study of Torah under rabbis become so central to the Jewish tradition, when rabbis are not even mentioned in the Bible? The answer to these questions lies in the character and frameworks of rabbinic Judaism, which Jews gradually came to embrace after the destruction of the Second Temple.
- II. In the post-Temple period, the word “rabbi” (master) was used to designate sages or teachers of Torah. One attained the title “rabbi” through ordination, which was an official recognition of a student’s qualities and legal knowledge.
- III. According to a popular rabbinic story, during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., a rabbi named Yohanan ben Zakkai was smuggled out of the city in a coffin. Arriving at the Roman commander’s headquarters, he prophesied that the general would soon be proclaimed the new Roman Caesar. As they were speaking, the prophecy was confirmed by a messenger from Rome, and the commander granted the rabbi a wish. Yohanan asked for “Yavne and its wise men,” referring to the town that would serve as a center for Judaism on the rebound.
 - A. Those who formulated this anachronistic story wished to suggest that, even before the demise of the old order, there existed a new vision for Judaism.
 - B. The rabbi’s request was meant to show that Judaism would not stand or fall on the existence of Jerusalem. Rather than deriving its authority from proximity to a cultic center run by priests, the new center would be defined by a community of scholars.
 - C. Maintaining a sense of history and continuity, rather than innovation or reformation, was essential in the development of Judaism after the fall of the Temple.
- IV. Because of the ultimate success of rabbinic Judaism, it is hard to appreciate the emotional trauma and theological questioning that were set off by the destruction of the Second Temple.
 - A. For centuries, Jews looked to the Temple as the focal point of their religious expression and access to God. The sudden removal of this center created a devastating vacuum.
 - B. The destruction of God’s abode might even have been interpreted as the defeat of God himself, possibly by a more potent adversary.
 - C. Some felt that life without a Temple was meaningless, and embarked on a life of perpetual mourning or ascetic abstinence.
 - D. Rabbinic leaders addressed these questions in a series of legends.
 1. One group of ascetics ceased eating meat or drinking wine, arguing that these foods must be avoided in daily life because they had previously been included in Temple offerings. Rabbi Joshua said that following that logic, even bread and water should now be avoided.
 2. When Rabbi Joshua asked how sins would be atoned without Temple sacrifice, his mentor Yohanan ben Zakkai replied that acts of loving kindness would be as effective.

3. Yohanan ben Zakkai, a political realist, is quoted as saying: “If you have a sapling in your hand and they tell you the messiah is here, come plant the sapling and then go out and receive him.”
- E. The destruction of the Temple and its institutions posed some immediate practical questions. Who would determine the Jewish calendar? How were Temple-oriented feasts, such as the Passover, to be celebrated without the offering of the biblically ordained sacrifice for that holiday?
1. Rabbinic literature attributes some critical decisions to Yohanan ben Zakkai, who established alternative religious practices and permitted activities once limited to the confines of the Temple to be performed throughout the land.
 2. When the New Year fell on a Sabbath, the custom in Temple times was to blow the *shofar* (ram’s horn) only in the Temple’s precincts. After the destruction, Yohanan declared that the *shofar* should be blown on Sabbath even outside Jerusalem.
- V. As Judaism evolved more and more into a “book religion,” teachers or interpreters of the sacred texts slowly assumed a position of prominence alongside the traditional priesthood. Removal of the Temple gave those teachers (rabbis) an unchallenged position of spiritual authority.
- A. Two characteristics distinguished the new rabbinic model of leadership from that of their priestly predecessors.
1. The priestly claim to leadership rested on lineage, whereas rabbinic leadership was based on merit, earned through learning and individual charisma.
 2. Priests served primarily in the Temple, whereas rabbis were mobile, able to attract disciples and establish local centers of learning.
- B. Rabbinic Judaism represented a decentralizing process in Jewish religious expression.
1. The exclusivity of one Temple was replaced by ubiquitous synagogues that served as communal centers and minor sanctuaries where worship through prayer became a central function.
 2. Study of the Torah was no longer simply a means of knowing what God required of man and of Israel, but also a central form of religious devotion.
 3. The basic legal text of rabbinic Judaism, the Mishna, devotes inordinate space to laws regarding the Temple and its procedures. Now that these activities could no longer be performed in the Temple, they were to be studied elsewhere.
 4. Rabbinic Judaism came to consider prayer not merely a practical alternative to sacrifice in the absence of a Temple, but an equally effective mode of communicating with God. Given that *all* can pray, this reinforced the democratizing process cultivated by rabbinic Judaism.
- C. The rabbinic movement was, in some ways, the spiritual descendant of the Pharisees.
1. Both groups believed in a legal tradition that accompanied the written text of the Bible. The Pharisees traced these unwritten traditions to former generations, but the rabbis believed the unwritten laws constituted a parallel Torah to the written one, with both having been given to Moses at Sinai.
 2. In one section of the Mishnah, the text lays out an unbroken chain of transmission from Moses at Sinai to the rabbis of the post-Temple period. This chain implies that rabbinic tradition and authority are inexorably linked; both derive from the *single* divine revelation at Sinai.
 3. Revelation in the rabbinic model was a one-time affair. From the moment the dual Torah (written and oral) was handed over to human beings, it was left to them to understand, interpret, teach, and apply the law to ongoing human conditions.
- VI. Scholars continue to debate the degree of exclusivity practiced and preached by the rabbis.
- A. Did the gathering at Yavne constitute something similar to the Council at Nicaea (325 C.E.) which established an orthodox creed for Christianity?
1. The nature of rabbinic literature does not support this assumption. Rabbinic literature is replete with conflicting opinions on almost every aspect of Jewish law, and grants legitimacy to a variety of opinions.
 2. Very little in rabbinic literature suggests that Judaism had been a creed-oriented religion. It is only in the Middle Ages (possibly as a response to Christianity and Islam) that Jewish sages began to formulate “principles” of their religion.
 3. Rabbinic Judaism did assume a belief in certain core articles of faith: belief that the Torah has a divine origin, that God is actively involved in the supervision of this world and cognizant of human behavior, that the soul survives death, and that the dead will be resurrected.

- B.** There is no way of knowing what percentage of Jews in Judea immediately embraced rabbinic teachings and accepted rabbinic authority. Elements of the priesthood may have formed an opposition of sorts, as did some wealthy aristocratic circles.

Essential Reading:

Alon, G., *The Jews in their Land in the Talmudic Era (70–640 CE)*.

Neusner, J., *First Century Judaism in Crisis*.

