

27/08/2009

## Judaism in Palestine in the Hellenistic-Roman Periods

Esther Eshel and Michael E. Stone

### 1. The "Dark Ages" of the Fourth and Third Centuries BCE

The conquest of the Near East by Alexander marked a turning point in its history — cultural, religious and political. This event is rarely used as a periodization marker by Jewish historiography, which groups the fourth (still mainly Achaemenid) and third (Ptolemaic) centuries together, bounded at their beginning by Ezra and Nehemiah and at their end by the Seleucid conquest of Judea (198 BCE). The reason for this strange ignoring of Alexander's conquest, which was the major event in the history of the Middle East at that time, is the darkness that shrouds Judaism in the fourth and third centuries. Despite that darkness, the changes in Jewish religion and polity between the age of the restoration in the fifth century BCE and the situation that led up to the Maccabean revolt in the early second century BCE were enormous.

The sources of information for the fourth and third centuries are very partial. Josephus has little information apart from one document dealing with the trans-Jordanian Jewish principality ruled by the Tobiads in the third century. We learn that they were intermarried with the aristocracies of Judea and Samaria, the two other Israelite regions. Members of the Tobiad family bid for and bought from the Ptolemies in Alexandria the right to farm the taxes of Judea and they were familiars at the Ptolemaic court. The information yielded by the Zeno papyri intersects with Josephus. Zeno, the business manager of Apollonius, a financial minister of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, traveled in Syria

27/08/2009

and Palestine and traded with the Tobiads.<sup>1</sup> In addition, an inscription from the fifth century BCE also mentions the Tobiads as do the last verses of Nehemiah.

We may compare the priestly aristocracy of Jerusalem and Samaria with the Tobiad aristocratic landowning family.<sup>2</sup> We know relatively little about them, though it is now clear that Sanballat (Neh 2, 4, 6, 13), was a member of a powerful, governing family in Samaria,<sup>3</sup> while the Onaid priesthood of Jerusalem held equivalent position in Jerusalem, down to their expulsion from office in 169 BCE. Thus, a picture may be painted of two major districts inhabited by worshippers of the God of Israel, Samaria and Judea. In addition there was a smaller, independent Jewish barony of the Tobiads in Trans-Jordan. Samaria and Judaea were each organized around a Temple controlled by a priestly aristocracy, and the ruling classes (including the Tobiads) were interrelated and often intermarried.<sup>4</sup>

Since 1991, around sixteen hundred ostraca were discovered at Khirbet el-Kôm (biblical Makkedah) from which we can learn that the Macedonian administration of the province of Idumea under Alexander continued to function the same way as during the Persian period.<sup>5</sup> Of special important is a bilingual ostrakon found at Khirbet el-Kôm,

---

<sup>1</sup> Tcherikover, "Palestine" 49-53; idem, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 39-89.

<sup>2</sup> Cross, "Judean Restoration", 6.

<sup>3</sup> Cross, "Samaritan and Jewish History", 201-5.

<sup>4</sup> Grabbe, *History of the Jews*, 207-37, 303-13.

<sup>5</sup> The name מוקדה, biblical Makkedah (Josh 10:10, 16, 21; 12:16; 15:41) appears in numerous inscriptions included in these collections and is identified with Khirbet el-Kôm

27/08/2009

which testifies to a shift from Aramaic to Greek.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the archaeological evidence of the late Persian and Ptolemaic periods shows a complex picture. The pagan population of Idumea and the coastal area, used *favissae*, pits into which clay figurines and stone statues had been deposited, from which many learn that they worshipped different gods.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the Idumean population used Aramaic, while in the coastal area of Ashdod, Ashkelon and Gaza Phoenician was spoken.

It is notable that the court tales of the Persian and early Hellenistic periods, such as Esther and Dan 2-6, differ significantly from Hasmonean and post-Hasmonean stories like Judith and Dan 1. Dan 2-6 and Esther tell how the Gentile king came to recognize the sovereignty of the God of Israel. Enterprising and wise Jewish courtiers, such as Zerubbabel (1 Esd 3:1-5:6) and Daniel (Dan 2-6 and Bel and the Dragon) functioned in the context of the pagan court. However, Judith 12 and Dan 1 both highlight dietary laws that distinguished Jews from pagans and which are not mentioned in the Book of Esther or in Dan 2-6. After the Maccabean revolt, heroes were not figures like Daniel and Esther, and when Jews like Philo's nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander, rose to very high

---

(Dorsey, "Location"). See also, Eph'al, Naveh, *Aramaic Ostraca*, which contains inscriptions dated to the Persian and Hellenistic periods that presumably also originated at Khirbet el Kom; Lemaire, *Nouvelles Inscriptions Araméennes*; idem, *Nouvelles Inscriptions II*.

<sup>6</sup> Grelot, "Khirbrt el-Kom".

<sup>7</sup> Stern, *Archaeology*, 490-505.

27/08/2009

position they paid the price of apostasy.<sup>8</sup> In the earlier period, however, the faithful heroes of stories rose to the highest positions in the pagan courts and the kings recognized the power of the God of Heaven.<sup>9</sup>

The Dead Sea Scrolls exemplify the process of embroidering and retelling biblical stories, incorporating extra-biblical traditions, some very ancient. Thus the Enochic *Book of the Luminaries* and *Book of the Watchers* exhibit a developed Enoch tradition. The Aramaic Levi Document (hereafter *ALD*), transmits detailed priestly instructions that nicely relate to Noah's priestly role and which claim Noachic origin.<sup>10</sup> All the above mentioned compositions, and probably also a Book (or books) of Noah,<sup>11</sup> were composed during the third century BCE. *ALD* is basically about the legitimacy of the Levitical priesthood and includes a strong wisdom component. The role of the priestly aristocracy makes the priestly teaching of *ALD* the more striking. Elias Bickerman stressed that as an outcome of Achemenid policy, the Torah came to have the force of the law of the land which led to the creation of a hierocracy in Judea.<sup>12</sup> Together with this it seems that

---

<sup>8</sup> Kraft, "Tiberius Julius Alexander".

<sup>9</sup> Wills, *Jews in the Court*, 9-19, 22-3.

<sup>10</sup> Levi was instructed by Isaac (*ALD* 5:8), who learnt from Abraham (7:4), who, in turn, consulted the "Book of Noah" (10:10).

<sup>11</sup> Stone, "Book(s) Attributed to Noah".

<sup>12</sup> Bickerman, "Historical Foundations", 70-114, esp. 73-4; Morton Smith, "Jewish Religious Life", 219-78, esp. 260-9.

27/08/2009

during this period the Torah became authoritative in its written rather than its oral form.<sup>13</sup>

This is not to deny the importance of written documents in early periods.<sup>14</sup> Once the transmundane norms of the religion of Israel were written down, or rather, once the written form of the tradition became authoritative, the knowledge of the tradition was taken out of the priests' hands and became available for investigation by the learned. By the second century BCE, as a result, argument over the right of exegesis became argument over power.

## 2. Transformation of the Sources of Information

Against this background, our perception of Judaism has changed. Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the only sources were the latest of biblical writings, minimal material in Josephus, some relatively minor items in the Apocrypha, certain fragments of Jewish writings in Greek, and some epigraphic and archeological evidence. With the early dating of a number of Qumran documents, we may say that parts of the *Book of Enoch (1 Enoch)* and *Aramaic Levi Document (ALD)* are definitely of the third century BCE. This is also the case for Dan 2-6 (which may be somewhat older) and probably for Tobit. The astronomical book of Enoch promotes a 364-day solar calendar, different from the Babylonian lunar-solar calendar that the Jews took over after the Exile. *ALD* used that same calendar as later did *Jubilees* and the Dead Sea sectaries. Different calendars imply different sources of religious authority, and different branches or wings of Judaism.

---

<sup>13</sup> Stone, "Three Transformations"; Carr, *Writing*; cf. Najman, *Seconding Sinai*.

<sup>14</sup> Najman, "Symbolic Significance", 13-16 with references to earlier discussions.

27/08/2009

In the Persian and Ptolemaic periods priestly trends were rather powerful. *ALD* 6-9 gives regulations for sacrificial cult that agree neither with Pentateuchal nor with Rabbinic sources. It is impossible to know if this reflects Temple usage or some dissident practice. The composition of *ALD* and its concern for the legitimacy of the Levitical priesthood serve to stress the central role played by the priesthood in this period, both in the political life and in the dissenting wings of Judaism. The existence of these compositions in such an early period is known only through the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Variety is typical of Judaism in the Second Temple period: groups, trends and sects proliferate though we only perceive them through sources outside received Jewish tradition. Although Rabbinic literature refers to Pharisees and Sadducees, its evidence is sparse and it foreshortens the Persian period, leaping from the generation of Ezra and Nehemiah to the early second century BCE. The Dead Sea Scrolls, the Pseudepigrapha preserved in the Christian tradition, some Apocryphal Psalms, Josephus, Philo and other Jewish-Hellenistic fragments provide information stemming from outside the Rabbinic tradition.<sup>15</sup> This plethora of sources contrasts very strongly with the situation in the First Temple period when we have virtually no documents except the Hebrew Bible, a tendentious and quite carefully censored work, though, of course, a rich and invaluable source.<sup>16</sup> It is difficult, therefore, to know whether religious phenomena appearing for the

---

<sup>15</sup> Hippolytus also has a treatment of the Jewish sects, see Smith, "Description"; Baumgarten, "Josephus and Hippolytus".

