



70 CE: The
Significance for
Judaism

HPRS50I5/60I5

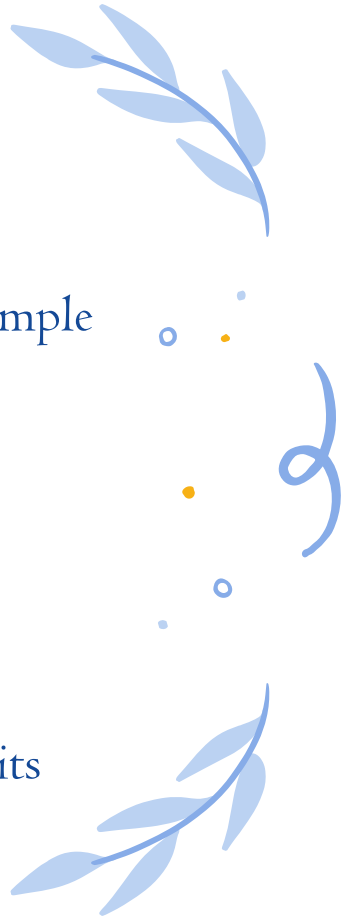
Session Outline



- Historical background
- The significance of the temple
- The destruction of the second temple
- The consequences of the temple's destruction

Historical Background

- 10th century BCE – the building of the first temple?
- 587 BCE – the Babylonians conquer Jerusalem. The end of the First Temple period.
- 539 BCE – the Babylonians conquered by Cyrus the Great. Exiled Jews permitted to return home and to rebuild the temple.
- c. 516 BCE – second temple completed. Steps taken by individuals like Nehemiah and Ezra to reform the Jewish community and to reorganize its civil and religious affairs.



The Significance of the Temple

- The temple at the centre of Jewish identity.
- The distinctiveness of the Jewish people reflected in the temple and its services.
- A link between heaven and earth, and a testament to the covenant between God and his people.



Key Source: Flavius Josephus (37/38 BCE – c. 100 CE)



- ❖ Born Yosef ben-Mattityahu
- ❖ Our main source for the history of the Jews during Hasmonean and Roman periods.
- ❖ Works: *Jewish War*; *Jewish Antiquities*; *The Life*; *Against Apion*.
- ❖ The four sects of Judaism: Pharisees; Sadducees; Essenes; Zealots.

Relationship of the Four Sects to the Temple

- Sadducees – small elite group responsible for temple rites and worship. Upheld the primacy of the hereditary priestly caste.
- Pharisees – class of religious teachers dedicated to studying and debating the Law. Centred their activities on the synagogue rather than on the temple.
- Essenes – small monastic group who had disassociated themselves from the temple cult completely.
- Zealots – religious freedom fighters. Would seize control of the temple during the First Jewish-Roman War (66-70 CE).

