

16. Judah from the 4th to the 3rd century BC



I. The last years of Persian rule of Judah (400-331)

i. The reign of Artaxerxes II (404 to 359BC).

Sparta, having defeated Athens in the Peloponnesian War (431-404), mounted a number of expeditions to liberate the Greek cities from Persian rule. The Spartan navy, however, was destroyed at Cnidus in 394BC, thereby giving the Persians mastery of the Aegean. In 386BC Artaxerxes II established direct rule over the Greek cities of Asia Minor.

After many reversals, especially against Egypt, by the end of his reign most of the Persian Empire was intact.

A number of assassinations followed the death of Artaxerxes II in 359BC. His son, Artaxerxes III (359-338), emerged triumphant, having killed most of his relatives. Persia suffered a new defeat at the hands of Egypt in 351-350BC. The Phoenician cities revolted the following year. In 345 Sidon had to surrender to the Persian fleet. In 343, the Persian army won a victory in Egypt. Thus, around 340, the Persian Empire recovered the territorial boundaries of 480.

Darius III (336-330BC) was the last king of the Achamaenid (First Persian) Empire. In 334BC, Alexander the Great began his invasion and subsequently defeated the Persians in a number of battles before looting and destroying the capital Persepolis in 331BC. This marked the beginning of Greek control of the Empire.

We have no evidence of any effects of the above events on the tiny province of Judah.



The Book of Proverbs

Though the Book of Proverbs as we now have it was published probably in the last years of Persian rule, it is a collection of wise sayings, some of which are as old as Israel itself. The oldest sections of the Book of Proverbs are the collections found in Section 2 (Proverbs 10:1 - 22:16) and Section 4 (Proverbs 25:1 - 29:27).

Most of these 'wise sayings' are simply that: they state a value that sheds light on behaviour that is considered appropriate in a particular area of personal or social activity.

'More than all else you guard, watch your heart.
From it flow the springs of life'(4:23).

'A wise child makes a father content,
a foolish child is a mother's grief'(10:1).

Some, but only a relatively small number, of these ‘wise sayings’ can be categorised as ‘proverbs’. While a proverb is drawn from experience, and makes obvious sense, the lesson it presents is not found in its literal meaning. (‘A stitch in time saves nine’)

‘No difference if the net is baited
while the bird is looking on’(1:17).

‘Can fire be carried in the bosom without burning one’s clothes?
Can one walk on hot coals without scorching the feet?’(7:27-28)

‘Where there are no oxen, the manger is empty;
abundant crops come by the strength of the ox’(14:4).

Some of the sayings and instruction are based on faith in God and in the religious traditions of Israel.

In Israel wisdom is seen as a gift of YHWH. The aim of wisdom is to live a good, productive life. The people of ancient Israel knew that such a life has its source in God, the Creator, and has as its goal a life of communion with God, a communion experienced in nature, in communal living whether in the country or the city, and in the events of daily life.

‘It is YHWH who gives wisdom.

From his mouth come knowledge and understanding’(2:6).

‘Trust in YHWH with all your heart.

Do not rely on your own understanding’(3:5).

As with prophets, so with wise persons, the claim is no guarantee.

Jeremiah challenged those who claimed to be wise as he challenged those who set themselves up as prophets:

‘How can you say, “We are wise and the law of YHWH is with us,” when in fact the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie?

The wise shall be put to shame, amazed and taken aback.

They have rejected the word of YHWH, what wisdom is in them?

(Jeremiah 8:8-9)

One assumption that appears in all traditional wisdom is that riches are a blessing from God, while poverty is a punishment.

‘Long life is in wisdom’s right hand.

In her left riches and honour’(3:16).

How differently Jesus saw things! The rich man who so wanted to experience the quality of life that was evident in Jesus and his disciples was shocked when Jesus told him to give away his possessions. He saw them as a sign of God’s blessing. When Jesus went on to say to his disciples: “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God”(Mark 10:24), his disciples, too, “were greatly astonished”(Mark 10:26).



