

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

I. ALEXANDER THE GREAT (336-323 BC) & THE DIADOCHI (323-301 BC)

- A. Alexander's Conquered the Entire Near East, 334-331 BC; made Babylon capital
- B. Greek Language and Culture was Spread Throughout Near East
 - 1. Greek Culture = Hellenic; Mixture of Greek with Oriental Elements = Hellenistic
 - a. Hellenizing of the East; Orientalizing of Greeks
 - b. Gradually Developed in Last Centuries BC
 - c. Classical Greek Evolved to Koine Greek
 - 2. Numerous Cities Founded on Model of the Greek *Polis*
 - a. Many Est. by Alexander; Most Important: Alexandria in Egypt
 - b. *Polis* had Certain Standard Elements + Citizenship
- C. 323 BC: Alexander Contracted Fever, Died With No Apparent Heir
- D. 323-301 BC: Alexander's Generals(*Diadochi*—"Strugglers") Vie for Control until Battle of Ipsus, 301 determined *Epigoni* ("Heirs"):
 - 1. **Cassander**: Greece
 - 2. **Lysimachus**: Thrace and Asia Minor
 - 3. **Seleucus**: Mesopotamia and Syria = Seleucid Empire
 - 4. **Ptolemy**: Egypt = Ptolemaic Empire

II. THE PTOLEMAIC EMPIRE: Ruled Palestine 301-198 BC

- A. Based in Egypt; Ruled Palestine 301-198 BC
 - 1. Wealthy Period for Egypt; Cities Refortified in Palestine
 - 2. Wars with Seleucid Empire Beginning with Ptolemy II (Daniel 11)
- B. Condition of Jews/Palestine
 - 1. No Forced Hellenization of the Jews
 - 2. Septuagint (LXX) produced (*tradition*: under Ptolemy II Philadelphus [283-246 BC])
 - 3. Zenon Papyri: Some Jews resisted Hellenization

III. SELEUCID EMPIRE: Ruled Palestine 198-140 BC

- A. Seleucus I (312-281 BC): founded empire; Antiochus I (281-261 BC): Capital Antioch
- B. Antiochus III the Great (223-187 BC)
 - 1. 198 BC: Conquered Palestine at Battle of Paneas
 - 2. Invasion of Greece Caused Roman Intervention
 - a. Repulsed; Defeated by Rome at Magnesia on the Meander
 - b. Treaty of Apamea (188 BC) Imposed Heavy Reparations
 - 1) Financial Burden on Seleucids; Son, Ant. IV, sent to Rome as hostage
 - 2) Antiochus Killed While Plundering a Temple (187)
- C. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 BC): Hostage 14 Years in Rome
 - 1. Allowed Jewish High Priesthood to be Sold to High Bidder

- a. 174 BC: Replaced Onias III with Jason (2 Macc 4)
- b. 171 BC: Menelaus Outbid Jason: Unrest in Jerusalem
2. Invasion of Egypt
 - a. 1st Aborted (because of unrest in Jerusalem)
 - b. 168 BC: renewed invasion blocked by Romans
3. Attempted to Force Hellenization of the Jews, 167 BC
 - a. Syrian Garrison Stationed at Akra in Jerusalem
 - b. Sacrifice of Swine to Zeus at Jewish Temple
 - c. Forbade: Scriptures; Circumcision; Sabbath Worship

IV. THE MACCABEAN REVOLT (167-140 BC)

- A. *Hasidim* (“Pious Ones”) resisted forced Hellenization
- B. Revolt by **Mattathias**, A Priest in Modein (1 Macc 2); Supported by Hasidim
- C. **Judas Maccabeus** (the “Hammer”) 166-161 BC
 1. Military Successes after Death of Mattathias
 2. 164 BC: Partial Maccabean victory
 - a. Temple in Jerusalem Taken, Cleansed, Rededicated
 - b. Festival of Dedication/Lights (Hannukah)
 3. 163 BC: Antiochus IV killed in battle; **Antiochus V/Lysias** rule Seleucid Empire
 - a. Menelaus Killed; Alcimus (Zadokite) = New High Priest
 - b. Hellenistic Alcimus Accepted by Hasidim; not by Judas
 - c. 162: Religious Freedom Granted by Antiochus V (163-162)
 4. Demetrius I Soter (162-150) (& Hasidim) Supported Alcimus
 5. 160: Judas killed in Battle by General Bacchides
- D. **Jonathan** (also son of Mattathias)
 1. 152 BC: Appointed High Priest by **Alexander Balas** (152-145)
 2. Not a Zadokite, opposed by religious Jews
 3. Killed by **Trypho**, a supporter of Antiochus VI
- E. **Simon** (another son of Mattathias)
 1. 142 BC: Granted Political Autonomy by Demetrius II
 - Favor for Support vs. Trypho; Syrian Garrison in Akra Expelled from Jerusalem
 2. 140 BC: Proclaimed “High Priest and Ethnarch Forever”
 3. 135 BC: Killed in Conspiracy by Son-in-Law Ptolemy

