

History of Judaism

Early Christianity and Judaism

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Early Christianity in Judaic Context

- One of many Jewish ‘sectarian’ movements of the 1st century
 - Apocalyptic and eschatological interests
 - Jesus an apocalyptic prophet?
 - Hellenistic adaptations: e.g. doctrine of the Logos (Word) as intermediary between God and the world and faith and reason
 - Septuagint – transformative role in introduction of Greek philosophy through Church Fathers and conversion of Jews to Christianity
 - Ebionites (*minim*) and Nazarenes
 - Ebionites – Jesus is messiah but not divine; Nazarenes – Jesus is messiah and God – both still followed Torah

Ebionites and Nazarenes



Major stages in break between Christianity and Judaism

- Flight of Jewish Christians from Jerusalem to Pella in 70 CE
- A prayer in the Eighteen Benedictions instituted by Gamaliel against Christian heretics (c. 100 CE)
- Refusal of Christians to join messianic leaders Lukuas-Andreas in revolt against Trajan (115-117 CE) and Bar Kokhba Hadrian (132-135 CE)

The Flight to Pella

- According to tradition
 - 4th century father Eusebius – before destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, Jerusalem Christians warned in vision to flee to Pella; Epiphanius of Salamis – Jerusalem Christians left during the siege
 - Resettled in Pella by Roman authorities after Jewish-Christians' surrender?
 - Eusebius and Epiphanius – documented this tradition; former promoted tradition to claim chastisement of non-believing Jews?
 - Gospel of Luke – Christians Jews left Jerusalem after surrounded by Romans; contradicts Eusebius who claimed they fled before destruction but concurs with Epiphanius
 - Josephus notes that Jews sought refuge in Roman soldiers and the policy of Vespasian and Titus of relocating Jews to distant Roman pagan cities
 - The late departure of Jewish Christians from Jerusalem in 68 CE suggests they were not against the Jewish revolt to Rome; tradition of flight to Pella therefore may not be a watershed moment between Judaism and Christianity

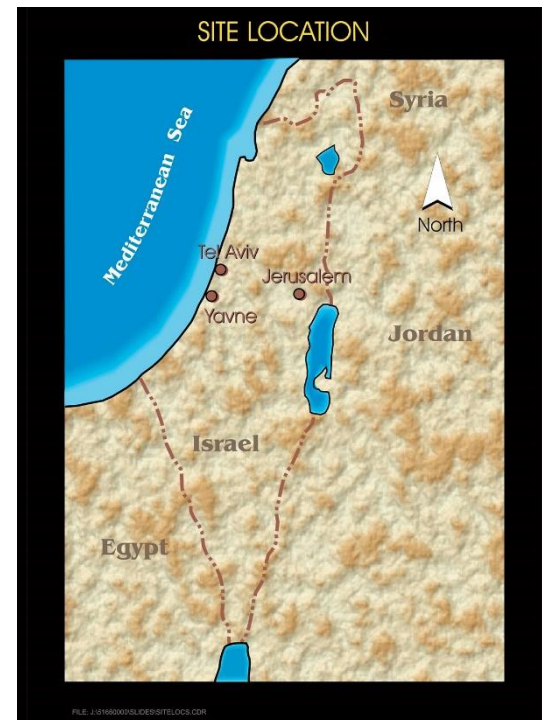
Pella, Jordan (1 of the 10 Decapolis cities)



Gamaliel II of Yavneh

- 2nd century AD – unified Jewish laws and rituals
 - Successor of Johanan ben Zakkai
 - Strengthened Judaism, weakened by loss of Temple, Sanhedrin, political autonomy
 - Ended division between Jewish spiritual leaders, favoring school of Hillel over Shammai
 - Regulated prayer – important in absence of sacrifice; revised the principal prayer (the ‘*amida*) consisting of 18 benedictions and made its recital 3 times a day obligatory; standardized the Jewish calendar and fixed festival dates
 - *Birkat haminin* – 12th benedict of the 18 benedicts – refers to dissenters/separatists who have abandoned Jewish faith

Grave of Gamaliel in Yavneh?



The Jewish Background of Christianity

- Key figures of Christianity and connections to Judaism
 - John
 - Southern Palestine
 - Spoke Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek
 - Connection to Qumran
 - Jesus
 - Galilee
 - Spoke Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek
 - Paul
 - Tarsus, from Hellenistic diaspora
 - Spoke Greek as first language
 - Pedigree
 - ‘Greek’ by association like many other Jews of his time
 - e definition of Jews as those who adhere to Judaism formulated at this time; just as ‘Greeks’ were those adhering to Hellenism although not ethnically Greek
 - Reflects a universalism of humanity, regardless of ethnicity, similar to Hellenistic Jewish thinking of the time – (Galations 3:6-9): all believers ‘sons of Abraham’; (Galations 3:28, Collosians 3:11): no distinction between Jews and Greeks
 - Place
 - Paul’s references to Christians as citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20) in the ‘Jerusalem which is above’ (Galations 4:26), and transforming the Temple into a metaphor of the Christian community (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16), and calling Christians to become ‘living sacrifices’ (Romans 12:1) – draw from elements already present in Hellenized Jewish communities?
 - Law
 - Physical objects of Jewish law as mere shadows of things to come (Colossians 2:16-17) – reflected wider Hellenistic Jewish attempt to explain why Levitical laws were necessary

Tarsus



The Jewish Background of Early Christianity

- John and the Qumran Community
 - **Qumran Community**
 - Like Paul and Hellenized Jews, used metaphorical language comparing their community to Temple in Jerusalem
 - Saw ethnicity of Aaronite priests in Jerusalem as unimportant – reference to Sons of Light and Sons of Darkness instead
 - A similar abrogation of the body as in Paul's writings; the struggle between observation of the Law and inability to achieve this despite strict discipline
 - **John**
 - Active in Judean desert
 - Preached apocalyptic message
 - Unimportance of Jewish descent
 - Baptism

Qumran Caves



The Jewish Background of Early Christianity

- Jesus of Nazareth (Galilee)
 - Messianic message – the coming of the Kingdom of God
 - The Resurrection – salvation individual and other-worldly; not about the restoration of Israel; on the other hand his message was directed more towards Jewish nation than that of John and Paul
- Jesus' resurrection solved the problem of the body's inability to live up to the Law for the Qumran and Hellenistic Jews; proved separateness of body and soul

Nazareth Village

- <https://www.nazarethvillage.com/>

Implications of Christianity for Jewish Identity

- Who is a Jew?
 - Usually concerning non-Jewish people by birth who wish to be Jewish by religion
 - Also concerning those who are Jewish by birth but do not adhere to Jewish religion
 - In antiquity – Yehudi referred to ‘Judaeans’
 - Last criteria no longer used; Law of Return in Israel allows for conversion to Judaism, but not for Jews by birth who have converted to another religion
 - E.g. Daniel Rufeisen, a Polish Jew who became a Catholic monk