Ecclesiastes

This is a penetrating reflection on the nature of true wisdom. In accepting it as inspired, Jews and Christians challenge us to listen for the Spirit of God breathing through the words of someone who introduces his work with the phrase: ‘The words of Qohelet’.

The word Qohelet derives from the Hebrew word for the assembly, *qāhāl*. Qohelet wishes to remain anonymous, for when we are listening to Qohelet reflecting on wisdom, we are expected to reflect on our own experiences as members of God’s chosen people, assembled for worship and communion.

In the Greek Version, ‘Qohelet’ is translated ‘*Ecclēsiastēs*’ [a member of the ekklesia] – hence the traditional title of the book.

Qohelet is described as ‘**the son of David, king in Jerusalem**’(Ecclesiastes 1:1). As we listen to the reflections of Qohelet, we are to have before our mind’s eye (or, better, sitting on stage), the man whom traditional wisdom has presented as renowned above all others for his wisdom: King Solomon (see also the Book of Proverbs, and the Song of Songs).

Solomon is the exemplar of all the benefits that flow from wisdom as traditionally understood: he was renowned for his power, wealth, and the astonishing success of all that he undertook. We know we are listening to Qohelet, but he wants us to listen to Solomon reflecting back over his life and we are challenged to ask ourselves what did all Solomon’s fame come to? Solomon’s united kingdom collapsed at his death.

What became of his 'success' as a builder, of his power and wealth? How wise was he? The author is challenging much of the traditional understanding of wisdom. How could he do this in a more dramatic way than by having the great Solomon centre stage, recognising his failure and questioning the wisdom that was attributed to him?

A picture of the social situation in the middle of the fifth century is provided by the following text from the Book of Nehemiah (5:3-5):

‘There were also those who said, “We are having to pledge our fields, our vineyards, and our houses in order to get grain during the famine.” And there were those who said, “We are having to borrow money on our fields and vineyards to pay the king’s tax. Now our flesh is the same as that of our kindred; our children are the same as their children; and yet we are forcing our sons and daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been ravished; we are powerless, and our fields and vineyards now belong to others.”

The economic environment favoured the political elite and the most influential entrepreneurs. In consequence, the gap between the rich and the dependent classes widened.

The prevailing insecurity and the difficulty of being economically self-sufficient in the new commercial environment that depended on the variability of inter-province trade, encouraged a mentality that fostered striving to have more, but never feeling secure, and so never being satisfied with what one had. There was a tendency for those who 'made it' to criticise the poor as being responsible for their condition. The legal system favoured the prosperous, so that justice was elusive. Greed and ambition flourished. People had to be careful in what they criticised, as reports got back to those who exercised power in the land. There was a prevailing fear of the arbitrary powers wielded by the rulers.

The author is well aware of the complexities and ambiguities of the human condition. We will notice him supporting values only to add the rider that we should not expect that following these values will lead to success. He offers guidelines, fully aware that they won't always help.

The author is aware of the responsibility of human beings for bringing about the suffering that we experience. He is critical of the greedy landowners, and, generally, of those who wield power in the land. He also recognises that his readers are free to welcome or to neglect the joy that God is offering them.

However, it never occurs to him to doubt that it is God, and God alone, who determines everything that happens in this world.

Qohelet will lead us to place our hope in God, but first requires of us that we face up to the fact that much of what traditional wisdom looked on as a sign of God's blessing is not what it is claimed to be, and we are unwise to chase after power, wealth, success or fame in our undertakings, thinking we can find meaning in them. Solomon didn't, and Qohelet tells us that we won't either. The list ('power', 'wealth', 'success in our undertakings') should prepare us modern readers to expect that the reflections we hear in Ecclesiastes might well have something to say to us.

In Ecclesiastes we hear the word 'vanity' 27 times. The Hebrew is *hebel*. The image is of a wisp of smoke: there one minute, gone the next.

