

BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS:
THE HISTORY OF THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD



The Intertestamental Period

James Bodnar

Intertestamental Period

- When Alexander the Great died 323 BC, his empire was divided among his generals. Seleucus got the territory from Asia Minor (modern Turkey) through Syria and Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). Ptolemy got Egypt, a very wealthy country in antiquity. The Holy land lies right between the Seleucids to the north and the Ptolemies to the south. During most of 3rd century BC, the Ptolemies in Egypt ruled Palestine. During most of 2nd century BC, the Seleucids to the North ruled it.

- Antiochus attempts to invade and capture Egypt thus becoming ruler of all of Alexander's domain. Romans dissuade him. An interesting story.

-167 BC the Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes issued a decree ordering the Jews to abandon the observance of Jewish Law and follow Greek customs, threatening death to the disobedient. The Jerusalem temple was now rededicated to the Greek god Zeus, and sacred prostitution was practiced there. Revolt ensued led by a village priestly family called the Hasmoneans (also Maccabeans, after the word for "hammer").

- 165 BC Maccabees score important military victories against Seleucid troops. They rededicate the temple to worship of the God of Israel, an event commemorated by the modern Jewish holiday Hanukkah.

-161 BC Maccabees gain complete independence from the Seleucids, make treaty of friendship with the Romans.

-150 BC Jonathan Maccabee appointed high priest (violation of Levitic law)

-Maccabees expand their territory to north (Galilee,etc.) and southerly to south of Judea area called Idumea.

-76 BC Alexander Janneaus (Hasmonean Ruler) dies and his widow Salome Alexander takes over and rules rather well.

-Remember 10 Northern tribes dispersed by Syrian invasion in 722 BC. Area including Galilee became pagan.

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(Note: ESB = ESV Study Bible)

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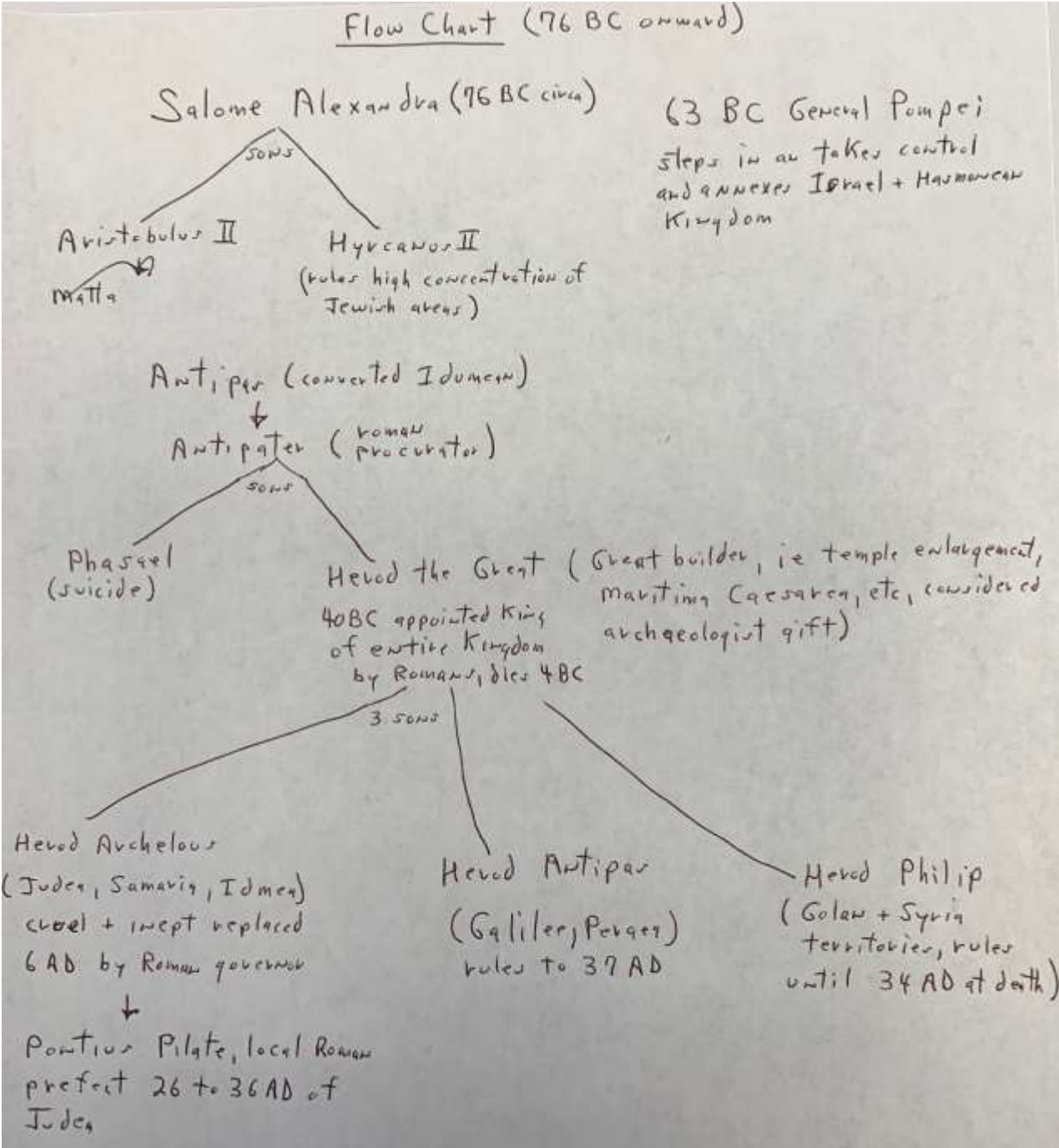
-Issues

- How was it that Jesus of Nazareth (Galilee) was Jewish?
- Why was Herod the Great so hated?
- Why did Antiochus turn back from attacking Egypt?
- Why did Rome leave governors and tax collectors in office so long? Parable of the flies.
- If Herod the Great died in 4 BC how was he involved in issuing decree to kill all boys under 2 years old after being tipped off by the Magi as to Jesus birth?
- Why was Jesus' fate attempted to be pushed onto Herod Antipas?
- How did the Maccabees accelerate the belief in life after death?

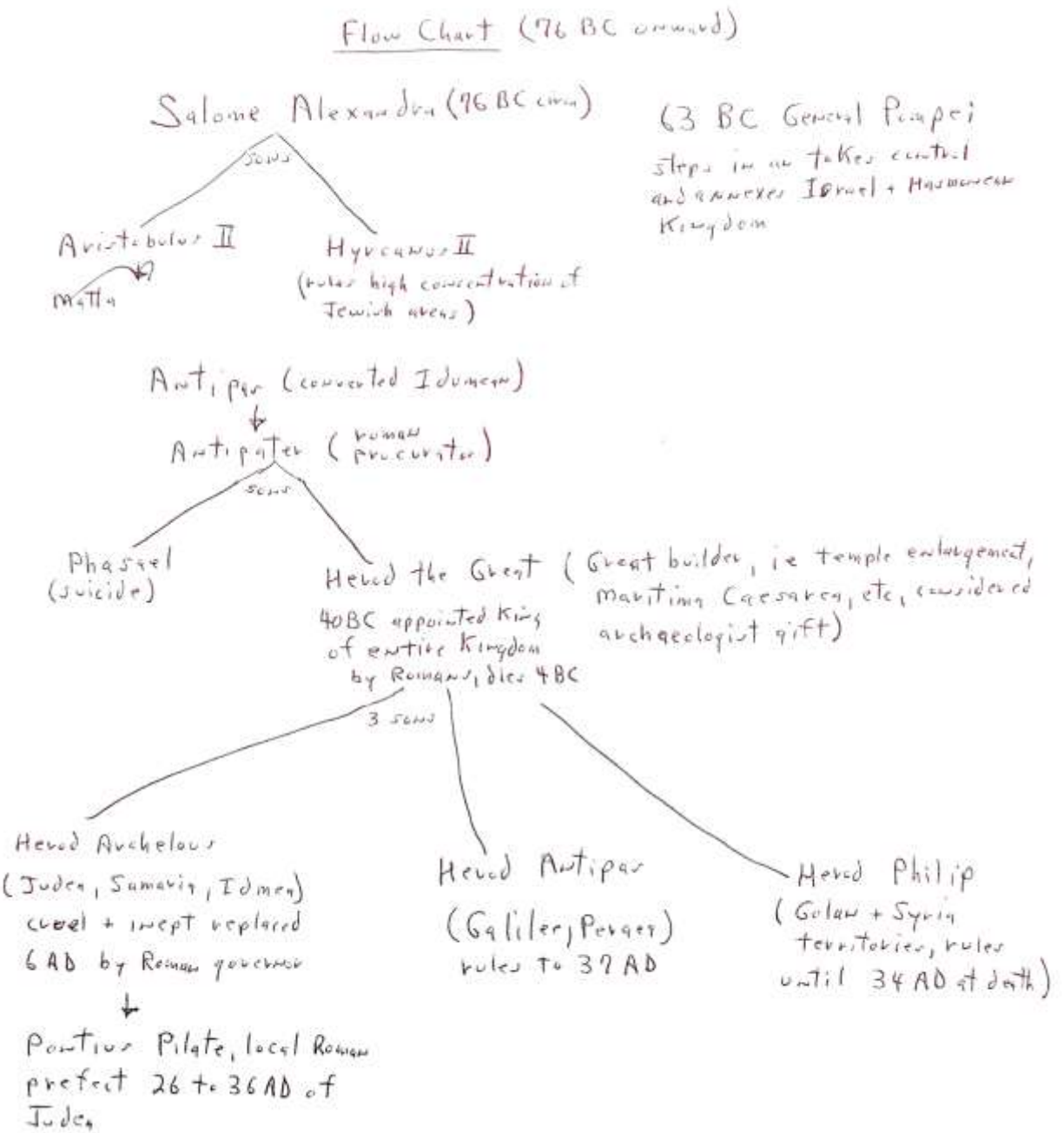
Jim Bodnar

SEE ANNEXED FLOW CHART COVERING THIS POINT ONWARD (Next Page)

FLOW CHART (76 BC onward)



See 'brightened' version on next page...