Supplementary Reading:

Levine, L. I., “Judaism from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the End of the Second Jewish Revolt: 70–135 C.E.,” in Shanks, H., ed., *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of their Origins and Early Development*, pp. 125–149.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think that Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai and his colleagues of the Yavne period were consciously out to redefine Judaism for all subsequent generations, or were they merely providing alternative systems for religious expression and behavior until a new Temple would be rebuilt?
2. Why do you think it was so important for the rabbis to declare that the legal development of Judaism was, after Sinai, solely in human hands, precluding any divine intervention by means of new revelation?

Lecture Twenty-Two

The Shaping of Rabbinic Judaism

Scope: Six hundred years of Second Temple history slowly witnessed the erosion of many of the biblical frameworks of Jewish life. Monarchy and prophets disappeared, and in 70 C.E. the Temple and its priesthood ceased to function. A post-Temple format required innovation, at times radical—but any group wishing to lead the way in this revolutionary process of national redefinition also needed to demonstrate a sense of continuity and adherence to age-old articles of faith in the midst of change. Synagogues might be referred to as mini-sanctuaries, but in fact they brought about democratization along with geographical decentralization. All were equal in prayer, and leadership evolved from an inherited priestly class to a group who achieved their positions through learning and personal behavior rather than genealogy. The values of rabbinic Judaism, no less than the revised forms of religious expression, were destined to serve as the new standards of Judaism down to the present day.

Outline

- I. In the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, every aspect of Jewish life had to be reshaped. As the rabbinic form of Judaism emerged, it established a roadmap for accepted Jewish behavior.
 - A. The frameworks of communal leadership and social authority, which for centuries had been placed in the hands of priestly families in Jerusalem, were destroyed overnight.
 - B. As the new rabbinic model of spiritual leadership began to emerge, formal governing bodies were required.
 1. Who would assume responsibility for regulating the Jewish calendar, by determining and announcing the dates of the New Year and all the ensuing holidays?
 2. How should those holidays, once centered around specific sacrifices, now be celebrated?
 3. Was there an authoritative body that could provide the community with a comprehensive liturgical text to take the place of Temple worship?
 - C. Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakai's guidelines for post-Temple Jewish life required a detailed translation into practical terms.
 - D. Yohanan's inspired ideas were translated into practice by his successors, who came from the ranks of teachers and students of Torah in the new rabbinic mold, combining intellectual ability and imposing character.
 - E. At Yavne, Yohanan ben Zakkai was succeeded by Rabban Gamaliel, the descendant of a well-respected Pharisaic family.
 - F. Under Gamaliel (c. 96–114 C.E.) a rabbinic hierarchy of leadership began to emerge, a forerunner to the establishment of the formal office that came to be known as the *patriarchate*.
 1. Gamaliel and his colleagues traveled extensively throughout Judea, where they sat as a court or dispensed legal advice; they also traveled to Rome and to Syria, where the local Roman governor granted Gamaliel "authority."
 2. The revised Jewish administrative body gave Rome a dependable conduit for communicating with the Jewish population of Judea and throughout the Empire. By the early 3rd century C.E., a recognized office of Patriarch (*Nasi*) existed.
- II. Rabban Gamaliel's recognition within the Jewish community played a critical role in the acceptance of rabbinic Judaism by the sages of his day and by the population at large.
 - A. There is no evidence that the average Jew during Second Temple times prayed regularly, or that any fixed text or structure for daily or weekly prayers existed. The main activity in Judean synagogues prior to 70 C.E. was the public reading of scripture, accompanied by a sermon.
 - B. Beginning with Rabban Gamaliel at Yavne, prayer was a fixed requirement for all Jews. There were two fixed times for praying, morning and afternoon, intended to correspond to the times of the daily sacrifices at the Temple. An evening prayer was optional.
 - C. The sages at Yavne solidified a structure for prayer services, which included the Amidah (standing) prayer, also known as the Eighteen Benedictions. This prayer begins and ends with praise for God; in between it contains a detailed list of requests, both personal and communal.

- D. Under Gamaliel, a benediction was inserted condemning the *minim*, a vague term which may have targeted certain groups of Jews who strayed beyond the broad consensus acceptable to the rabbis. These may have included Jewish Christians, whose beliefs were incongruent with the basic rabbinic belief in a future messianic figure.
 - E. Jewish festivals were revised and decentralized under Gamaliel. The Passover ritual was transformed from a sacrifice offered and eaten in Jerusalem to a family-oriented meal in the home, ultimately accompanied by the reading of the Haggadah in which all participated.
 - F. The lives of all Jews were directly affected by Gamaliel's decisions regarding the calendar. Festivals are determined by the calendar, and testimony by two witnesses to the appearance of the new moon (to begin the lunar month) was carried out only at the central rabbinic court attached to Rabban Gamaliel.
 - G. In redefining Judaism in post-Temple frameworks, rabbinic Judaism had to address not only the ideological and theological consequences of the destruction, but the practical and organizational ones as well.
- III. As part of the restoration of order in the aftermath of the destruction of Judaism's central institutions, the entire Jewish tradition was submitted to a systematic literary arrangement for the first time. Spanning the century and a half after Yavne, the full range of Jewish law and practice as taught by the rabbis was systematically arranged according to topics, in a book known as the Mishnah.
- A. The Mishnah (literally: repetition, teaching) is a systematic presentation of all that had been taught by Jewish interpreters of the Torah since the completion of the Hebrew Bible.
 - B. Produced anonymously, the Mishnah is attributed to the grandson of Rabban Gamaliel, known as Judah *ha-Nasi* (Judah the Patriarch), and dated to around 200 C.E.
 - C. The Mishnah as it appears today has six sections or "orders"; these address agriculture, festivals, marriage laws, torts, laws pertaining to the Temple, and aspects of ritual purity.
 - D. The traditions in the Mishnah had accumulated over hundreds of years, some dating back to the Second Temple period and others formulated by the rabbis of the post-Temple period. Often a statement contains more than one opinion, suggesting the Mishnah was intended to be a digest or anthology of legal traditions upon which later rabbis could base their legal decisions.
 - E. Rabbis from the 3rd to the 6th century C.E. produced two major works based on the Mishnah and known as the Talmud. By the 3rd century, rabbinic centers of learning existed in Babylonia as well as Judea. Each of these rabbinic communities produced its own Talmud, but over time the Babylonian Talmud gained a preferred status.
 - F. In addition to legal argumentation based on the Mishnah, the Talmud contains Rabbinic reflections on almost every aspect of Jewish life, using every literary tool available: stories, parables, folklore, accounts of celestial activity. This nonlegal material is collectively called *Aggadah*, which means "discourse" or "telling." The legal component of rabbinic Judaism is referred to as *Halakhah* ("to walk") and encompasses all the behavioral aspects of Jewish life.
 - G. Many of these rabbinic traditions were compiled as commentaries to the Scriptures. These compilations are known as *midrash* and were produced in two stages, parallel in time to the Mishnah and Talmud. Some are running commentaries to the biblical text, whereas others incorporate homilies which may have originated as sermons delivered in synagogues.
 - H. As rabbinic Judaism required all post-biblical tradition to be transmitted orally, it would be more accurate to say that Judah the Patriarch edited or redacted the Mishnah rather than wrote it. Oral transmission was critical to maintaining the social status of the rabbis. The study circles of the rabbis employed "reciters" (*tannaim*) whose function was to memorize and recite all the necessary traditions required for a given discussion. The period of the Mishnah (70–220 C.E.) came to be known as the *tannaitic* period, and all the rabbis of that era assumed the title *tannaim*.
- IV. The status and recognition afforded to Judah the Patriarch by Jews as well as Romans probably rendered his Mishnah the authoritative corpus of Jewish tradition.
- A. Judah was a recognized legal scholar as well as a statesman. Rabbinic stories even imagined a personal relationship between the Patriarch and the Roman Emperor.