Everything ‘**under the sun**’(Ecclesiastes 1:3), everything other than the transcendent and necessarily incomprehensible God, is as fleeting, unpredictable and unreliable as a puff of smoke. Apart from God everything we experience is, in and of itself, insubstantial and deceptive, a pretence, an illusion. This is true of piety, even of righteousness, and of much that goes under the name of ‘wisdom’. ‘**All is vanity**’(Ecclesiastes 1:2).

Everything has its place if we see it as a gift of God. If, however, we look to anything other than God to find meaning in our lives we lack wisdom. Ecclesiastes doesn't just make this claim, it challenges us to look at our own experience, honestly and without evasion, to see for ourselves that it is so.



The Book of Esther

Like the stories in the Book of Daniel, Esther is perhaps best described as a 'court tale'. It is set in Susa, in the court of Xerxes I, king of Persia (486-465BC). A Jew living in Susa, far from the land of Judah, rises to be prime minister of the realm, second only to the king (echoes of Joseph in Egypt).



A Jew living in Susa, far from the land of Judah, rises to be prime minister of the realm. This is because of the heroic actions of his relative, Esther, who becomes queen of Persia and intervenes to save her people from an anti-Jewish pogrom. It is possible that the events of one such pogrom form the historical basis for this story.

It is a story to demonstrate that there need be no contradiction between being a faithful Jew and being a good citizen in a foreign land (compare Jeremiah 29:4-7, 11). The story of Esther is making the point that it is by being faithful to one's Jewish traditions that one can best support a foreign state.

The names of the main characters point to the eastern origins of the story. 'Mordecai' echoes 'Marduk', the principal god in Babylon's pantheon. 'Esther' echoes 'Ishtar', the principal female deity celebrated in the fertility and burial rites of Babylon. 'Haman' echoes 'Humman', an Elamite god.

The Book is explicitly linked to the Jewish festival of **Purim** (see Esther chapter 9), and, since Purim is not found in the Torah, it provides a ‘historical’ setting for it. The origins of the festival are lost in the mists of history, but it may have arisen as a way of Jews celebrating the Persian New Year Festival.

One reason for Jewish reluctance to accept Esther among its inspired books may be that the Rabbis were hesitant to include a text that was linked to a festival that allowed excessive drinking (see Talmud, Megilla 7b).

The festival ‘Purim’ gets its name from the ‘lots’ (*pūr*) cast by Haman to determine the propitious day for the pogrom (Esther 3:7; 9:24).