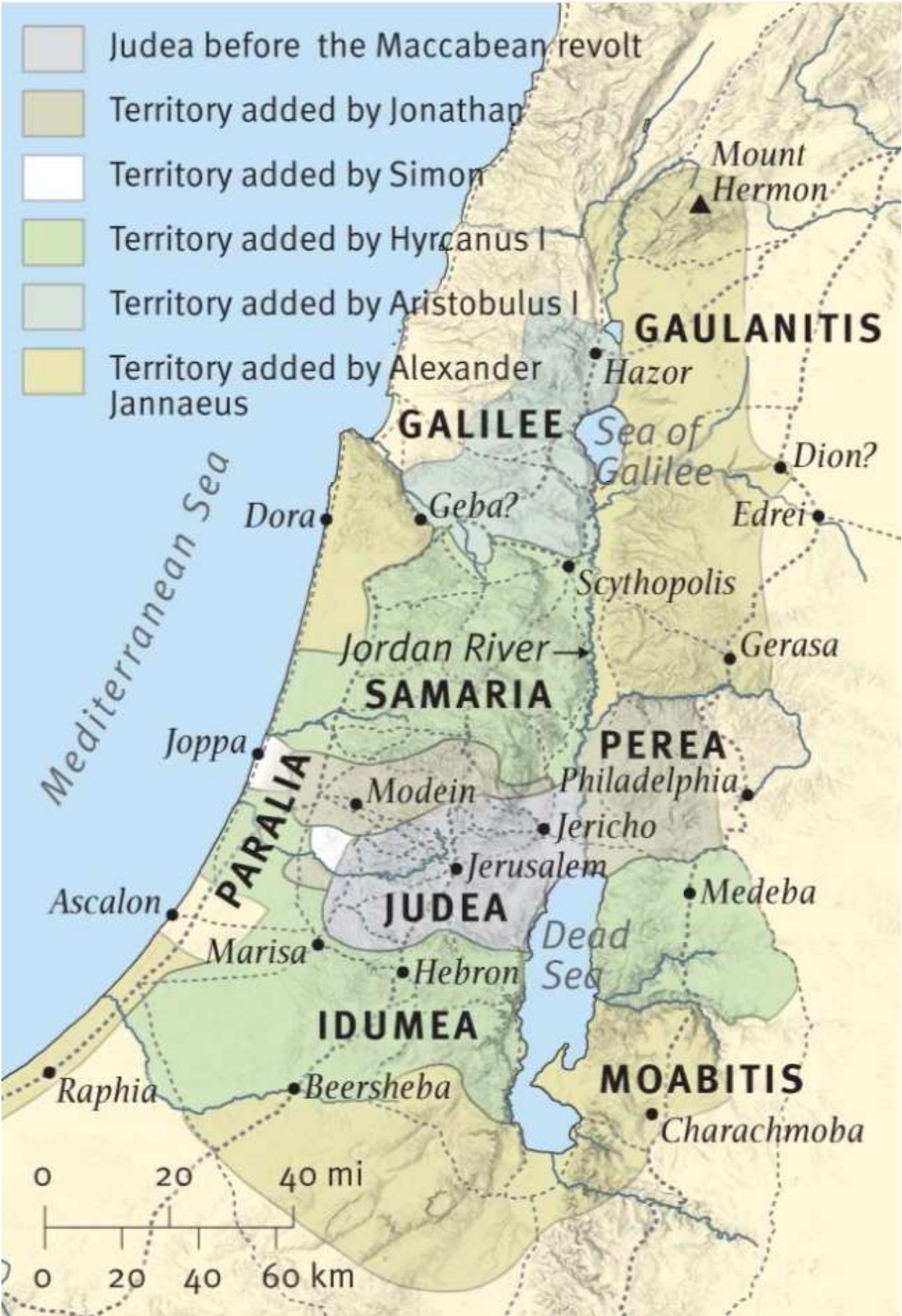
Flowchart: Jim Bodnar

Maps

ESB Map 7: The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires



ESB Map 9: Israel under the Maccabees



Palestine of the Maccabees and the Hasmonean Dynasty



Source: Zondervan Atlas of the Bible

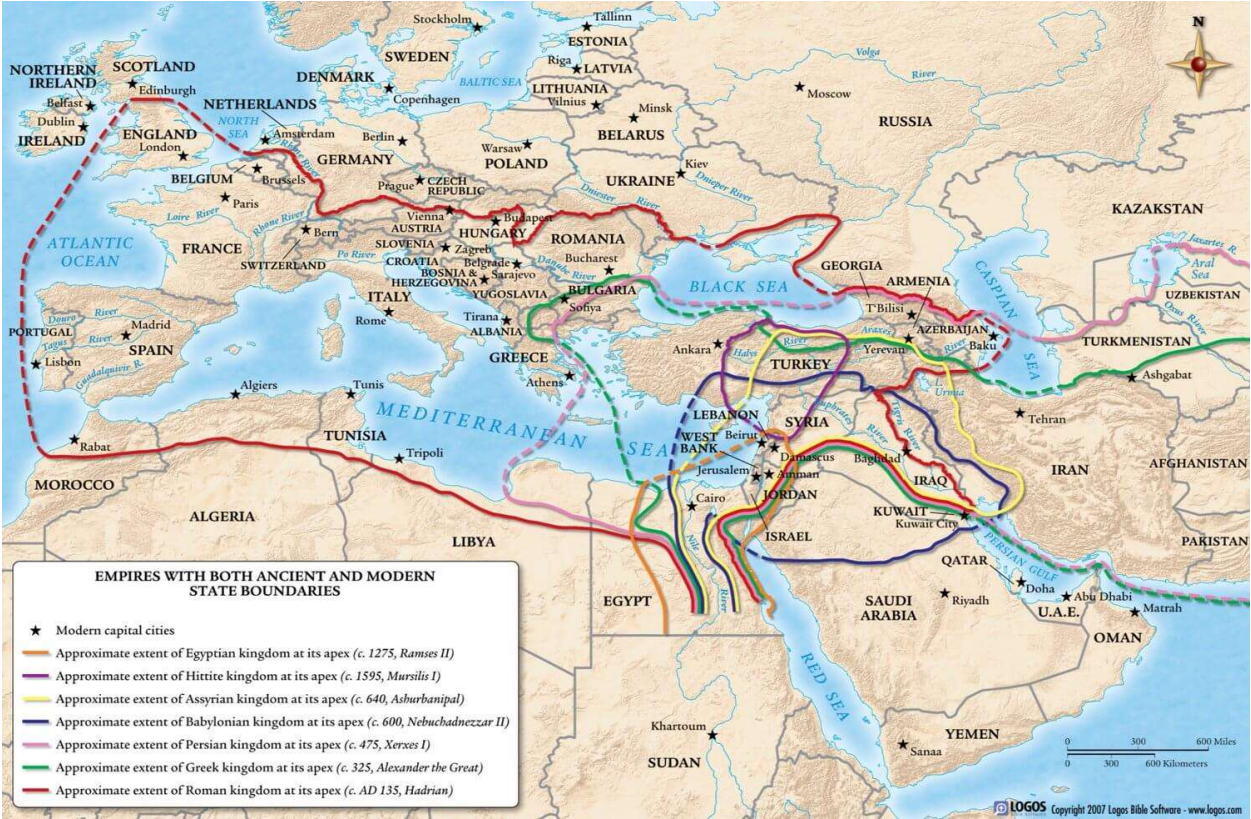
The Maccabean Revolt and the Hasmonean Dynasty

With the rise of Antiochus IV in 175 BC a chain of events began that culminated in the establishment of an independent Jewish state in 142 BC, a state that lasted until the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans in 63 BC. These events are of more than passing interest, for they had a direct influence on Jewish life and practice for the next two centuries and have had a profound effect on Judaism to the present day.



Source: Zondervan Atlas of the Bible

Empires with Both Ancient and Modern State Borders



Source: <https://www.understandchristianity.com/timelines/chronology-latter-prophets-intertestamental-period/>

See next page for larger view...



Historical & Background Settings

2. Babylonian Empire

606-536 BC

↪ Destruction of Jerusalem & Babylonian Exile

↪ Ark lost

↪ No temple



Historical & Background Settings

3. Persian

539-331 BC

↪ Return from Exile

↪ Much smaller Temple

↪ No Ark of the Covenant



Historical & Background Settings INTER-TESTAMENTAL PERIOD 400yrs

4. Greek

331 BC-167 BC

Alexander the Great

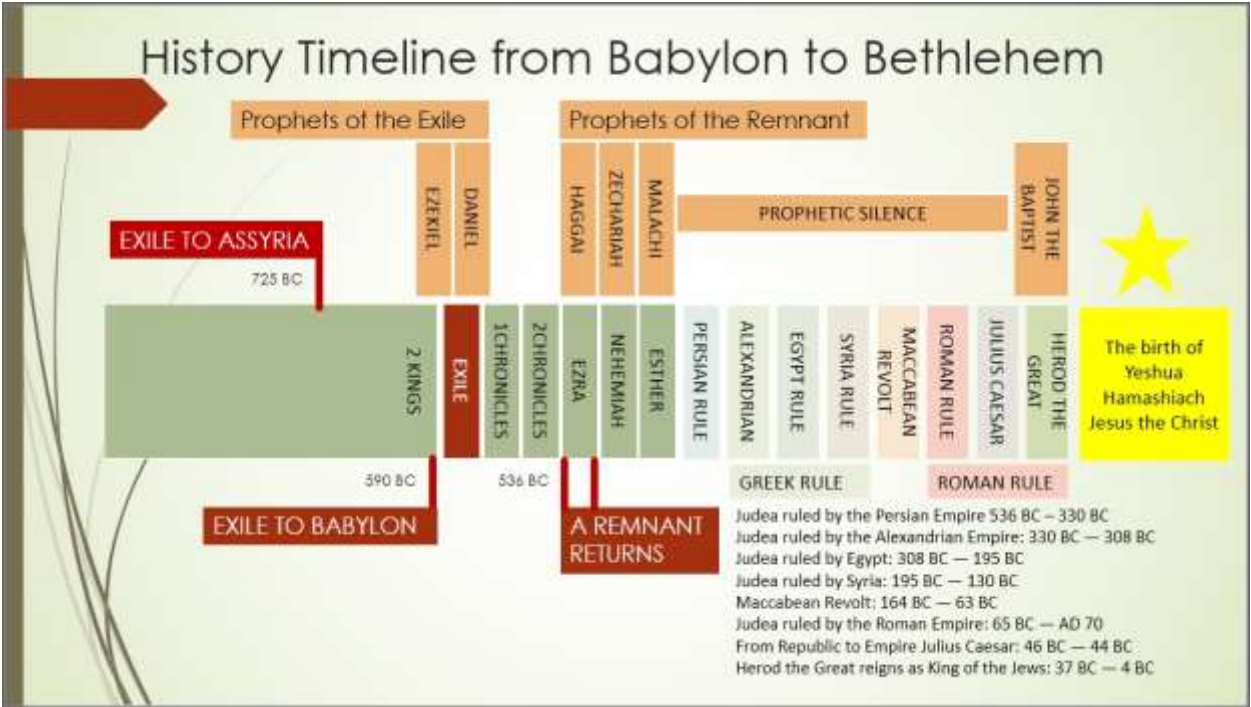
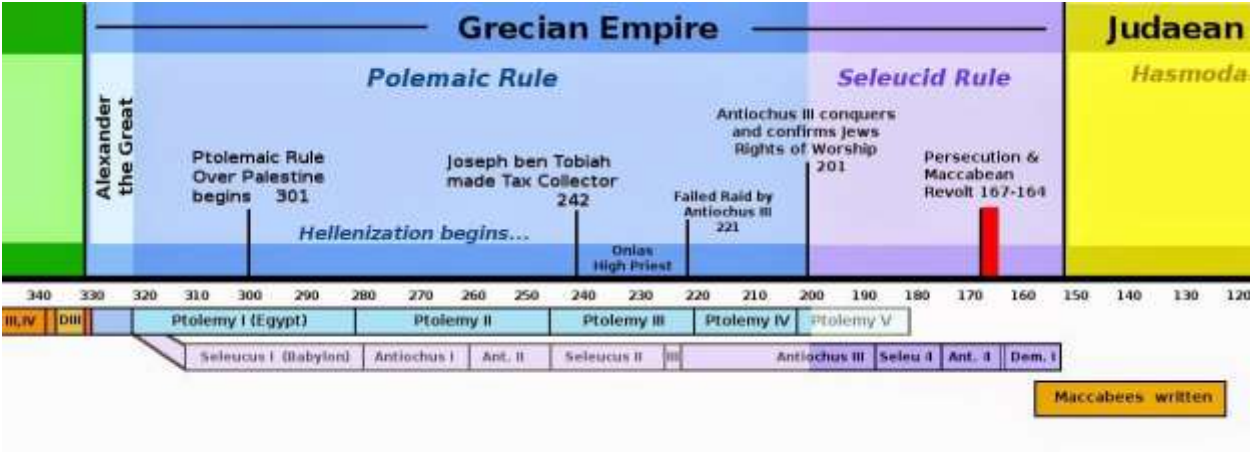
↪ Gk Culture

↪ Gk Language

↪ "Hellenization"

