

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

The Second Temple Period Jewish Diaspora
Preparing the Nations for the Coming of Christ in Accordance with Isaiah 43

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Bible Exposition

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The Second Temple Period Jewish Diaspora

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ABSTRACT

Scholars debate the purpose of Israel after the Babylonian exile. Many argue that God's promise made to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) was conditional on Israel's obedience. Their disobedience caused them to be removed from the Promised Land and marked the end of the Abrahamic covenant. There is sufficient biblical evidence to demonstrate that the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles were the result of Israel's disobedience. God warned the Israelites that the punishment for disobedience was exile (Deut 28), and He continued to warn them through the prophets. However, God used exile for a greater purpose. The thesis of this dissertation is that the purpose of the Second Temple period Jewish diaspora was to prepare the nations for the arrival of Christ. Millions of Jews were dispersed across Babylon and the Mediterranean region, where they formed communities. Instructed to live as a distinct people (Exod 12:5-6) and to be God's witness to His past and future redemption (Isa 43:10), the diaspora Jews attracted both a negative and positive response from their gentile neighbors. This centripetal approach drew gentiles to the synagogues, where they became God-fearers and proselytes. By the time of Jesus, God-fearers and proselytes attended synagogue and were prepared to receive the message that the promised Messiah had arrived.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>1 En</i>	<i>1 Enoch</i>
1QM	<i>War Scroll</i>
1QS	<i>Rule of the Community</i>
1QSa	<i>Rule of the Congregation</i>
1QSB	<i>Rule of the Blessings</i>
2 Macc	2 Maccabees
<i>4 Bar.</i>	<i>Baruch</i>
4Q161	<i>Pesher Isaiah</i>
4Q174	<i>Florilegium</i>
4Q175	<i>Testimonia</i>
4Q246	<i>Apocryphon of Daniel</i>
4Q252	<i>Pesher Genesis</i>
4Q267	<i>Damascus Document</i>
4Q276	<i>Tohorot</i>
4Q285	<i>Sefer ha-Milhamah</i>
4Q381	<i>Non-canonical Psalms</i>
4Q382	<i>Paraphrase of Kings</i>
4Q458	<i>Narratives</i>
4Q521	<i>Messianic Apocalypse</i>
4QMMT	<i>Miqsat Ma'ase ha-Torah</i>

11QMelch	<i>Melchizedek</i>
11QT	<i>Temple Scroll</i>
A.D.	<i>Anno Domini</i> (In the Year of the Lord)
Add Esth	Additions to Esther
Ag. Ap.	<i>Against Apion</i>
<i>Alleg. Interp.</i>	<i>Allegorical Interpretations</i>
<i>Ann.</i>	Tacitus
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
B.C.	Before Christ
<i>CD</i>	<i>Damascus Document</i>
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
<i>Embassy</i>	<i>On the Embassy to Gaius</i>
<i>Good Man</i>	<i>That Every Good Person Is Free</i>
Jdt	Judith
<i>Jub</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
<i>J.W.</i>	<i>Jewish War</i>
<i>Let. Arts.</i>	<i>Letter to Aristeas</i>
<i>Life</i>	<i>On the Life</i>
<i>Moses</i>	<i>On the Life of Moses</i>
NASB1995	New American Study Bible 1995
<i>Pss Sol</i>	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
<i>QG</i>	<i>Questions and Answers on Genesis</i>

<i>Rewards</i>	<i>On Rewards and Punishments</i>
<i>Sib. Or.</i>	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>
<i>Sir</i>	<i>Sirach</i>
<i>Spec. Laws</i>	<i>Special Laws</i>
<i>T. Benj.</i>	<i>Testament of Benjamin</i>
<i>T. Jos.</i>	<i>Testament of Joseph</i>
<i>T. Jud.</i>	<i>Testament of Judah</i>
<i>T. Levi</i>	<i>Testament of Levi</i>
<i>T. Mos.</i>	<i>Testament of Moses</i>
Tob	Tobit
<i>Virtues</i>	<i>On the Virtues</i>
Wis	Wisdom of S

Chapter I

Introduction

When the apostle Paul entered the synagogues to share the good news of Christ's resurrection, he preached to Jews and gentiles. Already in attendance were those gentiles that had come to know and follow the Jewish God. When Paul shared that Jesus was the awaited Messiah, these gentile God-fearers and proselytes had pre-existing knowledge of God's promise. The Jewish mission to the pagan nations had permeated throughout the Mediterranean during the diaspora of the Second Temple period. When Paul arrived, both Jew and gentile were prepared to receive the gospel.

When the Israelites were removed from their land and entered into exile, it is believed that their divine calling to be a light to the nations ended. God chose Israel to be a kingdom of priests in order to attract the pagan nations to His glory. They were to live according to the Law and become a distinct people. Israel was to forsake the gods and the idolatry of their neighbors. They were to be a holy nation through whom God would reveal His glory.

Rather than live apart, Israel adopted the gods and the customs of their pagan neighbors. They disobeyed the Law and ignored God's warnings delivered through His prophets. The Israelites were told of the consequences of their disobedience. They were warned that God would punish them and cast them from the land they were promised. Their disobedience would cause the division of the kingdom and ultimately lead to exile. The Israelites would once again live within the pagan nations. It would seem that God's call for Israel to be the light to the nations was over.

However, God had a specific purpose for His creation of Israel. They were not to become a nation for themselves. They were to be the people He chose to reveal Himself again to humanity. Although they were removed from their land, Israel remained a nation and part of God's salvation plan. The Israelites were to continue to live as a distinct people and attract gentiles to God. They were to be His witness.

During the Second Temple period, Jewish diaspora communities would emerge within pagan cities throughout the Mediterranean region. They would preserve their distinctiveness through the practice and observance of Jewish customs and festivals. They would forsake the customs and beliefs of their pagan neighbors. This distinctiveness would attract both positive and negative attention from the gentiles. Some would persecute the Jews because of this distinctiveness, while others were drawn to them. Gentiles would come to know God. Several gentiles would convert to Judaism (proselytes), while others would recognize Him as the one true God (God-fearers).

Although the Jews were cast from their land, they remained God's witness (Isa 43:10). This was not accomplished by what they did. Rather, it was through who they were. They were God's witness of His past restoration of Israel, and they would be His witness to its future restoration. By the nature of how they lived set them apart from the gentiles. This Jewish identity attracted the attention of the gentiles. The punishment for disobedience was the loss of their land, not the loss of their mission. The purpose of the Jewish diaspora during the Second Temple period was to continue the fulfillment of Israel's mission to restore the nations to God. The Jews

continued fulfillment of this mission had prepared the gentiles for the coming of Christ and set the foundation for the early church.

Problem Statement

A Chosen People

Blessing to All People

Regarded as one of the most important revelations in the Scriptures, Genesis 12:1-3 reveals God's rescue plan for humanity. His promise to make Abram a great nation is not for the benefit of Abram. Rather it serves God's greater purpose of blessing all the families of the earth.¹ He will use the great nation as part of His universal plan for salvation.² The election of Abram is the origin of Israel's mission to the nations. It is a two-stage process. The first stage is to establish Abram into a great nation. The second stage is for this great nation to bless all the nations of the earth. God will reveal Himself to the world through Abram and his descendants and accomplish His universal plan for creation's salvation.³

Abram is elected to restore creation from the consequences of Adam's failure. Five times the Hebrew word אָרַר is used in the first eleven chapters of Genesis (3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25). This Hebrew word equates to mean curse.⁴ It is used to describe the negative consequences of

¹ Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 33.

² Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose* (Downers Grove, IL: Apollos/InterVarsity Press, 2016), 77, 84.

³ Goheen, 33-35.

⁴ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

man's rebellion against God. Five times is the Hebrew word בָּרַךְ used in Genesis 12:1-3. This Hebrew word equates to mean bless.⁵ It is used to describe the positive results of Abram's and his descendants' faithfulness to God. He intends to use Abram and his descendants to reverse the effects of sin.⁶

Whether God made a single, eternal, unconditional covenant with Abraham continues to be an ongoing debate among scholars. Most scholars agree that Genesis 12:1-3 were pre-covenant promises as it lacks a covenant-cutting ceremony.⁷ These promises are ratified as a covenant between God and Abram ten years later when God performs the covenant-cutting ceremony (Gen 15).⁸ The nature of Genesis 15 and 17 is the cause for debate. The two-covenant position holds that God entered into two separate covenants with Abraham with Genesis 15 as a

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Hans Walter Wolff, "The Kerygma of the Yahwist," trans. Wilbur A. Benware, *Interpretation* 20, no. 2 (1966): 145-46.

⁷ David Allen Dean, "Covenant, Conditionality, and Consequence: New Terminology and a Case Study in the Abrahamic Covenant," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57, no. 2 (2014), 281-308; It may be argued that God's pre-covenant promise to Abram was conditional. God commands Abram to "go forth" from his country and depart from his relatives and his father's house. Should Abram obey, God promises to make him a great nation, bless him, make his name great, bless those who bless Abram, curse those who curse him, and bless all the families of the earth through Abram (Gen 12:1-3). Scripture reveals that Abram "went forth" as God commanded him (Gen 12:4). In the ancient Near East, to depart relatives and the father's house was to completely disengage from family. God's promised protection may be in replacement of the protection Abram received from his family. Jonathan Grossman, *Abram to Abraham; A Literary Analysis of the Abraham Narrative* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang AG, 2016). Although an agreement was made between a Lord and his vassal, scholars do not consider Gen 12:1-3 to be a covenant between God and Abram. In the ancient Near East, covenants between parties were ratified with a covenant-cutting ceremony. The covenant cutting ceremony between God and Abram is conducted ten years later (Gen 15). David Andrew Dean, "Covenant, Conditionality, and Consequence: New Terminology and a Case Study in the Abrahamic Covenant," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57, no. 2 (2014): 281-308. Abram's pre-covenantal obligation to "go forth" and leave his family was satisfied prior to the covenant-cutting ceremony. When the covenant is ratified between God and Abram, no covenantal obligations are placed on Abram.

⁸ Jeffrey J. Niehaus, "God's Covenant with Abraham," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 2 (2013), 249-71.

unilateral, unconditional, temporal land grant and Genesis 17 as a bilateral, conditional, everlasting covenant. According to the two-covenant position, God’s land promise to Abraham is not eternal (Gen 15). However, the promise to be a blessing to all the families of the earth is eternal,⁹ The two-covenant position views Genesis 22 as a test of Abraham’s faithfulness to the covenant established in Genesis 17.¹⁰

The single-covenant position holds that God entered into a single, unilateral, and eternal covenant with Abraham. God establishes His pre-covenantal relationship with Abram in Genesis 12. The covenant is cut in Genesis 15. Unlike the two-covenant position, the single-covenant position understands Genesis 17 as God providing supplemental information.¹¹ The overlap in God’s promises between Genesis 12, 15, 17, and 22 supports the single covenant position. Niehaus argues that the sharing of a promise across multiple passages is consistent with a single covenant.¹²

Table 1. Promise Overlap in the Abrahamic Covenant

Promise	Chapter 12	Chapter 15	Chapter 17	Chapter 22
“I will bless”	12:2			22:17
Numerous Descendants	12:2	15:5	17:2b, 4-5	22:17
Land as Possession	12:7	15:18-21	17:8	22:17

Source: Jeffrey J. Niehaus. “God’s Covenant with Abraham,” *JETS* 56/2 (2013), 249-71; NASB1995.

The reference to the Abrahamic covenant in the singular further supports the single-covenant position. God tells Isaac that He will confirm the oath He swore to Abraham (Gen

⁹ Williamson, 86-88.

¹⁰ Ibid., 90.

¹¹ Niehaus, 250.

¹² Ibid., 255.

26:3b-4). The promise of numerous descendants, land possession, and universal blessing are contained in this single covenant renewal with Isaac.¹³ God's later covenant renewal with Jacob contains the same three promises: numerous descendants, land possession, and universal blessing (Gen 28:13-14).

The conditionality of the covenant is another area of debate. Niehaus argues that the Abrahamic covenant is both conditional and unconditional. Unconditional in that the covenant is unilateral and God will see His purpose accomplished. Conditional in that an individual may remove themselves from the covenant relationship through disobedience.¹⁴ Williamson argues that the eternal covenant to be a blessing to all people is conditional upon Abraham's and his descendants' faithfulness to God.¹⁵ Mason believes that God's instructions to walk and be blameless before Him (Gen 17:2) sets the condition for Abraham and his descendants to receive the covenant promise.¹⁶

Dean clarifies terminology and makes the distinction between covenant obligations and covenant regulations. Covenant obligations are anything the active covenanting party obligates themselves to do or not do at the time the covenant is made. Covenant regulations are imposed upon the vassal by the suzerain after entering the covenant relationship.¹⁷ Dean believes the two-

¹³ Ibid., 251.

¹⁴ Ibid., 260-61.

¹⁵ Williamson, 86-88.

¹⁶ Steven D. Mason, "Eternal Covenant," in *the Pentateuch: The Contours of an Elusive Phrase*, vol. 494 (New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2008), 93.

¹⁷ Dean, 281-308.

covenant position is confusing covenant regulations with covenant obligations. Genesis 15 contains God's covenant obligations to Abraham. He is the active oath maker and the only party with covenant obligations. In Genesis 17, God is the suzerain who adds the covenant regulation of circumcision to his vassal Abraham. Both positions agree that Genesis 22 is a test of Abraham's obedience. They differ in that the two-covenant position believes that Genesis 22 is testing Abraham's obedience to the covenant obligations whereas the single-covenant position believes Genesis 22 is testing Abraham's obedience to covenant regulations.¹⁸

The evidence best supports the Abrahamic covenant as a single, unconditional, eternal covenant with covenant regulations. The covenant is referenced in the singular and the promises overlap several passages. The temporal land promise is inconsistent with what is understood as a royal land grant in the ancient Near East. Royal land grants to vassals in the ancient Near East did not require warfare to take possession of the land.¹⁹ God is the oath taker. He alone has covenant obligations. Although God instructs Abraham to walk blameless before Him, Abraham does not make this oath. As suzerain, God does impose covenant regulations upon His vassal. There are consequences for disobedience to the covenant regulations, however, this does not nullify God's covenant obligations. Abraham and his descendants are part of God's universal plan for salvation. He will make them into a great nation through whom He will bless the people of the world.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Niehaus, 267.

Kingdom of Priests

The descendants of Abraham became known as the Israelites. God delivered them from slavery in Egypt and brought them to the land that He had promised. It is there that God would call them to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:5-6). The Israelites were provided the Law from which to live as to distinguish them from their pagan neighbors. Moses instructed them to follow this Law so that they would be seen as a wise and understanding people (Deut 4:5-8). The Israelites were to live in such a way as to model God's original intention for humanity.²⁰ The nation of Israel was not to exist for themselves. Their existence was for the sake of God's glory and His mission.²¹ The Israelites would serve as God's priests to the nations through a lifestyle obedient to the Law. They would arouse the curiosity and awe of their neighbors as they practiced a unique law that would form them into a distinct people.²² This was not to be accomplished by any action of their own. Israel was to be, and God would reveal Himself through His chosen people.²³ He would convert the nations as He worked within Israel's midst.²⁴

²⁰ Goheen, 30.

²¹ Ibid., 31.

²² Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission; The Glory of Christ in All Time and Space* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 107.

²³ Christopher. R. North, *The Second Isaiah; Introduction, Translation, and Commentary to Chapters XL-LV* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), 143.

²⁴ Robert Martin-Archard, *A Light to the Nations; A Study of the Old Testament Conception of Israel's Mission to the World*. trans. John Penney Smith (London, UK: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 79.

Evidence of Israel's purpose is demonstrated in the biblical text as God repeatedly reveals Himself through Israel which attracts the curiosity and awe of the other nations. After witnessing God's power, a mixed multitude of people departed Egypt with the Israelites (Exod 12:38). The prostitute Rahab recognized God as the God of heaven and earth after receiving reports of how He had destroyed Israel's enemies (Josh 2:8-11). Upon receiving these same reports, the Gibeonites deceptively sued for peace out of their fear of God (Josh 9:9-11). The Moabite Ruth and the Assyrian commander Naaman both abandon their gods to become a follower of God (Ruth 1:16-18; 2 Kgs 5:1-17). God blesses Solomon with such wisdom that it attracts people from all nations (1 Kgs 4:34). The Queen of Sheba recognizes that Solomon's wisdom comes from God and that He provided it out of His love for Israel (1 Kgs 10:6-9).

Israel attracted the curiosity and awe of the gentile nations. Their observance of the Law made them distinct from their neighbors. God is revealed to the gentiles through Israel. They acknowledge His power and wisdom as He works within the midst of His chosen people. They serve as His priests to the world.

An Exiled People

The Exile

In 722 B.C. the Northern Tribes of Israel were sent into exile from their land by the conquering Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:6). The people of Judah soon followed in 597 B.C. after being defeated by the Babylonians (2 Kgs 24:14-16; 2 Chr 36:6-7). By 586 B.C., the last of the nation of Israel was sent into exile, the walls of Jerusalem were torn down, its Temple destroyed, and its people were dispersed among their pagan neighbors (2 Kgs 25:9-11, 21; 2 Chr 36:19-20). The

Babylonians permitted only the poorest of the land to remain as vinedressers and plowmen (2 Kgs 25:12).

Moses warned the Israelites that God would remove them from their land and scatter them among their pagan neighbors should they disobey the Mosaic covenant (Lev 26:33; Deut 28:63-64).²⁵ Through His prophets, God continued to warn the Israelites to turn from their evil ways and to keep His commandments and statutes (2 Kgs 17:13). These warnings went unheeded as the Israelites repeatedly abandoned God's commandments and adopted the gods of their neighbors and engaged in idolatry (2 Kgs 17:9-12, 16). Because of their disobedience, they aroused God's anger, and He removed them from the land (2 Kgs 17:18, 24:20).

God's mission for Israel did not end when they were exiled from the land. Rather, the land promise and mission are detached. Israel was originally called to become a great nation living as a distinct people so that they may attract the curiosity and awe of other nations. Once removed from their national borders, the Israelites would remain a distinct people and continue to attract people to God. Although their social context has changed due to their disobedience, they remain the "so-that" people. The Israelites are blessed so that they may be a blessing to others.²⁶

²⁵ Disobedience to the covenant is reference to the Mosaic covenant made between God and the Israelites at Mount Sinai (Exod 24). This covenant was conditional as the Israelites took an oath to do all that God commanded (Exod 24:3). This is not to be confused with the unconditional Abrahamic covenant made between God and Abraham where God alone had Covenant obligations. Although the Israelites may be temporarily removed from the land due to disobedience (Mosaic), God continued His promise to make them a great nation and to bless the people of the world through them (Abrahamic).

²⁶ Goheen, 63.

Prior to the Egyptian exodus, Pharaoh recognized that God had given Joseph wisdom and discernment and placed him as second in command to oversee all the land (Gen 41:39-41). Egypt experiences God's blessing through Joseph. Through his interpretation of God's revelation to Pharaoh, Joseph is able to spare Egypt from the ill effects of the seven-year famine. The Egyptians and the neighboring people purchased the bread Joseph had stored in preparation for the famine (Gen 41:53-57). During the Babylonian exile, God would continue to reveal Himself through the Israelites and raise them to positions of influence. King Nebuchadnezzar appointed Daniel ruler of the province of Babylon and prefect over all the wise men after Nebuchadnezzar recognized God as the God of gods and a Lord of kings (Dan 2:47-48). God continued to reveal His power to Nebuchadnezzar to where Nebuchadnezzar would praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven (Dan 4:37). Daniel's position of influence carried over to the Persian empire as he was appointed ruler over the entire kingdom (Dan 6:3). Because Daniel was spared from the lions, King Darius recognized God as the living God whose eternal kingdom could not be destroyed (Dan 6:25-27).

Cyrus, the king of Persia, felt called by God to permit the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1-3). In 537 B.C., the first Jewish exiles returned to Judah (Ezra 2:1). However, not all the Jews returned to Israel. Rather, they continued to organize their social and religious life so that they remained distinct among their gentile neighbors.²⁷

²⁷ Ibid., 61.

The Diaspora

The intentional separation of the Jews from the gentiles caused communities to develop outside Palestine. These communities were referred to as the diaspora. Although the term defines any people group that is expelled from their homeland, this term is more often associated with the Jewish populations outside Israel's national boundaries. Such communities emerged in Egypt, Babylon, Rome, and other regions of the Mediterranean and spread as far as China and India.²⁸ Within these communities, the Jews preserved their Jewish identity and set themselves apart from their gentile neighbors.

Biblical evidence of the diaspora

Scripture reveals that the earliest Jewish community outside Palestine was in Egypt. Abraham relocated to Egypt during the famine (Gen 12:10-20). Joseph was transported to Egypt after being sold into slavery by his brothers (Gen 37:28). Joseph's brothers traveled to Egypt to purchase grain during a time of severe famine (Gen 42:3). Jacob settled with his family in the land of Goshen where they became a nation (Gen 47:11). Here the Jewish population increased from seventy persons to such a great multitude that Pharaoh feared that they had become too strong (Exod 1:7-9). Four hundred and thirty years later, Moses led the Jews out of Egypt to the land promised to them by God. At the time of the exodus, the Jews numbered six-hundred thousand (600,000), not including the women and children (Exod 12:37).²⁹

²⁸ Richard R. De Ridder, *Disciplining the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books House, 1971), 60.

²⁹ The book of Exodus provides 600,000 as the number of Israelite men that traveled from Rameses to Succoth. This number does not include children. This is the same number given in Numbers 11:21. Scholars have debated the accuracy of this number. If the women and children were to be included, the total number of Israelites

After the defeat of the Northern Tribes in 722 B.C. and the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the Jews were sent into exile, where they would once again reside amongst the gentiles. The Northern Tribes were dispersed to Assyria, where they were intermingled with the gentile population (2 Kgs 17:6). The Judean exiles fared much better than their northern brothers and established communities within Babylon, where they continued to preserve their Jewish distinctiveness. Members of these communities were appointed to serve the pagan governments and rose to positions of prominence. Daniel was made the third ruler of the Babylonian kingdom and continued to prosper under the Persian kings Darius and Cyrus (Dan 5:29, 6:28). Esther became the queen of Persia (Esth 2:17), and Mordecai was second only to king Ahasuerus (Esth 10:3). Ultimately, it was Jews in positions of influence that caused the Persian kings to permit the Jews to return to Palestine (537 B.C.), rebuild the Temple (515 B.C.), and restore the walls of Jerusalem (444 B.C.).

Jewish diaspora during the Second Temple period

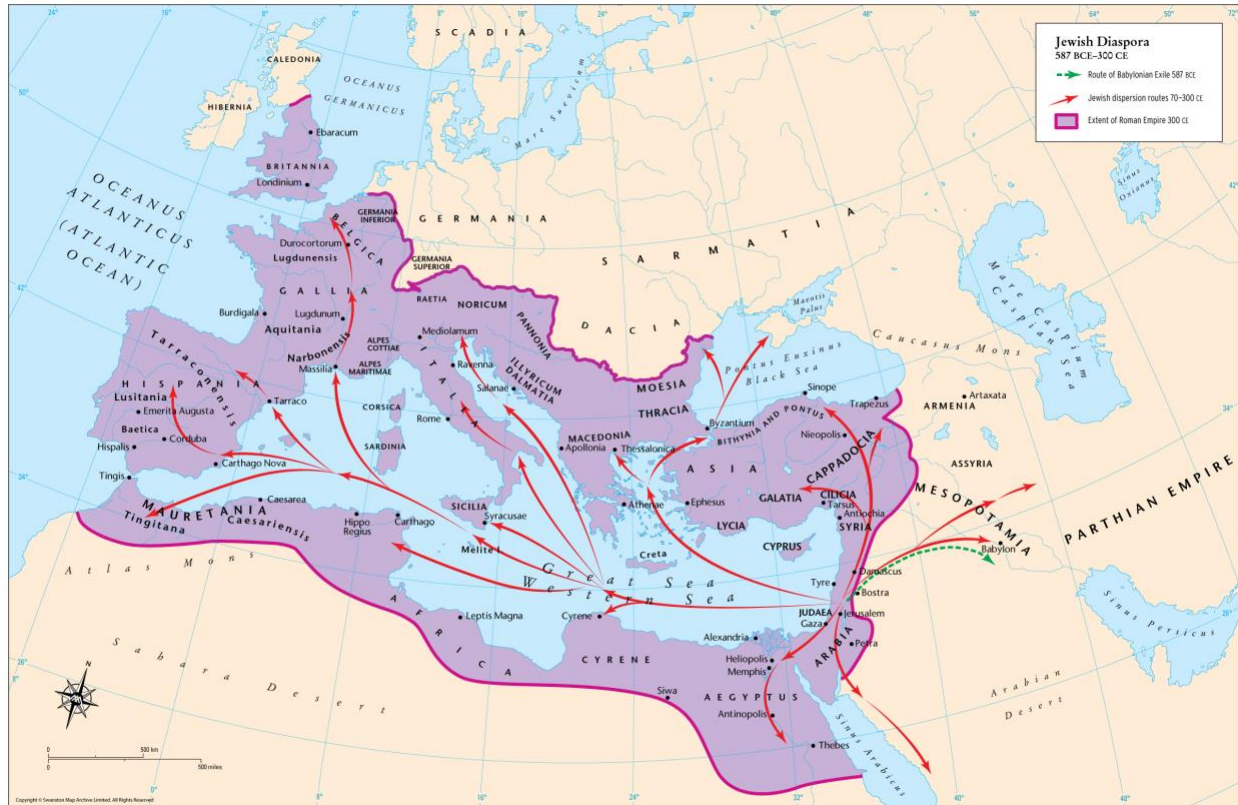
Although the Jews were permitted to return to Palestine in 537 B.C., large Jewish populations remained outside the region. Communities of diaspora Jews were established throughout the Mediterranean and spread as far as India and China.³⁰ Much like the times of the Egyptian exodus and Babylonian exile, the Jews preserved their distinctiveness from the surrounding population. Notwithstanding various degrees of assimilation to the local culture, the

departing Egypt would have been between 2 to 3 million. The exact number may not be known, however, it was large enough to frighten the Moabites (Num 22:3). R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 119.

³⁰ De Ridder, 61, 64.

diaspora Jews continued the practice of circumcision, observed the Sabbath, and adhered to dietary restrictions that made their lives notably different from their gentile neighbors.³¹

Map 1.1. Jewish Diaspora 587 B.C. – A.D. 300



Source: The Map Achieve

Egypt became a popular Jewish asylum after Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 597 B.C.³² Jewish immigration to Egypt increased after its defeat to Alexander in 323 B.C.³³ The

³¹ Ibid., 58.

³² John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE - 117 CE)* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 20.

³³ Ibid.

Letter of Aristeas reveals that Ptolemy I (323 – 282 B.C.) relocated one hundred thousand (100,000) Jews to Egypt for military service (12-27). Jews were attracted to the city of Alexandria for its promise of wealth, economic expansion, and social advancement.³⁴ Ptolemy I granted sections of the city of Alexandria to the Jewish population so they could observe their laws without the interference of gentile contact. By A.D. 38, they were concentrated in two of the city's five quarters.³⁵ The Jewish population in Alexandria grew to constitute forty percent of the city's population and become an eighth of Egypt's population. The Egyptian diaspora became the largest concentration of Jews outside of Palestine.³⁶

From Egypt, it is believed that Jews migrated to Cyrenaica (modern-day Libya) during the Ptolemaic dynasty. The Roman Jewish historian Josephus states that Ptolemy I actively encouraged this migration (*Ag. Ap.* 2.44). The Jews settled in the Pentapolis, the cities of Cyrene, Apollonia, Ptolemais, Teucheira, and Berenice.³⁷ Evidence reveals the existence of an independent Jewish community in Cyrene. Josephus quotes the Greek historian Strabo in that there were four classes of men within the city; the citizens, the husbandmen, the strangers, and the Jews (*Ant.* 14.7.2).

³⁴ Ibid., 22.

³⁵ De Ridder, 68.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Barclay, 232.

Diaspora Jews settled in cities within the region of Syria. Jewish communities emerged in the cities of Antioch, Damascus, Tyre, Sidon, and Ptolemais.³⁸ Josephus notes that the Jewish population was especially numerous in Syria (*J.W.* 7.43). The New Testament provides evidence of the Jewish presence in this region. The book of Acts shares how Saul secured authorization from the high priest in Jerusalem to travel to the synagogues in Damascus in order to persecute Jewish Christians (9:1-2). It also shares how Jewish Christians fled persecution from Jerusalem and traveled to Antioch, where they shared the gospel with the Jews and the gentile God-fearers residing in that city (11:19-20).

Ancient literary sources demonstrate the existence of Jewish diaspora communities in Asia Minor. The Greek rhetorician Apollonius Molon's remarks regarding the Jewish refusal to worship the gentile gods and their unwillingness to socialize with those different from them, suggests the presence of the Jewish identity within the region. His remarks and accusations of atheism and misanthropy further suggest that the Jewish population in Asia Minor maintained their distinctiveness from their gentile neighbors (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.79; 2.148; 2.258). The book of Acts provides biblical evidence of the existence of synagogues in this region. Upon his missionary trips, Paul visited the synagogues in the various Asia Minor cities (13:14; 14:1; 17:1-2, 10; 18:4).

From the book of Acts and Paul's epistle to the Romans, the city of Rome was known to have an established Jewish community. Diaspora Jews settled on the Tiber River's right bank

³⁸ Ibid., 243.

across from the city's civic center. The existence of synagogues and Jewish burial sites provides evidence of the Jews' distinctiveness from the surrounding communities. The diaspora community within Rome grew to become one of the larger concentrations of Jews outside Palestine, second only to Egypt.³⁹

Diaspora communities existed in other regions of the Mediterranean. Evidence of Jewish settlements has been found in Cyprus, Cilicia, Pontus, the Bosphorus, Macedonia, Greece, Illyricum, and parts of Italy outside of Rome.⁴⁰ Although there may have been some level of assimilation to the local culture, the Jewish identity was preserved across the region. Their continued observance of Jewish practices and their recognition of Jerusalem as their religious center demonstrates a unified Jewish identity shared across the diaspora communities.

The Synagogue

As the diaspora Jews settled and congregated in specific parts of the cities, one particular element commonly found in the diaspora communities was the establishment of a synagogue. In the absence of the Jerusalem Temple, the synagogue offered a place for Jews to meet and worship God. Assembling outside the Jerusalem Temple for instruction was not unique to the diaspora. There is biblical evidence for such Jewish gatherings. King Jehoshaphat sent officials, Levites, and priests traveling across Judah to teach the Law to the people (2 Chr 17:7-9).⁴¹ Jeremiah mentions that the eighty men from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria were destined for the

³⁹ Ibid., 290, 282.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 231.

⁴¹ De Ridder, 78.

house of the Lord (Jer 41:5). The First Temple was destroyed at this time which suggests Jewish gathering places away from the Temple.⁴²

Jerusalem remained the religious center of Judaism. The Jews understood the Temple to be God's presence on earth. It was here that the first fruits were to be delivered, and purification offerings were made.⁴³ Each adult male over the age of twenty contributed to the Temple tax, and tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims traveled to Jerusalem each year.⁴⁴ The synagogue became the location for weekly worship and instruction.⁴⁵ The synagogue was the house of prayer and instructions on Sabbath, Monday, Thursday, New Moon, and festivals.⁴⁶ The form of worship practiced within the synagogue was unprecedented; the Jews would worship without sacrifice.⁴⁷ Both Josephus and the Jewish philosopher Philo believed the purpose of the synagogue was to promote the moral and religious education of the community (*Ag. Ap.* 2.17; *Embassy* 156-57).⁴⁸

However, the synagogue appears to have served more than a meeting place for worship and instruction for diaspora Jews. The synagogue would become the location to acquaint the

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus; An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, trans by F.H. and C. H. Cave (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1969), 75.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 62.

⁴⁵ De Ridder, 77.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 80.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 81.

world with the Word of God. Unlike the Temple, gentiles were permitted to enter synagogues without the threat of death.⁴⁹ The synagogue is where gentiles learned about Judaism and came to know God. Gentile proselytes and God-fearers were in attendance when the apostle Paul started traveling to synagogues to share the gospel (Acts 13:43, 14:1; 17:4, 12; 18:4). Peter is led to share the gospel with the God-fearer Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 10:9-25). Prior to his encounter with Peter, Cornelius is described as a devout man who feared and prayed continually to God (Acts 10:2). When Peter first meets Cornelius, he states that Cornelius knows that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or visit a gentile. Although not explicitly stated, it may be assumed that Cornelius received such instruction and knowledge of God from the synagogue in Caesarea. Jesus has a similar encounter with a Roman God-fearer (Luke 7:1-10). The Jewish elders who approach Jesus on the centurion's behalf describe him as someone who loves Israel and was responsible for the construction of their synagogue. The centurion understood that God was able to heal his servant with just a word. Again, it may be assumed that the centurion received such instruction at the synagogue.

A Distinct People

As the diaspora communities emerged and grew within the gentile cities, the Jews continued to observe customs and practices that would set them apart from their neighbors. They rejected the local gods and avoided the pagan temples. Dietary restrictions caused the Jews to avoid sharing meals with gentiles. Males continued to be circumcised to demonstrate their

⁴⁹ Ibid., 80.

commitment to the covenant with God. Jews ceased all work on Saturday in order to observe the Sabbath. Jerusalem and its temple would remain their religious center. Their Jewish identity was distinct from their pagan neighbors.

Monotheism

The diaspora Jews worshipped God and did not participate in idol worship.⁵⁰ They rejected all other gods and refused to participate in pagan worship. God had instructed the early Israelites not to worship any other gods nor were they to construct any image of a heavenly being (Exod 20:3-4, Lev 19:4, Deut 6:14, Deut 12:30). The gentiles during this period worshipped several gods, crafted idols in which to direct their worship and developed mythologies surrounding these gods.⁵¹ Although there were those among the gentiles who worshiped a single pagan god, the Jewish people rejected this as it was not the one true God.⁵²

Dietary Restrictions

The books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy provide a list of foods God forbade the Jews from consuming (Lev 11; Deut 14). However, Jewish abstinence went beyond this list of forbidden foods. During the Second Temple period, meals were often hosted at pagan temples and associated with worship and sacrifice. Rather than risk consuming tainted food, the Jews avoided such social engagements. Jews ate with gentiles when they hosted the event. However,

⁵⁰ There may have been deviation from monotheism. Evidence reveals a level of syncretism among some Jews who worshiped other gods and participated in idol worship. Please see “Monotheism” under “Jewish Identity” in Chapter Four for evidence of syncretism.

⁵¹ Barclay, 430.

⁵² Ibid.

the requirement of reciprocity in giving and receiving hospitality made establishing friendships with gentiles difficult without accepting gentile invitations.⁵³

The separation of the Jews from the gentiles during meals is illustrated in the apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians (2:11-14). Paul shares how prior to the arrival of the circumcised party, Peter shared meals with the gentile believers. However, upon their arrival and fearing that he would be considered unclean, Peter separated himself from the gentiles and ate with the circumcised party.

Circumcision

As a covenant regulation, God instructs Abraham that he and his descendants are to be circumcised (Gen 17:10-12). God further instructs that any uncircumcised male is to be cut off from the Jewish people (Gen 17:14). This is illustrated when God meets Moses and his family as they are traveling to Egypt. God intends to kill Moses' uncircumcised firstborn son. God relents after Moses' wife Zipporah circumcises the child (Exod 4:24-26). The insertion of this brief narrative between God's instructions to Moses and His command to Aaron demonstrates the seriousness of circumcision. God would not permit an uncircumcised male to accompany His people.⁵⁴

The diaspora Jews continued to adhere to this practice to demonstrate their commitment to the covenant and the Jewish lifestyle. Circumcision was the core of their faith, and observance

⁵³ Ibid., 434.

⁵⁴ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*. Vol. 2. The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 125-26.

of the Law would be impossible without it.⁵⁵ The practice of circumcision was a requirement of any male proselyte to complete their conversion to Judaism as it demonstrated their commitment to the Jewish way of life.⁵⁶ Josephus described circumcision as becoming assuredly Jewish (*Ant.* 20.38). He further wrote that the Idumeans became Jewish when they submitted to circumcision (*Ant.* 13.257-58). The apostle Paul testified that every circumcised male was obligated to observe the whole Law (Gal 5:3).

The practice of circumcision was a requirement for any non-Jew male desiring to marry a Jewish woman. Such a practice would limit the marriage options of Jewish women and discourage exogamy.⁵⁷ Herod, who was far removed from Judaism observance, insisted that the Arab Syllaeus be circumcised before being permitted to marry Herod's sister Salome. Syllaeus refused, and marriage was not permitted. Similarly, Agrippa II refused the marriage between his sister Drusilla and Epiphanes because of Epiphanes' refusal to become circumcised.⁵⁸

Sabbath Observance

Sabbath observance was another practice that was distinctly Jewish. This practice is commanded in the book of Exodus (20:8) and was given the highest sanction as God Himself

⁵⁵ J.N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World*. (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1975), 136.

⁵⁶ Barclay, 439

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Louis H. Feldman, *Jew & Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 157.

observed the Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3).⁵⁹ The Jews were to cease all work on the seventh day. This day was to be holy to God and for complete rest. Much like circumcision, anyone who profanes or works on the Sabbath was to be cut off from their people and put to death (Exod 31:14-15). The Jews understood that the observance of the Sabbath was a sign of the relationship between God and His chosen people (Exod 31:13).⁶⁰

The diaspora Jews would cease all work on the Sabbath. In addition, they would abstain from engaging in any financial or legal matters.⁶¹ Jews serving in the military would not fight, march or perform any work on this day. Although Matthias would be the first to order his soldiers to fight if attacked on the Sabbath (1 Macc 2:41), this practice would not be observed by all Jews (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.276).⁶² In A.D. 66, Agrippa II warns the Jews that they will be defeated much as their forefathers were by Pompey should they observe the Sabbath. He is alluding to the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman general Pompey in 63 B.C. (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.393).

The Sabbath was to be a day for worship and instruction in the Law. Jews would gather at the synagogues to hear the Law expounded and be equipped to observe Jewish customs (Philo, *Embassy* 156-57).⁶³ Biblical evidence of these Sabbath gatherings at the synagogues may be found in the New Testament (Mark 1:21-22; Luke 4:16; Acts 13:42; 15:21; 17:2; 18:4). Jesus

⁵⁹ Barclay, 440.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 441.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Feldman, 159-61

⁶³ Barclay 417.

taught at the synagogue in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-22; Luke 4:31-32). He pronounced His ministry at the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-22). The apostle Paul traveled to the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, Thessalonica, and Corinth to proclaim the good news of Jesus' resurrection (Acts 13:14; 17:1-2; 18:4). At the Council of Jerusalem, James states that Moses is read in the synagogues every Sabbath (Acts 15:21).

Jerusalem and the Temple

The centrality of Jerusalem and the Temple was an important aspect of the diaspora Jewish identity. Each adult male over the age of twenty was to contribute a half-shekel as a Temple tax.⁶⁴ God commanded Moses to collect this tax for the atonement of that individual. All, regardless of economic status, were to pay the same amount. The collection was to be given to the service of the Tent of Meeting (Exod 30:11-16). The Jews understood this tax to be a ransom for their souls and that it would bring social and physical salvation.⁶⁵ The collection of this tax was conducted at defined times during the year and held in a communal bank before being delivered to Jerusalem. As all adult males were included, this provided a sense of individual belonging to the local community.⁶⁶

Jerusalem was Judaism's religious center. It attracted Jewish scholars from Babylon and Egypt. Students arrived from all parts of the Jewish world to study under these renowned

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 418.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

scholars.⁶⁷ Jews desiring to be buried at the site of the Resurrection and Final Judgment relocated to Jerusalem.⁶⁸

Intermarriage

The diaspora Jews adopted a strict policy against exogamy. Marriage to gentiles was forbidden.⁶⁹ Any gentile desiring to marry a Jew was to convert to Judaism. God had originally banned the intermarriage between the Jews and the people groups residing in the land of Canaan. This was to avoid their corrupting influence on the future generations that would cause them to turn from God (Deut 7:1-6).⁷⁰ However, the complete ban against exogamy appears after the return from Babylon. The concern is no longer the corrupting influence, rather, it is the desire to preserve the purity of the nation of Israel.⁷¹ Ezra believed that intermarriage with foreigners profaned the purity of the holy seed of Israel (9:2).⁷² Since the nations listed in Deuteronomy 7

⁶⁷ Jeremias, 75.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Instances of intermarriage did occur and may have been more common in larger population centers such as Alexandria, where there was increased contact with the gentiles. Feldman, 79. The higher level of assimilation among Jews may have been another contributor to exogamy. Tessa Rajak, "The Jewish Diaspora in Greco-Roman Antiquity," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 72, no. 2 (2018), 146-62.

⁷⁰ The original people groups that the Jews were banned from marrying were the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. The prohibition would later add the Ammonites and Moabites (Deut 23:1-6). Edomites and Egyptians were permitted after the third generation (Deut 23:7).

⁷¹ Christine Hayes, "Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources," *Harvard Theological Review* 92, no. 1 (January 1999): 3-36.

⁷² Matthew Thiessen, "Protecting the Holy Race and Holy Space: Judith's Reenactment of the Slaughter of Shechem," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 49 (2018), 165-88.

no longer existed during Ezra's time, he equates all foreign women to be like the Canaanites (9:1).⁷³

The diaspora Jews preserved the Jewish identity by keeping marriage bonds between Jews or between Jews and proselytes.⁷⁴ Since the offspring followed the father's ethnicity, the responsibility of preserving the continuity of Judaism fell upon the women and the women's fathers.⁷⁵ The Jewish practice of circumcision discouraged exogamy and assisted women in identifying with whom they may have sexual relations.⁷⁶ Jewish girls were taught to shudder at the thought of a sexual encounter with an uncircumcised man (Add Esth 14:15). Philo wrote that it was taboo for Jewish women to receive the alien seed of an uncircumcised man (*QG* 3.61). Due to the residential concentration of the Jews in the diaspora communities, endogamy was more likely.⁷⁷

⁷³ Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness; Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 243-44.

⁷⁴ Barclay, 410.

⁷⁵ Jewish fathers were responsible for ensuring their daughter's virginity and for making marriage arrangements. Barclay, 412.

⁷⁶ Barclay, 411, 439.

⁷⁷ Feldman, 79.

Table 2. The Jewish Identity

Jewish Practice	Distinctiveness
Monotheism	Jews believe in the one true God. He was to be worshipped at the Temple by His chosen people. They reject the pluralism and idols of the pagan gods. They refuse to visit pagan temples or consume food dedicated to these gods.
Dietary Restrictions	Jews abide by the dietary laws prescribed by Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. They separate themselves from gentiles during meals. They abstain from consuming pork, considered a national dish by the Romans.
Circumcision	Jews continue the practice of male circumcision as a symbol of their commitment to the covenant and the Jewish way of life. Uncircumcised males were not permitted to marry Jewish women.
Sabbath Observance	Jews observed the Sabbath on the seventh day. They considered it a sign of their unique relationship with God. They did not work or engage in financial matters. Jewish soldiers would not fight on the Sabbath.
Jerusalem and the Temple	Jerusalem was the home of the Temple. Jews understood the Temple to be God's presence on earth. A tax was collected and sent to the Temple each year. Thousands of pilgrims traveled to Jerusalem for the three major festivals. Jerusalem was the center of Jewish religious education.
Intermarriage	Exogamy is prohibited. Only marriage between Jews is permitted. Gentiles desiring to marry a Jew must first convert to Judaism.

Source: John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996); Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

A Strange People

This Jewish distinctiveness did not go unnoticed by their gentile neighbors. The Jews held beliefs and observed practices that appeared completely foreign to gentiles during the Second Temple period. It was the Jewish customs of circumcision, Sabbath observance, festivals, and dietary laws that would first attract the attention of the gentiles and draw the criticism of the ancient pagan writers. These customs caused the Jews to stand apart from the gentiles and become noticed as a strange people.⁷⁸ It would be this strangeness that would become the fundamental reason for the pagan anti-Semitism.⁷⁹ However, the Jewish rejection of idol

⁷⁸ Sevenster, 119.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 89.

worship, abstention from pork, and Sabbath observance would become the target of ridicule and cause the Jews to be accused of being atheists, unsociable, unpatriotic, and misanthropic.⁸⁰

Rejection of Polytheism and Idolatry

What would appear foreign and potentially hostile to the gentiles was the Jewish rejection of polytheism and idolatry. This rejection of polytheism and idol worship may have been interpreted by gentiles as an intolerance by the Jewish people for their gods.⁸¹ Socrates regarded the Jews as intolerant and claimed that they asserted that the premises of gentile polytheism were all wrong.⁸² Further, the Jews were viewed as unpatriotic and were accused of political disloyalty for their refusal to worship the local gods and engage in religious practices.⁸³

Due to their rejection of the pagan gods and idol worship, the Jews were similarly charged with atheism. A charge referred to the failure to participate in the prevailing cult, deviate from the polis religious ceremonies, and reject the state gods.⁸⁴ The Jews were accused of not believing in any god. The worship of an invisible God was incomprehensible to the gentiles. To them, if there was no idol, there was no god.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Emil Schurer, John. MacPherson, Sophia Taylor, and Peter Christie, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1994), 153.

