

An Overview of Israelite and Jewish History

ca. = *circa* = approximately; BCE = before the common era (or BC); CE = common era (or AD)

Major Empires: “Eat At Bill’s, Pittsburgh’s Greatest Restaurant” → Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans

[3760 BC - the creation of the world; year 1 in the Jewish calendar, based on chronological calculations from the book of Genesis]

ca. 3000-1000 BCE - **EGYPTIANS** control the land of Canaan, the land later called Israel and/or Palestine

ca. **1800-1700 BCE - *Period of the Patriarchs***; God promises to give the Holy Land to the descendants of Abraham (Gen)
first four generations: **Abraham, Isaac, Jacob = Israel, 12 Sons/Tribes of Israel** (Judah, Levi, Joseph, etc.)

ca. 1700-1300 - Israelites (a.k.a. Hebrews) in Egypt; welcome at first; worsening conditions and slavery at end

ca. **1300-1250 - Moses**; Plagues & Passover; Exodus from Egypt; *Law on Mount Sinai*; wanderings in the desert for 40 years

ca. 1250-1030 - Joshua: conquest of Promised Land; era of “Judges”: loose tribal confederation (*HCSB 335 & map 3*)

ca. 1030-930 BCE - ***United Kingdom of Israel***, as Egypt’s power declines and before Assyria’s rises (*HCSB 435, 519, and map 4*)

ca. 1030 - twelve tribes united more closely under a monarchy; first ruler is **King Saul**; continual war with Philistines

ca. **1000** - conquest of the Jebusite city of Jerusalem by the army of **King David**; *Jerusalem* becomes the capital of all Israel

ca. 970 - Building of First Temple by King Solomon (i.e. Solomon’s Temple); centralization of Jewish worship in Jerusalem

ca. 930 - death of Solomon; struggles for the throne succession; the kingdom soon divides into two parts:

922-587 - ***Divided Monarchy*** (*HCSB maps 5-9*); rise of ASSYRIAN empire (9th-7th cent.), and BABYLONIAN empire (6th cent.)

922-721 - Northern Kingdom, called “*Kingdom of Israel*”; ruled by several series of corrupt kings; much political intrigue

721 - fall of Samaria to the ASSYRIANS; deportation of most Israelites to places unknown; importation of foreigners

922-587 - Southern Kingdom, called “*Kingdom of Judah*”; ruled continuously by David’s descendants: some bad, some good

587 - Destruction of the City and Temple of Jerusalem by the BABYLONIANS under King Sennacherib

early books of the HB written during these centuries, esp. several early prophetic books and some royal historical narratives

587-539 - ***Babylonian Exile***; many upper-class Jews (officials, priests, artisans) deported to Babylon; others flee to Egypt, etc.

much of OT written, esp. major prophets; compiling of the Torah & the Deuteronomistic History (Gen - Deut - 2 Kings)

539 - after Babylonian empire conquered by PERSIANS, King Cyrus allows all deported peoples to return to their homelands

539-332 - ***Persian Period***; some (not all!) exiled Jews return to Judea & Galilee; limited local autonomy under Persian overlords

ca. 515 - rebuilding of the Second Temple in Jerusalem under Zerubbabel; but not as nice or large as Solomon’s!

ca. 458/445 - more exiles return to Jerusalem under the leadership of Ezra & Nehemiah; religious and political reforms

332ff - ***GREEK/Hellenistic Period***; conquest of the East by a Macedonian general, **Alexander the Great** (*HCSB maps 10-11*)

establishment of Greek language, culture, religion, and government throughout the East

founding and/or reconstruction of many new Greek-style cities (e.g. anything named Alexandria, Antioch)

323 - Alexander dies while still very young; entire empire divided among four of his generals, esp. Ptolemy & Seleucus

323-198 - *Ptolemaic* dynasty rulers in Egypt control Palestine (Judea, Samaria, etc.) (*HCSB 1646*)

198-141 - *Seleucid* dynasty rulers in Syria take over Palestine; growing pressure on Jews to assimilate & accept Greek culture

167 - desecration of Jerusalem Temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (*HCSB 1649*), i.e. statues of Greek gods put there, sparking a revolt by pious rural Jews under the leadership of the Hasmonean family, esp. Judas, nicknamed Maccabeus