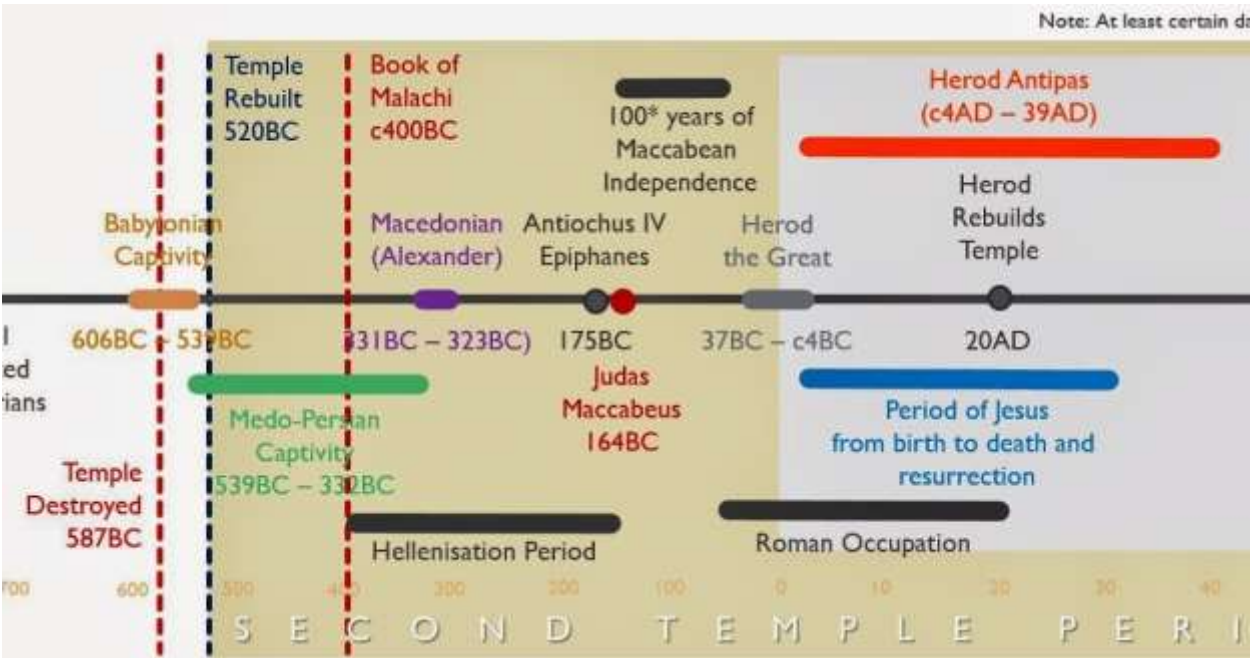


Timelines

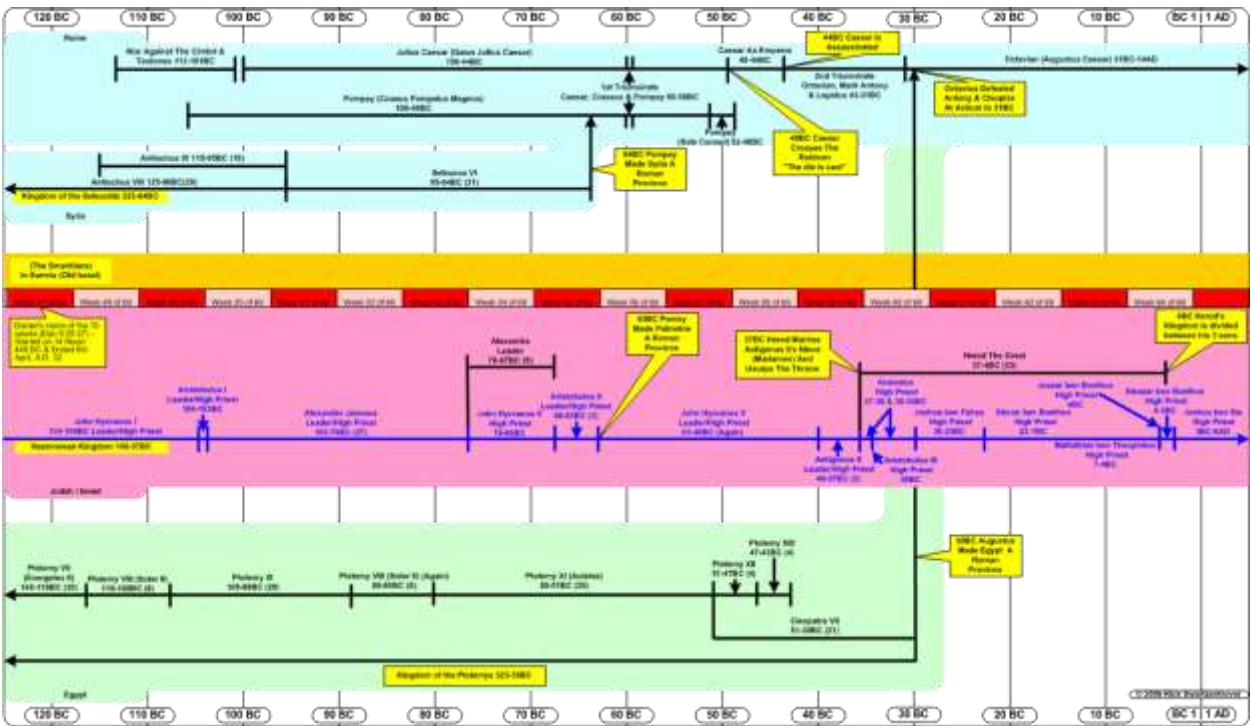


Source: <https://mountjoybibleschool.uk/ot-survey-part4/>

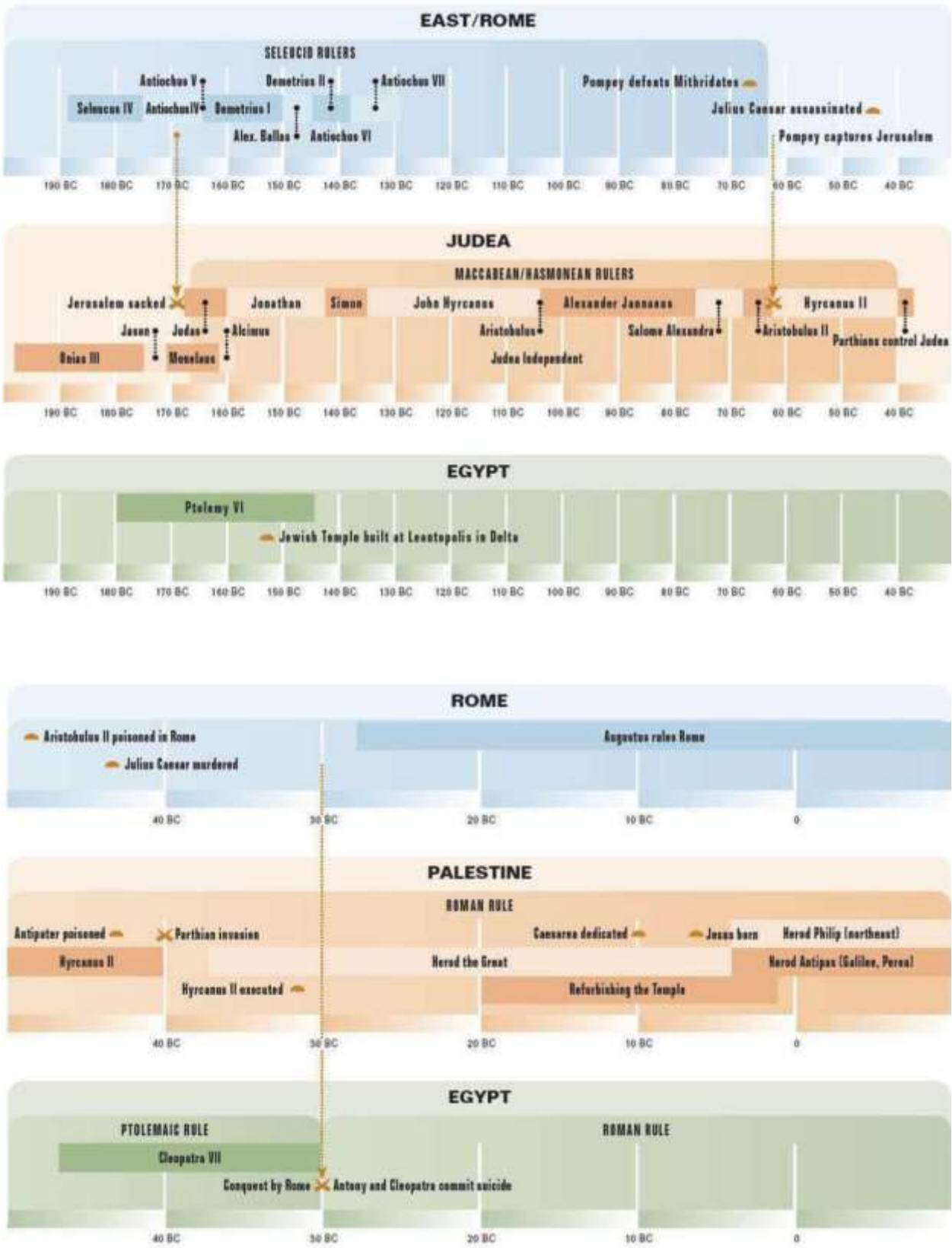
More timelines...



Source: <https://hosannaefluxmundi.blogspot.com/2015/04/the-political-crucible-of-new-testament.html>



Source: <http://www.swartzentrover.com/cotor/Bible/Timelines/120-1%20BC.htm>



Source: Zondervan Atlas of the Bible

ESB: Intertestamental Events Timeline

- Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) sweeps through Asia Minor and conquers the Persian Empire, including Egypt and Mesopotamia (see notes on Dan 7:3 ; 7:6 ; 8:5 ; 8:8 ; 8:20-22 ; 11:3 ; cf. 1 Macc. 1:1-7). Alexander imposes the Greek language and culture on all the nations he conquers, marking the beginning of the Hellenistic Age (ranging approximately from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 to the establishment of Roman Imperial rule around 30 B.C.). As a result of Alexander's imposition of the Greek language on conquered kingdoms, the entire NT will later be written in Greek, and will be understandable throughout the ancient world.
- 334-330 B.C. Alexander the Great passes through Palestine (comprised of Judea and Galilee), extending the influence of Greek thought and culture throughout the region and also into the Judaism of the period. ("Palestine" derives from a Latin name the conquering Romans later gave to this province [c. 63 B.C.] on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, comprising parts of modern Israel, Jordan, and Egypt.)
- 333 In the absence of legitimate heirs, following Alexander the Great's death in 323 B.C. (cf. 1 Macc. 1:5-9) four of his generals (called the *Diadochoi* , "successors") divide the conquered territory of his empire into fourths (which then included most of the known world throughout Europe and Asia Minor; see notes on Dan 7:6 ; 8:8 ; 8:20-22 ; 11:4): (1) Antipater (and later Cassander and then Antigonus I Monophthalmus) ruled in Greece and Macedon; (2) Lysimachus took control in Thrace and much of Asia Minor; (3) Seleucus I Nicator assumed power in Mesopotamia and Persia; and (4) Ptolemy I Lagi Soter became sovereign of Egypt and Palestine.
- 323-281 Zeno of Citium (c. 334-262 B.C.) founds Stoicism in Athens, a philosophy which prizes logic, reason, and indifference toward pleasure and pain alike. Paul later encounters Stoics and Epicureans in Athens (see Acts 17:18).
- 310* Epicurus (c. 341-270 B.C.) founds the Garden, an egalitarian community based upon friendship, in Athens (see Acts 17:18). The philosophical system of Epicureans stands somewhat opposite Stoicism in its pursuit of pleasure, especially emphasizing the importance of friendships and the luxurious enjoyment of eating, drinking, and other comforts.
- 307* By 277 B.C. three Hellenistic kingdoms stabilize out of the four divisions of Alexander the Great's kingdom: (1) the Antigonid dynasty in Macedonia (issuing from Alexander's general Antigonus I Monophthalmus, 382-301, and beginning with his son Demetrius I Poliorcetes in 294/293); (2) the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt (issuing from the general Ptolemy I Lagi Soter, 367-283); and (3) the Seleucid dynasty in Syria (issuing from the general Seleucus I Nicator, c. 358-281), the latter which also ruled much of Asia Minor from 312 to 64 (see Dan 11:4-35 and notes there). Though Judea will later become controlled by the Seleucids in 198 B.C. , it is initially under Ptolemaic (Egyptian) rule, with little disturbance.
- 277 The Seleucids gain control over Judea from the Ptolemies after the battle at Panium (see note on Dan 11:15-16). They are led in victory by their king, Antiochus III the Great (reigned 223-187 B.C. ; see notes on Dan 11:10 ; 11:11-12 ; 11:13 ; 11:15-16 ; 11:17-19), the father of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (reigned 175-164 / 163 ; see notes on Dan 8:9-10 ; 8:23 ; 8:25 ; 9:24-27 ; 11:21-23 ; 11:24 ; 11:25-27 ; 11:29-30 ; 11:33-35 ; 11:37-38).
- 198 Antiochus III the Great and the Seleucids are defeated by the Romans at the Battle of Magnesia (fought on the plains of Lydia, in modern Turkey) and forced to pay an indemnity in 12 annual payments. The Seleucids continue to rule over Judea, however.
- 190 The Teacher of Righteousness, the founder of the Qumran community (perhaps the Essenes) which produced many of the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls, becomes active.
- 176 * The Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (who reigned from 175 to 164 / 163 B.C. and was the son of Antiochus III the Great and brother of Seleucus IV Philopator, deposes the Zadokite high priest Onias III (2 Macc. 2 Maccabees 3:1-4:6), the son of Simon the Just (cf. Sir. Sirach 50:1-21). Onias III, who had functioned as the effective head of state for the Jewish people to that time, was replaced with his brother Jason (2 Macc. 2 Maccabees 4:7-22; see also note on Dan 8:9-10). Jason in turn would be supplanted by Menelaus (2 Macc. 2 Maccabees 4:23-26), who was eventually put to death about 162 B.C. following a 10-year reign (2 Macc. 2 Maccabees 13:1-8). ("Zadokite" refers to the descendants of Zadok, a high priest during King David's reign. Zadokites held a monopoly on the Jerusalem priesthood from the time of Solomon forward.) Antiochus IV takes on the name "Epiphanes," meaning "[god] manifest" (cf. 1 Macc. 1 Maccabees 1:10), however his enemies would call him "Epimanes," meaning "madman."
- 174 Antiochus IV Epiphanes, led into the sanctuary by the high priest Menelaus, loots and desecrates the temple in Jerusalem (1 Macc. 1 Maccabees 1:20-24; 1:37-64; 2 Macc. 2 Maccabees 5:11-26; 6:2-5; see also notes on Dan 11:28 ; 11:31-32). On Kislev (Nov.-Dec.) 25, 167 B.C. (1 Macc. 1 Maccabees 1:59), an idol devoted to Zeus (Jupiter) was erected in the temple ("the abomination that makes desolate"; cf. Dan 11:31 ; 12:11) and shortly afterwards sacrifices (likely swine) were offered up on the altar in the "Most Holy Place."
- 168 / 167 Mattathias, the father of Judas and his brothers, leads the Maccabean Revolt against Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (cf. 1 Macc. 1 Maccabees 2:1-48; see also notes on Dan 11:28 ; 11:31-32 ; 11:33-35), dies (1 Macc. 1 Maccabees 2:49-70). See Rulers Foretold in Da 11.
- 167 / 166 Judas "Maccabeus," third son of Mattathias and second leader of the revolt and later the Jewish government during 166 / 165-161 / 160 B.C. (1 Macc. 1 Maccabees 3:1-5:68; 6:18-54; 7:26-9:22; cf. 2

- Maccabees 8; 10:14-38; 11:1-15; 12; 13:9-22; 14-15) purifies the temple—an event still remembered by Jews at Hanukkah (1 Macc. 1 Maccabees 4:36-61; see also notes on Dan 8:12-14 ; 9:24).
- 161 * The Zadokite priest Onias IV migrates to Egypt and founds a rival temple at Leontopolis.
- Jonathan (assumed leadership during 160-143 / 142 B.C. ; cf. 1 Maccabees 9-12), brother of Judas Maccabeus, fifth son of Mattathias, and third leader of the revolt, accepts the high priesthood as a gift from Alexander Epiphanes (Balas) (1 Macc. 1 Maccabees 10:1-21), the son of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and pretender to the Seleucid throne. Three distinct sects within Judaism become active at this time: the Essenes (or perhaps Qumran community—the sect with which the Dead Sea Scrolls are most closely connected), the Pharisees (see note on John 1:24), and the Sadducees (see note on Matt 3:7). See also Jewish Groups at the Time of the New Testament .
- 152 Jewish independence is recognized by Seleucid king Demetrius II Nicator (d. 125 B.C. ; cf. 1 Macc. 1 Maccabees 13:31-42). Simon, brother of Judas Maccabeus and second son of Mattathias, is named “high priest and commander and leader” of the Judeans (1 Macc. 1 Maccabees 13:42; cf. 1 Maccabees 14:35,41), effectively establishing the Hasmonean Dynasty. Simon rules 142-135 B.C. (cf. 1 Maccabees 13-16). (“Hasmonean” is derived from the name of Hashman [see Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 12.265], great-grandfather of Mattathias.)
- 142
- 135 / John Hyrcanus I, son of Simon, rules following his father's murder (cf. 1 Macc. 1 Maccabees 16:11-24).
- 134-104
- 113 The Hasmonean king John Hyrcanus I destroys the Samaritan temple.
- 104-103
- 103-76 Judah Aristobulus I, oldest son of John Hyrcanus I, rules.
- 103-76 Alexander Jannaeus, youngest son of John Hyrcanus I, rules.
- 88 The Seleucid king Demetrius III Eukairos (son of Antiochus VIII Grypus) is invited by the opponents of Alexander Jannaeus to invade Palestine.
- 76-67 Salome Alexandra, wife of Alexander Jannaeus, rules.
- 73-71 Spartacus, a gladiator-slave, leads an ultimately unsuccessful slave revolt (known as the Third Servile War) against the Roman Republic.
- Civil war breaks out in Judea between supporters of Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, Hasmonean brothers.
- 67 Aristobulus II, older son of Alexander Jannaeus, rules from 67 to 63 B.C. Hyrcanus II, younger son of Alexander Jannaeus, rules from 63 to 40 B.C. Herod the Great would eventually marry into the Hasmonean Dynasty through his union with the granddaughter of Aristobulus II, Mariamne I.
- 64 Syria becomes a Roman province, effectively establishing Roman rule on Palestine's northern boundaries.
- 63 Aemilius Scaurus leads Pompey's armies into Palestine, leading to Roman control over Palestine and thus marking the definitive end of Jewish political independence.
- The Library of Alexandria is burned. Once the largest library in the world, probably containing half a million scrolls or volumes, it suffers the loss of many primary sources of ancient Greek literary texts, as well as translations or adaptations of important works written in other languages. According to the Letter of Aristeas, the Greek translation of the OT called the Septuagint (LXX) was begun for the needs of this library. No works housed in this once great library survived antiquity.
- 47
- 44 (March 15) Julius Caesar is murdered.
- Parthian invasion and interregnum: Phasaël, Herod's brother and tetrarch of Judea (“tetrarch” is a ruler of one of four divisions of a Roman country or province), is killed when the last Hasmonean, Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus II and nephew of Hyrcanus II, gains the support of the Parthians to the east and invades Judea.
- 43-40
- 40-37 Mattathias Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II, rules from Jerusalem.
- The Roman Senate declares Herod the Great “King of the Jews,” giving him vassal rulership over Palestine (comprised of the provinces Judea and Galilee). His rule does not truly begin until 37 B.C. , however, when he is able to recapture Jerusalem from Antigonus.
- 40
- Herod the Great rules from 37 to 4 B.C. and is the “legitimate” successor to the Hasmonean Dynasty through his marriage to Mariamne I, granddaughter of both Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II (her parents were first cousins). Herod recaptures Jerusalem from Antigonus and the Parthians in 37 B.C. through the help of Roman forces, to whom he had fled for help three years earlier.
- 37-4
- Herod the Great fortifies Masada, a mountaintop fortress in southeast Israel on the southwest shore of the Dead Sea, as a refuge in case of revolt. (Masada would be the site of the last stand of the Zealot Jewish community against the Romans during the revolt of A.D. 66-73. After a two-year siege, the Zealots chose to commit mass suicide rather than surrender to the Romans.)
- 37-31
- Octavian (later called Caesar Augustus) defeats Antony and Cleopatra in the Battle of Actium, effectively consolidating his de facto power as the sole ruler of the Roman Empire. His reign lasted until his death in A.D. 14, with Tiberius assuming power after him.
- 31
- 30 Egypt becomes a Roman province.
- 20 / 19 Herod the Great begins rebuilding the temple proper in Jerusalem.
- 5 * Jesus of Nazareth is born within the province of Judea in the town of Bethlehem during the final years of the reign of Herod the Great (cf. notes on Matt 2:1 ; Luke 1:5-7 ; 2:2).

