

# The Intertestamental Period

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PODCAST 5 – WHAT DOES TORAH TEACH? PART A

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# ***Exploring the Intertestamental Period***

Over 6 lessons we will discuss three categories that shaped Jewish belief during the period up to the time of Jesus

1. Political changes and the new ways of understanding YHWH's reign over the Jewish people (and the world!)
2. The new cultural impulse of Hellenism and how it affected Jewish identity
3. Religious beliefs that developed during the period as well as different groups within Judaism that sprang up

We will also discuss specifically how these changes are reflected in the New Testament

# *Last Session Review*

- The Intertestamental Period forced Hellenistic Judaism to further define what makes up Jewish identity
- Jewish cultural actions served to highlight contrasts with the Gentile world distinguishing who was in and who was outside the covenant people of YHWH
- These issues were confronted by the Christian community as well, as seen in the New Testament
- Most became moot over time as the Christian community separated from the Jewish community and the cultural values changed

Our focus for today:

- Who were the major groups of the 1<sup>st</sup> century?
- What did these groups believe?

# ***New Religious Ideas***

## **Numbers 20:7 - 12 (NIV) –**

“The LORD said to Moses, “Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. *Speak to that rock* before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.

So Moses took the staff from the LORD’s presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, ‘Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?’ Then *Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice* with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.”

# ***New Religious Ideas***

## **1 Corinthians 10:1 - 4 (NIV) –**

“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all ***under the cloud*** and that they all ***passed through the sea***. They were all ***baptized into Moses*** in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for ***they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them***, and that rock was Christ.”

***Where does Paul get this idea that a rock accompanied the Hebrews in the desert?***

# ***New Religious Ideas***

## ***Tosefta Sukkhot 3.11 (4<sup>th</sup> c. CE) -***

“And so the ***well which was with the Israelites in the wilderness was a rock***, the size of a large round vessel, surging and gurgling upward, as from the mouth of this little flask, ***rising with them up onto the mountains, and going down with them into the valleys.***

Wherever the Israelites would encamp, ***it made camp with them***, on a high place, opposite the Tent of Meeting. The princes of Israel come and surround it with their staffs, and they sing a song concerning it, “*Spring up, O Well! Sing to it!*”

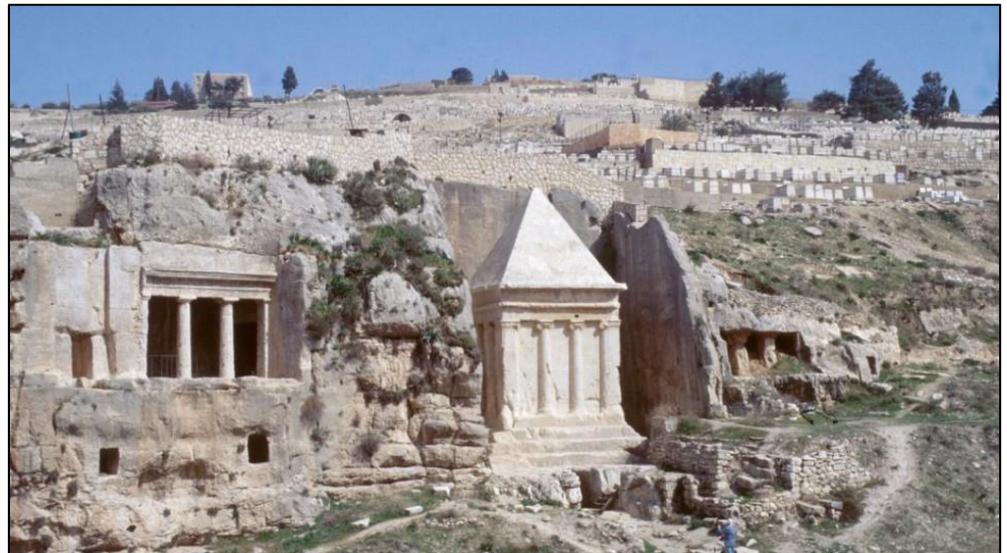
***The New Testament was not written in a vacuum – the writers addressed beliefs and ideas that were current in their time, known by their audience.***

# ***New Religious Challenges***

The challenges of the Intertestamental Period caused the Jewish community to look at Torah in new ways.