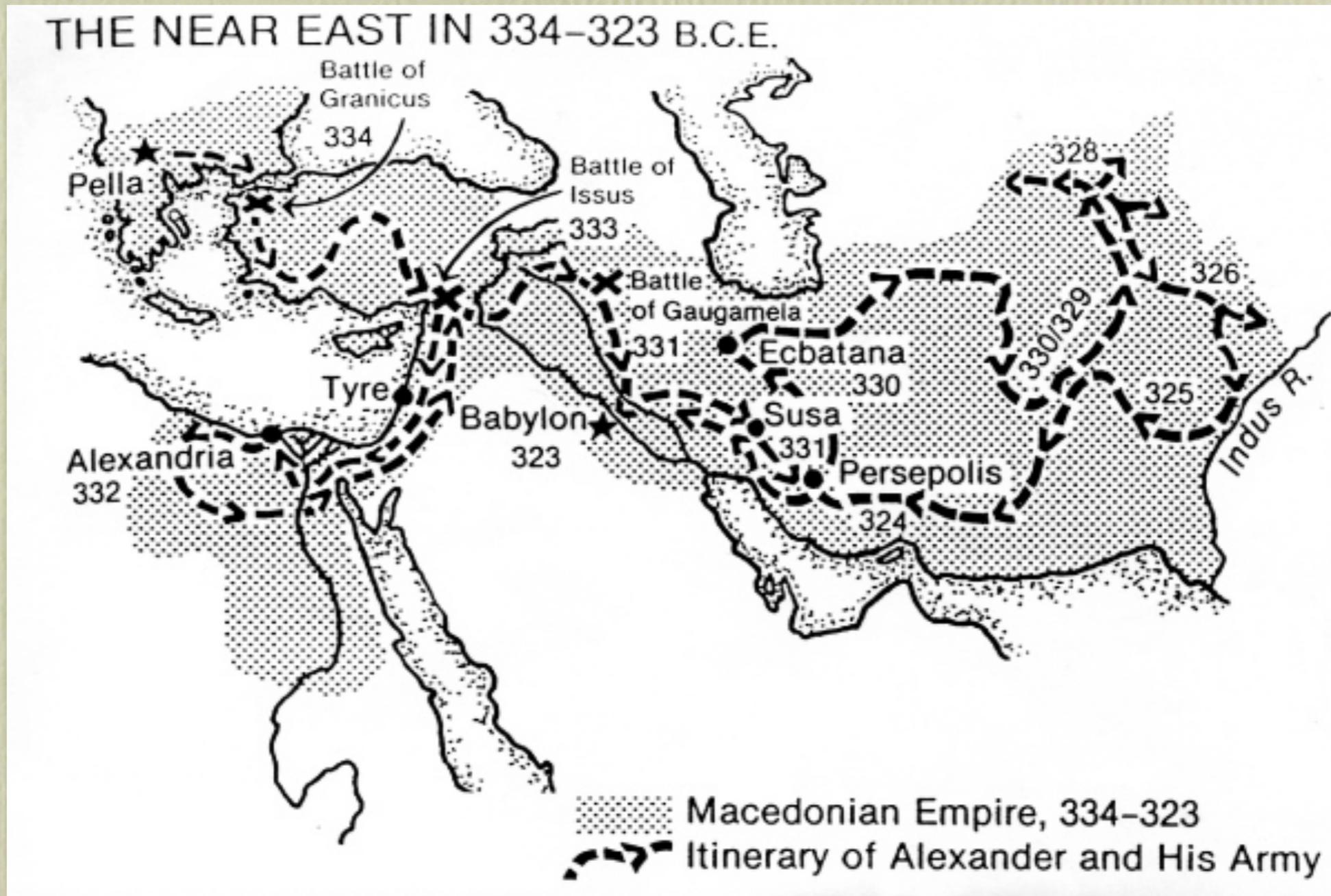
As is the way with religious festivals Purim picked up other connections in the course of its history, notably the celebration of the death of the Syrian general, Nicanor, at the hands of Judas the Maccabee in 160BC (see 2Maccabees 15:1-37). Like other Jewish festivals it is celebrated at the full moon.

The fourteenth day of Adar (March) is called 'Mordecai's Day'. The thirteenth is 'Nicanor's Day'. Purim celebrates Jewish identity and the conviction that Judaism will survive, whatever the circumstances.