<sup>16</sup> On this issue see Stone, *Scriptures*, 27-47.

27/08/2009

first time in Second Temple sources are new, or whether they come to light because of the different character of the transmitted sources. In all likelihood, both factors are at play.

The *Book of Enoch* (*I Enoch*) and the references to a *Book of Noah* show us aspects of Jewish creativity in the period.<sup>17</sup> *I Enoch* is a vision book, an apocalypse, and in addition to the revelation of the calendar in its *Book of the Luminaries*, its first part (*Book of the Watchers*) also preserves a very old instance of extra-biblical traditions (chaps. 6-11).<sup>18</sup> In chapter 14 we have the first ascent vision in post-biblical Jewish literature.<sup>19</sup> Enoch plays a role in the heavenly court and its developed angelology contrasts with the First Temple writings. *I Enoch* has varied traditions of angels and archangels (chapter 20), describes the underworld (chapter 22), discusses the distant parts of the earth (chapters 26-27, 33-36.). The religious world uncovered feels very different from that evident in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, and in the later works of the prophetic canon.

Except for noting the stress on the role of the priestly aristocracy, we can say little about social structure. Judea was small and presumably basically agricultural. Whether the people sustaining a solar calendar formed a distinct group, and what their relationship

---

<sup>17</sup> The existence of Book(s) of Noah is much debated. The situation is summarized in Stone, "Book(s) Attributed to Noah", with references to previous literature.

<sup>18</sup> See Nickelsburg, *I Enoch*, 29-30.

<sup>19</sup> It is not certain whether the idea of a separable soul is involved. Compare 14:8, which is not explicit.

27/08/2009

was to the priestly groups forwarding the sacrificial code of *ALD*, remain mysteries, but they were likely forerunners to trends and groups that emerge more distinctly on the stage of events in the second century BCE.<sup>20</sup>

From *I Enoch* and *Aramaic Levi Document* we learn that the idea of two opposed spirits, one of truth and one of falsehood, had already emerged by the third century.<sup>21</sup> In addition, demonology appears alongside angelology. It has been stressed that in this period a process of "remythologization" of Judaism was initiated, in which time and meta-time, space and meta-space, history and meta-history were emerging once more.<sup>22</sup> These tendencies, it has been convincingly maintained, were largely absent from religion of the First Temple period, at least as it is reflected in the Hebrew Bible.

### 3. Hellenization of Judaea in the context of the Hellenized East

Greek penetration into the East had begun before Alexander's conquest, but that event and Alexander's consequent policies had far-reaching effects on the civilization of

---

<sup>20</sup> The usual Jewish calendar is a 365-day solar-lunar calculation coming from Babylon: see Talmon, "Calendar and Mishmarot", 112-16; Ben-Dov, "Babylonian Lunar". That of *I Enoch*, *Jubilees* and *ALD* is a solar calendar of 12 x 30 days with one intercalated day every quarter. It resembles, but is not identical with the Ptolemaic and old Persian calendars; see Samuel, *Chronology*, 145; Ginzel, *Chronologie*, 314.

<sup>21</sup> See Stone, Greenfield, "Prayer of Levi", 252.

<sup>22</sup> Stone, "Eschatology"; Cross, "New Directions"; cf. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 343-6.

27/08/2009

the eastern Mediterranean basin.<sup>23</sup> The Hellenization of the East brought about profound changes in Greek civilization as well as in those of the oriental peoples. In the third century BCE great, ancient oriental cultures felt the need to present their traditions in Greek. This was done by Manetho for the Egyptians, by Berossus for Mesopotamia, and by the LXX translators and the fragmentarily preserved chronography of Demetrius for the Jews. Philo of Byblos who wrote about the Phoenecian religion lived at the same time as Josephus, but he used an earlier source, Sanchuniathon.<sup>24</sup> Josephus saw his own work

---

<sup>23</sup> See Hengel, "Political and Social", 35-6; Bickerman, *Jews in the Greek Age*, 13-19; thirty-nine different seal impressions of the Wadi Daliyeh bullae, as well as one ring were defined as stylistically Greek, see Leith, *Wadi Daliyeh*, 20-28, 35 (late fourth century BCE). To that evidence, one should add three Greek words in the Aramaic of Daniel (Dan 3:5; all are names of musical instruments); see Coxon, "Greek Loan-Words"; and perhaps *apirion* in Song 3:9. In an Aramaic marriage contract found in Maresha, dated to 176 BCE, one finds the Greek word, *nomos*, which means 'law or custom'. In the marriage contract it means that the bride will be given to the groom according to the custom prevailing among the Edomites of Marehsah, see Eshel, Kloner, "Marriage Contract".

<sup>24</sup> See Baumgarten, *Phoenician History*, 260-8; Attridge, Oden, *Philo of Byblos*, 3-5. It is possible that both Josephus and Philo Byblos are to be seen as part of a single later movement in conversation not with Greek ethnography, as the Ptolemaic period authors were, but with Imperial ideas of universal history, see Bilde, *Flavius Josephus*, 80-104.

27/08/2009

as a continuation of the Septuagint (*Antiquities* 1.10) though they differ considerably (see below).

How extensive was Hellenization in Palestine where, as well as Jewish settlement, there were Greek cities and other pagan settlements? There seems no doubt that it was considerable. For example, roughly half of the names on ossuaries from the Jerusalem area are in Greek.<sup>25</sup> Even the list of early Rabbinic authorities contains two individuals with Greek names.<sup>26</sup> Exactly how deeply Hellenization penetrated in Judea is unknown, but no doubt considerably.

It has been claimed that the Maccabean revolt was not chiefly over the attempt of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE) to impose Hellenism, but only the attempt of a Hellenizing group in Jerusalem so to do, aided by the monarch.<sup>27</sup> This theory assumes a substantial measure of Hellenistic penetration. Certainly, there were pagan writers in Greek in Palestine such as the philosopher and satirist Menippus (*floruit* third century BCE), as there were Greek cities. We cannot speak with any certainty of Jewish literary composition in Greek in Palestine, though this has been claimed for the historian Eupolemus (early second century BCE).<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> See Rahmani, *Jewish Ossuaries*, 13-15; Ilan, *Lexicon*, 11-13, 257-324.

<sup>26</sup> Abtalion (*m.Abod* 1:10-11) and Antigonus of Socho, (*m.Abod* 1:3); see Hengel, "Interpretation of Judaism", 217-18.

<sup>27</sup> See Bickerman, *God of the Maccabees*, 30, 38-42.

<sup>28</sup> Wacholder, *Eupolemus*, 4-21.

27/08/2009

During the third century BCE, the Ptolemies ruled Palestine. Something of the character of their rule is known from the Zeno papyri.<sup>29</sup> Zeno's reports on the Tobiads show the level of their participation in Hellenistic culture, an impression strengthened by Josephus' reports on the activities of Tobias' sons at the Ptolemaic court in Alexandria.<sup>30</sup>

The activities of the Hellenized sons of the trans-Jordanian Jewish ruler in the Ptolemaic court form a striking contrast with the court stories prominent in Jewish narrative literature down to the Maccabean revolt. Obviously, a biblical prototype of these stories is the Joseph cycle in Genesis, but during the early Hellenistic period such stories became extremely popular. We referred above to the chief instances, from Esther on; and note also the originally pagan Aḥikar story, adopted by the Jewish author of Tobit,<sup>31</sup> and others. The conduct of these ideal heroes contrasted positively with the dissolute and avaricious mores of the Tobiad offspring, but the context is not dissimilar. In these stories, the climax is the foreign potentate's recognition of the God of Israel as the true God.<sup>32</sup> Such stories disappeared after the Maccabean revolt, a reflection of the change in Jewish-Gentile relations after that event. Instead, in a book like 3 Maccabees, it

---

<sup>29</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 60.

<sup>30</sup> On the Tobiads, see, 2 Macc 3:11 Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.156-222; 228-236; see Gera, "On the Credibility", 31-8. See also above, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> This is preserved in the fifth-century BCE pagan Aramaic copy of the *Wisdom of Aḥiqar* found at Elephantine, see Porten, Yardeni, *Textbook*, 24-71; Strugnell, "Problems". See Greenfield, "Ahikar".