- B. Later sources suggested that Judah was a descendant of King David, a not-very-subtle messianic allusion. The Talmud compares Judah to Moses, in that each served as a political leader while also providing posterity with a definitive legal text.
- C. The messianic imagery attached to Judah is striking, coming only decades after the Jews of Judea made one last attempt to regain full independence from Rome, led by the military commander Simon Bar Kokhba. This may suggest a spiritualizing shift in the messianic model.

Essential Reading:

Neusner, J., *Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah*.

Urbach, E. E., *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*.

Supplementary Reading:

Cohen, S. J. D., "The Rabbi in Second-Century Jewish Society," in Horbury, W., W. D. Davies, and J. Sturdy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3, pp. 922–990.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think that the rabbis considered the solutions they offered as alternatives to Temple worship to be improvements, possibly even an upgrading of Judaism to a higher spiritual level?
2. The rabbis as a social class represent an aristocracy of learning, taking the place of the priestly aristocracy of birth. Does this alternative aristocratic element in rabbinic Judaism diminish the degree of democratization in religious life that was provided by rabbinic Judaism?

Lecture Twenty-Three

A Violent Epilogue—Bar Kokhba

Scope: Not all Jews opted immediately for the rabbinic alternative to Second Temple realities. Sixty-two years after the destruction of the Temple, the image of a militant messiah appeared once again. Under a leader named bar Kosiba (or Bar Kokhba, “Son of a Star”), a violent rebellion broke out once again in Judea. While many of the events remain obscure, archaeological discoveries, and in particular coins and documents produced in the rebel camp, breathe new life into what was once a legendary episode. After the failure of this rebellion, rabbinic Judaism entered a further stage of consolidation. Messianic expectations assumed a distinctly spiritual (and far more passive) tone, and even the role of the Land of Israel in Jewish thought was subjected to reappraisal.

Outline

- I. The militant Jewish activism of the late Second Temple period was not abandoned overnight. Dreams of a restored Jerusalem and rebuilt Temple could still arouse the passions of large segments of the Jewish community. These hopes had to be dashed with absolute finality before the rabbinic alternative could be embraced as the only viable solution for the maintenance of a Jewish identity.
 - A. During the first half of the 2nd century C.E., two extremely violent Jewish uprisings broke out, one in the Jewish Diaspora and the other in Judea. Both were led by Jewish opponents to accommodation with the Roman Empire or the Greco-Roman world.
 - B. The first of these two violent outbreaks took place in the years 115–117 C.E., while the Roman Emperor Trajan was involved in a campaign to suppress an uprising against Rome in Mesopotamia. Taking advantage of the Roman army’s preoccupation elsewhere, the Jews of Egypt and Cyrene launched an attack upon the Greek population in cities all along the North African coast.
 - C. These disturbances marked a new phase in the longstanding hostility between Jews and Greeks throughout much of the Hellenistic-Roman world.
 - D. Literary and epigraphic evidence refers to the disturbances as “the Jewish rebellion.” Roman and Christian literary sources indicate the casualties ran into the hundreds of thousands, and the Jewish community of Alexandria was decimated.
 - E. The Jewish leader of the uprising was called Andreas by the Roman historian Cassius Dio and Lukuas by the Church Father Eusebius, who adds the title “King” to the leader’s name.
 - F. There is no hard evidence that the disturbances spread to Judea, but the Jewish community in that province was just a few years away from launching its own major uprising.
- II. This second violent clash between Jews and Rome, known as the Bar Kokhba uprising after the name of the Jewish leader, occurred during the reign of Trajan’s successor, Hadrian (117–138 C.E.). The uprising, which erupted in 132 C.E., was the one great exception to Hadrian’s image throughout the empire as a prince of peace. Its suppression required a concerted military effort on the part of the Roman legions.
 - A. Sources for the history of the Bar Kokhba uprising are extremely limited, as is our knowledge of its causes, the sequence of events, and even some of the results.
 - B. Despite the paucity of written sources, the atmosphere that incited some Jews to take up arms again seems clear.
 1. In the eyes of many Judeans, Rome was an illegitimate conqueror that had also sinned by destroying God’s Temple.
 2. Many Jews still thought of the messiah as a military warrior who would lead the forces of Israel against the heathen, restore Jerusalem to its ancient glory, and rebuild the Temple.
 3. The year 130 C.E. marked the seventh decade after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. Belief in predetermined historical cycles may have given rise to hopes for a rebuilding of the Temple. After all, 70 years separated the destruction of the First Temple and the consecration of the Second Temple.
 - C. Hadrian disappointed expectations for a restoration of Jerusalem and its Temple.