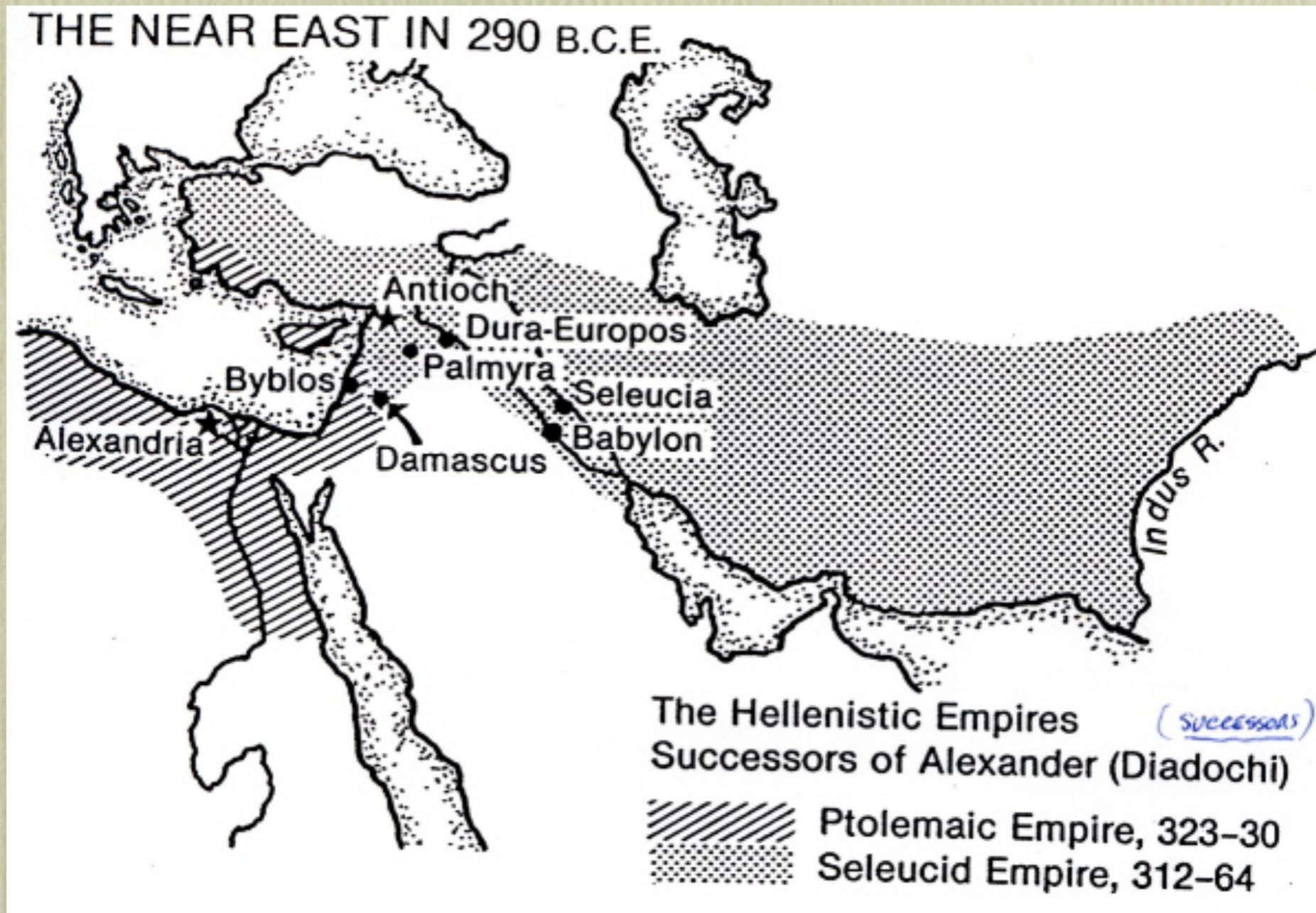


II. The Greek period 334-167BC

Josephus is our only source for a continuous history of this period.



Alexander the Great died in Babylon in 323, and the Eastern Empire immediately broke into two rival regions. Egypt (including Palestine) was ruled by Ptolemy. After 312BC Seleucus ruled from Anatolia (modern Turkey) right through to the Indus River.





MACEDONIA

SELEUCIDS

Magnesia •

Ipsos •

SELEUCIDS

CILICIA

Antioch •

SYRIA

SELEUCIDS

Pannias •

Babylon •

Alexandria • Jerusalem •

SELEUCIDS

PTOLEMIES

Throughout the third century Greek trade, language and culture had an increasingly profound effect especially on the towns (trading centres) of the East. This influence of Greek language and culture is spoken of as ‘**hellenisation**’

Stages of hellenisation

- Close political, military or commercial contact
- Inter-marriage
- Adoption of Greek language and culture by those in the East who wanted to make their way in the world and had leisure for travel and study
- Complete assimilation of orientalised Greeks and hellenised Orientals

Judah under the Ptolemies (323-198BC)

Judah was under Egyptian control, and Alexandria was added to Babylon as a growing centre for Judaism outside Judah.

Some in Judah embraced hellenism, wanting to be part of the prevailing Greek culture. Among these was the leading family of the Tobiads.

Others, including the Oniads, determinedly resisted any attempt to water down the Jewish culture.