- 4 Herod the Great dies, and his kingdom is divided between his three surviving sons: (1) Herod Archelaus (“Herod the Ethnarch”) became ethnarch of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea (or Edom; ruled 4 B.C. - A.D. 6; “ethnarch” refers to ruler of a people under the Roman Empire); (2) Herod Antipas became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (ruled 4 B.C. - A.D. 39); and (3) Herod Philip II became tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis (ruled 4 B.C. - A.D. 34).

* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or

Jesus’ Religious and Civil Trials

JESUS' RELIGIOUS TRIAL				
	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Before Annas				18:12-14, 19-24
Before Caiaphas	26:57-68	14:53-65	22:54, 63-65	18:24 <small>(Only briefly mentions handoff to Caiaphas)</small>
Before the Sanhedrin	27:1	15:1	22:66-71	
JESUS' CIVIL TRIAL				
Before Pilate	27:2, 11-14	15:1-5	23:1-5	18:28-38
Before Herod Antipas			23:6-12	
Before Pilate	27:15-26	15:6-15	23:13-25	18:39—19:16

Source: Dr Constable’s Expository Notes – John
(with minor edit by LY)
<http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>

Additional Resources:

See in this document (following pages):

[New Bible Commentary – Intertestamental Period](#)

[New Living Translation Study Bible Notes – Intertestamental Period](#)

[NIV Study Bible: The Time Between the Testaments](#)

[Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Manners & Customs - Chapter 14: Life during the Maccabean Age \(1, 2 Maccabees; Josephus\)](#)

See online:

WVBS Online Videos: Intertestamental Period with Dan Cates

<https://video.wvbs.org/program/intertestamental-period/>

Though represented by no more than a blank page in most Bibles, the period between the Old and New Testaments was a vibrant time in secular history; more importantly, it was a vibrant time in Biblical history as well. In that roughly four centuries, many of the Old Testament prophecies were being fulfilled; moreover, many things central to the New Testament were seeing their genesis. In this course Daniel Cates will guide the viewer in a study of the nations, individuals, events, locations, histories, and prophecies of this "blank page."

The Hasmonean Dynasty (slideshow)

<https://www.slideshare.net/aaronjlin/05-24-2009-the-hasmonean-dynasty>

The Intertestamental Period (PPT Presentation)

<https://www.slideserve.com/Thomas/the-intertestamental-period>

New Bible Commentary – Intertestamental Period

When our English Bibles allow the books of the NT to follow directly after those of the OT, they pass over the period which is often called ‘intertestamental’. Although this period (by definition) does not provide canonical biblical literature, it is very important background for an understanding of the NT. It covers the rule of three empires in the ancient Near East: the Persian (539-331 BC), the Greek (331-63 BC) and the Roman (under which NT history itself was played out).

After their return from exile the Jewish people live in straitened circumstances under Persian rule. Little is known of their fortunes in the fourth century BC, but it is possible that it was a turbulent time. The Persian Empire gave way in its turn to the Greek, established by all-conquering Alexander the Great in 331 BC. It may have been around the time of Alexander that the Samaritan sect had its roots, though the exact circumstances of its formation are not known. This was a group of worshippers of Yahweh which formed around the ancient biblical city of Shechem in the former northern Israelite territory. It is not known what precisely caused the split from the Jerusalem community, though we have seen that there were tensions in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah both within the community and between it and outsiders. (Some of the enemies of the returning exiles, incidentally, seem to have been in some sense ‘Yahwist’; the name ‘Tobiah’ in Ne 4:7 has a typically Yahwistic ending.) The sect built a temple on Mt Gerizim (overlooking Shechem), evidently a rival to that of Jerusalem, and claimed to be the true Israel. It even produced its own version of the Scriptures, narrowly defined as the Pentateuch. This ‘Samaritan’ version of the Pentateuch is still consulted by scholars of the Hebrew Bible as an important extra witness to the most ancient biblical text.

Alexander's empire divided on his death in 323 BC, and was governed by a number of his generals. It resolved itself finally into three parts, the Ptolemaic in Egypt, the Antigonid in Macedonia and the Seleucid in Asia, including Palestine. The culture of the three parts of the empire was still Greek, however, and the period which began after Alexander's conquests is known to history as Hellenistic. In it, the language, culture and thought of Greece became dominant throughout the civilized world. The subsequent conquest of the empire by Rome did not alter this, but rather gave it a new solidity, for the Greco-Roman culture of this time was essentially unified. The history of Judaism henceforth, and of early Christianity, both trades on and confronts this culture. Jews in Egyptian Alexandria soon felt the need for the Scriptures in the Greek language, which they had adopted, and beginning in the third century BC they made the translation known as the Septuagint (LXX). It is because Greek became the language of the educated throughout the empire in the Hellenistic and Roman periods that the NT too was written in that language.

During the third century BC Jerusalem and Judea were controlled more or less benignly by the Egyptian Ptolemies, even though the territory in general was contested between these and the Seleucids. At the beginning of the second century it was the Seleucids who gained control, and Jerusalem had to recognize a new master. The Seleucids, however, began a disastrous war against the Romans, and in their defeat had to pay enormous tribute. One of the ways in which they met this demand was by the plunder of temples under their control. Thus it was that in 168 BC the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes IV committed the unthinkable sacrilege and entered, and robbed, the temple at Jerusalem. The following year, thinking the city in rebellion, he dismantled its walls, amid great slaughter, and dedicated the temple to the worship of the Greek god, Zeus (1Ma 1; cf. 2Ma 6:1-2). These events, so traumatizing to faithful Jews, were the subject of the prophetic narrative in Da 11, where the ‘abomination that causes desolation’ (v 31) is a reference to the false god.

The pressure from the Seleucids on their religion led to different responses from Jewish people. The high priest in 200 BC was Simon II, son of Onias II, who became celebrated in Judaism for his faithfulness to traditional Jewish belief (Sir 50:1-21). Other leading Jews, however, participated eagerly in the new cultural refinement which cosmopolitan Hellenism had brought. Some joined the service of the regime as tax-collectors—a feature which would continue into the Roman period. Soon, the high priesthood itself became available to the highest bidder, and

in 174 BC Jason, the brother of Onias III, secured it illegally from the Seleucid king Antiochus III, and instituted Hellenistic practices, such as athletics, in Jerusalem. He in turn was ousted by one Menelaus, who, though not even of priestly lineage, bought the favour of Antiochus IV. Jason escaped, but Menelaus succeeded in having Onias III put to death. Menelaus, in time, even connived at Antiochus IV's first plundering of the temple.

Faithful Jews, outraged by their Hellenizing leaders, were known from the early part of the second century as Hasidim. Their resistance was a firm but patient one. Following Antiochus IV's dedication of the temple to Zeus (1Ma 2:29-38) and his insistence on religious conformity, this sort of dissent hardly seemed sufficient to many, and pious Jews took up arms. There followed the Maccabean (or Hasmonean) revolt, led by the priest Mattathiah and his sons. ('Maccabean' was a nickname, meaning 'hammerer', and applied to Mattathiah's son Judas in particular; the term 'Hasmonean' was derived from the family name Hasmon.) The revolt began in the town of Modin near Jerusalem in 167 BC with the murder of a Jew who was in the act of sacrificing to a pagan god, and the imperial officer who was supervising it (1Ma 2:15-28). It became an astonishingly successful military campaign, under Judas, which resulted in the Seleucids accepting Judas's terms for the reestablishment of Jewish worship in 164 BC. Judas then cleansed the temple of its idolatrous paraphernalia, and rededicated it. The Jewish feast of Hanukkah still commemorates this event.

The ending was not, however, entirely happy. The Seleucid king still insisted on appointing the high priest, and his candidate, a Hellenizer, blew open the old rift between traditional and Hellenizing Jews (as well as between the militant Hasmoneans and more peaceable Hasidim), effectively producing civil war. Seleucid armies again marched into Palestine as a consequence, and Judas died in battle in 161 BC. His mantle fell to his brother Jonathan, who conducted guerrilla campaigns with mixed success.

In 152, however, Jonathan came to terms with a pretender to the Seleucid throne, and as a result was himself offered, and accepted, the high priesthood. Both Jonathan and his brother Simon held this office, Simon effectively enjoying independence, under Roman guarantee, from 142. He himself was proclaimed both high priest and 'ethnarch' by the Jewish people. This was the beginning of what is known as the Hasmonean dynasty, for Simon and his successors would enjoy virtually the status of kings (though the contentious title was not taken by Simon). Simon's successor John Hyrcanus I (134-104 BC) defeated the Idumeans to the south, forcing them to become Jewish, and expanded also in Transjordan and in the ancient northern territory, destroying the Samaritan temple on Mt Gerizim in the process. The title of king was first taken by John's successor, Aristobulus I (104-103 BC). And after him Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BC), the most cruel of the Hasmoneans, continued the policy of military expansionism begun by John. There is irony in the degeneration of the Hasmoneans from their first idealism to the power-grubbing of their later years. Many Jews saw that their way was a false trail.

New Living Translation Study Bible Notes:

The Historical Background of the InterTestamental Period

The OT ends with the Jewish people reestablished in their land. The Persian rulers, unlike the Babylonians before them, allowed them to return to Judea and rebuild Jerusalem, its wall, and the Temple. They also put aside their former idolatry and committed themselves fully to monotheism for the first time in their history as a nation. During the time from Malachi to Christ, the people of Israel lived under five different governments: the Persian empire, the Greek empire, the Ptolemies of Egypt, the Seleucids of Syria, self-rule under the Maccabees (Hasmoneans), and finally Roman rule.

The Intertestamental Period

The Persian Empire (549-331 BC).

Cyrus II (559-530 BC) inaugurated the Persian empire with his conquest of Media in 549 BC and Babylonia in 539 BC. The Jewish people benefited from Cyrus's policy of allowing peoples who had been conquered by the Babylonians to return to their homelands, rebuild, and reinstitute worship of their own gods. During the period 538-430 BC, Jewish people returned to Judea, restored Jerusalem, rebuilt the Temple, and reestablished their lives in relative peace. Meanwhile, Jews who remained in Mesopotamia enjoyed prosperity. This period is recounted in detail in the last historical narratives of the OT (Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther; see also Josephus, *Antiquities* 11).

Greek Rule (331-320 BC).

When Alexander the Great of Macedonia (336-323 BC) conquered and annexed the Persian empire, very little changed for the people of Judea. Alexander's rule, though brief, was nevertheless formative for culture: (1) He extended the Greek language into use around the Mediterranean world and the Near East; (2) he founded the city of Alexandria in Egypt, which became a Greek cultural center for several hundred years; and (3) during his reign, Alexander was recognized as a god, setting a precedent for later rulers. Following Alexander's death, his generals (the so-called *Diadochoi*) struggled for dominance in their own realms. By 320 BC, the divisions were settled (see map). The two kingdoms that most impacted the Jewish people were Egypt under the Ptolemies (323-30 BC), and Syria under the Seleucids (321-64 BC).

Egyptian Rule (Ptolemies) (320-200 BC).

Judea fell under the control of Ptolemy I of Egypt sporadically between 320 and 301 BC, then Egyptian control was settled for a century. The Ptolemies had a generally peaceable relationship with Judea. Ptolemaic society was Greek, and Ptolemaic rule brought Greek people and culture into Judea. This Hellenization later became a serious challenge to Jewish culture and religion. A large number of Jews also settled in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, which became a center of Jewish culture and learning. The Greek translation of the OT (the Septuagint) was begun during this time (around 285 BC), to be completed sometime during the 100s BC. (The Septuagint was the primary Bible for Greek-speaking Jews in the first century AD; many of Paul's OT quotations are drawn from it.)

Syrian Rule (Seleucids) (200~142 BC).

When the Seleucid king Antiochus III of Syria (223-187 BC) won the Jewish territories from the Ptolemies in 200 BC, he continued to tolerate the Jews' exercise of their faith and the rule of the Jewish high priest over both civil and religious affairs. The irenic policies of Antiochus III ended when his son, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, took the throne (175-164 BC). Antiochus Epiphanes (meaning "a manifestation of a god") sought to impose unified Hellenistic culture and religion on his kingdom. He gave the Jewish high priesthood to the highest-bidder sympathetic with Hellenism. In 169 BC, returning from a campaign in Egypt, he attacked Jerusalem, killed many people, and looted the Temple. In 167 BC, Antiochus responded to a humiliating defeat in Egypt at the hands of the Romans by brutalizing the Jewish people, banning the Jewish faith, and murdering Jews who refused to give up their faith (see *1 Maccabees* 1 Maccabees 1; cp. Da 11:28-39).