1. Hadrian cultivated the image of a peace-oriented ruler and supporter of Hellenistic culture, founding new Greek cities in the east and introducing Greek institutions into existing cities.
 2. Hadrian planned to rebuild Jerusalem as a Greek city named Aelia Capitolina, dashing Jewish hopes that he would rebuild Jerusalem and its Temple.
 3. Jews feared that pagan worship would be introduced into their holy city, possibly even in a pagan Temple situated on the site of their own destroyed sanctuary.
 4. Numismatic evidence proves that plans to build Aelia Capitolina were made known prior to the war, but it is not certain whether this was a major catalyst in the uprising, as suggested by Cassius Dio.
 5. Another Roman historian suggested it was Hadrian's ban on circumcision that sparked the uprising.
- D. The Romans were forced to transfer a number of legions to Judea, under the command of Julius Severus, the governor of Britain.
 - E. Documents produced in the rebel camp indicate the Jewish general was named Simon bar Kosiba. Subsequently he was dubbed "Bar Kokhba" (Aramaic for "son of a star"), an allusion to his messianic aspirations.
 - F. Bar Kokhba struck coins as a symbol of national independence, on which he referred to himself with the title *Nasi*, which was associated with King David. Some of the coins also list a priest, Eleazar, reminiscent of the Qumranic vision of a Davidic messiah paired with a priestly one.
 - G. The coins struck by Bar Kokhba count years "to the redemption of Israel" or "to the freedom of Jerusalem." Bar Kokhba was cultivating a belief that a return to Jerusalem was imminent.
- III. The Bar Kokhba uprising took place *after* the sages at Yavne had proposed an alternative Jewish framework for religious expression. Was Bar Kokhba reacting against the ideas forged by Yohanan ben Zakkai? Were Jews once again focusing on a restored, glorious past, rather than forging the new, spiritualized and depoliticized Judaism that many of the rabbis preferred?
- A. Contemporary scholars have embraced radically different positions on this critical issue, which goes to the heart of rabbinic Judaism.
 - B. Some scholars note that very few of the rabbis expressed support for Bar Kokhba.
 - C. Other historians maintain that such a major uprising would not have taken place without tacit, if not overt, rabbinic support.
 - D. All of rabbinic literature was edited decades or centuries after the events of the Bar Kokhba uprising. The rabbis were not historians, and rabbinic literature was interested far less in *what* happened than in *why* certain disasters were visited on the Jewish people.
- IV. The war itself lasted for three years (132–135 C.E.), bringing devastation upon Jews and Romans alike.
- A. Cassius Dio claimed that more than half a million Jews died, and so many Romans also perished that Hadrian was forced to omit the standard imperial assurance that his legions were well.
 - B. During and after the war, Hadrian inflicted upon the Jews of Judea a systematic religious persecution. Many visible manifestations of Jewish religious behavior were banned, including public prayer, public study of Torah, circumcision, ordination of rabbis, and public wearing of *tefilin*.
 - C. In general, Hadrian ordered Jews to refrain from keeping certain Commandments rather than to actively transgress the law. This complicated the formulation of a uniform response. Some rabbis preached passive acquiescence; others demanded public disregard for Hadrian's decrees even at the risk of death.
 - D. The question of which Commandments must be kept at all costs had been taken up by the sages of the Yavne generation, who determined that three areas require total obedience to the Torah: avoidance of all idolatry; of sexual transgressions; and of the shedding of innocent blood at the urging of heathen.
 - E. In rabbinic minds the maintenance of life was a cardinal Commandment, even at the expense of a temporary breach of the Law. But in the face of targeted persecution after the Bar Kokhba war, the rabbis refused to compromise: The very existence of Judaism hinged on absolute commitment to the Law, even at the risk of death.
 - F. This understanding became the basis for the Jewish ideal of martyrdom, known as *Kiddush ha-Shem* (the sanctification of God's name).
 - G. Stories of rabbinic martyrdom during the Bar Kokhba war abound, providing Jews with a model of religious devotion that took its place alongside the story of Abraham's binding of Isaac.

- H. By stressing passive resistance rather than the activism of Bar Kokhba and his soldiers, the rabbis were effectively distancing themselves from the militancy of Second Temple times and setting the stage for a redefined Jewish lifestyle that represents the core of rabbinic Judaism.

Essential Reading:

Eshel, H., "The Bar Kochba Revolt, 132–135," in Katz, S. T., ed., *The Cambridge History of Judaism, vol. 4: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, pp. 105–127.

Yadin, Y., *Bar Kokhba: The Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero of the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome*.

Supplementary Reading:

Schaefer, P., ed., *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Would it be correct to state that in many ways the Bar Kokhba episode was no less of a turning point in the development of Judaism than the destruction of the Second Temple?
2. While the Biblical description of Abraham's binding of Isaac projects primarily the unbound faith of Abraham, rabbinic exegesis stresses that Isaac was an active partner in the event, completely aware of the fact that he was about to be offered up as a sacrifice. How might the events surrounding the Bar Kokhba uprising have contributed to this depiction of Isaac?

Lecture Twenty-Four

From “Roots” to “Tree”

Scope: The concluding lecture of this course attempts to put all that we have discussed into a broader perspective. After the destruction of the Temple, did Judaism evolve from a vibrant, freewheeling, and diverse community into a normative society with far less room for deviation or opposing positions? Or, as claimed by others, did Jews and others begin slowly to think of Judaism as a religion or faith rather than as a distinct ethnic community centered around a specific homeland and capital city? Of the two major rabbinic communities that now emerged, why was the Babylonian center ultimately successful in overcoming its rival in the Land of Israel? Were Jews finally reconciled to a dispersion that would only cease in “the end of days,” and how did decisions on these and other issues affect the direction taken by Judaism during the past two millennia?

Outline

- I. Beliefs that evolved during the formative period of Jewish history continue to influence the development of Judaism. Judaism’s survival is all the more striking in light of the vicissitudes that swept over its adherents throughout history.
- II. Added to the spiritual trauma of the destruction of the Second Temple, the tragic aftermath of the Bar Kokhba uprising carried the potential for a total disintegration of the Jewish community in Judea.
 - A. After suppressing the Jewish uprising, the Romans proceeded to carry out their earlier plans to render the city of Jerusalem a pagan city.
 - B. According to Christian tradition, Jews were now prevented from physically entering their sacred city.
 - C. In an attempt to sever the historic link between the ethnic community of the Jews and the Land of Israel, the name of the Roman province was now officially changed from Judaea to Syria-Palaestina.
 - D. The demographic results of the Bar Kokhba war were devastating. Many thousands of Jews were killed, others sold into slavery, and yet others fled. The center of Jewish life moved north to the Galilee.
- III. The long-term results of the Bar Kokhba defeat, coming on the heels of the War of 66–70 C.E, played a significant role in reshaping the communal structure and aspirations of the Jewish world.
 - A. The political activism of the late Second Temple period and the immediate post-Temple era under Bar Kokhba had been dealt a mortal blow.
 1. The vast majority of Jews reconciled themselves to a Roman presence in Israel, and by the late 2nd century C.E. the Jewish patriarchate cooperated with the Roman administration.
 2. The messianic model embraced by most Jews now assumed a more spiritual image, enabling a figure such as Rabbi Judah the Patriarch to become the focus of messianic expectations.
 3. Without a religious center in Jerusalem, Jewish Diaspora communities assumed a greater sense of independence. Within the rabbinic movement, a new center emerged by the end of the 2nd century C.E. east of the Euphrates River. The Babylonian rabbinic community soon rivaled its Judean counterpart in power and authority, and by the early Middle Ages surpassed it.
 4. The rabbis of Judea did all they could to maintain their central position. In the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba uprising, rabbinic ideology called for total allegiance to the Holy Land and cast aspersions on all who would reside outside its borders.
 5. Fear of losing control of the Jewish homeland elicited calls for its continued support by Jews throughout the Diaspora.
 - B. Beginning in the late 2nd century C.E., Jews whose families had lived abroad for generations now had their bodies sent to the Holy Land for interment.
 1. Archaeologists have discovered concentrations of graves in Israel, containing the dead of the Diaspora whose coffins were brought for reburial in the Holy Land.
 2. Some (but not all) rabbis supported this custom by suggesting that those buried in the Holy Land would be the first to rise up from the dead, with the future coming of the messiah. Burial in Israel was also said to expiate sins.