It was a period of considerable unrest. The rivalry between Egypt and Syria made Palestine a constant military corridor. There were no fewer than five drawn-out wars during the third century.

The Books of Chronicles

Scholars today tend to see the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah as being among the sources used by the Chronicler.

As part of the attempt to encourage a sense of identity in Judah, the Chronicler set out to re-write their history, focusing on Israel as a worshipping community, and so on the Torah and the temple.

Like the Deuteronomists the Chronicler still hopes for a restoration of the Davidic dynasty. He quotes 2Samuel 7:3 where God promises he will establish the throne of David's son forever (see 1Chronicles 17:12) and he continues the Davidic genealogy beyond Zerubbabel in 1Chronicles 3. However, with no signs of an imminent restoration, the Chronicler places his hopes in the cult as it had been reformed and consolidated in the middle of the fifth century under Ezra and Nehemiah.

In what the Chronicler adds to the Deuteronomists' account it is clear that he wants to provide a tradition that traces the cult of his day back to David. He sets out also to provide proper credentials for those exercising various ministries in the temple, especially the Levites. He sees the renewed cult, centred in the temple, as fulfilling God's will, and as providing an inspiration and a guide to Jewish communities throughout the world. This last point is important for the Chronicler. At a time when pressure was being exerted to resist syncretism and assimilation by promoting an exclusive view of Israel, the Chronicler tried to redress the balance. Worshipping God in a way that was faithful to the prescriptions of the cult was essential, but Judah must not exclude those who had a rightful claim to participate.

In the Tanak Chronicles is positioned last of the Writings. Its final words underline the link between the Writings, the Prophets and the Torah:

‘In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfillment of the word of YHWH spoken by Jeremiah, YHWH stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also declared in a written edict: “Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: YHWH, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may YHWH his God be with him! Let him go up.”(2Chronicles 36:22-23).



The Book of Tobit

The Book of Tobit is perhaps best described as a short Jewish Romance. What it lacks in suspense, it makes up for in the realism of the characters: ordinary people who look to God and care for others. This does not protect them from suffering, but they continue to trust in God, and they do experience God's blessing.

Tobit, a righteous and observant Jew living in Nineveh, the ancient capital of the Assyrian Empire, gives an account of his experiences. He is from Thisbe in Naphtali (Galilee), and was exiled along with many of his countrymen during the reign of the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser V (727-722BC). His mother (unnamed) and father, Tobiel, died when he was still a child and he was raised by his grandmother, Deborah. He married Hannah, who was also from Naphtali, and they had a son whom they named Tobiah.



God rewards Tobit by making him purchasing agent to the king. With a change of ruler, his fortunes change under Sennacherib (705-681), but he is again in favour during the reign of King Esar-haddon (681-669), thanks to the fact that his nephew Ahikar is the king's chief financial minister. As a consequence of his persistence in burying the dead, Tobit loses his sight. His blindness is compounded by having to rely on the support of his wife, who challenges his whole reason for living. He sees no purpose in continuing, and in desperation prays to God to bring his life to an end.

There is a change of scene from Nineveh in Assyria to Ecbatana in Media, some 400ks east of Nineveh through the Zagros mountains.



We are taken to the home of Raguel, who is living with his wife Edna, and daughter, Sarah. Sarah, too, is desperate, as she has been betrothed seven times, but each time her husband has died before consummating the marriage. She, too, prays for God to end her life. God answers both their prayers by sending to their aid Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the throne of God (see Tobit 4:16-17; 12:12-15, 19-20). He arrives under the guise of a man who calls himself Azariah.

Tobit remembers that he is owed money by Gabael who lives in Ráges, in the Elburz Mountains, south of the Caspian Sea.



Tobit sends his son, Tobiah, on the long journey to collect the debt, telling him to stay with Jews and not to marry anyone outside his tribe. Tobiah is accompanied by Azariah. Eventually Tobiah and Sarah meet and are married. They travel back to Nineveh, Tobit's sight is miraculously restored, and they all live 'happily ever after'.