The heat of persecution forged Jewish resistance. A priest named Mattathias, followed by his five sons (nicknamed Maccabees, “hammers”), led the revolt against Antiochus. In 164 BC, the revolt succeeded in temporarily gaining freedom. The Temple was restored and rededicated in December, 164 BC (now celebrated as Hanukkah, “Dedication”; see Jn 10:22). Meanwhile, Antiochus Epiphanes died while on a campaign to reassert his rule in Persia. Judas Maccabeus himself was killed in 160 BC in a series of battles that brought the Jews once again under Seleucid domination. But the Jews were not again subjected to fierce religious persecution.

Semi-Independence (Hasmonean Dynasty) (142~63 BC).

In 142 BC, Syria granted Judea semi-independence, and for most of the following century the Jewish people were self-governing under the Hasmonean dynasty, the descendants of the Maccabees. As time went on, the Hasmoneans embraced Hellenistic perspectives and policies. In violation of OT law, ruler was also serving as high priest. Not surprisingly with this concentration of power, corruption and abuses quickly arose among the Hasmonean rulers. The parties of the Pharisees came into view at this time, opposing Hellenization and the singular power of the ruler (see “The Pharisees” at Mt 3:7, p. 1581). The Sadducees also appeared, supporting Hellenization and the power of the priesthood (see “The Sadducees” at Mt 16:1-12).

Roman Rule (63 BC—AD 135).

Throughout the first century BC, Rome steadily increased its power over the Mediterranean world. In 63 BC the Roman general Pompey made Judea a vassal of Rome, and Jewish independence was gone. When Hyrcanus II, the last Hasmonean ruler, died in 40 BC, an Idumean named Herod was well-positioned to take control of Judea, supported in Rome by Octavian and Mark Antony, and strengthened by his marriage to a Hasmonean princess, Mariamne, the granddaughter of Hyrcanus II. So Herod the Great became king (37-4 BC) and reestablished a separate high priesthood. By the turn of the first century AD, the *pax Romana* was fully established, with Judea in its grip under the rule of Herod's successors (see illustration, “The Herod Family.”).

Jewish Literature

In the 400 years between the last of the OT books and the beginning of NT history, Jewish thinking underwent radical changes under the extended influence of Persian rule, the influx of Greek language and philosophy, and even the renewed nationalism of relative independence under Hasmonean rule.

Though none of the writings of this period were accepted as Scripture, they are valuable for understanding Jewish history and culture. The works of the Apocrypha (*Epistle of Jeremiah*, *Tobit*, *Baruch*, *Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)*, *Judith*, *Judith 1-2 Esdras*, *1-2 Maccabees*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, and additions to Esther and Daniel) were included with most manuscripts of the Greek OT. Other Jewish books from the period are called the *pseudepigrapha* (e.g., *1-2 Enoch*, *Jubilees*, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Letter of Aristeas*, *Psalms of Solomon*). Most of the books of the Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha were written in Greek. Additionally, some Jewish separatists living at Qumran continued to write in Hebrew. Their writings were discovered in 1948 and are commonly referred to as the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., *Community Rule*, *Damascus Document*, *Temple Scroll*, and many commentaries on OT books as well as liturgical texts).

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NIV Study Bible: The Time Between the Testaments

The time between the Testaments was one of ferment and change—a time of the realignment of traditional power blocs and the passing of a Near Eastern cultural tradition that had been dominant for almost 3,000 years.

In Biblical history, the approximately 400 years that separate the time of Nehemiah from the birth of Christ are known as the intertestamental period (c. 433- 5 B.C.). Sometimes called the “silent” years, they were anything but silent. The events, literature and social forces of these years would shape the world of the NT.

History

With the Babylonian exile, Israel ceased to be an independent nation and became a minor territory in a succession of larger empires. Very little is known about the latter years of Persian domination because the Jewish historian Josephus (c. A.D. 37- 100), our primary source for the intertestamental period, all but ignores them.

With Alexander the Great's acquisition of the Holy Land (332 B.C.), a new and more insidious threat to Israel emerged. Alexander was committed to the creation of a world united by Greek language and culture, a policy followed by his successors. This policy, called Hellenization, had a dramatic impact on the Jews.

At Alexander's death (323 B.C.) the empire he won was divided among his generals. Two of them founded dynasties—the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids in Syria and Mesopotamia—that would contend for control of the Holy Land for over a century.

The rule of the Ptolemies was considerate of Jewish religious sensitivities, but in 198 B.C. the Seleucids took control and paved the way for one of the most heroic periods in Jewish history. The early Seleucid years were largely a continuation of the tolerant rule of the Ptolemies, but Antiochus IV Epiphanes (whose title means “God made manifest” and who ruled 175-164 B.C.) changed that when he attempted to consolidate his fading empire through a policy of radical Hellenization. While a segment of the Jewish aristocracy had already adopted Greek ways, the majority of Jews were outraged.

Antiochus's atrocities were aimed at the eradication of Jewish religion. He prohibited some of the central elements of Jewish practice, attempted to destroy all copies of the Torah (the Pentateuch) and required offerings to the Greek god Zeus. His crowning outrage was the erection of a statue of Zeus and the sacrificing of a pig in the Jerusalem temple itself. Opposition to Antiochus was led by Mattathias, an elderly villager from a priestly family, and his five sons: Judas (Maccabeus—probably meaning “hammerer”), Jonathan, Simon, John and Eleazar. Mattathias destroyed a Greek altar established in his village, Modein, and killed Antiochus's emissary. This triggered the Maccabean revolt, a 24-year war (166-142 B.C.) that resulted in the independence of Judah until the Romans took control in 63 B.C.

The victory of Mattathias's family was a hollow one, however. With the death of his last son, Simon, the Hasmonean dynasty that they founded soon evolved into an aristocratic, Hellenistic regime sometimes hard to distinguish from that of the Seleucids. During the reign of Simon's son, John Hyrcanus, the orthodox Jews who had supported the Maccabees fell out of favor. With only a few exceptions, the rest of the Hasmoneans supported the Jewish Hellenizers. The Pharisees were actually persecuted by Alexander Janneus (102-76 B.C.).

The Hasmonean dynasty ended when, in 63 B.C. , an expanding Roman empire intervened in a dynastic clash between the two sons of Janneus, Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II. Pompey, the general who subdued the East for Rome, took Jerusalem after a three-month siege of the temple area, massacring priests in the performance of their duties and entering the Most Holy Place. This sacrilege began Roman rule in a way that Jews could neither forgive nor forget.

Literature

During these unhappy years of oppression and internal strife, the Jewish people produced a sizable body of literature that both recorded and addressed their era. Three of the more significant works are the Septuagint, the Apocrypha and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Septuagint. Jewish legend says that 72 scholars, under the sponsorship of Ptolemy Philadelphus (c. 250 B.C.), were brought together on the island of Pharos, near Alexandria, where they produced a Greek translation of the OT in 72 days. From this tradition the Latin word for 70 , “Septuagint,” became the name attached to the translation. The Roman numeral for 70 , LXX, is used as an abbreviation for it.

Behind the legend lies the probability that at least the Torah (the five books of Moses) was translated into Greek c. 250 B.C. for the use of the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria. The rest of the OT and some noncanonical books were also included in the LXX before the dawning of the Christian era, though it is difficult to be certain when.

The Septuagint quickly became the Bible of the Jews outside the Holy Land who, like the Alexandrians, no longer spoke Hebrew. It would be difficult to overestimate its influence. It made the Scriptures available both to the Jews who no longer spoke their ancestral language and to the entire Greek-speaking world. It later became the Bible of the early church, frequently quoted by the NT writers. Also, its widespread popularity and use contributed to the retention of the Apocrypha by some branches of Christendom.

Apocrypha. Derived from a Greek word that means “hidden,” Apocrypha has acquired the meaning “false,” but in a technical sense it describes a specific body of writings. This collection consists of a variety of books and additions to canonical books that, with the exception of 2 Esdras (c. A.D. 90), were written during the intertestamental period. Their recognition as authoritative in Roman and Eastern Christianity is the result of a complex historical process. The limits of the Hebrew canon of the OT, also accepted by most Protestants today, were very likely established for most Jews by the dawn of the Christian era. In spite of disagreements among some of the church fathers as to which books were canonical and which were not, the Apocryphal books (which were included in the Septuagint) continued in common use by most Christians until the Reformation. During this period most Protestants decided to follow the Hebrew canon while Rome, at the Council of Trent (1546) and more recently at the First Vatican Council (1869-70), affirmed the larger Alexandrian canon that includes the Apocrypha. The Apocryphal books have retained their place primarily through the weight of ecclesiastical authority, without which they would not commend themselves as canonical literature. There is no clear evidence that Jesus or the apostles ever quoted any Apocryphal works as inspired Scripture. The Jewish community that produced them repudiated them, and the historical surveys in the apostolic sermons recorded in Acts completely ignore the period they cover. Even the sober, historical account of 1 Maccabees is tarnished by numerous errors and anachronisms.

There is nothing of theological value in the Apocryphal books that cannot be duplicated in canonical Scripture, and they contain much that runs counter to its teachings. Nonetheless, this body of literature does provide a valuable source of information for the study of the intertestamental period.

■ *Dead Sea Scrolls.* In the spring of 1947 an Arab shepherd chanced upon a cave in the hills overlooking the southwestern shore of the Dead Sea that contained what has been called “the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times.” The documents and fragments of documents found in those caves, dubbed the “Dead Sea Scrolls,” included OT books, a few books of the Apocrypha, apocalyptic works, pseudepigrapha (books that purport to be the work of ancient heroes of the faith), and a number of books peculiar to the sect that produced them.

Approximately a third of the documents are Biblical, with Psalms, Deuteronomy and Isaiah—the books quoted most often in the NT—occurring most frequently. One of the most remarkable finds was a complete 24-foot-long scroll of Isaiah.

The Scrolls have made a significant contribution to the quest for a form of the OT texts most accurately reflecting the original manuscripts; they provide copies 1,000 years closer to the originals than were previously known. The understanding of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic and knowledge of the development of Judaism between the Testaments have been increased significantly. Of great importance to readers of the Bible is the demonstration of the care with which OT texts were copied, thus providing objective evidence for the general reliability of those texts.

Social Developments

The Judaism of Jesus' day is, to a large extent, the result of changes that came about in response to the pressures of the intertestamental period.

Diaspora. The Diaspora (dispersion) of Israel begun in the exile accelerated during these years until a writer of the day could say that Jews filled “every land and sea.”

Jews outside the Holy Land, cut off from the temple, concentrated their religious life in the study of the Torah as the chief guide for their daily living within the Gentile world and in the activities centered in the synagogue (see below). The missionaries of the early church began their Gentile ministries among the Diaspora, using their Greek translation of the OT (the Septuagint).

Sadducees. In the Holy Land, the Greek world made its greatest impact through the party of the Sadducees. Made up of aristocrats, it became the temple party. Because of their position, the Sadducees had a vested interest in the status quo.

Relatively few in number, they wielded disproportionate political power and controlled the high priesthood. They rejected all religious writings except the Torah, as well as any doctrine (such as resurrection from the dead) not found in those five books.

Synagogue. During the Babylonian exile, Israel was cut off from the temple, divested of nationhood and surrounded by pagan religious practices. The nation's faith was threatened with extinction. Under these circumstances, the exiles turned their religious focus from what they had lost to what they retained—the Torah and the belief that they were God's people. They concentrated on the law rather than nationhood, on personal piety rather than sacramental rectitude, and on prayer as an acceptable replacement for the sacrifices denied to them.

When they returned from the exile, they brought with them this new form of religious expression, as well as the synagogue (its center), and Judaism became a faith that could be practiced wherever the Torah could be carried. The emphases on personal piety and a relationship with God, which characterized synagogue worship, not only helped preserve Judaism but also prepared the way for the Christian gospel.

Pharisees. As the party of the synagogue, the Pharisees strove to reinterpret the law. They built a “hedge” around it to enable Jews to live righteously before God in a world that had changed drastically since the days of Moses. Although they were comparatively few in number, the Pharisees enjoyed the support of the people and influenced popular opinion if not national policy. They were the only party to survive the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 and were the spiritual progenitors of modern Judaism.

■ *Essenes.* An almost forgotten Jewish sect until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Essenes were a small, separatist group that grew out of the conflicts of the Maccabean age. Like the Pharisees, they stressed strict legal observance, but they considered the temple priesthood corrupt and rejected much of the temple ritual and sacrificial system. Mentioned by several ancient writers (including Josephus and Pliny), the precise nature of the Essenes is still not

certain, though it is generally agreed that the Qumran community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls was probably an Essene group.

Because they were convinced that they were the true remnant, these Qumran Essenes had separated themselves from Judaism at large and devoted themselves to personal purity and preparation for the final war between the “Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness.” They practiced an apocalyptic faith, looking back to the contributions of their “Teacher of Righteousness” and forward to the coming of two, and possibly three, Messiahs. The destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, however, seems to have delivered a death blow to their apocalyptic expectations.

Attempts have been made to equate aspects of the beliefs of the Qumran community with the origins of Christianity. Some have seen a prototype of Jesus in their “Teacher of Righteousness,” and both John the Baptist and Jesus have been assigned membership in the sect. There is, however, only a superficial, speculative base for these conjectures.