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Dan 2:47, 3:28, 4:31-34, 6:27-28.

27/08/2009

is not the wise Jewish courtier but God's intervention against the king's plans that makes the point. The idea of the Jew in the high position in the pagan court has yielded to a more nationalist attitude that set Jews and Gentiles in opposition, as exemplified in the stories of Judith and Daniel 1.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4. The Second Century BCE and Its Developments

In the second century BCE great changes took place in Judaism and in the course of Jewish history.<sup>34</sup> The active sequence of events that climaxed in the great revolt against the Romans in 66 CE began with the Seleucid Antiochus III's conquest of Palestine from the Ptolemies in the early second century (198 BCE) at the Battle of Panium. The ensuing conflict over Hellenism culminated in Antiochus IV Epiphanes' decrees against Judaism in 167 BCE, the outbreak of the Maccabean revolt in the same year and the series of battles and subsequent political manoeuvring that led to the independence of Judaea under Hasmonean High Priest and eventually king, Jonathan in 152 BCE. The Hasmonean dynasty ruled until the Roman annexation of Judea in 63 BCE and were succeeded by the Idumeans Antipater, Herod and his sons, the last of whom,

---

<sup>33</sup> The Potter's Oracle, a Hellenistic Egyptian nationalist document written in Greek, is a different expression of attitudes of the Orientals to Greek rule; see Koenen, "Prophecies of the Potter". Compare also Fuchs, *Der geistige Widerstand*.

<sup>34</sup> Gera, *Judaea and Mediterranean Politics*, 59-254.

27/08/2009

Archelaus, was deposed by the Romans in 6 CE.<sup>35</sup> Roman governors ruled the country thenceforth. A pattern of civil turmoil, stoked by Zealot activist tendencies typified the first century CE, and revolt broke out against the Romans in 66 CE. Although Jerusalem was taken in 70 CE, the last of the fighters on the Herodian fortress of Masada were only overcome in 73 or 74 CE. Revolt broke out again half a century later under the leadership of Bar Kochba (or son of Kosiba) and lasted between 132 and 135 CE. By the end of these events, the situation of the Jews and Judaism had undergone a profound revolution.

Judea had been a hierocracy throughout the Persian and Ptolemaic periods. A priestly aristocracy, headed by the Oniad dynasty had led the polity until its replacement in 170 BCE. In that year the last Oniad High Priest, Onias IV,<sup>36</sup> fled to Egypt where he established a temple in Leontopolis which continued to function down to the Jewish revolt (73 CE), when it was closed by the Romans as a precautionary measure.<sup>37</sup> At the same time the Tobiad family was ruling in Transjordan, while in Samaria to the north,

---

<sup>35</sup> Herodians continued to rule different parts of the land of Israel down to 100 CE, and members of this family, known for their loyalty to Rome, were even appointed as vassal monarchs elsewhere in the east; see Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty*, 225, 339-40.

<sup>36</sup> Since Josephus wrote in his first book of *The Jewish Wars* 1.33, that Onias III built the Leontopolis temple, while in the second book of *Antiquities* 12.387-88; 13.62-73, written 13 years later he wrote that it was Onias IV (perhaps because of 2 Maccabees), there is some debate over which Onias established the Leontopolis temple; see Parente, "Onias III's Death", 70-80; On the Egyptian reaction to this temple, see Bohak "CPJ III, 520".

<sup>37</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities* 7.420-36.

27/08/2009

leadership was in the hands of a family favoring the name Sanballat. The first known ruler of this name is mentioned in Nehemiah (2:10, 19, 4:1, 7, 6:1, 2, etc., and in Elephantine Papyri). His family was intermarried with the Jerusalem high-priestly families (Neh 13:28) and he was associated with Tobiah (Neh 6:4). In a *bullā* that sealed one of the Wadi Daliyeh papyri (No. 16), another ruler named Sanballat (4th century BCE) is mentioned.<sup>38</sup>

In 142 BCE Judea became independent of both Seleucids and Ptolemys and was ruled by the Hasmonean Simon as high priest and eventually ethnarch. This Hasmonean kingdom pursued a policy, which, particularly under John Hyrcanus (135-104 BCE) and Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE), led to a significant expansion of the boundaries of the country and the forced conversion of various surrounding tribes including the Idumeans.

Although the Hasmonean dynasty owed its position to a revolt against the imposition of Hellenism, the court and its customs were deeply Hellenized and can be compared with such Hellenized Oriental kingdoms as Pontus (later such a thorn in the side of the Romans). The revolt, nonetheless, caused a polarization of Jewish attitudes towards the Hellenistic courts. So no more "Daniel-type" court stories were written. Now heroines like Judith beheaded pagan generals, while observing punctiliously rules of ritual bathing and kosher food.

In the course of the second century BCE, and certainly by its last decades, a number of religious movements (called "philosophies" by Josephus) appeared on the

---

<sup>38</sup> Cross, *Samaria Papyri*, 120-1.

27/08/2009

stage.<sup>39</sup> The Pharisees and Sadducees were involved in the court politics of Alexander Jannaeus and his wife Salome. It is unknown how much earlier they existed. The early history of the specific sect that lived at Qumran, on the northwestern corner of the Dead Sea is disputed, but these sectarians (one group of Essenes) were established in their communal center at the latest by the time of Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE). Earlier, in the stories surrounding the outbreak of the Maccabean revolt, another group, the Hasideans is mentioned, but they disappear from our sources by the middle of the second century. They seem to have been a pietistic group with close connections with the Temple and it is related that at the beginning of the revolt they agreed to be slaughtered rather than to fight on the Sabbath.<sup>40</sup> Earlier, the conflict between the returnees from the Babylonian exile and those remaining in the land is reflected in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the broad split between Judeans (i.e., Jews) and Samaritans goes back to that time, or earlier (if the highly biased account in 2 Kings 17 is to be believed, at least in general chronological terms).<sup>41</sup> So, by the end of the second century BCE, one of the major characteristics of Judaism of the Greco-Roman period is prominent: the existence of many religious groups and trends.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> See Schürer, *History*, 2.381-414, 550-9. Compare also Sievers, “Josephus”.

<sup>40</sup> 1 Macc 2.29-42; 7. 12-17; 2 Macc 14.6, see Kampen, *The Hasideans*, 45-62, 65-76, 128-35; Kampen argues for the identification of the Scribes and the Hasideans, 115-22. See, however, Schwartz, “Hasidim”, WHAT DOES HE SAY/

<sup>41</sup> Nickelsburg, Stone, *Faith and Piety*, 13-19; Coggins, *Samaritans and Jews*, 37-74.

<sup>42</sup> Baumgarten, *Jewish Sects*, 57-8.

27/08/2009

This raises major questions in our minds. What was the situation in the period preceding the emergence of the recognizable groups such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, that became so prominent from the late second century on? The third century BCE is largely obscure because the historical sources are sparse. Were there groups and tendencies in Judaism at that time that foreshadowed those that appear on the relatively well-lit stage of history by the end of the second century BCE? There are certainly indications of this. From the Qumran library, we now have some works that can be dated, on a variety of grounds, to the third century BCE. From them we learn much about Judaism at that time that is not in the "conventional" historical record. Thus, we know now that at that time calendar and astronomy were greatly prized (*The Enochic Book of the Luminaries*) and there were two calendars, one solar resembling that used in the next century by *Jubilees* and the Dead Sea sectaries, and the other solar-lunar with Babylonian month names. Two calendars imply two foci of religious authority, probably one central and one dissident. We also know that there were priestly handbooks, describing cultic and sacrificial laws unparalleled in biblical or rabbinic legislation (*Aramaic Levi Document* §§ 6-9 and *Jubilees* 21). Another remarkable notion that circulated was that there were people who expected not a single, Davidic Messiah; nor two Messiahs as we find in the Dead Sea Scrolls; but a single Levitical Messiah, to whom royal, Judahite characteristics were attracted. The *Temple Scroll* from Qumran, likely also of third-century BCE origin, is a pseudepigraphon of God, exhibiting an attitude to authority and biblical law that is quite unusual. We are as yet unable to place these views in society or to relate them to the groups that act on the stage of history in the following century, but

27/08/2009

their very existence means that Jewish expression in the third century BCE was multifaceted.