V. THE HASMONEAN DYNASTY (140-63 BC)

- A. **John Hyrcanus** (134-104 BC): Son of Simon; Overcame Ptolemy
 1. Expanded Jewish Territory: took hellenized cities
 - a. Idumea Taken, Forcibly Judaized
 - b. 128 BC: Samaritan Temple Destroyed; Samaria Taken 109
 2. Ideals of revolt lost; Pharisees emerge as opposition party
 3. At death: designated wife as secular ruler; son Aristobulus as High Priest
- B. **Aristobulus I** (104-103 BC): Imprisoned His Mother
 1. Seized control; 1st Hasmonean to claim title of king
 2. Gained control of Galilee; Jews settled there

- C. **Alexander Jannaeus** (103-76 BC): Son of John Hyrcanus
 1. Coins: obverse, “Jonathan the H.P.” (Hebrew); reverse, “Alexander the king” (Greek)
 2. Uprising of Pharisees Began 94 BC, for 6 Years; violently suppressed, 800 crucified
- D. Alexandra (76-67 BC): wife of Alexander, promoted Pharisees
- E. Civil War: **Hyrcanus II** (Supported by Idumean **Antipater**) vs. **Aristobulus II**; all appealed to Rome, 63 BC

VI. THE ROMAN PERIOD IN PALESTINE (63 BC – AD 66)

- A. General **Pompey** took Palestine for Rome
 1. Went to Syria to organize territory as Roman province
 2. Received emissaries from Aristobulus II, Hyrcanus, people
 3. **63 BC**: Jerusalem taken; Pompey entered Temple; Aristobulus II a prisoner to Rome
- B. Direct Roman rule (63-40 BC): Palestine as part of province of Syria
 1. Hyrcanus II remained as high priest
 2. Aristobulus II and son Alexander cause revolts, 57-55
 3. **Antipater** became procurator (55-43): **Idumean** (OT Edomite)
 - a. Aided Julius Caesar in Egypt, 48-47; Privileges awarded Jews by Caesar
 - b. Antipater’s sons: Phasael over Judea, Herod over Galilee
- C. **Herod the Great** (37-4 BC): son of Antipater
 1. **Rise to power**
 - a. Antipater murdered 43 BC (related to Caesar’s murder)
 - b. Herod married Hasmonean Mariamne I; supported Cassius
 - c. After battle of Philippi, Herod supported Marc Antony
 - d. Herod and Phasael appointed as tetrarchs
 - e. **40 BC**: Antigonus (son of Aristobulus II) seized power; Herod escaped to Rome
 - f. appointed king by Senate
 2. Consolidation of power (37-27 BC)
 - a. Honored Essenes, as Menahem had predicted his kingship (Josephus Antiq. 15. 10. 5) b. Had opponents murdered: high priest, Mariamne I, Hyrcanus II
 - c. After Battle of Actium (31 BC); Octavian confirmed Herod’s position and added to it
 3. Great building projects (27-13 BC)
 - a. Rebuilt Samaria as Hellenistic city; renamed it Sebastiya
 - b. Caesarea (on site of Strato’s tower)
 - c. Temple in Jerusalem (beginning 20/19 BC)
 - d. Fortress/palaces: Jerusalem, Herodium, Masada, Jericho
 4. Paranoia about his reign (13-4 BC)
 - a. Herod’s character: kept Jewish law, killed opponents
 - b. Had 2 sons by Mariamne killed; heir Antipater drowned
 - c. Died just before Passover, 4 BC
- D. Herod’s sons and successors
 1. **Archelaus** (4 BC - AD 6)
 - a. Appointed ethnarch of **Judah, Samaria, & Idumea**
 - b. Unpopular (Mt 2:22); beset by Jewish rebellions
 - c. Deposed, exiled; Territory converted to Procuratorship
 2. **Herod Antipas** (4 BC - AD 39)
 - a. Appointed tetrarch of **Galilee & Perea**

- b. **Herodias**: granddaughter of Herod and Mariamne
 - 1) **Married H. Boethus; Antiaps married Nabatean princess**
 - 2) Antipas married Herodias, Nabatean princess displaced
 - a) Criticized by John the Baptist (Mt 14:4, etc.)
 - b) Nabatean king Aretas IV attacked Antipas
 - c. AD 39: exiled to Lyon by Caligula
 - d. Territory given to Herod Agrippa I
 - 3. **Herod Philip** (4 BC - AD 34)
 - a. Tetrarch of Northeast Palestine/Iturea
 - b. Rebuilt Paneas as capital, renamed Caesarea Philippi
 - c. Died AD 34; territory given to Herod Agrippa, AD 37
- E. Roman rule over Judea, Samaria, Idumea (AD 6-41) through procurators/prefects
i.e., Pontius Pilate (AD 26-36)
- a. Brought Roman military ensigns into Jerusalem
 - b. Built aqueduct to supply Jerusalem
 - c. Ruthlessly quelled riots in Judea (Lk 13:1), Samaria
 - d. Forced to appear in Rome; perhaps committed suicide
- F. **Herod Agrippa I**: grandson of Herod the Great (AD 37-44)
- 1. AD 37: Acquired Abilene and Philip's tetrarchy
 - 2. AD 39: Caligula added tetrarchy of Herod Antipas
 - 3. AD 41: Claudius made him king of all Palestine
 - 4. Popular because he favored Pharisaism; messianic overtones
 - 5. Died of sudden illness, AD 44 (Acts 12:20-23)

