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5/10/01
REL 112
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Take Home Final

1) The Maccabean revolt under Judas Maccabeus is key to changing the conditions the Jews faced under the various administrations during the Greco-Roman period. Prior to the Maccabean Revolt Israel was seen as a political element that was key in controlling the buffer area between Semeria and Egypt. It was the battleground of the Persian and Babylonian rulers and then the Greeks and Persians. However, the most notable struggle was between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. The Seleucids finally gained control of Jerusalem when the Ptolemies lost to Antiochus II. When Antiochus IV, succeeds Antiochus II, he sets up the Jerusalem Temple as a Temple for his soldiers honoring the Greek god Olympian-Zeus.

This "abomination of desolation" (Dan. 11:31, 12:11) becomes a focal point of the anti-Seleucid sentiment of the Jews of this period. In I and II Maccabees the Hasmonaeans begin to lead a revolt against the Selucid factions and against all who refute the Torah as law. The Seleucids in an attempt to restore peace begin diplomatic measures, which commences agreements that establish Israel as an "independent kingdom." These include: 1) guarantee amnesty, 2) allow for the Jews to practice their own law (I Macc. 16:55-61, II Macc. 11:22-26), 3) and

establish an "open" line of communication between Jewish rulers and foreign powers. The first two, which were declared by Antiochus, by Lysias and the third by Roman Ambassadors (Heyes and Mandel 72).

This appeased the Hasmoneans as well as alerted foreign rule to the hidden strength of the Jewish faction. Similar policy was extended by Antiochus V the successor of Antiochus IV (Hayes and Mandel, 73). This led to the restoration of the Temple, the Jewish sectarian cult and the establishment of a Hasmonean priesthood. This establishment of the Hasmoneans as priests fell under the scrutiny of the Essenes and led to the establishment of the community at Qumran.

The independent kingdom reached its climax during the rule of John Hyrcanus, who was able to have supreme command under a Roman friendship agreement. This rule would continue until a second civil war broke out among the Jews, which the Romans finally gained control over. The rights and conditions under which the Jews enjoyed did not change, however. Supreme rule was now under the command of Roman authority, yet the Jewish law was allowed to continue under Jewish authority in the form of the Sanhedrin ("A ruling body of elders" who enforced both the Mosaic and Roman laws among the Jews.) This Jewish leadership would continue until the end of the period we studied when the Jewish revolt occurred and the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE.

3) The development of the high priesthood and the issues concerning the priesthood were important in the history of the Second Temple

period. The priesthood had its origins among the Aaronite family and were established by the command of YHWH in Ex. 28:1. When David became king he set up Zadok as the high priest and this became the official priestly line up unto the greco-roman period (I Chr. 16:39).

The allegiance between king and priest as seen by David and Zadok, continues as a theme into greco-roman times. Many saw problems with cooperation and other issues regarding the priesthood. One of earlier extensive writing regarding the priesthood and its problems is found in Malachi. These allegations included polluted sacrifice (1:8) and illegitimate children.

The Zadokite priesthood ends in the early second century BCE, when the Seleucid army takes control of the Temple and it is turned over to the god Olympian-Zeus. It remains in this state until the Macabean revolt, when through a diplomatic agreement between Judas Maccabeus and the Seleucids and Rome, the Jerusalem temple is again restored. The high priesthood is established with priests who have political objectives that often take precedent over religious ones. Jason as high priest is an example of this, who steals from the Temple and does other deeds in order to pay of the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV, securing his position.

After a brief interregnum of the high priestly post, Jonathan is appointed the position in 152 BCE and assumes the position of both religious and military leader of Judea (Hayes and Mandel 63). These

priests would end up mirroring their Roman counterparts and often were more stringed. They, however, were not of the correct Aaronian priestly line. This prompted many disputes and factions such as the Essenes began to split off from the greater Judean groups. This results in the beginning of the Qumran community.

The priesthood continued as this sort of sociopolitical office, which was accepted by many, but lead to questioning among others. A continual mistrust and skepticism of the high priesthood would be seen among many communities including the Jesus community. The priesthood would continue until the second Jewish revolt when the temple was destroyed in 70 CE.

6) One of the most popular literary styles during the period that we studied was apocalyptic literature. They provided a variety of functions for the Jewish people during greco-roman period. First, it provided a sense of hope in times of crisis. The present was shown in a prospective to show it as the eschaton. This world-view was mostly heavenly in nature, which is apparent in Isa. 65:16,17 and elsewhere.

Second, it separated various groups and also provided a bond between them. The Qumran community demonstrates both of these aspects. The literature they chose to use characterized their common world-view and furthered their ideologies. Apocalyptic stories could be shared both orally and in written form.

Third, they acted as a way to provide evidence for the creditability

of various groups thoughts on a subject. A prime example would be that of the calendar. Tensions were high around this subject and all sides regarding this issue needed evidence to support their contention. The book of Jubilees and 1 Enoch as both eschatological texts provide insight into these arguments.