164 - Maccabean revolt successfully takes control of and “rededicates” the Jerusalem Temple (Hannukah!),

then continues gradual expansion of power and territory, eventually ending the influence of the Seleucids in Palestine

141-63 - ***Maccabean/Hasmonean Dynasty*** - short period of *Jewish independence* under various Maccabean/Hasmonean rulers

Monastery of Qumran founded; Pharisees and Sadducees become prominent; Samaria & Idumea conquered by Jews

63 BCE - **ROMAN** army under General **Pompey** takes over much of Middle East, incl. Israel (*HCSB, maps 12-13*)

[more about the Roman period, 63 BCE - ca. 600 CE, on a later handout]

Main Point: Israel was ruled by foreign empires for *most* of its history, with only about two centuries of political independence, esp. the “Golden Age” of Kings David & Solomon, and the period of the Maccabean/Hasmonean dynasty.

For another overview of the changing political situation of Israel over the centuries, see the maps in the back of the *HCSB*.

An Overview of Jewish and Early Christian History (Part II)

167-63 BCE - Maccabean/Hasmonean Period - about a century of Jewish Independence

167-164 - desecration of Jerusalem Temple; Maccabean revolt; rededication of the Temple (see previous handout)

164-141 - Jews gradually regain full independence from Seleucid rulers in Syria under the leadership of Hasmonean family:

Mattathias - older rural priest who in 167 began the revolt which was carried on after his death by his sons:

Judas "Maccabeus" (167-61) - eldest son, nicknamed "the hammer"; recaptured and rededicated the Jerusalem Temple

Jonathan (161-142) - led the continued fight against the Seleucids to gain control gradually over more of Israel

Simon (141-134) - gains total independence for Israel; given titles "Ethnarch" (ruler of the people) and "High Priest";

since he was not of the "Zadokite" line of high priests, some Jews ("the Essenes") dispute his high priestly authority, form a separatist movement with a monastery at Qumran, where many "Dead Sea Scrolls" were found in 1948.

141-67 - the Hasmonean Dynasty continues ruling Israel for several more generations:

John Hyrcanus I (134-104) - expansion of Israel; Samaritans & Idumeans conquered, city/temple of Samaria destroyed

"Pharisees" and "Sadducees" first appear as rival Jewish groups, with different interpretations of Jewish Laws

Aristobulus I (104-103) - cruel leader; imprisons and/or kills his mother and several brothers; soon dies of illness

Alexander Jannaeus (103-76) - surviving brother, who marries Aristobulus' widow Alexandra;

Alexandra (76-67) - rules as *queen* after her second husband dies; appoints her son Hyrcanus II as high priest

67-63 - Alexandra's sons Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II vie for power; each appeals for Roman help to become sole ruler

63 BCE to ca. 600 CE - *Roman Period* of domination in Israel/Palestine

63 BCE - Roman army under General **Pompey** takes over much of Middle East, incl. Israel (see *HCSB*, maps 12-13)

Hyrcanus II (63-40) - member of the Hasmonean family; remains as high priest, but not as king

Antipater (from Idumea) and his sons Herod and Phasael more influential politically and militarily, with Roman support

40-4 BCE - HEROD THE GREAT; Roman Senate names him "King" over Judea, Idumea, Perea, Samaria, Galilee

40-37 - Herod fights to gain sole control over Israel; defeats & executes Antigonos II (who ruled as high priest 40-37)

37-7 - Herod consolidates his power, executes scores of enemies, and begins massive building/rebuilding projects,

including cities with *Roman* temples (esp. Caesarea Maritima - huge artificial harbor; Sebaste - formerly Samaria), fortresses (Masada, Herodium, Hyrcania, Machaerus, etc.), and especially rebuilt/expands the Jerusalem Temple

7-4 - near the end of his reign, Herod is paranoid about losing power, so has several sons and several wives executed!

ca. **6-4 BCE** - Jesus is born in Bethlehem, a small town in Judea, just before Herod dies (see Matt 2)

4 BCE - 66 CE - when Herod the Great dies, his *kingdom is divided* between three surviving sons & one sister (*HCSB* 1862):

4 BCE - 39 CE - **Herod Antipas** rules as "Tetrarch" of Galilee and Perea (Mark 6:14; Luke 23:6-12)

ca. **27-30 CE** - preaching of John the Baptist and public ministry of Jesus both take place *mostly* in Galilee and Perea