The situation in the second century BCE had certainly changed remarkably in contrast to the community of the return and to the early Ptolemaic period. Jewish attitudes to the pagan world and to Hellenism became more decisive and separatist. Yet, Hellenism made great inroads into Jewish society, not least in the Greek-speaking Diaspora. The Jews, like many of the oriental peoples, entered into an intellectual dialogue with the Hellenistic world and an *interpretatio graeca* of Judaism developed, as we note above for the third century BCE. The same deeply ambiguous process of encounter with Hellenism was later exhibited in the philosophico-exegetical undertaking of Philo of Alexandria (Philo Judaeus – late first century BCE to mid-first century CE) and in the major historical enterprise, *Jewish Antiquities*, written by the priest Flavius Josephus in Rome towards the end of the first century CE. These works, while clearly designed to demonstrate the superiority of Judaism, did so in literary forms and intellectual categories that were part of Hellenistic culture.

Above we mentioned the foundation of a temple at Leontopolis in Egypt by a refugee Onaid High Priest, probably Onias IV. It has been a commonplace of biblical scholarship that, from the time of the reforms of Josiah on (622 BCE) the cult of the God of Israel was carried out exclusively in the one, central Temple in Jerusalem. There is no doubt that the Jerusalem Temple played an absolutely dominant role in Judaism in the Graeco-Roman period and, concomitantly, its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE marked the end of one age in Jewish history and the start of a new modality in Judaism that was to last for two millennia. Much has been written in recent decades about the

27/08/2009

Temple's position, and the political, economic and religious power that inhered in its priests. The High Priesthood, even if in the first century CE it was frequently more or less sold in auction, was still the central office of the Jews. Disagreements over the Temple and over high-priestly legitimacy played a major role in the formation of the Essene sect, as well as in the events subsequent to the victory of the Maccabees.<sup>43</sup> So, how is the establishment of a rival temple in Egypt to be reconciled with the scholarly consensus? In fact, a combination of archeological evidence and re-reading of Josephus, leads us to the view that the complete centralization of worship in the Jerusalem temple was an ideal of many, but not the practice of all.

As early as the late sixth century BCE a temple existed in Arad on the southern border of Judea that was built in the architectural plan of the Jerusalem Temple. An altar from the end of the First Temple period was found at Beersheba, In Lachish a temple from the Persian period was discovered. In the fifth century BCE, Jewish mercenaries in the Persian army in Elephantine, far up the Nile, had a temple dedicated to the God of Israel, and when it was burnt, had no inhibitions in writing to their brethren both in Samaria and in Jerusalem to ask for help in its rebuilding.<sup>44</sup> Based on the recently discovered ostraca from the Khirbet el-Kôm site, it seems probable, that a temple for the

---

<sup>43</sup> Sanders, *Judaism*, 341-79; Baumgarten, *Jewish Sects*, 75-91, esp. 86-91.

<sup>44</sup> On the northern traditions in Second Temple Jewish writing, see Nickelsburg, "Enoch, Levi, Peter"; Freyne, "Galileans", but see Eshel and Eshel, "Toponymic Midrash".

27/08/2009

God of Israel also existed there.<sup>45</sup> In addition to the temple in Leontopolis, there seems to have been Jewish sacrificial cult in Sardis in Asia Minor (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.259-261).

This situation seems to indicate that, on the one hand, indeed the view was held of the uniqueness and centrality of the Jerusalem Temple, both for Diaspora Jews and those in Judea (cf. Philo's description of his pilgrimage, *De Providentia* 2.64), but at the same time it was considered possible to conduct sacrificial cult not only outside the Jerusalem Temple, but also outside the Land of Israel.<sup>46</sup>

#### 5. The Essenes, the Scrolls and Related Matter

The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in eleven caves in Qumran between 1947 and 1956. They constitute a library of about nine hundred documents and thousands of fragments (some unidentified), including biblical writings, copies of known apocrypha and pseudepigrapha together with other unknown but analogous works, as well as works of a distinctly sectarian character.<sup>47</sup> In this latter category of writings, we may discern the particular ideas and theological concepts of the Essene sect.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Lemaire, *New Aramaic Ostraca*, 416-7; for the sanctity of Bethel at that period, see Schwartz, "Jubilees".

<sup>46</sup> On Jewish cult outside Jerusalem, see Stone, "Judaism at the Time of Christ", 228; Smith, *Palestinian Parties*, 69-73; Campell, "Jewish Shrines".

<sup>47</sup> For the classification of the Qumran compositions, see Lange, Mittmann-Richert, "List of Texts".

<sup>48</sup> This seems the most reasonable identification, despite much debate. See VanderKam, *Dead Sea Scrolls, Today*, 71-98; Beal, "Essenes", 262-3.

27/08/2009

It is not clear exactly where the Essenes originate. They must be related broadly to those third century BCE circles that produced the Enochic *Book of the Luminaries* and the *Aramaic Levi Document*, circles that observed the 364-day solar calendar. Both groups also stressed the central role of the priesthood, but in different ways. Twelve manuscripts of *1 Enoch* and fifteen of *Jubilees* occur among the Qumran sect's manuscripts, though neither work bears the unique ideas or specific terminology typical of the sect. This indicates the overall continuity of this type of Judaism, but also that the Qumran sectarian form of it was quite distinctive. There is no evidence for the survival of the Essenes after the destruction of Qumran by the Romans in 68 CE.<sup>49</sup>

The Qumran sect and its life-style are known from three chief, different sources. The first is documents from Qumran that prescribe the way of life of the group. The most important of these is the *Rule of the Community*, included in the *Manual of Discipline* (1QS). This book presents the way of life, laws and customs of a communal sect living together, and all subject to rigorous rules of conduct and discipline. It was found in numerous copies at Qumran,<sup>50</sup> and in a number of versions.<sup>51</sup> Admission to the sect was through three stages: a preliminary year, a second year during which the candidate was a partial member and then a final stage, when the candidate became a full, albeit junior

---

<sup>49</sup> See below the discussion of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* found on Masada, which fell in 73 or 74 CE to the Romans.

<sup>50</sup> It was preserved in one copy from Cave 1 (1QS), and ten copies from Cave 4 (4Q255-264); see Charlesworth, *Rule of the Community*, 1-103.

<sup>51</sup> Metso, *Development*, 69-155.

27/08/2009

member of the sect. Conduct, daily life, food and dress are all regulated. This pattern of life may be compared with that described by Josephus in both of his descriptions of the Jewish sects, or "philosophies" as he calls them.<sup>52</sup> Indeed the writings of Josephus and Philo, and to a lesser extent of Hippolytus,<sup>53</sup> form the second source of information about the Essenes. The third source is the archeological finds at the site of Qumran. The nature of the installations uncovered there fit with the pattern of life that may be reconstructed from the *Manual of Discipline* and from the ancient sources.<sup>54</sup>

Apparently, though, the sect living at Qumran was not the only type of Essenes. Philo in his treatises *Every Good Man Is Free* (12-13.75-91) and *Hypothetica* (11.1-18; preserved in Eusebius, *Preparatio evangelica* 8.5.11-11.18), describes the way of life of Essenes living among others.<sup>55</sup> This fits in overall terms with another intriguing ancient document. In 1910 a document was published from the Geniza in Cairo, and it was early discussed by Louis Ginzberg and also included in Charles' *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* under the title "Zadokite Fragment".<sup>56</sup> This document, later named *Damascus Document*, was a puzzle to scholars until the discovery

---

<sup>52</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, 2.119; *Antiquities*, 13.171; 18.11.

<sup>53</sup> Smith, "Description".

<sup>54</sup> Milik, *Ten years*, 49-60; Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran*, 32-46.

<sup>55</sup> The Essenes are also mentioned briefly by Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*, 5.15.73).

<sup>56</sup> Ginzberg, "An Unknown Jewish Sect", 257-73, was of the opinion that it belonged to early zealot Pharisees; see Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* 2. 785-834. See now Broshi, *Damascus Document II*, 1-185.

27/08/2009

of the Dead Sea manuscripts, at which point it became immediately evident that it was cognate with them.<sup>57</sup> Afterwards, copies of it were discovered at Qumran.<sup>58</sup> There are distinct differences between the way of life prescribed in *Manual of Discipline* and that set forth in the *Damascus Document*. These are most probably to be understood in terms of the target audiences. While the *Manual of Discipline* was directed to a separatist, communal sectarian settlement, the *Damascus Document*, like Philo's description, addresses the way of life of Essene conclaves living in the towns and villages of Judaea. Before the discovery of these documents, the existence of separatist, indeed sectarian,<sup>59</sup> groups was not a familiar dimension of Judaism in late antiquity. The only prior reference to such a group, besides the Essenes in Josephus and Philo, was Philo's discussion of the Therapeutae, a Jewish sectarian group living on the banks of Lake Mareotis in Egypt.<sup>60</sup> Scholars have debated the existence of this group and the accuracy of Philo's description. Is it influenced by Greek utopian ideas or by Greek ethnography that described groups of

---

<sup>57</sup> Eleazar L. Sukenik (after consulting with Chanoch Albeck), a few months after he bought the first three scrolls, recognized the connection between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Damascus Document.