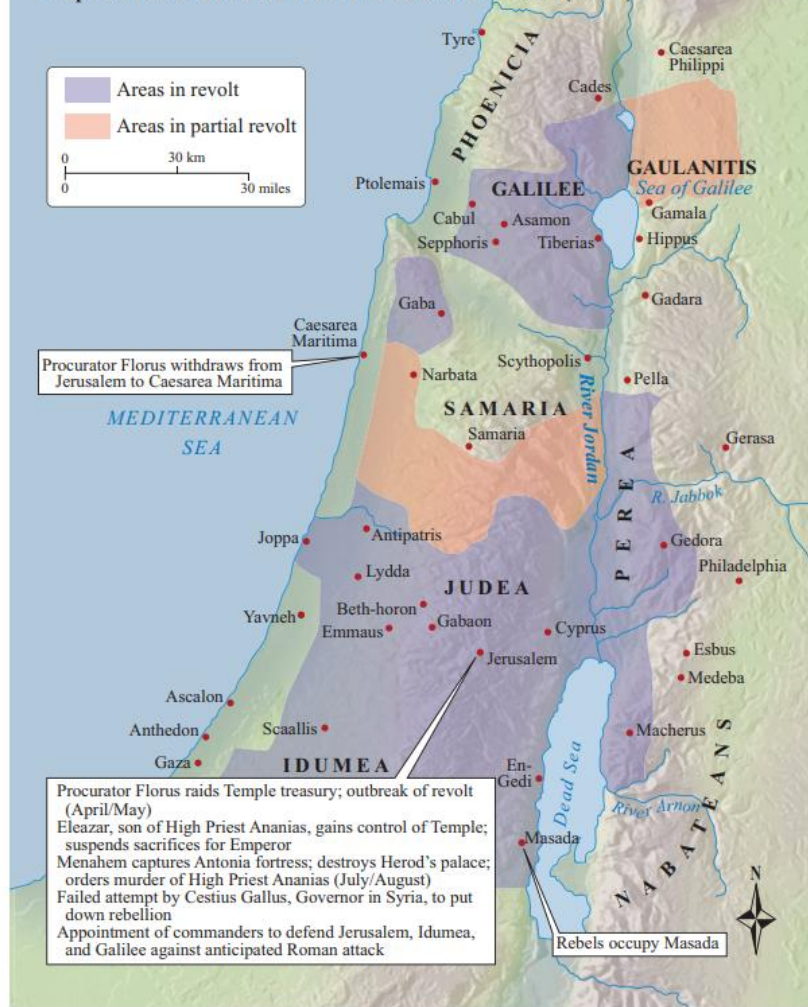
Jews and Judaism under the Romans

- 63 BCE – Jerusalem falls to Pompey, signifying the end of the independent Jewish state established by the Hasmoneans.
- 37/36 BCE – Herod ('the Great') appointed 'King of the Jews' by the Roman State. An efficient monarch.
- Political situation begins to deteriorate after Herod's death. Direct Roman rule necessary.
- By 50 CE, the situation threatens to boil over. Growing 'us' versus 'them' mentality.

