

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Department of History
K. Sacks Semester I, 1989-90

History 572: Judaism in the Greco-Roman World

This course will investigate the relationship between Jews and Greco-Roman civilization. Of particular interest will be the ways in which Jewish culture and religion changed in response to the attractive cultural values of the Greeks. The result was a transformation of religious attitudes that has helped define the religions of the West till the present.

General reference works, to be found in the reference rooms at memorial and H.C. White Libraries. You are expected to gain for yourselves a general background in the different civilizations, so....Use Them Frequently!

Encyclopaedia Judaica: DS/102.8/-496

Oxford Classical Dictionary (2nd ed.): DE/5/09

All readings are from books purchased for this course or from the reserve collection at H.C. White Library. There is a very limited number of copies of books and articles for this course there, so please be considerate when using them.

*Meeting I (Sept. 12): General Background to the Greco-Judaic World.

1. What are the types of institutions and cultural values important to the Greek and Jewish Experience?
2. What are the potential areas of harmony and conflict?

A. Schalit, World History of the Jewish People, vol. VI: The Hellenistic Age, pp. 33-50

W.F. Albright, "The Biblical Period," in L. Finkelstein, The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion, pp. 3-65

E. Bickerman, From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees, 1-53.

M. Hadas, Hellenistic Culture, cc. 1-7.

*Meeting II (Sept. 19): Hellenization of Judaea to 175.

1. What do we mean by Hellenistic Culture? What was its relationship to the indigenous populations of the Near East during the Third Century, B.C.?
2. How were the Jews affected by Seleucid and Ptolemaic policies and actions? Were the Jews forced to take sides, and, if so, which sides did they take?
3. Who were the Tobiads, and what was their role in understanding Third and Century Palestine and her relationship to Hellenistic culture?
4. How did Antiochus III treat the Jews of Palestine and why?

READINGS:

Josephus, Antiquities. xii 1-4 (= pp. 1-12).

Diodorus Siculus, xviii 43, xx 113; xxi 4b.5.

Appian, Syrian Wars c. 52.

Tcherikover, 39-142.

M. Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, I, 1-106, or:

M. Hengel, Jews, Greeks and Barbarians, 1-92.

E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, vol. I (2nd ed. only), 136-145

*Meeting III (Sept. 26): Ecclesiastes or Koheleth: Early Response to Hellenization. First papers due today.

First Paper Topic: What are the types of institutions important to the Greek and Hebrew experiences which, by the beginning of the second century B.C., could result in general harmony and/or conflict between the two civilizations? What evidence is there that individual Jews and/or Greeks were accepting the other's institutions and beginning to learn the other's civilization?

1. What are the dating and circumstances of the composition of Ecclesiastes?

2. What is its relationship to Hebrew, Egyptian and Near Eastern Wisdom literature? Does Koheleth's philosophy represent a new department in Jewish thought?

3. Is Koheleth influenced by Greek thought? If so, how? Does he seem to accept Greek ideas or is there evidence of rejection and/or syncretism?

4. Is Koheleth's philosophy a dead end or does he express reason for hope? What was the possible cultural climate that gave rise to his thinking?

READINGS:

Ecclesiastes (Koheleth) (all).

R. Gordis, Koheleth: The Man and his World, 22-38, 51-58, 63-68.

Hengel, I, 107-130.

Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, ed. by R.B.Y. Scott, 196-206.

E. Bickerman, Four Strange Books of the Bible, 139-167.

*Meeting IV (Oct. 3):

1. What is "wisdom" to ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus) and to the authors of Proverbs and the Dead Sea Scrolls? How does it compare to that understood by Koheleth?

2. In general in Judaism, have there been to his time any changes in the notion of wisdom and in the teaching of wisdom?

3. What is Sira's advice to the Jewish gentleman?

4. How does ben Sira reflect the cultural crisis of the early Second Century, B.C., in Palestine? Does the crisis loom larger for him than for Koheleth?

READINGS:

Ecclesiasticus (all).

Proverbs 1-9

G. Vermes, Dead Sea Scrolls in English, scrolls nos. 19 & 20

R. Pfeiffer, History of New Testament Times, 352-398.

Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism I, 131-169.

Tcherikover, 142-151.

L. Perdue, Wisdom and Cult, 142-155.

E. Schürer, History of the Jewish People, III.1 (2nd ed.), 198-212.

*Meeting V (Oct. 17): Maccabean Revolt, 175-161. Second paper due today.

Second Paper Topic: Compare and contrast the lives (as we conjecture them) and works of Koheleth and Ben Sira: what do they

perceive to be the main social and cultural problems of their day and how do they propose to deal with them.

1. Why did Antiochus IV impose his policy of Hellenisation on the Jews of Palestine?

2. Are there any identifiable political factions within Judaism at the time? To what extent can their strengths and sympathies be defined?