<sup>58</sup> Eight copies were found in Cave 4 (4Q266-273), one from Cave 5 (5Q12) and one from Cave 6 (6Q15), see Baumgarten, *Damascus Document*, 1-22; Charlesworth, *Damascus Document II*, 1-185.

<sup>59</sup> Much has been written on the term "sectarian." See Baumgarten, *Jewish Sects*, 5-15.

<sup>60</sup> Philo, *De Vita Contemplativa*, 1-90; see Hayward, "Therapeutae", 943-4; Taylor, *Jewish Women*, 74-104. For a survey of literature, see Riaud, "Les Thérapeutes".

27/08/2009

oriental sages, such as the gymnosophists? No answer is known although, today, in light of Qumran, we may perhaps regard Philo's Therapeutae as reflecting a Diaspora expression of the same impetus towards separation from daily life and towards pietism and communal living that characterized the Essenes in the land of Israel.

The Essenes, then, were marked by their religious ideas and by their way of life, both differ from what we expected in the world of ancient Judaism. Their religious ideas may be found typically in the *Community Rule* (1QS 3:13-4:26), where their cosmological dualism is set forth.<sup>61</sup> God, who is one, created two spirits, one of light and one of darkness. Humans and superhuman beings are divided into two camps under the leadership of these two spirits. It is unclear and debated whether the division between the sons of light and the sons of darkness was absolute or whether there was a mixture of the two spirits within humans. This latter view may be indicated by a difficult phrase in the *Community Rule* "In these (two spirits are) the natures of all the sons of man ...and the entire task of their works (falls) within their divisions according to a man's share, much or little, in all the times of eternity" (4:15-16), and also by horoscopic and physiognomic texts found at Qumran.<sup>62</sup> These refer to humans having so-and-so many parts of light and of darkness, which can be discerned by their features. The nexus between determinism

---

<sup>61</sup> 1QS 3.13-4.26.

<sup>62</sup> 4QHoroscope (4Q186) describes different individuals and their characteristics from which a division of their spirit into parts of light and darkness on a scale of nine was deduced. 4Q561 is an Aramaic physiognomic or horoscopic text that also describes parts of body, probably in a similar context to 4Q186.

27/08/2009

and piety is difficult, however, as it is in other religious deterministic systems (such as Calvinism). People are exhorted to piety, yet at the same time their lot in light or darkness has been fixed. This tension was likely never resolved. In any case, such an approach to the world is quite different from those we find in Rabbinic Judaism, which regularly speaks of human free-will as the crucial factor in the religious life: "All is under the control of Heaven (i.e., God) except the fear of Heaven".<sup>63</sup> The origins of Qumran dualism have been discussed. It has been compared with Zurvanism in Iran, both having a supreme Deity below whom are two spirits, one good and the other evil. There are difficulties of chronology and of channels of contact, and Iranian influence on the Qumran sectaries cannot be asserted unambiguously.<sup>64</sup> Regardless, the dualism at Qumran does not resemble the "soul – body" dualism that characterized many Hellenistic religious viewpoints, pagan and Jewish.<sup>65</sup>

Although Josephus refers to Essenes in Jerusalem during the reign of John Hyrcanus and King Herod, it is difficult to trace their influence on the course of events in Judea in the last century BCE and the first century CE. A liturgical composition, named *The Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice* was discovered in nine copies in Qumran caves, as well as in one copy at Masada. There is no scholarly consensus as to whether it is Essene or

---

<sup>63</sup> B. Berakoth 33b (= B. Niddah 16b; B. Megillah 25a).

<sup>64</sup> Winston, "Iranian Component"; Frye, "Qumran and Iran"; Shaked, "Iranian Influence", 324-5.

<sup>65</sup> E.g., "for a perishable **body** weighs down the **soul**, and this **earthy tent** burdens the thoughtful **mind**" (Wis 9:15).

27/08/2009

non-Essene in origin, and whether these prayers, which seem to have gained some popularity, were recited by the Qumran sect alone, or by other Jewish groups as well.<sup>66</sup> The significance of the Qumran discoveries, then, reverberates in a number of different fields. The library of the sect provides detailed documentation of the life and beliefs of the Essenes. It also contains the oldest surviving substantial manuscripts of books of the Hebrew Bible, fragments of the lost Hebrew or Aramaic originals of known extra-biblical works and many fragmentary works of similar character, as well as documents reflecting the ideas and practices of this sectarian community. It contains works in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. From the evidence of this literature, we can see a group in which the priests played a major role, which rejected the validity of the Jerusalem Temple and its establishment, which developed ideas of bloodless sacrifice and daily, weekly and festival prayer cycles. In other words, this group cultivated a disciplined and ascetic way of life, designed, we may speculate, as a prolepsis of the eschatological state.<sup>67</sup> This, combined with the double determinism that dominated their cosmology, makes them remarkable in the history of Judaism.

During the same period as the *floruit* of the Qumran sect, sources also mention the Pharisees and Sadducees. Truth be told, our knowledge of these groups is rather limited, notably of their early stages. According to Josephus, the Pharisees had a strong tradition

---

<sup>66</sup> See Newsom, "Sectually Explicit", 179-85. The "Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice" known from Cave 4. However, its sectarian character has recently been doubted; see Morray-Jones, "The Temple Within", 409-10.

<sup>67</sup> Cross, *Ancient Library of Qumran*, 37-79.

27/08/2009

of interpretation of the laws and this exegetical tradition was crucial to their worldview. It is true, of course, that, although the process of reduction of oral tradition to writing took place earlier, during the Persian and Ptolemaic periods its written form, particularly as embodied in the Torah, gradually became recognized as authoritative.<sup>68</sup> Once the oral tradition had been reduced to writing, it became available to larger circles in society, and was not limited just to its oral tradents, who were most likely the priesthood. Much of the debate in Judaism throughout the Second Temple period, and particularly in its second part, was about the right to interpret the law.

Accordingly, the Qumran sectaries made much of the inspired exegesis of the Teacher of Righteousness (see 1QpHab II:1-10; VII:3-5.), and they called their Pharisaic opponents, the “Smooth Exegetes”.<sup>69</sup> The Pharisees were not only exegetes of the sacred writings, with their own distinctive tradition and customs, but also played a role in current events. In the first century BCE we are told that the Hasmonean queen Salome gave them much power, and later, Josephus remarks, most of the people followed the Pharisees REF%%%. This does not mean that, in the first century CE most of the people

---

<sup>68</sup> Stone, *Three Transformations*. Earlier, particularly important documents were said to be "written"; cf., Najman, *Seconding Sinai*. On the question of canonical traditions and the extent of fluidity, see Trebolle Barrera, “A Canon Within a Canon”. Carr, *Writing*, 217-8. See also Bowley, Reeves.

<sup>69</sup> See, e.g. CD I:18; 1QH<sup>a</sup> X:15,32; 1QpNah frags. 3-4, I:2.

27/08/2009

were Pharisees, but that they were considered the most influential group.<sup>70</sup> According to the characterization of the Jewish sects by Josephus, the Pharisees also believed in the immortality of the soul (which is most likely a Hellenizing formulation of belief in the resurrection of the dead) and the combination of Josephus with Acts 9 provides a sort of checklist of Pharisaic beliefs. It is impossible to know how far this list reflects reality, and it is wisest to regard it with a good deal of suspicion.<sup>71</sup>

Even less is known of the Sadducees, than of the Pharisees. They, apparently, had a priestly orientation, indicated by their name, which derives from that of the Zadokite family, that had held the High Priestly position from the time of King David.<sup>72</sup> This group played a distinctive role in politics and seems to have included wealthy aristocrats of priestly orientation.<sup>73</sup> The priestly aristocracy, as we have pointed out, held crucial political power through the Persian period and also down to the Ptolemaic. If the

---

<sup>70</sup> Josephus' motives for writing his histories, as well as for his presentation of the Pharisees, were very mixed and it is difficult to tell how far he is serving his own aims in his description of their influence; see Baumgarten, *Jewish Sects*, 42, n. 2, 51-2, 62-3.

<sup>71</sup> See below, note 110.

<sup>72</sup> The origins of the Zadokite family are unclear. Zadok is first mentioned in 2 Sam 8:17 and in 2 Samuel and 1 Kings in connection with the Ark of the Covenant: see Ramsey, "Zadok".

<sup>73</sup> This is the *communis opinio*, but it may over-simplify things of which very little is known and concerning for which there is very sparse evidence. See Regev, "Pharisees and Sadducees".