⁸¹ Barclay, 431.

⁸² Feldman, 125-26.

⁸³ Feldman, 150; Barclay, 434.

⁸⁴ Sevenster, 96-97.

⁸⁵ Barclay, 432.

Apollonius Molon would be the first to define Jews as atheists (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.14). However, the accusation went beyond the Jews' rejection of the pagan gods. They were said to be hostile toward them. Pliny the Elder stated that the Jews had a remarkable contempt for the divine (*The Natural History* 13, 4.46). Lysimachus believed that Moses had instructed the Jews to destroy any temple or altar they encountered that was devoted to the pagan gods (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.34).

Pork Abstinence and Separatism at Meals

Jews were further viewed as unsociable due to their dietary restrictions, which caused them to separate themselves from gentiles during meals.⁸⁶ One such forbidden item often noted by gentiles was pork, considered a delicacy by the Greeks and the Romans. To the Romans, pork was a national dish, and abstinence from it would have been considered unpatriotic.⁸⁷ King Antiochus Epiphanes IV would order the Jews to sacrifice swine in his attempt to assimilate the Jewish people (1 Macc 1:47). Others, such as Plutarch, would suggest the reason for the Jewish abstinence from pork was due to the Jews having a special reverence for the pig.⁸⁸ So great was the curiosity of the Jewish abstinence from pork that Emperor Gaius Caligula once asked Philo, head of the embassy of Alexandrian Jews at the time, why the Jews did not eat pork.⁸⁹ Due to the dietary laws and their rejection of the pagan gods, fraternizing with gentiles was challenging

⁸⁶ Ibid., 436.

⁸⁷ Feldman, 167.

⁸⁸ Ibid..

⁸⁹ Ibid., 168.

as the Jews would not enter temples or engage in idol worship. In order to guard against violations of the covenant law, Jews found it easier to separate themselves from gentiles and socialize with other Jews. Because Jews often separated themselves from gentiles and abstained from certain foods, they were accused of being misanthropic.⁹⁰ The Greek historian Diodorus stated that the Jews' refusal to share meals with other nations best illustrated their hatred for humanity (*Bibliotheca Historia* 34-35, 1.2).

Circumcision

The Jewish practice of circumcision further contributed to the accusations of misanthropy. Although practiced by other cultures, this practice was mainly associated with the Jews by the Greeks and Romans, who viewed circumcision as a physical deformity and disqualified Jewish males from participating in the Olympic games.⁹¹ Because this practice distinguished Jews from their gentile neighbors, it was viewed as another means of the Jews attempting to separate themselves and provided further evidence of their hatred for humanity.⁹²

Sabbath Observance

The Jews halting of all work on the seventh day appeared odd to the gentiles as they tracked time in terms of months and years. The seven-day astrological week would not be introduced until the second-century B.C. and would not be adopted by the Romans until the first

⁹⁰ Barclay, 436.

⁹¹ Although circumcision was primarily associated with the Jews by the Greeks and Romans, this practice was common amongst Egyptians, Ethiopians, Colchians, and Syrians. Feldman, 154. The first-century B.C. historian Diodorus claimed that the Jews and Colchians derived this practice from the Egyptians since both people groups had migrated from that country (*Bibliotheca Historia* I 28.3; 55.5).

⁹² Feldman, 154-55.

century A.D.⁹³ The Jewish observance of the Sabbath and their unwillingness to work on this day was visible to the gentiles. Jews who enlisted in military service within gentile armies did not march or take up arms on the Sabbath. Jews refrained from engaging in any legal or financial transactions on this day.⁹⁴ That the Jews did not perform any work on the Sabbath caused some gentiles to view the Jews as lazy.⁹⁵

That the Jews did not work or take up arms was well known and used as an advantage by gentiles. When capturing Jerusalem in 63 B.C., Roman general Pompey waited until the Sabbath day to prepare for his attack, knowing that the Jews were not permitted to resist such preparatory work and would only act if attacked.⁹⁶ However, like other Jewish practices, the gentiles misunderstood the purpose of Sabbath observance. The Greek historian Strabo identified the Sabbath as a day of fasting, believing the Jews' abstinence went beyond work. So common was this belief amongst gentiles that the emperor Augustus wrote that not even a Jew observed fasting as diligently as he had done on that particular Sabbath.⁹⁷ Although the Sabbath restrictions placed on the Jews were seen as a disadvantage by the gentiles, their strict adherence to this practice further set them apart from the gentiles.⁹⁸

⁹³ Ibid., 158.

⁹⁴ Barclay, 440-42.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 440.

⁹⁶ Feldman, 161.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 163.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Intermarriage (Endogamy)

The Roman historian Tacitus' (A.D. 56-120) comment that Jews sleep apart and abstain from sexual intercourse with foreign women lends the strongest evidence for the practice of endogamy (*Histories* 5.5.1). This comment is part of a greater discourse where he describes how Jews only feel hate and enmity towards foreigners (Tacitus, *Histories* 5.5.1). Although there may have been instances of Jewish exogamy, from the gentile response, the practice of endogamy was significant enough across the various diaspora communities to attract the attention and criticism of gentile intellectuals.

Ancient Intellectual Allegations of Jewish Misanthropy

Intellectuals expressed accusations of Jewish misanthropy during the Second Temple period. The Greek historian Hecataeus wrote in 300 B.C. that Moses introduced a way of life to his Jewish followers that was hostile towards gentiles to cause them not to associate with non-Jews (Diodorus, *Bibliotheca Historia* 40, 3.4). The Egyptian priest Manetho (third century B.C.) claimed that Moses ordained Israelites to have no connections with gentiles (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.250). The Thessalian officer Lysimachus (first or second century B.C.) expressed that Moses taught that Jews were not to show goodwill to gentiles, that Jews should offer the worst advice, and seek to overthrow temples altars of the pagan gods (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.309). The Greek rhetorician Apollonius Molon (first century B.C.) accused the Jews of illiberalism as they would reject anyone who shared differing ideas regarding God and would not engage with anyone who adopted a different lifestyle from their own (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.258). The philosopher

Euphrates (first century B.C.) noted that Jews do not associate with gentiles during meals, libations, prayers, or sacrifice (Lucius Flavius Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 5.33).

Such accusations of misanthropy are reflected in the book of Esther. Haman states that the Jews are a group of people within the kingdom that have their own laws and do not keep the laws of the king (Esth 3:8). Josephus would paraphrase Haman's words to match the gentile sentiment of the time by describing the Jews as being unsocial, having separate religion and laws from other people, and were the enemy of the Persians and of all people (*Ant.* 11.209-14).

Although the Jews lived amongst the gentiles, their continued adherence to their customs and unwillingness to compromise for the sake of assimilation caused them to remain a distinct people. However, not all gentiles responded negatively to their distinctiveness. Rather, some gentiles were drawn to the Jewish identity.

Table 3. Gentile Negative Response to Judaism

Charge	Description
Atheism	The gentiles viewed the Jewish rejection of polytheism and idol worship as intolerance for their gods.
Atheism	Jews did not participate in the prevailing cult and rejected the state gods.
Unsocial	Jews viewed as unsociable due to their dietary restrictions, which caused them to separate themselves from gentiles during meals.
Unpatriotic	Jews were viewed as unpatriotic and suffered accusations of political disloyalty for their refusal to worship the local gods and engage in religious practices.
Unpatriotic	The Jewish abstinence from pork which was considered a national dish by the Romans.
Misanthropy	Jews separated themselves from gentiles and abstained from certain foods.
Misanthropy	The Jewish practice of circumcision.
Misanthropy	The Jewish practice of endogamy.

Source: Barclay, 431, 436; Sevenster, 96-97; Feldman, 150, 154-55, 167;

An Attractive People

From the biblical evidence, it is known that gentiles were attracted to Judaism. Although their experience of God may range from knowledge to full conversion, the gentiles were made

aware of God. The book of Exodus describes a multitude of people departing Egypt with the Jews (Exod 12:38). The prostitute Rahab elects God over loyalty to her king (Josh 2:8-11). The Moabite Ruth tells her mother-in-law Naomi that she will become a Jew and follow God (Ruth 1:16-18). The Queen of Sheba recognizes that God blessed Solomon with the throne of Israel (1 Kgs 10:6-9). Naaman becomes a God-fearer after being cured of his skin disease (2 Kgs 5:1-17). Balaam understands that the words he speaks are from God (Num 24:13). The sailors aboard the boat with Jonah pray to God that they may not perish (Jonah 1:14,16). Pharaoh recognized that God shared the interpretation of his dream with Joseph (Gen 41:39-41). Through a series of encounters with God, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar states that he will praise, exalt, and honor God (Dan 4:37). The Persian king Darius instructs all within his kingdom to fear God (Dan 6:25-27). The king and people of Nineveh repent after receiving God's warning through Jonah (Jonah 3:4-9). From these examples, it is evident that the knowledge of God was shared with gentiles from the time before the Egyptian exodus through the post-exilic period.

Eastern Practices

As the Roman empire expanded east, it became increasingly influenced by Eastern religions. The spread of Judaism in Rome was among the many non-Roman religions to enter the city.⁹⁹ Juvenal wrote that Rome was becoming a Greek city and, possibly worse, an oriental city (*Satire* 3.58-63). Several Romans became fascinated with the rites and rituals from Greece,

⁹⁹ Michael F. Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land; Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing LLC, 2010), 84.

Egypt, and Persia. Eastern cults presented Roman citizens with intriguing rituals and the promise of blessings, prosperity, and salvation in this world and in the next.¹⁰⁰

Moses

Ancient pagan writers highly regard Moses. The ancient Greek historian Hecataeus describes him as wise and valiant. Hecataeus would credit Moses for conquering the land and with building the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. According to Hecataeus, all the major Jewish institutions were to be credited to Moses. He would claim that Moses divided his people into twelve tribes to reflect the most perfect number (Diodorus, *Bibliotheca Historia* 40, 3).

The Egyptian priest Manetho identified Moses as an Egyptian priest who possessed esoteric knowledge that he may have learned from being a member of Pharaoh's court and from his father-in-law Jethro, the priest. Manetho would further describe Moses as a learned priest who was skilled and eloquent with words (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.250). This was a prized attribute amongst the Greeks.¹⁰¹ The Greek historian Strabo identified Moses as an Egyptian priest and a prophet who was in the same league as other great divinely inspired lawgivers (*Geographia* 16, 2.34-46).

Beyond his wisdom and courage, Moses was praised by the ancient writers for his beauty. This was another quality important to the ancients. The Greek philosopher Plato wrote that only the most handsome people should be elected to become philosopher-kings (*Republic* 7.535A).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 84-85.

¹⁰¹ Feldman, 237.

The Roman historian Pompeius Trogus commends Moses for his knowledge and beauty (Justin, *Historiae Philippicae* 36, *Eptoma* 2.11).

Monotheism

Monotheism was not exclusive to Judaism. The Greek philosophers Xenophanes and Antisthenes were monotheists.¹⁰² The Greek philosophical systems of Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism were based upon a single divine being who created and operated the cosmos.¹⁰³ The Roman author Varro thought the Jewish God to be the same as the pagan god Jupiter and believed that the Jews worshipped the highest God (Augustine, *The Harmony of the Gospels* 1.22.30). Gentile intellectuals may have been attracted to a God who rewarded virtue, interacted with the world through intermediaries, and had sovereignty over creation.¹⁰⁴

Antiquity

The Greeks and Romans placed a great emphasis on antiquity. They believed that humans were closest to the gods during the earliest times. The older and more eastern something was, the more divine and more credible it was regarded.¹⁰⁵ The Roman statesman Cicero wrote that the preservation of the rites of the family and their ancestors meant preserving the religious rites that

¹⁰² Meijer argues that Antisthenes and Xenophanes and were not monotheists. Their form of religious belief was that one god is greatest above the other gods. Antisthenes speaks of one god according to nature without the exclusion of other gods. Meijer states that “for Antisthenes there was no contradiction in his slogan regarding the existence of both the one god and the many gods.” Piet Meijer, *A New Perspective on Antisthenes: Logos, Predicate and Ethics in his Philosophy* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 75-84.

¹⁰³ Bird, 88.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 89.

¹⁰⁵ Feldman, 177.

the gods had handed down during ancient times (*The Law* 2.10.27). The East would consider the Greek and Roman civilizations as young. The Egyptian priest Solon referred to the Greeks as children as they did not possess an immemorial past (Plato, *Timaeus* 22B). Judaism was considered to have a high degree of authority due to its antiquity and distinguished history. Their lifestyle was not regarded as faddish since its history was as distinguished as the Greeks, Phoenicians, and Egyptians.¹⁰⁶

Ritual

In the ancient world, ritual was the key mechanism by which one demonstrated their piety and connected to the divine realm. The Jewish practices of prayer, almsgiving, calendrical observances, Scripture instruction, purity laws, and Sabbath observance would have been an attractive means to have an ongoing communion with a divine being.¹⁰⁷ Gentiles desiring to have a tangible means to maintain a continual relationship with God may have become attracted to the consistent nature of Jewish ritual.

Healing and Deliverance from Evil

The Jewish ability to dispel demons and cure illness attracted gentiles.¹⁰⁸ Magic in the ancient world had been thought to be the ability to petition the gods to accomplish particular tasks, manipulate people, and exert power over the spiritual realm. Illness was often identified as the result of an invading spirit that the appropriate spells could only drive out. The Jews were

¹⁰⁶ Bird, 85-86.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 86.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 88.

considered to be excellent magicians.¹⁰⁹ Pliny the Elder regarded Moses as one of the greatest magicians to have lived (*The Natural History* 30.11). Jewish rites, rituals, and names were often associated with deliverance from evil powers and were commonly used for healing. The Greek magical papyri that have been discovered invoke the words “by the God of the Hebrews” to effect an exorcism.¹¹⁰ It is believed that one-third of the magical papyri and amulets were based on Jewish elements.¹¹¹ Jewish exorcists were known to operate during the diaspora, where they offered their services to Jews and gentiles.¹¹² The book of Acts mentions Jewish exorcists in the city of Ephesus. The Jews and Greeks who practiced magic burned their books once they came to believe in Christ (Acts 19:13-19).

Virtues

The pagan religion did not include a moral component, as the pagan gods were amoral or immoral. In contrast, Judaism incorporated religious devotion, public and private living, and ethical behavior.¹¹³ However, it was the wisdom of the Jews that was most admired.¹¹⁴ Judaism offered answers to the Greco-Roman philosophical questions surrounding the good life and the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 87.

¹¹⁰ Theodore S. de Bruyn and Jitse H.F. Dijkstra, “Greek Amulets and Formularies from Egypt Containing Christian Elements: A Checklist of Papyri, Parchments, Ostraka, and Tablets.” *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 48 (2011): 163–216.

¹¹¹ Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch*, trans. John Bowden (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 70.

¹¹² Bird, 87.

¹¹³ Ibid., 90.

¹¹⁴ Feldman, 201.

purpose of human existence.¹¹⁵ The Pythagorean philosopher Ocellus paraphrases Genesis 1:28 when he suggests that man should be fruitful and multiply in order to fill the earth (*The Nature of the Universe* 45-46). The Roman historian Pompeius Trogus refers to Joseph's extraordinary talent and shrewd nature (Justin, *Historie Phillippicae* 36, 2.6-10). Joseph's ability to interpret dreams was another highly regarded aspect of his wisdom. This ability was considered the means used by the demonic to communicate with man. Pompeius Trogus would credit Joseph to be the first to develop the science of dream interpretation and that nothing could be hidden from him due to this ability.¹¹⁶

Civil and Economic Benefits

There were perceived civil and economic benefits to Judaism that may have become attractive to the gentiles. The Greek historian Strabo claimed that Judaism did not place a heavy financial burden upon its adherents (*Geographica* 16.2.36). Jews were exempt from military service and were not required to participate in the cultus of the Roman gods during the rule of Julius Caesar.¹¹⁷ Philo wrote that proselytes should join the Jewish people to receive material benefits (*Virtues* 103-104). Josephus claimed that gentile converts benefited from Jewish charities that provided alms to the poor (*Ag. Ap.* 2.283).

¹¹⁵ Bird, 90.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 89.

Social Identity

The distinct Jewish identity was highly visible to their gentile neighbors. The diaspora communities demonstrated a strong sense of group loyalty and values. Those gentiles of low social standing or who lacked any sense of loyalty to their cultural or geopolitical circumstances may have become attracted to the potential of a Jewish identity. Judaism offered a strong identity that was flexible enough to flourish in the Greco-Roman polis.¹¹⁸

Table 4. Gentile Attraction to Judaism

Characteristic	Description
Eastern Practices	Eastern cults presented Roman citizens with intriguing rituals and the promise of blessings, prosperity, and salvation in this world and the next.
Moses	Moses was held in high regard. He was praised for his wisdom, courage, and beauty.
Monotheism	Gentile intellectuals were attracted to a God who rewarded virtue, interacted with the world through intermediaries, and had sovereignty over creation.
Antiquity	Judaism is considered to have a high degree of authority due to its distinguished history, as the Greeks and Romans believed the earliest humans were closest to the gods.
Ritual	The Jewish practices of prayer, almsgiving, calendrical observances, Scripture instruction, purity laws, and Sabbath observance provided an attractive means to have a continuous communion with a divine being.
Healing	Magic in the ancient world was thought to be the ability to petition the gods to accomplish particular tasks, manipulate people, and exert power over the spiritual realm. Illness was often identified as the result of an invading spirit that the appropriate spells could only drive out. The Jews were considered excellent magicians due to their ability to dispel demons and cure illness.
Virtues	Jews were admired for their wisdom. The ability to interpret dreams was a highly regarded aspect of wisdom.
Economic Benefits	Greek historian Strabo claimed that Judaism did not place a heavy financial burden upon its adherents. According to Philo and Josephus, proselytes received material benefits and Jewish charities contributed alms to the poor.
Civil Benefits	Jews were exempt from military service during Julius Caesar's rule.
Identity	Gentiles of low social standing were attracted to the group loyalty and values of the Jewish identity.

Source: Feldman, 177, 201; Bird, 86-87, 89-90; Justin, *Historie Phillippicae* 36.2.6-10; Strabo, *Geographica* 16.2.36; Philo, *Virtues* 103-104; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.283.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 90.

A Missional People

God's Witness

Living as a distinct people amongst the gentile nations was not for their own benefit. It was their divine mission to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation in order to draw the curiosity and awe of their gentile neighbors (Exod 19:4-6).¹¹⁹ This mission did not cease with the Babylonian exodus. The diaspora Jews understood that this was an ongoing mission and the purpose of their creation. The prophet Isaiah instructs the Jews that they are to be God's witnesses to the gentiles of His universal sovereignty (Isa 43:10-13). Isaiah would continue to instruct the Jews that they were to bring justice to the nations, that they were appointed as the covenant to the people, and were to be a light to the nations (Isa 42:1, 6; 49:6).¹²⁰

This understanding of the Jewish mission is echoed by the Jewish religious scholar Hillel the Elder (first century B.C.) who instructed the Jews to love their fellow creatures and draw them near to the Torah (*Pirkei Avot* 1.13). The number of gentile proselytes and God-fearers found throughout the Mediterranean diaspora resulted from the witness and missionary activity undertaken by Jews committed to being God's witness and who declared His praise among the nations.¹²¹ Hengel and Schoeps suggest that Saul, having learned under Hillel's grandson

¹¹⁹ Peskett and Ramachandra, 107.

¹²⁰ Scholars continue to debate the identity of the servant in Isaiah's servant songs. The term servant has been argued to refer to corporate Israel, while other scholars argue that Isaiah was referring to the Messianic figure that was to come. What is relevant to this study is the Second Temple period Jews' understanding of the servant to be the believing remnant of Israel. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 56.

¹²¹ F.F. Bruce, *Paul; Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 129.

Gamaliel, may have shared this commitment to this Jewish mission to the gentiles prior to his encounter with Christ.¹²² Schoeps further argues that Paul's statement in Galatians 5:11 may be possible evidence of his mission to the gentiles prior to preaching the good news of Jesus Christ.¹²³ Paul states that "if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted?" This statement suggests that prior to his acceptance of Christ, Paul taught that conversion to Judaism was the only way for gentiles to become children of God. Now that he is teaching that gentiles may find salvation through their faith in Christ, Paul is encountering persecution from the believing and non-believing Jews who continue to argue that gentiles must convert to Judaism in order to join the family of God.

Jewish Acceptance of Gentile Conversion

What is debated is whether Jews were open to gentile conversion and, if so, to what degree did the Jewish people actively engage in proselytizing gentiles to Judaism. There are three positions within this debate:

Table 5. Three Positions on the Jewish Acceptance of Gentile Conversion to Judaism

Three Positions of Jewish Acceptance of Gentile Conversion	
1	Jewish unfavorable of gentile conversion to Judaism.
2	Jewish favorable of gentile conversion to Judaism. Did not actively proselytize.
3	Jewish favorable of gentile conversion to Judaism. Did actively proselytize.

¹²² Martin Hengel, "Die Ursprünge Der Christlichen Mission." *New Testament Studies*. 20, no. 1 (1971): 23; Hans Joachim Schoeps. *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*. trans. Harold Knight (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke Co., 2022), 219; F.F. Bruce, *Paul; Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 128-29.

¹²³ Schoeps, 219.

Scholars supporting the first two positions will argue that there is no textual evidence in the Bible of gentiles being converted to Judaism. There is no mention of the multitude of people who departed Egypt with the Jews of being converted. Although Ruth stated that she would follow God, nothing states that she was converted. Moreover, with Joseph's marriage to an Egyptian, Judah's to a Canaanite, Moses to a Midianite and Ethiopian, and David to a Philistine, there are no accounts of the spouse being converted.¹²⁴

Those who support the first position believe Jews were opposed and discouraged gentile conversion to Judaism. They reference ancient literary works that express Jewish separatist ideals. The *Letter of Aristeas* states that the Jews will remain pure in body and soul by not associating with non-Jews. *Jubilees* instructs Jews to avoid gentiles because they are sinners (239, 247, 257). *2 Baruch* calls the other nations wicked and unrighteous and declares that Israel has no equal in holiness and obedience.

Considering the evidence for the existence of proselytes biblically and from other ancient literary sources, scholars supporting the second position will acknowledge that Jews were agreeable to gentile conversion to Judaism. Those supporting this position believe that the Jews did not actively pursue proselytizing. McKnight claims that although the Jews encouraged and admitted proselytes, there is no evidence of Jews aggressively proselytizing gentiles and drawing them into Judaism. He would further state that the lack of data surrounding initiation into

¹²⁴ Feldman, 289.

Judaism supports the claim that Judaism was not a missional religion.¹²⁵ Goodman argues that if such a universal proselytizing mission existed, any active effort by members to draw others that are normally considered outside the group would have had to have been acknowledged and approved by the other members of the group.¹²⁶ According to Goldenberg, no such evidence exists in any Jewish community.¹²⁷ Kaminsky will further state that the Hebrew Bible does not endorse an active mission to the gentiles.¹²⁸

Scholars in support of the third position believe that Jews were both agreeable to gentile conversion to Judaism and actively engaged in proselytizing. Goheen argues that the more modern concept of mission is being mistakenly applied to what the Second Temple period Jews understood as mission.¹²⁹ Israel was to be a display people that would attract nations to what God had originally intended and to the goal in which He was moving. Israel's mission was to be what God called it to be, it was not about going or doing. Israel was to be a distinctive people and a counterculture amongst the gentile nations. Israel was not to exist for themselves. They were to exist for God's glory and His mission.¹³⁰ According to Goheen, in order to become a

¹²⁵ Scot McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles; Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 48, 88.

¹²⁶ Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5.

¹²⁷ Robert Goldenberg, *The Nations that Know Thee Not: Ancient Jewish Attitudes towards Other Religions* (New York: NYU Press, 1998), 94.

¹²⁸ Joel Kaminsky, "A Light to the Nations: Was There Mission and or Conversion in the Hebrew Bible?" *Jewish Studies Quarterly*. 16, no. 1 (2009): 6–22.

¹²⁹ Goheen, 30.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

distinctive people, the Jews would have to face in three directions. They would have to look backward to God; creation and embody His original design for human life. They would have to look forward to the consummation of a restored humanity on a new earth. They would have to look outward to the nations and confront their idolatry.¹³¹ Hengel and Schwemer argue that it was the Jews' power of attraction that brought forth gentile converts.¹³² Bedell suggests that a sacred magnetism exuded from the synagogues that drew in the gentiles.¹³³

Martin-Achard explains that mission during the Old Testament was understood as something different than the more modern definition of intentional activities to incorporate outsiders into the believing community. Martin-Achard argues that the Old Testament demonstrates that the Jewish mission consisted of three parts, universalism, incorporation of foreigners, and proselytizing.¹³⁴ Universalism in that the Jews assert that the God of the Scripture is the only God and Lord over the entire earth. Wright furthers this understanding by stating that God's mission is His people living His way for all the nations to see.¹³⁵ Barth agrees that God's people must only live publicly for His glory.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Hengel and Schwemer, 75-76.

¹³³ Clifford H. Bedell, "Mission in Intertestamental Judaism" in *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach*. ed. William J. Larkin, Jr. and Joel F. Williams (New York, NY: Maryknoll, 1998), 25.

¹³⁴ Martin-Archad, 5.

¹³⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 22-23.

¹³⁶ Markus Barth, *The Broken Wall: A Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Vancouver, B.C.: Regent Press, 2002), 171.

Peskett and Ramachandra claim that the book of Deuteronomy may be read as a missional charter for the entire Hebrew Bible. They believe that relocating to a land and diligently practicing a law that distinguishes them from other nations would draw the curiosity and awe of their gentile neighbors.¹³⁷ De Ridder furthers the argument for the attractional mission model by stating that the exile from Israel's national boundaries should not be looked at as punishment for sin. He quotes Rabbi Eleazer in that God dispersed Israel among the nations so that proselytes may be added to their number. De Ridder equates Israel to a wonderful jewel that was not to be wrapped in a napkin, hidden, and buried. Rather it was to be displayed for all to see.¹³⁸

Baron references the unprecedented Jewish population growth between the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the census conducted by emperor Claudius in A.D. 48 as evidence of the Jews actively proselytizing. At the time of the fall of Jerusalem, the Jewish population was one hundred and fifty thousand (150,000).¹³⁹ The census results revealed that no less than six million, nine-hundred and forty-four thousand (6,944,000) Jews resided within the Roman empire.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Peskett and Ramachandra, 107.

¹³⁸ De Ridder, 75-77.

¹³⁹ Baron estimates a significant decline in Israel's population from 1000 B.C. to 586 B.C. due to the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions. He estimates that the population in 1000 B.C. would have been 450,000 in Judah and 1,350,000 in Israel. By 733/701 B.C., the population would reduce to 300,000 – 350,000 in Judah and 800,000 in Israel. In 586 B.C., the population in Judah would be 150,000, and 0 would remain in Israel. Salo W. Baron, "Population." in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, vol. 16 (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 384-85.

¹⁴⁰ Baron argues that the Jewish population experienced unprecedented growth during the Hasmonean and Herodian rule. According to Baron, the Jews comprising nearly 40 percent of the 500,000 to 1,000,000 Alexandrian

Barclay argues that the diaspora Jews looked favorably upon the conversion of gentiles to Judaism and their acceptance within the Jewish communities. He references the Egyptian diaspora Jew Philo who stated that he looked forward to the time when Israel would be restored and when other nations would abandon their ancestral customs and adopt those of the Jews. Barclay shares that the proselyte underwent such thorough resocialization that they abandoned their ancestral customs to become redefined as members of the Jewish nation (*Moses* 2.43-44). Something that started being referred to as "becoming a Jew."¹⁴¹

Jeremias believes that Jewish missionary activity began during the post-exilic period and is closely connected to the rise and growth of the diaspora. He argues that Judaism was the first great missionary religion, and the diaspora was its primary channel. Their dispersion amongst the gentiles was no longer to be viewed as punishment, rather, it was to be viewed as an opportunity to glorify God. Evidence of its success may be found in the book of Acts. Everywhere the Christian missionaries traveled, they encountered proselytes and God-fearers.¹⁴²

New Testament Evidence

Although the New Testament focuses on the time after the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the growth of the early church, it does provide valuable clues regarding Jewish proselytizing. Several of Jesus' disciples traveled to synagogues to share the gospel. Philip traveled to Samaria and Caesarea (Acts 8:4-5, 40). Peter traveled to Caesarea to share the gospel with the gentile

population demonstrates the significant growth of the Jewish communities outside of Palestine during this period. He contributes this to active proselytizing by the Jewish people. Baron, 384-85.

¹⁴¹ Barclay, 408.

¹⁴² Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations* (London, UK: SCM Press LTD, 1967), 11, 14, 16.

Cornelius (Acts 10:23-24). God-fearers received the gospel in Antioch (Act 11:19-20). Paul traveled to synagogues in Damascus, Jerusalem, Antioch, and throughout Asia Minor to proclaim the gospel (Acts 9:20, 28, 11:26). Phillip would baptize an Ethiopian God-fearer or proselyte (Acts 8:27-39). Within the Jerusalem church, Nicolas, the proselyte from Antioch, was elected as one of the seven (Acts 6:5). That Peter, Paul, and the other disciples encountered God-fearers and proselytes suggests that Jews had been instructing the gentiles at the synagogues prior to their arrival. Christianity's extraordinary growth depended on the synagogue, as Paul built upon the ground prepared by the Jewish mission.¹⁴³

The book of Acts and Paul's epistles further suggest that Jews continued to travel between synagogues to instruct the gentiles. Paul would challenge the Judaizers who instructed the gentiles to convert to Judaism to receive Christ (Gal 6:12-13). The biblical evidence shows that the travel of rabbis between synagogues to provide instruction was a common practice adopted by Paul, Barnabas, and other Jewish Christians.

The Future Restoration of Israel

During the Second Temple period, Jews understood that they continued to live in exile. The glorious message of the prophets remained unfulfilled. God had not returned to Zion.¹⁴⁴ The

¹⁴³ Ibid., 16; Although Jesus' comment in Matthew 23:15 that the Pharisees would travel both sea and land to make a single convert has been argued as evidence of Jewish proselytizing, the God-fearers and proselytes encountered in the synagogues by His disciples presents the strongest evidence of a Jewish mission prior to Christ. Bird disagrees that Matthew 23:15 is evidence of Jewish proselytizing. Rather, he argues that there is sufficient epigraphical, archeological, literary, and biblical evidence of gentile adherence to Judaism. Michael F. Bird, *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 70, 45.

¹⁴⁴ N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God. The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 268-69.

exilic and post-exilic periods would end when God comes to earth to establish the Messianic age.¹⁴⁵ The Jews awaited the building of the eschatological temple, the restoration of the twelve tribes, the rule of David, the submission of the gentiles, and the prevalence of righteousness (Isa 40-66; Ezek 34-48; Tob 13-14; 1 En 24-25, 89-90, 91; Jub 1, 23-25, 33; T. Benj. 9; T. Mos 3-4, 10; Pss Sol 8, 117; CD; 1QM; 11QT).¹⁴⁶ The restoration of Israel was the constant anchor to all hopes and was synonymous with Jewish eschatology.¹⁴⁷

Messianic Expectation

Messianic expectations emerged during the mid-second century B.C. The sociopolitical environment following the collapse of the Hasmonean dynasty triggered a reinterpretation of scriptural traditions that evolved into messianic expectations. Socio-religious movements emerged shortly after Herod the Great's death, expressing growing expectations and hope for God's intervention.¹⁴⁸ Believing they were still in exile, Israel's hope for national deliverance (restoration eschatology) was rooted in the Old Testament.¹⁴⁹ Although there is little evidence of messianic expectation in the early fifth to late second century B.C., the Old Testament does

¹⁴⁵ Michael A. Knibb, "The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period," in *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 256.

¹⁴⁶ E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 79-88, 95-98, 106-108; 1992, 290-98.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁴⁸ Bird, 34.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

provide a proto-messianic notion that the future of Israel is linked to the continuing line of David.¹⁵⁰

Table 6. Old Testament Proto-Messianic Passages

Proto-Messianic Notion	Passage
Scepter	Gen 49:10
Star	Num 24:17
Davidic Covenant	2 Sam 7:12-16
Lord's Anointed	Ps 2
Shoot of Jesse	Isa 11:1-6
Suffering Servant	Isa 53
Branch of David	Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 6:12
Shepherd over God's flock	Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25
Son of Man	Dan 7:9, 13-14
Booth of David	Amos 9:11

Source: Michael Bird. *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 34-35.

Second Temple Judaism's interpretation of the prophets Isaiah and Daniel reveals that they associated the restoration of Israel with the arrival of the Messiah. They awaited the Davidic King, the Son of Man, and the suffering Servant. Much as Moses led the Jews in the first Exodus, the one like Moses was to lead them in the second Exodus.¹⁵¹ The reinterpretation of the prophets evolved into messianic expectations.

The messianic expectations were diverse. There was not a single uniform description of the Messiah. The expectations differed on how he accomplished his task and the level of divine assistance he would receive.¹⁵² The *Psalms of Solomon* 17-18 and the *War Scroll* (1QM) understood the Messiah as an earthly warrior. *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra* describes a preexistent and

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 25, 27.

¹⁵¹ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 16, 18.

¹⁵² Bird, 28.

transcendent figure. The *Damascus Document* (CD) and other Dead Sea scrolls identify two messianic figures: the priestly Messiah of Aaron and the royal Messiah of Israel.¹⁵³ What they share in common is that the Messiah is from the Davidic line.

Table 7. Intertestamental Messianic Expectations

Messianic Text	Davidic	Priest	Divine
Psalms of Solomon 17 & 18	Yes	No	No
1 Enoch 37-71	Yes	No	Yes
4 Ezra	Yes	No	Yes
2 Baruch	Yes	No	Yes
Dead Sea Scrolls	Yes	Yes	Yes / No

Source: Michael Bird, *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 25-50; Michael A. Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Jun 1995, 2(2), 165-84; John J. Collins, "'He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See': Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Jun 1995, 2(2), 145-64.

Parallels exist between the Old Testament and intertestamental literature. *Psalms of Solomon 17* parallels Isaiah 11:1-5 as it petitions God to raise up the Davidic king who will rule Israel for eternity.¹⁵⁴ *1 Enoch 37-41* and *4 Ezra* refer to Daniel's Son of Man (7:13). *1 Enoch* describes the Son of Man sitting upon the throne of God's glory, judging the wicked, and being worshipped by the kings and all the people of the earth.¹⁵⁵ *4 Ezra* describes the man of the sea coming on the clouds like God.¹⁵⁶ The Dead Sea scrolls share similar parallels with Isaiah 11:1-5. The *War Scroll* (4Q285 3-4) refers to the branch of David. The *Florilegium* (4Q174 1:13)

¹⁵³ Ibid., 26.

¹⁵⁴ Joel Willitts, "Matthew and Psalms of Solomon's Messianism: A Comparative Study in First-Century Messianology," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 22, no. 1 (2012): 27-50.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

defines the branch of David as the savior of Israel. The *Rule of Blessings* (1Q28b 5:20-23) and the *Pesher of Isaiah* (4Q161 3:23-24) describe him as a righteous ruler.¹⁵⁷

Jesus of Nazareth

This hope for restoration was expressed through messianic expectations. Although the attributes ascribed to the Messiah varied, there was a common belief that there would be a king from the line of David that would defeat Israel's enemies and inaugurate the kingdom of God. Through His ministry and after His resurrection, thousands of Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers during the Second Temple period recognized Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of the messianic promise.

Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man, alluding to the Danielic figure (Mark 14:62; cf. Dan 7:13-14). The messianic expectations associate the Son of Man with the Messiah. He is to sit on the throne of God and execute judgment (1 En 46.4-6; 4 Ezra 12.32-33; 11QMelch 2.9-14; 4Q246 2.5-6; cf. Dan 7:14).¹⁵⁸ Through this reference, Jesus claims He has inaugurated the salvation and restoration of God's people.¹⁵⁹ Jesus identifies with the suffering servant when He quotes Isaiah 61 and tells His audience that it had been fulfilled in their hearing (Luke 4:18-21; cf. Isa 61:1-2). He expresses Isaiah's concept of substitutionary atonement when he speaks of

¹⁵⁷ Micahel A. Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," *Dead Sea Discoveries*. 2, no. 2 (June 1995): 165-84.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.; Florentino Garcia Martinez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, ed., *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden; New York; Koln: Brill, 1999), 495, 1207.

¹⁵⁹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 153.

His blood being poured out for the forgiveness of sin for the many (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; cf. Isa 53:11-12).¹⁶⁰

The Gospel authors acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. Matthew's opening statement that Jesus is the Messiah, son of David, and the son of Abraham (1:1) demonstrates his belief that Jesus is the messianic King and the One who will deliver Israel from exile.¹⁶¹ Mark's opening statement is no less explicit in his belief when he writes that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God (1:1). Luke delivers the message of Jesus through the angel Gabriel who informs Mary that she will give birth to the Son of God and the Davidic King (1:32-33). John starts his Gospel with the divine nature of Jesus, claiming that He is the incarnation of God's Word (1:1-4).

Peter views the resurrection event as evidence of Jesus' divine nature. Jesus' victory over death and His ascension to heaven distinguishes Him as the Messiah.¹⁶² Similar to Peter, Paul's encounter with the risen Jesus serves as evidence that Jesus is the Messiah (Acts 9:3-6). For Paul, the risen Jesus is the culmination of God's redemptive plan and the climax of salvation history.¹⁶³ Jesus is the guarantor of final salvation.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 155-56.

¹⁶¹ Hays, 111.

¹⁶² Brandon D. Crowe, *The Hope of Israel; The Resurrection of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 27.

¹⁶³ Brad H. Young, *Paul the Jewish Theologian; A Pharisee Among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1997), 31, 33.

¹⁶⁴ Crowe, 48.

New Jewish Sect

Jewish Christians became a new Jewish sect called "the Way." They continued to observe the Torah and preserved their Jewish identity. Jewish Christians believed the awaited restoration of Israel was found in Jesus (Acts 4:12; 10:43). Everything they taught about Jesus was in accordance with the Law and with all that was written in the Prophets (Acts 24:14; 28:23). God had fulfilled His promise to their fathers in accordance with Psalm 2 (Acts 13:33). The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus was the inauguration of the promise which would be concluded upon Jesus' return (inaugurated eschatology).¹⁶⁵ The concept of inaugurated eschatology was shared with the Essenes and was rooted in Psalm 110.¹⁶⁶

Gentile Inclusion

Peter's baptism of the God-fearer Cornelius and his family triggered a controversial issue, the requirements for gentiles to be part of God's salvation. Based upon the evidence presented by Peter, Paul, and Barnabas, James decided that gentile conversion to Judaism was not required (Acts 15). He believed that the reports of gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit were consistent with

¹⁶⁵ Alexander E. Stewart, "The Temporary Messianic Kingdom in Second Temple Judaism and the Delay of the Parousia: Psalm 110:1 and the Development of Early Christian Inaugurated Eschatology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59, no. 2 (2016): 255-70.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 264.

prophetic expectations.¹⁶⁷ He references Amos 9:11-12 which speaks of the inclusion of gentiles as gentiles as part of the people of God.¹⁶⁸

Jewish Proselytizing After Christ

The Jewish Christian mission to the gentiles started at the church in Antioch by Hellenistic Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene (Acts 11:20). After witnessing God working through the gentiles, Barnabas would retrieve Saul from Tarsus (Acts 11:23-25). The use of the synagogue remained the primary means to proselytize since gentiles would gather there each week to hear the Word of God in their native language.¹⁶⁹ Paul and other Jewish Christians found a consistent presence of God-fearers and proselytes within the synagogue.¹⁷⁰

The success of Paul's mission to the gentiles is built upon the ground of the Jewish mission.¹⁷¹ He restricted his gentile mission to the God-fearers previously drawn to Judaism by Jewish proselytizers. They already attended synagogue, believed in God, and lived in accordance with the moral precepts of the Torah. The God-fearers would understand Paul's Old Testament references and the role of the Messiah in Jewish eschatology and soteriology.

¹⁶⁷ W. Edward Glenny, "The Septuagint and Apostolic Hermeneutics: Amos 9 in Acts 15," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 22, no. 1 (2012): 2.

¹⁶⁸ Charles Haddon Savelle, Jr., "James's Use of Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 31, no. 1 (2021): 54-71.

¹⁶⁹ De Ridder, 80, 83.

¹⁷⁰ McKnight, 74.

¹⁷¹ Joachim Jeremias. *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*, 16.

During the Second Temple period, the Jewish diaspora constituted the primary channel for the Christian mission. Paul and his fellow Jewish Christians encountered proselytes and God-fearers at every synagogue to which they traveled.¹⁷² The God-fearers would share the gospel with their gentile neighbors, causing the church to grow beyond the Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers (Acts 13:44).¹⁷³ This later influx of non-God-fearing gentiles is evidenced by Paul's writings becoming hard to understand and being distorted by the untaught (2 Pet 3:16).¹⁷⁴ During the Second Temple period, Jews were God's witness to the nations of the past and future restoration of Israel, which would bring salvation to all humankind. Jewish Christians shared with the gentiles the arrival of the Messiah and the inauguration of the kingdom of God. The wild branches grafted into the Olive tree with the natural branches continue to be God's witness until Jesus' return.

Delimitations

The scope of this research will be contained to the Jewish diaspora communities surrounding the Mediterranean during the Second Temple period (516 B.C. – A.D. 70). Any reference to the exilic period will be the Judean exile to Babylon unless otherwise explicitly

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Bruce, 166.

¹⁷⁴ Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple; Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 174.

noted. The term Jew will refer to the descendants from the southern kingdom of Judah or those later incorporated into that ethno-religious group.¹⁷⁵

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of clarification, the key terms have been defined for this study:

Table 8. Definition of Terms

Term	Description
Jew (Judean)	Persons descended from the southern kingdom of Judah (tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi) or otherwise incorporated into this ethno-religious group.
Israelite	The term Israel and Israelite refers to the original nation of Israel prior to the division of the kingdom, the ten northern tribes after the kingdom's division (northern kingdom of Israel), and the future reunited kingdom of the twelve tribes.
Mediterranean Diaspora	The Jewish communities outside Palestine surrounding the Mediterranean Sea to include Northern Africa, Greece, Italy, and Asia Minor.
Second Temple Period	The time period between 516 B.C. when the Second Temple was completed and A.D. 70 when the Second Temple was destroyed.
Proselytizing	The attempt to convert gentiles to Judaism.
Evangelism	The same definition as proselytizing except used in the Christian context.
Centripetal Mission	Jews living as a distinct people to attract gentiles to Judaism
God-Fearer	A gentile who attaches themselves to Judaism without fully converting
Proselyte	A gentile who has fully converted to Judaism.

Purpose Statement

This expository study will demonstrate that the purpose of the Jewish diaspora during the Second Temple period was to prepare the nations for the coming of Christ in accordance with Isaiah 43.

¹⁷⁵ Staples defines “Jew as a term that denoting a person descending from the southern kingdom of Judah or otherwise incorporated into that ethno-religious group.” According to Staples, all Jews are Israelites. However, not all Israelites are Jews. Jason A. Staples, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism: A New Theory of People, Exile, and Israelite Identity* (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 52. Josephus states that “there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates” (*Ant.* 11.133). In his use of the term *Ioudaios* (Jew), Josephus is referring to the Judeans. Staples, 43-51.

Methodology

This study will employ historical-criticism to understand the original meaning of the text within the historical and cultural context in which it was written. This form of literary criticism uses several methods when interpreting the text; source-criticism, form-criticism, and redaction-criticism. Source-criticism focuses on issues related to the original authorship. Form-criticism identifies the sections and genres of the text. Reaction-criticism focuses on the editing or modifications to the original source text.¹⁷⁶

The study will begin by answering two questions from which this entire argument will be built.

- Did Second Temple Judaism accept gentile converts?
- If so, did diaspora Jews actively proselytize during the Second Temple period?

The current literary works surrounding this debate may be summarized into three positions. First, those who believe that Second Temple Judaism was not accepting of gentile conversion. Thus, they did not actively proselytize. Second, those who believe Second Temple Judaism was accepting of gentile conversion. However, they did not actively proselytize. Third, those who believe Second Temple Judaism was accepting of gentile conversion and actively proselytized. The strengths and weaknesses of the arguments from the three positions will be examined to determine the Jews' level of acceptance of gentile conversion and the degree to which they actively proselytized. The outcome of this examination will demonstrate that the

¹⁷⁶ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral; A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 201.

diaspora Jews were accepting of gentile conversion and actively proselytized during the Second Temple period.

The study will continue by developing an understanding of God's purpose for His creation of the nation of Israel. It will explore the Abrahamic promise and what it meant for the Israelites and the gentiles. This study will demonstrate how Israel understood its role as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation meant living as a distinct people and attracting the curiosity of their pagan neighbors. Further evidence will be examined to support that God's mission for Israel is detached from the land promise and that they were to continue to live as a distinct people while in exile.

Having determined that the Jews were to continue to live as a distinct people outside the national borders of Israel, this study will demonstrate how they continued to distinguish themselves from their gentile neighbors. It will identify the Jewish diaspora communities that emerged in the Mediterranean. It will examine the various degrees of assimilation by the Jewish people and the customs that set them apart. This study will further discuss the role and importance of the synagogue and the use of the vernacular language in diaspora communities. It will examine the ancient literary works and historical events to reveal both the positive and negative responses of the gentiles to the diaspora Jews living among them.