- IV.** Jews were torn between the wish to maintain their ongoing lives in a Diaspora setting and the need to express a close emotional link to the Land of Israel. This link had roots going back to the Bible.
- A.** Abraham, the founding patriarch of the Israelites, had faith in God, and as a reward, God entered into a covenant with him.
 - B.** We think of faith as an internalized belief that accompanies the believer regardless of geographical context, but Abraham’s covenant with God specified that he leave his home and go to the land God would show him.
 - C.** Abraham was also promised that he would be the progenitor of a nation, whose numbers would equal that of the stars.
 - D.** Following the exodus of the enslaved Israelites from Egypt, the descendants of Abraham wandered through the desert until they arrived at Mt. Sinai, where they received a revealed law, the Torah. According to Jewish tradition, this was the first and only divine revelation. It provided the Israelites with guidelines for their continued existence as believers in a faith, members in an ethnic community, and future residents in a national homeland.
- V.** These defining components of Judaism manifested themselves throughout this course:
- A.** The Judean captives in Babylon wept in exile, for they could not sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land.
 - B.** Those who returned from Babylon to Judea were not granted permission to establish an independent state, but “to build a house of the Lord God” to be a center for expressing their faith and devotion to God through the biblically required system of sacrificial worship.
 - C.** The two central leaders of this process of restoration, Ezra and Nehemiah, demanded a rededication to the Law and a commitment to refrain from intermarriage.
 - D.** The historical process of defending one component often evolved into the quest for another. Threats to Judaism as a faith and mode of worship sometimes evolved into wars for political independence.
- VI.** As Judaism developed, there was an ongoing process of rendering its knowledge and practices accessible to an ever-widening circle of adherents. Even as the Temple remained the exclusive site for Jewish sacrificial worship, Second Temple Judaism was evolving into a text-oriented religion, increasingly accessible to an ever-broadening base of the faithful.
- A.** The first stage was the canonization of the Bible, so that all Jews would know precisely which books, out of a vast library produced during Second Temple times, were divinely inspired.
 - B.** To remain meaningful to all members of the faith, Judaism had to be accessible not only to Hebrew-speaking residents of Judea, but also to Jews who were distanced by geography or language. The Greek translation of the Bible took up that challenge, and also played a significant role in rendering Judaism accessible to non-Jews.
 - C.** Synagogues in the Second Temple period brought the sacred text to the people, rendering knowledge of Jewish tradition not only accessible but ubiquitous. The synagogue encouraged a democratization of religious activity, for a caste of priests was no longer required.
- VII.** In addition to accessibility, the Second Temple and immediate post-Temple period cultivated adaptability, through a variety of channels.
- A.** The books of the Bible were constantly retold and updated. Books such as Jubilees could cast biblical figures in post-biblical imagery, enhancing their relevance to the reader.
 - B.** Additional works of pious literature were provided to address social contexts unimaginable to the minds of biblical authors. Books like Tobit or III Maccabees featured Jews living outside Israel.
 - C.** Even central tenets of Second Temple Judaism were redefined in light of new political realities, such as the ever-shifting belief in a messianic restoration.
 - D.** The ultimate adaptors were the rabbis of the post-Temple period, who had little choice but to adapt if Judaism was to survive.
- VIII.** As innovative as rabbinic Judaism was, the seeds for these innovations had been planted hundreds of years before they were required for Judaism’s very survival.
- A.** The complexity of Judaism enabled Jews throughout history to identify their roots in the period and processes analyzed here. Religious Jews today would choose to identify themselves with the rabbinic

model. German Jews of the 19th century would point to a figure like Philo of Alexandria as proof that a Jew could be totally engaged in his surrounding culture while maintaining a legitimate Jewish identity. The secular founders of the modern Jewish national movement known as Zionism might feel affinity with the freedom fighters of the Second Temple period.

- B.** The secret to Jewish survival seems to have been built into the essential complexity and diversity of Judaism at its formative stages. All Jews, in all generations, could find their roots in the original plant, and the tree would remain standing precisely because of its deep and widespread roots.

Essential Reading:

Bickerman, E. J., “The Historical Foundations of Postbiblical Judaism,” and Goldin, J., “The Period of the Talmud,” in Finkelstein, L., *The Jews: Their History*, pp. 72–224.

Marcus, R., “The Hellenistic Age,” and Cohen, G. D., “The Talmudic Age,” in Schwarz, L. W., ed., *Great Ages and Ideas of the Jewish People*, pp. 95–212.

Questions to Consider:

1. Given the vicissitudes that shaped Judaism after the Bible, would it be more correct to define Judaism (both before and after the destruction of the Second Temple) as a faith, or as a nationality with religious elements?
2. Two elements characterized the history of Judaism in the period we have surveyed. One was the creation of a widespread Diaspora, and the other was the ultimate loss of political sovereignty. Did these two developments weaken Judaism or contribute to its survival?

