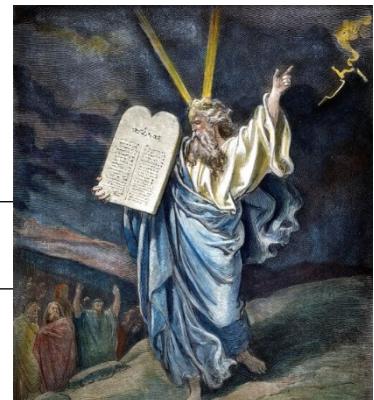


# A history of the Jewish faith: Explanatory guide

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## Lecture 2: Ancient Judaism (2): From the restoration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple to its destruction (5<sup>th</sup> C. BCE – 70 CE)

- A. THE PERSIAN ERA (538 – 332 BCE) – Defeated the Babylonians and then were defeated by Alexander the Great

**Temple Judaism** – refers to the form of Judaism practised when there was a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple

- B. HELLENISTIC JUDAISM (332 – 63 BCE) - a form of Judaism in classical antiquity that combined Jewish religious tradition with elements of Greek culture. This persisted even when the Romans took over.

**Alexander the Great** (356 – 323 BCE) – King of Macedon who conquered Judah in 332 BCE.

**The Ptolemies (305 – 30 BCE)** – Hellenistic regime based in Egypt. Lost Judea in 200 BCE.

**The Seleucids (312 – 63 BCE)** – Also a Hellenistic empire that spread widely but was based in Syria.

**Hellenism** – The language, culture, and values of the ‘Hellenes’, especially after Alexander the Great. Its most characteristic feature is that it put humans at the centre of life, not a deity.

**The Maccabees** - a group of Jewish rebel warriors who took control of Judea, which at the time was part of the Seleucid Empire. They founded the Hasmonean dynasty (167 BCE to 37 BCE)

**Jason** - High Priest of the Temple in Jerusalem from 175 – 171 BCE. Fled when Menelaus took over. Was Hellenistic but less so than Menelaus and hence less favoured by Antiochus IV.

**Menelaus** – High Priest from 171 – 161 BCE. Very Hellenistic who collaborated with Antiochus IV

**Hasideans** – Sect of uncompromising observance of Judaic Law that joined the Maccabean revolt against the Hellenistic Seleucids to fight for religious freedom and stem the tide of paganism.

**Antiochus IV** - Seleucid king of the who reigned from 175 to 164 BCE. Encouraged Greek culture and institutions. His attempts to suppress Judaism brought on the Wars of the Maccabees.

**The Hasmoneans** – A Jewish but mainly Hellenistic dynasty from 167 – 37 BCE, but ruling a fully independent kingdom from 110 – 63 BCE. Succeeded by the Herodian dynasty.

**King Herod** (73 – 4 BCE) – A Roman client king of Judea; ushered in peace and massive building, including the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple redevelopment, but was also infamous for his extreme cruelty.

**Pilgrim festivals** – 3 major festivals, Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Weeks or Pentecost), and Sukkot (Tabernacles, Tents or Booths), when the Israelites would make a pilgrimage to the Temple

### C. SECTS (LATE 2<sup>ND</sup> TEMPLE)

**Sadducees** - Sect that was active in Judea during the Second Temple period (from the second century BCE through to 70 CE), emphasizing acceptance of the written Law alone.

**Pharisees** - A social movement and a school of thought during late 2nd Temple Judaism. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, Pharisaic beliefs became the foundational, liturgical, and ritualistic basis for Rabbinic Judaism. Could be a bit self-righteous. The Pharisees' insistence on the binding force of oral tradition (“the unwritten Torah”) remains a basic tenet of Jewish thought.

**Essenes** - Ascetic sect from the 2nd century BCE to the 2nd century CE in Palestine that lived in highly organized groups and held property in common. Widely regarded as the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

**Zealots** - A political movement in 1st-century Second Temple Judaism which sought to incite the people of Judea Province to rebel against the Roman Empire and expel it from the Holy Land by force of arms, most notably during the First Jewish–Roman War (66–70).

**Sicarii** - A splinter group of the Jewish Zealots who, in the decades preceding Jerusalem's destruction in 70 CE, strongly opposed the Roman occupation of Judea and attempted to expel them and their sympathizers from the area. The Sicarii carried sicae, or small daggers, concealed in their cloaks.

**Zugot** ('pairs') - The 200-year period (c. 170 BCE – 30 CE) during the time of the Second Temple in which the spiritual leadership was in the hands of five successions of 'pairs' of religious teachers.

**Sanhedrin** - The supreme council and tribunal of the Jews during Roman rule of Judea headed by a High Priest (Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem) and having religious, civil, and criminal jurisdiction. The *gerousia*, which existed under Persian and Seleucid rule (333–165 BE) is considered by some the forerunner of the Great Sanhedrin. Smaller versions were developed after 70 CE, e.g. at Yavneh. These Sanhedrins existed until the abolition of the rabbinic patriarchate in about 425 C.E.

**Midrash** ('textual interpretation', 'study') - Biblical exegesis by ancient Judaic authorities, using a mode of interpretation prominent in the Talmud. The term is also used of a rabbinic work that interprets Scripture in that manner. Such works contain early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (*aggadah*) and occasionally Jewish religious laws (*halakha*), 'Midrash' can refer to a specific compilation of these rabbinic writings composed between 400 and 1200 CE.

**Tannaim** - Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from ~ 10–220 CE. The period of the Tannaim also referred to as the Mishnaic period. Mishnah compiled by Judah HaNasi.

**Philo of Alexandria** (15 BCE 50 CE) - Born and lived in Alexandria, a Greek-speaking Jewish philosopher, and the most important representative of Hellenistic Judaism. As the first to attempt to synthesize revealed faith and philosophic reason, he occupies a unique position in the history of philosophy. He is also regarded by Christians as a forerunner of Christian theology.

#### D. DESTRUCTION OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> TEMPLE (70 CE)

**Jewish Christians** – These were Jews who were followers of Jesus. The sect integrated the belief of Jesus as the prophesied Messiah and his teachings into the Jewish faith, including the observance of the Jewish law. Jewish Christianity is the foundation of Early Christianity. Jesus was Jewish, preached to the Jewish people, and called from them his first followers. Jewish Christians, as faithful religious Jews, regarded their movement as an affirmation of every aspect of contemporary Judaism, plus one extra belief — that Jesus was the Messiah. After Paul, taken over by non-Jewish Christians.

**Eschatology** - A part of theology concerned with the final events of history, or the ultimate destiny of humanity. This concept is commonly referred to as the 'end of the world' or 'end times'. Concerns beliefs about the end of history, the resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment, the messianic era, and the problem of theodicy (the vindication of God's justice).