There is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that Second Temple Judaism engaged a centripetal missional approach that attracted the curiosity of the gentiles. This study will examine the various elements of Judaism that the gentiles found attractive. It will further demonstrate that this attraction drew gentiles to the synagogues, where they were able to learn of God in their own

language. This study will reveal that a number of gentiles became God-fearers and proselytes. It will demonstrate how this centripetal approach was the continued fulfillment of God's mission for Israel during the diaspora and how it created opportunities for proselytizing. This study will examine the diverse messianic expectations that emerged during the Second Temple period and their commonalities. It will examine how these expectations were applied to Jesus of Nazareth and demonstrate that the concept of inaugurated eschatology existed prior to Christianity. Further evidence will reveal that the diaspora Jews were successful in their fulfillment of this centripetal mission and how the presence of God-fearers and proselytes in the synagogues demonstrates how their proselytizing activity firmly established the foundation for the extraordinary growth of Christianity in this region.

Organization of the Study

Chapter II – Literary Review

This chapter will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the positions held by scholars regarding Second Temple Judaism's acceptance of gentile conversion. The chapter will be divided by the three primary positions held among these scholars. The first position is the rejection of gentile conversion by Second Temple Judaism. As most scholars agree with the existence of gentile converts to Judaism during this period, this section will limit itself to the work of Joel Kaminsky.

The second section will review scholars who agree that Second Temple Judaism was accepting of gentile conversion. They disagree that the Jews actively proselytized during this period. This section will interact with the works of Scot McKnight, Martin Goodman, Shaye J.

D. Cohen, Martin Goldenberg, Howard Peskett, and Vinoth Ramachandra. This section references ancient literary works that counter these scholars' arguments against active Jewish proselytizing. It also notes these scholars' concessions that there may have been evidence of proselytizing activities during the Second Temple period.

The third section of the chapter will interact with the works of the scholars who agree that Second Temple Judaism was accepting of gentile conversion and actively engaged in proselytizing activities. Scholars in this section include Michael W. Goheen, Richard De Ridder, Louis H. Feldman, Michael F. Bird, Jeremias Joachim, John Barclay, Mortimer Arias, Scott Waldron, and Christopher R. North. This section will examine the primary evidence each scholar provides to support their position. This includes literary works from Josephus, Philo, Tacitus, and Juvenal, historical events triggered by Jewish proselytizing activities, and biblical evidence that supports the centripetal missional approach. Much like in the previous sections, gaps in their arguments will be identified. After having reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of each of their arguments, this chapter will conclude that the diaspora Jews were accepting of gentile conversion and that they were actively engaged in proselytizing activities.

Chapter III – The Origin of the Nation of Israel and its Mission

Chapter three examines the origin and purpose of the nation of Israel. It is centered around three key biblical passages that reveal Israel's role in God's plan for universal salvation. The chapter begins with Genesis 12:2-3 where God promises to make Abram into a great nation through which all families will be blessed. It examines the nature of the Abrahamic covenant and the arguments presented by scholars regarding its conditionality and whether it is temporal or

eternal. Based on the presented evidence, the chapter determines that the Abrahamic covenant is eternal and unconditional. It presents evidence that the land promise is separate from the nation promise. Biblical evidence shows that the nation of Israel originated in Egypt and continued beyond the Babylonian exile.

The chapter continues with Exodus 19:5-6. God calls Israel to become a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. It shows Israel's unique role as God's chosen people and their intended relationship with the world. The chapter discusses how God will reveal Himself to the world through the nation of Israel. It introduces the concept of centripetal mission. The Israelites were to live as distinct people that would attract the curiosity and awe of the gentile nations. Biblical evidence is presented to demonstrate the existence of the Jewish centripetal mission as gentiles were drawn to the nation of Israel and acknowledged God's power.

The chapter concludes with Isaiah 43. God calls Israel as His witness. They witnessed His past deliverance, and they will witness His future deliverance. The chapter discusses how Israel will reveal God through their personal testimony. Gentile nations are drawn to God not from what Israel does but from what God does through Israel. The chapter concludes that it is God's ultimate purpose for the world to know and worship Him. He sends Israel to live among the gentiles as His witness to the gentiles.

Chapter IV – The Diaspora, the Synagogue, and the Proselytizers

Chapter four examines the diaspora Jewish communities and their impact on their gentile neighbors. It begins with a discussion of the locations where prominent Jewish settlements were established. Although permitted to return to Palestine, many Jews elected to remain in Babylon

while others relocated to other parts of the Mediterranean. The chapter will examine the reasons for the Jewish migration to these regions.

The chapter will discuss the importance of the synagogue within the diaspora communities. It will discuss the synagogue's role in Jewish life and how they became instrumental in acquainting gentiles with God. The chapter provides biblical evidence of the presence of God-fearers and proselytes in the synagogues.

The chapter will examine the elements of the Jewish identity that distinguished the diaspora Jews from the gentiles. This section is divided by each Jewish practice and includes biblical evidence and evidence from the literary works of Josephus and Philo. The gentile response to this Jewish identity follows this section. It will begin with the negative response to each element and the accusations the gentiles made. References to ancient literary works are provided as evidence of the gentile response. The following section discusses the gentile's positive response to Judaism and reveals the success of the Jewish centripetal mission. The section is divided by a discussion of the primary elements that attracted gentiles to Judaism.

Chapter four concludes with an examination of the evidence for Jewish proselytizing activities during the Second Temple period. It will discuss how Judaism was the first missionary religion in the Mediterranean and how the diaspora served as the primary channel for Jewish proselytizing activities. The chapter explores how the synagogue and the use of the vernacular language enabled gentiles to learn of God, which led to many becoming God-fearers and proselytes.

Chapter V – The Messiah and the Restoration of Israel

Chapter five begins with the events that occurred during the period between the Old and New Testament (intertestamental period). It will discuss the occupiers of the region after Persia's defeat to Alexander the Great and their influence upon the Jews. The chapter will discuss the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucids and the semi-independent Hasmonean dynasty that emerged as a result. It will explore the three major Jewish sects (Judaisms) that formed as a response to the region's Hellenization and the illegitimate Hasmonean rule.

Following the discussion of the "Judaisms," the chapter explores the messianic expectations that emerged during the intertestamental period. It discusses the diversity among the expectations as well as the commonalities. Literary evidence from Philo, the Pseudepigrapha, the Apocrypha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls is presented in support of these messianic expectations.

Chapter five examines how Jesus and His disciples demonstrated that He was the fulfillment of the messianic promise. It shows how Jesus' claims are rooted in the Old Testament and the intertestamental period writings. The chapter presents the dependence of the New Testament authors on the Old Testament through quotes and allusions. It will further reveal the influence of the messianic expectations upon their claims.

The chapter demonstrates that Christianity was considered another Jewish sect and was referred to as "the Way." It shows the many similarities that continued between Christianity and Judaism and how Jewish Christians remained Torah-observant Jews. The chapter discusses Jesus' claim of an inaugurated eschatology and how this concept is rooted in Psalm 110. The

idea of “already/not yet” was part of Second Temple Judaism and was shared by other Jewish sects.

Chapter five reviews the importance and controversy surrounding gentile inclusion. It discusses the biblical evidence that led to the Jerusalem Council and James’ decision to permit gentiles without converting to Judaism. The chapter reviews the biblical foundation for his decision and the understanding of gentile inclusion among Jesus’ disciples.

The chapter will discuss the split in the Jewish mission after Christ. It will demonstrate that the mission of being God’s witness continued across Judaism. However, the message was based on the proselytizer’s view of Jesus and the requirements for gentile inclusion.

Chapter five concludes with a case study on the apostle Paul. It contrasts Saul, the persecutor with Paul the Christian. The chapter demonstrates that Paul remained a Torah-observant Jew who understood Jesus to be the Messiah and the fulfillment of the Old Testament promise. It discusses how Paul’s acceptance of gentiles without conversion to Judaism is rooted in the Old Testament and his belief that they were the eschatological gentiles that were to come after the inauguration of God’s kingdom.

Chapter VI – Conclusion

The last chapter summarizes and reviews the study. It steps through the key arguments that affirm that the purpose of the Second Temple period Jewish diaspora was to prepare the nations for the arrival of Christ in accordance with Isaiah 43. This concluding chapter highlights the main ideas and their supporting evidence. It begins by demonstrating that Second Temple Judaism accepted gentile conversion and actively engaged in proselytizing activities. Having

established the missional intent of Second Temple Judaism, the chapter reviews God's original purpose for the nation of Israel. It will show that the election of the Israelites is part of God's plan for universal salvation. Highlighting key evidence from the Abrahamic covenant to Israel's call to be God's witness, this summary will validate the idea that Israel has a unique role in God's plan.

Chapter six reviews the purpose and impact of the Jewish identity in the diaspora communities. It discusses how the distinctiveness of the Jews from their gentile neighbors was part of the centripetal mission to attract gentiles to God. It reviews the role of the synagogue, the use of the vernacular language, and their importance to Jewish proselytizing activities. The chapter reviews how God-fearers and proselytizers were found attending the synagogue as evidence of the success of the Jewish mission.

The chapter concludes with a review of the messianic expectations. It will highlight how Jesus and the New Testament authors demonstrated that He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promise. The chapter reviews the controversy with gentile inclusion and the importance of James' decision. It discusses how intra-sect and inter-sect disagreements were commonplace and how Jesus' and Paul's disagreements with other Jews do not represent a break from Judaism. The chapter highlights how these disagreements triggered the split in the Jewish mission after Christ. It shows that the Jewish Christians remained Torah-observant Jews and considered themselves and were considered by other Jews as another Jewish sect.

Finally, this chapter will conclude that God's purpose for the nation of Israel is part of His universal salvation plan. It will discuss how they were elected for this specific role and that

God works through Israel to reveal Himself to the world. The chapter will review that today's Christian mission is a continuation of the original Jewish mission. A review of the evidence shows that the Second Temple Jews had already established the missional approach used by early Christians. The Jewish mission's success built the foundation for rapid Christian expansion within the Mediterranean region.

Chapter II

Literary Review: Acceptance of Gentile Conversion to Judaism

During the Second Temple period, several Jewish diaspora communities emerged within the Mediterranean region. Jews elected to remain living outside the land of Israel after they were permitted to return. Here they lived distinct lives that set them apart from their gentile neighbors and established synagogues where they could meet and worship. During this time period, there is evidence that a number of gentiles began to observe Judaism to various degrees, either as God-fearers or full converts (proselytes). Very few scholars will dispute the existence of the gentile converts to Judaism. However, what remains in question is whether the Jews looked favorably upon and were accepting of gentile conversion. If they were accepting of gentile converts, the second question is whether they were actively engaged in missional activity or were the conversions initiated by the converted.

Three positions appear to predominate among scholars pertaining to the issue of acceptance of gentile conversion to Judaism. The first position is that the Jews did not accept gentile conversion to Judaism. The second position is that Jews did accept gentile conversion and did not engage in missional activity. The third position is that the Jews did accept gentile conversion and did engage in missional activity.

Table 9. Scholarly Positions Regarding Second Temple Judaism Proselytizing

	Accepted Converts to Judaism	Actively Proselytized
1	No	No
2	Yes	No
3	Yes	Yes

This chapter will review the arguments from various scholars from each of the three positions. Since position one is such a minority position and that there is overwhelming evidence of Jewish acceptance of gentile conversion, a single scholar has been selected. From the review of the various scholarly arguments and the evidence presented, this chapter will conclude that the Jews were both accepting of gentile converts and that they were actively engaged in missional activity as God's witnesses.

Position 1: Negative Acceptance of Gentile Conversion

Joel Kaminsky

Kaminsky not only challenges whether the Second Temple period Jews engaged in missional activity, he challenges whether the Jews were accepting of gentile conversion to Judaism. Kaminsky suggests that Israel recognized that gentiles could stand in positive relationship to God without converting to Judaism.¹ It is his position that the Jews categorized people as either elect, anti-elect, and non-elect. The elect were God's chosen people, the anti-elect was those condemned to destruction such as the Canaanites and the Amalekites, and the non-elect which consisted of a larger people group who were neither elected nor doomed for destruction.² Kaminsky argues that the Jews discouraged gentile conversion since they understood that the non-elect could achieve righteousness before God by observing the seven Noahide commandments (Gen 9:4-6). He further argues that this belief may be the reason for the

¹ Joel Kaminsky, "A Light to the Nations: Was There Mission and or Conversion in the Hebrew Bible?" *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 16 (2009): 6-22.

² *Ibid.*, 6.

lack of any missional activity during the Second Temple period.³ Kaminsky goes as far as suggesting that the Jews forfeited their elect status to the church due to their failure to proselytize the gentiles.⁴

Kaminsky argues that the Jews did not view themselves as a religion and that Jewish identity was tied to ethnic or tribal affiliation and that the notion of conversion would have been inconceivable to the Jews. Rather, he believes that in most instances, it must be thought in terms of gentiles attaching themselves to the people of God rather than describing it as a conversion. Kaminsky argues that the foreigners who attached themselves to the Jews preserved their foreign identity.⁵

Kaminsky believes that the intermarriage between Jews and gentiles may have been one instance where the gentile was converted and identified as Jewish. Kaminsky notes that whenever a Jewish male married a gentile female, the female and any children would be considered fully Jewish. However, whenever a Jewish female married a gentile male, the gentile male and any children would not be recognized as Jewish. Kaminsky references the biblical text in order to demonstrate this distinction. Ruth the Moabite marries an Israelite man and their child is the grandfather of King David (Ruth 4:13, 17) However, in Leviticus 24:10-23, the blasphemer is identified as the son of an Israelite woman whose father was Egyptian. Kaminsky

³ Ibid., 20.

⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁵ Ibid., 8.

argues that the individual being identified as the son of an Israelite woman rather than being identified as an Israelite demonstrates that he was not part of the people of God.⁶

Kaminsky challenges the interpretation of Second Isaiah as an endorsement for universal missional activity. He argues that any such universal interpretation ignores the more nationalistic framework of the entire book.⁷ Kaminsky believes that Second Isaiah focuses primarily on the return of the Israelites to Zion and that expressions that have been interpreted as a missional calling to the gentiles may in fact be referring to the God's relationship with the Israelites.⁸ Kaminsky suggests that the expression "a light to the nations" is calling to become a beacon in order to draw the Israelite exiles back to Zion.⁹ He further argues that the passages in Isaiah reveal that the gentiles will witness God's redemption of Israel and not suggesting that the gentiles will be converted. These passages further reveal that God will use the gentile nations to draw the Israelite exiles home and depict the gentiles in subservient terms. Kaminsky references Isaiah 49:22-23 where the gentiles will bow down to the Israelites and lick the dust of their feet.¹⁰

There are several issues with Kaminsky's position. He argues that the Jews discouraged gentile conversion to Judaism and that it would have been inconceivable since the Jews

⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 14.

understood their inclusion to be tied to ethnic or tribal affiliation. However, the Old Testament refutes this argument. The book of Esther provides evidence of a mass gentile conversion to Judaism as many among the people of the land became Jews (8:17). Had the author of Esther held the opinion advocated by Kaminsky, it is doubtful such a verse would have been included in this book. Barclay counters Kaminsky's position. He argues that the gentile proselyte underwent such a resocialization that they acquired a new ethnicity and were fully assimilated into the Jewish nation.¹¹ Both the works of Philo and Josephus reflect a favorable attitude towards gentile conversion to Judaism. Philo states that he looks forward to when the people groups abandon their ancestral ways and join the Jews (Philo, *Moses* 2 43-44). Josephus continued to depict the Jewish diaspora community as a nation (*Ant.* 14.117). This and the evidence to follow suggests that the Jews were accepting of gentile conversion to Judaism, that the converts abandoned their old identity for the Jewish identity, and were fully assimilated into the Jewish community. Gentile conversion appears to go beyond Kaminsky's argument for intermarriage being the only instance for such an activity. The following evidence will further reveal that the Jews continued to understand themselves to be God's elected people and that they understood the writings of Isaiah to be an universal call to be God's witness to the nations. Kaminsky holds a minority position as most scholars agree that the Jews held favorable views towards gentile conversion to Judaism. The disagreement is more to whether the Jews actively engaged in missional activities.

¹¹ John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 B.C.E-117 C.E)* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 403.

Position 2: Positive Acceptance of Gentile Conversion / No Active Proselytization

Scot McKnight

McKnight argues that the Jews had a favorable view towards gentile conversion and that they encouraged gentiles to convert to Judaism. However, he asserts that having a positive position towards proselytes does not demonstrate evidence that the Jews were actively engaged in proselytizing.¹² It is McKnight's position that although there is evidence of proselytes and their acceptance by the Jews, there is not sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the Jews actively engaged in proselytizing.

In his concluding remarks on the Jewish methods of proselytizing, McKnight raises eight points to support this position. His first two points argue that the Jews did not engage in missionary activity as they viewed this as the work of God alone. It was expected during the end times that there would be a mass conversion of gentiles through an act of God.¹³ Any conversion to Judaism was considered a miraculous act. However, McKnight argues that there is very little evidence for these miraculous occasions.¹⁴

McKnight asserts that the first two points are substantiated by the lack of evidence for Jews being engaged in missional activity. He references Louis H. Feldman's own comment that not a single name of a Jewish missionary is known.¹⁵ McKnight will further his point with his

¹² Scot McKnight. *A Light Amongst the Gentiles; Jewish Missionary Activity During the Second Temple Period* (Location: Fortress Press, 1991), 48.

¹³ Ibid., 50.

¹⁴ Ibid., 74.

¹⁵ Ibid., 52.

own statement that there is no evidence of Jews engaged in missionary activity at any time nor at any location. He argues that the Jews did not view themselves as missionaries nor were they engaged in such activities.¹⁶ The lack of any documented kerygma is due to the lack of any organized effort to proselytize the gentiles. McKnight reasons that Judaism is far too diverse for any effort to summarize the religion and would be too reductionistic to be of any value.¹⁷

Two other points McKnight uses to support his position that Judaism was not a missional religion his contention that literature and education were not methods of proselytizing utilized by the Jews to convert gentiles. He argues that there is evidence that the Jews educated their children and the orphans they may have adopted. However, there is no evidence of Jews conducting adult education courses for the gentiles. He further asserts that if education was used for proselytizing, the limited evidence suggests that this method did not result in a great many conversions.¹⁸ In regard to literature, McKnight disagrees with scholars who suggest that Jewish literary works during the Second Temple period were apologetic and evangelistic in nature. He contends that Jews would not distribute their work to non-Jews out of fear of reprisal or that their work may be destroyed. Something worth consideration due to the expense and slowness of publication at that time.¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid., 57.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 67.

¹⁹ Ibid., 76.

McKnight further disagrees that the synagogue was a missionary platform to proselytize gentiles. He argues that the primary purpose of the synagogue was to instruct the Jews on the Torah and the Jewish customs. McKnight concedes that gentiles sympathetic to Judaism were permitted to attend the synagogue where they became educated in Judaism and may have been open to conversion.²⁰ However, McKnight argues that gentile attendance at the synagogue was not a conscious effort by the Jews to proselytize the gentiles.

McKnight reasons that the primary cause for the number of gentile converts and the most effective means of Jewish proselytizing was by demonstrating their distinctiveness through how they lived and through the good deeds that they performed.²¹ The gentiles would become attracted to Judaism through no active part of the Jews, rather, it was a result of Jewish lifestyle from which they observed. McKnight believes that there is sufficient evidence of gentile God-fearers and proselytes. However, they are not the result of any active proselytizing conducted by the Jews.

Although Scot McKnight argues that the original purpose of the synagogue was not intended to be a missional platform for gentile conversion, he states that the synagogue played a major role in the rapid expansion of early Christianity.²² McKnight further suggests that it was the good deeds performed by the Jews that drew the gentiles to the synagogue.²³ McKnight

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 67.

²² Ibid, 114.

²³ Ibid., 77.

states that the synagogue was not used for gentile conversion nor was it evidence for Jewish missional activity, yet his own words suggest otherwise. He states that gentiles were attracted to the synagogue. It was at the synagogue where they became educated in Judaism. Through this education, gentiles would become God-fearers and proselytes. McKnight further states that Jews wanted God-fearers to fully convert to Judaism.²⁴ From his own evidence, McKnight builds the argument that the synagogue had a critical role in the conversion of gentiles to Judaism. The synagogue is where the apostle Paul would first deliver the good news of Jesus to the gentiles. McKnight states that there is considerable evidence for the consistent presence of God-fearers at the synagogue.²⁵

McKnight contends that Judaism is not a missional religion and that the Jews did not actively proselytize the gentiles. However, he states that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the Jewish diaspora community in Rome engaged in missional activity.²⁶ He also recognizes that Judaism had its occasional evangelist and that there is evidence of Jewish missionary activity.²⁷ Such statements contradict his previous statement that at no time nor at any location did the Jews engage in missional activity. Again, his comments and presented evidence suggest otherwise. From his own admission, the Jews were actively proselytizing the gentiles during the

²⁴ Ibid., 107.

²⁵ Ibid., 74.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 75.

Second Temple period. McKnight also recognized a significant amount of Jewish literature with apologetic tendencies.²⁸

In his study of Jewish missionary activity in the Second Temple period, McKnight omits the apostles Peter and Paul.²⁹ A proper study of Jewish missionary activity during this period must include the early Jewish church. During the first century, the apostles traveled to synagogues to share the good news of Jesus. When Paul first traveled to Asia Minor, he preached to both Jew and gentile. A proper study would explore the roots of Peter's and Paul's evangelistic method and determine if this was a common approach amongst Jewish rabbis for proselytizing gentiles. Paul's own words suggest that he preached conversion to the gentiles prior to his encounter with Christ (Gal 5:11).

McKnight recognizes the presence of gentile God-fearers and proselytes during the Second Temple period. He attributes their conversion to Judaism as a result of their exposure to the Jewish lifestyle and to the good deeds performed by the Jewish people. What he neglects to recognize is that this is part of God's plan as He intends for the Jewish people to draw the curiosity and awe of the gentiles by living as a distinct people. Once attracted to Judaism, the Jews would have the opportunity to utilize the synagogue to actively instruct gentiles about Judaism and the one true God. By imposing a more modern and Western understanding of evangelism, McKnight fails to recognize that the Jews were actively participating in God's plan to restore creation.

²⁸ Ibid., 76.

²⁹ Ibid., 102.

Martin Goodman

Goodman believes that the Jews recognized themselves as the religious mentors of the gentile world and that the Jews expected the gentiles to come to recognize God as the true sovereign over all creation. However, Goodman does not believe that this Jewish belief should be mistaken for evidence for actively proselytizing the gentiles.³⁰ Goodman acknowledges that gentiles converted to Judaism and that such a conversion was generally acceptable to the Jews.³¹ Despite this Jewish belief and the existence of gentile proselytes, Goodman does not believe that the Second Temple period Jews actively proselytized the gentiles in order to draw them to God.³² He argues that any such conversion to Judaism was actively pursued by the gentile, the Jews' role was to passively bear witness through their existence and piety.³³

Goodman's position differs from Scot McKnight in that Goodman builds his argument around the identity of the proselytes. He argues that there is no evidence of ceremonies where those gentiles who came to believe in God and adopted His ways were converted to Judaism.³⁴ He further argues that the Jewish writers during the Second Temple period were vague on whether Jews considered proselytes to be Jews or whether they were treated as a special class of

³⁰ Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid..

³³ Ibid., 19.

³⁴ Ibid., 3.

gentile.³⁵ Goodman believes that gentile converts to Judaism became part of a less privileged group and were set apart from those who were born Jewish.³⁶

Goodman references Matthew 23:15 to further his argument against active Jewish proselytizing. In this verse, Jesus mentions that the Pharisees will travel both land and sea to make a single proselyte. Scholars that believe Second Temple Judaism to be missional reference this verse as evidence. However, Goodman believes that the Greek word *proselytos* has been misinterpreted. Goodman argues that the Pharisees were not seeking gentile proselytes, rather, they were seeking Jewish converts to Pharisaism and that this word should be interpreted as such. He supports this interpretation through reasoning that there is no other good evidence of Pharisees seeking to proselytize gentiles.³⁷ Goodman's argument appears to be based more on opinion than any lack of evidence. The Greek word προσήλυτος used in Matthew 23:15 is the same word used in the book of Acts in reference to gentiles who had converted to Judaism (Acts 2:10, 6:5, 13:43). There is no other use of this word in the New Testament to denote Jews who had embraced Pharisaism.

Goodman explains that the size of the Jewish population growth during the Second Temple period is guesswork, and that any growth was the result of Jewish opposition to abortion, infanticide, and contraception. In addition, the Jewish sense of charity caused them to care for the poor children which may have added to their numbers. Goodman does not dismiss the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 18.

³⁷ Ibid., 8.

possibility of a massive surge in Jewish population due to proselytes, however he does believe that it is implausible. He believes that had there been such a widespread conversion, Jewish authors during that time would have documented such an event out of sheer pride.³⁸ Goodman's suggestion that the determination of the Jewish population is guesswork appears to be a direct challenge to the estimated number of eight million (8,000,000) Jews presented by Salo W. Baron.³⁹ However, outside of Baron, Adolf von Harnack offered an estimate of four million (4,000,000) Jews. Josephus included population information in his own writing. He states that there are two hundred and four (204) villages in Galilee in which the smallest village had fifteen thousand (15,000) residents (*Life* 235). If all the villages shared the same population, the total would be three million and sixty thousand (3,060,000). Josephus also notes two million five hundred and fifty-six thousand (2,556,000) as the number of Jews in Jerusalem during Passover in A.D. 66 (*J.W.* 6.425). Considering that the population numbers offered by Josephus do not include the Jewish diaspora communities and the size of the Jewish population in Alexandria and Rome alone, reaching a Jewish population number between four to eight million appear to be safe estimates and not mere guesswork as Goodman suggests.

Goodman argues that the cases of Jews being expelled from Rome in 139 B.C. and A.D. 19 for proselytizing were not widely documented and the circumstances of the expulsion were inconsistent. He believes that any such expulsion of the Jews from Rome was due to other

³⁸ Ibid., 17.

³⁹ Salo W. Baron, "Population." in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, vol. 16 (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 381-400.

circumstances than that of actively proselytizing gentiles. Goodman argues that if the Jews were actively engaged in such activity, he would have expected similar riots and expulsions in Antioch and Alexandria.⁴⁰ However, the Roman historian Valerius Maximus states that Cornelius Scipio Hispallus expelled the Jews from Rome in 139 B.C. for their attempts to transmit their sacred rites to Romans (1.3.3). Roman Historian Cassius Dio documents that the Jews were again expelled from Rome in A.D. 19 for proselytizing activities (*Historia Romana* 57.18.5a). According to Tacitus, emperor Tiberius expelled four thousand (4,000) Jews from Rome for proselytizing activities. Those “infected by this religion” were given the option to renounce Judaism or leave Italy (Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.85). Tacitus believed that “those infected” referred to proselytes.⁴¹ Josephus reports that the expulsion in A.D. 19 was triggered by a report from a Roman that four Jewish men attempted to secure a contribution from his Roman proselyte wife (*Ant.* 18.81-84). Both Roman and Jewish historians document these instances of expulsion from Rome as being the result of Jewish missional activities.

⁴⁰ Goodman, 18.

⁴¹ Benjamin Isaac, *Empire and Ideology in the Greco-Roman World* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 318.

Table 10. Ancient Literary Evidence of Jewish Proselytizing in Rome

Author	Text
Valerius Maximus	C. Cornelius Hispallus, a praetor of foreigners, in the time when M. Popilius Laenas and L. Calpurnius were consuls, by edict commanded the Chaldeans to depart out of Italy, who by their false interpretations of the stars cast a profitable mist before the eyes of shallow and foolish characters. The same person banished those who with a counterfeit worship of Jupiter Sabazius sought to corrupt Roman customs.
Cassius Dio	As the Jews flocked to Rome in great numbers and were converting many of the natives to their ways, he banished most of them.
Tacitus	There was a debate too about expelling the Egyptian and Jewish worship, and a resolution of the Senate was passed that four thousand of the freedmen class who were infected with those superstitions and were of military age should be transported to the island of Sardinia, to quell the brigandage of the place, a cheap sacrifice should they die from the pestilential climate. The rest were to quit Italy, unless before a certain day they repudiated their impious rites.
Suetonius	He suppressed all foreign religions, and the Egyptian and Jewish rites, obliging those who practiced that kind of superstition, to burn their vestments, and all their sacred utensils. He distributed the Jewish youths, under the pretense of military service, among the provinces noted for an unhealthy climate; and dismissed from the city all the rest of that nation as well as those who were proselytes to that religion, under pain of slavery for life, unless they complied. He also expelled the astrologers; but upon their suing for pardon, and promising to renounce their profession, he revoked his decree.
Josephus	There was a man who was a Jew, but had been driven away from his own country by an accusation laid against him for transgressing their laws, and by the fear he was under of punishment for the same; but in all respects a wicked man: --he then living in Rome, professed to instruct men in the wisdom of the laws of Moses. He procured also three other men, entirely of the same character with himself, to be his partners. These men persuaded Fulvia, a woman of great dignity, and one that had embraced the Jewish religion, to send purple and gold to the temple in Jerusalem: and when they had gotten them, they employed them for their own uses, and spent the money themselves; on which account it was that they at first required it of her. Whereupon Tiberius, who had been informed of the thing by Saturninus, the husband of Fulvia, who desired inquiry might be made about it, order all the Jews to be banished out of Rome; at which time the consuls listed four thousand men out of them, and sent them to the island Sardinia; but punished a greater number of them, who were unwilling to become soldiers on account of keeping the laws of their forefathers. Thus were these Jews banished out of the city by the wickedness of four men.

Source: Valerius Maximus, 1.3.3; Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana* 57.18.5a; Tacitus, *Annals* 2.85.4; Suetonius, *Tiberius* 36; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.81-84.

Much like McKnight, Goodman appears to overlook evidence in support of active Jewish proselytizing or treats any such evidence as an exception. However, the number of exceptions recognized by Goodman builds a compelling argument for a missional Second Temple Judaism. Goodman states that most Jewish literature written in Greek was intended for Greek-speaking

Jews and not intended as missional works in order to proselytize gentiles. He presents *Joseph and Asenath* as evidence since this text assumes the reader's familiarity with the biblical narrative of Joseph.⁴² Yet, Goodman recognizes that such Jewish literature may have been read by gentiles.⁴³ He argues that there is no evidence that the synagogues were made accessible to non-Jews.⁴⁴ The book of Acts clearly demonstrates that both Jews and gentiles were in attendance when the apostle Paul shared the good news of Christ.

Goodman appears to share the same contradiction with McKnight. After clearly stating that there is no valid evidence for Jewish missional activity, Goodman concedes that there is some evidence of Jewish mission. He concludes much as McKnight that such activity varied from location to location and from period to period and that it falls short of any universal proselytizing mission.⁴⁵ Goodman does recognize that the Jews during this period did not view Judaism as being fixed to one particular location.⁴⁶ However Goodman might attempt to downplay the evidence, he acknowledges the existence of Jewish missional activity during the Second Temple period. The arguments he presents against such a position is based upon what he believes to be a lack of reliable evidence and not upon any evidence that would counter such a position.

⁴² Goodman, 14.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 2.

Shaye J. D. Cohen

Cohen acknowledges the existence of proselytes and their favorable acceptance amongst the Jewish community during the Second Temple period. He refers to seven categories of gentiles in regard to their affection towards Judaism. The seven categories range in degrees from admiring some aspects of Judaism to conversion to Judaism.⁴⁷ Cohen's argument appears to center on two key factors. The first of these factors being the requirements of a gentile convert in order to be recognized as a proselyte by the Jews. Cohen identifies three elements that are required in order to convert to Judaism: practice of Jewish laws, exclusive devotion to the Jewish God, and integration into the Jewish community.⁴⁸ He references the account of Achior the Ammonite who believed firmly in God, was circumcised, and joined the house of Israel (Jdt 14:10) which illustrates the three elements of conversion.⁴⁹ However, Cohen argues that most descriptions of conversion during the Second Temple period mention only one or two of these elements. According to Cohen, Philo only mentions that they abandoned the pagan gods to worship the one true God in his praise of the proselytes. Cohen argues that Philo's identification of a proselyte is one who denies the pagan gods, worships God, and integrates into the Jewish community as Philo does not make any explicit mention of observing Jewish law.⁵⁰ Although Philo may not have explicitly mentioned observance of the Jewish law or circumcision in

⁴⁷ Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew." *The Harvard Theological Review* 82, no. 1 (January 1989): 13-33.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid..

⁵⁰ Ibid.

particular, Cohen does acknowledge that Josephus viewed conversion to mean the adoption of Jewish laws. As Cohen notes, to Josephus, adopting the laws was to be circumcised.⁵¹ Cohen further acknowledges that no Jewish community during the Second Temple period accepted uncircumcised proselytes.

Cohen does not appear to acknowledge any missional activity by the Jews to convert gentiles to Judaism, rather, he defines four methods in which gentiles became proselytes. The first method was through mass conversion of entire households. The conversion of one member of a household would bring the conversion of their slaves and family members.⁵² The second method was through the acquisition of a gentile slave by a Jew. The male slave would be circumcised and upon manumission, they would attain the status of a proselyte. The female slave would attain the same proselyte status upon manumission.⁵³

The third and fourth methods were through the intermarriage between Jews and gentiles. However, as mentioned previously, only gentile women who married Jewish men would attain the status of proselyte. Any gentile man who married a Jewish woman would not be regarded as a proselyte.⁵⁴ Gentile men could convert to Judaism prior to marrying a Jewish woman and would be required before receiving the consent of the Jewish family. The gentile male would

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 24.

⁵³ Ibid..

⁵⁴ Ibid.

undergo circumcision.⁵⁵ Cohen acknowledges that there was not an official conversion ceremony for the gentile woman, rather, her marriage to the Jewish man served as the conversion ceremony.⁵⁶

The second key factor of Cohen's argument is the status of the gentile proselyte within the Jewish community. He acknowledges that the proselytes would become members of the synagogue, be permitted to participate in the sacred meals, would be required to bring legal cases before the communal authority, would pay their share of communal taxes, be permitted to sit with the Jews at the theater, and be buried in proximity of other Jews like any native-born Jew.⁵⁷ However, Cohen raises a similar argument as Kaminsky in that the proselyte may have had an ambiguous status within the Jewish community and may not have been regarded as equals to the native-born Jew.⁵⁸ Cohen notes that the *Damascus Document* (4Q267) divides the Jewish people into four groups; priests, Levites, Israelites, and proselytes. He also notes that inscriptions within synagogues that commemorate gentiles who had converted to Judaism would have the label proselyte after the name.⁵⁹ Cohen suggests that Jews viewed those that converted to Judaism not as Jews, but as proselytes. Cohen concedes that the unequal treatment of proselytes or the

⁵⁵ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 28, 14.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 29.

viewing them as something different than a native-born Jew may have varied between the Jewish communities.⁶⁰

Much of Cohen's arguments have been addressed previously. Evidence appears to suggest that gentile converts were accepted and fully assimilated into the Jewish communities and were not treated any differently than other Jews. The *Damascus Document* (4Q267) originated from a Jewish sect within Palestine that separated itself from much of the other Jewish population. Contrasted with other Jewish and non-Jewish writing of the time, such a distinction between Jew and proselyte appears to have been contained within this minority group.

Other Scholars

Goldenberg agrees with McKnight that there is no evidence of any Jewish leaders in any Jewish community that established an organized program to attract gentiles to Judaism.⁶¹ Peskett and Ramachandra go further and state that the Jewish mission had been revoked due to Israel's disobedience.⁶² They present a minority view as many scholars believe that the Jews had a missional perspective derived from Isaiah and the other prophets that did not end with the Jewish exile to Babylon. The question is more whether the Jews acted upon this sense of mission.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 30.

⁶¹ Robert Goldenberg, *The Nations that Know Thee Not: Ancient Jewish Attitudes towards Other Religions* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 1998), 94.

⁶² Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission; The Glory of Christ in All Time and Space* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 110.

Position 3: Positive Acceptance of Gentile Conversion / Active Proselytization

Michael W. Goheen

Goheen argues that the Second Temple period Jews were both accepting of gentile proselytes and were engaged in missional activity. He believes what was understood as missional by the Jews of that time has been confused with the more modern definition of intentional activities to incorporate outsiders into a believing community.⁶³ Goheen adopts Robert Martin Achard's definition of missional as comprising of universalism, incorporation of foreigners, and proselytism. Goheen believes all of which are contained in the Old Testament story.⁶⁴ He notes that there is sufficient evidence that the Jews believed that God was the only God and the Creator of the entire earth and its people (universalism). He contends that there is biblical evidence of foreigners being incorporated into the Jewish community. Goheen further argues that the Jews vigorously proselytized the gentiles which reached its climax during the time of Jesus and the apostles. Goheen states that the proselytizing was both individualistic and nationalistic. It was a private enterprise undertaken by individuals in order to incorporate gentiles into the Jewish nation.⁶⁵

According to Goheen, the concept of mission is in contrast to proselytizing. Where he defined proselytism as an individual enterprise, the concept of mission is a communal belief that

⁶³ Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 30.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

they have a task to fulfill on behalf of all mankind.⁶⁶ He argues that Israel's missional identity is defined by the role they are called to play in God's redemptive plan. Understanding mission as God's long-term purpose to renew creation, the Jews are missional in that they are part of God's plan for the sake of the world. Part of God's plan was for His people to live according to His way in sight of the other nations. Goheen argues that the Jews did not exist for themselves, rather, they were to be a display people from which God would manifest His glory before the watching nations. Their mission was not about going or doing, rather, it was about being. The Jews were to be a distinct people, a countercultural community amongst the nations. They were to be an attractive sign to what God had intended from the beginning.⁶⁷

Goheen employs biblical evidence as the foundation for a missional Judaism. He argues that God's covenant with Abraham is where God reveals His strategy to restore creation (Gen 12:2-3). Through Abraham, God intends to make all human life good again.⁶⁸ Goheen believes that God's redemption plan is to be accomplished through two stages. First, God would make Abraham into a great nation. Second, this great nation would bless all nations.⁶⁹

Goheen believes that Exodus 19:3-6 provides the unique identity of the Jewish people and how they will fulfill their role in delivering God's blessing. In the book of Exodus, the nation of Israel is formed and delivered out of Egypt. God informs them that they will become a

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 32.

⁶⁹ Ibid..

kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Goheen argues that Israel will fulfill a priestly role as a people amongst people. They will do for the world what a priest does for a people. They will be set apart and mediate God's presence and blessing for the sake of others. Goheen states that they have a responsibility to embody God's holiness to the people.⁷⁰ Goheen defines Israel's mission as centripetal. The Jews are to live such a distinctive life that it attracts the nations to God.⁷¹ Goheen invokes the words of Isaiah in that they are to be a light to the nations (Isa 42:6).

Although Goheen employs the biblical text as evidence for a missional Judaism, he does not reference any ancient literature to substantiate his biblical interpretations or to demonstrate that the Jews understood their missional role and were effective during the Second Temple period. Goheen provides a theological position for a missional Judaism. He makes no reference to historical information that would suggest that the Second Temple period Jews were vigorously engaged in proselytizing the gentiles and fulfilling their priestly role as a light to the nations.

Richard De Ridder

De Ridder identifies a missional purpose for the Jewish diaspora. He references Rabbi Elazar's statement from the Babylonian Talmud that God exiled Israel among the nations so that converts would join the Jewish people (87b.14).⁷² De Ridder argues that the Jewish people were to be seen by the gentiles and that the synagogue provided the primary means. According to De

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Richard De Ridder. *Discipling the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books House, 1971), 75-76; Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Pirkei Avos: Chapters of the Fathers*, trans. Daniel Haberman (Spring Valley, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 2014), 87b.14.

Ridder, the synagogue served as a meeting place for both the Jews and the gentiles where the weekly teaching of the Jewish Scripture acquainted the world with God.⁷³ Beyond teaching, the synagogue served as the center for Jewish charity to the Jews and the gentiles. Here the Jews and the proselytes were encouraged to contribute funds in support of the widows and the orphans.⁷⁴

De Ridder believes that the translation of the Hebrew Bible into the vernacular language was a key component of the Jewish missionary success. He argues that the God of all men should speak to men in their own language. According to De Ridder, this occurred during the diaspora where men would encounter God at the synagogue and hear Him speak.⁷⁵ De Ridder notes that the Babylonian Talmud makes frequent reference of the use of translators while reading scriptures during public worship.⁷⁶ He references the book of Nehemiah as further evidence where translators were used when reading the Law of God (8:8). De Ridder argues that the Jews felt a sense of duty to make known the Word of God in the vernacular language. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible would become the great apostle.⁷⁷

De Ridder provides three major elements as evidence for the Jewish acceptance of gentile conversion and for missional activity during the Second Temple period. His reference of the Jewish attitude towards conversion and proselytizing documented in the Babylonian Talmud

⁷³ De Ridder, 77, 80.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 82.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 83.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 84.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 86.

demonstrates that the rabbis were not only open to gentile conversion, they also understood that the exile was part of God's plan to draw converts to Judaism. Although the Talmud was written after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, it reflects the oral traditions from the Second Temple period.

The second element of De Ridder's argument is the role of the synagogue. The synagogue would become the center where the gentiles who had become attracted to Judaism learned about God. The synagogue is where the gentiles would become God-fearers, and some eventually would become proselytes. Linked to the second element is the third. Within the synagogue, the Word of God would be translated and shared in the vernacular language. This would permit gentiles to read and hear scripture in a familiar language.

Louis H. Feldman

Feldman draws from various sources as evidence to demonstrate the favorable attitude of Jews towards gentile converts to Judaism as well to demonstrate their active proselytizing activities. He provides a more well-rounded argument and addresses many of the opposing opinions towards his evidence. Although Feldman makes some biblical references in his argument, the majority of his position is based on demographical and ancient literary evidence.

Feldman ignores the first position in his argument as he states that a favorable attitude towards gentile converts to Judaism is undeniable and that the numerous conversions in the works of Philo, Josephus, and other rabbinic writings cannot be disregarded.⁷⁸ Although other

⁷⁸ Louis H. Feldman, *Jew & Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 290.

biblical books may have alluded to conversion, Feldman notes that the first actual conversion mentioned in the Bible is contained in the book of Esther where many gentiles became Jews after Esther's triumph over Haman (8:17).⁷⁹ Believing the evidence of a favorable attitude towards conversion is overwhelming, he does not pause to address any argument for a negative attitude towards conversion. Rather, Feldman focuses primarily on the argument to whether the Jews were missional during the Second Temple period.

Feldman begins with demographic evidence by referencing Salo W. Baron's calculations of the Jewish population between 586 B.C. and the middle of the first century A.D. Feldman argues that a population growth from one-hundred and fifty thousand (150,000) to an estimated eight million (8,000,000) during this period may only be explained through the aggressive proselytizing conducted by the Jews.⁸⁰ He goes further to suggest that even the acceptance of Adolf von Harnack's estimate of four million (4,000,000) Jews cannot be explained due to the Jews' superior hygiene and their refusal to practice birth control.⁸¹ Feldman addresses Scot McKnight's argument concerning the inadequacy of censuses conducted during antiquity by referencing ancient literary sources from that time period. Josephus states that there are two

⁷⁹ Ibid., 289.

⁸⁰ Feldman, 293; Baron, 381-400. McGing argues that Feldman relies almost entirely on Baron's figures. According to McGing, Feldman's numbers are derived from a flawed foundation as Baron provides no basis for his preexilic Judean population of 150,000 Jews which serves as the starting point for his calculations. He believes that the number of Jews in the ancient world cannot be determined. Brian McGing, "Population and Proselytism: How Many Jews were there in the Ancient World?" in *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities*. ed. John R. Bartlett (London, England; New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 89-90, 106.

⁸¹ Feldman, 293; Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, 2 ed. 2 vols. Trans. James Moffatt (London, England: Williams and Norgate, 1904), 1-8.

hundred and four (204) villages in Galilee of which the smallest had a population of fifteen thousand (15,000) (*Life* 235; *J.W.* 3.587-88). As Feldman notes, this would have a total population of three million and sixty thousand (3,060,000) if all the villages had the smallest population.⁸² Feldman further references Josephus' account of a Jewish population of two million five hundred and fifty-six thousand (2,556,000) in Jerusalem during Passover in A.D. 66 (*J.W.* 6.425).⁸³

Through his reference of Baron and Josephus, Feldman is able to demonstrate that the Jewish population experienced rapid growth during the Second Temple period after the loss of the ten northern tribes. However, this alone does not provide evidence of active missional activity. Fortunately, Feldman uses this evidence as the foundation in which to build his argument. He shifts to the ancient literary works as further evidence of active Jewish missional activity. Feldman argues that active conversion language may be found in the *Letter to Aristeeas* and the *Sibylline Oracles*. He believes that in both works, that the proselytizing of the gentiles is identified as a divinely ordained mission (*Let. Arts.* 227; *Sib. Or.* 3.5-10).⁸⁴ Feldman argues that this positive attitude towards conversion is reflected by the author of 2 Maccabees when describing how king Antiochus Epiphanes promised to convert to Judaism upon his deathbed (9:17). Feldman argues that although this account may be fictitious, it does reflect the attitude of

⁸² Feldman, 556.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 294.

the author.⁸⁵ Feldman further references the *Testament of Levi* as evidence for this divinely appointed mission where the text states that the Law was granted to the Jews for the enlightenment of all people (*T. Levi* 14.4).⁸⁶ He argues that reference to this universal mission may also be found in the *Wisdom of Solomon* that states that the light of the Law was to be given to the world (*Wis* 18.4).⁸⁷ Feldman's references the account of Potiphar's wife's desire to convert to Judaism and the confidence she demonstrates of being able to convert her husband as evidence of the frequency and success of gentile conversion (*T. Jos.* 4.4-5).⁸⁸ However, this alone does not demonstrate the activeness of the Jewish mission.