Timeline

- c. 20th–16th centuries B.C.E. Migratory processes connected to the Patriarchs of Israel (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob).
- c. 14th–13th centuries B.C.E. Exodus from Egypt.
- c. 12th century B.C.E. Israelites conquer Canaan.
- c. 967 B.C.E. Death of King David.
- c. 967–928 B.C.E. Kingdom of Solomon.
- c. 950 B.C.E. First Temple is completed.
- c. 928 B.C.E. Israel is divided into Northern and Southern kingdoms.
- 722 B.C.E. Assyrians conquer Northern Kingdom; “Ten Tribes” taken into captivity.
- 597 B.C.E. Babylonians capture Jerusalem; beginning of Babylonian Exile.
- 586 B.C.E. Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the First Temple.
- 538 B.C.E. Cyrus Declaration.
- 516 B.C.E. Second Temple consecrated.
- 458 B.C.E. Ezra arrives in Jerusalem.
- 445 B.C.E. Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem.
- c. 410 B.C.E. Jewish Temple at Elephantine, Egypt, is destroyed.
- 332 B.C.E. Alexander the Great conquers Judea.
- 301–200 B.C.E. Judea ruled by Ptolemaic Hellenistic Empire.
- 200 B.C.E. Judea comes under Seleucid Hellenistic rule.
- c. 190–180 B.C.E. Ben Sira writes book of Wisdom.
- 167 B.C.E. Outbreak of Hasmonean Uprising; led by Judah Maccabee after death of Mattathias.
- 164 B.C.E. Judah Maccabee retakes Jerusalem; Temple reconsecrated.
- c. 160–142 B.C.E. Jonathan leads Hasmonean uprising; Jewish sects first appear in Judea.
- 141–63 B.C.E. Hasmoneans rule independent Jewish state and kingdom.
- 63 B.C.E. Roman army captures Judea.
- 37–4 B.C.E. Kingdom of Herod the Great.
- c. 20–10 B.C.E. Birth of Philo of Alexandria.
- 6 C.E. Judea becomes Roman province; first appearance of the “Fourth Philosophy.”
- 37 C.E. Birth of Josephus.
- c. 45–50 C.E. Death of Philo of Alexandria.
- 66–70 C.E. Jewish Uprising against Rome.
- 70 C.E. Fall of Jerusalem; Second Temple is destroyed.
- 73 or 74 C.E. Fall of Masada.
- c. 70–80 C.E. Yohanan ben Zakkai at Yavne.
- c. 80–115 C.E. Rabban Gamaliel II at Yavne.
- c. 100 C.E. Death of Josephus.

- 115–117 C.E. Jewish uprisings during reign of Trajan.
- 132–135 C.E. Bar Kokhba Uprising.
- c. 200 C.E. Judah the Patriarch redacts the Mishnah.
- c. 375–400 C.E. Jerusalem Talmud is completed.
- c. 500–600 C.E. Babylonian Talmud is completed.
- 1947 C.E. Initial discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran.

Glossary

Antiquities of the Jews: Title of Josephus' Jewish history, which begins with the earliest biblical stories and concludes just prior to the outbreak of the Great Revolt against Rome in 66 C.E.

apocalypse: From the Greek "to reveal," referring to literary works that purport to reveal secrets of the divinity, future history, and the nature of the world. Apocalyptic literature often contains a messianic component.

Apocrypha: From the word "hidden," in Greek; refers to books written by Jews and included in the Greek (Septuagint) or Latin versions of the Old Testament preserved by the Christian Church, but not found in the Hebrew Bible.

canon: Greek for "bar" or "rod," and taking on the meaning "standard" or "norm"; the authoritative body of Sacred Scripture.

common Judaism: Elements of Jewish beliefs, behavior, or practice embraced by all or most sections of the Jewish community, in Judea as well as the Diaspora, regardless of social and cultural contexts or sectarian affiliation.

Cyrus Declaration: Edict issued by the King of Persia in 538 B.C.E., allowing Jewish captives in Babylon to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Jewish Temple.

Diaspora: The dispersion of the Jews that developed in the wake of the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. and grew during the Second Temple period.

Ecclesiasticus (or **Sirach**): Book of Wisdom written by Joshua (or Simon) Ben Sira, a 2nd century B.C.E. priest from Jerusalem. Originally in Hebrew, the work was translated by the author's grandson into Greek and included in the Apocrypha.

Elephantine: Island in southern Egypt, opposite modern Aswan, and site of an ancient Jewish community during the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.E. Functioned as a Jewish garrison with its own temple. Papyri from this community were discovered in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

eschatology: From the Greek *eschatos*, doctrines referring to the "end of days," often including resurrection, messianism, and national restoration.

Essenes: A Jewish sect of the Second Temple period, removed from mainstream society and identified by many scholars with the Dead Sea Sect.

First Temple: The Jewish Temple built in Jerusalem by King Solomon. The First Temple was completed in the mid-10th century B.C.E. and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E.

Fourth Philosophy: Josephus's designation for the religious ideology of the Jewish rebel group that emerged in 6 C.E. with the establishment of the Province of Judaea. This group believed that it was forbidden to submit to the rule of any human being, and so considered subservience to Rome as a sort of idolatry.

Hasmoneans: Priestly family that led the Jewish rebellion against the Seleucid Empire that culminated with the reconquest and consecration of the Temple of Jerusalem in 164 B.C.E. Often referred to as the Maccabees.

Jewish War: Title of Josephus's history of the Jewish uprising against Roman rule in Judea that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Jewish Temple in 70 C.E.

Jubilees (Book of): A work produced in the 2nd century B.C.E., representing a retelling of the biblical book of Genesis and the first part of Exodus. Projects biblical history according to cycles of 50 years ("jubilees"), and maintains that the calendar must be based only on solar calculations.

koine: "Common" in Greek, and referring to what became the standard Greek dialect of the Hellenistic period.

Maccabee(s): "Hammer" in Hebrew; the designation of Judah, son of Mattathias, who led the Jewish uprising against the Seleucid Empire. Often used to designate all members of the Hasmonean family.

Maccabees, Books of: Books describing the Hasmonean uprising, included in the Apocrypha. The first book of Maccabees was written in Judea, in Hebrew. The second book of Maccabees was written in Greek, in North Africa. The extant version of the second book of Maccabees is an abridged version of the original work, written by Jason of

Cyrene, and evinces a far more pious stance than I Maccabees, which represents a political legitimization of the eventual role of the Hasmoneans as Jewish rulers and priests.

Masada: Originally a Hasmonean and Herodian palace on the southwestern shore of the Dead Sea, Masada was the last stronghold of the Zealots in the Great Revolt against Rome, and was conquered by the Roman army in 73 or 74 C.E. According to Josephus, the Jewish defenders of the site chose to commit suicide rather than fall into Roman hands.

messiah: “Anointed” in Hebrew. Applied in the Hebrew Bible to kings and priests who were anointed as a symbol of divine confirmation of their position. In post-biblical times refers to an ultimate redeemer of Israel, usually considered a descendant of the House of David.

midrash: Systems of biblical exegesis employed by the rabbis. *Midrash* uses a variety of approaches: some *midrashim* (plural of *midrash*) interpret the biblical text line by line, while others attach long homilies to a central idea in the biblical text.

Mishnah: “Repetition” in Hebrew. The first codification of Jewish law after the Bible, edited by Judah the Patriarch (*ha-Nasi*) c. 200 C.E. The Mishnah is divided into six sections, known as “orders” (*sedarim*), each addressing a particular aspect of Jewish law.

Nasi: Hebrew term for “chief.” Used in the Bible initially to refer to the heads of the tribes of Israel. By late biblical times, a designation for either king or high priest. In the post-Second Temple period, the title of the new office of Patriarchate.

Old Testament: The Christian designation of the Hebrew Bible; referred to as *Tanakh* by Jews.

peshet: System of Biblical interpretation employed by the Dead Sea Sect, wherein biblical prophecy is understood as being played out at the time of the author.