27/08/2009

Saducees are descended from that priestly aristocracy, their role in politics and the Temple is completely understandable. In 4QpNahum there is some further support for the idea that they were the wealthy, upper-class group in society.<sup>74</sup> Like the Pharisees, however, they do not appear on the stage of history until middle of the second century BCE. Both groups disappear from the known historical record after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and it is the common view that the subsequent Rabbinic tradition continues that of the Pharisees.

Other groups existed in Palestinian Judaism at the turn of the era. Although not strictly "Jews", i.e., Judeans, the Samaritan worshippers of the God of Israel held distinctive political and religious views. While the Sadducees rejected Pharisaic exegesis of the Torah (while of course actually replacing it with one of their own), the Samaritans accepted only the Pentateuch as authoritative. They identified with the northern kingdom of Israel and regarded Shechem, not Jerusalem as the holy city and Mt. Gerizim and not Mt. Zion as the holy site of the Temple. There were a number of Samaritan sects in the period under discussion and Samaritan communities also existed in the Diaspora.<sup>75</sup>

## 6. Eschatology and Apocalypticism

During the Second Temple period, Judaism underwent considerable change. One great transformation took place when the oral tradition of ancient Israel was replaced by written documents, books. That books became authoritative was also aided by the Persian

---

<sup>74</sup> Flusser, "Pharisäer".

<sup>75</sup> Nickelsburg, Stone, *Faith and Piety*, 13-19; Crown, "The Samaritan Diaspora"; Isser, *The Dositheans*; Coggins, *Samaritans and Jews*.

27/08/2009

policy by which the Torah was regarded as the law of the land.<sup>76</sup> From the second century BCE on, if not earlier, the central issue in religious dispute was the authority to interpret Scripture.

After the return another feature arose in Judaism, which came to have enormous impact on the life of Judea and on both Judaism and Christianity in the succeeding centuries. Scholars of the Hebrew Bible hold the view, for the most part, that during the period of the First Temple, the religion of Israel did not entertain a meta-historical eschatology. The hope for the future was a hope for events that would happen in the ordinary course of history – desired, yearned for, even idealized, but still events that were part of the historical process. At some point after the Restoration, this hope was transformed into the expectation of a momentous change in the historical order, an end of history, and finally the redemption of Israel and vindication of God. These momentous events would take place beyond history. Sometimes, moreover, the arena of happenings changed from this created world alone, and included the heavenly meta-spatial world. We cannot trace the beginnings of this development in detail, but it was certainly well underway by the time the oldest parts of *I Enoch* were written.<sup>77</sup> This hope for redemption beyond history and outside this world became a dominant force in the Judaism of the day, and of course in incipient Christianity.

---

<sup>76</sup> See Bickerman, “Historical Foundations”, 72-3; see above pp. %%%.

<sup>77</sup> One important view is that of Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic* and “Rebellion in Heaven”.

27/08/2009

Nickelsburg has remarked that the persecutions of Antiochus IV in all likelihood played a significant role in the crystallization of eschatology. If the motivation for the eschatological solution stemmed from the issue of theodicy, the flourishing of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous, then the events of the Maccabean period made this issue extraordinarily acute. It was no longer a question, as Hanson maintained, of the pushing of future expectation off into the meta-historical because of the miserable present situation and the unlikeliness of vindication taking place in the course of history.<sup>78</sup> This was a factor in moving from an idealized future in the course of history to the expectation of a restoration at the end or beyond the historical process. With the death of the righteous precisely for observance of the Torah under the decrees of Antiochus IV, the situation changed.<sup>79</sup> Now people were dying *because* they observed God's commandments. This made the theodicy issue far more acute and pushed the expectation of vindication and recompense beyond history and beyond the series of this-worldly events into the meta-historical. Without recompense of the righteous at the end of days, divine justice would be completely flaunted.<sup>80</sup>

The hope of future redemption was often expressed in terms of the expectation of a redeemer figure(s) who would usher in the ideal future age. The Jews in the centuries before and after the turn of the era did not have a set dogma or a fixed generally accepted belief about the details of such matters. Thus the literature of the age yearns for a great

---

<sup>78</sup> Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*.

<sup>79</sup> Van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*; Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality* 97-111.

<sup>80</sup> Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality*.

27/08/2009

variety of redemption and redeemers. One pattern desired to see the restoration of the ideal polity of Israel as a sacred people living according to God's will and led by two figures, a king of the line of David and a Zadokite high priest. This hope is already expressed by the prophet Zechariah (6:11-12). Since both the king and the high priest were anointed with oil, they came to be called Anointed Ones, or Messiahs, a name symbolized by the two olive trees in Zech. 4:16. The hope of two Messiahs was not widespread, but it is to be found in Essene documents from Qumran, which speak of the "Messiah" or "Messiahs of Aaron and Israel", using an ambiguous expression that is taken to mean two Messiahs because of the teaching of certain other sectarian documents.<sup>81</sup> In the *Aramaic Levi Document*, which is of the third century BCE, we find the idea of a single, Levitical Messiah who combines elements of the priestly and royal Messiahs.<sup>82</sup> The expectation of the restoration of the Davidic monarchy, was bolstered by Nathan's prophecy to David, "I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam 7:13), as well as by prophetic expectations of the coming of a future ideal king (e.g., Isa 11). This hope is first expressed clearly in the apocryphal *Psalms of Solomon* 17:23-51. It later becomes the centre of Jewish hope for a redeemer figure, but during the Second Temple period it was one among other expectations.

Another anticipated figure was Melchizedek. This mysterious figure appears in Genesis 14:18-20 as king of Shalem (traditionally interpreted as Jerusalem) priest of God Most High to whom Abraham brought tithes. Melchizedek is also mentioned suggestively

---

<sup>81</sup> Evans, "Messiahs", 539-40.

<sup>82</sup> Greenfield, Stone, Eshel, *Aramaic Levi*, 36-38.

27/08/2009

in Psalm 110:4 where the king is told, "The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'." In *2 Enoch* Melchizedek is said to be Noah's nephew, to be assumed to heaven and to return to earth (*2 Enoch* 71:33-37):

And behold, Melchizedek will be the head of the 13 priests who existed before. And afterward, in the last generation, there will be another Melchizedek, the first of 12 priests. And the last will be head of all, a great archpriest, the Word and Power of God, who will perform miracles, greater and more glorious than all the previous ones. He, Melchizedek, will be priest and king in the place of Akhuzan, that is to say, in the center of the earth, where Adam was created. and there will be his final grave. ... 37b And afterward there will be a planting from his (Noe's) tribe, and there will be other people, and there will be another Melchizedek, the head of priests reigning over the people, and performing the liturgy for the Lord.

In the second version, A, we read: "And Melchizedek will be my priest to all priests, and I will sanctify him and I will change him into a great people who will sanctify me." (71:29) ... And Melchizedek will be the head of the priests of another generation. ... (71:37) "and Melchizedek will become the head of priests reigning over a royal people who serve you, O Lord." One Dead Sea Scroll also expresses the expectation of a Melchizedek figure who will come at the end of the present period and will judge and he is connected with the freeing on the Jubilee year (11QMelchizedek).

The passage in Hebrews 7:1-17 is to be understood against the background of the expectation of a non-Levitical priestly figure who will be involved with final judgment

27/08/2009

and redemption.<sup>83</sup> Melchizedek, a heavenly redeemer figure who returns to earth and whose final appearance will be eschatological, as we find in 2 Enoch, is a priestly figure. Hebrews uses the priestly Melchizedek as a contrast to the Aaronid priests. This is polemical in Hebrews, but none of the other texts hint at a contrast or tension between Melchizedek and the eschatological expectation of an Aaronid Messiah. Yet, these traditions cannot be reconciled or harmonized into a single system, but must have co-existed within the spectrum of Second Temple Jewish thought.

Another such human type figure was expected at the end of days, and has been discussed frequently in the scholarly literature. This human figure bears one of the titles that the Gospels apply to Jesus, "Son of Man" (Mark 13:26).<sup>84</sup> The title, in our texts, derives from the symbolic vision in Dan 7, specifically from the description of the younger human figure who is to be associated in judgment with the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9). The explanation offered by Dan 7:22-28 is that this human figure represents the kingdom of the holy ones of the Most High, an ambiguous expression that can be taken to designate Israel or the saints, or else the angels.<sup>85</sup> This pair of figures, the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man, was taken up in the somewhat mysterious second part of *I*

---

<sup>83</sup> Melchizedek also played a role in Gnostic texts, see Pearson, *Introduction to Codex IX,I*. See also the *Apophthegmata Patrum* on Melchizedek as a subject of discussion among the Egyptian desert fathers, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 65, 159-160.

<sup>84</sup> See Fossum, *Son of God*, 1486-98 with references to earlier discussions. See Yarbro-Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 139-58; Collins, *Daniel*, 79-89.

<sup>85</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 278-94.

