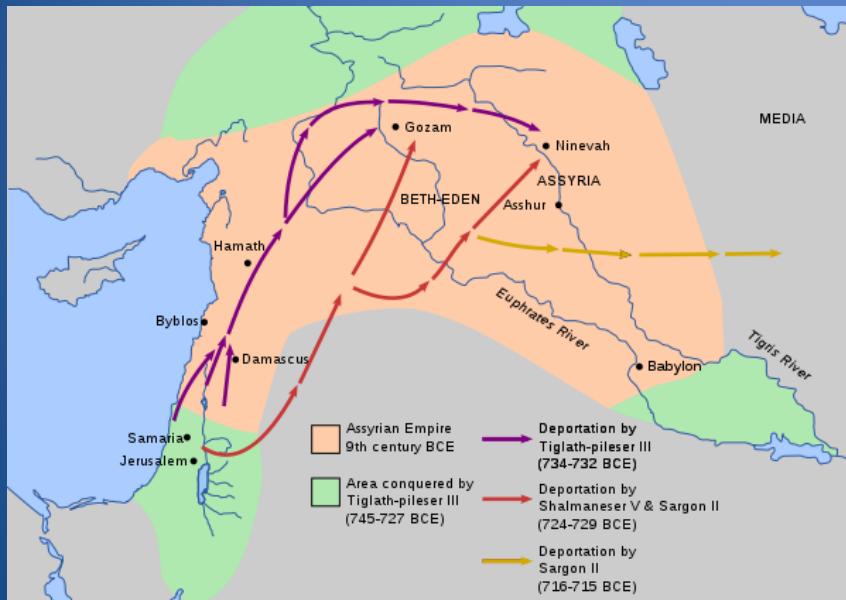


Judaism and Empire:

Jews among Greeks and Romans

SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM

The Fall of Judah



- The end of Assyrian power and the rise of the Babylonian empire (610 BCE).
- Siege and destruction of Jerusalem (589-587 BCE) by Nebuchadnezzar. The first Jewish temple is destroyed.
- Exile of the population to Babylon.

Second Temple Judaism

1. History of the Jews in Palestine is a history of unrest and domination by foreign powers (Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans).
2. The period of the Jews after the exile to Babylon (586-39 BCE) is known as **SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM**.

Alexander the Great and the Conquest of Palestine

- 333 BCE - Alexander defeats the Persians in Asia Minor (present day Turkey)
- His rule was characterized by:
 - Expansion of lands (as far as Pakistan)
 - Greek culture (business, administration, education) and language (‘koine’) become the unifying features of Alexander’s empire.

Greeks = Hellenes =
Hellenization = Hellenism



Alexander's Empire



 *The Empire of Alexander the Great. Alexander's conquests united Eurasia from Greece to India into a cultural and, briefly, a political unity.*

The Maccabean Revolt

Relations with the Jews of Palestine deteriorate, because the Greeks:

- Raid the Temple treasury
- Enforce a policy of Hellenization (and outlaw Jewish practices)
- Dedicate the Jerusalem Temple to the Greek god Zeus ('the abomination of desolation').

The Maccabean revolt erupts in 167 BCE (Mattathias and his five sons, including Judas Maccabeus).

Rededication of the Temple



The revolt leads to victory and the Temple is rededicated in 164 BCE. Commemoration during the eight-day festival of Hanukkah (festival of lights).

The Jews gain national independence in 142 BCE (the period of Hasmonean rule).

Roman Rule and Herod the Great

64 BCE – the Roman consul Pompey enters Jerusalem.

37 BCE - Herod (the Great) is appointed a client king of Judaea. He is known for his magnificent building projects

Destruction of possible rivals (paranoia?), including some of his sons and his first wife

Image as ruthless tyrant in the NT infancy narratives (Matt. 2:1-19; Luke 1:5)





Division of Herod's Kingdom

- **Archelaus** - Judaea and Samaria but replaced by a series of Roman procurators.
- **Herod Antipas** - Galilee and Perea, also known for the beheading of John the Baptist (Matt. 14:1; Luke 3:19).
- **Philip** – Golan, Trachonitis, Batanea.
- **Herod Agrippa I** ruled the whole of Palestine from 41 to 44 CE.



Second Temple Judaism: Unity and Diversity

- **The God of Judaism** (cf. *the Shema* in Deuteronomy 6:4)

Josephus, *Antiquities* 5:112: the recognition of the one God is common to all the Hebrew people.

- **God's Covenant with Israel**

- **The Centrality of the Torah** (Israel as a 'holy nation')

- **Temple and Priesthood**

m. Kelim 1:6-8: the land of Israel is more holy than other lands, the walled cities of Israel are holier, the city of Jerusalem holier still, then the Temple mount, the rampart, the Court of Women, the Court of Israel, the Court of Priests, areas between porch and altar, the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies.

- **National Festivals and Fasts**

- **Eschatology**

Diversity in Second Temple Judaism

- Diversity is the result of responses to Hellenism and foreign domination.
- Josephus, the Jewish historian, mentions four groups:
 - The Pharisees
 - The Sadducees
 - The Essenes
 - The 'Fourth Philosophy'
- The '*am ha 'aretz*' (the people of the land)

Josephus on the Essenes

Antiquities 18:18-22

The doctrine of the Essenes is wont to leave everything in the hands of God. They regard the soul as immortal and believe that they ought to strive especially to draw near to righteousness. They send votive offerings to the temple, but perform their sacrifices employing a different ritual of purification They hold their possessions in common, and the wealthy receives no more enjoyment from property than the one who possesses nothing....

The Essenes and the Qumran Sectarians



Common Features

- Emphasis on purity
- Separation from communities
- Wilderness communities (celibate men)
- Sharing of property
- Strict observance of the Sabbath

The Dead Sea Scrolls



Fragments of around 800 manuscripts (Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic) from the last three centuries BCE to around 70 CE.

The manuscripts were the library of the Qumran community, consisting of

- **Biblical books**
- **Copies of other late Second Temple Jewish writings**
- **Sectarian texts (e.g., Manual of Discipline)**

Jewish Response to Roman Rule

Reasons for Jewish dissatisfaction with Roman rule:

- Lack of Roman sensitivity to Jewish concerns (Pilate commands his soldiers to bring their shields into Jerusalem).
- Heavy tax imposed on a predominantly poor population (note response reflected in Gospel texts: Matthew 13:24-30; 20:1-16; 21:33-41; Luke 17:7-10).

Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem

66 CE - Florus (the governor of Judaea) demands money from the Temple treasury

67 CE - the Roman general Vespasian subdues Galilee

68 CE - and most of Judaea

70 CE - Titus (Vespasian's son) resumes the war

70 CE - the Temple and its precincts are destroyed by fire

74 CE - Flavius Silva takes the fortress of Masada

Destruction of the Second Temple