- The new situation created new religious questions necessary to address
- New groups formed over differences in policy, interpretation, and polity.

**3<sup>rd</sup> c. CE Tombs in  
Jerusalem on Mt. of  
Olives**

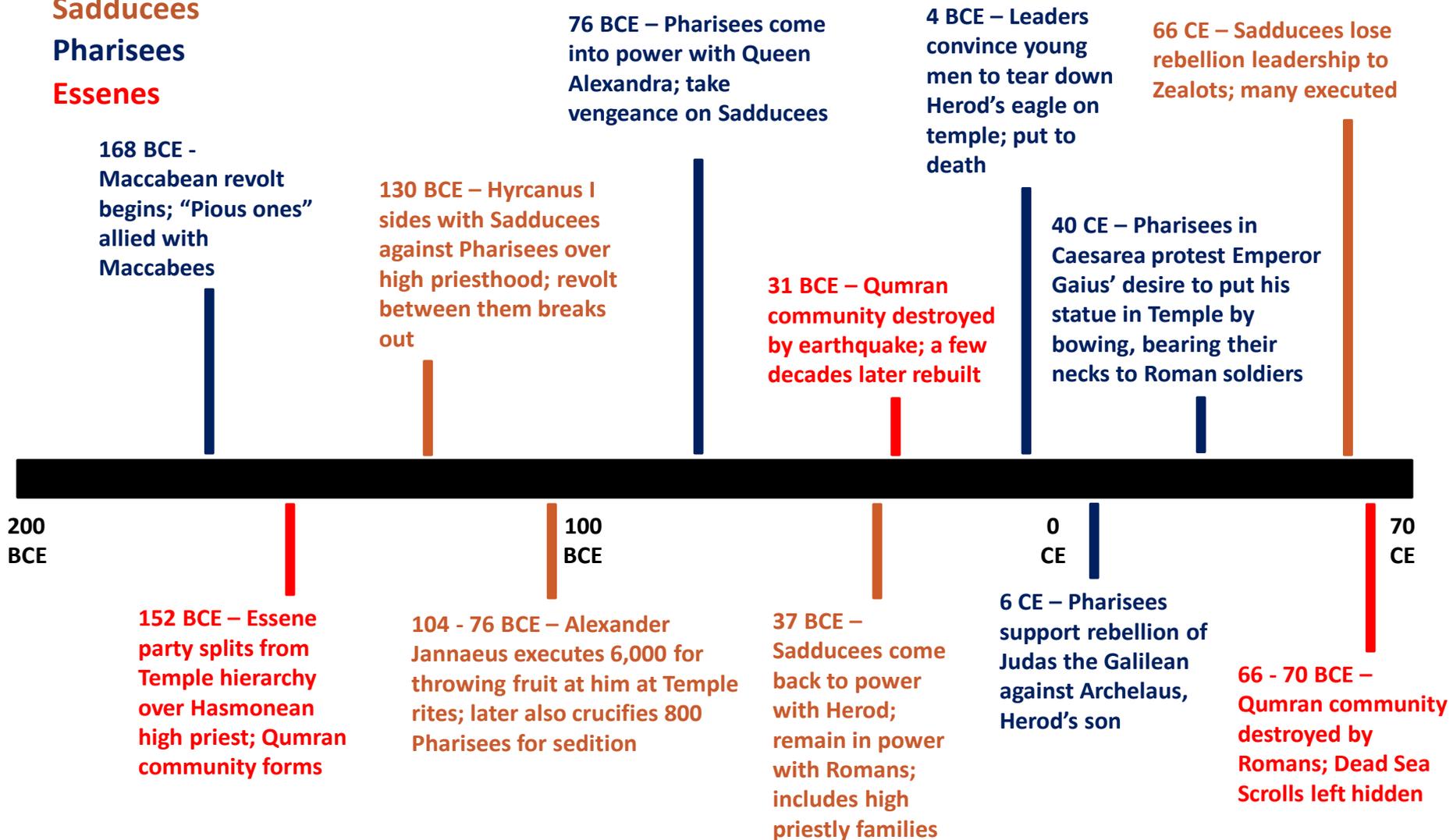


# A History of Intertestamental Groups

Sadducees

Pharisees

Essenes



# ***Perspectives on Religious Practice***

## ***The Jewish Antiquities 18.1.4 (1<sup>st</sup> c. CE) -***

“But the doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That **souls die with the bodies**; nor do they regard the observation of **any thing besides what the law enjoins them**; for they think it **an instance of virtue to dispute** with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent: but this doctrine is received but by a few, yet by those still of the greatest dignity.