27/08/2009

*Enoch, the Similitudes (Parables) of Enoch*. There the Son of Man, also called the Elect One, is anointed and enthroned (46:1). He is hidden before creation and takes over part of God's function of judgment. This sort of depiction may lie in the background of the use of "Son of Man" in the Gospels.<sup>86</sup>

Other figures also serve as redeemers or play a part in redemption. One is the eschatological prophet, a development of Malachi's reference to Elijah's future return as part of a new world order (Mal 3:23). Another actor in the eschatological drama is the leader of the forces of evil, expected to rally the armies in a final cataclysmic clash of the forces of good and evil. Following Ezekiel 38, this battle is called the war of Gog and Magog by later Jewish sources, while it is called Armageddon in Christian sources. That name derives from Hebrew Har (Mount) Megiddo, where the battle was expected to take place (Rev. 16:16).<sup>87</sup>

In the last century BCE and the first century CE, then, eschatological hopes became very current among the Jews. On the one hand, we hear of itinerant prophets such as John the Baptist, who withdrew to the desert to preach the imminence of the eschaton and the requital of the righteous and wicked,<sup>88</sup> on the other, active anti-Roman agitation

---

<sup>86</sup> Intriguingly, in Testament of Abraham the eschatological judge 13:2 (long recension) is Abel, who is son of Adam = "man". See Allison, *Testament of Abraham*, 280-2.

<sup>87</sup> See Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah*, 343-4.

<sup>88</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18. 116-19; See Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, 122-3.

27/08/2009

broke out on a number of occasions, which seems to have been fuelled, in part at least, by acute eschatological expectation.<sup>89</sup>

#### 7. Brief History Down to Destruction.

The civil war between the Hasmonean brothers Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II resulted in the annexation of Judea by Pompey in 63 BCE. Roman policy kept in power first the Herodian dynasty, from Herod's father Antipater, advisor to John Hyrcanus and later governor of Judea, down to the end of the reign of Archelaus (6 CE). After the Jews petitioned for the removal of Archelaus because of his misrule, the country was governed by Roman officials (procurators) under the authority of the governor of Syria down to the outbreak of the great revolt in 66 CE, the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, and the self-immolation of the last of the Zealot resistance fighters on Masada in 73 or 74 CE.

Herod I (Herod the Great 37-4 BCE) was an energetic ruler. He was of Idumean origin, coming from an Edomite tribe that inhabited southern areas of Judea and further south, which had been forcibly Judaized by the Hasmonean John Hyrcanus I (135-104 BCE). Herod pursued a policy of total loyalty to Rome, as had his father Antipater. He suppressed opposition in Judea, often fomented by scions of the Hasmonean family he had replaced, and took complete control of the High Priesthood and domestic institutions. Outside Judea he pursued a policy of Hellenization and his intense building programme resulted in major achievements: the refurbishing of the Temple in Jerusalem, the building

---

<sup>89</sup> Compare Judah the Galilean's 'Fourth Philosophy' see Josephus, *Jewish War* 2. 117-19, 433; *Antiquities* 18.4-10; 23-5, and others through out the first century CE. See Hengel, *Zealots*, 76-145.

27/08/2009

of the cities of Sebastia in Samaria and Caesarea Maritima on the coast, and also construction projects in other parts of the empire. For these projects, as for his military activities, such as wars against the Nabateans, he needed to raise revenue, resulting in an oppressive domestic regime.

During this last period of Judean history before the revolt, obvious changes must have taken place in Jewish society and religion. Since Josephus wrote in the last quarter of the first century CE and was of a priestly family, the information he provides is particularly detailed for this period, though often suspect of political and personal tendentiousness.<sup>90</sup>

One factor that changed with Herod and Antipater was the divorcing of the High Priesthood from the center of political power. The Temple played a central role in Jewish life in this period, and the High Priestly office carried a very great prestige. It was the object of manipulation under the Herodians and the procurators and the High Priest was frequently replaced. Yet Herod's policy was to concentrate all effective power in his own hands.

#### 8. Changes in Judean society and religion.

Roman control of Judea brought about changes in Judean society and religion as far-reaching as those in political structures. The central role of the Temple in Jewish life continued, despite the divorce of the High Priesthood from the monarchy.<sup>91</sup> Three major transformations commenced, however, which were to have considerable effects. In the

---

<sup>90</sup> Cohen, *Josephus*, 84-180.

<sup>91</sup> Sanders, *Judaism*, 47-72.

27/08/2009

early part of the first century CE, under the leadership of Judah the Zealot the movement that Josephus calls the "Fourth Philosophy" or the Zealots got underway and conducted activities with populist tendencies against the power elites and the Roman occupation.<sup>92</sup>

The question remains open whether the nationalist enthusiasts whose actions played such a great role in the events leading up to the Great Revolt in 66-70 CE and in its aftermath were continuators of those early first century agitators. The chief difficulty for the historian is that the only source with any detail is Josephus, who is suspect due to his own tendentiousness of giving a very jaundiced view of the Zealots.

This said, however, there seems no doubt that there developed in Judea and in the Galilee in the first century CE groups of individuals who, inspired by the expectation of divine intervention on behalf of the people of Israel and its Temple, cultivated activism against Roman rule. In *Testament of Moses*, as Jacob Licht pointed out, the symbolic figure Taxo, with his sons, by direct action and martyrdom, sought to precipitate the divine redemption that they expected.<sup>93</sup> This layer of *Testament of Moses* certainly reflects events in the time of Archelaus.<sup>94</sup> The same sort of ideals permeated those Zealots who formed the last pocket of resistance on Masada in 73 or 74 CE, choosing suicide

---

<sup>92</sup> See note 89, above.

<sup>93</sup> Licht, *Taxo*, 95-100.

<sup>94</sup> Nickelsburg, "Antiochean Date", 36-7.

27/08/2009

rather than surrender.<sup>95</sup> Zealot activism seems to have been motivated by eschatological hopes interpreted in such a way as to become a program of military and political action.

#### 9. Literary Types and Relationship between Literary Types and Social Realities.

During the Greco-Roman period, apart from the biblical literature on the one hand and the Rabbinic on the other, the Jews produced a rich crop of literature. Jewish writing in Greek started already in the late fourth or early third centuries BCE. This literature, which included belletristic compositions, such as the drama “Exodus” by Ezekiel the Tragedian, as well as philosophical, chronographic, oracular, sapiential and other writings, was lost, except for a few works included in the Apocrypha and the writings of Philo of Alexandria, of Josephus Flavius and some citations in Patristic sources. Our focus, however, is on the land of Israel, and so we may ask whether Jews in the land wrote any works in Greek. Pagans did, that is certain, but it remains unclear whether Jews did. It can only be pointed out that there is good reason to think that many people knew Greek and that Jewish writing in Greek would not have been impossible. If the Eupolemus mentioned in 1 Macc 8:17 is the same as the fragmentary historian Eupolemus, then his work was perhaps composed in Jerusalem.<sup>96</sup> By the first century very many Jewish sarcophagi from Jerusalem bore names written in Greek, often

---

<sup>95</sup> Josephus’ report of the speech of Eleazar, the head of the Masada fortress, that the Romans besieged (*Jewish Wars* 7.323-88) was, of course, fictitious, but it seems likely that some aspects of it reflect points of view which may have animated these activists.

<sup>96</sup> See Hummel, *Historiography*, 25-7; Wacholder, *Eupolemus*, 4-7.

27/08/2009

accompanied by Hebrew or Aramaic.<sup>97</sup> Above we alluded to Cave 7 at Qumran, which contained only Greek papyri including translations of a few Pseudepigrapha.<sup>98</sup> Thus it is not implausible that some religious works (and nearly all Jewish literary writing of this period was religious) were composed in Palestine in Greek.<sup>99</sup> Most of the hundreds of writings of which we know were written in Hebrew and Aramaic. It seems most likely that the Aramaic compositions antedate those in Hebrew and stem for the most part from the fourth and third centuries BCE. They include four of the five parts of *1 Enoch*,<sup>100</sup> Dan 2-7,<sup>101</sup> *Aramaic Levi Document*, Tobit,<sup>102</sup> the *Genesis Apocryphon*, and others. The

---

<sup>97</sup> Rahmani, *Catalogue*, 13.

<sup>98</sup> Compare also the late first century BCE scroll of the Greek revision of the Septuagint version of the Minor Prophets found at Nahal Hever, Tov, *Greek Minor Prophets*. .

<sup>99</sup> The evidence for the Greek influence in the early Rabbinic period was assembled by Liebermann, *Greeks in Jewish Palestine* and idem, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*. See also the detailed statement by Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1.83-106.

<sup>100</sup> The remaining part, the *Similitudes of Enoch*, might have been written in Aramaic as well, but this is unknown. It is later than the other four parts probably written around the turn of the era: see Knibb, "Date"; Collins, *Daniel*, 80-2.