3. What is the chronology of 170-167, and why is the order of events important for our understanding of the responsibility for the war?

4. Do the Book of Daniel and material in Josephus affect the interpretation of the events recounted in I and II Maccabees?

I Maccabees 1-9:22.

II Maccabees (all).

READINGS:

Josephus, Antiquities xii 5-11 (= pp. 12-42).

Daniel 8:23-26; 9:24-27; 11:21-45.

Tcherikover, 152-234, 381-390, 395-400, 404-409 (optional).

Momigliano Alien Wisdom, 102-112.

Bickerman, From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees, 93-135.

Hengel, I, 95-99, 277-314.

E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People, vol. I, 136-173, esp. 150, n. 32 nnd 152, n. 37.

*Meeting VI (Oct. 24): Hasmonean Rule, 161-105.

1. What was the aim of Hasmonean imperialism and what was the Hasmonean policy toward the Seleucid monarch?

2. What were the sources for Jewish support of and antagonism towards the Hasmonean monarchy?

3. How lasting were the anti-Hellenistic reforms in Palestine? What evidence of Hellenistic influence can be found within the Hasmonean dynasty?

I Maccabees, 9:23 to end.

READINGS:

Josephus, Antiquities xiii 1-10 (= pp. 42-90).

Tcherikover, 234-265.

Schurer, The History of the Jewish People, vol. I, 174-215.

Bickerman, From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees, 136-182.

*Meeting VII (Oct. 31): Resistance, Acceptance, and Apocalypse.

1. What is apocalyptic and how does it differ from prophetic literature and thought?

2. What, if any, is the influence of Near Eastern and/or Greek thought on Jewish apocalypics?

3. What are the historical circumstances which give rise to such thinking in the time of Daniel and I & II Maccabees?

4. Does material in Enoch affect the traditional understanding of the rise of apocalyptic and the Maccabean experience?

I Maccabees 9

II Maccabees 6:18-35, 7, 12:38-48.

READINGS:

Daniel 1-12, esp. 2, 7-12

I Enoch 83-90

Hengel I, 180-218.

Book of Daniel, ed. by Louis Hartman, 46-54, 62-71.

J. J. Collins, "Jewish Apocalyptic against its Hellenistic Near Eastern Environment," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research ccxx (1975), 27-36

L. Finkelstein, The Pharisees I, 145-159

E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People, III.1 250f FIND EXACT PAGES

M. Stone, "The Book of Enoch and Judaism in the Third Century B.C.E.," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 40 (1978), 479-92

*Meeting VIII (Nov. 7): The Essenes

1. To what period are the Dead Sea Scrolls datable? How secure is that dating?

2. Who are the candidates for the Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest? Who are the likeliest choices?

3. What do the scrolls and the Qumran community tell us about opposition groups during their period of existence?

4. How do the notions of apocalypse and resurrection in the scrolls compare and contrast with those found in Daniel and other material we've read.

READINGS:

Josephus War ii 8.2-13 (119-61)

Antiquities xiii 5.9 (171-2), xviii 1,2 (11, 18-22)

E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, vol. II (2nd ed. only), 550-606

Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, 1-158, 283-289

J. Murphy-O'Connor, "The Essenes and their History," Revue Biblique 81 (1974), 215-244

H.M. Segal, "The Habakkuk Commentary and the Damascus Fragments," Journal of Biblical Literature 70 (1951), 131-147

*Meeting IX (Nov. 14): Hasidim (Pietists), Pharisees and Sadducees

1. From our readings on the Maccabees and from this week on the Pharisees, who were the Hasidim and what role did they play in the rebellion during the decade of the 160's?

2. From the readings for Meeting VI and this week, what roles do the Pharisees and Sadducees play in Jewish history during the second half of the Second Century, B.C.?

3. How did the Hellenistic reforms of 175-167 and the subsequent Maccabean rebellion affect the major outlooks of Judaism? Who carried on with Hellenism and how; Who opposed Hellenism and how; Were the issues the same for the period of 160-104 as they were for earlier decade of the 160's?

I Maccabees 2:42; 7:13-14; II Maccabees 14.6.

READINGS:

Daniel 11:33-35

Josephus, Antiquities XIII 10.5-7 (pp. 89-90)

War II 162-166.

L. Finkelstein, The Pharisees I, 73-100, 145-159; II, 570-625.

Hengel I, 175-180.

E. Rivkin, "Pharisaism and the Crisis of the Individual in the Greco-Roman World," Jewish Quarterly Review, lxi (1970), 27-53

*Meeting X (Nov. 21): Greeks and Jews in Alexandria. Third Paper Due

Third Paper Topic: The Maccabean Revolt was a reaction to Hellenism. To what extent did that succeed? What were the intellectual and cultural byproducts of that revolt which affected the course of Judaism?