God is portrayed in the romance as one who hears prayer, and who guides his people and is close to them, even when they are living outside Judah. God is a God of truth, justice and mercy. We are called to embrace these same virtues.

The Psalms

The Psalms come from every period of the history of the Israelite and Jewish people. Those that centre on the king (see Psalms 2, 18, 21, 45, 72, 110) come, at least in their basic form, from the pre-exilic period, the period of the kings. Likewise the psalms that are in praise of YHWH, when the temple was considered YHWH's abode (see Psalms 24, 29, 93). The same can be said of the psalms to Sion, the king's city (see Psalms 46, 48, 76).

Other psalms reflect the period of the exile, and the restoration of the temple after the return (see Psalm 126). Some psalms show clear signs of editing. In general we should expect this, for the prayers were not meant as archive pieces, but would have been updated to make them more suitable for prayer as situations changed.

The collection of the 150 psalms appears to have taken place c. 200BC. The collection was made, it seems, to create a devotional prayer book for the people. Some of the psalms came from and were used in the public cult; others were of a more personal nature.

Acts 2:23-28; see 13:35

Part of Peter's speech at Pentecost

'You crucified and killed Jesus of Nazareth by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him, 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.' (Psalm 16:8-11).

Examples of Jesus quoting from the psalms

See 03. Wisdom in Ancient Israel Slides 23-35

Hebrews 1:8-9

The author of the Oration is using Scripture to support his contention that the risen Jesus is superior to the angels

But of the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,
and the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of your kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions”(Psalm 45:6-7).

Hebrews 13:6

‘We can say with confidence,

“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.

What can anyone do to me?”(Psalm 118:6).

Hebrews 2:6-8

As part of his argument that Jesus is superior to the angels the author of the Oration to the Hebrews quotes:

“What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them? You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honour, subjecting all things under their feet.”(Psalm 8:4)

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, but we do see Jesus ...

Hebrews 5:5

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

“You are my Son, today I have begotten you”(Psalm 2:7).

Hebrews 5:6

To support his claim that the risen Jesus fulfils the role of the High Priest, the author states:

‘God says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek”(Psalm 110:4).

Hebrews 10:5-7

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘See, God, I have come to do your will, O God’ (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)”(Psalm 40:6-8).

1Peter 2:3

Peter is appealing to them to live a pure life

‘if indeed you have **tasted that the Lord is good**’(Psalm 34:8).

Ephesians 4:8

Paul is assuring his readers that the risen Christ is gracing them

Therefore it is said,

**“When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive;
he gave gifts to his people”**(Psalm 68:18).

Romans 10:18

Paul insists that the gospel has been widely spread

But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for

“Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the world”(Psalm 19:4).

Romans 15:3

‘For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, “The insults
of those who insult you have fallen on me”(Psalm 69:9).

Psalms not used in the liturgy (From Book I Psalms 1-41)

5:9 There is no truth in their accusations.
Inside they are only empty caverns.
Their throats, wide-open graves;
all honey their speech.

(The following six lines are not in the liturgy)

5:10 My God, make them suffer
the consequences of their sin.
Bring to nothing their plotting.
Because of their many transgressions
cast them out,
for they rebel against you.

11:5 The Lord tests the faithful and the wicked,
and rejects the lover of violence.

(Perhaps the following two lines could be omitted from the liturgy?)

11:6 God sends coals of fire and sulphur on the wicked;
a scorching wind will be their lot.

21:6 You have filled the king with joy in your presence,
21:7 for the king trusts in the Lord.
Through the kindness of the Most High
he shall not waver.

(The following ten lines are not in the liturgy.)

21:8 Lord, you will deal with your enemies
when suddenly you appear.

21:9 You devour them in your anger,
your fire consumes them.

21:10 You destroy their offspring
from the earth.

21:11 For they plotted against you,
but their evil schemes did not succeed.

21:12 You made them turn and run
from the deadly aim of your arrows.

28:3 Do not drag me away
with the wicked, O Lord,
with those who speak peace to their neighbours,
while mischief is in their hearts.