The following chapter is excerpted from:

Nelson's *New Illustrated Bible Manners & Customs*

How the People of the Bible Really Lived



Chapter 14: Life during the Maccabean Age

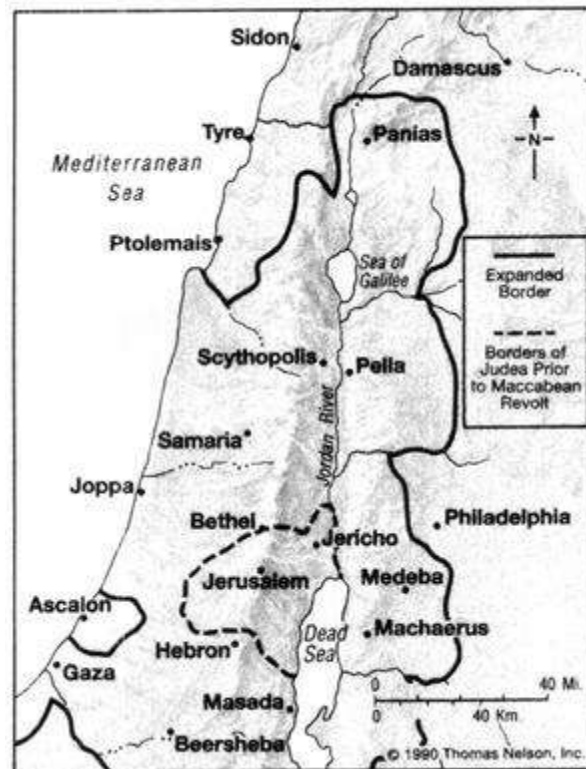
(1, 2 Maccabees; Josephus)

If you are like most Americans, you thrilled to the stories of the patriots who rebelled against the British: the Boston Tea Party; Paul Revere's ride, the heroism of the Minutemen at Lexington and Concord. They inspired courage, poems, songs, great statements about the role of freedom. Now if you are Jewish, there is another period that inspired the same kind of heroism, stories of courage, poetry and songs, and even an annual celebration: Hannukah.

For American readers the American Revolution has the same kind of significance as the time of the Maccabees to Hebrews of Jesus' day and Jews around the world today. And just as we must study the history of revolutionary America to understand the role of freedom today, so we must study the Maccabean period to understand the days in which Jesus Christ lived and the apostle Paul ministered.

The two centuries before Christ was born was a period filled with tumult. First the Seleucids of Syria successfully invaded Palestine as they wrenched control of the region from the Egyptian Ptolemies (198 B.C.). Then the Seleucids moved in with new religious dictates designed to bring about greater political and social unity, moves that only fractured the social and religious fabric. When they forced pagan religious views on the populace, the results were predictable—some capitulated and some did not. Thus they pitted Jew against Jew and/or Jew against Syrian Seleucids and their Jewish supporters, very much like the division between the British loyalists and the American patriots.

This friction between those who found it politically and economically expedient to side with the dominant political and social force and those who resisted resulted in open revolution, the successful Maccabean revolt. After Jewish independence became a fact, the Maccabeans or Hasmoneans continued to fight to take chunks of territory from Syria and add them to the Jewish state. But then there arose new dimensions to the tumult as hellenized Jews contested with traditional or conservative Jews and as ambitious personalities tried to build their constituencies and advance their causes. Finally, Roman imperial designs resulted in Roman conquest in 63 B.C.



Expansion of the Jewish State under the Maccabees

The Land

Of course the physical geography of Palestine remained as it had been for thousands of years. But the political geography changed greatly with succeeding Maccabean rulers. Under Simon in 142 the Maccabean or Hasmonean state gained independence. At that time Simon controlled Judea from a little north of Hebron to a point north of Bethel and from the Jordan River to the modern airport at Lod. He also ruled the southern part of Perea east of the Jordan. Expansionistic, Simon later took Joppa and its surroundings, gaining a seaport.

His successor, John Hyrcanus (135–104) conquered east of the Dead Sea, then Samaria (destroying the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim) and the Idumeans (Edomites) south to Beersheba. He forced the Idumeans to accept Judaism and be circumcised. This is the only known instance in all of history that Jews were responsible for forced conversion of another people to Judaism.

Aristobulus (104–103) conquered Galilee, and Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 B.C.) completed the conquest of almost the whole of Palestine. Thus by the end of his reign the Maccabean kingdom included Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Idumea west of the Jordan River; and the Golan, Perea, Moab, and part of Edom east of the Jordan.

Government

Seleucid Rule

The Seleucid kings ruled as autocrats; their word was law. They had gained their position by conquest and they chose helpers, with little regard for class or wealth, to run the state. In occupied Norway during the Second World War similar sympathizers of the Nazis were called Quislings. These Seleucid “friends” constituted something of a governing council in Palestine. With their friends the Seleucid kings filled army positions, officers of state, and ambassadorships. And from them they expected and received a high degree of loyalty. But their councils were not merely a group of military and political experts. The Seleucids also kept scholars—artists, writers, philosophers, and others—at their courts.

The Seleucid kings also ruled with the help of a Greco-Macedonian elite in the cities that they founded. In such cities Syrians, Jews, Persians and others were welcomed for their

contributions to the economy and society, but the Seleucids generally excluded them from rule, and they never constituted more than a tiny percent of the ruling group. With a collection of Greeks and Macedonians planted in cities across their kingdom on land granted by the crown, and subscribing to a Hellenistic culture, the Seleucids sought to bring cohesion to their greatly varied subjects.

Citizen Privileges

In passing, it is interesting to note that Seleucus Nicator (306–280 B.C.) made the Jews citizens of the cities he built in Asia and Syria and in Antioch itself, and gave them privileges equal to those of the Macedonians and Greeks. These privileges they continued to enjoy down through the first Christian century. * As citizens they would have had the protection of local laws and access to the courts, the right to establish businesses and to trade freely, and the opportunity to serve in local government agencies.



Coins of the cities of Antioch (above, the capital) and Seleucia (below, its port) of the Seleucid Kingdom.

The ruler cult and the state religion provided a unifying feature of Greco-Macedonian ways. Though they did not at first impose this state religion on the non-Greco-Macedonian elements of the population, the religious climate changed after Roman defeat of the Seleucids in 189 B.C. More and more the worship of the king as the Seleucid state religion impacted heavily on the monotheistic faith of the Jews and sparked a revolution among them (see subsequent discussion under Religion and War).

Maccabean/Hasmonean Rule

After the successful Jewish revolt and the establishment of their independent state, the victorious Jews of course had to set up a government of their own. In the early years—under Judas Maccabeus (167–161) and Jonathan (161–143)—whatever territory the Maccabeans

ruled, they did so as generals of an army. As they shouted orders to their troops, they also controlled whatever civilians depended on them for their livelihood and safety.

Simon

The situation changed somewhat in 142 B.C. when Simon won independence of Judea from Syrian control. The next year the Jews conferred on him and his descendants permanent authority as ruling high priests (1Ma 14:25-49), and the Roman Senate recognized him as a friendly independent ruler (1Ma 14:16-19, 24; 1Ma 15:15-24). In international affairs, for the next eighty years the Romans valued the Hasmonean dynasty as a counterbalance to the Seleucid state.

With Simon, the Hasmonean line took over rule of the Jews and held sway until the Roman conquest in 63 B.C. Incidentally, the name *Hasmonean* is thought to be derived from an ancestor of the Maccabeans named Asmoneus.

Domestically, the Hasmoneans depended on the aristocratic Sadducean party with its power base in the temple. Partially hellenized, this sect usually contested with the Pharisees—with their power base primarily in the synagogue—for control of the public at large.

Not only did Simon win permanent authority as ruling high priest for himself and his posterity, but he secured Joppa as a Jewish harbor and conquered Gazara (Gezer), Beth-zur, and the Acra or citadel in Jerusalem where Seleucids had continued to hold out. Though he was successful against the Syrians, he met a violent death at the hands of the governor of Jericho, who assassinated him and two of his sons in 135 B.C. But John Hyrcanus, a third son, escaped to become the next high priest (1Ma 16:18).

Greek Education

What kind of education would Hyracanus' sons have received in the Greek schools, in the gymnasiums? Greek education was humanistic—man-centered instead of God-centered, relativistic instead of based on absolutes. The subject matter would have included literature: the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and various tragedies and comedies with their polytheistic thrust, instead of the Bible and Hebrew history. Further, Plato and Aristotle and their philosophies and scientific observations, Stoic and Epicurean teachings, and the new Hellenistic scholars of Alexandria would have been included in the curriculum.



The monumental tomb of Alexander Jannaeus.

(From the Jerusalem model at the Holyland Hotel in west Jerusalem)

John Hyrcanus

John Hyrcanus (135–104 B.C.) began his reign fighting for his life and his kingdom but ended it with the Jewish state at the height of its power. Internally the Jewish state changed significantly too. It transformed itself from a religious community into a secular state. Though the Hellenistic party as a separate group disappeared, as did Syrian interference in Jewish affairs, its views were perpetuated by the Sadducees, as the views of the Hasidim were perpetuated by the Pharisees. Those two parties, so prominent in the New Testament, first surfaced during Hyrcanus' reign. Hyrcanus publicly aligned himself with the Sadducees, but he was safely Jewish, having brought both the Samaritans and Edomites to heel. Thus he did not unduly upset the more conservative elements of the realm. But his sons received an education in Greek culture and tended to repudiate the Pharisees.

Aristobulus

Aristobulus (104–103 B.C.), the eldest of those sons, emerged as victor in the dynastic struggle that erupted after the death of Hyrcanus. Then he proceeded to imprison his brothers and his mother to guarantee his position as chief of state. It is said that his mother starved to death in prison, and he unjustly executed his brother Antigonos for supposed involvement in a plot against him. Aside from these family tragedies, he apparently ruled well. He continued the expansionist policies of his father and extended Jewish rule into Galilee. He also continued the Hasmonean tendency to transform the religious community into a secular state, adopting the title *Philhellene* ("love of things Greek") and taking the title of king.

It is easy to understand why the Hasmoneans decided to assume the title of king. The Jewish state was no longer confined to Jerusalem and its environs. It now included a much larger territory and almost thirty hellenized cities. Gentiles in this larger territory, and especially the inhabitants of the hellenized cities, would consider the high-priestly authority to be confined to the temple-state in Judea, or at most to Jews in the territories. A king could claim authority over all kinds of people—Greeks, Samaritans, Idumeans, and others—throughout his kingdom.

Roman Takeover of Palestine

In 66 B.C. , while the Roman general Pompey was involved in conquests in the East, one of his lieutenants visited Judea, where he heard appeals from representatives of Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. He made tentative decisions. And when Pompey came to Damascus in 63 B.C. , he heard appeals from the two brothers and the Jewish people, who wanted abolition of the monarchy and a return to priestly government.

After that the political situation gradually unraveled, and a Roman army marched in and took over in 63. The Romans detached all non-Jewish areas (the Mediterranean coastlands, Transjordan, and Samaria) from the Jewish state. They placed what remained under the rule of Hyrcanus II as high priest. Thus they abolished the kingship, as the representatives of the Jews had asked, and Hyrcanus (with Antipater, father of Herod the Great, at his elbow) controlled the state, at the pleasure of the Romans.

After Palestine passed under Roman rule, it inevitably became embroiled in Roman politics. Over the following decades Jews formed factions loyal to Hyrcanus, Aristobulus, Pompey, Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, Augustus, Herod the Great, and others. Even the best informed scholar finds it difficult to follow accurately the history of the period, but some details are clear.

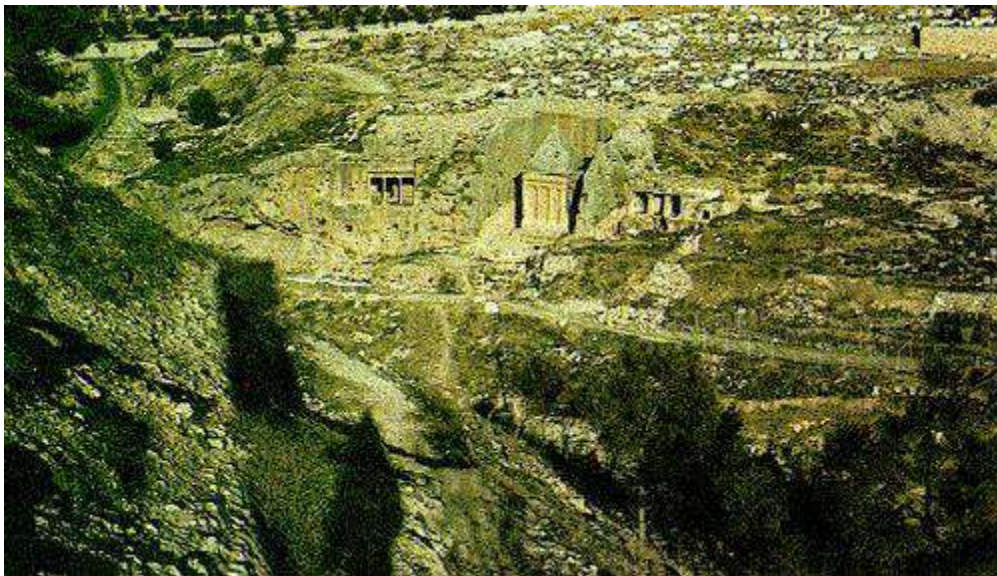
First, Hyrcanus II continued as high priest and ruler of the Jews during the confused period from 63 to 40 B.C. During almost all those years, Antipater faithfully carried out Roman policies as the real power in the state. Second, after Pompey's defeat at the hands of Julius Caesar in 48 B.C. ,

Hyrchanus and Antipater became loyal supporters of Caesar. In appreciation, Caesar confirmed their position in Judah and showed numerous favors to Jews of the Dispersion, many of which were continued under subsequent rulers during the New Testament period. Third, the Romans appointed Herod king of the Jews in 40 B.C. After a confused political and military situation, he became king in fact in 37 B.C. and ruled until his death in 4 B.C. Thus we have made the political transition from the Maccabeans to the Romans and to the situation that existed as the New Testament period begins.

Alexander Jannaeus

When Aristobulus died from drink and disease, his widow, Salome Alexandra, released his brothers from prison and married the eldest, Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 B.C.). Jannaeus continued the expansionistic policies of his predecessors. By the time he died he had extended the borders of the Jewish state to include almost all the territory that Solomon had ruled. Jannaeus was almost constantly at war, however, and more than once suffered nearly total disaster (see later discussion on Warfare).

One of these conflicts involved an internal rebellion, which came in part because of his violation of temple ritual at the Feast of Tabernacles. At that time the crowd had assaulted him for his impiety and he had called in troops to restore order, with the resultant death of a large number (Josephus said 6,000) of defenseless people. In the following conflict Jannaeus almost lost his kingdom. And when he reestablished his control, he hunted down his enemies and crucified about eight hundred of them. *



Tomb complex of Bene Hezir overlooking the Kidron Valley in Jerusalem—the burial site of a priestly family of the Maccabean period. The pyramid-topped tomb is mistakenly known as Zechariah's tomb.