Feldman continues with the use of the ancient literary works of Philo and Josephus. Although Feldman cites several passages that demonstrate a favorable disposition towards gentile conversion by both authors, they do not provide evidence of an active missional activity conducted by the Jewish people. Feldman references Philo's statement that those gentiles that traveled with the Israelites during the Exodus from Egypt were converted and that the Pentateuch commands the Jews to love all proselytes as themselves (*Moses* 1 27.147; *Virtues* 20.103-104).⁸⁹ However, this again only demonstrates a favorable attitude. Likewise, Feldman's reference to Josephus' statement that the masses have shown much zeal to adopt Judaism and that it had

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 295.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

spread to every Greek city only demonstrates that there were gentiles who desired to convert to Judaism (*Ag. Ap.* 2.282).⁹⁰

Feldman's biblical reference of Matthew 23:15 which states that the Pharisee would travel sea and land to make one proselyte may provide the literary evidence of actual Jewish missional activity. Although the purpose of Matthew's statement was not intended to demonstrate Jewish missional activity, the statement is grounded in the truth that the Pharisees would go to any length to make a single convert.⁹¹ Feldman counters Martin Goodman's argument that Matthew was referring to the Pharisees' desire to convert other Jews to their sect. He notes that the other three references of the Greek word *προσήλυτος* in the New Testament refers to proselytes; gentile converts to Judaism (Acts 2:10, 6:5, 13:43).⁹² The combination of the favorable attitude and the understanding of proselytism as a divine calling with the statement of Matthew 23:15 may provide support that the Jews were actively engaged in missional activity during the Second Temple period.

Beyond the ancient literary works, Feldman references the resentment caused by Jewish missional activity. The Roman poet and satirist Horace references the Jews and how they force people to join their throng (*Satires* 1.4.142-43).⁹³ The Roman philosopher Seneca as quoted by the early church father Augustine alludes to the spread of Judaism throughout the Roman empire

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 298.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 299.

in his statement that the vanquished have given laws to the victors (*The City of God* D-1 6.1).⁹⁴ The Roman historian Tacitus remarks that the worst amongst his people have renounced their own religion and contribute to the wealth of the Jews by sending tributes to Jerusalem. He further states that the first lesson a proselyte to Judaism receives is to despise their gods, disown their country, and demonstrate very little regard towards their parents and children Tacitus, *Histories* 5.5.1, 5.5.2).⁹⁵ Through these references, Feldman is able to demonstrate that gentiles were converting to Judaism and that such activity was attracting a negative response from their fellow countrymen. From such evidence, it is undeniable that there were gentile converts to Judaism. However, this does not demonstrate the degree of proselytism or whether such activity was initiated by the Jews.

Beyond the demographic evidence provided earlier in his argument, Feldman identifies historic events where Jews were expelled from cities due to their proselyting the gentiles as real evidence of Jewish missional activities. He states that two such accounts demonstrate that the Jews were aggressive missionaries and that they conducted such activities in the capital of Rome demonstrates their boldness and confidence.⁹⁶ Feldman argues that there is sufficient literary evidence to demonstrate the Jews were expelled from Rome in 139 B.C. and A.D. 19 due to their attempts to proselytize the Roman people. He refers to Valerius Maximus' statement that the Jews were banished from Rome in 139 B.C. due to their attempt to transit their sacred rites to the

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 300.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 300, 304.

Romans (1.3.3).⁹⁷ Feldman identifies literary sources from Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio as evidence of the Jewish expulsion from Rome in A.D. 19. However, Feldman notes that only Cassius Dio states that it was specially due to their missional activities (*Historia Romana* 57.18.5a).⁹⁸

Although much of Feldman's evidence for Jewish missional activity cannot stand alone, combined he provides a compelling argument that the Jews were actively engaged in proselytizing the gentiles. From his evidence, it appears that the Jews understood this as their divine calling and had a favorable attitude towards proselytes. Although Scot McKnight challenges the reliability of the census data, even he will not argue against the estimated Jewish population by the mid first century A.D. The negative response of the gentiles to Jewish conversion as captured by the Roman literary works and the expulsion of the Jews from Rome substantiates the claim that the population growth was due to a large number of gentiles converting to Judaism. Although much of this evidence does not demonstrate whether such conversion was initiated by Jewish activity, the statement made in Matthew 23:15 does demonstrate the positive attitude of the Jews towards proselytizing.

Michael F. Bird

Bird takes a more cautious approach to this position. He argues that the population data presented by Baron may not be accurate and does not provide evidence of Jewish missional

⁹⁷ Ibid., 301.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 302.

activity.⁹⁹ He supports the statement from McKnight that there is no evidence of any organized Jewish mission to convert gentiles to Judaism.¹⁰⁰ Bird further disagrees with the interpretation of Matthew 23:15 as evidence of Jewish proselytizing activities.¹⁰¹ However, he does state that there is substantial evidence of a group of gentile adherents to Judaism.¹⁰² Bird draws his conclusions from epigraphical, archeological, literary, and biblical evidence. He notes that there are several inscriptions that were discovered within ancient synagogues which demonstrate that groups of gentiles were attached to the Jewish communities.¹⁰³ As far as literary evidence, Bird references Juvenal whose work distinguishes between God-fearers and proselytes.¹⁰⁴ He further notes the use of the word fearers in 2 Chronicles 5:6 and how it distinguishes the gentile God-fearers from the Israelites.¹⁰⁵ The greater literary evidence is contained within the works of Luke. Bird identifies the God-fearers encountered by Jesus, Peter, and Paul. He agrees with Terence Donaldson that Luke knew the difference between a God-fearer and a full convert to

⁹⁹ Michael F. Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, 2010), 54.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 70.

¹⁰² Ibid., 45.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 49.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Judaism and that Luke took for granted that one would encounter a body of non-Jews at the synagogues.¹⁰⁶

Although he challenges some of the arguments shared by other scholars of this position, it is clear from the evidence presented that Bird agrees to the existence of God-fearers and proselytes. His position appears to be more consistent with the idea of centripetal Jewish missionary activity. Bird concludes that the diaspora provides the largest amount of evidence of gentiles converting to Judaism. He states that conversions to Judaism in Greek cities was in such numbers that it drew negative attention from the cultural elite.¹⁰⁷

For evidence of Jewish missionary activity, Bird argues that one need not look any further than early Christian sources. He identifies two principle areas for this evidence. The first is the Jewish Christians proselytizing gentiles to be circumcised in addition to their faith in Christ. The second principle area is the competition between Jews and Christians for gentile converts.¹⁰⁸ Bird draws from the letters of Paul to demonstrate the existence of Jewish Christian proselytizers.¹⁰⁹ In his letter to the Philippians, Paul describes those who preach Christ while he is imprisoned (1:15-18). He warns the Philippians to beware of the dogs and evil doers who preach circumcision (3:2). In his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes of those who are compelling the gentile believers to become circumcised (6:12). He describes them as the false brethren who

¹⁰⁶ Bird, 51; Terence Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles; Jewish Patterns of Universalism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 432-34.

¹⁰⁷ Bird, 77, 81.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 135-36.

compelled Titus, a Greek, to be circumcised (2:3-4). While in Antioch, Paul refers to a group of men as being from James and as the party of the circumcision that would compel Peter, Barnabas, and the other Jewish Christians to separate themselves from the gentile believers (2:12-13). Paul questions the Galatians to whom had caused them to seek circumcision after he had preached that they were not required to become circumcised. He further states that those who preach circumcision will face God's judgment (5:7-10).

From these handful of examples, it is evident that there were other Jewish Christians in the diaspora communities beyond Paul preaching about Christ. Not all Jewish Christians agreed with Paul that circumcision was not required of the gentile believers and continued to teach that circumcision was required to join the family of God. Bird argues that these Jewish Christian proselytizers are the clearest example of Jewish missionary activity during the Second Temple period. He believes that they sought out gentiles in order to socialize them into Israel through the ritual of circumcision.¹¹⁰

Bird references Paul's letter to the Colossians as evidence of the competition between the Jews and the Christians. Bird argues that Paul's warning that no one delude the Colossian believers with a persuasive argument (2:4) is evidence that there were Jewish proselytizers attempting to draw them away from Christianity and convert them to Judaism. Bird believes this is reinforced with Paul's warning for them to see that no one takes them captive through philosophy and empty deception (2:8).¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 136.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 142.

From the evidence, Bird concludes that there were individuals and groups of Jews who actively facilitated the conversion of gentiles to Judaism and incorporated them into the Jewish communities.¹¹² He argues that the Jewish proselytes were engaged in two types of activities. The first being that they assisted non-Jews to abandon the immorality and idolatry of paganism in order to discover an ethical monotheism. The second being that they actively encouraged God-fearers to convert to Judaism through circumcision.¹¹³ Bird further concludes that the Christian mission may find its roots in the Jewish mission. The book of Isaiah influenced the Christian mission much as it had the Jewish mission with its emphasis on God's concern to reach the world through a restored Israel.¹¹⁴

Other Scholars

Jeremias argues that the start of Jewish missionary activity occurred during the post-exilic period and that the diaspora served as its primary channel. He believes that the rise and development of the Jewish diaspora communities is closely linked to the Jewish missionary activity. According to Jeremias, Judaism was the first great missionary religion to appear in the Mediterranean region.¹¹⁵ He believes that the Jewish dispersion amongst the gentiles was not to

¹¹² Ibid., 149.

¹¹³ Ibid., 150.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 152.

¹¹⁵ Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations* (London, England: SCM Press LTD, 1967), 11, 16.

be viewed as punishment, rather it was a divinely given opportunity to glory God before gentile witnesses.¹¹⁶

Jeremias references the book of Acts as evidence of the extraordinary success of the diaspora Jews missionary activities. He notes that the first Christian missionaries encountered proselytes and God-fearers wherever they traveled. Jeremias credits the Jewish missionary activity for establishing the foundation for the apostle Paul's missionary success. The diaspora Jews in Asia Minor had already been proselytizing the gentiles and drawing them to God.¹¹⁷

Barclay shares a similar position that the Second Temple period Jews were favorable to gentile conversion to Judaism. Much like Feldman and other scholars, he references the ancient literary works of Josephus and Philo to support this position. Specifically, Barclay refers to Philo's statement of looking forward to the restoration of his nation and to when other people groups would abandon their ancestral customs and join the Jews as evidence (*Moses* 2 43-44).¹¹⁸ Barclay believes that Josephus was consistent in depicting the diaspora Jewish communities as a nation.¹¹⁹ He argues that the gentile proselyte underwent such a resocialization that they acquired a new ethnicity in kinship and custom and were fully assimilated into the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 14.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 16.

¹¹⁸ Barclay, 406.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 405.

Jewish nation. So much so that Barclay argues that they became Jews and may have been viewed as more Jewish than those that were naturally born Jewish and had abandoned their customs.¹²⁰

In addition to the ancient literary works, Barclay presents the negative response to gentile conversion as evidence for gentile conversion to Judaism. Much as Feldman, he references the statement from Roman historian Tacitus where he identifies proselytes as scoundrels who abandon their gods, nation, and family for Judaism (*Histories* 5.5.1).¹²¹ He further references the Roman poet Juvenal in his comment that circumcised converts become accustomed to despising Roman law (*Satires* 14.100-101).¹²² By referencing both the favorable statements of Josephus and Philo and the negative response from Tacitus and Juvenal, Barclay is able to demonstrate that not only did the Jews view favorable upon gentile conversion to Judaism, but that the conversion was so complete that the proselyte became foreigners to their original people. From the evidence, it would be difficult to argue against gentile conversion to Judaism during the Second Temple period. However, Barclay does not mention whether the conversion was initiated by the proselyte or if the Jews engaged in missional activity. His mention of the importance of the synagogue in the Jewish diaspora communities does not provide evidence that they were used as a means to proselytize the gentiles.¹²³

¹²⁰ Ibid., 403, 408.

¹²¹ Ibid., 410.

¹²² Ibid., 409.

¹²³ Ibid., 26.

Both Arias and Scott argue that a possible reason scholars struggle to identify evidence of Jewish missional activity is due to applying a more modern definition to mission. Arias argues that modern scholars think of mission as going. Whereas the Old Testament model of mission is more centripetal. He argues that for the Israelites to be a light to the nations, they were not to go, they were to be the people of God.¹²⁴ Scott agrees that the centripetal vision of the Old Testament was for the Israelites to live an authentic life before God.¹²⁵ Both scholars advocate that the Jews' model of mission was more attractional. The Jews were to draw gentiles to God by living a righteous life distinct from their neighbors.

Other scholars agree with Arias' and Scott's argument for a more centripetal approach to mission by the Jews during the Second Temple period. Wielenga believes that there is biblical evidence for a centripetal mission in the book of Malachi. The worship service held at the Jerusalem Temple was not only meant to reenergize and redirect those reconciled to God, it was to enable them to fulfill their divinely given centripetal mandate to attract the nations to God.¹²⁶ Goldenberg states that the Jews and their religion was highly visible in the Greco-Roman world. He estimates that they comprised twenty percent of the population of the eastern Mediterranean basin and were aggressively proud of their distinctive monotheistic faith.¹²⁷ Bedell argues that a

¹²⁴ Mortimer Arias, "Centripetal Mission or Evangelization by Hospitality," *Missiology* 10, no. 1 (January 1982): 69–81.

¹²⁵ Waldron Scott, *Bring Forth Justice* (Authentic Media, 1997), 108.

¹²⁶ Bob Wielenga, "'Remember the Law of Moses': Malachi 3:22 in Prophetic Eschatology, with a Missional Postscript." *In die Skriflig* 53, no. 1 (2019): 1-10.

¹²⁷ Robert Goldenberg, *The Origins of Judaism from Canaan to the Rise of Islam* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 180.

sacred magnetism exuded from the synagogues that attracted gentiles to Judaism.¹²⁸ Hengel and Schwemer concur that it was the power of attraction that brought gentiles to Judaism.¹²⁹

North argues that the Isaiah 49:3 provides further evidence of Israel's divinely given mission to attract gentiles to God. God's statement that He will show His glory through Israel supports the idea of a centripetal mission where God will reveal Himself to the gentiles through Israel.¹³⁰ The Jews are called to be and live as His people, God will take the action to reveal His glory. This position is further substantiated by Martin-Achard who argues that God converts the nations by working in the midst of His people. He states that it is God's interventions alone that make Israel the light to the world. Martin-Achard believes that it is the hidden activity of God that defines mission and that the Old Testament serves as a reminder of this truth.¹³¹

Bruce argues that there is evidence of considerable proselytizing activities amongst the gentiles during the early part of the first century A.D.. He quotes the Rabbi Hillel who states that the Jews are to love their fellow creatures and draw them towards the Torah (*Pirkei Avot* 1.13).¹³² Bruce references Josephus' account of the conversion of the house of Adiabene in A.D.

¹²⁸ Clifford H. Bedell, "Mission in Intertestamental Judaism" in *Mission in the New Testament; An Evangelical Approach*. ed. William J. Larkin Jr. and Joel F. Williams (New York, NY: Maryknoll, 1998), 25.

¹²⁹ Martin Hengel and Anna Marie Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch; The Unknown Years* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 75-76.

¹³⁰ Christopher R. North, *The Second Isaiah; Introduction, Translation and Commentary to Chapters XL-LV* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), 143.

¹³¹ Robert Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations: A Study of the Old Testament Conception of Israel's Mission to the World*. trans. John Penney Smith (London, England: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 79.

¹³² F. F. Bruce, *Paul; The Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 128.

40 as evidence of Jewish missionary activity and willingness to travel in support of this mission (*Ant.* 10.17).¹³³ He draws reference to the biblical accounts within the book of Acts where both Jews and proselytes were visiting Jerusalem from Rome during Pentecost in A.D. 30 (2:10).¹³⁴ Bruce also notes that one of the seven leaders of the early Jerusalem church was a proselyte (Acts 6:5) and that Philip baptized an Ethiopian proselyte (Acts 8:27-39). This proselytizing activity reveals that the Jews understood their mission to be God's witness to the nations in accordance with Isaiah 43:10-12, 21.¹³⁵ Bruce also suggests that the apostle Paul may have been engaged in such missional activity prior to his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus.¹³⁶ Martin Hengel agrees with this assertion.¹³⁷

Conclusion

From this literary review, most scholars either hold that the Second Temple period Jews were open to gentile converts to Judaism and did not engage in missional activities (position 2) or that the Second Temple period Jews were open to gentile converts to Judaism and engaged in missional activities (position 3). Kaminsky appears to be in the minority believing that the Jews did not hold a favorable view towards gentile converts to Judaism (position 1). From the biblical text and from the ancient literary sources, it is difficult to argue that the Jews were opposed to

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 129.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Martin Hengel, "The Origin of the Christian Mission," *New Testament Studies* 18 (1971-72): 23.

gentile conversion to Judaism. If there was opposition, it may have been a minority view amongst the Jewish people. It may be argued that those of the non-missional position are applying a modern definition to mission in their effort to identify evidence for missional activity. It appears clear that the Jewish people understood their mission to be God's witnesses as living as a distinct people of God that would attract the curiosity and awe of their gentile neighbors. From the evidence presented by scholars of both position 2 and 3, the diaspora Jews were a distinct people who attracted gentiles to Judaism. Several of these gentiles would either become God-fearers or fully convert to Judaism and become proselytes. The evidence reveals that the God-fearers and proselytes attended the synagogue where they learned about God and what it meant to live as a Jew. The book of Acts provides several accounts of God-fearers and proselytes attending synagogue.

From this evidence, it may be concluded that the Second Temple period Jews were favorable to gentile conversion. It may be further concluded that the Jews were missional. They understood God's given mission was to be centripetal. The Jewish people lived as a distinct people in order to be His witness and attract the gentiles to God. The ancient literary and biblical evidence reveals that the Jews enjoyed great success in their missional activity as numerous gentiles became God-fearers or proselytes. The evidence further demonstrates that the synagogues were the place where gentiles were welcome to learn about God and about the Jewish identity.

Chapter III

The Origin of the Nation of Israel and its Mission

Understanding the Jewish people's missional activity during the Second Temple period requires an examination of Israel's origin and purpose. Three critical passages in the Hebrew Bible shaped the Jewish identity and mission during the Second Temple period. The origin of the nation of Israel is traced back to God's promise to Abram that He would make him into a great nation (Gen 12:2). God reveals their purpose in that same promise. He promises to bless all the families of the earth through Abram (Gen 12:3). However, God reveals how all the families will be blessed when He informs Israel that they would become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:5-6). God reveals Israel's mission to the gentile nations when He calls them to be His witnesses (Isa 43:10, 12).

These three passages became the root of the distinct Jewish identity and purpose amongst the gentile nations. They understood that God established the nation of Israel not for the sake of Israel nor due to their righteousness (Deut 9:4-6). Instead, He had established them for the unique mission to restore His relationship with the entire world. God had provided them instructions on how to live apart from the other nations and draw the curiosity and awe of their gentile neighbors (Deut 4:5-8).

The Jewish mission started attracting gentiles to God from all parts of the earth. From prostitutes to queens, gentiles came to know and fear God (Josh 2:8-11; 1 Kgs 10:6-9). Although Israel was driven from their land due to disobedience (Deut 29:28), their divinely given mission continued. They lived distinctive lives that attracted the curiosity and awe of their gentile

neighbors. God continued to reveal Himself through His exiled people to the astonishment of the gentile kings and subjects. After the Jews were permitted to return to their land, many remained living in the diaspora, fulfilling God's mission.

I Will Make You a Great Nation (Genesis 12:2)

Origin of Israel

In Genesis 11, Shem's list of descendants identifies Terah (11:24). He is the son of Nahor and the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. This chapter also reveals that Terah set out for the land of Canaan from Ur of the Chaldeans with his son Abram, his grandson Lot, and his daughter-in-law Sarai (11:31). However, Terah stopped and settled in Haran, where he died at the age of two-hundred and five (205) (11:31-32). Scripture does not reveal what caused Terah to depart Ur for the land of Canaan. It only highlights that he fell short in his journey. However, Talmudic tradition shares that it was Abram's urging for Terah to flee out of fear of king Nimrod who intended to put Abram to death (*Book of Jasher* 12.65).

Genesis 12 opens immediately with God's call to Abram to depart from his country for a land that God would show him (12:1). According to Talmudic tradition, Abram had lived in Haran for three years with his father when God called him to depart for Canaan (*Book of Jasher* 13.3). Included in this call was a three-part promise known as the Abrahamic covenant. Should Abram depart from his father and his relatives, God would make Abram into a great nation, He would make Abram's name great, and through Abram, all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3).

The first part of the covenant relates to the formation of the nation of Israel. Should Abram follow God to the land of Canaan, Abram would become a great nation. Once Abram settled in Canaan, God appeared to Abram and reaffirmed this promise. He tells Abram that He has established His covenant between them. Abram would now be named Abraham and become the father of a multitude of nations (Gen 17:5). God promises that He will pass this everlasting covenant through Abraham's descendants (Gen 17:7). God will give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants, and He would be their God (Gen 17:8). God informs Abraham that his wife Sarai would be renamed Sarah and would give birth to Isaac (Gen 17:15). It would be through Isaac and his descendants that God would continue His everlasting covenant (Gen 17:19). God continues to reaffirm His promise to Abraham. In Mamre, God appeared again before Abraham and stated that he would become a great and mighty nation. He would bless all the nations of the earth through him (Gen 18:18). After nearly offering Isaac to God, Abraham is told by God that He would greatly multiply Abraham's seed and that "in your seed, all the nations of the earth will be blessed" due to his obedience (Gen 22:17-18).

As promised, God continues His everlasting covenant through Abraham's descendants. After the death of Abraham, God blesses Isaac (Gen 25:11). God first appears to Isaac in Beersheba and promises Isaac that He will bless him and multiply his descendants for the sake of Isaac's father Abraham (Gen 26:24). When Isaac's wife Rebekah was pregnant with twins, God reveals to her that His covenant would continue through their younger son Jacob. God tells her that the older son, Esau, would serve Jacob (Gen 25:23).

That the covenant will continue through Jacob is confirmed when God appears to him in a dream and informs him that He will multiply Jacob's descendants, give them the land of Canaan, and that through his descendants, He would bless all the families of the earth. God told Jacob that He would not leave him until all that He promised was complete (Gen 28:13-15). Jacob's name is changed to Israel when God appears to him to reaffirm the covenant. God informs Israel that a nation and a company of nations would come from him and that God would give him and his descendants the same land He had promised Abraham and Isaac (Gen 35:9-12).

God appeared to Jacob in a vision and instructed him to move to Egypt with his sons, where God would fulfill His promise and make him a great nation (Gen 46:2-4). Jacob and all his descendants relocated to Egypt with all the possessions they acquired in Canaan and settled in Goshen (Gen 46:5-7). It was in Goshen where God established the nation of Israel. The sons of Israel would be fruitful and multiple until they became so mighty that Pharaoh feared that they were mightier than the Egyptians (Exod 1:7, 9). The nation of Israel would remain in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years (Exod 12:40-41).

Table 11. Key Scripture of the Origin of Israel

Verse	Subject	Description
Gen 12:1-3	Abram	God calls Abram to leave his country, his people, and his father's household and travel to the land of Canaan
Gen 25:11	Isaac	God blesses Isaac after the passing of his father Abraham
Gen 25:23	Rebekah	God informs Isaac's wife Rebekah that her older son Esau will serve her younger son Jacob
Gen 28:13-15	Jacob	God reaffirms His promise to Jacob that his descendants will be numerous and that through them all the peoples of the earth will be blessed
Gen 35:9-12	Jacob	Jacob's name is changed to Israel. God reaffirms His promise that his descendants will become a great nation
Gen 46:2-4	Jacob	God calls Jacob to relocate to Egypt, where He will make him into a great nation

Source: NASB1995

The Everlasting Covenant

Williamson states that Genesis 12:1-3 is one of the most important revelations in Scripture as it reveals God's rescue plan for humanity.¹ He argues that the promise of Abram becoming a great nation is subservient to God's principle desire to bless all the families of the earth and that God's plan for Israel is subservient to His universal plan for salvation.² Goheen agrees that Abram's election is for the sake of mission.³

However, there is much scholarly debate concerning the Abrahamic covenant regarding conditionality and whether there were multiple covenants. Arguments exist that God's promises in Genesis 12:1-3 are pre-covenant promises due to the lack of a cutting ceremony.⁴ Most believe the covenant was made ten years after the pre-covenant promises when God performed

¹ Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose* (Downers Grove, Ill: Apollos/InterVarsity Press, 2016), 77.

² Ibid., 84.

³ Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 35.

⁴ David Andrew Dean, "Covenant, Conditionality, and Consequence: New Terminology and a Case Study in the Abrahamic Covenant," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 57, no. 2 (2014): 281-308; It may be argued that God's pre-covenant promise to Abram was conditional. God commands Abram to "go forth" from his country and depart from his relatives and his father's house. Should Abram obey, God promises to make him a great nation, bless him, make his name great, bless those who bless Abram, curse those who curse him, and bless all the families of the earth through Abram (Gen 12:1-3). Scripture reveals that Abram "went forth" as God commanded him (Gen 12:4). In the ancient Near East, to depart relatives and the father's house was to completely disengage from family. God's promised protection may be in replacement of the protection Abram received from his family. Jonathan Grossman, *Abram to Abraham; A Literary Analysis of the Abraham Narrative* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang AG, 2016). Although an agreement was made between a Lord and his vassal, scholars do not consider Gen 12:1-3 to be a covenant between God and Abram. In the ancient Near East, covenants between parties were ratified with a covenant-cutting ceremony. The covenant cutting ceremony between God and Abram is conducted ten years later (Gen 15). David Andrew Dean, "Covenant, Conditionality, and Consequence: New Terminology and a Case Study in the Abrahamic Covenant," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57, no. 2 (2014): 281-308. Abram's pre-covenantal obligation to "go forth" and leave his family was satisfied prior to the covenant-cutting ceremony. When the covenant is ratified between God and Abram, no covenantal obligations are placed on Abram.

the covenant cutting ceremony (Gen 15).⁵ The nature of Genesis 17 is what has become widely debated. Williamson argues that Genesis 17 is a separate covenant from the covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 15. He believes Genesis 15 is a unilateral covenant where only God has any covenantal obligations. Williamson identifies Genesis 15 as a temporal royal grant made by God to Abraham with a national focus. This covenant focuses on the first part of the pre-covenantal promises of Abraham becoming a great nation. However, according to Williamson, there is no mention that the covenant is everlasting.⁶ He believes Genesis 17 is a separate bilateral covenant between God and Abraham where both parties have covenantal obligations. This covenant covers the second part of the pre-covenantal promises and has more of an international focus. Although this is an everlasting covenant, it is conditional upon human behavior.⁷ As long as Abraham and his descendants walked faithfully with God, it would be through them that the families of the earth would be blessed. Williamson regards Genesis 22 as a test of Abraham's faith and demonstrates his compliance with his covenant obligations described in Genesis 17.⁸

Niehaus disagrees with Williamson. According to Niehaus, Genesis 15 is where God entered into a single covenant with Abraham, and Genesis 17 and 22 describe supplemental

⁵ Jeffrey J. Niehaus, "God's Covenant with Abraham," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 2 (2013): 249-271.

⁶ Williamson, 86-87.

⁷ Ibid., 87-88.

⁸ Ibid., 90.

information.⁹ Niehaus notes that the Bible only refers to God's covenant with Abraham in the singular.¹⁰ He argues that the Abrahamic covenant is both conditional and unconditional. It is unconditional in that the covenant is unilateral, and God will see it accomplished. It is conditional in that any individual may remove themselves from the covenant relationship through covenant breaking.¹¹ Niehaus also disagrees with the view of the unilateral nature of the covenant as a royal grant. Royal grants in the ancient Near East were gifts of land bestowed upon loyal vassals by the king. Such grants did not require warfare in order for the vassal to take possession of the land.¹²

Another factor that must be considered is the difference between the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant made with Israel at Mount Sinai. The Mosaic covenant greatly emphasizes Israel and the judgment they will experience for their disobedience (Deut 28). In contrast, the Abrahamic covenant emphasizes God's promise to Abraham more than Abraham's obligations.¹³ Davidson argues that the Abrahamic covenant is unilateral and describes the covenant as a promissory oath made by God to Abraham.¹⁴ Mason argues that the promissory nature of Genesis 17 overshadows the conditional nature of the covenant. He believes that the Abrahamic

⁹ Niehaus, 250.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 260-61.

¹² Ibid., 267.

¹³ Walter Moberly, *Genesis 12-50* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 24-25.

¹⁴ Robert Davidson, "Covenant Ideology in Ancient Israel," in *The World of Ancient Israel*. ed. R. E. Clements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 338.

covenant is bilateral and that each entering party has covenantal obligations. However, the promissory aspect of the covenant is within the covenant obligations; the promises are contingent upon Abraham's and his descendants' continued fulfillment of their covenantal obligations.¹⁵ Mason argues that the preamble of Genesis 17 introduces the conditional nature of the covenant. God instructs Abraham to walk before Him and be blameless in order to receive the covenantal promises. According to Mason, the condition is for Abraham to "walk," and the consequence of that condition is to "be."¹⁶ He further substantiates the bilateral nature of the covenant by comparing it with the pattern used in Genesis 9. According to Mason, the dual responsibility of both covenanting parties is seen in Genesis 9 and 17. God's covenantal obligations begin with "as for me," while Noah's and Abraham's obligations begin with "as for you."¹⁷

Dean provides a more substantial explanation of the Abrahamic covenant by clarifying the terminology. He employs George E. Mendenhall's definition of covenant as a solemn promise made binding by an oath.¹⁸ This is important when determining the lateral nature of the covenant. Since the covenant is bound with an oath, the oath taker can only bind themselves, thus making a unilateral oath.¹⁹ Because of this, the very foundation of the covenant is unilateral.

¹⁵ Steven D. Mason, "Eternal Covenant" in *the Pentateuch; The Contours of an Elusive Phrase*, vol. 494 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2008), 93.

¹⁶ Ibid., 94.

¹⁷ Ibid., 96.

¹⁸ Dean, 281-308; George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 17, no. 3 (Sep 1954): 49-76.

¹⁹ Dean, 285.

The active covenant maker cannot bind the passive covenant maker. In the ancient world, if the covenant were to be bilateral, the covenanting parties would enter into a double covenant where they both bound themselves to identical oaths.²⁰ Dean makes the distinction between covenant obligations and covenant regulations. He defines covenant obligations as anything the active covenanting party obligates themselves to do or not do when the covenant is made. He further clarifies that within a unilateral covenant, only the party who actively makes the covenant has any covenantal obligations.²¹ In contrast to covenant obligations applicable to either or both covenanting parties, the covenant regulations are imposed upon the vassal by the suzerain after they have entered into the covenant relationship. Since the vassal lives under the authority of the suzerain, the suzerain has the right to regulate the behavior of the vassal during the course of the covenant.²²

Having made the distinction between covenant obligations and regulations, Dean further identifies that there are obligatory penalties for a party's failure to uphold their covenant obligations and regulatory penalties for the vassal's failure to obey the regulatory obligations.²³ According to Dean, the penalties would fall within three possible types:

- Death penalty
- Nullification of the covenant

²⁰ Ibid..

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 287.

²³ Ibid., 289.

- Punitive and corrective actions that did not result in death or in the nullification of the covenant

Dean references Leviticus 26:14-45 and Deuteronomy 28:15-68 as an example of punitive and corrective actions for Israel's failure to obey the Mosaic covenant. God clarifies that these penalties' goal is to correct wrongful behavior.²⁴ Although there are individual cases of the death penalty, there is no scriptural evidence of God eliminating an entire vassal group. Even with the Noahic flood, where God appears to impose a near-universal death penalty, He spares Noah and his family.²⁵ Similarly, when God intended to eliminate the nation of Israel after the golden calf incident, God told Moses that He would make Moses a great nation (Exod 32:10). From both examples, it appears that God did not eliminate humanity or eliminate Abraham's descendants as He considers His covenant obligations to be permanent.²⁶

Applying his defined terminology, Dean argues that it is in Genesis 15 where God performs the cutting ceremony and enters into a unilateral covenant to fulfill the promises He made to Abram in Genesis 12. In Genesis 17, God does not enter into a new covenant with Abraham. Instead, He reaffirms the previous cut covenant made in Genesis 15. Dean believes that the sign of circumcision is not a covenant obligation. Rather, it is a covenant regulation.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 290.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The incident with Moses' uncircumcised son Gershom is an example of the penalty for violating covenant regulations (Exod 4:24-26). If Moses' wife Zipporah had not circumcised her son at that moment, God would have killed Gershom. He had violated the covenant regulations given to Abram in Genesis 17 in which the penalty was to be cut off from the people (Gen 17:14). In the case of Gershom, this meant death. Douglas K. Stuart,

Genesis 22 is a test of Abraham's obedience to these covenant regulations.²⁸ According to Dean's argument, the Abrahamic covenant cannot be nullified as God is the only active covenanting party. Abraham and his descendants have only covenant regulations and do not have any covenant obligations.

Based on this evidence, the Abrahamic covenant is singular, unilateral, and eternal. Although Williamson argues that God's promises are divided between two covenants, Dean's argument for a single covenant with covenant regulations is more consistent with the Scripture's reference to the covenant in the singular. The lack of a covenant cutting ceremony in Genesis 17 suggests that God is reaffirming His covenant made in Genesis 15 before instructing Abram of the new covenant regulations. This is further substantiated with the unilateral nature of the covenant. God is the oath taker when He promises Abram that he will become a great nation and will be a blessing to the other nations. Abram does not take an oath. His obedience is more consistent with covenant regulations than covenant obligations. The basis of Williamson's argument for a bilateral covenant is God instructions to Abram that he is to walk faithfully and be blameless (Gen 17:1). This does not infer an oath on Abram's part. He does not explicitly state or make an oath that he will walk faithfully and be blameless. The formation of Israel is part of God's universal plan for humanity's salvation. Although God promises to make Abraham

Exodus. vol. 2. The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 125-26. There is debate to whether God intended to kill Moses or Gershom and whether it was due to not being circumcised or due to Moses' reluctance in his calling. That Moses was already enroute to Egypt and that God relented after the circumcision was performed supports that the reason for the attack was the lack of circumcision. Whether the intended target was Moses or Gershom is irrelevant. The covenant regulation had been violated and death was the punishment. Simon Skidmore, "A Mimetic Reading of Exodus 4:24-26." *The Heythrop Journal*. (2021), 1-12.

²⁸ Dean, 308.

a great nation, the purpose for this nation is to be a blessing to the other nations. If, as Williamson argues, the national promise is temporal, then the international blessing promise cannot be eternal as the blessing is through the nation Israel. God has entered into this unalterable covenant to accomplish His own purpose and not for the purpose of Israel.²⁹ Individuals may be removed from the covenant for failure to observe the covenant regulations. However, God will fulfill His covenant obligations to the corporate vassal body. The foundation of the Abrahamic covenant is God's promise and is not dependent upon the performance of the vassal party, Israel.³⁰

Table 12. Key Scripture of the Eternal Abrahamic Covenant

Verse	Subject	Description
Gen 12:1-3	Promise	God promises Abram that He will make him into a great nation through whom the peoples of the earth will be blessed
Gen 15	Covenant Obligation	Covenant cutting ceremony where God establishes His promise that Abram's descendants will be as numerous as the stars and possess the land of Canaan
Gen 17	Covenant Regulation	Affirmation of God's covenant with Abram. Abram's name is changed to Abraham, and the covenant regulation of circumcision is established
Gen 22	Covenant Test	Abraham's obedience to covenant regulation is tested when God commands him to sacrifice his son Isaac
Exod 32:10	Eternal Covenant	After God plans to destroy the Israelites for their disobedience, God keeps his promise to make Abraham's descendant Moses a great nation
Lev 26:14-45	Punishment	God outlines the punishment for disobedience of the covenant regulations, including removal from the land. God's covenant obligations remain.
Deut 28:15-68	Punishment	God outlines the punishment for disobedience of the covenant regulations, including removal from the land. God's covenant obligations remain.

Source: NASB1995.

²⁹ John F. Walvoord, "The Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant," *The Bibliotheca Sacra* 102, no. 405 (1945): 27-36.

³⁰ Dean, 308.

A Nation Without Borders

In Genesis 12:2, God promises to make Abram a great nation. In Genesis 12:7, He promises Abram that He will give Abram's descendants the land of Canaan. God again promises the land to Abram in Genesis 13:15. It is in Genesis 15 that God solidifies this land promise into a covenant with Abram (15:7, 18). In Genesis 17:8, God reaffirms His covenant to Abraham that He will give the land of Canaan to his descendants. In Genesis 18:18, God states that Abraham will become a great and mighty nation through which all the earth's nations will be blessed.

Vasholz argues that three components were required to fulfill God's promise that He would make Abraham a great nation; people, government, and land.³¹ The fulfillment of the promise to multiply and make Abraham's descendants as numerous as the stars (Gen 15:5) was confirmed when Moses was told that "the Lord your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day like the stars in heaven in number" (Deut 1:10; cf. 10:22; 26:5). The giving of the Law to Moses established how the people were to be governed. The fulfillment of the land promise was confirmed in Joshua 21:43-45, "so the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers."

However, the promise of becoming a great nation is separate from the land promise. Israel does not require the land of Canaan to become a great nation, and the biblical evidence demonstrates that Israel became a nation before they arrived in the land of Canaan. God instructs Jacob to relocate to Egypt, where God would make Jacob a great nation (Gen 46:3). The seventy

³¹ Robert Vasholz, "The Character of Israel's Future in Light of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants," *Trinity Journal*, 25NS (2004), 39-59.

who traveled to Egypt with Jacob would settle in Goshen, where they acquired property and became numerous in number (Gen 47:27). There the sons of Israel increased greatly in number, became exceedingly mighty, and filled the land of Egypt (Exod 1:7). They would continue to increase in number and spread throughout the land that Pharaoh feared that their number might exceed that of the Egyptians (Exod 1:9).

Deuteronomy 26:5 confirms the establishment of the nation of Israel in Goshen. Moses instructs the Israelites to say before God during the Offering of First Fruits that their father was a wandering Aramean who traveled to Egypt few in number, where he became a great, mighty, and populous nation. The nation of Israel would reside in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years (Exod 12:40-41). God moves the nation of Israel to the land that He promised due to their suffering under the oppression of the Egyptians (Exod 2:25; 3:7-9; Deut 26:7-9). The population of Israel increased from seventy to six hundred thousand men (Exod 12:37). Including the women and children, their number would have exceeded over one million.³²

After departing Egypt, the nation of Israel would reside in the wilderness for another forty years before entering the land of Canaan (Jos 5:6). They walked the wilderness until all the circumcised members of the nation perished due to their disobedience to God. He instructs Joshua to circumcise the sons of Israel a second time, as the children who had been born in the wilderness had not been circumcised (Jos 5:2, 5). Joshua circumcises all the nation of Israel at Gilgal (Jos 5:8-9).

³² R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*. vol. 2. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 119.

God's establishment of the nation of Israel outside the land of Canaan demonstrates that the promise of being made a great nation is not dependent on the promise of the Canaanite land. Israel had been a nation for four hundred and seventy years prior to entering Canaan. The nation of Israel is a distinct people group governed by divine law and not tied to a particular geographical location. Israel would continue to be a nation during their exile in Babylon and while continuing to live as diaspora communities. During the Second Temple period, Jews shared a common national identity regardless of geographical location. They understood that their citizenship was not contingent upon having residence within Palestine. Josephus often referred to the Jews as members of a nation (*Ag. Ap.* 1.1).³³ Similarly, Philo identifies the Jews as a nation (*Moses* 2.43-44).³⁴ This is an important distinction for the Jewish people's sense of identity and mission.

³³ John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora; From Alexander to Trajan (323 B.C.E – 117 C.E)* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 405.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 406.

Table 13. Key Scripture of the Establishment of the Nation Outside Canaan

Verse	Subject	Description
Gen 46:3	Nation	God tells Jacob to relocate to Egypt, where He would make him into a great nation
Gen 47:27	Goshen	Israelites settled in Goshen, where they acquired property and increased in number
Exod 1:7, 9	Population	Israel's population increased so that they filled the land of Egypt, and Pharaoh stated that they had become too numerous
Exod 12:37	Population	The Israelites numbered six hundred thousand men, not including women and children, when they departed Egypt
Exod 12:40-41	Time in Egypt	The nation of Israel lived in Egypt for four hundred and thirty (430) years before they departed for the land of Canaan
Deut 26:5	Nation	Moses tells how Jacob traveled to Egypt, where he became a great nation that was powerful and numerous
Josh 5:2-9	Nation	Joshua circumcises the nation after wandering in the wilderness for forty (40) years

Source: NASB1995.

A Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation (Exodus 19:6)

Purpose for Israel

Upon arriving in the Sinai wilderness, God instructs Moses to inform the Israelites that they will be God's possession and that they will be His kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:5-6). This verse reveals the universal purpose for God's election of the Jewish people. Israel has a unique role in His plan for the salvation of all humankind.³⁵ Their election is not one of privilege. Rather it is one of responsibility.³⁶ That they are to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation is instructive on how they are to fulfill this role.

God does not elect Israel to this role due to their righteousness. Rather it is to keep the covenant He made with Abraham (Deut 9:6; 7:8). The Abrahamic covenant reveals God's two-

³⁵ Andrew S. Malone, *God's Mediators: A Biblical Theology of Priesthood* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 142.

³⁶ John N. Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 571-72.

stage redemptive plan for humankind. The first stage is to form Abraham into a great nation. The second stage is to bless all the nations of the earth through this nation.³⁷ Israel is now a nation, and God intends to launch the second stage of His plan. He will reveal Himself to the world through the nation of Israel (Isa 49:3).³⁸

God's call for Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation is not a description of a nation in isolation. Rather it describes Israel's relation to God's entire earth.³⁹ The unique role of Israel intends to serve the universality of God's interest in the world.⁴⁰ Israel is to mediate and intercede as priests between God and the wayward nations.⁴¹ What priests are for a people, Israel is for the world.⁴² Just as priests provide the opportunity for a relationship between God and His people, Israel is to provide the opportunity for a relationship between God and the nations. They are to represent God to the world through mission and represent the world through prayer.⁴³ The prophet Isaiah reaffirms this call to be the Lord's priesthood when he tells the Israelites that they will be spoken of as ministers of our God (Isa 61:6). The concept of the nation of Israel as an

³⁷ Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 34.

³⁸ Christopher. R. North, *The Second Isaiah; Introduction, Translation, and Commentary to Chapters XL-LV* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), 143.

³⁹ Jo Bailey Wells, *God's Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 49.

⁴⁰ Malone, 134.

⁴¹ Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of the Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 65.

⁴² Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (London, England: Lutterworth, 1962), 24.

⁴³ Tim Chester, *Exodus for You* (Epsom: The Good Book Company, 2016), 142.

intercessory priesthood was perpetuated by the Second Temple period scholars. Philo states that God consecrated Israel into the priesthood so that they may offer up prayers on behalf of all humankind in order to avert evil from them and permit them to participate in God's blessing (*Moses* 1.149).

For Israel to be a kingdom of priests, they had to become a holy nation (Deut 7:6; 14:2). They were to be set apart for God's purpose. They were to live amongst the gentiles. However, they were to remain distinct from the gentiles. Israel was to be a nation in the world but not of the world. They were to live according to God's code of ethics and reflect His value system. Israel was to model God's standards of justice and demonstrate to the world His model for life and society. As they lived in a covenant relationship with God, they were to display to the nations how living in this covenant relationship changes people.⁴⁴ Israel was to embody God's original creational intention and eschatological goal for humankind.⁴⁵ They would become distinct from other people by who they were and whom they were becoming. This distinctiveness was to be apparent to all observers.⁴⁶

Moses instructs Israel to keep God's law to attract the attention of the other nations. This law manifests God's creational design and intent for all humankind in that time's specific social and cultural context. It is God's intended way of life for all humanity.⁴⁷ People of these nations

⁴⁴ Malone, 136.

⁴⁵ Goheen, 30.

⁴⁶ Malone, 136-37.

