

VARIETIES OF JUDAISM IN FIRST CENTURY C.E.

SACRED SYMBOLS OF JEWISH TRADITION:

One God -- the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ("Israel")

Covenant - an agreement or pact between two parties

The People of God - Descendants of Abraham, People of Israel joined in Covenant

The Land

Temple - Built by King Solomon, son of David, Destroyed in 586 BCE and Rebuilt; Second Temple Destroyed by Romans in 70 CE

Kingship/Kingdom - Monarchy, Dominion, Rule -- by King, by God

Torah - Instruction, Teaching, Scripture

VARIETIES OF JUDAISM IN FIRST CENTURY

Sanhedrin - a council. presided over by High Priest, made up of Sadducees (priests) and Pharisees (lay interpreters of Torah). Not part of Torah constitution until rabbinic period.

Sadducees - Priests of the Zadokite line. custodians of the Temple and of religious tradition and cultic ceremony. Conflict with Pharisees on political and religious grounds. Sadducees were more heavily Hellenized and sympathetic to Roman interests during the period of Roman rule; they tried to maintain cordial relations with Romans; open to Greek-Roman culture. Yet religiously more conservative: regarded only the Pentateuch as authoritative. Adopted a method of literal reading of scripture; strict about observance; rejected belief in resurrection of the dead.

Pharisees - separated ones. First appeared under the Maccabees; during time of Maccabean Revolt (ca. 168 BCE). First supported the Maccabees, but later separated from them. Not priests but lay scholars who developed oral traditions of interpreting and applying Torah to everyday life. Described by Josephus as "the most accurate interpreters of the laws." Leading sect of Jews in first century - basis for emergence of rabbinic Judaism which became normative after 70 CE. Accepted belief in angels and demons, and in resurrection. Center of worship: the synagogue; reading of scripture. Major schools in first century were founded by the rabbis Hillel and Shammai. They reorganized Judaism after 70 around: Torah, synagogue, interpretation of Torah, preserved in oral and written tradition.

Zealots - radical movement joined together in resistance to foreign rule - especially against Antiochus, in time of Maccabean revolt and later against Roman rule. Membership cut across party lines, including Pharisees, priests, common folk.

Essenes - separated community. Their name is thought to mean "pious ones" or healers - Essaii - hasayyah. 3 important moments in their history: 1) origins ca. 150 BCE in dispute between Teacher of Righteousness and "Wicked Priest." - dispute over high priesthood of Jonathan 161-143 BCE. An important scriptural passage: Isaiah 40:3 - "A voice cries out: In the **wilderness** prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." 2) Expanded between 134-105 BCE during reign of John Hyrcanus (Hasmonean), regarded as corrupt. 3) the community destroyed in Jewish Wars, 66-70 CE.

Acc to Josephus, the Essenes cultivated a peculiar sanctity. Many of them lived as a community in a monastery-like settlement along the Dead Sea - Khirbet Qumran. Its features: priest-directed, scribal, apocalyptic. Interpreted books of scripture by peshar method - key events and terms in scripture were read as referring to them. Baptism, common meals, ascetic lives. Eschatological orientation, community organization. Protested against the corruption of the Temple and Priesthood, of people. Future hopes: they looked toward the future vindication of Israel, and viewed their own community as the remnant of the true Israel, expected an apocalyptic drama - battles of sons of light vs. sons of darkness. **Dead Sea Scrolls** - one of most important archaeol discoveries of 20th century - manuscripts believed to be products of Essene

community - produced between 160 BCE and 70 CE. Controversy over their publication, interpretation, and their relation to John the Baptist, Jesus, and early Christianity.

Samaritans - Those who lived in Samaria, between Galilee and Judea. They appear to have considered themselves Jews, descendants of Abraham and keepers of the covenant with Moses. More specially, they understood themselves to be the remnant of the kingdom of Israel, descended from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. But Samaritans were considered apostates and half-Jews because their Jewish ancestors intermarried with non-Jews, starting with the Assyrians who conquered the land in the 8th century before the common era. They opposed the restoration of the Temple under Ezra and Nehemiah and had their own Temple on Mount Gerizim in Samaria. They accepted the authority of only the Pentateuch - the five books attributed to Moses. They expected a final day of rewards for the faithful and punishment for the wicked, based on their eschatological reading of Deut. 32:34-35.

People of the Land (the Am ha'aretz) - the ordinary people of the land of Israel; the majority which didn't belong to any of the groups listed above.

Diaspora Judaism - Judaism in the Diaspora (dispersion of Jews outside of the land) included important Jewish communities in Babylonia, Alexandria (Egypt), Rome, and other cities. Diaspora Jews were responsible for translation of Jewish Scriptures from Hebrew into Greek in the third century BCE. Their translation is called the Septuagint, LXX. The LXX was widely read by Greek-speaking Jews and Christians in the first centuries of the common era.

The Jesus Movement - the small community of disciples made up of men and women who gathered around and followed Jesus of Nazareth. Many of these disciples followed Jesus through the towns and villages of Galilee as he preached the "Kingdom of God" and healed people. According to the gospels, 12 of the men in this group were designated as having a special role as "the Twelve disciples." One betrayed Jesus to the authorities and most of the others appear to have abandoned Jesus around the time of his arrest and execution. A few days later, however, they regrouped and reconstituted themselves as they proclaimed Jesus to be resurrected from the dead. This group formed the core of the earliest church which began a missionary movement that spread its message throughout the cities of the Greco-Roman world.

The Early Church (ekklesia) - An ekklesia is a community "called out," an assembly of people gathered together as a religious or political body. Used in Deut. 31:30, Judges 20:2; and elsewhere in exclusively religious sense; also in 1 Macc 3:13, Sirach 26:5. The communities of Jews and Gentiles who believed Jesus to be the Messiah (Christ) of Israel. They met together in synagogues and in private homes or "house churches" for worship (see, for example, Romans 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Matt 18:17; Acts 8:1). Gradually there developed the sense of a universal "church" - all those who believed in Jesus were seen as constituting a single community (see, for example, Matt 16:18; 1 Cor. 6:4, Eph. 1:22, etc.). The earliest church communities considered themselves to be Jews, or a special remnant of the Jewish people who recognized that the Messiah had come. By the time of Paul's letters (our earliest evidence), there is already a clear distinction between "the church" and "the synagogue," between "Christians" and "Jews."