(Ben Chapman)

Salome Alexandra

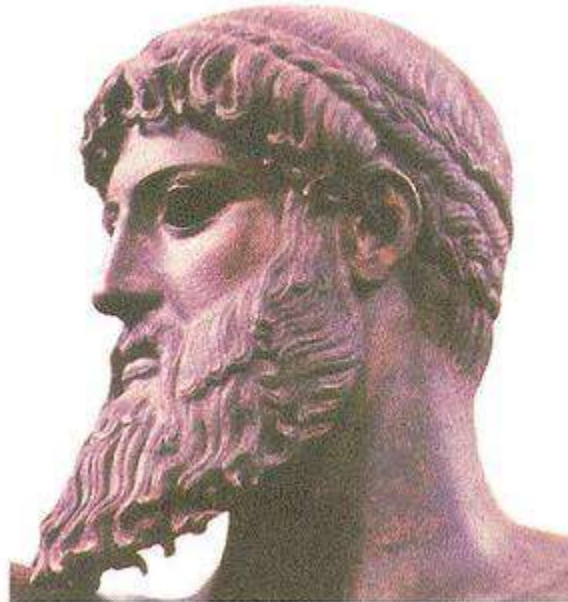
When Jannaeus died, his widow Salome Alexandra (76–67 B.C.) succeeded him on the throne, as she had when Aristobulus, her first husband, died. Because she was a woman she could not exercise the high priesthood. Her eldest son, Hyrchanus II, filled that position. Her more able second son, Aristobulus II, received command of the army. The Pharisees, who had enjoyed little influence under earlier Hasmonean rulers, now played an important role in the government and for the first time were admitted to the Sanhedrin or council. This change in their fortunes seems due in part to the fact that Alexandra's brother was the famous Pharisee, Simon ben Shetach. In general, Alexandra's reign was peaceful and prosperous. When she died at the age of seventy-three, the days of Jewish independence were nearing an end. As a matter

of fact, the sparring between Alexandra's two sons gave the Romans the chance to add Palestine to their empire (63 B.C.).

Operation of the Government

During the whole Maccabean/Hasmonean period the government could not operate effectively and efficiently. At first the Jews fought to establish their independence. Having done so, they still faced occasional intrusions of either Syrian or Egyptian forces—sometimes invited in by a faction in Israel. Then they experienced the occasional revolution, as in the days of Alexander Jannaeus. And strife persisted between Pharisees and Sadducees. Under these chaotic circumstances, it became difficult to establish government agencies and make them operate efficiently. It also proved difficult to put in place a workable taxing system for the support of the government.

The rulers, as kings and high priests, exercised great power, and there was little check on them. The Sanhedrin or Council always operated under the leadership (or dominance) of the high priest and did not enjoy the power it had earlier under the Seleucids or later under the Romans. Both of them permitted a degree of internal autonomy in which the Sanhedrin could flourish.



A bronze head of Zeus with plaited hair and beard

Religion

“In those days certain renegades came out from Israel and misled many, saying, ‘Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us’... and some of the people eagerly went to the king, who authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, and removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil.” (1Ma 1:11-15 NRSV).

Growing Hellenistic Influence

Hellenism had been growing in influence in Palestine all during the years when the Ptolemies ruled there and increasingly after the Seleucids took over in 198 B.C. The upper classes in Jerusalem bowed and scraped to things Greek and seemed increasingly embarrassed by things Jewish. As noted in the passage quoted above, they campaigned for many elements of pagan culture and even sought to turn Jerusalem into a Greek *polis* or city, complete with a Greek-style gymnasium.

During the century of Egyptian occupation and the early decades of Syrian or Seleucid rule, Jews enjoyed the freedom to worship as they chose, but that situation changed in the days of

Antiochus IV (175–163 B.C.). In an effort to bring greater unity to his kingdom, Antiochus IV tried to force Greek religion on the Jews, along with all the other subject peoples—and there were plenty of Jews willing and eager to go along with him. The Seleucid kings assumed the right to appoint the Jewish high priests, and ambitious Hellenists vied for the position.

Jason's Actions

When Antiochus IV came to the throne in 175, Onias III, an orthodox Jew, was serving as high priest. But many Jews had become so hellenized that they were ready for a change in the religious system. At that point apparently some accused Onias of pro-Ptolemaic leanings, and his brother Joshua paid a huge bribe for appointment as high priest and the right to build a gymnasium in Jerusalem (2Ma 4:8-10). Taking the Greek name Jason, Joshua proceeded to build the gymnasium, to introduce athletic competition in the nude, and to encourage other actions totally repugnant to orthodox Jews. The orthodox organized under the name *Hasidim* (pious), a movement from which the Pharisees eventually arose.

Menelaus' Excesses

After Jason had been in office three years (175–172 B.C.), Menelaus, a close associate, deposed him by outbidding him in the bribery game (2Ma 4:23-26), and Jason fled to Transjordan. Menelaus proved to be an even more thoroughgoing Hellenist than Jason, and more unscrupulous as well. He helped himself to temple assets to pay off his debt to Antiochus. Jason waited impatiently in Transjordan for a chance to regain his lost position. Finally, in 168 B.C., when Antiochus was busy with a military campaign in Egypt, Jason raised a force and attacked Jerusalem. The disorders that followed evidently were clashes primarily between those loyal to Jason and Menelaus and between the pro-Egyptian and pro-Syrian factions. Antiochus, however, chose to regard them as open rebellion against his rule. He sent a force to Jerusalem that broke down the walls, destroyed many houses, slaughtered countless inhabitants, and built a fortified citadel for a Syrian garrison.



Coin of Antiochus IV, a Seleucid king of Syria who desecrated the temple in Jerusalem and precipitated the Maccabean revolt

Antiochus' Proscription of Judaism

Then in 167 B.C., realizing that Jewish opposition to him rose ultimately from their religion, Antiochus decided to destroy Judaism, much as Communists in Russia and China more recently

tried to destroy Christianity. He made such religious observances as circumcision and Sabbath-keeping and the possession of a copy of the Law punishable by death. He dedicated the temple to the Olympian Zeus, and desecrated it with a sacrifice of swine on the altar. Worship of heathen gods became compulsory.

Maccabean Rebellion

Response to these severe measures was predictable. Some capitulated, some offered passive resistance, and some decided to fight for their faith. The spark that ignited open revolt was struck at the mountain village of Modin, west of Jerusalem. There a priest named Mattathias lived with his five sons. When a royal officer came to town to enforce the decree requiring the Jews to perform pagan sacrifice, Mattathias killed a Jew who was about to offer sacrifice, as well as the officer. Then he fled to the hills with his sons, there to conduct guerrilla warfare. A few months after the beginning of the struggle Mattathias died, but before he did he saw to it that the mantle of leadership fell on his third son Judas, "the Maccabee" (interpreted to mean "the hammer").

Ultimately Judas entered Jerusalem and cleansed the temple (where for three years sacrifices had been offered to the Olympian Zeus) on the twenty-fifth of Chislev (December), 165 B.C. The day has been celebrated ever since as the feast of Hanukkah or Rededication or Lights. The story of the Maccabean wars or the military struggles of the Hasmonean dynasty will be featured in the next section.

After the death of Judah, his younger brother Jonathan took up the fight and maintained the religious goals of the Maccabean struggle (161–142). The same was true of Jonathan's son Simon, who led the movement 142–135 B.C. As noted, he won for his family permanent authority as ruling high priests, along with independence of the Hasmonean state.

Hasmonean Slippage

Erosion of Maccabean goals began to occur during the reign of Simon's son, John Hyrcanus (135–104). He publicly aligned himself with the Sadducees and gave his sons an education in Greek culture.

The eldest of those sons, Aristobulus (104–103 B.C.), continued the religious slide. He adopted the title of *Philhellene* ("love of things Greek") and took the title of king. His brother Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 B.C.) was notorious for his power and cruelty. Favoring the party of the Sadducees, he alienated the people and thus the Pharisees. When they revolted against him he killed thousands in battle and hundreds more subsequently in executions.

The Faith of the Masses

The faith of the masses at the close of the Maccabean period demonstrated various levels of commitment. A great many believed themselves acceptable to God because they practiced circumcision (as sons of the covenant) and kept the Sabbath. Some were faithful to the temple and corporate worship, keeping the feasts, especially the Passover, and being careful to make proper sacrifices required by the Law. A substantial percentage, following the Pharisees, concerned themselves with law-keeping as a way of life, and they were faithful in synagogue attendance.

During the long period of Ptolemaic and Seleucid occupation and Maccabean Hellenistic orientation, many, especially among the upper classes, tended to drift away from a supernatural approach to religion. They did not believe in a life after death, a resurrection, or a coming Messiah who would establish a spiritual kingdom. Most of those who still thought about a Messiah centered on a prince who would establish a political kingdom. We have no opinion polls to indicate the percentage of the population that fell into each camp. The spiritual condition of the masses must have been much the same as during New Testament times.

In their alliance with the Sadducees, the temple leadership, and the Hellenistically oriented aristocracy, the Hasmonean kings betrayed the ideals that had inspired the Maccabean revolt. By the time Rome took over Palestine in 63 B.C. , the political leadership had moved dangerously close to the position held by the Syrians before 168 B.C. And by New Testament times the Sadducees were denying the supernatural.

Pharisees and Sadducees

To better understand the religious landscape in the second century B.C. , we need to examine the positions of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Sadducees belonged to the wealthy priestly aristocracy and were primarily concerned with temple administration and ritual. They recognized only the written law of the Pentateuch as binding on them and tended to ignore the development of the oral law. Generally they subscribed to Hellenistic beliefs and practices and, as noted, at many points turned their backs on supernatural points of view. Though they were always a minority in Judaism, their political power at times was great. Because their sphere of activity was the temple, they died out after the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70.

The Pharisees did not reject the temple and the privileges of the priestly class. But as trustees of the nation's culture, they enjoyed greater support among the masses. Sticklers for observance of the Law, they paid great attention to ceremonial purity, fasting, and Sabbath observance. Concerned with both the written and oral law, they subscribed to the canonicity of the entire Old Testament and continued to refine and add to the interpretation of Scripture. Thus they were progressive in their constant reinterpretation of the Law and in their seeking proselytes to Judaism. They were more inclined to impose duties than to grant rights to their followers. Their sphere of influence centered especially in the synagogue. And they tended to separate themselves from the influences of Hellenism and to hold to a supernatural faith.

Warfare

“But Judas said to those who were with him, ‘Do not fear their numbers or be afraid when they charge. Remember how our ancestors were saved at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh with his forces pursued them. And now, let us cry to Heaven, to see whether he will favor us and remember his covenant with our ancestors and crush this army before us today. Then all the Gentiles will know that there is one who redeems and saves Israel.’” (1Ma 4:8-11)

The Maccabean Hope of Victory

Mattathias and his sons fled into the hills after killing the government agent who had commanded sacrifice at Modin. How could they hope to survive when they were hunted like animals in the wilderness? How could they expect to take on the military might of the Seleucids? How could they outfit an army with no resources or a dependable source of supply? How could they hope to win?

1. To begin with, they were a guerrilla force that moved about in hills and caves and woods that were familiar to them. In all periods of history a few guerrillas have been able to operate effectively in rugged terrain with minimal equipment.
2. With a fierce dedication to a cause, they had the edge on mercenary armies. Witness the success of American patriot armies during the Revolution when fighting German mercenaries.
3. They fought in defense of their faith, homes, and freedoms, and the Seleucid forces were merely trying to maintain the power of the central government. Judas told his men, “We fight for our lives [our wives and our children] and our laws” (1Ma 3:20, 21).
4. As the Maccabean conflict progressed, the need to fight the Parthians on the eastern frontier sometimes distracted the Seleucids. And Rome sometimes reined them in as well. Moreover, the Seleucid royal family engaged in factional infighting. For example, when Demetrius I and Alexander Balas were slugging it out for control of the Seleucid

kingdom in the 150s B.C. , Alexander granted Jonathan the privileges of a royally appointed commander and permitted him to recruit an army and forge weapons.

5. The Maccabeans captured many weapons that they turned back against the Seleucids. Judas himself captured the sword of the Seleucid general Apollonius “and used it in battle the rest of his life” (1Ma 3:12). Often the Jews seized weapons (e. g., 1Ma 3:12; 4:23; 5:3). The statement in 1Ma 6:6 is quite specific in this connection: “The Jews had grown strong from the arms, supplies, and abundant spoils that they had taken from the armies they had cut down.”
6. The Jews sometimes made their own weapons. In one battle the Seleucids “set up siege towers, engines of war to throw fire and stones, machines to shoot arrows, and catapults” (1Ma 6:51). In response, “The Jews also made engines of war to match theirs” (1Ma 6:52).
7. Judas, especially, encouraged his men to have faith in God, and God evidently intervened on their behalf. The speech recorded above is an especially eloquent exhortation. God responded by evidently causing confusion in the enemy ranks and giving the Jews the victory. Clearly, the Jews could not have won on their own on this occasion because they “did not have armor and swords such as they desired” (1Ma 4:6).

Jewish Equipment of War

We know the Jews had swords because the Books of Maccabees say so. And if they captured a lot of military equipment, many of them must have had Greek body armor, which would have consisted of a corslet to cover the torso, made of leather or iron, and greaves to protect the lower legs. The Maccabeans also would have captured spears or lances and the round shields Macedonians and Greeks carried. Presumably some contingents became proficient slingers, as Jews had been from time immemorial. Then, as noted above, they sometimes built engines of war, such as catapults.

It does not appear that the Maccabeans had whole cavalry units (though they did have a few mounted soldiers), but that was not a great disadvantage in the hilly regions where most of their battles took place. Nor did they have war elephants, as did the Seleucids. From the little information we have, it is not clear how much difference elephants made in battle. Elephants could be almost as much of a problem to the forces that had them as to their enemies. If they were wounded they might become somewhat crazed. If the enemy killed their riders/trainers, they were left without adequate control and might run amuck among friendly forces.