⁴⁷ Goheen, 41.

will recognize Israel's righteous wisdom and the nearness of their God (Deut 4:5-8). Israel would become a holy people to God so that the other nations would see that they are called by Him (Deut 28:9-10). God separates the Israelites from the gentiles as His own holy people who distinguish between clean and unclean (Lev 10:10-11; 20:20-24). Should the Israelites follow the law diligently, they would provoke the curiosity and awe of the surrounding nations.⁴⁸ Israel would become a counterculture, displaying what God had intended from the beginning and His goal of restoration for all creation.⁴⁹ Goheen describes God's purpose for Israel as being threefold. First, Israel is to embody God's original intention for human life. Second, they are to bear God's promise of a restored humanity. Third, they are to confront the idolatry of the nations so that the nations may come to know and praise the one true God.⁵⁰

Israel's purpose is a centripetal mission. Their primary mission is not to go anywhere or do anything. God calls them to be a distinct people.⁵¹ Israel was to be the people of God and live an authentic life before Him.⁵² It is their distinctive lifestyle that attracts the nations to God.⁵³

⁴⁸ Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission; The Glory of Christ in All Time and Space* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 107.

⁴⁹ Goheen, 30.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Mortimer Arias, "Centripetal Mission or Evangelization by Hospitality," *Missiology* 10, no.1 (January 1982): 69-81; Waldren Scott. *Bring Forth the Justice* (Authentic Media, 1997), 108.

⁵³ Bob Wielenga, "Remember the Law of Moses: Malachi 3:22 in Prophetic Eschatology, with Missional Postscript," in *Die Skriflig* 53, no. 1 (2019), 1-10.

God works in the midst of His own people.⁵⁴ It is through Israel that He will reveal Himself to the world.

Table 14. Key Scripture of God's Purpose for Israel

Verse	Subject	Description
Exod 19:5-6	Israel	Israel will be God's treasured possession and become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation
Deut 4:5-8	Israel	Israel is to follow all the laws and decrees that God has given them so that they appear as a wise and understanding people to the other nations
Deut 7:6; 14:2	Israel	Israel is holy to God and chosen from all the people of the earth. They are His treasured possession
Deut 7:8; 9:6	Israel	Israel is given the land of Canaan not because of their righteousness, rather it is due to God's love for them and His oath to their ancestors
Deut 28:9-10	Israel	God will establish Israel as a holy people, and the nations will see that they are called by the name of the Lord and will be feared
Isa 7:6	Israel	God calls Israel His servant through whom He will display His glory
Isa 61:6	Israel	Israel will be called priests of the Lord and ministers of God

Source: NASB1995.

Biblical Evidence of Centripetal Mission

The Old Testament contains evidence of the Jewish centripetal mission. The nation of Israel began living as a distinct people through whom God revealed Himself to the world. Gentiles acknowledged the Jewish God as early as the time of Joseph. When the Pharaoh of Egypt had a dream foretelling the seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine, it was Joseph who was able to interpret the dream (Gen 41:25-32). Pharaoh recognized that God had worked through Joseph to warn him of the coming famine, and because of God working through Joseph, Pharaoh recognized that there was no one more discerning and wise as Joseph

⁵⁴ Robert Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations: A Study of the Old Testament Conception of Israel's Mission to the World*. trans. John Penney Smith (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 79.

(Gen 41:39-41). Joseph remained faithful to God. He lived a life distinct from the Egyptians. The work of God and not Joseph caused Pharaoh to acknowledge God.⁵⁵

God would reveal Himself to Egypt again during the time of Moses. God sends Moses to warn Pharaoh that should he not release the Jews, God would fall upon Egypt with pestilence or with a sword (Exod 5:1-3). Egypt suffered ten plagues before Pharaoh would permit the departure of the Jews (Exod 12:31). The Egyptians experienced the water turning to blood (Exod 7:14-24), the land covered with frogs (Exod 8:1-15), swarms of gnats and flies (Exod 8:16-31), the death of their cattle (Exod 9:1-7), boils (Exod 9:8-12), destructive hail (Exod 13-35), locusts (Exod 10:1-20), three days of darkness (Exod 10:21-29), and the death of the firstborn son (Exod 11:1-12:30). Amid these ten plagues, God made a distinction between the Jews and the Egyptians starting with the cattle. He would only strike down the Egyptian livestock and not those of the Jews (Exod 9:4). During the hailstorm, the hail only destroyed the fields of the Egyptians (Exod 9:26). God furthered this distinction when He declared that He would strike down only the firstborn son of the Egyptians (Exod 11:7).

The Egyptians who experienced the plagues began to acknowledge God. When Pharaoh's magicians could not replicate the act of bringing forth gnats from the dust of the earth, they told him that this was the finger of God (Exod 8:19). The magicians confessed that this was not a trick, it was a supernatural act of God.⁵⁶ After Moses' warning of the coming hailstorm,

⁵⁵ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*. vol. 1B. The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 743.

⁵⁶ Stuart, *Exodus*, 183-84.

Egyptians who feared the Word of God moved their livestock indoors so that they may be spared (Exod 9:20). Although there is no evidence that these Egyptians converted to Judaism, they did come to believe in the power of God.⁵⁷ When Pharaoh finally permitted the Jews to depart Egypt, a mixed multitude traveled with them (Exod 12:38). Stuart argues that a large, ethnically diverse group traveled with the Israelites. They had seen the power of God and believed life amongst His people was their best hope for the future.⁵⁸

God had revealed Himself and His power to Pharaoh and the Egyptian people. Although God spoke through Moses, the Egyptians experienced His power firsthand. He instructs Moses to tell Pharaoh that God had placed all these plagues upon Egypt so that they know that there is none like Him on earth and that God had permitted Pharaoh and his people to live so that they could see His power and proclaim His name throughout the earth (Exod 9:14-16). By the time of the exodus, the Egyptians acknowledged the power of God and that the Jews were His chosen people.

The book of Numbers reveals the prophet Balaam who speaks with God (22:9-12). Very little is revealed about him except that he is the son of Beor and lives in Pethor near the Euphrates River (22:5). Belek, the king of Moab sends for Balaam since he is known for his ability to bless and curse (22:6). Although Balak offers Balaam great reward should he come and curse the Israelites, Balaam informs him that he cannot do anything contrary to what God commands (22:18; 24:13). Much to Balak's frustration, rather than cursing the Israelites, Balaam

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

follows God's commands and blesses them three times (24:10). For what God has blessed, no man can curse. As promised to Abram, God would carry out retribution to any person or nation that attempted to curse His people (Gen 12:3).⁵⁹ It is not known how Balaam entered into this relationship with God. However, scripture reveals that Balaam fears God and will not disobey His commands regardless of what may be offered. God will use Israelites and non-Israelites alike to accomplish His goal.⁶⁰ He speaks through Balaam to reveal to the Moabites God's blessing upon the nation of Israel.

The Moabites were not the only people to fear the Israelites as they approached the land of Canaan. When Joshua sends two spies to Jericho, the prostitute Rahab protects them (Josh 2:4). She defies her king and sends his men on a false trail after the two spies. Rahab shares how the people of Jericho are aware of how God had dried up the Red Sea and of the destruction of the Amorites. She acknowledges that God is the God of heaven and earth (Josh 2:8-11). Rahab and her family would live with the Israelites after the destruction of Jericho (Josh 6:25). New Testament authors commend Rahab for her faith.⁶¹ The book of Hebrews states that it was her faith that kept her from being killed with the disobedient (Heb 11:31). James accredits Rahab's action as righteousness (Jas 2:25). God had revealed Himself to the people of Jericho by working through the Israelites. By His opening of the Red Sea, so the Israelites could escape Egypt and

⁵⁹ Dennis R. Cole, *Numbers*. Vol. 3B. The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 379-80.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ David M. Howard Jr., *Joshua*. vol. 5. The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 173.

His destruction of the Amorites, word of His power spread to the gentile nations.⁶² They began to acknowledge and fear God.

The gentile fear of God continued once Israel arrived in Canaan. The Gibeonites had received word of the destruction of Jericho and Ai (Josh 9:3). They had heard what God had done in Egypt and of the defeat of the Amorites (Josh 9:9-10). Rather than planning to fight the Israelites, the Gibeonites deceived them into entering a covenant of peace (Josh 9:15). The knowledge of God's power working through Israel had created such fear that the Gibeonites surrendered without a fight.⁶³

After Naomi's husband and two sons died, she traveled back to Judah from Moab. She instructed her two daughters-in-law to return to their mother's home (Ruth 1:8). Orpah returned to her people and her gods (Ruth 1:15). Ruth clung to Naomi and insisted on staying with her (Ruth 1:14). Ruth tells Naomi that she will join the Jewish people and that God will become her God (Ruth 1:16). This statement alone does not imply an intent to convert to Judaism. It is more of an affirmation that Ruth would transfer from the Moabite people group to the Jewish people group. As it was in the ancient Near East, this would require a shift in allegiance from the Moabite god Chemosh to the Jewish God.⁶⁴ It is not known whether Ruth converted to Judaism, what is known is that a Jew named Boaz married Ruth. Through this marriage, she would give

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Daniel Issac Block, *Judges, Ruth*. Vol. 6. The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 601.

birth to Obed, the father of Jesse, who is the father of king David (Ruth 4:13, 21). Ruth forsakes her people and her gods to accompany Naomi to Israel. Her allegiance was to God. Ruth asked that God punish her should anything besides death cause her to part from Naomi (Ruth 1:17). Because of her faith, God permits her to conceive. Something that she was unable to do during her ten-year marriage to Mahlon.⁶⁵

God had instructed Israel to keep and follow His statutes and judgments once they had arrived in the land of Canaan. By following them, other nations would see Israel as a wise and understanding people whose God is so near (Deut 4:5-8). This centripetal mission called the Israelites to be a people distinct from their neighbors. King Solomon's reign provides evidence of the effectiveness of this missional approach. Men from all peoples came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, for all the kings of the earth had heard of it (1 Kgs 4:34). The Queen of Sheba traveled to Israel to test the wisdom of Solomon (1 Kgs 10:6-9). She had heard great reports of his wisdom and would not believe until she had seen with her own eyes. So satisfied with his answers, the Queen acknowledged the national God of Israel.⁶⁶ She states that God's love for Israel is eternal and that He had blessed Solomon with this wisdom for the benefit of His people (1 Kgs 10:8-9).⁶⁷ All the earth would seek the wisdom that God had placed in Solomon's heart (1 Kgs 10:24). The wisdom exhibited by Solomon attracted the attention of the other nations.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*. vol. 9. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 141-43.

⁶⁷ Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*. vol. 8. The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 105.

These nations recognized the king for his great wisdom and understanding, just as God had foretold.⁶⁸

God did not restrict the positive effects of His power to the Israelites. He demonstrates His power to non-Israelites. In her desire to glorify God, the Jewish servant shares with the Aramean captain Naaman that the prophet Elisha may heal his leprosy (2 Kgs 5:1-9).⁶⁹ Naaman reacts angrily to the Jewish messenger's instructions to wash in the Jordan river. Upon the urging of his servants, Naaman relents and washes seven times in the Jordan river, where his flesh is immediately restored (2 Kgs 5:10, 13-14). Naaman becomes a believer in God and declares that there is no God except the God of Israel (2 Kgs 5:15). From this moment forward, Naaman will only make offerings to God and asks for forgiveness when he enters the house of Rimmon with his king (2 Kgs 5:17-19). Naaman's confession of faith rejects the other pagan gods as only the Jewish God is able to heal him.⁷⁰ This example demonstrates the nature of the Jewish mission. The two Jewish servants attract Naaman to God. However, it is God Himself that causes Naaman to believe.

Just as some gentiles had accredited Israel's victories to God, some would accredit their defeat to Him. Nabuzaradan, the captain of the Babylonian bodyguard, acknowledged that the Jews' disobedience caused the fall of Jerusalem and their exile. He tells Jeremiah that this is the

⁶⁸ James Alan Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings*. International Critical Commentary (New York: Scribner, 1951).

⁶⁹ House. 1, 2 *Kings*, 251.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

fulfillment of God's promise of disaster in the event that they stopped listening to His voice (Jer 40:2-3).⁷¹ Although it is doubtful that Nebuzaradan was a believer of God, it is unusual for a worshipper of Marduk to acknowledge the enemy's God as the reason for Assyria's victory.⁷²

After the Jews were exiled from their land and sent to Babylon, God continued to reveal Himself through the nation of Israel. Once resettled in Babylon, God instructed the Jews to multiply and pray for the city's welfare (Jer 29:4-7). The Jews enjoyed considerable freedom in Babylon. They were able to lead normal lives. Their only restriction was that they could not return to Judah.⁷³ The call to pray for Babylon was much to the benefit of the Jews as it was for the Babylonians. Should Babylon prosper, the Jews who lived within its borders would also prosper.⁷⁴ However, God does not want the Jews to lose their distinctiveness as the Northern tribes had done after the Assyrian exile. God wanted them to continue to distinguish themselves from the gentiles as part of His ongoing plan to reveal Himself through the people of Israel.

The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar would come to know God through his experience with the Jewish exiles. He would first experience the power of God when Daniel is the only one who can interpret the king's dream (Dan 2:26-45). Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that God is a God of gods, a Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries (Dan 2:47). Although, Nebuchadnezzar recognized that God was the only God who could have given the dream and its interpretation,

⁷¹ F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*. vol. 16. The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 353-54.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

this did not cause him to convert to Judaism. His words alone demonstrate that he continued to observe polytheism as he believed God to be one of many gods.⁷⁵ Later, Nebuchadnezzar would once again experience the power of God when he orders that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego be thrown into the furnace after they refused to worship his golden image (Dan 3:15). After Nebuchadnezzar witnesses the three men in the fire unharmed along with a fourth man, he recognizes that God had sent an angel to protect them (Dan 3:25-28).⁷⁶ On that day, he makes a decree that no one should speak ill of God under the penalty of death and the destruction of their property, for he declares that no other god may deliver in such a way (Dan 3:29). Again, this incident does not cause Nebuchadnezzar to recognize God as the only true God. He believed God was a great God among many and the only God who could have saved the three men from the furnace.⁷⁷

Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the great signs and mighty wonders of God to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language. He tells them that God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom whose dominion passes from generation to generation (Dan 4:1-3). God had revealed and interpreted a dream, delivered three men from a fiery furnace, and removed and restored both Nebuchadnezzar's sanity and kingdom. Through these experiences, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the sovereignty of God.⁷⁸ It would take seven periods of time in which

⁷⁵ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*. Vol. 18. The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 83.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Nebuchadnezzar was driven away from mankind before he truly acknowledged God as the Most High and ruler of all the earth (Dan 4:31-34). On this occasion, God does not speak through Daniel or act through His people. A voice from heaven informs Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom is lost to him and that he would live as a beast of the field for seven periods of time (Dan 4:31-32). After this period, Nebuchadnezzar praises, exalts, and honors God. He states that God's ways are true and just, and that God is able to humble those who walk in pride (Dan 4:37). Scripture does not reveal whether Nebuchadnezzar went beyond acknowledging the power and sovereignty of God.⁷⁹ However, Daniel does share that he did humble himself before God and recognized that God is the ruler of all. He sets over it whomever He wishes (Dan 5:21). Much as Pharaoh heard God through Moses, God spoke to Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel. However, experiencing His power drove these men to acknowledge God.

God continued to work through Daniel and the other Jewish exiles when the Babylonians fell to the Persians. King Darius recognizes that it is God who spared Daniel from the lions. He decrees that God was a living God and that all people are to fear and tremble before Him. He further decrees that God's kingdom is eternal and indestructible. God can deliver, rescue, and perform signs in heaven and on earth (Dan 6:25-27).⁸⁰ Later, when the Jewish exile Esther becomes queen of Persia, God works through her and her cousin Mordecai to protect the Jewish people. The king's servant Haman recognized the Jews as distinct people throughout the

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*. vol. 23. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 148.

kingdom. Although motivated by his disdain for Mordecai, he convinces the king that the Jews threaten the kingdom and thus decrees that they must be destroyed (Esth 3:8-9). Mordecai warns Esther that her position as queen will not spare her from the same fate as the other Jews and suggests that her placement as queen may be part of God's plan to save His people (Esth 4:13-14). Through the action of Esther and Mordecai, Haman is put to death for his treachery, and it is decreed that the Jews may defend themselves. Instead of suffering destruction, the Jewish population increased. Each province and city of the kingdom held a holiday feast to celebrate the Jews. Many among the people became Jews (Esth 8:17). Although God is not explicitly mentioned in the book of Esther, His divine intervention is apparent in the course of events that lead to the salvation and expansion of the Jewish people.⁸¹

Those who acknowledged and experienced God went beyond Persia. When Jonah fled God and attempted to sail to Tarshish, God caused a great storm that threatened to sink the ship (Jonah 1:3-4). At first, the sailors prayed to their gods. However, once Jonah reveals that he is fleeing from the Lord of heaven, they seek God and ask that they not perish on account of Jonah's life since he had asked them to throw him overboard. After witnessing God's power to end the storm, they feared God greatly and offered sacrifices (Jonah 1:14-16). This encounter with God through Jonah would cause these sailors to turn from their gods and seek the one true God.

⁸¹ Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. Electronic ed. Vol. 10. The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 306.

Arguments exist that Jonah's travel to Nineveh is an example of a centrifugal mission. However, the Ninevite king and subjects repenting upon hearing Jonah's warning suggest that they were already aware of God before Jonah's arrival.⁸² The Ninevites' knowledge of God may have been obtained through the Jews' centripetal mission. Jonah 3:5 states that the people of Nineveh believed in God when they heard Jonah, however it does not specify that they were not previously aware of God (Jonah 3:5). Considering the proximity of Nineveh to Israel, Israel's conquests accredited to God, and the awareness of Solomon's divinely gifted wisdom, it would be difficult to argue that Nineveh was not previously aware of the Jewish God. Arguably, it is the opposite. Due to their prior knowledge of God, the Ninevites quickly believed and repented. God demonstrates His grace to Nineveh. Because they choose to repent, He spares them from destruction (Jonah 3:10).⁸³ Much like Naaman, God once again demonstrates that those who believe in Him share His plan for salvation.

⁸² Elmer A. Martens. "Impulses to Mission in Isaiah: An Intertextual Exploration," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 17, no. 2 (2007), 215-39.

⁸³ The repentance of the Ninevites would be short lived. They would return to their wickedness. The book of Nahum describes how God will destroy the city of Nineveh. The book of Jonah is dated during the eighth-century B.C. Donald J. Wiseman, T. Desmond Alexander, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Obadiah, Jonah and Micah: An Introduction and Commentary*. vol. 26. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 55-56. Whereas the book of Nahum is dated seventh-century B.C. prior to Nineveh's fall in 612 B.C. Kenneth L. Barker, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*. Vol. 20. The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 130-31.

Table 15. Biblical Examples of Centripetal Mission in the Old Testament

Verse	Subject	Description
Gen 41:39-41	Pharaoh	The Pharaoh of Egypt recognizes that God gave Joseph the ability to interpret his dream
Exod 12:38	Multitude	A mixed multitude of gentiles departed Egypt with the Israelites after having witnessed the power of God
Num 24:10-13	Balaam	The gentile prophet Balaam fears God over material wealth and blesses Israel rather than cursing them as Balak requested
Josh 2:8-11	Rahab	The prostitute Rahab confesses that God is the God of heaven and earth after hearing of the parting of the Red Sea and the defeat of the two Amorite kings
Josh 9:9-11	Gibeonites	Out of their fear of God, the Gibeonites trick the Israelites into entering into a treaty out of fear that they would be destroyed as Jericho and Ai
Ruth 1:16-18	Ruth	The Moabite Ruth insists on accompanying Naomi and asks that God punish her should anything besides death cause them to part
1 Kgs 4:34	Men	Men from all peoples and all the kings of the earth traveled to Israel to hear the wisdom of Solomon
1 Kgs 10:6-9	Queen of Sheba	The Queen of Sheba travels to Israel to test Solomon's world-renown wisdom and recognizes that God has blessed him with this wisdom
2 Kgs 5:1-17	Naaman	After being healed, the Assyrian Naaman recognizes that there is no God on all the earth except in Israel and will now only make offerings to Him
Jer 29:4-7	Babylon	God instructs the exiled Israelites to seek the welfare of Babylon and pray to God on its behalf
Jer 40:2-3	Nabuzaradan	The Babylonian captain acknowledges that God is exiling the Israelites from their land due to their disobedience as He had promised
Dan 2:47-48	Nebuchadnezzar	The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar recognizes that God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings after Daniel interprets his dream
Dan 3:28-29	Nebuchadnezzar	The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar recognizes that no other god except God can deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego from the furnace
Dan 4:1-3	Nebuchadnezzar	The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar praises God and acknowledges that His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom
Dan 4:37	Nebuchadnezzar	The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar praises God, the King of heaven, and acknowledges that God can humble the prideful
Dan 6:25-27	Darius	The Persian king Darius acknowledges the power of God and makes a decree that all men are to fear God after He spares Daniel from the lions
Jonah 1:14, 16	Sailors	The sailors pray to God to spare them from the storm after discovering that Jonah's flight from God had placed them in peril
Jonah 3:4-9	Ninevites	Upon hearing the warning from Jonah, the king and the people of Nineveh fast in the hopes that God would not destroy them as foretold by Jonah

Source: NASB1995.

You Are My Witness (Isaiah 43:10)

Mission of Israel

Isaiah 43:8-13 presents a courtroom scene. Israel is present with the nations and the peoples. God calls the nations to produce evidence that their gods had made any past predictions that had come true. Their silence proves that there is no such evidence.⁸⁴ God is both the judge and the defendant. He tells Israel that they are His witnesses (43:10). Evidence of God's claim of unique divinity will rest on the testimony of Israel.⁸⁵

God does not command Israel to be His witnesses. Rather, He tells them that they are His witnesses. They had experienced change due to His divine, delivering, and transforming power. It is not something they did. It is something they are.⁸⁶ Israel is the living evidence that He is God alone.⁸⁷ His claims are not solely based on past deliverance, He will demonstrate new works of deliverance in the future.⁸⁸ Israel may rest assured that they will be redeemed.⁸⁹ Never in recorded history have any people returned to their homeland from an Assyrian or a Babylonian Exile. God will do what had not been done before.⁹⁰ God will use Israel to

⁸⁴ John N. Oswalt, *The NIV Application Commentary: Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 417.

⁸⁵ Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 121.

⁸⁶ Oswalt, *The NIV Application Commentary: Isaiah*, 423.

⁸⁷ Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 123.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

demonstrate His incomparability and as part of His plan to reveal Himself to the world.⁹¹

Through Israel's redemption, He will demonstrate that not only had He predicted salvation, He has also fulfilled salvation.⁹²

The exile was not merely a punishment. It has become the vehicle for Israel's mission.⁹³ They are to represent God to the nations. He has not forsaken them. Rather He will use them to demonstrate His Godhead against the Babylonian idols.⁹⁴ God had formed Israel so they could proclaim His praise (Isa 43:21). He is the One who created all things and to whom all will return. God alone is the Savior the world seeks (Isa 43:11). Israel is to experience this truth and demonstrate it to all nations.⁹⁵ They are His chosen servants that are to come to know, believe, and understand God as the One (Isa 43:10).⁹⁶ He reveals His totality of deity by His actions done both for and through the nation of Israel.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Ibid., 106, 119.

⁹² Ibid., 119.

⁹³ John N. Oswalt, *The Mission of Israel to the Nations: Studies in the Book of Isaiah* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co, 2014), 91.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Oswalt, *The NIV Application Commentary: Isaiah*, 418.

⁹⁶ The servant's identity in Isaiah continues to be debated as to whether it refers to corporate Israel, a remnant of Israel, or a messianic figure. Regarding Isaiah 43, the witnessing servant refers to corporate Israel. God intends to reveal that He alone is the one true God by redeeming the exiled nation. The debate surrounding the servant's identity is irrelevant to this discussion.

⁹⁷ Oswalt, *The NIV Application Commentary: Isaiah*, 418.

Israel is to know God through personal experience. Only by coming to know God and His character can they share with the other nations.⁹⁸ A witness can only share what they have experienced. Israel is a witness to how He delivered them in the past, and they will witness His redemption in the future. By calling Israel both His witness and His servant, God reveals His intention to use them as living evidence of His unique saviorhood.⁹⁹ Just as Isaiah, a man with unclean lips, was made able to declare God's glory to his nation, Israel, a people with unclean lips, would be able to declare His glory to the nations.¹⁰⁰ They were to share His blessing and make known His deeds to all the earth.

Schnabel defines mission as the activity that distinguishes itself in both religious belief and social behavior and that this activity is to attract others to this way of life.¹⁰¹ In the same way, Israel's mission was to be centripetal. They were not to actively seek out nations; they were to draw nations to themselves.¹⁰² Israel was to be passive, and the witness would be based upon God's salvific activity.¹⁰³ Israel would become the key attraction as the locus for God's glory

⁹⁸ Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 121.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Oswalt, *The Mission of Israel to the Nations*, 90.

¹⁰¹ Eckhard Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission, Vol 1: Jesus and the Twelve* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2004), 11.

¹⁰² Martens, 218.

¹⁰³ Oswalt, *The Mission of Israel to the Nations*, 92.

and law.¹⁰⁴ Nations are drawn to God as they witness His activity within Israel.¹⁰⁵ Nations and kings would come to Zion after acknowledging Israel's blessedness (Isa 60:1-3; 61:9; 62:2). All will bow down before God (Isa 66:23).

Isaiah 2:3 states that the law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Zion represents Israel in this passage. They are to serve an intermediary function between God and the nations. Israel is to share God's law with the world.¹⁰⁶ They were to show the greatness and the glory of His law. It is God's revelation of the nature and meaning of life. His law is the instruction for which the world awaits (Isa 2:3; 42:4; 51:4). Israel was to be God's foothold from which His revelation to the world could spread.¹⁰⁷ Because of His righteous nature, God sought that the people of the earth realized the good for which they were created. To not make His law available to the world would have been unrighteous. It is through God's grace that the world was to receive His law through the nation of Israel.¹⁰⁸

God's ultimate purpose is for the world to know and worship Him. He has chosen the nation of Israel to be His witness. God will work through Israel to return all the peoples of the earth to Him. Although Israel is no longer within the borders of Canaan, God will redeem them from their current captives and send them out amongst nations that have not heard of His glory.

¹⁰⁴ Martens, 219.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 113.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

There, the diaspora Jews will proclaim His glory and draw their gentile neighbors to God (Isa 66:19-20). They will accomplish God's centripetal mission by living a life devoted to His law and becoming distinct people. With this sense of being God's witness, the Jewish people establish diaspora communities throughout the Mediterranean region.

Table 16. Biblical Examples of Israel's Mission According to Isaiah

Verse	Subject	Description
Isa 2:3; 42:4; 51:4	Torah	God's awaited torah will go out to the world from the nation of Israel
Isa 43:10	Witness	God tells Israel that they are His witnesses and His chosen servant who will know, believe, and Understand that He is the One
Isa 43:11	Savior	God alone is Savior
Isa 43:21	Israel	God created Israel to proclaim His praise to the world
Isa 60:1-3	Nations	The nations and kings will be drawn to God through the nation of Israel
Isa 61:9	Nations	The nations will acknowledge that Israel is God's chosen people
Isa 62:2	Nations	The nations will witness the redemptive power of God through the nation of Israel
Isa 66:19-20	Israel	God will send the Jews to establish diaspora communities amongst the gentiles in order to attract them to His glory
Isa 66:23	Mankind	All of mankind will know and worship God

Source: NASB1995.

Chapter IV

The Diaspora, the Synagogue, and the Proselytizers

Isaiah states that God will send survivors of Israel to the nations that have not heard His fame or seen His glory (66:19-20). The nations of the world would see God's redemptive power through the nation of Israel (Isa 62:2). Jews migrated to various parts of the Mediterranean. Diaspora communities emerged, and large populations of Jews filled the cities. They preserved their Jewish identity and continued the observances and practices that made them distinct from the gentiles. Local synagogues became the center of Jewish worship and education. Their large population and distinctive lifestyle attracted the attention of their neighbors. Many gentiles spoke against the Jews, while others were attracted to Judaism. Gentiles attended the synagogues where they were able to learn of God in their native language. They came to know God and followed Jewish customs. God-fearers and proselytes filled the synagogues. The Jewish diaspora communities grew as gentile converts added to their number. By the time of Christ, the nations were prepared for His coming.

The Jewish Diaspora in the Mediterranean

Although the Persian king Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to Palestine in 538 B.C., many chose to remain in Babylon and regions throughout the Mediterranean.¹ In his letter to emperor Gaius, Agrippa I (10 B.C – A.D. 44) includes parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa as

¹ Tessa Rajak, "The Jewish Diaspora in Greco-Roman Antiquity," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 72, no. 2 (2018): 146-62; Richard R. De Ridder, *Discipling the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1971), 66-67.

regions that contain Jewish colonies (Philo, *Embassy* 281-82).² For the festival of Pentecost, pilgrims traveled to Jerusalem from Parthia, Medes, Elam, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, north Africa, Rome, Crete, and Arabia (Acts 2:9-11). Those who confronted Stephen originated from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia (Acts 6:9).

Several factors contributed to the migration of the Jewish population to these regions. Jews fled the Babylonians and sought asylum in Egypt (2 Kgs 25:26).³ Some would be relocated there as enslaved people or as military personnel.⁴ Others migrated, seeking the economic advantages of the newly founded city of Alexandria.⁵ The increased Jewish population in Egypt would spread across northern Africa. Jewish diaspora communities emerged in Syria, Asia Minor, and Rome. Like Egypt, Jews were relocated to these regions as enslaved people or military personnel.⁶ The Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms offered land grants in exchange for military service, permitting Jews to settle in cities and across the countryside.⁷ The Roman practice of manumission allowed the Jewish slaves to obtain their freedom and Roman

² Joachim Jeremias. *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus; An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*. trans. F.H. and C. H. Cave (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1969), 63.

³ Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*. Vol. 8. The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 113.

⁴ John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE - 117 CE)* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 22.

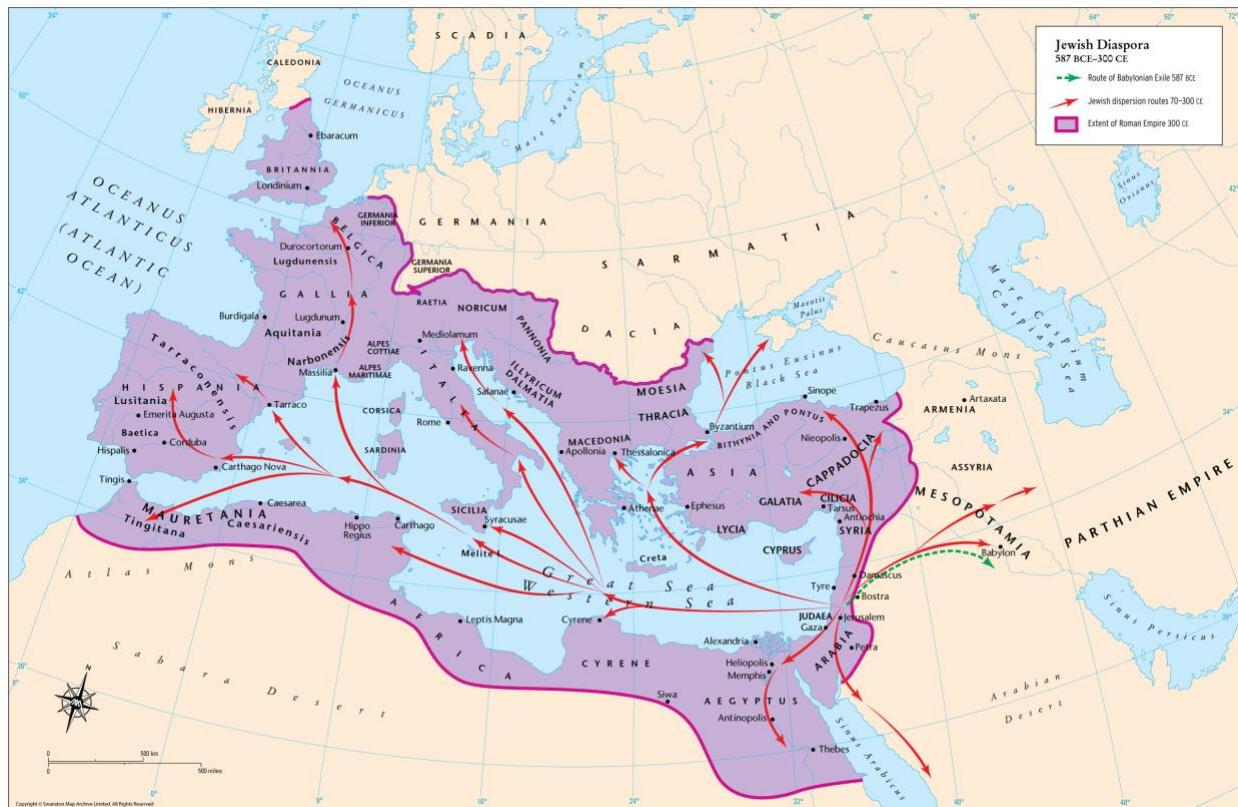
⁵ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

citizenship.⁸ Just as God had promised, His people lived amongst the nations (Isa 66:19-23). By the time of Christ, the Jewish diaspora communities were well-established across the Mediterranean.

Map 4.1. Jewish Diaspora 587 B.C. – A.D. 300



Source: The Map Achieve.

⁸ Ibid., 289.

Egypt

Egypt became a popular asylum after the defeat of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 597 B.C.⁹ After Ishmael struck down the Babylonian-appointed governor Gedaliah (Jer 41:2), the people of Jerusalem fled to Egypt out of fear of Babylonian reprisal (2 Kgs 25:26; Jer 41:16-17).¹⁰ Although the Jews were permitted to return to Judah in 538 B.C., Jewish immigration increased after Alexander's defeat of Egypt in 323 B.C.¹¹ Syria, which included Jerusalem, fell under Ptolemaic rule between 301 and 198 B.C. Since both Syria and Egypt were under the same administrative control, migration to the newly established Macedonian dynasty and the city of Alexandria became easier for those residing in the Syrian district.¹²

Ancient sources suggest that some Jews were forced to relocate to Egypt. The *Letter of Aristeas* claims that Ptolemy I (305-282 B.C.) relocated one hundred thousand (100,000) Jews to Egypt to serve in his military or as slaves.¹³ These Jews may have been prisoners of war captured during the Syrian Wars that followed the division of Alexander's empire.¹⁴ The *Letter of Aristeas* also claims that thirty thousand (30,000) Jews were employed in the Ptolemaic army

⁹ Ibid., 20.

¹⁰ House, 113.

¹¹ Barclay, 20.

¹² Ibid., 21.

¹³ Benjamin G. Wright, *Letter of Aristeas: "Aristeas to Philocrates" or "On the Translation of the Law of the Jews"* (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2015), 122.

¹⁴ Barclay, 22.

and settled in garrisons and forts across the kingdom.¹⁵ The Ptolemies preferred to build standing armies of non-natives and would provide land grants in exchange for service. The presence of military landowners may explain the expansion of the Jewish population in the Egyptian *chora* (countryside).¹⁶

Elephantine Island (Aswan)

During the fifth century B.C., Pre-Hellenistic Jewish military colonists were relocated to Elephantine Island in the northern Nile. Along with the Caspians, Babylonians, and Medes, they served the Persian army.¹⁷ Referred to as the Jewish garrison (*Hayla Yehudaia*), they were

¹⁵ Wright, 122.

¹⁶ Barclay, 22-23.

¹⁷ Karel van der Toorn. "Ethnicity at Elephantine: Jews, Arameans, Caspians." *Tel Aviv*, 43:2 (2016), 147-164; Cyrus Gordon argues that the Elephantine Jews had arrived at an earlier date. He believes that they originated from the Judeans that were planted in Aram by Solomon during the United Monarchy to secure his kingdom (2 Chr 8:2-6). An Assyrian conquest may explain the Elephantine Jews' use of the Aramaic language. Many Cilician personnel were in the service of the Achaemenian government in Egypt. Cyrus H. Gordon, "The Origin of the Jews in Elephantine." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 14, no. 1 (1955): 56-58. Papyrus Amherst 63 may provide the best clue to the origin of the Elephantine Jews. van der Toorn argues that they were Samaritans who originally migrated to Egypt from Palmyra. The papyrus provides an account of Samaritan soldiers led by a Judean that sought shelter in the city. From the description of the city and other evidence, van der Toorn believes that this is not an Egyptian city and that it was most likely Palmyra. After the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C., many Samaritans moved to Judah and enlisted in the army. The defeat they suffered that led them to seek shelter in Palmyra may have been during the Assyrian campaign that brought Sennacherib's army to Jerusalem in 701 B.C. This supports van der Toorn's position that the Samaritans arrived in Palmyra around 700 B.C.

It would be the defeat of the Assyrians by the Babylonians in 612 B.C. that triggered the migration from Palmyra to Egypt. The prospect of homes, land, and a possible salary attracted many from Syria and Palestine to Egypt. The garrison of Syene including the military families at Elephantine was one of the many mercenary colonies established in Lower and Upper Egypt. This garrison was composed of the Babylonian, Syrian, and Samaritan communities from Palmyra. The Elephantine Jews were Samaritan Arameans. Although they had resided with the Babylonians and Syrians in Palmyra and adopted much of the Aramean culture, the Samaritans preserved their distinct identity. Biblical evidence demonstrates a migration of Judeans to Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem around 580 B.C. The construction of "tower house" in Elephantine suggests the migration of Judeans to the colony. Although the majority may have been Samaritan, Elephantine included migrants from Judah. The Samaritans served in the same garrison with the Babylonians and the Syrians, yet they lived apart on Elephantine Island (Babylonians and Syrians resided in Syene). Much as the Arameans communities centered on temples of their gods, the temple of Yaho was the center of the Jewish community.

organized in a distinct military and ethnic framework.¹⁸ The Jews lived in a separate settlement or resident quarter.¹⁹ They were part of a larger military unit that was charged with the defense of Egypt's southern border and with the preservation of order and security in the region.²⁰ The Jewish garrison included non-military members, who, along with the soldiers, engaged in farming and trade.²¹ They had their own religious leadership that was responsible for the community's religious life and worship at its temple. It was headed by the supreme board and a priesthood that served as the community's official representatives.²² Although its jurisdiction is hard to determine, the Jewish garrison had its own court.²³

Alexandria

The newly established city of Alexandria was the seat of power for the Ptolemaic kingdom. It promised wealth, economic expansion, and social advancement. It was viewed as the

Over time the Samaritans from Palmyra became known as the Jews of Elephantine. This was due to several factors. Elephantine was one of many in a network of Jewish diaspora communities spread across Egypt (Migdol, Tahpanhes, Memphis, Abydos, Thebes, and Edfu). In 420 B.C., they were included by the Persian empire as part of the Jewish nation. The Elephantine community was ordered to conform their religious calendar with the calendar observed by the Jews throughout the empire. Ultimately, the Elephantine leadership claimed the Jewish identity to win sympathy after the destruction of their temple in 410 B.C. Henceforth, they were known as Jews. Karel van der Toorn, *Becoming Diaspora Jews: Behind the Story of Elephantine* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 71, 84, 87-88, 95-96, 118, 127, 146.

¹⁸ Arthur Ernest Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Osnabruck: Otto Zeller, 1967), no. 21, 22.

¹⁹ van der Toorn, 95-96.

²⁰ E.G. Kraeling, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri; New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony of Elephantine* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953), 41-42.

²¹ Aryeh Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 39.

²² Cowley, no. 27, 30, 31.

²³ Cowley, no. 1, 7, 8, 13, 15, 16, 18, 28; Kraeling, 5-9.

“new world” by Jews seeking opportunities greater than those found in the backwater conditions of Judaea.²⁴ The Jews were early inhabitants of Alexandria and would grow to account for forty percent of the city’s population and an eighth of the Egyptian population. Ptolemy I granted sections of the city to the Jewish population. By A.D. 38, the Jews were concentrated in two of the city’s five quarters.²⁵ Under emperor Augustus (63 B.C. - A.D. 14), the Alexandrian Jews achieved a degree of legal autonomy. An ethnarch governed as if he was a ruler of a free republic. He administered the community, judged lawsuits, and established contracts (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.117). Alexandria would become the largest concentration of Jews outside Palestine and become known for the splendor of its great synagogue.²⁶ Because of their size and influence, Alexandrian Judaism would become synonymous with diaspora Judaism.²⁷

Chora (Countryside)

Jewish districts emerged in various towns. Those who served in the military were scattered over the Egyptian countryside. Since the Ptolemies preferred to staff their bureaucracy with non-natives, Jews filled a wide range of administrative roles.²⁸ Discovered papyri from that time reveal that Jews served as police, tax collectors, and artisan occupations (CPJ 25).²⁹ The

²⁴ Barclay, 22.

²⁵ De Ridder, 68; Barclay, 29.

²⁶ De Ridder, 68; Rajak, 150.

²⁷ Barclay, 19.

²⁸ Ibid., 23-24.

²⁹ William Horbury, “Jewish Inscriptions and Jewish Literature in Egypt, with Special Reference to Ecclesiasticus,” in *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy*, ed. Jan Willem van Henten and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 9-43; Barclay, 24.

Ptolemies considered the Jews valuable in their willingness to engage in agriculture that was not traditional to the Egyptians, such as viticulture.³⁰

Cyrenaica and North Africa

Jewish immigration did not stop in Egypt. Jews migrated from Egypt to Cyrenaica, now part of modern-day Libya. They settled in Cyrenaica's five main cities: Cyrene, Apollonia, Ptolemais, Teucheira, and Berenice. Also referred to as the Pentapolis (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.118).³¹ Since this region fell under Ptolemaic rule until 96 B.C., the growing Jewish population in Egypt may have been encouraged by the government to expand to Cyrenaica (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.44).³² The Jewish historian Josephus' quote from the Greek historian Strabo builds the argument that a large, distinct Jewish community existed in Cyrenaica. According to Strabo, there were four classes of men in the city; the citizens, the husbandmen, the strangers, and the Jews (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.114-15). Tripoli contains archeological evidence of Jewish synagogues and catacombs dated to the early B.C. period. Carthage contains records of Jewish colonies as early as the construction of the first Temple. Moroccan Jews claim that their ancestors did not go into Babylonian captivity.³³

³⁰ Elias Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 85-86.

³¹ Barclay, 232.

³² Although there is no evidence for Josephus' claim of royal support for the Jewish migration to Cyrenaica, it is reasonable to assume that the value of the Jewish employment in the military and other administrative roles in Egypt would have been considered as valuable by the Ptolemies government in Cyrenaica. Flavius Josephus, "Against Apion." in *Josephus; the Complete Works*. trans. William Whiston, A. M. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 2.44.

³³ Sidney Mendelssohn, *The Jews of Africa* (London: Kegan Paul, 1920), 64.

Syria

Josephus asserts that the Jewish population was particularly numerous in the region of Syria due to its proximity to the Jewish homeland (*J.W.* 7.43).³⁴ Jewish communities emerged in the cities of Antioch, Damascus, Tyre, Sidon, and Ptolemais. The Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires contested for control of this region. The coastal portions held allegiance to Egypt while the northern region remained with the Seleucids.³⁵ Jews in Ptolemaic Syria were similar to those settled in Egypt. They were acquired as slaves or enlisted in military service. Jews were dispersed across the Phoenician and Greek coastal cities. Much like in Egypt, Jews would serve at various levels of administration.³⁶

Jews settled in Seleucid Syria may have been Babylonian Jews who had fought in the Seleucid army and migrated to Antioch (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.119). The Book of Acts contains biblical evidence of a Jewish community in Antioch, where Jewish Christians fled Jerusalem to avoid persecution. There, they would share the gospel with Jews and gentile God-fearers (11:19-20). There is evidence of Jewish communities in Seleucid Syria beyond Antioch. Saul secured

³⁴ Although Josephus holds that Syria is adjacent to the Jewish homeland, during much of the Second Temple period, Jerusalem and the Jewish home territory were considered part of Syria and not considered an independent nation. Jews that relocated to Syria were not considered to have moved into Syria. They were thought of moving within Syria. Flavius Josephus, "Jewish War." in *Josephus; the Complete Works*. trans. William Whiston, A. M. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 7.43; Barclay, 242.

³⁵ Barclay, 244.

³⁶ Ibid.

authorization from the high priest in Jerusalem to travel to Damascus to persecute Jewish Christians (Acts 9:1-2).³⁷

Asia Minor

The earliest evidence of Jewish communities in Asia Minor is found in the letter from the Seleucid king Antiochus III to his governor, Zeuxis. Dated to the third century B.C., Antiochus III instructs Zeuxis to relocate two thousand (2,000) Jewish families from Mesopotamia and Babylonia to strategic fortresses in Phrygia and Lydia. There, the Jews were to be given plots of land and permitted to practice their laws without interference (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.147-53).³⁸ The Roman governor Flaccus' confiscation of the temple tax in 62 B.C. provides further evidence of a large Jewish presence. The one hundred (100) pounds of seized gold had a value of one hundred thousand (100,000) drachmae. With the requirement for each Jewish male between the ages of 20 and 50 to contribute two drachmae suggests a population of fifty thousand (50,000) (Cicero, *Pro Flacco*, 28.68). Based on the amount seized from Apamea and Adramyttium, each of these cities would have an estimated fifty thousand Jewish males.³⁹ Gentile literary sources provide further evidence of a significant Jewish presence in Asia. The Greek rhetorician Apollonius Molon made remarks concerning the Jews' refusal to worship the gentile gods and

³⁷ The two biblical references occurred after Rome had seized control of Syria in 63 B.C. Archeological evidence demonstrates the existence of these Jewish communities prior to Roman control. Barclay, 250.