1. What is the political and economic status of Jews in Alexandria? How does their position compare to that of the Egyptians and Greeks?

2. Is there any evidence of Egyptian or Greek anti-Semitism or racial tension during this period? Include any evidence of negative portrayals of the Jews in Greco-Egyptian literature.

3. If so, what conditions and factors are the cause of such a situation?

M. Stern, Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism I 20-52, 62-86, 389-421

Tcherikover, 269-377.

P. Fraser, Ptolemaic Alexandria I, 38-86, 281-286, 298-300.

J.G. Gager, Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism (skim).

M. Stern, "The Jews in Greek and Latin Literature," in The Jewish People in the First Century, ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern, vol. II, 1101-1117

L. Feldman, "The Orthodoxy of the Jews in Hellenistic Egypt," Jewish Social Studies xxii (1960), 215-237

J. Daniel, "Anti-Semitism in the Hellenistic Roman Period," Journal of Biblical Literature xcvi (1979), 45-65

*Meeting XI (Nov. 28): The Purpose of the Apologetics.

1. What kinds of materials compose the Jewish apologetics and what are their main purposes?

2. How does Jewish apologetic literature relate to the sacred literature in the Bible? Is it factually consistent with Biblical writings; does it represent a continuation of the "holy word"?

3. In what ways might this material reflect the influence of Hellenism? How does it differ from to Wisdom Literature?

READINGS:

Selections from Holladay, Fragments from Hellenistic Authors, vol. I, 51-156, 189-243

Bickerman, From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees, 54-92

Fraser I, 687-716.

Pfeiffer, 197-232.

Hadas, c. 8.

V. Tcherikover, "Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered," Eos xlvi (1956), 169-193

A. Haire Forster, "Propaganda Analysis Applied to Alexandrian-Jewish Apologetic," in The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow, ed. by Harold R. Willoughby, 268-278

*Meeting XII (Dec. 5): The Septuagint (LXX)

1. What are the circumstances and purpose of the Letter of Aristeas? What is his message and who is he aiming it at?

2. How accurately does Aristeas describe the process of the creation of the LXX? To what extent is there Greek influence in its narrative method?

3. What is the purpose of the LXX: who was it aimed at, and what, if any, was its immediate effect?

4. To what degree does the LXX's theology (as compared with that of the Hebrew text) reveal Greek influence or an attempt to answer such ideas? To what degree can we discern apologetic motifs that are intended to reply to anti-Semitic charges?

Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates, ed. by M. Hadas, pp. 1-9, 59-84, 92-227

V. Tcherikover, "The Ideology of the Letter of Aristeas," Harvard Theological Review, li (1958), 59-85

S. Jellicoe, "The Occasion and Purpose of the Letter of Aristeas: A Reexamination," New Testament Studies xii (1966), 144-150

E. Bickerman, From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees, 72-87

H.M. Orlinsky, "The Septuagint as Holy Writ and the Philosophy of the Translators," Hebrew Union College Annual 46 (1975), 89-114

C.H. Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks, 3-95

G.E. Howard, "The Letter of Aristeas and Diaspora Judaism," Journal of Theological Studies xxii (1971), 337-348

E. Schürer, History of the Jewish People, III.1 (2nd ed.), 474-480

S. Jellicoe, The Septuagint and Modern Studies, 47-73, 321-322.

*Meeting XIII (Dec. 12): Near the End of the Struggle.

1. What are the main purposes of the Wisdom of Solomon and Philo's On the Creation?

2. How does the concept of wisdom within these works compare with each other and that of Koheleth, ben Sira, and Proverbs?

3. How does the concept(s) of resurrection and/or apocalypse in Wisdom of Solomon compare with such thoughts in Daniel?

4. What are the main lines of Greek influence and thought in Philo and the Wisdom of Solomon?

READINGS:

Philo, On the Creation

Charlesworth: Late Jewish Prayer

Wisdom of Solomon (= Book of Wisdom): all

The Wisdom of Solomon, ed. by David Winston, 20-64.

E. Schürer, History of the Jewish People, III.1 (2nd ed.), 568-573, and III.2 (2nd ed.), 813-821, 871-889

Final Paper. Will be a 5-10 page essay. Due date to be discussed in class.

EITHER: Detail in any method you wish what you've learned in this course and why that's important to your intellectual perceptions of cultural and religious history.

OR: During the Second Century B.C., the Jews of Judea waged a war against the Syrian Greeks for their spiritual integrity and their political freedom. At the same time, the Jews of Alexandria -- the second largest body of Jews in the ancient world -- were becoming increasingly integrated into the Egyptian Greek society. What are the different and similar attitudes and desires expressed by Jews of both civilizations; how do their physical circumstances account for these differences and similarities?