<sup>101</sup> Though chapter 7 is problematic; see Collins; *Daniel*, 280-94, 323-4.

<sup>102</sup> For the assumption that Hebrew Tobit was translated from Aramaic; see Fitzmyer, "Significance", 419-23; idem, *Tobit*, 18-28. Nevertheless, there is no evidence for Aramaic translations of Hebrew compositions at that period, while there are examples of

27/08/2009

Hebrew works include an enormous range of writings from Qumran's sectarian documents like the *Community Rule* to pro-Hasmonean court propaganda such as 1 Maccabees.<sup>103</sup> Books of psalms and prayers, such as the Thanksgiving Hymns from Qumran, the *Psalms of Solomon*, and the Apocryphal Psalms existed alongside sapiential writings such as the *Wisdom of ben Sira*. Most of the Pseudepigrapha and some of the writings from Qumran are pseudepigraphic, i.e., they were attributed to authors who did not write them, most frequently biblical characters. Another substantial body of texts is anonymous and there are almost no works from the land of Israel, whose authors' names are known (Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira forming a notable exception).<sup>104</sup>

The visionary texts, the apocalypses, which transmit teachings about cosmology, eschatology, and future redemption have received great attention. This is, of course, because of affinities discerned between the acute eschatological expectation that typifies many of them<sup>105</sup> and the movement led by Jesus of Nazareth that eventually became

---

Hebrew translations of Aramaic texts. Since people were fluent in Aramaic, it is possible that the Hebrew composition *Tobit* was translated into Aramaic.

<sup>103</sup> Of course, it is not always possible to determine the original language of works that survive only in Greek translation, or in daughter versions of the Greek. This has been the object of considerable research.

<sup>104</sup> No persuasive reason has been suggested for this exception and it is worthy of consideration.

<sup>105</sup> As well as certain other works of the period: see Stone, "Lists of Revealed Things", 439-43; idem, "Apocalyptic Literature", 383-95; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*.

27/08/2009

Christianity. Indeed, these texts and the type of religious experience that they reflect exhibit a form of Judaism that would not have been expected had they not survived.<sup>106</sup> An interest in cosmology and eschatology, meta-time and meta-place, characterizes them, and this interest is relatively ancient, documented at least from the fourth or third centuries BCE. In addition to such apocalyptic and oracular literature, the psalmodic and prayer texts both in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha and among the Dead Sea Scrolls, exemplify the piety of the period. Personal religious sentiment, a sense of closeness to the Deity and of divine Providence permeates these works, and simultaneously, developments may be discerned which stand close to the liturgical tradition of fixed prayer that became typical of Judaism towards the end of this period.<sup>107</sup> Speculative thinking, both about the nature of Wisdom understood as a metaphysical element and about moral and ethical issues is expressed in the sapiential books.

Changes in the conception of time and history meant that the attempt to understand God's working by retelling the events of Israel's history was not undertaken again after Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah. Instead, historiography found expression in apocalyptic reviews of history. Of the major genres of biblical writing, the psalmodic and sapiential writings continue to be produced.

A major problem in writing the religious history of this period lies in the disjunction between this religious literature in all its genres and varieties, and the numerous Jewish sects, streams of thought and groups to which the historical sources

---

<sup>106</sup> Stone, "Apocalyptic, Vision or Hallucination"; idem, "A Reconsideration".

<sup>107</sup> Chazon, Psalms, 710-11, 714.

27/08/2009

refer. In fact, the only group to which we can attribute writings with some assuredness is the Qumran sect, apparently one group of Essenes. That attribution is made on the basis of the archaeological find at Qumran and its relationship to the books found in the caves.<sup>108</sup> Even in this case, just which of the documents actually reflect the ideas of the sect and which were just part of their library is debated. As for Pharisees and Sadducees, it is virtually impossible to attribute to them specifically any of the works of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha or of those found at Qumran. Thus, on the one hand the historical sources for the period give ample evidence for a great variety of Jewish sects, trends and groups. On the other, the literature produced in this period exhibits a broad range of ideas, concepts and points of view that indicate that they were written by groups or individuals holding differing points of view.

Thus the great variety of religious thought and life in the Second Temple period, is exhibited both in the historical evidence and the religious literature. However, except for the one instance of Qumran and the Essenes, we cannot with any assurance connect particular books or groups of books with various groups in the society.<sup>109</sup> Josephus, in the

---

<sup>108</sup> Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran*, 43-6. Some would deny this connection, but it seems to us to be certain. It does not mean, of course, that all the Dead Sea manuscripts were copied at Qumran.

<sup>109</sup> It is possible to discern relationships between different groups of books. *Aramaic Levi Document* shows a number of features in common with the early Enochic "booklets", such as *Book of the Watchers* and *Luminaries*. These works, all of the third century BCE, are also intimately related to *Jubilees*, which is rather later, and are cognate with some

27/08/2009

*Antiquities*, states that most of the people followed the Pharisees. We might assume that such a situation might reflect the state of affairs in the first century CE, though that is not certain either. It is also often assumed that the tradition of the Rabbis descends from that of the Pharisees, though again the crucial evidence that would prove this direct connection is not strong.<sup>110</sup>

---

Qumran writings. In all likelihood, the Daniel visions (chaps. 1,7-12), *Judith*, and certain Enochic writings such as the *Epistle of Enoch* come from a broadly similar context, some time around the Hasmonean revolt; see Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 1-193.

Similarly, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch* (*Syriac Apocalypse*), and perhaps *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo seem to be connected and mostly to have been produced perhaps after the failure of the revolt of 66-70. Yet, we have no way to identify any of these groups of texts unambiguously with social groups whose names are known. The "Daniel" group has been connected with the Hasideans, but this remains in the realm of speculation, since it is impossible to demonstrate. Cross argued that both the Pharisees and the Essenes descended from the Hasideans, but again this cannot be proved; see Cross, *Ancient Library*, 147-53.

<sup>110</sup> The character of the Pharisees is much debated by scholars. Morton Smith, "Palestinian Judaism", argued that they were a small elite group, mainly concerned with their exegetical teaching; Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety*, 143-54, presents the view that this group was concerned with certain types of pietism, though their start is in the political arena. See also Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 79-95, 277-97. The issue is a significant

27/08/2009

Is it possible to speak of "normative Judaism" during the first century CE, a type of Judaism which was generally recognized and viewed as that from which other groups dissented? This was the assumption of many scholars, and the issue is a significant one, particularly if the question is asked against the background of the different groups in Second Temple Judaism, such as Pharisees and Sadducees. Lacking Gallup polls, the only general statement remains Josephus' one that most of the people followed the Pharisees. Yet, as observed above, this statement may well be tendentious. Clearly, certain common institutions and practices characterized the Jews, such as aniconic worship, the reverence for the Temple in Jerusalem, dietary laws and Sabbath observance. Recent attempts to assess different groups in Jewish society taking advantage of sociological understandings of sectarianism have yielded some insights,<sup>111</sup> but it remains impossible to declare one or another of the "sects", "parties" or "philosophies" to represent the norm from which the other groups differed. To pose the question in such a way is in all likelihood anachronistic, for the impact of the destruction of the Temple in 70, together with the loss of national autonomy, led to consolidation in many areas,

---

one because of the references to the Pharisees in the Gospels on the one hand, and because of the role they played in society according to Josephus on the other.

<sup>111</sup> For sociological approaches, see Baumgarten, *Jewish Sects*, 43-50; Regev, "Sectarian Practice". A number of works of general character on Second Temple Judaism have appeared recently, see e.g., Sanders, *Judaism*; Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*; Schwartz, *Imperialism*.

27/08/2009

including the biblical text, the Rabbinic academies and others. It is difficult to reconstruct the situation before this process got underway.

At the basis of the political unrest that characterized first-century Judaea lay eschatological ideas as we have explained. It was exacerbated by a general eastern opposition to Rome<sup>112</sup> to which some must have subscribed, though the Jews, on the whole, were positive towards Rome.<sup>113</sup> In any case, this unrest issued in the Great Revolt that broke out in 66 CE and continued down to 70. Its end came with the destruction of the Temple in that year, though Zealot opposition continued in Masada down to 73 or 74 CE. After the revolt, further changes took place in Judaism and among the Jewish people.

---

<sup>112</sup> The opposition to Rome in the Hellenized kingdoms of the East was not limited to Judea. See Fuchs, *Widerstand* (book on the opposition ideology in the Roman East). The Mithraditic wars and Tigranes the Great's resistance to Roman expansion were motivated by such ideologies: see Manandyan, *Tigrane II et Rome*.

<sup>113</sup> See Schürer-Vermes-Millar, *History of the Jewish People*, 1.485-513, esp. 485-8.