Lastly, they functioned as a historical review. This form allows for the author to write anonymously while maintaining a pseudonymous identity. The perspective gives insight into current issues while maintaining the front of a text written by a historical author. Daniel is the primary example for this type of apocalyptic literature. Where the issues during the Hasomonean revolt were discussed in a revelatory manor, giving greater meaning to the current events at hand. The historical review had the added functionality of giving authenticity to the pseudonymous author, because the events that had unfolded held true, so future events that the author wrote about should unfold as well.

As one of the main forms of literary expression during the time, apocalyptic literature was fundamental in unveiling Jewish thought during the greco-roman period. It was a form common to other nations at the time, demonstrating Roman influence and therefore was important in establishing the Jews as active participants in the philosophical and academic arenas of the time.

B.1) The issue that transcends all of Judaism and marks Jews as Jews is circumcision. For many Jews it was a symbol that defined their origin and covenant. Circumcision was the beginning of a covenantal relationship between their God and the Jews. Its origins began when Abraham was extended an agreement by God. To seal this agreement between Abraham and his descendants and God the act of circumcision would have to be performed on all male children. (Gen. 17:10-14).

Throughout the greco-roman period the issue of circumcision was debated many communities. The Torah and law was quite explicit in stating that it was a mothers duty to have her son circumcised eight days after his birth. "On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised"(Lev. 12:3). As Luke 1:59-61 points out it was common at this time for the baby to be named at his circumcision, adding even greater significance to this tradition.

One of the first places that this practice becomes an integral part of the greco-roman period was prior to and during the Hasmonean revolt. The Hasmoneans used force in order to assure that this law of sanctification and purity was kept among the Jews (Hayes and Mandell, 70). "And Mattathias and his friends went around and tore down the alters; they forcibly circumcised all the uncircumcised boys that they found within the borders of Israel" (I Macc. 2:45,46).

This issue also became prevalent in relation to the Jews and how they were perceived by foreign powers. "Greeks and Romans saw it as a

sign of extreme crudity, marring the beauty of the human form" (Jaffee, 129). This adverse feeling was nothing new, the first mention of foreign reaction to this event is found in Exodus 4:24–25, where Zipporah, Moses's wife, reacts to her son's circumcision. Philo, however, after studying both the laws of the Torah and observing the practice in other cultures, such as Egypt, in a way defended this custom.

I will begin with that which is an object of ridicule among many people,... namely the circumcision of the genital organs. It is very zealously observed by many other nations, particularly by the Egyptians, a race regarded as pre-immanent for its populousness, its antiquity and its attachment to philosophy. And therefore it would be well for the detractors to desist from childish mockery and inquire in a wiser and more serious spirit into the causes of which the persistence of this custom is due. (Special Laws I,I as found in Jaffee 130)

Philo, among others, saw this symbol of both loyalty to God and the separation of the Jewish people from the evils of the world. Martin Jaffee points out that Plato's obligation to consider topic indicates "the centrality that he and other Jews ascribed to it in the domain of Jewish custom... one of the distinguishing traits of the Jews" (Jaffee 130).

Although, Philo seemed to have some more positive and defensive comments regarding circumcision, some Jews who wished to become Roman citizens or demos did not. It caused public embarrassment when they would participate in the gymnasium in Jerusalem. They felt as if it was preventing their ability to rise within the Roman world and fit in with the non-Judean participants, and therefore attempted to reverse their circumcision (Hayes and Mandell 52).

For those at Qumran the feeling was quite different. Works such as 4QFlor and Jubilees make it apparent that circumcision and the covenant it represents is essential for appearance in the final Temple and acceptance within the community. Jubilees in recording a pseudo-speech by Abraham to his children demonstrates the necessity of circumcision.

That they should each circumcise their sons according to the covenant which he had made with them, and not deviate to the right hand or the left of all the paths which the Lord had commanded us; and that we should keep ourselves from all fornication and uncleanness and renounce among us all fornication and uncleanness. (Jubilees 20:3)

In 4QFlor we see that circumcision is required to enter into the future Temple.

This is the house which [he will build] f[or them] at the end of days, as it is written in the book [of Moses: The sanctuary, O Lord, which] your hands have [es]tablished. ... This is the house into which no [one uncircumcised in heart and flesh] shall ever enter, not the Ammonite, or the Moabite, or the bastard, or the foreigner, or the proselyte, ever, for his holy ones will be there [...for] ever. (4Q174:1:3,4)

A brief look at the Jesus community also shows that this issue was central to how they understood covenant and salvation. Martin Jaffee in his discussion of the Jesus community points out the following:

"Circumcision and a persistence in Jewish Sabbaths and Festivals seem to have been fairly common" (150). Paul a later leader of this community time in his writing to various groups talking about this issue. When appealing to the Gentiles he shows that the circumcision of heart is more important than the physical circumcision a dead wrought by human

hands (Eph. 2:11).

Of all the issues and ideas that can be seen as central for the Jews in the period we studied, circumcision is an ever present issue, which is the concern of most, if not all, groups of that time.