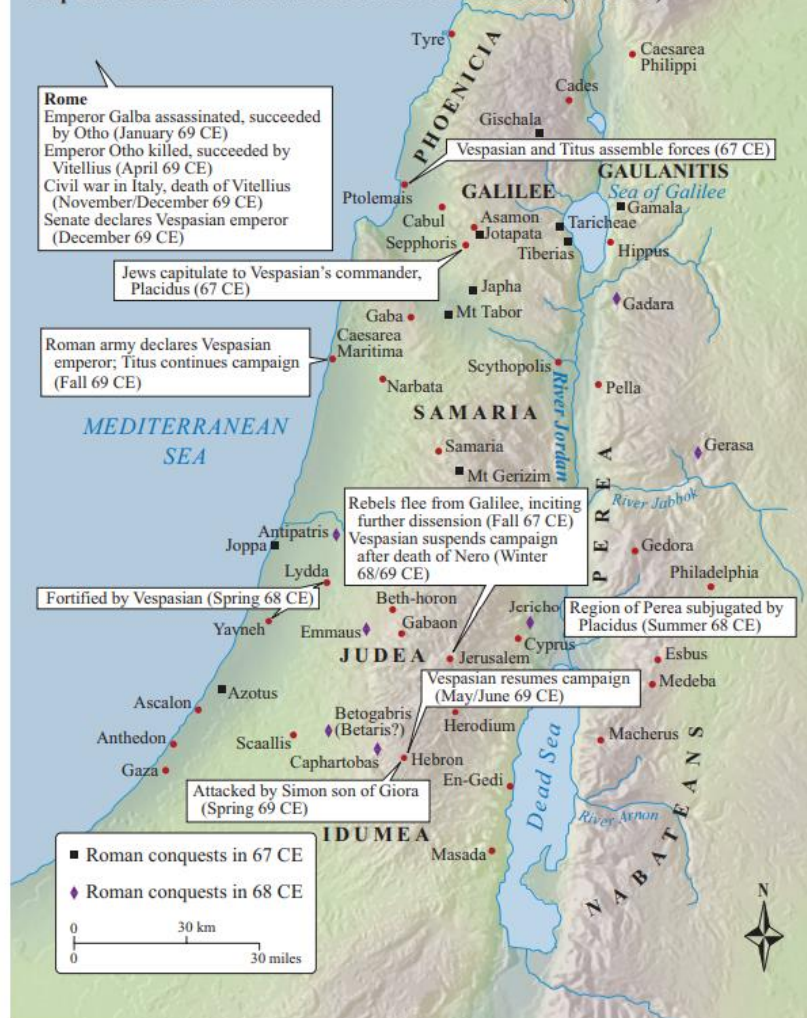
The Outbreak of War

- 66 CE – fighting breaks out between Greeks and Jews in Caesarea Maritima.
- The procurator Florus (64-66 CE) adopts an anti-Jewish policy, allowing his troops to riot and execute a number of leading Jews.
- Jews take up arms against the Romans. The Romans suffer shock defeat to the Jewish rebels.
- 67 CE – Nero appoints Vespasian to crush the rebellion. With Jerusalem cut off, the city quickly descends into anarchy. The Zealots seize control of the temple (cf. Mark II:17).
- Campaign suspended on death of Nero in 68 CE.

Map 12a: FIRST JEWISH WAR: INITIAL SUCCESSES (66 CE)



Map 12b: FIRST JEWISH WAR: ROMAN CAMPAIGNS (67–69 CE)



The Destruction of Jerusalem

- 69 CE – Vespasian proclaimed Emperor. His son Titus given responsibility for the military campaign in Judea.
- Spring 70 CE – the siege of Jerusalem.
- By the end of the summer, the temple had been captured and the city almost entirely destroyed.
- 71 CE – triumphal procession in Rome.



Arch of Titus inscription: 'The Senate and the Roman people to the Emperor Titus Caesar Vespasian Augustus, son of the deified Vespasian, pontifex maximus...father of his country, their princeps, because under the direction and plans and auspices of his father he subdued the Jewish people, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, previously either attacked in vain by generals, kings, peoples, or completely unassailed' (*CIL* VI, no 944)



Consequences of the Temple's Destruction

- The destruction of the temple presented huge theological difficulties for Judaism.
- Jews forced to question why God had allowed this disaster to happen (again!).
- Many came to accept that the destruction was divine punishment for sin, but there was substantial disagreement as to the nature of that sin.
- 'Invariably arms have been refused to our nation, and warfare has been the sure signal of defeat. For it is, I suppose, the duty of the occupants of holy ground to leave everything to the rule of God, and to scorn the aid of human hands, can they but conciliate to the Arbiter above' (*Jewish War* 5:399-40).



Jewish Literary Responses to 70 CE (Case Study): 4 Ezra



A literary apocalypse written in the immediate aftermath of the national tragedy of 70 CE.

Presents itself as a series of revelations to the biblical scribe Ezra during the Babylonian Exile.

The author's initial anguish and confusion gives way to hope as he learns to find solace in the eschatological promises of God.

4 Ezra

‘Then I said in my heart, Are the deeds of those who inhabit Babylon any better? Is that why she has gained dominion over Zion?’ (3:28)

‘For I did not wish to inquire about the ways above, but about those things which we daily experience: why Israel has been given over to the gentiles as a reproach; why the people whom you loved has been given to godless tribes, and the Law of our father has been made of no effect and the written covenants no longer exist’ (4:23).

‘And I said, “O sovereign Lord, from every forest of the earth and from all its trees you have chosen one vine, and from all the lands of the world you have chosen for yourself one region, and from all the flowers of the world you have chosen for yourself one lily, and from all the depths of the sea you have filled for yourself one river, and from all the cities that have been built you have consecrated Zion for yourself, and from all the birds that have been created you have named for yourself one dove, and from all the flocks that have been fashioned you have provided for yourself one sheep, and from all the multitude of people you have gotten for yourself one people; and to this people, whom you have loved, you have given the Law which is approved by all. And now, O Lord, why have you given over the one to the many, and dishonoured the one root beyond the others, and scattered your only one among the many? And those who opposed your promises have trodden down on those who believed your covenants. If you really hate your people, they should be punished at your own hands”’ (5:23-30).