Pharisees: One of numerous political and religious groups among the Jewish population in Judea in the Second Temple period. Spiritual forerunners to the rabbis of the post-Temple period. The term derives from the Hebrew word “to separate.”

proseuche: Greek for “prayer” or “place of prayer,” and the formal designation for some of the earliest known synagogues, primarily in Hellenistic Egypt (3rd–2nd centuries B.C.E.).

pseudepigrapha: “False ascription.” Books written primarily during the Second Temple period, and attributed falsely to authors who lived during the Biblical period. Often broadly used to designate the religious literary corpus of the Second Temple period not included in the Greek Bible.

Ptolemies; Ptolemaic Empire: Hellenistic empire based in Egypt and founded by Ptolemy I after the death of Alexander the Great.

Qumran: Site on the northwestern shores of the Dead Sea, where the Dead Sea Scrolls, and much of the Jewish library of the Second Temple period, was discovered in 1947.

rabbi: “Master” in Hebrew; the common designation in post-Temple times for sages or teachers of Torah. Ultimately the title was awarded through a formal process of ordination, granted at first by the ordained person’s own teacher, and later by the office of the Patriarch (*Nasi*).

Sadducees: One of the Jewish parties of the Second Temple period primarily linked to the priesthood and aristocracy.

Second Temple: Completed in 516–515 B.C.E. after Jews from Babylon were permitted by the Persian King Cyrus to return to Jerusalem; destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E.

Seleucids; Seleucid Empire: Hellenistic Empire based in Syria and founded by Seleucus I after the death of Alexander the Great.

Septuagint: From the Greek for “seventy,” referring to the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek by seventy Jewish elders.

Shofar: The ram’s horn blown according to Jewish tradition on the New Year (Rosh ha-Shanah).

Talmud: “Learning” in Hebrew. Refers to the literary corpus of rabbinic traditions on all aspects of Judaism, and following the order of the Mishnah. Two Talmuds exist: the Jerusalem (or Palestinian) Talmud, edited c. 400 C.E., and the Babylonian Talmud, edited c. 500–600 C.E. The Babylonian Talmud emerged as the authoritative basis for all subsequent Jewish legal codification and became the most studied text in the rabbinic curriculum.

Tanakh: Hebrew acronym designating the three components of the Hebrew Bible: *Torah* (Five Books of Moses), *Nevi'im* (Prophets), and *Ketuvim* (Writings).

tanna (plural: **tannaim**): “Reciter(s)” in Hebrew; the *tanna* would memorize the entire oral tradition of the rabbis and serve as presenter of any given tradition to be discussed in the academy. Ultimately the term came to designate all the rabbis of the *Mishnah* period (70–220 C.E.).

Torah: Literally “teaching” in Hebrew, and specifically referring to the five Books of Moses (Pentateuch) that constitute the first portion of the Hebrew Bible.

Biographical Notes

Ben Sira (2nd century B.C.E.): Prominent priest, teacher, and author, who wrote a book of Wisdom in the early part of the 2nd century B.C.E. Ben Sira describes the social and religious atmosphere of Jerusalem just prior to the Maccabean uprising. In true Hellenistic form, Ben Sira recognized the central role of “wisdom” in all intellectual endeavors. For him, all wisdom derives from God, and thus God’s Torah and wisdom are one and the same. Observance of the laws provided by the Torah is therefore of supreme importance for any seeker of wisdom. Ben Sira wrote in Hebrew, but his work was translated into Greek by his grandson in 132 B.C.E. Until the late 19th century only the Greek version was available, incorporated into the Apocrypha. Significant parts of his work were discovered in the Cairo Genizah in the late 19th century, and more portions were discovered at Masada and Qumran in the mid-20th century.

Ezra (5th century B.C.E.): Jewish priest and prominent official, described in the Bible as “a scholar in the law of the God of heaven.” Ezra was commissioned by King Artaxerxes I of Persia to leave Babylon for Judea, where he would regulate the country and the city of Jerusalem “according to the Law of your God.” Ezra arrived in Judea in 458 B.C.E. with considerable financial support from the royal treasury for the Temple and its service, but upon arrival devoted most of his efforts to effecting a sweeping religious and social revitalization of the local Jewish community. One of his first steps was to have a public reading and explication of the entire Torah carried out during the festival of Sukkot (“Tabernacles”), and many consider this event to be the origin of the Jewish practice of public readings of the Torah on a weekly basis in synagogues. Ezra also exerted a major effort to annul the mixed marriages between Jews and non-Jews that had become common prior to his arrival.

Gamaliel II of Yavne (late 1st–early 2nd century C.E.): Succeeded Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai as leader of the rabbinic community at Yavne (c. 80–c. 115 C.E.). Gamaliel was the descendant of a prominent Pharisaic family of the late Second Temple period. His appearance at Yavne after Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai may represent the first stage in the emergence of the office of Patriarch, combining political functions with spiritual leadership. Gamaliel appears to have received some sort of formal Roman recognition as a representative of the Jewish community, and at the same time was recognized as first among equals within the nascent rabbinic movement. Major steps at redefining Jewish religious activity were taken under Gamaliel. Organized communal prayer seems to have been solidified in his day, and the central components of Jewish prayer, such as the *amidah* (or “eighteen benedictions”) were finalized at this time. Festivals such as Passover received their post-Temple character during Gamaliel’s term of office, with the *seder* as a family-oriented ceremony taking the place of sacrificial worship, following the destruction of the Temple.

Herod the Great (73 B.C.E.–4 B.C.E.): Ruled over Judea from 37 B.C.E. until his death in 4 B.C.E. Herod was born into a prominent Idumean family that had been converted to Judaism during the rule of the Hasmonean High Priest John Hyrcanus I. When the Parthians invaded Judea in 40 B.C.E. and placed a Hasmonean king on the throne in Jerusalem, Herod made his way to Rome where he was named king by the Senate, upon the advice of Mark Anthony. By 37 B.C.E. he was in control of the entire country. Herod ruled Judea with an iron fist, cruelly suppressing any opposition. He was one of the great builders in the history of the Land of Israel, establishing a string of palaces and fortresses throughout the country. One of the most famous of these is the fortress of Masada, site of the last stand of the Zealots in their war against Rome (73 or 74 C.E.). Herod was also renowned for his rebuilding of Jerusalem, introducing numerous Hellenistic-Roman structures into the city, and rebuilding the Jewish Temple into one of the most illustrious structures in the Roman East.