VII. JEWISH REVOLTS AGAINST ROME

- A. First Jewish Revolt Against Rome
- 1. Causes/Beginnings
 - a. Nero took Hellenizing stance toward Jews; riots in AD 66
 - b. Procurator Florus demanded 17 talents from temple
 - 1) May 66: riots in Caesarea, Jerusalem
 - 2) June 66: sacrifices on behalf of emperor halted
 - c. Jerusalem/Judea, Idumea, Galilee, Perea in rebellion
 - d. November 66: Syrian Legate Cestius Gallus besieged Jerusalem
 - 1) Occupied north of city; forced to withdraw
 - 2) Forces scattered; requested aid from emperor
 - 2. Roman general **Vespasian** appointed to put down revolt
 - a. Preparations early 67: 2 legions in Syria; **Titus** from Egypt
 - b. Spring-fall 67: attacked, defeated rebels in Galilee
 - c. Spring 68: Perea, western Judea taken
 - 3. Jerusalem under Roman siege: Jewish leadership struggles
 - a. Nationalistic aristocrats: controlled upper city
 - 1) Former HPs Jeshua IV & Ananus III killed by Idumeans
 - 2) **Simon bar Giora** of Gerasa
 - a) Idumeans switched alliance to aristocrats
 - b) Summoned to Jerusalem; became military dictator
 - c) Struggled with zealots in temple mount
 - b. Zealots: controlled temple area
 - 1) Menachem, son of Judas of Gamala
 - a) Took Masada; fought in Jerusalem

- b) Made messianic claims; killed by temple officials
 - 2) **John of Gischala**: headed resistance movement in Galilee
 - a) Fled to Jerusalem; took temple area; led zealots
 - b) AD 68: ordered election of high priest from people
 - 3) Eleazar Simonis: defected from John, defeated
 - 4. Final Roman assault on Jerusalem delayed by civil wars 68-70
 - a. **Galba** declared emperor by senate, 8 June AD 68
 - 1) General in Spain representing Roman nobility
 - 2) Nero took his own life on 9 June AD 68
 - b. **Vitellius**: declared emperor New Year's 69 by German legions
 - 1) Supported by troops in central, western Europe
 - 2) Marched on Rome
 - c. **Otho**: a general, popular with praetorians
 - 1) 15 January, AD 69: declared emperor in Rome; Galba slain
 - 2) Defeated in battle by Vitellius; committed suicide
 - d. Flavius Vespasianus (**Vespasian**)
 - 1) 1 July 69: declared emperor by Egyptian prefect, troops
 - 2) Vitellius executed 21 December 69
 - 5. **AD 70: the Fall of Jerusalem**
 - a. Titus began siege in April against stiff resistance
 - b. Northern city wall breached
 - c. 10 August: temple enclosure taken, temple destroyed
 - d. Upper city taken, burned a month later
 - 6. Masada: the Zealots' last stand
 - a. Zealots held out in Herod's isolated fortress on Dead Sea
 - b. AD 73: Jewish defenders committed suicide rather than be taken
- B. After AD 70
 - 1. "Sanhedrin" (*Beth Din*) reconstituted as religious body at **Jamnia**
 - a. **R. Johanan ben Zakkai** secured permission from Vespasian
 - b. Interpretation of Bible became more important than temple
 - 2. AD 116-117: Jewish insurrection began in Cyrene, Egypt
- C. **AD 132-135: Second Jewish Revolt**
 - 1. Hadrian: rebuild Jerusalem with temple of Jupiter on temple mount
 - 2. Revolt led by **Simon bar Kockba** ("Son of the Star")
 - a. Documents, evidence of massacre in Judean wilderness caves
 - b. Documents include letters to/from Simon "bar Koziba"
 - 3. Results
 - a. Revolt crushed; Judaism oppressed; Aqiba martyred
 - b. Jerusalem rebuilt (135) as **Aelia Capitolina**; Jews banned
 - 4. *Beth Din* moved to Galilee, eventually settled in Tiberius
 - a. The **Mishnah**: Rabbinical codification of the oral law
 - b. Tannaitic *Midrashim* ("investigations"): biblical commentaries
 - c. **Tosephta** ("additions"): Halachic additions to Mishnah