³⁸ Withstanding the reliability of Josephus' claim, based upon the evidence of Jews serving in the Ptolemaic armies, it is entirely possible that the Jews served in the Seleucid armies. The considerably large size of the Jewish communities by the first century B.C. further substantiates this claim. Josephus, "Antiquities of the Jews," 12.147-53; Barclay, 261.

³⁹ Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 48.

their unwillingness to socialize with those different from them. He further accused them of atheism and misanthropy (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.79; 2.148; 2.258). The apostle Paul would visit synagogues in Jewish communities spread across several Asia Minor cities: Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth (Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1-2, 10; 18:4). The existence of the synagogues is evidence of well-established Jewish communities in these cities.

Rome

The Jewish community was established in Rome before the mid-second century B.C.⁴⁰ The diaspora Jews settled on the right bank of the Tiber River across from Rome's civic center.⁴¹ Literary works and archeological discoveries lend support to the existence of Jewish communities in Rome during the Second Temple period. The presence of inscriptions, synagogues, and burial sites demonstrate a prominent Jewish community.⁴² Although possibly exaggerated, Cicero's statement of a Jew-packed crowd who had come to support the interests of the Asian Jews demonstrates that the Jewish community was well-established (*Pro Flacco* 28.66-69).⁴³ The Jewish community grew from the Roman victories in Judaea. Cicero's reference to an enslaved Jewish nation was in response to the large influx of Jewish slaves into

⁴⁰ Rajak, 150.

⁴¹ Barclay, 290.

⁴² Ibid., 283.

⁴³ Cicero delivered a speech in 59 B.C. in support of governor Flaccus' decision to seize one hundred pounds of gold from the Jews in Asia Minor. During his speech, he lowers his voice, concerned about the reaction of the large number of Jews in attendance. Although this was a theatrical exaggeration, Cicero acknowledges the size of the Jewish community in Rome. Cicero. *Pro Flacco*, 28.66-69.

Rome. Captured Jews flooded the slave market after Pompey's victory in 63 B.C.⁴⁴ Upon his visit to Rome in A.D. 37, Philo observed that the majority of the Jews were former war captives (*Embassy*, 155). Their presence suggests that the Jewish slaves had attained manumission and Roman citizenship in the four generations between Pompey and Gaius.⁴⁵ The Jewish community in Rome was well-established prior to the arrival of the apostle Paul. He wrote to the Jewish Christians, expressing his desire to visit them in Rome (Rom 1:10). In Corinth, he encountered Aquila and Priscilla, two Jews expelled from Rome. (Acts 18:2).

The Synagogue

As the diaspora Jews settled and congregated in specific parts of the cities, one particular element commonly found in the diaspora communities was the establishment of a synagogue. In the absence of the Jerusalem Temple, the synagogue offered a place for Jews to meet and worship God. The form of worship practiced within the synagogue was unprecedented; the Jews would worship without sacrifice. Although Jerusalem would always remain the religious center of Judaism, the synagogue became the location to meet for worship and instruction.⁴⁶ The earliest evidence of the synagogue is the prayer houses in Egypt dating from the third century

⁴⁴ Barclay, 289; Rajak, 150.

⁴⁵ Barclay, 289.

⁴⁶ The Second Temple period Jews believed that the Jerusalem Temple represented God's presence on earth. Thousands of Jewish pilgrims traveled to Jerusalem each year to observe the three major festivals: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The city attracted world renowned Jewish scholars, making it the center for religious education. Jeremias, 75; De Ridder, 77.

B.C.⁴⁷ Josephus and the Jewish philosopher Philo believed the purpose of the synagogue was to promote the moral and religious education of the community.⁴⁸ Jews would gather at the local synagogue every seven days to hear the law expounded, equipping them for long and steadfast observance of their customs (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.175; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 2.62-63).

However, the synagogue appears to have served more than a meeting place for worship and instruction for diaspora Jews. The synagogue would become the location to acquaint the world with the Word of God. The synagogue was the house of prayer and instructions on Sabbath, Monday, Thursday, New Moon, and festivals.⁴⁹ Unlike the Jerusalem Temple, gentiles were welcome to attend and were permitted to enter synagogues without the threat of death.⁵⁰ The synagogue is where gentiles would learn about Judaism and come to know God.⁵¹ Gentile proselytes and God-fearers were in attendance when the apostle Paul started traveling to synagogues to share the gospel (Acts 13:43, 14:1; 17:4, 12, 17; 18:4; 20:21). Peter shared the gospel to the God-fearer Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 10:9-25). Before his encounter with Peter, Cornelius is described as a devout man who continually feared and prayed to God (Acts 10:2). When Peter first meets Cornelius, he states that Cornelius knows it is unlawful for him, a Jew, to

⁴⁷ Unlike the earlier garrison in Elephantine, the Jews in Ptolemaic Egypt did not call the prayer houses temples, suggesting that they refrained from erecting altars or offering sacrifices, indicating a continued orientation towards the Temple in Jerusalem. Barclay, 26.

⁴⁸ De Ridder, 81.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 80.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

associate with or visit a gentile. Although not explicitly stated, presumably, Cornelius received such instruction and knowledge of God from the synagogue in Caesarea. Jesus has a similar encounter with a Roman God-fearer (Lk 7:1-10). The Jewish elders who approach Jesus on the centurion's behalf describe him as someone who loves Israel and was responsible for constructing their synagogue. The centurion understood that God was able to heal his servant with just a word. Again, the assumption is that the centurion received such instruction at the synagogue.

The Jewish Identity

God called the Jews to live as distinct people. They were to live according to His code of ethics and reflect His value system. They were to demonstrate God's standard of justice and His model for life and society. The Jews were to embody God's original creational intention and eschatological goal for humankind.⁵² They were His witness, and they were to be a testimony to the redemptive power of God. However, the diaspora Jewish identity varied widely as they were dispersed across a large geographical region and subject to diverse regional influences. They demonstrated the ability to combine conformity with the surrounding culture while preserving

⁵² Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Baker Academic, 2011), 30.

their own self-imposed value system.⁵³ This common set of Torah prescribed practices shared across the diaspora communities defined what it was to be Jewish.⁵⁴

The diaspora Jews could not be distinguished from their appearance. Ancient Romans and Greeks often noted the difference in the appearance of foreigners, yet there is not a single account referencing the distinctive size, looks, or coiffure of the Jews.⁵⁵ They wore the same clothing and spoke the same language as their gentile neighbors.⁵⁶ Their names were indistinguishable from gentile names.⁵⁷ It was their Jewish identity and its associated practices that set them apart from the gentiles. The Jews were monotheistic and refused to worship the pagan gods or their idols.⁵⁸ Their strict dietary laws caused them to avoid foods regularly consumed by the gentiles.⁵⁹ The Jews continued the practice of circumcision, which was

⁵³ John Barclay notes the various levels of Jewish assimilation into the local culture. Those of high assimilation were Jews fully integrated into state politics and religion, social climbers, Jews married to gentiles that abandoned Judaism, Jewish opponents to Judaism, allegorists who abandoned key Jewish practices, and Jews isolated away from other Jews. Those of medium assimilation were Jews prominent in court but distinguishably Jewish, Jewish *ephebes* and citizens, well-educated Jews who participated in social and cultural life, Jews employed by non-Jews, those who gained supporters, patrons, or converts from non-Jews, and legal associations. The low assimilation were those residing in Jewish residential districts, those impacted by social conflict, and those residing in isolated Jewish communities. Barclay, 103-19, 320-32; Rajak, 158.

⁵⁴ Rajak, 150-51.

⁵⁵ Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness; Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 28.

⁵⁶ Second Maccabees shares that Jewish *ephebes* in Hellenistic Jerusalem wore the broad-rimmed Greek hat (*petasos*). Archeological evidence reveals that Palestinian Jews from the first and second century A.D. wore clothing indistinguishable from the non-Jews. The common language of the Jews during the Roman empire was Greek. There is no evidence of Jewish Greek. Cohen, 31, 35.

⁵⁷ Some diaspora Jews had a Jewish name and a gentile name. When interacting with gentiles, they used their gentile name. Cohen, 35.

⁵⁸ Barclay, 430-31.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 434.

considered a form of mutilation by the Greeks.⁶⁰ They appeared idle due to their cessation of all work on the seventh day for Sabbath observance.⁶¹ Considered God's presence on earth, the Jerusalem Temple remained the center of the Jewish religion. The city was flooded with contributions and pilgrims each year.⁶² Intermarriage between Jews and gentiles was strongly discouraged, if not forbidden.⁶³ Although the Jewish members of the community were similar in appearance, spoke the same language and shared many of the same customs, their observance of Jewish practices caused them to stand apart and appear strange to their gentile neighbors.

Monotheism

The Jews rejected the pagan gods. They worshipped God alone and refused to participate in idol worship.⁶⁴ God had instructed the early Israelites not to worship any other gods nor were

⁶⁰ Feldman, 154.

⁶¹ Rajak, 152..

⁶² Jeremias, 62, 75.

⁶³ Feldman, 77-79.

⁶⁴ Strict monotheism may be an element of later normalized Judaism. A document from 400 B.C. reveals that the Elephantine temple accommodated two other gods besides Yaho. Eshem-Bethel and Anat-Bethel were "gods in residence" in the "House of Yaho." Yaho is celebrated as the king of the gods and that the council of heaven proclaims His rule. The Israelite psalms contained in Papyrus Amherst 63 makes reference to Baal-Shamayin and Baal-Zaphon congratulating Yaho on His rise to kingship. The forerunner to Psalm 20 equates Yaho with Bethel. Suggesting the two gods differ in name only. The book of Jeremiah shares how Jews residing in southern Egypt burned sacrifices and poured out drink offerings to the queen of heaven (44:15-28). van der Toorn, 100-13. There is further evidence that reveals a level of deviation from monotheism among the diaspora Jews. Jewish documents from the second century B.C. refer to the Ptolemies as gods. Inscriptions that mention Jewish names were found in the Temple of Pan at Resediyeh in Upper Egypt, dating from the Ptolemaic period. Jewish tombstones from the first century B.C. refer to Hades. Jews possessed charms and amulets that called upon God and various pagan gods. Feldman, 68-69. Early evidence of cultic images may be found with the Samaritans (Northern Kingdom). Yahweh's image was symbolized by a bull calf. Jeroboam made two golden calves and placed them in Bethel and Dan. He told the people that they were their gods who had brought them up from Egypt (1 Kgs 12:28-30). The psalm in Papyrus Amherst 63 refers to Yahweh as "our bull." van der Toorn, 102.

they to construct any image of a heavenly being (Exod 20:3-4, Lev 19:4, Deut 6:14, Deut 12:30). Barclay makes an important distinction in that the Jews' rejection of the pagan gods went beyond mere monotheism. He argues that Jewish monotheism is a rejection of alien cults, pluralist cults, and iconic cults.⁶⁵ The Jewish belief in One God extended to their belief that the Jews were the only people who could worship Him properly and that only the Jerusalem Temple was sacred. Pagan worship, even to a single god, was considered false and rejected by the Jews.⁶⁶ Josephus states that there should be one temple for one God shared by all since He is the God of all (*Ag. Ap.* 2.193).⁶⁷ Philo makes a similar statement that there should be a single temple for a single God. He further states that God will only accept sacrifices made at the temple (*Spec. Law* 1.67).⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Barclay, 430-33.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 430-31.

⁶⁷ The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus was a young aristocrat born to a priestly family in Judea at the time of the Jewish revolt against Rome in A.D. 66. After being captured, his aid to the Romans' military efforts resulted in his freedom. His known works are *The Jewish War* (A.D. 75), *The Jewish Antiquities* (A.D. 94), *Against Apion* (A.D. 97), and *The Life of Josephus* (A.D. 99). His works are an important source for historical information during this period. However, there is a debate to their accuracy. He was not an unbiased observer of the events he documented. He had a personal agenda to present himself in the best light and to discredit his opponents. As ancient Roman historians were to appear disinterested, for the sake of his reputation, Josephus wanted to his work to be legitimate. However, his personal perspective would be an influencing factor. Writing to a contemporary audience placed restraints on his ability to alter historical events. Although there may be contradictions and biases in his work, Josephus sought to present an accurate account of history. He filtered his accounts in an attempt to preserve his reputation and career. Root argues that most of what is contained in his works that can be collaborated by other sources is reasonably accurate. Bradley W. Root, *First Century Galilee: A Fresh Examination of Sources* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 10-15.

⁶⁸ There is evidence of Jewish temples outside Jerusalem. See "Jerusalem and the Temple" below.

The gentiles during this period worshipped several gods, crafted idols in which to direct their worship, and developed mythologies surrounding these gods.⁶⁹ The Jews not only considered the gentile belief in multiple gods to be intellectually false, but they also viewed it as an insult to God.⁷⁰ Philo perceived the gentiles as worshiping the created rather than the Creator. He understood their created gods to be representatives of natural elements (*Spec. Law* 1.12-20). Philo argued that any physical representation of God obscured His character as incorporeal, invisible, and uncreated (*Alleg. Interp.* 3.36).

Dietary Restrictions

Each week the reading and expounding of the Jewish constitution at the synagogue included a list of prohibited foodstuffs according to the restrictions imposed by God (Lev 11; Deut 14).⁷¹ The prominence of the dietary laws in diaspora literary sources reflect the importance of the basic Levitical requirements and a desire to explain to the non-Jewish reader.⁷² In his writings, Philo reviews the food laws and explains what food is permitted and what is prohibited (*Spec. Law* 4.95-130). The *Letter of Aristeeas* goes further by explaining the reasoning behind the food laws (142-71). The list of prohibited foods included pork. One of the most common meats associated with Rome and one of the four most commonly sacrificed

⁶⁹ Barclay, 430.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 431.

⁷¹ Ibid., 434.

⁷² Rajak, 152.

animals throughout the empire. Pork was consumed during the post-sacrificial ritual banquet.⁷³ Emperor Gaius' question to why the Jews do not consume pork illustrates the universal practice of abstinence (Philo, *Embassy* 45.361).⁷⁴ However, Jewish abstinence went beyond this list of forbidden foods. During the Second Temple period, meals were often hosted at pagan temples and associated with worship and sacrifice. Rather than risk consuming tainted food, the Jews would avoid such social engagements.⁷⁵

Jews would eat with gentiles when they hosted the event. However, the requirement of reciprocity in giving and receiving hospitality would make establishing friendships with gentiles difficult without accepting gentile invitations.⁷⁶ Paul's letter to the Galatians illustrates the separation of the Jews from the gentiles during meals (2:11-14). Paul shares how before the men from James arrived, Peter shared meals with the gentile believers. However, upon their arrival, Peter separated himself from the gentiles and ate with the men from James. Although God had

⁷³ Beyond being a prohibited food, the consumption of pork may have been viewed by Jews as submission to foreign control. The moment they ingest pork, they submit to external rule. Antiochus IV gave the scribe Eleazer the option to eat pork or be tortured and killed. Eleazer selected death (2 Macc 6:18 – 7:42). Antiochus called for daily pork sacrifices throughout the region to force Jews to ingest pork (4 Macc 5-18). Philo writes that Jewish women captured during the Alexandrian pogrom of A.D. 38 were forced to consume pork. Philo. *In Flaccum*, 95-96; Jordan D. Rosenblum. "Why Do You Refuse to Eat Pork?' Jews, Food, and Identity in Roman Palestine." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 100, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 95-110.

⁷⁴ Feldman, 49.

⁷⁵ Barclay, 434.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

shown Peter that nothing was unclean that He made clean (Acts 10:15), Peter gave into pressure and returned to the Jewish practice of separating from gentiles.⁷⁷

Circumcision

As a covenant regulation, God instructs Abraham that he and his descendants are to be circumcised (Gen 17:10-12). Those born into the household are to be circumcised on their eighth day (Gen 17:12; Lev 12:3). God further instructs that any uncircumcised male is to be cut off from the Jewish people (Gen 17:14). Only those who are circumcised are permitted to participate in Passover (Exod 12:43-49). Abraham obeyed God's instructions and circumcised his entire household (Gen 17:23-27). Isaac was circumcised on his eighth day (Gen 21:4). Joshua circumcised the Israelites in Gilgal upon first entering the Promised Land (Josh 5:2-9).⁷⁸ The seriousness of circumcision is illustrated in the narrative of when God meets Moses and his family as they travel to Egypt. His intent is to kill Moses' uncircumcised firstborn son. God relents after Moses' wife Zipporah circumcises the child (Exod 4:24-26). An uncircumcised male was not permitted to accompany God's people.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Timothy George. *Galatians*. vol. 30. The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 150-51.

⁷⁸ The Israelite males born in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt were not circumcised. All the males that departed Egypt that were circumcised died in the wilderness. God had promised that they would not see the Promised Land due to their disobedience (Num 14:20-35; Josh 5:6).

⁷⁹ There are several debates surrounding Exodus 4:24-26. The first debate is whether God sought to kill Moses or Moses' son Gershom. The second debate is the reason God sought to kill him. There are two more widely held positions. The first is that God sought to kill Moses for his reluctance in his calling. The second position is Moses' failure to either circumcise himself or his son. The identity of the intended victim is not important for the purpose of this study. The reason for God's attack is due to the failure to circumcise. The first position is difficult to support since Moses was already enroute to Egypt when this event occurred. The fact that the child was not circumcised prior to the event and the act of circumcision caused God to relent supports this as the reason for the attack. Simon Skidmore, "A Mimetic Reading of Exodus 4:24-26." *The Heythrop Journal*. (2021): 1-12; Douglas K.

The metaphorical usage of the term circumcised reminded the Israelites of their covenant regulations. God's use of the phrase uncircumcised heart refers to stubbornness and disobedience. He states that He will bring them into the land of their enemies until their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their disobedience (Lev 26:41). The Israelites are instructed to circumcise their hearts and be stiff-necked no longer (Deut 10:16). Jeremiah describes how the residents of Jerusalem had "closed their ears" to the word of the Lord (Jer 6:10). Israel is described as being uncircumcised of heart due to their disobedience (Jer 9:26). This term is used to describe the gentile nations. Just as Israel was uncircumcised of heart, so were all the nations (Jer 9:26). Israel profaned God's sanctuary when they permitted the foreigners that were uncircumcised in heart and flesh to enter. He instructs them that no foreigner uncircumcised in heart and flesh is to enter His sanctuary (Eze 44:7, 9).

The diaspora Jews continued to adhere to this practice to demonstrate their commitment to the covenant and the Jewish lifestyle. Circumcision was the core of their faith, and observance of the Law would be impossible without it.⁸⁰ The practice of circumcision was a requirement of any male proselyte to complete their conversion to Judaism as it demonstrated their commitment to the Jewish way of life (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.257-58).⁸¹ Jewish literary evidence from the Second

Stuart, *Exodus*. vol. 2. The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 125-26.

⁸⁰ J.N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1975), 136.

⁸¹ Barclay, 439. Josephus provides an account of king Izates who converted to Judaism. Originally, his Jewish tutor Ananias argued that God would forgive Izates and permit him to worship without circumcision as it would cause Izates hardship with his people and bring blame to his tutor. However, Izates is challenged by Eleazer, a Jew from Galilee, and becomes circumcised (*Ant.* 20.38-48).

Temple period reveals the continued importance and practice of circumcision. Josephus describes circumcision as becoming assuredly Jewish (*Ant.* 20.38). Philo provides a rationale for the practice, presenting the medical and prolific benefits of circumcision. He argues for its continued preservation (*Spec. Law* 1.1-11). After Antiochus IV prohibited circumcision, Jews preferred to risk death and the death of their infant instead of forsaken this practice (1 Macc 1:60-61; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.256). The Hasmoneans forcibly circumcised Jewish apostates (1 Macc 2:46; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.278).⁸² Similar evidence is found in the New Testament. Jesus and John the Baptist were circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 1:59; 2:21). The apostle Paul testified that every circumcised male was obligated to observe the whole Law (Gal 5:3). He was circumcised on the eighth day (Phil 3:5) and he circumcised Timothy who was born to a Jewish mother and a Greek father (Acts 16:3).

The practice of circumcision would be a requirement for any non-Jew male desiring to marry a Jewish woman. Such a practice would limit the marriage options of Jewish women and discourage exogamy.⁸³ Although far removed from Judaism, Herod insisted that the Arab Syllaeus be circumcised before being permitted to marry Herod's sister Salome. Syllaeus refused,

⁸² There is an argument that Mattathias did not forcibly circumcise Jews. Rather it was his strength of emancipation from the Seleucids that permitted Jews to resume the practice of circumcision without fear of persecution. Isaac T. Soon, "‘In Strength’ Not ‘By Force’: Re-Reading the Circumcision of the Uncircumcised ἐν ἰσχύϊ in 1 Macc 2:46." *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 29, no. 3 (2020): 149-67; Josephus, "The Antiquities of the Jews," 12.278. Josephus' disagreement with the practice of forced circumcision of gentiles suggests that the Hasmoneans forced all among them to be circumcised (*Life* 112-13).

⁸³ Barclay, 439.

and marriage was not permitted. Similarly, Agrippa II refused the marriage between his sister Drusilla and Epiphanes because Epiphanes refused to become circumcised.⁸⁴

Sabbath Observance

Sabbath observance was another practice that was distinctly Jewish. This practice is commanded in the book of Exodus and is the only Jewish practice contained in the Ten Commandments (20:8-11; 23:12; Deut 5:12-13). It was given the highest sanction as God Himself observed the Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3).⁸⁵ The Jews were to cease all work on the seventh day. This day was to be holy to God and for complete rest. Like circumcision, anyone who profanes or works on the Sabbath was to be cut off from their people and put to death (Exod 31:14-15). The Jews understood that the observance of the Sabbath was a sign of the relationship between God and His chosen people (Exod 31:13; Ezek 20:12).⁸⁶ Nehemiah and the prophets expressed Sabbath observance as an important part of the covenant relationship. They warned that profaning the Sabbath would bring further wrath on Israel (Jer 17:27; Neh 13:18). The Sabbath was to be a delight (Isa 58:13) and God welcomed proselytes who observed it (Isa 56:3-7).

Very little guidance was given at first to what constituted forbidden work on the Sabbath. The book of Exodus expressly forbade plowing, and harvesting, and the kindling of a fire (34:21; 35:3). Inferences may be made in regard to what was forbidden on Sabbath from the biblical

⁸⁴ Feldman, 157.

⁸⁵ Barclay, 440.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 441.

narratives. The Israelites were instructed to collect twice the daily amount of manna on the sixth day (Exod 16:5, 22-30). The additional collection being for the Sabbath. Those who ignored God's instructions did not find any manna on the seventh day (Exod 16:27). The book of Numbers reveals that a man was put to death for collecting wood on the Sabbath (15:32-36).

Nehemiah and the prophets expanded the list of work that was forbidden on the Sabbath. Amos instructed that grain was not to be sold (8:5). Isaiah warned against the pursuit of personal interests (58:13-14). Jeremiah states that all work was to cease, specifically the carrying of loads or transporting anything through the gates of Jerusalem (17:19-27). Nehemiah instructs the Jews that they are not to operate wine presses, transport any loads through the gates of Jerusalem, sell food or purchase anything from foreign traders (13:15-22). He reprimanded the nobles of Judah for permitting such activities (13:17).

Second Temple period literature demonstrates the seriousness of Sabbath observance. Philo builds an argument for the death penalty for those who profane the Sabbath (*Spec. Law* 2.249-51). The book of Jubilees added greater work restrictions than those by Nehemiah and the prophets. In addition to the previous additions, Jews were not to lift loads, draw water, eat or drink anything that had not been prepared the day before, discuss work, engage in sexual intercourse, ride an animal, sail upon a ship, hunt, make war, or fast (Jub 2:17-32; 50:6-13). "And whoever profanes it [Sabbath] will surely die, and whoever does any work thereon will surely die forever" (Jub 2:27). Those who profaned the Sabbath suffered an eternal death ("die forever").

The Jews ceased all work on the Sabbath. In addition, they would abstain from engaging in any financial or legal matters.⁸⁷ Jews serving in the military would not fight, march or perform any work on this day. Although Matthias would be the first to order his soldiers to fight if attacked on the Sabbath (1 Macc 2:41), not all Jews observed this practice (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.276).⁸⁸ In A.D. 66, Agrippa II warned the Jews that should they observe the Sabbath, they would be defeated much as Jerusalem was in 63 B.C. by the Roman general Pompey (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.392).

The Sabbath was to be a day for worship and instruction in the Law. Jews would gather at the synagogues where they would hear the Law expounded, equipping them to observe Jewish customs.⁸⁹ According to Philo, “on the seventh day there are spread before the people in every city innumerable lessons of prudence, and temperance, and courage, and justice, and all other virtues; during the giving of which the common people sit down, keeping silence and pricking up their ears, with all possible attention, from their thirst for wholesome instruction; but some of those who are very learned explain to them what is of great importance and use, lessons by which the whole of their lives may be improved” (*Spec. Law* 2.62). Josephus regarded the Sabbath gathering as an opportunity for Jews to gain knowledge of their legislation in order to prevent transgressions (*Ag. Ap.* 2.175). He explains that on “the seventh day we set apart from labor; it is dedicated to the learning of our customs and laws, we thinking it proper to reflect on

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Feldman, 159-61.

⁸⁹ Barclay 417.

them as well as on any [good] thing else, in order to our avoiding of sin” (*Ant.* 16.43). The New Testament provides biblical evidence of these Sabbath gatherings at the synagogues (Mark 1:21-22; Luke 4:16; Acts 13:42; 15:21; 17:2; 18:4). Jesus taught at the synagogue in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-22; Luke 4:31-32). He pronounced His ministry at the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-22). The apostle Paul traveled to the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, Thessalonica, and Corinth to proclaim the good news of Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 13:14; 17-2; 18:4). At the Council of Jerusalem, James states that Moses is read in the synagogues every Sabbath (Acts 15:21).

Jerusalem and the Temple

The centrality of the Jerusalem Temple was an important aspect of the diaspora Jewish identity.⁹⁰ According to the Jews, the Temple was God’s presence on earth.⁹¹ Prayers made to

⁹⁰ The centrality of the Jerusalem temple may have originated with the Babylonian Jewish nationalism as Jerusalem and the temple were the focus of their learned history. However, Jewish temples existed outside of Jerusalem. Mount Gerizim was the location of the Samaritan temple. A Jewish temple existed in Elephantine and the presence of priests in Edfu suggests that a temple was located there as well. During the Ptolemaic era, a Jewish temple existed in Leontopolis. Based upon the descriptions from 407 B.C., the Elephantine temple was a monumental building. This was not a forerunner for the synagogue, this was Yahweh’s true home. They traveled here to meet Him, beseech His favors, and to make Him witness to their declarations. Unlike the Babylonian Jews, there is no evidence that the Elephantine Jews longed to return to Jerusalem. They did not view their temple as a temporary shelter or as a substitute for the Jerusalem temple. The Elephantine temple was destroyed by the Egyptians in 410 B.C. van der Toorn, 96-97, 114. The Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim was destroyed by John Hyrcanus I in 110 B.C. Jason A. Staples, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism: A New Theory of People, Exile, and Israelite Identity* (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 64. The temple in Leontopolis was destroyed by the Egyptians by order of the Romans in A.D. 73. Solomon H. Steckoll, “The Qumran Sect in Relation to the Temple of Leontopolis,” *Revue de Qumran* 6, no. 1 (1967): 55-69.

⁹¹ The temple was the cosmic axis and the “naval of the world.” (Ezek 5:5; 38:12) Alexandru Mihăilă, “Temple and Paradise. Some Remarks on the Dynamics of Sacred Place,” *Ecumenical Review Sibiu / Revista Ecumenica Sibiu* 13, no. 2 (August 2021): 145-159. The temple was God’s dwelling place on earth. Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple; Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 93. Goldhill states that the temple was where the presence of God could be perceived and acknowledged. Simon Goldhill, *The Temple of Jerusalem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 23.

God at the Temple went directly to His ear. It was here that the first fruits were to be delivered, and the customary offering for purification after the birth of a child was made.⁹² Each adult male over the age of twenty was to contribute a half-shekel as a Temple tax.⁹³ God commanded Moses to collect this tax for the atonement of that individual. All, regardless of economic status, were to pay the same amount. The collection was to be given to the service of the Tent of Meeting (Exod 30:11-16). The Jews understood this tax to be a ransom for their souls and that it would bring social and physical salvation (Philo, *Spec. Law* 1.77-78). The collection of this tax was conducted at defined times during the year and held in a communal bank before being delivered to Jerusalem. This included all adult males, providing a sense of individual belonging to the local community.⁹⁴ In addition to the temple tax, wealthy Jews sent prestigious gifts to the temple.⁹⁵

The temple tax would not travel alone to Jerusalem. Tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims would converge upon the city for the major festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.⁹⁶ Three times a year, diaspora Jews streamed into Jerusalem.⁹⁷ The number of pilgrims has been

Barclay argues that the centrality of the temple had a greater symbolic than practical significance during the Second Temple period considering the survival of Judaism after its destruction in A.D. 70. Barclay, 420.

⁹² Jeremias, 75.

⁹³ Barclay, 417.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 418.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 419.

⁹⁶ Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem was rare. It was often a once in a lifetime event. The three annual festivals were more often celebrated in their home country. Rajak, 151; Philo made a single pilgrimage to Jerusalem in his lifetime. Philo, *Prov*, 2.64; Barclay, 419; Jeremias, 62.

⁹⁷ Jeremias, 75.

calculated based on the number of animal offerings during Passover. Agrippa II ordered the removal of the kidneys from the animals. The number of kidneys reveals an estimated twelve million (12,000,000) Jews.⁹⁸ Josephus used a similar means to calculate the Passover population at three million (3,000,000) in A.D. 65 (*J.W.* 2.280).⁹⁹

The book of Acts provides a list of the various regions from which the pilgrims traveled during Pentecost: Parthia, Medes, Elam, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, the parts of Libya near Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia (2:9-11).

⁹⁸ Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Pirkei Avos: Chapters of the Fathers*, trans. Daniel Haberman (Spring Valley, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 2014), *Talmud Pesachim* 64b.9; Jeremias, 76.

⁹⁹ Two hundred and fifty-six thousand five hundred (256,500) paschal lambs were counted. With twelve (12) people per lamb, the population totals three million and seventy-eight thousand (3,078,000). Josephus shares a similar count of lamb at the beginning of the Roman siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (*J.W.* 6.424). Price argues that Josephus has greatly exaggerated the Passover population number or that he is referring to the Passover in A.D. 66. In Josephus' account, he states that Cestius ordered a census of the city's population. The Passover in A.D. 66 is Cestius' only visit to Jerusalem during Passover prior to the war. Jonathan J. Price, *Jerusalem under Siege* (Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill, 1992), 109-11. Colautti agrees with the A.D. 66 date as it is highly improbably, if not impossible, that the Romans would have permitted such a large number of Jews to enter Jerusalem in A.D. 70 when they had nearly all the territory under their control. Frederico M. Colautti, *Passover in the Works of Josephus* (Leiden; Boston; Koln: Brill, 2002), 116. Other numbers provided by Josephus are challenged. Cline suggests that Josephus' account of no fewer than six hundred thousand dead bodies were thrown out the gates during the Roman siege may be inflated (*J.W.* 5.569). Eric H. Cline, *Jerusalem Besieged: From Ancient Canaan to Modern Israel* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 124. The Roman historian Tacitus states that he "heard that the number of the besieged of every age and both sexes was six hundred thousand" (*Histories* 5.13). McGing argues that the large numbers provided by Josephus break the limits of credibility, that analysis of the literary sources is a highly subjective matter, and should be regarded as extremely unreliable. He agrees that the temple authorities may have been able to track the number of animals slaughtered. However, multiplying this number by ten appears arbitrary. McGing argues that the population estimates "fly in the face" of the population density that the city could support at the time. He believes that even Tacitus' number of six hundred thousand besieged has been inflated (*Histories* 5.13). McGing does agree that "the number of settlements in Palestine increased substantially in the Roman period, and thus an increase in population in this area is to be deduced; but we do not have the data that would enable us to estimate the scale of that increase and the exact numbers involved." He goes on to say that he does "not believe we have the first notion of how many Jews were in the ancient world, even roughly speaking, nor do we have the means to discover it." Brian McGing, "Population and Proselytism: How Many Jews Were There in the Ancient World," in *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities*. ed. John R. Bartlett (London, England; New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 88-106. Although Josephus' Passover numbers may be inflated, biblical evidence supports the arrival of thousands of diaspora Jews to Jerusalem during major festivals (Acts 2:9-11).

This is further substantiated by the Jews who confronted Stephen. They were from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia (Acts 6:9). In his letter to emperor Gaius, Agrippa I refers to Jerusalem as the mother city of the Jewish colonies spread across the world. He lists Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria, Coele-Syria, Pamphylia, Cilicia, Asia, Bithynia, Pontus, Europe, Thessaly, Boeotia, Macedonia, Aeolia, Attica, Argos, Corinth, the Peloponnese, the islands of Euboea, Cyprus, Crete, and the lands beyond the Euphrates as regions that contain Jewish settlers (Philo, *Embassy* 281-82).¹⁰⁰

Besides being the home of the Jewish Temple, Jerusalem was considered the center for Jewish religious education. It attracted scholars from Babylon and Egypt. Because of the world renown of these scholars, students arrived from all parts of the Jewish world to study.¹⁰¹ The diaspora Jew Saul traveled from Tarsus of Cilicia to study under the rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Many messianic movements of the time looked towards Jerusalem. Jews would relocate to the city seeking to die in the Holy Place and be buried at the Resurrection and Final Judgment site.¹⁰²

Intermarriage

God prohibits marriage between the Israelites and the the people groups of the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. They are to destroy them completely and not make any treaty or show mercy (Deut 7:1-6). This is so that the Israelites'

¹⁰⁰ Jeremias, 63.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 75.

¹⁰² Ibid.

future generations are not influenced by these people groups and turn away from God (Deut 7:4). The prohibition against intermarriage is specific to these seven nations.¹⁰³ This prohibition is later extended to the Ammonites and Moabites. None of their descendants are permitted to enter the assembly of God (Deut 23:1-6). However, descendants from Edomites and Egyptians are permitted after the third generation (Deut 23:7). Nations beyond these people groups were not subject to this prohibition.¹⁰⁴ In the case of foreign women captured during warfare, Jewish men are permitted to marry after the women grieved thirty days for their parents (Deut 21: 10-13).

Although the initial intermarriage prohibition did not extend to all nations, it was discouraged. Samson's parents ask if there are no daughters among his own kinsmen that he had to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines (Judg 14:3).¹⁰⁵ The biblical evidence for the complete ban against exogamy appears after the Jews' return from Babylon. The concern was not the corrupting influence of the gentiles, it was for the purity of the nation of Israel.¹⁰⁶ Ezra believed that intermarriage with foreigners profaned the purity of the holy seed of Israel (9:2).¹⁰⁷ Although he references the nations from Deuteronomy 7 (9:1), these nations no longer existed during Ezra's time. He equates all foreign women to be like the Canaanites.¹⁰⁸ His concern is

¹⁰³ Cohen, 243.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 243-44.

¹⁰⁶ Christine Hayes, "Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources," *Harvard Theological Review* 92, no. 1 (Jan 1999), 3-36.

¹⁰⁷ Matthew Thiessen, "Protecting the Holy Race and Holy Space: Judith's Reenactment of the Slaughter of Shechem," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 49 (2018): 165-88.

¹⁰⁸ Cohen, 243-44.

with the impurity of the gentiles and not with their corrupting influence.¹⁰⁹ The prophet Malachi makes a similar claim as Ezra. He believes that Judah has profaned the sanctuary of God by marrying a foreign woman (2:10-12).

When the Jews discovered from the book of Moses that the Ammonites and Moabites were not permitted to enter the assembly of God, they banned all foreigners from Israel (Neh 13:1-3). Nehemiah charges that those who marry a foreign woman are acting unfaithfully towards God (13:27). He argues that it was the corrupting influence of his foreign wives that caused Solomon to sin (13:26).

The book of Ruth demonstrates a greater tolerance for exogamy.¹¹⁰ Ruth is a Moabite widow that relocates to Judah with her Jewish mother-in-law (1:4, 6-7). She remarries and becomes the wife of Boaz, a Jewish man of great wealth (2:1; 4:13). The child born to them is king David's grandfather (4:16-17). The biblical text reveals that a Moabite woman is the great-grandmother of king David and is in the genealogical line of Jesus (Luke 1:1-6).

Second Temple Jewish literature reflects Ezra and Nehemiah by adopting a strict position against exogamy. The concern shifts from the corrupting influence of the gentiles to preserving the purity of the nation of Israel. *Jubilees* (second century B.C.) states that any man who gives his daughter to a foreigner is to be stoned to death.¹¹¹ The woman is to be burned with fire

¹⁰⁹ Hayes, 3-36.

¹¹⁰ Sarah Pearce, "Rethinking the Other in Antiquity: Philo of Alexandria on Intermarriage," *Antichon* 47 (2013): 140-55.

¹¹¹ To support a total ban on exogamy, *Jubilees* attempts to erase the intermarriage of the patriarchs' families. The Aramean women are recognized as Jews and reports the marriages of Jacob's sons to Aramean women. This permits *Jubilees* to hold the position that any marriage to a gentile will result in defilement and

(30:7). It further instructs Jews not to permit their sons to fornicate with Canaanite women or take them as wives. Rather, they are to burn the women with fire as the Canaanites are to be removed from the land (Jub 20:4). Abraham instructed Jacob to separate himself from the nations and not to take a wife from the seed of the Canaanite daughters for all their seed is to be rooted from the earth (Jub 22:16, 20). Rebekah reiterates Abraham's instructions and tells Jacob not to marry a Canaanite as they are unrighteous. Rather, should he marry a woman from her father's house, God will bless him, and his children will be righteous and a holy seed (Jub 25:1-3). Isaac warns Jacob not to marry a Canaanite. He is to travel to Mesopotamia and marry one of Rebekah's nieces (Jub 27:10). *Jubilees* holds that Israelites who marry foreigners become impure through physical contact and pollute the entire nation.¹¹²

The *Letter of Aristeas* (second or third century B.C.) forbids intermarriage. The Jews are not to intermingle at all with any other nations in order to remain pure in body and soul. This prohibition is based upon the Torah.¹¹³ *Judith* shares the holy seed ideology that promotes an ontological distinction between Jews and non-Jews. According to *Judith*, sexual intercourse with a foreigner creates a pollution in the womb. In its recounting of Genesis 34, had Dinah conceived through Shechem, the mix of foreign blood would have polluted the Israelite blood and

warrants punishment. In the account of Dinah (Gen 34), it omits any mention of Dinah's brothers' proposal that the Shechemites be circumcised or of the Shechemites being circumcised. Cana Werman, "Jubilees 30: Building a Paradigm for the Ban on Intermarriage," *The Harvard Theological Review* 90, no. 1 (Jan 1997): 1-22.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Feldman, 77.

threatened to dissolve the boundary between Israel and the nations.¹¹⁴ The *Saruch* condemns Solomon for profaning the holy seed by his intercourse with foreign women. The author contributes this as the cause to the division of Solomon's kingdom and to the rise of the disobedient northern kingdom (Sir 47:21).¹¹⁵ The *Apocryphal Esther* (Septuagint version) states that she abhors the bed of the uncircumcised (14:15). In the *Testament of Levi* (second century B.C.), Isaac warns Jacob not to marry a foreigner (9:10). Levi states that exogamy among Jews is unlawful and equates the marriage with Sodom and Gomorrah (T. Levi 14:6). *Tobit* (second century B.C.) instructs his son Tobias to marry from his father's tribe and not a foreign woman. He reminds him that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob married women of their countrymen and that their children were blessed. It is their seed that will inherit the land (Tob 4:12). Influenced by Ezra and *Jubilees*, the 4QMMT (150 B.C.) regards intermarriage as a corruption of the holy seed of Israel (78-84).¹¹⁶ It references Leviticus 19:19 as the basis for the ban as the Jews were not to mix species (80). *Joseph and Asenath* (200 B.C. – A.D. 200) provides a narrative of Joseph's relationship with his wife Asenath. He states that it is not fitting for a Jew to marry a pagan. They are married once Asenath converts to Judaism (8:5-13).¹¹⁷ Unlike the previously mentioned Second Temple Jewish literature, *Joseph and Asenath* demonstrates that marriage was acceptable between a Jew and a proselyte.

¹¹⁴ Thiessen, 165-88.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Hayes, 3-36.

¹¹⁷ Barclay, 204-6, 214.

Philo's position on intermarriage is rooted in the Mosaic law. He expands the terms of Exodus 34 and Deuteronomy 7 to constitute a complete ban on exogamy.¹¹⁸ Jews are not to intermarry with foreign women as they may cause the Jews to forget the path that leads to piety (*Spec. Law* 3.29). His concern is that exogamy would result in future religious deviance.¹¹⁹ Philo argued that it was crucial for the family to impart and safeguard Jewish traditions.¹²⁰ For Philo, education was critical to the survival of the next Jewish generation. His fear is that intermarriage would lead to neglect of the teaching of Jewish laws and customs.¹²¹ Like Philo, Josephus argues that the prohibition against exogamy is rooted in the laws of Moses (Exod 34; Deut 7), which forbade Jews to marry women outside their own people.¹²² He explains how king Solomon's lust for women caused him to violate this law and begin to worship other gods (*Ant.* 8.191). Josephus refers to the events of Numbers 25 as another example of the disastrous influence of foreign women (*Ant.* 4.131-55).

The diaspora Jews were concerned with keeping marriage bonds between Jews or between Jews and proselytes.¹²³ The preservation of the Jewish identity is accredited to this effort of keeping the nation pure.¹²⁴ Since the offspring followed the ethnicity of the father and

¹¹⁸ Pearce, 147-48.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹²⁰ Barclay, 108.

¹²¹ Pearce, 151.

¹²² Cohen, 245.

¹²³ Barclay, 410.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 411.

not the mother, the responsibility of preserving the continuity of Judaism fell upon the Jewish women. The Jewish fathers held similar responsibilities as they were to ensure their daughter's virginity and make the marriage arrangement.¹²⁵

The ban on exogamy was founded in the Pentateuch (Gen 34; Exod 34:15-16; Num 25; Deut 7:1-4). These passages were interpreted in a broader sense to include all gentiles (Ezra 9-10; Tob 4:12-13).¹²⁶ In the cases of exogamy, it was believed that the marriage relationship diluted or destroyed the commitment of the Jewish partner to their ancestral traditions.¹²⁷ In several of his writings, Philo notes the corrupting influence of foreign women (*Moses* 1.295-305; *Spec. Law* 1.54-58; 3.29; *Virtues* 34-44). Josephus provides a recount of Drusilla, the sister of Berenice and Agrippa II. She marries Felix, the Roman procurator of Judea without requiring him to be circumcised. Josephus describes this marriage as a transgression against the ancestral laws (*Ant.* 20.141-44).¹²⁸ Biblical evidence reveals similar instances. In the Old Testament, the Israelites at Shittim married Moabite women and started worshiping their gods (Num 25). In the New Testament, Timothy, born to a Jewish mother and a Greek father, was not circumcised (Acts 16:1-3). This suggests that other Jewish practices were neglected in that household.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Ibid., 412.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 108.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 324-25.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

The practice of circumcision discouraged exogamy.¹³⁰ Josephus believed that this practice was instituted to prevent Abraham's offspring from mixing with foreigners (*Ant.* 1.192). Circumcision assisted Jewish women in identifying with whom they were permitted to have sexual relations.¹³¹ According to Philo, it was taboo for a Jewish woman to receive the alien seed of an uncircumcised man (*QG* 3.61). Jewish girls were taught to shudder at the thought of a sexual encounter with an uncircumcised man (Add Esth 14:15). Since this practice was unique to Judaism in most contexts, the insistence on circumcised partners played a crucial role in keeping the nation pure.¹³²

The residential concentration of Jews made endogamy more likely.¹³³ Philo make little reference to intermarriage, suggesting it infrequency. As a leader of the Jewish community, he would have had held a harsher tone if intermarriage was a frequent occurrence.¹³⁴ Rather, the diaspora Jews adopted the practice of endogamy as part of their Jewish identity. The importance of endogamy is reflected at all levels of Jewish assimilation to the local culture. As an example, the Alexandrian citizen Hermogenes marries Apollonia, a Jewish non-citizen. It is unlikely that a

¹³⁰ Ibid., 439.

¹³¹ Ibid., 411.

¹³² Ibid., 412.

¹³³ Feldman, 79; Barclay, 29-30; Intermarriage may have been more common in larger population centers such as Alexandria where there was increased contact with the gentiles. Feldman, 79. The higher level of assimilation among Jews may have been another contributor to exogamy. Rajak, 154.