4 Ezra (The Eagle Vision)

“Then I heard a voice saying to me , “Look before you and consider what you see.” I looked, and behold, a creature like a lion was aroused out of the forest, roaring; and I heard how he uttered a man's voice to the eagle, and spoke, saying, “Listen and I will speak to you. The Most High says to you, Are you not the one that remains of the four beasts which I had made to reign in my world, so that the end of my times might come through them? - You, the fourth that has come, have conquered all the beasts that have gone before; and you have held sway over the world with much terror, and over all the earth with grievous oppression; and for so long you have dwelt on the earth with deceit. And you have judged the earth, but not with truth; for you have afflicted the meek and injured the peaceable: you have hated those who tell the truth, and have loved liars; you have destroyed the dwellings of those who brought forth fruit, and have laid low the walls of those who did you no harm. And so your insolence has come up before the Most High, and your pride to the Mighty One. And the Most High has looked upon his times, and behold, they are ended, and his ages are completed! Therefore you will surely disappear, you eagle, and your terrifying wings, and your most evil little wings, and your malicious heads, and your most evil talons, and your whole worthless body, so that the whole earth, freed from your violence, may be refreshed and relieved, and may hope for the judgment and mercy of him who made it” (11:36-46).

4 Ezra (The Eagle Vision)

“And as for the lion that you saw rousing up out of the forest and roaring and speaking to the eagle and reproving him for his unrighteousness, and as for all his words that you have heard, this is the Messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David, and will come and speak to them; he will denounce them for their ungodliness and for their wickedness, and will cast up before them their contemptuous dealings. For first he will set them living before his judgment seat, and when he has reproved them, then he will destroy them. But he will deliver in mercy the remnant of my people, those who have been saved throughout my borders, and he will make them joyful until the end comes, the day of judgment, of which I spoke to you at the beginning. This is the dream that you saw, and this is its interpretation” (11:31-35).

4 Ezra

- How would you characterize Ezra's initial interactions with God/his angelic guide?
- What do these verses tell us about the author's attitude to Rome?
- To what extent can this text be said to offer a message of comfort or hope to its original audience?



Judaism after the Temple

- Urgent need to redefine holiness in light of the destruction of the temple.
- How to sanctify the life of the nation without a physical temple and active priesthood?
- The destruction led to a more Torah-focused form of worship.
- The evidence suggests that it was the Pharisees who helped to bring about this shift in emphasis.



Mourning the Loss of the Temple

- The destruction of the temple a catastrophe of huge proportions for Judaism. Jews have mourned this loss ever since.
- *Tisha B'Av* (9th of *Av*) – a day of mourning which commemorates the destruction of the temple and other tragic events in the history of the Jewish people.
- Rabbis of the Talmudic period taught that the Messiah would be born on *Tisha B'Av*, and that he would fulfil God's promise of final redemption.
- Many Orthodox and Conservative Jews believe that the temple in Jerusalem will be restored as an integral part of this final redemption.



The *Nachem* Prayer

‘*Nachem* – Console, O Lord our God, the mourners of Zion and the mourners of Jerusalem, and the city that is in sorrow, laid waste, scorned and desolate; that grieves for the loss of its children, that is laid waste of its dwellings, robbed of its glory, desolate without inhabitants. She sits with her head covered like a barren childless woman. Legions have devoured her; idolaters have taken possession of her; they have put Your people Israel to the sword and deliberately killed the devoted followers of the Most High. Therefore Zion weeps bitterly, and Jerusalem raises her voice. My heart, my heart grieves for those they killed; I am in anguish, I am in anguish for those they killed. For You, O Lord, consumed it with fire and with fire You will rebuild it in the future, as is said, ‘And I myself will be a wall of fire around it, says the Lord, and I will be its glory within.’ Blessed are You, Lord, who consoles Zion and rebuilds Jerusalem.’

Summary



- Prior to 70 CE, the temple was the focal point of the faith.
- Four sects identified by Josephus: Sadducees; Pharisees; Essenes; Zealots.
- The destruction of the second temple by the Romans a moment of great crisis for 'mainstream' Judaism.
- The events of 70 CE would have a big impact on the shape and character of Judaism.