The Size of the Maccabean Army

The Maccabeans organized their army into divisions of a thousand, which were subdivided into hundreds, fifties, and tens, with appropriate officers for each (1Ma 3:54). We do not have information about training camps or about how they deployed fighting units on the battlefield (such as, for instance, the Macedonian phalanx). In a few instances we do have some idea of relative strength of forces. For instance, at Emmaus (165 B.C.) Judas had 3,000 infantry to face Gorgias with 5,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry. Judas and Jonathan (in 163 B.C.) led 8,000 men into Gilead to relieve Jews being persecuted there; we do not know the strength of Seleucid garrisons in the several fortified cities. Jonathan marched at the head of 10,000 men and Simon commanded a further battalion in the battle in the Plain of Philistia in 147 B.C. Ten years later at the Battle of Kidron (southwest of the modern airport at Lod), John Hyrcanus and his brother Judas commanded 20,000 infantry.

Major Battles

1. The Battle of Emmaus (northwest of Jerusalem) in 165 was significant because against great odds Judas won an overwhelming victory. Evidently God intervened, showing that He was on the side of the rebels and giving them courage to continue the struggle. Judas' ragtag army of 3,000, without adequate weapons, was pitted against 6,000 crack Seleucid troops (1Ma 4:1-25).

2. At the Battle of Eleasa (some 10 miles north of Jerusalem) in 161 B.C. the Seleucid forces under Bacchides trounced the Maccabean forces. Judas lost his life on the battlefield and his army scattered. Simon and Jonathan were able to carry away his body and bury it in the family tomb at Modin (see 1Ma 9:5-19).

3. In 147 B.C. the Seleucid king Demetrius II commanded his general to take strong measures against Judea. This backfired, resulting in the first Jewish conquest of Joppa. Jonathan, leading 10,000 men, was joined by Simon and another battalion in that battle. Initially hard-pressed, the Jews gained the upper hand and then took control of the whole southern coastal plain (the Plain of Philistia). The Jewish army emerged from that battle as the “strongest military power in the land of Israel” (See 1Ma 10:69-87).

4. Tryphon, leader of one Seleucid faction, launched an attack on Jonathan (143–2 B.C.). By a ruse he captured Jonathan at Ptolemais (modern Acre) and killed the thousand men who were with him. Later Tryphon killed Jonathan, and the rest of Jonathan's troops chose Simon to lead the people in his brother's stead (see 1Ma 12:39-54). Simon now threw in his lot with the Seleucid faction led by Demetrius II, who granted Simon independence in 142 B.C.

5. The conquests of John Hyrcanus (135–104). Though John Hyrcanus began his reign in a weak position, the situation changed after 129 B.C. when Antiochus VII was killed fighting against the Parthians. That greatly reduced the power of the Seleucid dynasty and Hyrcanus did not have to fear further interference. He proceeded expand his kingdom, first taking a chunk of territory east of the north end of the Dead Sea. This gave him control of a stretch of the King's Highway that ran from the Red Sea to Damascus. He already controlled a section of the Via Maris (Way of the Sea) in the coastal plain. Then he conquered the Idumeans to the south and the Samaritans to the north. Following that he took the Greek cities on his northern border: Strato's Tower (later Caesarea), Samaria, and Scythopolis (earlier Beth Shan).

7. In the year that Aristobulus I reigned (104–103), he managed to conquer Galilee.

Housing and Furniture

Houses in the nearly thirty Greek cities of Palestine, as well as those of the upper classes in Jerusalem during this period, imitated the Greek style. That is, they were of the peristyle type (arranged around square courtyards that were surrounded by columns, often with Ionic capitals). A narrow passageway gave entrance into one large room, with smaller rooms opening around the court and lighted from it. Depending on the affluence of the owners, some floors might have mosaics.

Houses of the middle and lower classes were small. Excavations have not revealed rooms arranged according to a clear plan. Remains of hearths and steps leading to a roof or a cellar are frequently found. Houses of the very poor might be of one or two rooms.

The kind and amount of furniture depended on one's economic condition. The upper and middle classes had wooden bed frames with mattresses filled with a variety of materials, chairs (with or without backs and arms), and tables. The very poor had almost no furniture, perhaps bedrolls that could be put on the floor at night, and a few stools.

Diet and Foodstuffs

In normal times Palestine could provide enough wheat and barley (the staple diet of the poor) for its own population, but not enough for export. The good wheat and barley producing districts were located in Judea, Benjamin, Galilee, and the Decapolis, with the best wheat believed to grow near Michmash, about seven miles north of Jerusalem. Oats and rye were in plentiful supply.

Vegetables and Fruits

They had many vegetables. Cabbage and onions (especially those from Ascalon) abounded, with adequate supplies of mushrooms (especially from Jerusalem), lentils, kidney beans, and chickpeas. Among the many other vegetables raised and consumed were radishes, turnips, cucumbers, artichokes, asparagus, and pumpkins. Seasonings included coriander, mustard, anise, cumin, ginger, mint, and rue.

Increased commerce introduced many fruits into Palestine during the Hellenistic age. In the Maccabean period pears, apples, peaches, plums, cherries, dates, pomegranates, and figs flourished, with excellent fruit farms around Samaria, Ascalon, Scythopolis, and around the Sea of Galilee. The date-palms of Judea (especially Jericho) and Galilee became famous throughout the whole ancient world, especially after Palestine became part of the Roman Empire. Fig culture of the region of Lydda (modern Lod) was especially extensive. Likewise the cultivation of the grape was extensive. The wines of Ascalon and Gaza were popular. But the wines of Galilee were considered the best quality. Fruit and date plantations were even more profitable than vineyards. Numerous fruit wines and fruit-beers were produced.

Olive oil had a multi-purpose use—for cooking, medicinal purposes, and lighting. As in other periods of history, residents burned it in small clay lamps to provide illumination. The province of Galilee as a whole had become the most important center for the production of oil, with olive trees grown widely. Palestine could not grow enough olives for its population. Therefore olive oil, like wheat and wine, generally was not exported. Dates and bee honey provided sweetening for meals.

Though dry farming was the rule in Palestine, artificial irrigation was practiced in many districts, including Sepphoris in Galilee, Jericho, Gezer, and around the shores of the Sea of Galilee.



During the Maccabean period, oil lamps looked like a slipper. Instead of being an open saucer, the two sides were pinched together.

Animal Consumption

Though the poor could not afford to eat the meat, the Hebrews raised beef cattle widely. Milk, butter, and cheese were products they would more likely have consumed. The breeding of sheep and goats was extensive and highly profitable. Again the poor normally could not afford to eat the meat but did consume the milk, butter, and cheese. And of course wool and goat hair met many needs in society.

Poultry (geese, ducks, doves, pheasants, quails, ravens, sparrows) were eaten by rich and poor alike. Fishing went on everywhere—in rivers, lakes, and the sea. The Jordan River was very popular for its fish, and those of the Sea of Galilee were widely known. Dried fish from the Sea of Galilee were sold throughout Palestine.

Dress

Three developments characterize the clothing of the period in Palestine. (1) Greek styles in the almost thirty Hellenistic cities influenced many among the upper-class Jews. (2) Instead of an almost universal preference for wool fabrics in earlier periods, many now chose linen. (3) With more dyes available and more dye works in operation, people increasingly wore more gaily colored clothing than in previous periods.

As to choice of fabric, the women of Judea still normally used wool for weaving, while the women of Galilee commonly used flax to produce linen fabric. Palestinian flax was now highly esteemed and was exported.

Dyes available included saffron, which produced a yellow orange; henna, a reddish dye; madder, red; and woad, blue. The women of the day highly valued the henna of Ascalon. Of course, they still produced the purple of Tyre, but it now was so expensive that only the most wealthy could afford to use it.

The literary and archaeological information available to us concerns the clothing of Judea more than that of the rest of Palestine. The basic garment consisted of a tunic made of two pieces of woolen material, joined at the top with a hole for the head to pass through. The usual length of these pieces was about three and one-half feet, so the tunic must have extended roughly to the knee or mid-calf. Tunics were normally decorated with two vertical stripes. The tunics themselves usually were red, yellow, or black, with contrasting stripes, or they were multicolored.

The mantle served as the Hebrews' other main garment (*talith* in Hebrew, *himation* in Greek). Also of wool, this consisted of one piece of cloth and was worn over the tunic. The mantles were yellow or brown and often decorated with checkerboard patterns. There were also woolen kerchiefs decorated with fringes and made of many colors. In addition, garments made of linen and of leather are known, but we cannot be sure of their exact shape and use. Apparently the Mosaic Law that forbade the mixing of linen and wool in the same garment (e. g., Dt 22:11) was obeyed. Sandals consisted of several pieces of leather stitched together.

We do not know as much about the clothing of Samaria or Galilee. From the fact that linen cloth was produced extensively in Galilee, we may guess that the tunics there commonly may have been made of linen, with the warmer mantles being made of wool. Also, possibly people in the other provinces were not so careful to avoid mixing wool and linen. It should be noted, however, that the basic garments of Judeans were similar to those worn by people all along the Mediterranean coast at that time. So the clothing of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee must have been similar.



Though this ostracon dates to the eighth century B.C. , its use is similar to those of the Hasmonean period. Ostraca were pieces of pottery inscribed in ink or engraved with a stylus. It was found at Tell Qasile on the northern outskirts of Tel Aviv and is inscribed with the words “Gold from Ophir to Beth-horon—30 shekels.”

Family Life

At this time marriage continued to be largely by arrangement between parents of the bride and groom. Jewish bridegrooms continued to pay a bride-price and the father of the bride provided a dowry for his daughter. We have some knowledge of prices expected or paid, but they don't mean much when converted into contemporary coinage. Perhaps it is useful to note that by the end of the Hasmonean period a Jewish groom was expected to pay a minimum of one hundred denarii, equal to one hundred days of the daily wage of a day laborer. A dowry should be at least half as much. Sums in either case fluctuated according to one's social and economic standing.

Upper and middle classes usually ratified marriage and divorce by a written document, but legal marriage was possible without such documents. And generally the poor did not have them.

Even fairly small towns had midwives to assist in births. Mothers normally nursed for two years. Mothers ran the household, but in this patriarchal society fathers had considerable power over the family. Children commonly began to help in the fields or with the crafts as soon as they were able. Boys usually were brought up to follow in their fathers' occupations, though an apprenticeship to another craftsman could be arranged. By the end of the Hasmonean period, rudimentary education of boys included at least training in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Sons were especially prized, since they carried on the family name. The eldest son received a double portion of the inheritance. Often younger sons received so little inheritance that they were forced to work as day laborers.

On death, burial took place on the same day because bodies were not embalmed. The wealthy and many of the middle class were laid out on stone slabs in caves or free-standing family mausoleums.

Work, Travel, and Commerce

Craftsmen

Hebrews practiced many crafts in Palestine during this period: tailors, masons, stonecutters, woodworkers, bakers, perfumers, smiths (goldsmiths, silversmiths, blacksmiths), dyers and tanners, carpet weavers, ceramic workers, glass smelters, washer-women, midwives (for women), to note a few.

The Phoenicians probably invented the art of glassblowing in the first century B.C. In the region near Acre they found sand that proved especially suitable for glassmaking. The industry quickly spread elsewhere. There were apparently no sculptors because the Second Commandment forbade the making of graven images. Painters did produce art scenes.

The Hebrews employed professional scribes in writing documents or copying books. At this time imported papyrus from Egypt became too expensive to serve as a writing material, though they grew some papyrus in Palestine. The most important Hellenistic writing material was parchment, but it was also expensive to produce. Ostraca (pieces of pottery), wax tablets, and linen were substitutes. Ink was commonly made from gallnut resin.

They organized some crafts as home industries, such as families of linen weavers. And sometimes whole towns were connected with a certain trade or industry. Bethsaida apparently concentrated on its fishing industry. Nazareth is thought to have been a town of carpenters. Other towns were centers of pottery production.

Agricultural Workers

Though craftsmen were important and numerous, most people engaged in agricultural activity—largely subsistence agriculture. That is, they used much of what they produced to feed the farmer and his family. What little was left over was bartered or sold to supply necessities they could not produce themselves. Since farming provided a marginal existence, in the event

of extensive drought or warfare farmers often lost their land and became day laborers. Or worse, if their debt was large enough, the whole family might become Hebrew slaves until their debt was paid.

In addition to the large class of small landholders, there were numerous peasants. These might work as day laborers or tenants who had rented the land on one basis or another.

Two other classes of workers were servants and slaves. The wealthy employed servants on a more or less permanent basis as personal attendants or assistants of one kind or another. Hebrew slaves were never very numerous and could be sold by a Jew only to a fellow Jew and only to his creditor in payment for a debt. While the servant could change masters, the slave could not. The advantage for the slave was that he could never become unemployed or die of hunger. Nor was he a slave forever, for according to Mosaic Law he had to be released after six years of service, unless he declared that he loved his master and elected not to go free.

The Hebrews had some non-Jewish slaves, and some Jews were captured in battle and sold to non-Jewish owners. The non-Jews, known as “Canaanite slaves,” were probably sold in the markets of Tyre and Sidon. They worked as tailors, bakers and cooks, tutors, nursemaids, entertainers, and in other ways. They were traded by bill of sale and marked, in case they should escape.

A few great landowners stood at the top of the social and economic scale. These commonly included the king, high officials, members of high priestly houses, and some of the wealthy merchants. Much of the time these could not, because of the pressure of other duties, live on the land and work it themselves. So they employed stewards to work it for them. Or they leased out their land.

Merchants

By the time the Hasmoneans conquered the Mediterranean coastal towns they had become completely hellenized. After the conquest, Jews began to move there and to engage in trade as merchants. Greeks carried on the overseas trade. By the end of the Hasmonean period, Palestinian production and commerce were poised to take advantage of the expanded economic opportunities that came with being part of the Roman Empire. Then new markets and more settled conditions especially contributed to a higher level of prosperity. Wine and olive oil were two of the main products exported. As noted earlier, Hasmonean control of sections of the Via Maris and The King's Highway enabled the Jews to tap into Mediterranean coastal trade and commerce on the Damascus route. Rule over the Idumeans enabled the Jews to dominate commercial arteries across the Negev.

Domestically, Friday, the day before the Sabbath, was market day in every town, when food, clothing, and other goods could be bought and sold. Because it was a “Day of Assembly,” it was also a day for weddings, court sessions, and other events.

The coming Roman control of Palestine would prove to be a mixed blessing. On the one hand, a stronger control administratively brought a certain stability to the region and permitted or promoted greater prosperity. On the other, heavy Roman taxation and the inability of her governors to understand Jewish ways ultimately led to Jewish revolt and terrible destruction—of Jerusalem and the temple.

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