¹³⁴ Feldman, 77; Philo's softer tone may indicate that Jewish intermarriage was a substantial reality during his time. He may have determined that encouraging the conversion of the non-Jewish partner was a wiser course of action than condemning the practice. Feldman, 77-78; Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999), 353-54.

citizen would marry a non-citizen as citizenship would not result through the marriage. Rather, it is suspected that Hermogenes was Jewish, and endogamy was the most important criteria for marriage.¹³⁵ In most documented cases of intermarriage, the gentile converts to Judaism prior to the union. The importance of gentile conversion prior to matrimony is demonstrated among the highly assimilated. Herod insisted that the Arab Syllaeus be circumcised before being permitted to marry Herod's sister Salome. Syllaeus refused, and marriage was not permitted. Similarly, Agrippa II refused the marriage between his sister Drusilla and Epiphanes because Epiphanes refused to become circumcised.¹³⁶

Table 17. The Jewish Identity

Distinctive Trait	Description
Monotheism	Belief in the one true God.
Dietary Restrictions	Abstinence from the foods listed in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.
Practice of Circumcision	All Jewish males must be circumcised to demonstrate their commitment to the Abrahamic covenant.
Sabbath Observance	Cease all work on the seventh day.
Centrality of Jerusalem and the Temple	The Jerusalem Temple is God's presence on earth. Sacrifices must be made at the Temple.
Intermarriage	Exogamy is prohibited. Only marriage between Jews is permitted. Gentiles desiring to marry a Jew must first convert to Judaism.

Source: John M.G. Barclay. *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996); Louis H. Feldman. *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Gentile Response to Second Temple Judaism

Negative Response

This Jewish distinctiveness did not go unnoticed by their gentile neighbors. The Jews held beliefs and observed practices that appeared completely foreign to gentiles during the

¹³⁵ Barclay, 67.

¹³⁶ Feldman, 157.

Second Temple period. The Jewish customs of circumcision, Sabbath observance, festivals, and dietary laws would first attract the gentiles' attention and draw the criticism of the ancient pagan writers. These customs caused the Jews to stand apart from the gentiles and become noticed as a strange people.¹³⁷ It would be this strangeness that would become the fundamental reason for the pagan anti-Semitism.¹³⁸ However, the Jewish rejection of idol worship, abstention from pork, and Sabbath observance would become the target of ridicule and cause accusations that the Jewish people were atheists, unsociable, unpatriotic, and misanthropic.¹³⁹

Rejection of Polytheism and Idolatry

The Jewish rejection of polytheism and idolatry would appear foreign and potentially hostile to the gentiles. Gentiles interpreted this rejection of polytheism and idol worship as an intolerance by the Jewish people of their gods.¹⁴⁰ Socrates regarded the Jews as intolerant and claimed that they asserted that the premises of the gentile's polytheism were all wrong.¹⁴¹ Further, the Jews were viewed as unpatriotic and suffered accusations of political disloyalty for their refusal to worship the local gods and engage in religious practices.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Sevenster, 119.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 89.

¹³⁹ Emil Schurer, John MacPherson, Sophia. Taylor, and Peter Christie, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1994), 153.

¹⁴⁰ Barclay, 431.

¹⁴¹ Feldman, 125-26.

¹⁴² Feldman, 150; Barclay, 434.

Due to their rejection of the pagan gods and idol worship, the Jews were similarly charged with atheism. This charge was brought about by their failure to participate in the prevailing cult, their deviation from the polis religious ceremonies, and their rejection of the state gods.¹⁴³ The Jews were accused of not believing in any god. The worship of an invisible God was incomprehensible to the gentiles. To them, if there was no idol, there was no god.¹⁴⁴

The Greek rhetorician Apollonius Molon (first century B.C.) was the first to define Jews as atheists. However, the accusation went beyond the Jews' rejection of the pagan gods. They were said to be hostile towards them (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.14). Roman author Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23/24-79) stated that the Jews had a remarkable contempt for the divine (*Naturalis Historia* 13, 4.46). Egyptian grammarian Lysimachus of Alexandria believed that Moses had instructed the Jews to destroy any temple or altar they encountered that was devoted to the pagan gods (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.34).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Sevenster, 96-97.

¹⁴⁴ Barclay, 432.

¹⁴⁵ Josephus reveals that a systematic policy of destruction of alien temples occurred in the days of Simon's successors, John Hyrcanus, Aristobulus I, and Alexander Janneaeus. Barbu states that "in Jewish eyes, the uncompromising stance with regard to alien temples—and one may suggest, more broadly, alien religion—fits in with a very specific ideological discourse relating to the preservation of the sanctity of the land and its people. In non-Jewish eyes, however, the same stance appears as "immoderate," contributing to the coining of the Jews not as a "people of philosophers," but as a "sacrilegious," "misanthropic," and even "impious nation." Daniel Barbu, "The Jewish Sacking of Alien Temples: 'Limits of Toleration' in a Comparative Perspective," *History of Religions* 50, no. 1 (2010): 21-42.

Pork Abstinence & Separatism at Meals

Jews were further viewed as unsociable due to their dietary restrictions, which caused them to separate themselves from gentiles during meals.¹⁴⁶ One such forbidden item often noted by gentiles was pork, considered a delicacy by the Greeks and the Romans. To the Romans, pork was a national dish, and abstinence from it was viewed as unpatriotic.¹⁴⁷ The prohibition against pork was one of the clearest means to identify Jews.¹⁴⁸

King Antiochus Epiphanes IV (215-164 B.C.) ordered the Jews to sacrifice swine in his attempt to assimilate the Jewish people (1 Macc 1:47). Others, such as Greek philosopher Plutarch (A.D. 46-119), suggested the reason for the Jewish abstinence from pork was due to the Jews having a special reverence for the pig.¹⁴⁹ Roman satirist Petronius (A.D. 27-66) commented that the Jews worship a pig god (*Fragmenta* 37). So great was the curiosity of the Jewish abstinence from pork that emperor Gaius (A.D. 12-41) once asked Philo, head of the embassy of Alexandrian Jews at the time, why the Jews did not eat pork (*Embassy* 45.361).

Due to the dietary laws and their rejection of the pagan gods, fraternizing with gentiles was challenging as the Jews would not enter temples or engage in idol worship. In order to guard against violations of the covenant law, Jews found it easier to separate themselves from gentiles and socialize with other Jews. Because Jews often separated themselves from gentiles and

¹⁴⁶ Barclay, 436.

¹⁴⁷ Feldman, 167.

¹⁴⁸ Rosenblum, 95-110.

¹⁴⁹ Feldman, 167.

abstained from certain foods, they were accused of being misanthropic.¹⁵⁰ The Greek historian Diodorus (first century B.C.) stated that the Jews' refusal to share meals with other nations best illustrated their hatred for humanity (*Bibliotheca Historia* 34-35, 1.2).

Circumcision

The Jewish practice of circumcision further contributed to the accusations of misanthropy. Although practiced by other cultures, this practice was mainly associated with the Jews by the Greeks and Romans, who viewed circumcision as a physical deformity.¹⁵¹ Visible to the gentiles in the baths and the gymnasia, circumcision was a defining feature of Jewish males and was an easy target for ridicule.¹⁵² The Roman poet Horace (65-8 B.C.) referred to the circumcised males as “the clipped Jews.” (*Satires*, 1.9.69-70) Fellow poet Persius (A.D. 34-62) remarked of the “skinned Sabbath” (*Satires*, 5.184). An epigram accredited to the Roman satirist Petronius (A.D. 27-66) describes how the Jewish male will be cast from his people and forced to wander from their ancestral city should they fail to be circumcised (*Fragmenta* 37). This practice disqualified Jewish males from participating in the Olympic games.¹⁵³ Because this practice distinguished Jews from their gentile neighbors, it was viewed as another means of the Jews

¹⁵⁰ Barclay, 436.

¹⁵¹ Although circumcision was primarily associated with the Jews by the Greeks and Romans, this practice was common amongst Egyptians, Ethiopians, Colchians, and Syrians. Feldman, 154. The first-century B.C. historian Diodorus claimed that the Jews and Colchians derived this practice from the Egyptians since both groups had migrated from that country (*Bibliotheca Historia* 1.28.3, 1.55.5).

¹⁵² Cohen, 39-49.

¹⁵³ Feldman, 154.

attempting to separate themselves and provided further evidence of their hatred for humanity (Tacitus, *Histories* 5.5.1-2).¹⁵⁴

Sabbath Observance

The Jews halting of all work on the seventh day appeared odd to the gentiles as they tracked time in terms of months and years. The seven-day astrological week would not be introduced until the second-century B.C. and not adopted by the Romans until the first century A.D.¹⁵⁵ The Jewish observance of the Sabbath and unwillingness to work on this day was visible to the gentiles. Jews who enlisted in military service within gentile armies would not march or take up arms on the Sabbath. Jews would refrain from engaging in any legal or financial transactions on this day.¹⁵⁶ The gentiles viewed the Jews' unwillingness to perform any work on the Sabbath as idleness and folly.¹⁵⁷ Some gentiles accused the Jews of laziness.¹⁵⁸

The Jews unwillingness to perform work or take up arms was well known and used as an advantage by gentiles. When capturing Jerusalem in 63 B.C., Roman general Pompey waited until the Sabbath to prepare for his attack, knowing that the Jews were not permitted to resist such preparatory work and would only act if attacked.¹⁵⁹ However, like other Jewish practices,

¹⁵⁴ Cohen 43-44.

¹⁵⁵ Feldman, 158.

¹⁵⁶ Barclay, 440-42.

¹⁵⁷ Rajak, 152.

¹⁵⁸ Barclay, 440.

¹⁵⁹ Feldman, 161.

the gentiles misunderstood the purpose of Sabbath observance. The Greek historian Strabo (63 B.C.-A.D. 23) identified the Sabbath as a day of fasting, believing the Jews' abstinence went beyond work. So common was this belief amongst gentiles that the emperor Augustus (63 B.C.-A.D. 14) wrote that not even a Jew observed fasting as diligently as he had done on that particular Sabbath.¹⁶⁰ Although the Sabbath restrictions placed on the Jews were seen as a disadvantage by the gentiles, their strict adherence to this practice further set them apart.¹⁶¹

Intermarriage (Endogamy)

The Roman historian Tacitus' (A.D. 56-120) comment that Jews sleep apart and abstain from sexual intercourse with foreign women lends the strongest evidence for the practice of endogamy (*Histories* 5.5.1). This comment is part of a greater discourse where he describes how Jews only feel hate and enmity towards foreigners (Tacitus, *Histories* 5.5.1). Although there may have been instances of Jewish exogamy, from the gentile response, the practice of endogamy was significant enough across the various diaspora communities to attract the attention and criticism of gentile intellectuals.

Ancient Intellectual Allegations of Jewish Misanthropy

Intellectuals expressed accusations of Jewish misanthropy during the Second Temple period. The Greek historian Hecataeus wrote in 300 B.C. that Moses introduced a way of life to his Jewish followers that was hostile towards gentiles as to cause them not to associate with non-Jews (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historia* 40.3.4). The Egyptian priest Manetho (third

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 163.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

century B.C.) would claim that Moses ordained that Israelites were to have no connections with gentiles (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.250). The Thessalian officer Lysimachus (first or second century B.C.) expressed that Moses taught Jews not to show goodwill to gentiles, that Jews should offer the worst advice, and seek to overthrow temples altars of the pagan gods (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.309). The Greek rhetorician Apollonius Molon (first century B.C.) accused the Jews of illiberalism as they would reject anyone who shared differing ideas regarding God and would not engage with anyone who adopted a different lifestyle from their own (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.258). The philosopher Euphrates (first century B.C.) noted that Jews do not associate with gentiles during meals, libations, prayers, or sacrifice (Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 5.33).

The book of Esther contains accusations of misanthropy. Haman states that the Jews are a group of people within the kingdom that have their own laws and do not keep the laws of the king (Esth 3:8). Josephus would paraphrase Haman's words to match the gentile sentiment of the time by describing the Jews as being unsocial, having separate religion and laws from other people, and were the enemy of the Persians and of all people (*Ant.* 11.6.5).

Although the Jews lived amongst the gentiles, their continued adherence to their customs and unwillingness to compromise for the sake of assimilation caused them to remain a distinct people. However, not all gentiles responded negatively to their distinctiveness. Rather, some gentiles were drawn to the Jewish identity.

Table 18. Negative Gentile Response to Second Temple Judaism

Accusation	Description
Atheism	The Jewish rejection of polytheism and idol worship was viewed by the gentiles as intolerance for their gods.
Atheism	Jews did not participate in the prevailing cult and rejected the state gods.
Unsocial	Jews viewed as unsociable due to their dietary restrictions, which caused them to separate themselves from gentiles during meals.
Unpatriotic	Jews were viewed as unpatriotic and suffered accusations of political disloyalty for their refusal to worship the local gods and engage in religious practices.
Unpatriotic	The Jewish abstinence from pork which was considered a national dish by the Romans.
Misanthropy	Jews separated themselves from gentiles and abstained from certain foods.
Misanthropy	The Jewish practice of circumcision.
Misanthropy	The Jewish practice of endogamy.

Source: Barclay, 431, 436; Sevenster, 96-97; Feldman, 150, 154-55, 167.

Positive Response

From the biblical evidence, it is known that gentiles were attracted to Judaism. Although their experience of God may range from knowledge to full conversion, the gentiles were made aware of God. The book of Exodus describes a multitude of people departing Egypt with the Jews (Exod 12:38). The prostitute Rahab elects God over loyalty to her king (Josh 2:8-11). The Moabite Ruth tells her mother-in-law Naomi that she will become a Jew and follow God (Ruth 1:16-18). The Queen of Sheba recognizes that God blessed Solomon with the throne of Israel (1 Kgs 10:6-9). Naaman becomes a God-fearer after being cured of his skin disease (2 Kgs 5:1-17). Balaam understands that the words he speaks are from God (Num 24:13). The sailors aboard the boat with Jonah pray to God that they may not perish (Jonah 1:14,16). Pharaoh recognized that God shared the interpretation of his dream with Joseph (Gen 41:39-41). Through a series of encounters with God, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar states that he will praise, exalt, and honor God (Dan 4:37). The Persian king Darius instructs all within his kingdom to fear God (Dan 6:25-27). The king and people of Nineveh repent after receiving God's warning through

Jonah (Jonah 3:4-9). From these examples, it is evident that the knowledge of God was shared with gentiles from the time before the Egyptian exodus through the post-exilic period.

There are various reasons for the gentile attraction to Judaism during the Second Temple period. There was an increased infatuation with eastern practices. Ancient intellectuals highly regarded Moses. Others were intrigued by a God who rewarded virtue. Judaism was regarded as an ancient religion. Having established rituals was understood as the means to keep communion with the divine. The Jews were renowned for their ability to heal and dispel demons. The Jewish God was the only virtuous God.¹⁶² Some sought the perceived civil and economic benefits of Judaism. Those of low social standing sought Judaism brought a heightened identity and a sense of connectedness. Whether their perception was accurate or not, the distinctiveness of Judaism attracted gentiles.

Eastern Practices

As the Roman empire expanded east, it became increasingly influenced by Eastern religions. The spread of Judaism in Rome was among the many non-Roman religions to enter the city.¹⁶³ Juvenal wrote that Rome was becoming a Greek city and possibly worse, an oriental city (*Satire* 3.58-63). Several Romans became fascinated with the rites and rituals of Greece, Egypt,

¹⁶² The ancient pagan gods were unpredictable and often acted selfishly and immorally regardless of the actions of the people. God is righteous and values justice. His believers are blessed for their obedience and punished for their disobedience. Michael F. Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land; Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing LLC, 2010), 90.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 84.

and Persia. Eastern cults presented Roman citizens with intriguing rituals and the promise of blessings, prosperity, and salvation in this world and in the next.¹⁶⁴

Moses

Ancient pagan writers held Moses in high regard. The ancient Greek historian Hecataeus (550-476 B.C.) describes him as a very wise and valiant man. Hecataeus would credit Moses for conquering the land and building the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. According to Hecataeus, all the major Jewish institutions were credited to Moses. He would claim that Moses divided his people into twelve tribes to reflect the most perfect number (Diodorus, *Bibliotheca Historia* 40, 3).

The Egyptian priest Manetho (third century B.C.) identified Moses as an Egyptian priest who possessed esoteric knowledge that he learned from being a member of Pharaoh's court and from his father-in-law Jethro, the priest. Manetho would further describe Moses as a learned priest who was skilled and eloquent with words (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.250). This was a prized attribute amongst the Greeks.¹⁶⁵ The Greek historian Strabo (63 B.C.-A.D. 23) identified Moses as an Egyptian priest and a prophet who was in the same league as other great divinely inspired lawgivers (*Geographica* 16, 2.34-46).

Beyond his wisdom and courage, ancient writers praised Moses for his beauty. This was another quality important to the ancients. The Greek philosopher Plato (428/427 or 424/432-348/347 B.C.) would write that only the handsomest people should be elected to become

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 84-85.

¹⁶⁵ Feldman, 237.

philosopher-kings (*Republic* 7.535A). The Roman historian Pompeius Trogus (first century B.C.) commends Moses for his knowledge and beauty (Justin, *Historiae Philippicae* 36, *Epitoma* 2.11).

Monotheism

Monotheism was not exclusive to Judaism. The Greek philosophers Xenophanes (570-478 B.C.) and Antisthenes (445-365 B.C.) were monotheists.¹⁶⁶ The Greek philosophical systems of Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism were based upon a single divine being who created and operated the cosmos.¹⁶⁷ The Roman author Varro (116-27 B.C.) thought the Jewish God to be the same as the pagan god Jupiter and believed that the Jews worshipped the highest God (Augustine, *The Harmony of the Gospels*, 1.22.30). Gentile intellectuals may have been attracted to a God who rewarded virtue, interacted with the world through intermediaries, and had sovereignty over creation.¹⁶⁸

Antiquity

The Greeks and Romans placed a great emphasis on antiquity. They believed that humans were closest to the gods during the earliest times. The older and more eastern something was, the

¹⁶⁶ Meijer argues that Antisthenes and Xenophanes were not monotheists. Their form of religious belief was that one god is greatest above the other gods. Antisthenes speaks of one god according to nature without the exclusion of other gods. Meijer states that “for Antisthenes there was no contradiction in his slogan regarding the existence of both the one god and the many gods.” Piet Meijer, *A New Perspective on Antisthenes: Logos, Predicate and Ethics in his Philosophy* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 75-84.

¹⁶⁷ Bird, 88.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 89.

more divine and more credible it was regarded.¹⁶⁹ The Roman statesman Cicero (106-43 B.C.) wrote that preserving the rites of the family and their ancestors meant preserving the religious rites that the gods had handed down during ancient times (*The Law* 2.10.27). The East would consider the Greek and Roman civilizations as young. In Plato's *Timaeus*, an Egyptian priest tells Solon that the Greeks are children and that there is no such thing as an old Greek (*Timaeus* 22B). Judaism was considered to have a high degree of authority due to its antiquity and distinguished history. Their lifestyle was not regarded as faddish since its history was as distinguished as the Greeks, Phoenicians, and Egyptians.¹⁷⁰

Ritual

In the ancient world, ritual was the key mechanism by which one demonstrated piety and connection to the divine realm. The Jewish practices of prayer, almsgiving, calendrical observances, Scripture instruction, purity laws, and Sabbath observance would have been an attractive means to have an ongoing communion with a divine being.¹⁷¹ Gentiles desiring to have a tangible means to maintain a continual relationship with God may have become attracted to the consistent nature of Jewish ritual.

¹⁶⁹ Feldman, 177.

¹⁷⁰ Bird, 85-86.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 86.

Healing and Deliverance from Evil

The Jewish ability to dispel demons and cure illness would attract gentiles.¹⁷² Magic in the ancient world was thought to be the ability to petition the gods to accomplish particular tasks, manipulate people, and exert power over the spiritual realm. Illness was often identified as the result of an invading spirit that the appropriate spells could only drive out. The Jews were considered to be excellent magicians.¹⁷³ Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23/24-79) regarded Moses as one of the greatest magicians (*Naturalis Historia* 30, 11). Jewish rites, rituals, and names were often associated with deliverance from evil powers and were commonly used for healing. The Greek magical papyri that have been discovered invoke the words "by the God of the Hebrews" to effect an exorcism.¹⁷⁴ It is believed that one-third of the magical papyri and amulets were based on Jewish elements.¹⁷⁵ Jewish exorcists were known to operate during the diaspora, where they offered their services to Jews and gentiles.¹⁷⁶ The book of Acts mentions Jewish exorcists in the

¹⁷² Ibid., 88.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 87.

¹⁷⁴ Theodore S. de Bruyn and Jitse H.F. Dijkstra, "Greek Amulets and Formularies from Egypt Containing Christian Elements: A Checklist of Papyri, Parchments, Ostraka, and Tablets." *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 48 (2011): 163–216.

¹⁷⁵ Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch*, trans. John Bowden (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 70. Twin silver amulets dating from 600 B.C. were discovered in a burial cave in Jerusalem's Ketef Hinnon. The amulets protected their owner against "the Evil." Nili Wazana, "A Case of the Evil Eye: Qohelet 4:4-8," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, no. 4 (2007), 685-702. The two amulets contain the earliest citations of biblical text, including the Priestly Benediction of Numbers 6:24-26. The second of the two texts contained on the amulets may be translated to "may he be blessed by YHWH, the warrior (or: helper) and the rebuker of Evil: 'May YHWH bless you, keep you. May YHWH make his face shine upon you and grant you peace.'" Roy D. Kotansky, "Textual Amulets and Writing Traditions in the Ancient World," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, ed. David Frankfurter (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019), 507-54.

¹⁷⁶ Bird, 87.

city of Ephesus. The Jews and Greeks who practiced magic burned their books once they came to believe in Christ (Acts 19:13-19).

Virtues

The pagan religion did not include a moral component, as the pagan gods were amoral or immoral. In contrast, Judaism incorporated religious devotion, public and private living, and ethical behavior.¹⁷⁷ However, it was the wisdom of the Jews that was most admired.¹⁷⁸ Judaism offered answers to the Greco-Roman philosophical questions surrounding the good life and the purpose of human existence.¹⁷⁹ The Pythagorean philosopher Ocellus (sixth century B.C.) paraphrases Genesis 1:28 when he suggests that man should be fruitful and multiple in order to fill the earth.¹⁸⁰ The Roman historian Pompeius Trogus (first century B.C.) referred to Joseph's extraordinary talent and shrewd nature (Justin, *Historie Phillippicae* 36.2.6-10). Joseph's ability to interpret dreams was another highly regarded aspect of his wisdom. This ability was considered the means used by the demonic to communicate with man. Pompeius Trogus would credit Joseph with being the first to develop the science of dream interpretation and that nothing could be hidden from him due to this ability (Justin, *Historie Phillippicae* 36.2.6-10).

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 90.

¹⁷⁸ Feldman, 201.

¹⁷⁹ Bird, 90.

¹⁸⁰ Ocellus Lucanus, *The Nature of the Universe*, trans. Thomas Taylor (London, UK: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), 45-46.

Civil and Economic Benefits

There were perceived civil and economic benefits to Judaism that may have become attractive to the gentiles. The Greek historian Strabo would claim that Judaism did not place a heavy financial burden upon its adherents (*Geographica* 16.2.36). Jews were exempt from military service and were not required to participate in the cultus of the Roman gods during the rule of Julius Caesar.¹⁸¹ Philo wrote that proselytes should join the Jewish people to receive material benefits (*Virtues* 103-104). Gentile converts would also benefit from Jewish charities that provided alms to the poor (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.283).

Social Identity

The distinct Jewish identity was highly visible to their gentile neighbors. The diaspora communities demonstrated a strong sense of group loyalty and values. Those gentiles of low social standing or who lacked any sense of loyalty to their cultural or geopolitical circumstances may have become attracted to the potential of a Jewish identity. Judaism offered a strong identity flexible enough to flourish in the Greco-Roman polis.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Bird, 89.

¹⁸² Ibid., 90.

Table 19. Positive Gentile Response to Second Temple Judaism

Characteristic	Description
Eastern Practices	Eastern cults presented Roman citizens with intriguing rituals and the promise of blessings, prosperity, and salvation in this world and the next.
Moses	Moses was held in high regard. He was praised for his wisdom, courage, and beauty.
Monotheism	Gentile intellectuals were attracted to a God who rewarded virtue, interacted with the world through intermediaries, and had sovereignty over creation.
Antiquity	Judaism is considered to have a high degree of authority due to its distinguished history, as the Greeks and Romans believed the earliest humans were closest to the gods.
Ritual	The Jewish practices of prayer, almsgiving, calendrical observances, Scripture instruction, purity laws, and Sabbath observance provided an attractive means to have a continuous communion with a divine being.
Healing	Magic in the ancient world was thought to be the ability to petition the gods to accomplish particular tasks, manipulate people, and exert power over the spiritual realm. Illness was often identified as the result of an invading spirit that the appropriate spells could only drive out. The Jews were considered excellent magicians due to their ability to dispel demons and cure illness.
Virtues	Jews were admired for their wisdom. The ability to interpret dreams was a highly regarded aspect of wisdom.
Economic Benefits	Greek historian Strabo claimed that Judaism did not place a heavy financial burden upon its adherents. According to Philo and Josephus, proselytes received material benefits and Jewish charities contributed alms to the poor.
Civil Benefits	Jews were exempt from military service during Julius Caesar's rule.
Identity	Gentiles of low social standing were attracted to the group loyalty and values of the Jewish identity.

Source: Feldman, 177, 201; Bird, 84-87, 89-90; Justin. *Historic Phillippicae*, 36.2.6-10; Strabo, *Geographica* 16.2.36; Philo, *Virtues* 103-104; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.283.

Jewish Proselytizing Prior to Christ

The diaspora Jews understood their role as God's witness. They were chosen as God's agents to restore humankind to Him. Their mission was centripetal. They were to demonstrate the life intended by God. The Jewish identity attracted the gentiles. Gentiles attended the local synagogues to learn about God and Jewish customs. Many would become God-fearers while others fully converted to Judaism. Jews preached to gentiles in their native language, and the Hebrew Bible was translated to Greek. The large number of converts caught the attention of gentile scholars and triggered reactions from the government. By the time of Christ, Peter, Paul,

and the other apostles would encounter God-fearers and proselytes in synagogues throughout the Mediterranean region.

Acceptance of Converts

The diaspora Jews looked favorable upon gentile conversion and accepted them into their communities.¹⁸³ The diaspora Jews understood themselves to be a nation without any fixed locality. It was open to anyone to integrate into its political and social community by accepting Jewish religious customs.¹⁸⁴ Gentile converts to Judaism were to be regarded as dearest friends and kinsmen (Philo, *Virtues* 33.179). Philo awaited the day when people abandoned their ancestral customs and adopted those of the Jews (*Moses* 2.43-44). It was the desire of the Jews that God-fearers become full converts to Judaism.¹⁸⁵

Ancient literary sources provide evidence for a positive attitude toward Jewish proselytizing. The *Letter of Aristeas* instructs the Jews to show their opponent charity so they may change (227). The *Sibylline Oracles* shares that the Jews are compelled from within to provide an oracle to all (3.5-10). The *Testament of Levi* states that the law was granted to the Jews for the enlightenment of every person (14.4). The *Wisdom of Solomon* claims that Israel was to give God's law to all men (18.4). The *Testament of Joseph* has Potiphar's wife seeking instruction in God's word from Joseph (4.4-5).

¹⁸³ Please see Chapter 2 "Literary Review" for evidence of Jewish acceptance of gentile converts to Judaism; Barclay, 408.

¹⁸⁴ Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion; Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 2.

¹⁸⁵ Scot McKnight, *A Light Amongst the Gentiles; Jewish Missionary Activity During the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 107.

Centripetal Mission in the Diaspora

The diaspora Jews are God's witness (Isa 43:10). They are to attract gentiles to God not by what they do but by who they are.¹⁸⁶ They are called to live an authentic life before God.¹⁸⁷ Israel is to be the Creator's true humanity. Their lives are to exhibit His creational design for human life.¹⁸⁸ It is this distinct Jewish identity that attracts the curiosity of the gentiles. McKnight notes that the best evidence for converting gentiles is to be found in the good deeds and lifestyle of the Jews. He argues that this led to the majority of the gentile conversions.¹⁸⁹ God converts the nations by working in the midst of His own people. His interventions make Israel the light of the world.¹⁹⁰

Judaism was the first great missionary religion to appear in the Mediterranean region. The primary channel for Jewish missional activity was the diaspora. Its spread is closely mapped to the growth and development of diaspora communities. The Jews' dispersion was a divinely given opportunity to glorify God before the gentiles.¹⁹¹ Goheen describes the diaspora Jews as the "so-that" people. They are blessed so that they may become a blessing to others. He also

¹⁸⁶ Mortimer Arias, "Centripetal Mission or Evangelization by Hospitality" *Missiology: An International Review* 10, no. 1 (January 1982): 74–75.

¹⁸⁷ Waldron Scott, *Bring Forth Justice; A Contemporary Perspective on Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1861), 108.

¹⁸⁸ Goheen, 35.

¹⁸⁹ McKnight, 67-68, 77.

¹⁹⁰ Robert Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations: A Study of the Old Testament Conception of Israel's Mission to the World*, trans. John Penney Smith (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 79.

¹⁹¹ Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations* (London, England: SCM Press LTD, 1967), 11, 14.

refers to them as the “come and join us” people as they invite the world to participate in God’s mission.¹⁹² The diaspora Jews were highly visible as they composed an estimated twenty percent of the eastern Mediterranean’s population.¹⁹³ The diaspora provides the largest amount of evidence for gentile conversion to Judaism.¹⁹⁴

Evidence of Jewish Proselytizing

The local synagogue was a major contributor to the success of the Jewish mission. The attractiveness of the Jewish lifestyle drew gentiles to the synagogue.¹⁹⁵ In every city, Moses was preached in the synagogues on the Sabbath (Acts 15:21). This weekly teaching permitted the world to become acquainted with God.¹⁹⁶ Through the synagogue service, gentiles learned of God. It served as the vehicle for conversion to Judaism.¹⁹⁷ Besides being a place of worship and learning, the synagogue was the Jewish center for charity. Jews and proselytes contributed funds to support Jewish and gentile orphans and widows.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹² Goheen, 63.

¹⁹³ Robert Goldenberg, *The Origins of Judaism: From Canaan to the Rise of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 180; Rajak argues that although the Jews were visible, they were not a dominant presence during the Roman empire. He believes that the estimated population of eight million Jews during the Roman empire is based upon dubious evidence and that Josephus’ estimate of one million Jews in Egypt were exaggerated. Rajak, 150. See the earlier footnote under “Jerusalem and the Temple” regarding Josephus’ tendency to inflate numbers.

¹⁹⁴ Bird, 77.

¹⁹⁵ McKnight, 77.

¹⁹⁶ De Ridder, 80.

¹⁹⁷ McKnight, 76.

¹⁹⁸ De Ridder, 82.

Language was another major factor in their missionary success. During the Greco-Roman period, Greek was the spoken and written language for everyday use and for Jewish religious practices. This was made possible by the translation of the Torah into Greek during the mid-third century B.C., which was soon followed by Greek versions of the remaining books of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁹⁹ The use of translators in the local synagogue permitted people to hear God speak to them in their native language.²⁰⁰ Without the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Jewish proselytizing movements would not have enjoyed the same level of success.²⁰¹ The Babylonian Talmud references the use of translators when reading Scriptures.²⁰² In the book of Nehemiah, translators are used to help people understand the reading of God's law (8:8).

McKnight argues that there is evidence for Jewish proselytizing activities. He claims that there is solid evidence of such activity in Rome during the second century B.C. This is supported by the consistent presence of God-fearers and the large amount of apologetic literature.²⁰³ Bird believes several Jewish groups and individuals actively converted gentiles to Judaism and incorporated them into their communities. He argues that there were two key objectives. First, they assisted gentiles in abandoning the immorality and idolatry of paganism and adopting the ethical ways of Judaism. Second, they encouraged God-fearers to complete the conversion to

¹⁹⁹ Rajak, 156.

²⁰⁰ De Ridder, 84.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ McKnight, 74-76.

Judaism.²⁰⁴ Bird presents archeological evidence in support of the existence of God-fearers. He mentions the inscriptions at the synagogues in Sardis and Aphrodisias that list prominent God-fearing members.²⁰⁵ Barclay claims that gentiles joined the Jewish community to such a degree that it was referred to as “becoming a Jew.” He further states that the proselyte underwent such resocialization that they acquired a new ethnicity in kinship and custom. They would become redefined and a member of the Jewish nation.²⁰⁶

Evidence for gentile conversion to Judaism is found in non-Jewish literary works, as other gentiles did not always view this practice favorably. Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus calls proselytes the worst rascals among people as they renounce their ancestral religions and contribute to the wealth of the Jews. He further states that they abandon their patriotic loyalties and treat their family with contentment (Tacitus, *Histories* 5, 5.1-2). Roman poet Juvenal states that those who learn, observe, and fear the Jewish law become accustomed to despising the Roman law (*Saturae* 14, 100-101).

The expulsion of Jews from Rome by the government to halt the spread of Judaism provides further evidence of Jewish proselytizing activities.²⁰⁷ In 139 B.C., Roman politician Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Hispanus expelled Jews from Rome for attempting to transmit their

²⁰⁴ Bird, 149-50.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 46.

²⁰⁶ Barclay, 403, 408.

²⁰⁷ Benjamin Isaac, *Empire and Ideology in the Greco-Roman World* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 318-19; It is debatable whether the expulsions from Rome were actually due to proselytizing activities. However, these expulsions were consistently ascribed to Jewish proselytizing. Such activity, or the perception of, caused social anxiety that induced Roman action against eastern cults. Rajak, 160; Isaac, 319.

sacred rites to Romans.²⁰⁸ In 19 B.C., the emperor Tiberius expelled four thousand (4,000) Jews from Rome for proselytizing activities. “Those infected by this religion” were given the choice to renounce Judaism or leave Italy.²⁰⁹ Tacitus believed that “those infected” referred to proselytes (*Ann.* 2.85). This was initiated by an incident of four Jewish men securing a contribution from a Roman proselyte woman. After being reported by the husband, the emperor ordered all Jews to be banished from Rome (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.81-84). As further evidence that this expulsion was the result of Jewish proselytizing, a fragment from Dio explicitly states that Jews were actively engaged in converting non-Jews (*Historia Romana* 57, 18 5a).

The book of Acts reveals the presence of God-fearers and proselytes.²¹⁰ Within the Jerusalem church, Nicolas, the Antiochian proselyte, would be elected as one of the seven (Acts 6:5). Phillip would baptize an Ethiopian God-fearer or proselyte (Acts 8:27-39). Peter traveled to Caesarea to share the gospel with the God-fearer Cornelius (Acts 10:23-24). God-fearers would receive the gospel in Antioch (Acts 11:19-20). Paul encountered God-fearers and proselytes at various synagogues across Asia Minor (Acts 13:43; 14:1; 17:4, 12, 17; 18:4; 20:21). The synagogue and the presence of the God-fearers and proselytes contributed to the remarkable growth of the first century A.D. church.²¹¹ The apostle Paul was able to build upon the

²⁰⁸ McKnight, 73.

²⁰⁹ Isaac, 318.

²¹⁰ Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*, 16.

²¹¹ McKnight, 114.

missionary success of the Jewish proselytizers.²¹² The Jewish mission served as the roots of the Christian mission. Early Christian sources are imprinted with Jewish missionary work.²¹³

The Nations Prepared

By the time of Christ, Jewish diaspora communities were established throughout the Mediterranean region. Large Jewish populations were concentrated in the cities of Alexandria, Antioch, Damascus, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Rome. Each Sabbath, the diaspora Jews attended synagogue for worship and instruction. Although there were levels of assimilation to the local culture, the diaspora Jews preserved their Jewish identity which distinguished them from their gentile neighbors. They continued to observe the Sabbath and dietary restrictions. Males adhered to the practice of circumcision. Exogamy was discouraged. Jewish women were to marry Jewish men or gentiles who had converted to Judaism (proselytes). Diaspora Jews worshiped the one true God, and the Jerusalem temple remained their religious center.

Adherence to these Jewish practices resulted in a negative response from some gentiles. The diaspora Jews were accused of atheism and of misanthropy. They were called unsocial and unpatriotic. However, their distinctive lifestyle also attracted gentiles to Judaism. Antiquity and eastern practices were viewed favorably among some gentiles. Moses was highly regarded as a leader and Judaism was respected for its wisdom. Jewish rituals offered the means for an ongoing communion with a divine being. Jews were considered excellent magicians due to their ability to expel demons and cure illnesses. Others sought the perceived economic and civil

²¹² Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*, 16.

²¹³ Bird, 113, 152.

benefits of Judaism. Gentiles of low standing desired the group loyalty and values of the Jewish identity.

The diaspora Jews' distinct lifestyle concentrated in major metropolitan areas allowed them to serve as God's witness. They were the kingdom of priests and the holy nation (Exod 19:5-6). The diaspora Jews were spread throughout the Mediterranean region and surrounded by gentiles. As God commanded, they drew the curiosity and awe of their gentile neighbors (Deut 4:5-8). Gentiles attracted to Judaism attended synagogue where they learned of God. Many sought the Jewish God (God-fearers) while others converted to Judaism (proselytes). The apostles encountered God-fearers and proselytes at the synagogues when they arrived to preach the Gospel. The Jewish mission prepared the gentile nations for the arrival of the Messiah.

Chapter V

The Messiah and the Restoration of Israel

A young Jewish woman would give birth to a man that would change the world. At the time of His arrival, the Second Temple period Jews believed that they were living in exile and awaited the second exodus.¹ The Romans ruled over Israel and most of the diaspora region. The Jews continued to be God's witness as they awaited the future restoration of Israel. The prophets had foretold of a Messiah born from the line of David that would deliver the kingdom of God to earth and restore His chosen people. The gentile nations would flock to Jerusalem and worship the God of Israel. This Messiah would bring salvation to all humankind. Although the Jews awaited His arrival, not all agreed that the man from Nazareth was the Messiah. Jesus' death and ascension would cause division among His people and make salvation available to the Jews and the gentiles.

¹ There is a debate as to whether the Second Temple period Jews considered themselves in exile after the return from Babylon in 538 B.C. Knibb argues that Israel viewed themselves to be in exile long after the sixth century B.C. and would only end when God intervened to establish His rule. Michael A. Knibb, "The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period," in *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Jewish Texts and Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 271-72. Nickelsburg echoes this position when he states that the hope for restoration lay in the return of the dispersed and the appearance of the Davidic king. George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1981), 18. Wright further supports this position by stating that Israel remained in exile due to the unfulfilled prophetic messages: Israel was ruled by foreigners, and their God had not returned. N.T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God; I. The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 268-69. However, Bryan argues against this position as it may not reflect the worldview of those living in the land. A desire to be free from foreign oppression is not the same as a belief in an ongoing exile. After a hundred years of independence under the Hasmonean dynasty, he believes that it is hard to imagine that they perceived themselves to be in exile. Steven M. Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgement and Restoration* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 13-15, 20. Dennis believes the ongoing exile refers to the tribes lost during the Assyrian conquest, not the Babylonian exiles. John A. Dennis, *Jesus' Death and the Gathering of True Israel; The Johannine Appropriation of Restoration Theology in the Light of John 11.47-52* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 81. Scott affirms the ongoing exile position. He claims that the Second Temple period's literary sources reflect the Deuteronomic sin-exile-return pattern. James M. Scott, "'For as Many as are of Works of the Law are Under a Curse' (Galatians 3.10)" in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 187-221.

Intertestamental Period

In 538 B.C., the Jews were permitted to return to Palestine by the Persian king Cyrus the Great. For nearly two hundred years, they continued to live under Persian rule. This would end with the defeat of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. His empire would be divided shortly after his death in 323 B.C. Palestine fell under the Ptolemaic Empire in 320 B.C. This land was contested between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids and would ultimately fall under the Seleucid Empire in 198 B.C. It was during the Seleucid rule that Judah Maccabee revolted in 166 B.C. His guerilla movement developed into an army that conquered Jerusalem in 164 B.C. After Judah's death in 160 B.C., the Seleucids regained control for a time. However, Simon Thassi established a semi-independent Hasmonean dynasty in 143 B.C. with the assistance of his Roman allies. He established himself as high priest and king. However, in 63 B.C., the Roman Republic invaded and divided the land into a client state. The Hasmonean dynasty survived until 37 B.C., when the Herodian dynasty replaced it. In 6 B.C., the Romans formed the province of Judaea by combining Judea, Samaria, and Idumea.²

As Alexander and his successors Hellenized the region, Greek thought and culture influenced the Jews living in Palestine and throughout the diaspora. As many began to assimilate, groups emerged to prevent the perversion of Jewish beliefs and practices.³ Some emerged to decry the illegitimate Hasmonean rulers in their assumption of the offices of both

² All events and dates are provided by Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple; Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 28.

³ Ibid., 33-35.

king and High Priest. Others benefited from the occupation and sought to strengthen their influence and position with Rome.

Table 20. Key Events from Alexander the Great to Herod the Great

Date	Event
538 B.C.	Jews permitted to return to Palestine
332 B.C.	Palestine falls under the rule of Alexander the Great
320 B.C.	Palestine under Ptolemaic rule
198 B.C.	Palestine under Seleucid rule
166 B.C.	Maccabean revolt
164 B.C.	Jerusalem captured and the Temple restored
143 B.C.	The semi-independent Hasmonean dynasty is established
63 B.C.	Rome invades and Judea becomes a client state
37 B.C.	Hasmonean dynasty replaced by Herodian dynasty
6 B.C.	Judea, Samaria, and Idumea become the Roman province of Judaea

Source: Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple; Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 28.

Sects within Judaism

There is a long history of sects and other movements in Judaism. They may have existed as early as the preexilic period.⁴ Ancient sources reveal the existence of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Essenes by 100 B.C. Although they may have already been in existence, Josephus first mentions the Pharisees and Sadducees as political rivals seeking to gain influence with the Hasmonean ruler John Hyrcanus (135-104 B.C.). The Essenes are first mentioned with the ruler Aristobulus (104-3 B.C.).⁵ The Hasidim pre-date these three groups and are the alleged ancestors of the Pharisees and the Essenes.⁶ The Roman occupation would see the emergence of

⁴ Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period, Volume 3: The Maccabean Revolt, Hasmonaean Rule, and Herod the Great (175-4 BCE)* (New York, NY: Bloomsburg T&T Clark, 2020), 174.

⁵ Ibid., 173-74.

⁶ Ibid., 136-37.

the revolutionary groups Fourth Philosophy and the Zealots.⁷ Each group ranged in political involvement, Torah interpretation, membership requirements, and belief in God's future intervention. However, membership in these sects represented a small percentage of the Jewish people. Most did not belong to any of these groups. Although considered by some to be a sect, the Samaritans are the descendants of the northern tribes and considered themselves Israelites and not Jews.⁸ They are included in this section. However, evidence is presented to demonstrate that they were not considered a Jewish sect.

Hasidim

The Hasidim are mentioned in 1 and 2 Maccabees. They are described as a group of mighty warriors with a will for the law that joined Mattathias (1 Macc 2:42). They were the first to seek peace and were deceived by the scribes Alcimus and Bacchides. They trusted Alcimus since he was an offspring of Aaron (1 Macc 7:12-16). In his speech to the Seleucid king Demetrius I, the High Priest Alcimus states that the Hasidim along with their leader Judah Maccabee maintain a warlike policy and will not permit the kingdom to be at peace (2 Macc 14:6).

The Hasidim are the alleged ancestors of the Pharisees and the Essenes. Kampen bases this assertion on the supposition that the Hasidim formed a unified movement and that the Pharisees had a position in Jewish society and religion. They are described as the orthodox who

⁷ Lester L. Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism: History and Religion of the Jews in the Time of Nehemiah, the Maccabees, Hillel and Jesus* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010), 72-73.

⁸ Jason Staples, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism: A New Theory of People, Exile, and Israelite Identity* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 66.

opposed the Hellenistic reform imposed by Jason and Menelaus.⁹ However, it is debated whether the Hasidim was an organized group. Grabbe argues that the original Hebrew text of 1 Maccabees may have been describing a miscellaneous group of pious individuals. Neither Josephus nor Philo mention the Hasidim.¹⁰

Pharisees

The existence of the Pharisees is known through Josephus' writings, the New Testament, and rabbinic literature. Josephus is important as he lived when the Pharisaic movement was active, and he had personal knowledge of prominent Pharisees.¹¹ He claimed that after spending three years with the hermit Bannus, he began at the age of nineteen (19) to govern his life by the rules of the Pharisees (*Life* 2.10-12).¹² Josephus states that although the Pharisees are few in number, they are "of the highest dignity" (*Ant.* 18.17). At the time of Herod the Great, the Pharisees numbered six thousand (6,000) (Josephus, *Ant.* 17.41-42).

⁹ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 137; John Kampen, *The Hasideans and the Origins of Pharisaism: A Study of 1 and 2 Maccabees* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988).

¹⁰ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 136-37.

¹¹ Lester Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 145. Although Josephus is the primary source, very little is written concerning the Pharisees. In his *Jewish War*, they are named in seven sentences between Books 1 and 2. In his twenty volume *Antiquities of the Jews*, the Pharisees appear in the Hasmonean and Herodian sections. They account for twenty (20) of the four hundred and thirty-two (432) sections in Book 13, they receive a brief mention in Book 15, a paragraph in Book 17, and a couple of sentences in Book 18. The Pharisees are mentioned twice in Josephus' *Life* and are not mentioned in *Against Apion*. Steve Mason, "Josephus's Pharisees: The Narratives," in *In Quest of the Historical Pharisees*. ed. Jacob Neusner and Bruce D. Chilton (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 5. Josephus names only a few individual Pharisees: Simeon ben Gamaliel, Pollion, and Samais. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in Second Temple Judaism*, 161.