(The following four lines are not in the liturgy.)

28:4 Repay them according to the evil they do.
Give them what they deserve.
They have no regard for what the Lord is doing.
God will break them down for ever.

31:15 Rescue me from my enemies
Ruthlessly they hunt me down.

31:16 Show your servant your radiant face.
In your kindness save me.

(The following six lines are not in the liturgy.)

31:17 Do not let me suffer shame,
for having called on you, my Lord.
May the wicked be ashamed;
let them go in silence to the grave.

31:18 Let the lying lips be stilled,
lips that speak insolently against the just.

35:1 Lord, plead my cause against my foes,
fight those who fight against me!

35:2 Take up buckler and shield. Rise to my defense!

35:3 Block the way against my pursuers. Say to me, 'I am your deliverer.'

(The following lines are not in the liturgy.)

35:4 Let those who seek my life be put to shame.

35:5 Make them retreat in disgrace.

Let them be like chaff before the wind.

35:6 Let their way be dark and slippery,
with the angel of the Lord in pursuit.

35:7 Without cause they hid their net to catch me;
for no good reason they dug a pit to take my life.

35:8 Let ruin come on them unawares.

Let the net that they hid ensnare them.

Let them fall into the pit, to their own ruin.

35:22 Lord, you see it all! Do not be silent!

Lord, do not be distant from me!

35:23 Wake! Stir yourself in my defense.

Take up my cause, my God and my Lord!

35:24 Vindicate me, Lord my God,
according to your justice.

(The following eight lines are not in the liturgy.)

35:25 Do not let them have the last word.

Do not let them think:

‘Aha, we have what we have always been wanting.

We have finished you off.’

35:26 Let all those who rejoice at my calamity
be put to shame and confusion.

Let those who exalt themselves against me
be clothed with shame and dishonour.

40:13 Lord, please free me.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(The following six lines are not in the liturgy.)

40:14 Let all those who seek my life
be put to shame and confusion.
Let those who desire to harm me
be repulsed and disgraced.

40:15 Let those who say to me 'Aha! Aha!'
remain aghast because of their shame.

149: 5 Take your rest and sing for joy.

149:6 Let the praises of our God resound on your lips.

Perhaps the following nine lines should be omitted?

149:6 Brandish swords in your hands,

149:7 to execute vengeance on the nations
and punishment on the peoples,

149:8 to bind their kings in chains,
and their nobles in fetters of iron,

149:9 to execute on them the judgment decreed.

This is your glory,

you, the faithful of God.

Forever sing God's praise.

The Septuagint

The work of translating the Hebrew Bible into Greek began in the third century BC and continued through to the early decades of the first century BC. Not only did the work continue for over a century, and was therefore carried out by different translators, it also happened in different places (especially Alexandria and Jerusalem). The title 'Septuagint' is given to the body of early Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible. The first books to be translated were the books of the Torah and the translation tends to be literal. In the case of other books the translation tends to be free.

The title 'Septuagint' is based on a legend found in the (fictitious) *Letter of Aristeas*, which describes how seventy-two scholars were selected for the task. Each one produced his own translation, and, miraculously, all the translations turned out to be identical. This was surely proof of divine inspiration, and could be used as an argument against those who were scandalized that people would dare to render God's inspired word in a language other than Hebrew!

One has to be careful when comparing the Septuagint to the standard Hebrew Massoretic text, the origins of which lie in the late first century AD, when the Rabbis set out to produce a standard text. Sometimes when the Septuagint and the Masoretic text differ we may be witnessing errors in translation, or the influence of Hellenism on anyone attempting to translate texts from one culture into another in a meaningful way. Sometimes the Masoretic text may point to a Hebrew manuscript that includes editorial elements that post-date the manuscripts used by the authors of the Septuagint as the basis of their translation. Maybe there never was what we could rightly call an 'original text'. Sometimes, when the Hebrew and Greek texts differ, it is the Hebrew editors who are responsible for errors, not the Greek. Each difference needs to be assessed on its merits.