Josephus Flavius (c. 37 C.E.–c.100 C.E.): The most important Jewish historian of antiquity, and the major source of information on Jews and Judaism in the Greco-Roman period. Josephus was born into a prominent family of priests in Jerusalem, and also claimed to be a descendant of the Hasmonean family. In his youth he received a thorough Jewish education, and also spent time with the different Jewish parties and sects of the day. Josephus was part of a delegation sent to Rome to secure the release of Jewish priests being held as prisoners. Not long after his return to Judaea, the Great Revolt against Rome broke out, and Josephus was chosen by the rebels to coordinate the war in Galilee. He enjoyed no real success as a commander, and by the end of 67 C.E. the Galilee had fallen to the Romans. Josephus spent the remainder of the war as a captive and confidant of the Roman commanders. The Flavian emperors that came to power during the war were his patrons, hence the name Flavius. After the war, Josephus moved to Rome, where he produced four works. The first, *The Jewish War*, is a detailed description of the Great Revolt of 66–70 C.E., and Josephus is at least as critical of the Jewish Zealots as he is of the last Roman governors of Judaea for causing a needless war. Two decades later he produced a defense of the Jews (*The*

Antiquities) in which he provides a sweeping history of the nation from its biblical origins and up to the eve of the uprising against Rome. A third work, *Against Apion*, is a response to what Josephus considered to be the calumny on Jews and their religion which had become a staple in much of Hellenistic and Roman literature. A fourth work, *The Life*, represents the author's biography, but is primarily a defense of his behavior during the war.

Judah Maccabee (d. 160 B.C.E.): Son of Mattathias, and military leader of the Jewish uprising against the Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Following the death of his father in 167 B.C.E., Judah focused his efforts on retaking the city of Jerusalem and restoring its traditional Jewish character, which had been abolished with the Hellenistic reforms that had been introduced by elements of the high priesthood and the support of the Seleucid monarch. After a guerilla-type series of attacks on numerous Syrian forces that had been dispatched to link up with the local Greek garrison in Jerusalem, Judah was able to enter the city in December 164 B.C.E. and purify the Temple from the pagan rites that had been introduced into its precincts. This victory is commemorated by the Jewish festival of Hannukah. Judah also directed attempts at alleviating the plight of Jewish communities throughout the country who had been subjected to attacks from their non-Jewish neighbors. This activity contributed to an emerging image of the Hasmonean family as defenders of Jewish interests at large, an important first stage in the creation of a new dynastic leadership. One of Judah's last achievements was the conclusion of a treaty between the Jews and the Roman Senate (161 B.C.E.), the first of numerous diplomatic efforts that became a mainstay of Hasmonean politics. Judah was killed in battle a year later (160 B.C.E.), and leadership of the Maccabean uprising fell to the hands of his brother Jonathan.

Judah the Patriarch (*ha-Nasi*) (c. 140–220 C.E.): Compiler of the Mishnah and political and spiritual leader of the Jewish community in Judea in the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries C.E. Judah succeeded in cultivating an amicable relationship with the Roman Severan dynasty (193–235 C.E.) and was rewarded with tacit imperial recognition of his position as political leader. Rabbinic literature took this relationship into legendary territory, describing an extremely intimate relationship between Judah (commonly referred to as “Rabbi”) and a Roman emperor named Antoninus (for whom no positive identification exists). Under Judah the office of “Patriarch” (*Nasi*) reached the zenith of its power and respect, and the Talmud declares that from the days of Moses until those of Judah “never has Torah and [political] greatness been so intrinsically bound together.”

Nehemiah (5th century B.C.E.): Initially the cupbearer to the Persian King Artaxerxes I, and appointed by the King to serve as governor in Judea. Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem in 445 B.C.E. and stayed for 12 years. Nehemiah is credited with fortifying Jerusalem by rebuilding the city's walls, and with alleviating the economic plight of many of its residents. Nehemiah also strengthened the city by requiring one in ten residents of Judea to move to Jerusalem. He introduced sweeping economic reforms into the country, among them the abrogation of debts and the return of fields to landowners who had been forced to sell their plots because of their debts. Nehemiah also instituted an ordinance that required all Jews to donate to the Temple's upkeep on a yearly basis, thereby introducing a support-system that spread throughout the Jewish Diaspora. Nehemiah supported the religious reforms introduced by Ezra, such as the prohibition of mixed marriages, and pressed for a total abstention from any work on the Sabbath.

Philo of Alexandria (from c. 20–10 B.C.E. to c. 45–50 C.E.): The most prominent Jewish author and philosopher of the Hellenistic Diaspora. Born into a prominent Jewish family and steeped in Greek culture, Philo attempted to present Judaism to Greek readers in a manner that would arouse respect and admiration, suggesting that the two cultures complemented one another. Much of his literary work is in the form of biblical exegesis, applying an allegorical interpretation to the biblical narrative. Philo also produced two historical works, describing the violent clashes between Jews and Greeks in Alexandria during the years 38–41 C.E. Philo's prolific literary achievement, like that of Josephus, was preserved primarily by the Christian Church.

Simon bar Kosiba (commonly referred to as Bar Kokhba; d. 135 C.E.): Led the final military attempt (132–135 C.E.) by the Jews of Judea to remove Roman rule from the land and reestablish a Jewish state. Almost no biographical information exists relating to bar Kosiba's background, but the limited literary evidence on the uprising in Jewish, Christian, and Roman sources has been supplemented in recent times by significant archaeological discoveries, including letters dispatched by bar Kosiba himself to his commanding officers. In coins and documents produced during the war, bar Kosiba assumes the title *Nasi*, which seems to imply certain monarchical ambitions on his part. Rabbinic literature indicates that bar Kosiba may even have been considered by some sages, most notably Rabbi Akiva, to be the fulfillment of messianic aspirations. His common title, Bar Kokhba (“son of a star”) is based on the messianic interpretation of the scripture “A star has risen from Jacob” (Numbers 24:17).

Yohanan ben Zakkai (c. 1–80 C.E.): Rabbinic leader credited with establishing a new center of Jewish leadership at Yavne, which provided for alternative systems of religious expression following the destruction of the Second

Temple in 70 C.E. Talmudic legend describes Yohanan ben Zakkai's being smuggled out of Jerusalem in a coffin during the Roman siege of the city. Appearing before the Roman commander, the Jewish sage predicted the general's imminent appointment as Emperor, and was rewarded by Vespasian with permission to establish a center of learning at Yavne with his small circle of disciples. Clearly an anachronistic attempt at explaining the survival of Judaism in the aftermath of catastrophe, the story nevertheless recognizes the role of Yohanan in providing the devastated Jewish community with the initial stages of an alternative mode of Jewish worship, as well as a new authority structure. This leadership would ultimately come to be based on a slowly emerging rabbinic community, one that did not require a Temple-oriented power base, as with their priestly predecessors.

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