4 BCE - 33 CE - Herod **Philip** rules as "Tetrarch" of regions North-East of the Sea of Galilee (Mark 6:17)

4 BCE - 6 CE - Herod **Archelaus** rules as "Ethnarch" of Judea, Idumea, Samaria (Matt 2:22)

6-66 CE - Judea, etc. under direct rule of Roman Procurators (e.g. Pilate), responsible to Governors in Syria

ca. **29/30 CE** - arrest, crucifixion & death of Jesus while **Pontius Pilate** (26-36 CE) rules Judea

37-41-44 CE - **Herod Agrippa I** (a grandson of Herod the Great) allowed by Romans to rule more and more of Palestine

ca. 41 - Herod executes James, the brother of John (sons of Zebedee), and imprisons Peter (see Acts 12:1-5)

50-70's - Herod **Agrippa II** rules parts of Palestine, esp. in Northeast; Paul imprisoned in Caesarea (Acts 25-26)

49 or 50 - "Council of Jerusalem" - early Christian leaders decide Gentile Christians must not first become Jews

50-60 - Christian missionaries travel throughout Roman Empire; *earliest N T letters written by Paul*

64 - Emperor Nero burns Rome and blames the Christians; Peter & Paul both martyred in Rome

66-74 CE - First Jewish Revolt against Rome; begins in Galilee and Jerusalem (recorded in Josephus' *Jewish War*)

67-68 - Roman armies under General *Vespasian* retake Galilee, Samaria, Perea, and most of Judea; also destroy Qumran

68-70 - pause in war because Emperor Nero dies; 3 transitional emperors; then Vespasian himself becomes emperor

70 - Jerusalem captured by General *Titus*; whole city burned; **Destruction of the Second Temple by the ROMANS**

73/74 - Roman conquest of last Jewish holdouts in the desert fortress of Masada, overlooking the Dead Sea

74-132 CE - Romans rule Israel directly; Christians and Jews spread further outside of Judea

79 - catastrophic volcanic eruption of *Mount Vesuvius* (S. Italy); cities of Pompey, Herculaneum, etc. totally buried

ca. 85 or 90 - "Council of Jamnia" - Jewish rabbis meet to consolidate Judaism; expel "heretics" from synagogues;

Christianity gradually separates from Judaism; emerges as independent religion; *local persecutions slowly increase*

132-135 - Second Jewish revolt, led by Bar Kochba, put down by Emperor Hadrian; Jerusalem completely destroyed

all Jews banned from Judea after 135; Jerusalem rebuilt as Roman city called Aelia Capitolina; Israel renamed "Palestine"

ca. 250 - first systematic empire-wide persecutions of Christians under Emperor Decius

ca. 300 - worst empire-wide persecutions of Christians under Emperor Diocletian

313 - "Edict of Milan"; **Emperor Constantine I** makes Christianity a legally recognized religion; official imperial support

allows Christians to build large churches, produce large durable Bibles, obtain more converts, develop structures, etc.

An Overview of Jewish and Early Christian History (one-page condensation)

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- ca. 1300-1250 - **Moses**; Plagues & Passover; Exodus from Egypt; *Law on Mount Sinai*; wanderings in the desert for 40 years
- ca. 1030-930 BCE - **United Kingdom of Israel**: Kings Saul, David, Solomon; ca. 1000 - conquest of Jerusalem by King David;
ca. 970 - Building of First Temple by King Solomon; ca. 930 - death of Solomon; soon leads to **Divided Monarchy**:
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Hasmonean family retains high priesthood, but Antipater (from Idumea) and sons Herod and Phasael given political/military rule
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Christianity gradually separates from Judaism; emerges as independent religion; *local persecutions gradually increase*
- ca. 110 - *last NT books written* (prob. 2 Peter); begun to be collected; Christianity continues growing throughout Mediterranean
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all Jews banned from Judea after 135; Jerusalem rebuilt as Roman city called Aelia Capitolina; Israel renamed "Palestine"
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- ca. 300 - worst empire-wide persecutions of Christians under Emperor *Diocletian*; wants Christianity eradicated
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614 - Persian Invasion leads to Islamic Rule of Palestine and most of Middle East; most Christians expelled from Holy Land, some Jews remain
1060's-1240's - Medieval Crusades; control of Jerusalem goes back and forth several times; 1300's-1917 - Ottoman Turks control Middle East
1948 - Modern State of Israel founded by U.N. mandate