But they are able to do **almost nothing of themselves**; for when they become magistrates, as they are unwillingly and by force sometimes obliged to be, they addict themselves to the **notions of the Pharisees**, because **the multitude would not otherwise bear them**.

# *Perspectives on Religious Practice*

- Sadducees' Beliefs
  - Conservatives of Hellenistic Judaism
  - Rejected addition of "oral law"
  - Rejected idea of resurrection and afterlife
  - Membership based on social power structure



*Christ Before Caiaphas, Duccio  
Buoninsegna*

# *Perspectives on Religious Practice*

## *The Jewish Antiquities 18.1.3 (1<sup>st</sup> c. CE) -*

“Now, for the Pharisees, **they live meanly**, and **despise delicacies** in diet; and they **follow the conduct of reason**; and what that prescribes to them as good for them they do; and they think they **ought earnestly to strive to observe reason's dictates for practice**...and when they determine that **all things are done by fate**, they do not take away **the freedom from men of acting** as they think fit; since their notion is, that it hath pleased God to make a temperament, whereby what he wills is done, but so that the will of man can act virtuously or viciously.

They also believe that **souls have an immortal rigor** in them, and that under the earth there will be **rewards or punishments**, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be **detained in an everlasting prison**, but that the former shall have power to **revive and live again**; on account of which doctrines they are **able greatly to persuade the body of the people**; and whatsoever they do about Divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices, **they perform them according to their direction**; insomuch that the cities give great attestations to them on account of their **entire virtuous conduct**, both in the actions of their lives and their discourses also.

# *Perspectives on Religious Practice*

- Pharisees' Beliefs
  - Mishnah – “oral law”
  - Purity
  - Resurrection and afterlife
  - No formal leadership structure
  - Membership based on holding certain beliefs



*Christ at Simon the Pharisee's House,*  
Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1619

# *Perspectives on Religious Practice*

## *The Jewish Antiquities 18.1.5 (1<sup>st</sup> c. CE) -*

“They teach **the immortality of souls**, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for...they do not offer sacrifices because they have **more pure lustrations** of their own; on which account they are **excluded from the common court of the temple, but offer their sacrifices themselves.**

It also deserves our admiration, how much **they exceed all other men** that addict themselves to virtue, and **this in righteousness**; and indeed to such a degree, that as it hath never appeared among any other men, neither Greeks nor barbarians, no, not for a little time, so hath it endured a long while among them. This is demonstrated by that institution of theirs, which will not suffer any thing to hinder them from **having all things in common**; so that a rich man enjoys no more of his own wealth than he who hath nothing at all.

There are about **four thousand men** that live in this way, and **neither marry wives**, nor are desirous **to keep servants**; as thinking the latter **tempts men to be unjust**, and the former **gives the handle to domestic quarrels**; but as they live by themselves, they minister one to another.”

# *Perspectives on Religious Practice*

- Essenes' Beliefs
  - Extreme purity standards
  - Eschatology
  - Afterlife
  - Other items
  - Praxis *AND* covenant



**Essenes' Qumran Settlement near  
the Dead Sea**

# ***Today's Takeaways***

- The Hellenistic Jewish groups found in Judea in the 1<sup>st</sup> century had a long history of interactions, rivalries, and disagreements
- The beliefs of each group were influenced by many factors including social status, political leanings, and
- While each of the groups discussed here believed their perspective was superior to the others, the Essenes were unique in asserting the other groups were not part of the covenant people of God

***Next Time – Could this be the Son of David? Jesus and national Jewish expectations of revolution***

# *Questions and Feedback*

I hope you were blessed by this study. I pray that God might deepen your knowledge and faith through it.

For any questions or feedback, I can be reached at:  
[thomrowe@flash.net](mailto:thomrowe@flash.net)

*Charis!*

Thom Rowe, March 2017

# ***Bibliography***

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