¹² Mason argues that Josephus' statement is not a claim that he joined the Pharisaic sect. Mason states that there is no further evidence in Josephus' writing that he was a Pharisee. Steve Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees: A Composition-Critical Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 342-56. Grabbe counters this argument, stating that the best way of understanding this statement in the entire context is that Josephus became a Pharisee at the age of 19. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 149.

Josephus' first account of the Pharisees reveals that they existed by 100 B.C. during the reign of John Hyrcanus (135 – 104 B.C.).¹³ The Pharisees are political rivals with the Sadducees. Josephus shares the story of the banquet held by Hyrcanus where members from both sects were in attendance. After Hyrcanus is offended by Eleazer, the Sadducees suggest that the punishment proposed by the Pharisees is too light, and that they share the same sentiment as Eleazer. This causes Hyrcanus to part with the Pharisees and repeal the decrees they had imposed on the people (*Ant.* 13.288-300).

Although the Pharisees did not hold political office, they enjoyed great influence over the people. The people believed anything the Pharisees spoke against the king or the high priest (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.288). However, during the reign of Alexandra Salome (76 – 67 B.C.), the Pharisees become the de facto head of state. Upon his deathbed, Alexander Jannaeus instructed his wife to yield part of her executive power to the Pharisees since they held the confidence of the people and could persuade them to be friendly or hostile towards whoever was in power.¹⁴ According to Josephus, “she [Alexandra] had indeed the name of the Regent; but the Pharisees had the authority” (*Ant.* 13.408). He further states that they “became the real administrators of public affairs,” and that they “had the enjoyment of the royal authority” (*J.W.* 1.111). During her brief reign, the Pharisees restored all their decrees that Hyrcanus had abolished (*Ant.* 13.408). Josephus shares that the Pharisees were well respected in Galilee. The influential Galilean John

¹³ Grabbe. *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 173-74.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

of Gischala had close ties with the Judean Pharisee Simeon ben Gamaliel.¹⁵ Herod the Great held Pharisee Pollion in high regard since it was Pollion that had advised the people to admit Herod during the siege of Jerusalem and it was he who foretold that if Herod's life was spared, that Herod would persecute Hyrcanus and the judges (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.2).¹⁶ Because of his regard for Pollion, Herod did not punish the Pharisees when they refused to take an oath of allegiance (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.370). The Pharisees ongoing influence with the people is evident when the ruling elite include them in their emergency council to sooth the masses in an effort to prevent the revolt against the Romans (*J.W.* 2.411).¹⁷

Josephus considered the Pharisees the most accurate interpreters of the laws (*J.W.* 2.162). The Pharisees supplemented the written law with "traditions from the elders." However, Josephus offers no evidence to what these traditions were.¹⁸ The New Testament and rabbinic literature reveal that the traditions were mostly concerned with eating, agricultural laws, festival celebrations, purity, and with the "exchange of women."¹⁹ They applied moral pressure to those

¹⁵ Bradley W. Root, *First Century Galilee: A Fresh Examination of the Sources* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 35.

¹⁶ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 148.

¹⁷ Mason, "Josephus' Pharisees," 11.

¹⁸ Grabbe believes that the traditions represent a group attempting to reproduce temple cult in their own homes since they focused on ritual purity normally required in the temple setting. He suggests that it is either a group attempting to imitate the priests or a priestly group extending temple regulations to their homes. Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 56.

¹⁹ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 62.

who held power to maintain their own purity and to influence the populace.²⁰ Although they were extremely focused on the Torah, they were not the official teachers of the Law. The priests held this position.²¹

The Pharisees believed in the soul and the rewards and punishments that followed death. They further believed in both fate and free will.²² They believed some actions were outside humanity's power and subjected to God. Other actions were within their power and accountable to God. "Now for the Pharisees, they say that some actions, but not all, are the work of fate, and some of them are in our own power, and that they are liable to fate, but are not caused by fate" (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.172). The Pharisees believed humanity may act virtuously or viciously and how someone acts impacts their eternal future. Those who act viciously will be detained in an everlasting prison, while those who act virtuously will be revived and live again (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.14).

²⁰ N.T Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 187-89.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 209.

²² Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 55.

Table 21. Josephus Descriptions of the Pharisees (Wars of the Jews & Antiquities of the Jews)

<i>War</i> 2.8.14: 162-66	<i>Ant.</i> 18.1.3: 4-23
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Leading sect and considered the most accurate interpreters of the laws. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extremely influential among the city dwellers, who practice their beliefs and pay tribute to their virtue (<i>arete</i>). All prayers and sacred rites of divine worship are carried out according to their views.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attribute everything to fate and to God; i.e., conduct is mostly determined by the individual but in each action fate cooperates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assume everything comes through fate, though there is still a place for free will. Live simply and make no concessions to luxury.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every soul is immortal: the soul of the good goes into another body (transmigration?), but the soul of the wicked suffers eternal punishment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believe that souls survive death and are rewarded or punished under the earth: evil souls suffer eternal imprisonment, but good souls go into a new life (transmigration?). Follow traditional doctrinal teachings of their circle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Pharisees are affectionate towards each other and promote harmony with the community. On the other hand, the Sadducees are uncouth toward each other, behaving toward their fellows as they would to strangers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show respect to their elders, deferring to them and not contradicting them.

Source: Lester Grabbe. *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period, Volume 3: The Maccabean Revolt, Hasmonaean Rule, and Herod the Great (175-4 BCE)*, 146.

Essenes

Most of what is known of the Essenes is from the writings of Josephus, Philo, and Pliny the Elder. Pliny provides a description of the Essenes in his *Naturalis Historia*:

“On the west side of the Dead Sea, but out of range of the noxious exhalations of the coast, is a solitary tribe of the Essenes, which is remarkable beyond all other tribes in the whole world, as it has no women and has renounced all sexual desire, has no money, and only has palm-trees for company. Day by day the throng of refugees is recruited to an equal number by numerous accessions of persons tired of life and driven thither by the waves of fortune to adopt their manners. Thus through thousands of ages a race in which no one is born lives on forever: so prolific for their advantage is other men’s weariness of life” (5, 73).

Although Pliny the Elder only mentions a single Essene settlement along the northwestern coast of the Dead Sea, both Josephus and Philo describe Essenes living throughout Judaea. Josephus states that “they have no certain city, but many dwell in every city” (*J.W.* 2.124). Philo writes that they “live in villages, avoiding all cities on account of the habitual lawlessness of those who inhabit them” (*Good Person* 76). Despite Josephus’ claim to have been initiated into the Essene sect during his youth (*Life* 2.10), the similarities between their accounts suggest the use of a common source.²³ Both agree that the Essenes number four thousand (*Ant.* 18.20; *Good Person* 75). They live in multiple locations (*J.W.* 2.124; *Good Person* 76; *Hypothetica* 11.1). They have no wives, women, or children (*J.W.* 2.120-121; *Ant.* 18.21; *Hypothetica* 11.14-17).²⁴ They do not own personal property and all things are shared as a community (*J.W.* 2.122; *Ant.* 18.20; *Good Person* 85-86; *Hypothetica* 11.4-5). Their work consists of agriculture and crafts (*Ant.* 18.19; *Good Person* 76; *Hypothetica* 11.6, 8-9). They do not swear oaths (*J.W.* 2.135; *Good Person* 84). They do not change clothes (*J.W.* 2.126; *Hypothetica* 11.12). And they do not own slaves (*Ant.* 18.21; *Good Person* 79).

Josephus includes additional details of the Essenes that are not mentioned by Philo. They elect stewards (*J.W.* 2.123; *Ant.* 18.22) and believe in the immortality of the soul (*J.W.* 2.154-58; *Ant.* 18.18). Josephus includes details in *The Wars of the Jews* that are not found in the *Antiquities of the Jews*. They believe oil is a defilement (*J.W.* 2.123). They pray before sunrise

²³ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 170-71.

²⁴ Josephus includes an account of an Essene order that permits marriage for the purpose of posterity (*J.W.* 2.160).

(*J.W.* 2.128). Josephus includes their daily work schedule (*J.W.* 2.128-32). They bathe before eating and if touched by an outsider (*J.W.* 2.129, 150). They speak in turn (*J.W.* 2.132). They study medicines and the writings of the ancients (*J.W.* 2.136). He provides their regulations for admission and expulsion from the order (*J.W.* 2.137-44). They preserve the names of angels (*J.W.* 2.142). They do not spit in company or to the right (*J.W.* 2.147). They practice strict observance of the Sabbath (*J.W.* 2.147). They foretell the future (*J.W.* 2.159). Josephus mentions an Essene order that permits marriage (*J.W.* 2.160).

Table 22. Essene Accounts in Josephus and Philo

Account	<i>J.W.</i>	<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Good Person</i>	<i>Hypothetica</i>
Number 4,000		18.20	75	
Live in multiple locations	2.124		76	11.1
No wives or women	2.120-21	18.21		11.14-17
Community goods	2.122	18.20	85-86	11.4-5
Agriculture and crafts		18.19	76	11.6, 8-9
No oaths	2.135		84	
No changing of clothes	2.126			11.12
No slaves		18.21	79	
Election of stewards	2.123	18.22		
Immortality of the soul	2.154-58	18.18		
Oil defilement	2.123			
Morning prayer	2.128			
Daily work schedule	2.128-32			
Bathe before eating	2.129			
Bathe if touched by outsider	2.150			
Speak in turn	2.132			
Study writings of the ancients	2.136			
Study medicine	2.136			
Regulations for admission	2.137-42			
Regulations for expulsion	2.143-44			
Preservation of angels' names	2.142			
No spitting	2.147			
Sabbath observance	2.147			
Foretell the future	2.159			
Essene order that permits marriage	2.160			

It is believed that the Essenes emerged sometime in the second century B.C. This may have been in response to the replacement of the older high-priest group with the new Hasmonean priest-kings.²⁵ The Essenes believed “that fate governs all things, and that nothing befalls men but what is according to its determination” (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.172). They are Jews by birth who despise riches and reject pleasure as evil (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.119-20, 122).

It is a widely held view that they are associated with the authorship of the Dead Sea Scrolls.²⁶ There are several points in common between the accounts provided by Josephus and Philo and the practices described in the Community Rule and Damascus Document.²⁷ All agree that property was held in common. All new members were to turn over their personal property to the community on attaining full membership (1QS 1.11-12; 5.1-22; 6.16-23).²⁸ They bathed prior to the communal meals (CD 10.10-13; *IQS* 3.4-5; 5.13-14; 6.2, 25; 7.2-3). They sat in a particular order and spoke in turn (1QS 6.8-13). They were not permitted to spit (1QS 7.13). A probation period was required for membership (1QS 6.13-23).²⁹ They followed strict Sabbath observance (CD 10,14 – 11.18).

²⁵ N.T. Wright, 204.

²⁶ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 59.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁸ The Damascus Document may be interpreted to permit some private ownership (CD 9.10-16; 14.12-16). Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 187.

²⁹ Josephus describes a three-stage probationary process (*J.W.* 2.147). The *Community Rule* describes a two-stage process.

Pliny the Elders description of the Essene includes the Qumran location where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered.³⁰ If the Essene are associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran location, the population estimate provided by Josephus and Philo support that the Qumran location was not the totality of their movement. Archeological evidence suggests that the location could only accommodate two hundred bodies.³¹ If this was the case, members of the Essene sect lived in multiple locations to include Qumran.

Sadducees

There is little information on the Sadducees. None of their original writing or thought has been preserved.³² They are mentioned in the New Testament, Josephus' writings, and in scattered references in rabbinic literature.³³ All of which are generally hostile towards the Sadducees.³⁴ Although Josephus does not provide a number, he describes the Sadducees as "few" (*Ant.* 18.17).

The Sadducees reject the traditions of the elders and only accept written scripture.³⁵ Although they appear in the Hebrew Bible, they did not believe in resurrection or in angels.

³⁰ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 170.

³¹ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 60. The burial excavations conducted at the Qumran cemetery revealed the skeletal remains of women and children. However, there were few and found on the outskirts and not in the main area of the cemetery. Arguments have been made that the women and children were visitors who died on site or that the women worked at the site, but were not part of the community. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 188.

³² Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 138.

³³ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 57.

³⁴ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 138.

³⁵ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 57-58.

Grabbe suggests that they may have rejected traditional interpretations of an elaborate angelology or speculations around the eschaton.³⁶ Unlike the Pharisees and the Essenes, the Sadducees reject all concept of fate. According to Josephus, they “suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil: and they say, that the act of what is good, or what is evil, is at men’s own choice” (*J.W.* 2.164-65). Further, they “take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul” (*J.W.* 2.165). The Sadducees do not belief in rewards or punishments in an afterlife. They believe the soul dies when the body dies.³⁷

The Sadducees had only the trust of the wealthy. The populace did not respect them as they did the Pharisees.³⁸ “When they become magistrates...they addict themselves to the notions of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise bear them” (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.17).

The earliest reference to the Sadducees is as political rivals with the Pharisees. They exist as a political entity until after the fall of Jerusalem.³⁹ From what little information provided, they appear to be associated with the priestly establishment. The name Sadducees is believed to be derived from Zadok, the name of the alter priests. Their rejection of an afterlife is consistent with the conservatism of the priesthood. Restricting themselves to the written law is another priestly characteristic. Their method of determining Pentecost is the most natural from the biblical text and coincides with the Samaritans’ method. They are concerned mainly with rituals associated

³⁶ Ibid., 58.

³⁷ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 139.

³⁸ Ibid., 139-40.

³⁹ Ibid., 142-43.

with the temple. The New Testament reveals them as the high priestly party and the majority within the Sanhedrin (Acts 5). This is consistent with Josephus statement that the Sadducees identified with the upper socioeconomic class.⁴⁰ Josephus identifies the high priest Ananus as a member of the Sadducees (*Ant.* 20.199).

The Fourth Philosophy

Josephus writes of a fourth school of philosophy that emerged in response to the Roman census in 6 B.C. The Fourth Philosophy was founded by Judas the Galilean and with the aid of the Pharisee Saddok. “Both said that this taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery, and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty” (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.1.4). The Fourth Philosophy understood God alone to be their leader and master and had an unquenchable passion for liberty (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.1.1-6).⁴¹ Beyond their desire to remove the Romans, they shared a similar viewpoint as the Pharisees.⁴²

Judas’ son Manahem sacked Herod’s armory in Masada and armed his people and a band of robbers. He returned to Jerusalem as a king and led the sedition. His killing of the High Priest Ananias and his insupportable tyranny caused Eleazar to rise up against him. Several in Manahem’s group were slain. Those who survived fled to Masada. Manahem was captured and tortured before being killed (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.17.8-9).⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Grabbe. *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 72-73.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Josephus believes that the Fourth Philosophy gave rise to the Sicarii in the A.D. 40s. They were named after the dagger they concealed in their clothing. The Sicarii would draw close to their target, strike quickly, and slip

Zealots

Josephus writes that “the captains of these troops of robbers...got all together from all parts, and became a band of wickedness, and all together crept into Jerusalem” (*J.W.* 4.3.3). The origins of the Zealots are unknown. They are believed to be a coalition of resistance groups who withdrew to Jerusalem in A.D. 68. However, there may be evidence of their existence as early as late A.D. 66 or early A.D. 67 (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.22.1).⁴⁴ The Zealots are not to be confused with the Fourth Philosophy/Sicarii. The Zealots fought during the final siege of Jerusalem, with most perishing during the battle. Unlike, the Fourth Philosophy/Sicarii who had long fled the city for Masada.⁴⁵ The Zealots revolutionary fervor may have been fed by the national mythology of their free and autonomous past and by the previous success enjoyed by Judas Maccabeus. They believed since they were free before, they could be free again.⁴⁶

back into the crowd. They killed or kidnapped high ranking Jewish officials who collaborated with the Romans. The Sicarii ultimately abandoned Jerusalem and retreated to Masada prior to its destruction at the hands of the Romans. After the fall of Jerusalem, the Romans defeated the Sicarii in Masada. Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 72-74.

⁴⁴ The term “zealot” may be used as a generic term for anyone who displays the same zeal for God as Phinehas (Num 25). This term was often associated with revolutionary groups. From Josephus’ writing, his use of the term “zealot” is in reference to a particular group who had taken this name. This is further demonstrated in his description of the state of Jerusalem in the opening of Book Five (*J.W.* 5.1.1) where there is infighting among several Jewish groups. His reference to the Zealots as one of the groups does not permit its application to all the groups. Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 75.

⁴⁵ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, 76.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

Samaritans

The Samaritans identify themselves as Israelites who have faithfully preserved the ancestral religion of Moses.⁴⁷ However, they should not be categorized as a Jewish sect. The term Jew refers to Israelites who originated from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi that were exiled to Babylon. The term Israel refers to the united monarchy or the northern tribes.⁴⁸ The Samaritans claimed to be the descendants of the tribes of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh). They worship Yahweh and observe the Torah. The Samaritans differ from the Jews in that their cultic center is Mount Gerizim and not Jerusalem.⁴⁹ The apostle John makes the distinction between the two groups when he states that the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans (John 4:9).

The replacement of the northern tribes with foreign transplants is a Jewish polemic (c.f. 2 Kgs 17:6, 24-41) and not a historical reality. According to Assyrian records, only a small portion of the upper-class people were deported while the majority of the people remained in the land.⁵⁰ The post-exilic Samaritans were primarily a remnant of the Israelites and other indigenous people who remained in the land after the Assyrian conquests during the eighth century B.C. The majority of the people remained in Ephraim and Manasseh.⁵¹ There is epigraphic and

⁴⁷ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 195.

⁴⁸ Staples, 60.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 58-59.

⁵⁰ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 202.

⁵¹ Staples, 61-63.

iconographic evidence of Yahwism dating from the ninth century through the fifth century B.C. that demonstrates the continuation of an earlier Israelite legacy.⁵²

The Samaritan identification as Israelites is further demonstrated with the existence of the Delos inscriptions from the first half of the second century B.C.⁵³ In addition, Josephus wrote of the controversy between the Jews and Samaritans in Egypt where they presented their case to Ptolemy VI Philometor (180-145 B.C.) on whether to send the temple tax to the temple in Jerusalem or the temple on Mount Gerizim (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.7-10; 13:74-79).⁵⁴ Both instances demonstrate a Samaritan identity in the diaspora prior to the second century B.C.⁵⁵ Further evidence of a separate Samaritan identity is revealed in the Elephantine memorandum TAD A4.5-10. After the destruction of the temple of Yehu on Elephantine in 410 B.C., Yedoniah writes to the governors of Jerusalem (Bigvai) and Samaria (Delaiah). The two governors respond in a joint letter which instruct the recipient to inform Arsames, the satrap of Egypt to rebuild the temple (TAD A4.9). This joint response suggests recognition and collaboration between Samaria and Jerusalem and an earlier acceptance of temples outside Jerusalem.⁵⁶

⁵² Ibid., 64.

⁵³ Magnar Kartvelt, *The Origin of the Samaritans* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2009), 353.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Bourgel, "The Samaritans during the Hasmonean Period: The Affirmation of a Discrete Identity?" *Religions* 10, no. 628 (2019), 1-21.

⁵⁵ Kartvelt, 353.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 353.

Ordinary Priests and People

The majority of the priests were not part of the aristocracy. They were not wealthy and depended upon the people's tithing practices. They lived away from Jerusalem and only traveled to the city when it was their time to perform the regular rituals. Most often, they performed the function of teachers of the law. They were the group that people sought for judgment and arbitration during disputes and legal issues. They were considered the representatives of official Judaism as they studied Torah and served in the Temple.⁵⁷ According to Josephus, the priests numbered between eighteen and twenty thousand (18,000 – 20,000). Of these, fifteen hundred (1,500) received tithes (*Ag. Ap.* 2.108; 1.188).

In addition, most Jewish people did not belong to one of these three sects. Although the Pharisees enjoyed greater acceptance than the Sadducees and were respected as unofficial teachers, it is doubtful that people outside their sect observed their strict laws. Most observed the Jewish practices (i.e., Sabbath, circumcision, dietary laws), attended synagogue and participated in the regular feasts and fasts. Out of respect, they would carry out these duties in a Pharisaic fashion.⁵⁸

Emerging Messianic Expectations

Jewish messianism started to emerge in the mid-second century B.C. after the collapse of the Hasmonean dynasty. The resulting sociopolitical climate in Palestine triggered a reinterpretation of scriptural traditions that evolved into messianic expectations. After the death

⁵⁷ N.T. Wright, 209.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 213-14.

of Herod the Great in 4 B.C., several socio-religious movements emerged that expressed a growing expectation and hope for God's intervention.⁵⁹ Israel believed that they were still in exile. Their hope for national deliverance (restoration eschatology) is anchored in the Old Testament.⁶⁰

In the Old Testament, a messiah or "anointed one" was someone raised up, sent, or anointed for a particular task related to Israel's liberation from suffering. Anointing was associated with three primary offices in ancient Israel: king, priest, and prophet. However, it was most commonly associated with a king. The term "anointed one" did not refer to an eschatological figure, with the possible exception of Daniel 9:24-27.⁶¹ Rather, it is used in connection with the continuing Davidic line in the history of Israel.⁶²

Though there is little evidence of such messianic expectation in the early fifth to late second century B.C., the Old Testament does provide a proto-messianic notion that the future of Israel is linked to the Davidic line (2 Sam 7:12-16).⁶³ Nathan's oracle reveals that God will provide David with a physical descendant who will build a house for His name. God will establish his kingdom forever, and there will be a filial relationship between him and God. The

⁵⁹ Michael Bird, *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 34.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 36-37.

⁶¹ Ibid., 26.

⁶² Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Company, 2007), 7, 11-13.

⁶³ Bird, 25, 27.

promise of an eternal Davidic house and kingdom establishes the covenant between God and David.⁶⁴ This covenant relationship is a prominent theme in the royal psalms and becomes the basis of hope for the future restoration of Israel (Ps 2; 72; 89; 132). It contains the base ingredients for messianic expectations: kingship, future hopes, and national restoration. The fusion of the royal ideology with eschatological hopes resulted in emerging messianic expectations.⁶⁵

This fusion of royal ideology with eschatological hopes is revealed in the writings of the prophets. Hosea writes that in the latter days, the northern tribe will repent and seek out David, their king (3:4-5). Micah states that the Davidic king will rise again from Bethlehem (5:1-2). Amos reveals that God will raise up the fallen booth of David (9:11). Isaiah writes of a child being born that will bring endless peace to the throne of David and his kingdom, who will uphold it with justice and righteousness (9:6-7). This shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse (Isa 11:1). That the Spirit of the Lord rests upon him reveals a special relationship with God (Isa 11:2; cf. 61:1). Jeremiah shares how God will raise up a righteous branch of David who will reign as king and act wisely (23:5). God's act of releasing the exiles from slavery will coincide with His raising of the Davidic king (Jer 30:8-9). Ezekiel reveals that God will make David the shepherd over His flock (Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25). From these prophetic passages, this proto-messianic notion centered on kingship.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 27-28.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 30.

Table 23. Old Testament Proto-Messianic Passages

Proto-Messianic Notion	Passage
Scepter	Gen 49:10
Star	Num 24:17
Davidic Covenant	2 Sam 7:12-16
Lord's Anointed	Ps 2
Shoot of Jesse	Isa 11:1-6
Suffering Servant	Isa 53
Branch of David	Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 6:12
Shepherd over God's flock	Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25
Son of Man	Dan 7:9, 13-14
Booth of David	Amos 9:11

Source: Michael Bird, *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 34-35.

However, the hopes for a messiah were not unanimous during the Second Temple period. Many viewed Rome as a viable option for the national direction for Israel as they would provide such advantages as imperial patronage and external security. Some preferred the Hellenized Herodians over the corrupt Hasmoneans (Josephus, *J.W.* 1.142-43). Eschatological hopes did not always require a messiah (2 Macc 2:18; 14:15; Tob 13:11-17; 14:4-7; Bar 2:27-35; 4:36-37; 5:5-9; Sir 36:11-17; Jub 23:27-31).⁶⁷ Others believed that Torah and messiah were two mutually exclusive options.⁶⁸ The messianic expectations during the Second Temple period were diverse. There was not a single and uniform description of the messianic task. How he accomplished his task, including the amount of divine assistance, was equally diverse among interpreters.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid., 25-26.

⁶⁸ Jacob Neusner, *Rabbinic Judaism: Structure and System* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 153-54.

⁶⁹ Bird, 38.

Messianic Expectations

Messianic expectations were diverse in form and content. Not everyone held to a single uniform hope for the coming Davidic king.⁷⁰ Expectations were projected upon them to align with known and celebrated concepts of liberation. The authors of *Psalm of Solomon* 17-18 and the *War Scroll* (1QM) understood the Messiah to be an earthly warrior. *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra* describe a preexistent and transcendent figure. The *Damascus Document* and other Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) believe there are two Messiahs. One is royal, while the other is priestly (1QS 9.11; CD 12.22-23; 13.20-22; 14:18-19; 19.34-20.1; CD-B 1.10-11; 2.1; 1QSa 2.17-22).⁷¹

Several titles are used to refer to the Messiah. He is the “Messiah of Israel” (1QSa 2.12, 14, 20), the “Messiah of Righteousness” (4Q252 frag. 1 5.3-4), the “Lord’s Messiah” (Pss. Sol. 117.32; cf. 18.7), the “Lord of the Spirits and His Messiah” (1 En. 48.10), “My Son the Messiah” (4 Ezra 7.28), and the “Messiah of Aaron and Israel” (CD 12.23-13.1; 14.19; 19.10-11; 20.1; 1QS 9.11). Other times he is referenced without the title messiah. He is the “Son of Man” (Dan 7:13-14; 1 En. 46.1-5; 48.2; 62.1-15; 63.111; 69.27-29; 71.14-17; 4 Ezra 13.1-13, 25-16), the “Branch of David” (4Q161 frgs. 8-10.15, 22; 4Q252 5.3; 4Q285 frag. 5.3-4; T. Jud. 24.4-6), the “Scepter” (1QSa 5.27-28; 4Q161 frgs. 2-4 2.9-13; frgs. 5-6 3.17; frgs 8-10, 22-26; 4Q252 5.2), the “Star” (T. Levi 18.3; T. Jud. 24.1; Sib. Or. 5.158-60), the “Son of God” (4Q246 1.9; 2.1), the “Chosen One” (1 En. 39.6; 40.5; 45.3; 48.6; 49.2, 4; 51.3, 5; 52.6, 9), the “Righteous One” (1 En. 38.2; 53.6), the “Rod” (CD 7.19-20), the “Prince” (Ezek 34:24; 37:25; Dan 9:25-26; CD

⁷⁰ Ibid., 26.

⁷¹ Ibid.

7.20; 1QSb 5.20; 1QM 3.16; 5.1; 4Q285 frgs. 4-6; Jub. 31.18; Sib. Or. 3.49-50), and the “King” (Sib. Or. 3.286-87, 652).

Although there are divergent views of the Messiah, Collins attempts to provide a definition. The messianic figure is an agent of God during the end days. Although not always called messiah, he is anointed.⁷² Boda ascribes the following attributes to the Messiah:⁷³

Table 24. Second Temple Period Messianic Attributes

He is regal and priestly
He acts as a royal arbiter between the people and God
He reigns over Israel
He defeats Israel’s enemies
He represents Israel before God

Source: Mark J. Boda. “Figuring the Future: The Prophet and Messiah.” in *The Messiah in the Old and New*, 36-43.

Wright attempts to provide a similar definition. He believes the primary task of the Messiah is the liberation of Israel and its reinstatement as the people of God. This requires military action and action related to the cleansing and/or rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple.⁷⁴

Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

The messianic expectation found within the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha are limited to a handful of texts. The notion of a messiah is contained to the *Psalms of Solomon* (17; 18), *1 Enoch* (37-71), *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.⁷⁵

⁷² John J. Collins, “‘He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See’: Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 2, no. 2 (Jun 1995), 145-64.

⁷³ Mark J. Boda, “Figuring the Future: The Prophet and Messiah,” in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 36-43.

⁷⁴ N. T. Wright, 320.

⁷⁵ Michael A. Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 2, no. 2 (Jun 1995), 165-84.

Although the messianic expectations are diverse across these texts, a common theme exists. The Messiah is to be the Davidic king to bring about Israel's restoration.

Psalms of Solomon (first century B.C.)

The *Psalms of Solomon* contain the first known reference and is a primary source for the Davidic messianic expectations.⁷⁶ They preserve one of the most detailed messianic expectations in the pre-Christian period. The *Psalms* contain more information about messianic expectations and the ideas surrounding the Messiah than any other Jewish writing from this time.⁷⁷ Written during the first century B.C., the *Psalms* are believed to be the reaction of a community of pious Jews to the Roman invasion and capture of Jerusalem in 63 B.C. The pious community is traditionally understood to be Pharisees or have a Pharisaic influence.⁷⁸ Further, the influence of Deuteronomistic theology is evident in that the success and failures of Israel are the results of the people's faithfulness or disobedience.⁷⁹ They strongly opposed Jewish sinners, including members of the Hasmonean dynasty and Jews who usurped the monarchy and desecrated the

⁷⁶ Frantisek Abel, *The Psalms of Solomon and the Messianic Ethics of Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 28; Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," 166; Bird, 15; Collins, 148.

⁷⁷ Abel, 57.

⁷⁸ Collins, 149; Abel, 31; Some scholars believe the *Psalms of Solomon* were written as a response to the invasion of Jerusalem by Herod the Great and the Roman general Sosius in 37 B.C. Abel, 31. The absence of copies of the *Psalms of Solomon* among the Dead Sea Scrolls argues against the notion that the Essenes were the pious community. Abel, 31.

⁷⁹ Abel, 58.

Temple.⁸⁰ It is believed that the *Psalms* were read within the synagogues during this time period.⁸¹

As expressed in Psalm 17, the pious place their trust in the Mosaic (17.1) and the Davidic covenants (17.4; cf. 1 Sam 24:21; 2 Sam 7:12). Israel suffers as a result of its disobedience (17.5-20). God will execute His redemptive plan through the appointed Davidic Messiah (17.21-46).⁸² The Lord Messiah is the leader of the pious against invaders, foreign influence, and corrupt state and Temple officials. The corrupt officials belonged to the Hasmonean dynasty. He will establish the Jewish theocracy to which the nations will serve.⁸³ His primary function is to purify the people (17.26) and Jerusalem (17.30) through the removal of the gentile sinners (Pss. Sol. 2.2) and the unrighteous rulers (17.22). The concern for ritual and moral purity from sin is rooted in Leviticus (18; 26) and Deuteronomy (28; 32).⁸⁴

The role of the Messiah is for the eschatological restoration of the nation of Israel. The messianic kingdom of the last days will resolve the failures of Israel. He purifies the saints in preparation for the Day of the Lord. Salvation is guaranteed for the righteous and devout (18.5). A universal soteriological feature is expressed through the hope of all nations. The messianic

⁸⁰ Collins, 149; Abel, 32.

⁸¹ Abel, 41.

⁸² Ibid., 55.

⁸³ Ibid., 32.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 56.

activity does not omit those who demonstrate humility before God (17.32, 34).⁸⁵ Bird ascribes the following attributes to the Messiah.

Table 25. Messianic Attributes in the Psalms of Solomon

Attribute	Passage
He is of the Davidic line and will establish the throne of David	17.23
He will appear on the appointed day	18.6
He will remove gentiles from Jerusalem	17.25
He will destroy the unrighteous rulers and the unlawful nations	17.24, 27
He will condemn the Jews who live as gentiles	17.26
He gathers the diaspora Jews and distributes the land	17.28, 30
He judges the twelve tribes of Israel	17.28
He inaugurates a period of holiness and covenant righteousness	18.7-10
He purifies the people	18.6
He is compassionate, sinless, blessed, wise, and full of the Holy Spirit	17.40-43
He is divinely strengthened to rule over Israel	17.42

Source: Michael Bird. *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 15.

These Davidic messianic expectations draw from the Old Testament. The appeal to raise up the son of David (17.23) is rooted in the promise of an eternal Davidic king (2 Sam 7:12-16). In addition, the *Psalms* draw heavily from Isaiah 11, the royal psalms, and other Old Testament passages.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Ibid., 56-58.

⁸⁶ Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," 167.

Table 26. Psalms of Solomon Parallels

Text	Passage	Parallel
Raise up the son of David	17.23	1 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 72:1-2
Gird him with strength to destroy his enemies	17:24	Ps 18:40
He will strike with a rod of iron	17:26	Ps 2:9
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth	17.26-27	Isa 11:4
Anyone who knows wickedness will not live with them	17.29	Ps 101:7
He will judge with righteousness	17.31	Isa 11:3-4; Ps 72:1-2
Nations will come from the ends of the earth to see his glory	17.34	Ps 72:9-11; Isa 49:22-23; 66:18-20
Nor will he multiply for himself gold and silver	17:37	Deut 17:17
Nor will he gather confidence from a multitude	17:37	Ps 44:7
The Lord Himself is his King, the hope of the strong	17:38	Ps 44:5
He will be free from sin	17.41	Isa 11:5
Shepherding the flock of God	17:45	Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:23

Source: Michael A. Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls." *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Jun 1995, 2(2), 165-184.

1 Enoch (first century A.D.)

The apocalypses *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, and *2 Baruch* portray the messianic figure as a heavenly being rather than the earthly being portrayed in the *Psalms of Solomon*.⁸⁷ Both *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra* assign a divine status to the messianic figure. Additionally, they describe the messianic figure as preexistent. A state which God keeps hidden until the time for the Messiah to act.⁸⁸ The two apocalypses share common interpretations of Daniel 7 that underlie both texts.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Bird, 42.

⁸⁸ Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," 170-71; Vanderkam argues that the hidden state of the messianic figure does not provide evidence for preexistence. Rather, it is a pre-mundane election and concealment of his identity. James Vanderkam, "Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, and Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37-71," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*. ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 169-91. However, Collins refutes this argument. He believes that the messianic figure being hidden before God prior to the creation of the world suggests more than a pre-mundane election. Rather, it confirms his preexistence. This is further supported by Proverbs 8:23-26 which shares of the preexistence of the figure of wisdom. John Collins, "The Son of Man in First Century Judaism," *New Testament Studies* 38, no. 3 (1992), 448-66.

⁸⁹ Collins, "Son of Man in First Century Judaism," 464-66; Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," 170.

In *1 Enoch*, The son of man sits on the throne of God (45.3; 51.3; 55.4; 61.8; 62.2, 18; 69.27, 29), where he judges the wicked (46.4-6; 49.4; 69.26-29) and is worshipped by kings (62.9) and the people (48.5).⁹⁰ He is referred by the following titles: “righteous one” (38.2), “chosen one” (39.6; 40.5; 45.3-4), “son of man” (46.1-6; 48.1-10), and “messiah” (48.10; 52.4).⁹¹

Table 27. Messianic Attributes in 1 Enoch

Attribute	Passage
Sits on the throne of God	45.3; 51.3; 55.4; 61.8; 62.2, 18; 69.27, 29
Judges the wicked	46.4-6; 49.4; 69.26-29
Worshipped by kings and the people	62.9; 48.5

Source: Michael A. Knibb. “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls.” *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Jun 1995, 2(2), 170-71.

1 Enoch draws from Danielic and Isaianic themes. The messianic figure emulates the functions of Isaiah’s Servant (42, 49, 53) and Daniel’s Son of Man (7:9, 13-14). He is eschatological and a representative of Israel.⁹²

Table 28. 1 Enoch Parallels

Text	Passage	Parallel
His anointed	48.10	Ps 2
Suffering Servant	37-70	Isa 42, 49, 53
Son of Man	37-70	Dan 7:9, 13-14

Source: Michael Bird. *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009, 34-35.

⁹⁰ Bird, 42; Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” 170-71.

⁹¹ Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” 172.

⁹² Bird, 42.

4 Ezra (first century A.D.)

4 *Ezra* draws from both the Davidic covenant and Danielic themes. The fifth vision's messianic figure is from the seed of David (12.32). He is the lion that will judge and destroy the eagle, which symbolizes the Roman Empire (12.31).⁹³ God has kept him hidden until the end of days when he will sit upon the throne of God (12.32). He will come and speak with the eagle, denouncing their ungodliness and wickedness. He will show them their contemptuous dealings (12.32). He will bring them alive before his seat of judgment. After being reproved, they will be destroyed (12.33).⁹⁴

The sixth vision includes elements from Daniel (2, 7). It describes how a figure of a man will come out of the sea and flies on the clouds of heaven (13.3; cf. Dan 7:13). He carves out for himself a great mountain (13.6; cf. Dan 2:35). He battles all those who gathered against him using fire, flaming breath, and sparks from his mouth (13.8-12). The nations will come before him and return the Jewish exiles (13.13).⁹⁵ The messianic figure is referred to as "messiah" (7.28-29; 12.32), "My Son" (7.28-29; 13.32, 37, 52; cf. Ps 2:2, 7), and "he whom the Most High has been keeping for many ages, who will himself deliver his creation" (13.26).⁹⁶

⁹³ Judah is portrayed as a lion in Genesis 49:9. Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity: Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013), 361-71.

⁹⁴ Bird, 42.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," 172.

Table 29. Messianic Attributes in 4 Ezra

Attribute	Passage
Fifth Vision	
He is from the seed of David	12.32
He is the lion (Messiah) that will destroy the eagle (Roman Empire)	12.31
He is hidden until the end days	12.32
He will sit on the throne of God	12.32
He will denounce the eagle's ungodliness and wickedness	12.32
He will show them their contemptuous dealings	12.32
He will reprove and destroy them	12.33
Sixth Vision	
He will come out of the sea and fly upon the clouds of heaven	13.3
He will carve out a great mountain	13.6
He will battle those who gather against him	13.8-12
Nations will come before him and return the Jewish exiles	13.13

Source: Michael Bird. *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 42.

Table 30. 4 Ezra Parallels

Text	Passage	Parallel
Davidic Covenant	12.32	2 Sam 7:12-16
Lord's Anointed	13.32, 37, 52	Dan 7:9, 13-14

Source: Michael Bird. *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 34-35.

2 Baruch (first century A.D.)

The *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch* or *2 Baruch* was written after the fall of the Jerusalem Temple in A.D. 70. Its portrayal of the Messiah is similar to that of *4 Ezra*. The multitude of hosts being taken up to Mount Zion, convicted of their impieties, shown their works, and put to death (40.1-2; cf. 4 Ezra 12.32-33) reveals a clear dependency upon *4 Ezra*. However, *2 Baruch* is more muted and less developed.⁹⁷ God reveals the Messiah (29.3). He defeats the kingdoms

⁹⁷ Ibid., 180-81.

that oppose God's people (39.7; 40.1-2; 72.1-6; 82.2-9). He inaugurates the resurrection of the dead (30.1). He delivers people from catastrophic situations (70.9).⁹⁸

Table 31. Messianic Attributes in 2 Baruch

Attribute	Passage
He is revealed by God	29.3
He defeats the kingdoms opposed to God's people	39.7; 40.1-2; 72.1-6; 82.2-9
He inaugurates the resurrection of the dead	30.1-2
He delivers people from catastrophes	70.9

Source: Michael Bird. *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 43.

Table 32. 2 Baruch Parallels

Text	Passage	Parallel
Lord's Anointed	29.3; 30.1; 39.7; 40.1; 70.9; 72.2	Ps 2

Source: Michael Bird. *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 34-35.

Although the messianic attributes vary between *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, they share four common attributes. The Messiah is a preexisting and transcendent figure. He establishes the messianic kingdom. He defeats God's enemies. He delivers God's people at the time of judgment.⁹⁹

Table 33. Common Attributes between 4 Ezra & 2 Baruch

Attribute
He is a preexistent and transcendent figure endowed with supernatural power
He establishes a messianic kingdom
He comes to deliver God's people at a time of judgment
He defends and restores the nation against their enemies

Source: Michael Bird. *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 43.

⁹⁸ Bird, 43.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (first century A.D.)

Although considered the work of Christians in its present form, the parallels it shares with the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q540 and 541) reveal that it draws from an earlier Aramaic source.¹⁰⁰ The *Testament of Levi* shares of a priestly Messiah. He is the star from Jacob (18.3; cf. Num 24:17). The Spirit of understanding will rest on him (18.7; cf. Isa 11:2). The *Testament of Judah* states that a star will arise from Jacob (24.1; cf. Num 24:17) and the scepter of his kingdom will shine forth (24.5; cf. Gen 49:10; Num 24:17). A stem will rise from the root and a rod of righteousness will grow from it (24.6; cf. Isa 11:1-6). The *Testament of Levi* envisioned an eschatological priest while the *Testament of Judah* predicted the arrival of an eschatological king.¹⁰¹

Table 34. Testament of Levi Parallels

Text	Passage	Parallel
Star from Jacob	18.3	Num 24:17
Spirit of Understanding will rest on Him	18.7	Isa 11:2

Table 35. Testament of Judah Parallels

Text	Passage	Parallel
Star from Jacob	24.1	Num 24:17
Scepter	24.5	Gen 49:10; Num 24:17
Root and the Rod	24.6	Isa 11:1-6

¹⁰⁰ Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," 181.

¹⁰¹ John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 105.

Dead Sea Scrolls

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has provided further evidence of messianic expectations during the Second Temple period. Although this discovery is often associated with the caves in Qumran, the first Scroll was discovered in an ancient synagogue genizah in Cairo, Egypt.¹⁰² In addition, they have provided valuable insight into the interpretation of the previously known apocryphal and pseudepigraphical texts.¹⁰³ The DSS are attributed to a Jewish sect, most often identified with the Essenes.¹⁰⁴ They were written between the third and early first century B.C.¹⁰⁵

In the time period between the Maccabees and Pompey (167 – 63 B.C.), there was a revival in messianic hope. This may have been triggered by the Hasmoneans establishing a

¹⁰² Collin, “‘He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See’: Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 126. Genizah is defined as any place that worn or defective sacred texts may be hidden away or buried. Its purpose was to prevent the physical destruction of any item that bore God’s name. This included writings, building materials, and utensils. Rebecca J. W. Jefferson, *The Cairo Genizah and the Age of Discovery in Egypt; the History and Provenance of a Jewish Archive* (London, UK; New York, NY; Dublin, Ireland: I. B. Tauris, 2022), 9.

¹⁰³ Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” 166.

¹⁰⁴ Norman Golb advocates the “Jerusalem hypothesis” that argues that the scrolls originated from various libraries in Jerusalem. The Qumran inhabitants merely supplied the pots to store the scrolls. Golb supports this argument by the numerous scribal hands which is greater than what would be expected from a small settlement. Collins refutes this by arguing that the scrolls provide evidence that the Qumran community existed in multiple locations. Collins further argues that some scrolls are older than the Qumran settlement and are the combined libraries of Essene communities that were transported to this location during a time of crisis. Lawrence Schiffman argues that the scrolls originated from the Sadducees as the halakhic positions contained in 4QMTT “Some of the Works of the Law” agree with this sect. John J. Collins, *The Dead Sea Scrolls; A Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 27-29, 165, 178. Florentino Garcia Martinez’s “Groningen hypothesis” argues that the Qumran community split-off from the parent Essene sect. This split may have resulted over the teachings of the Teacher of Righteousness. Those loyal to the Teacher established the Qumran sect. Gwynned De-Looijer and Maria Antonia, “The Qumran Paradigm: A Critical Evaluation of Some Foundational Hypotheses in the Construction of the ‘Qumran Sect’” (Durham theses, Durham University, 2013), 6-8.

¹⁰⁵ Collins, “‘He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See’: Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 146-47.

Jewish monarchy without Davidic descent and their combining of political rule with the High Priesthood. Because of this, many Jews viewed the Hasmoneans as illegitimate.¹⁰⁶ The *Psalms of Solomon* emphasize the Davidic line, whereas the Scrolls place greater emphasis on the separation of the offices of the king and the priest.¹⁰⁷ For example, the *Testimonia* (4Q175) quotes from the books of Exodus (20:21), Numbers (24:15-17), and Deuteronomy (5:28-29; 18:18-19; 33:8-11) to provide the biblical basis for three distinct figures: king, priest, and prophet.¹⁰⁸

Of the eight hundred and sixty-seven (867) scrolls recovered from Qumran, only six to eight explicitly mention an anointed being who is understood to be the eschatological Messiah. These include the *Damascus Document* (CD), the *Rule of the Community* (1QS), the *Rule of the Congregation* (1QSa), the *Pesher on Genesis* (4Q252), the *Narratives* (4Q458), the *Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521), and possibly the *Non-canonical Psalms* (4Q381), and the *Paraphrase of Kings* (4Q382). The *Rule of Blessing* (1QSB), the *War Scroll* (1QM), the *Pesher Isaiah* (4Q161), the *Testimonia* (4Q175), and the *Tohorot* (4Q276) are to be included in this list as they provide a messianic exegesis of biblical texts (Numbers 24:17, Genesis 49:10, and 2 Samuel 7:12-16).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Very little support for the Hasmonean dynasty may be found in the contents of the scrolls. 4Q448, known as the “Prayer to King Jonathan” may have been written in support of Alexander Jannaeus at the time he was at war with the Pharisees (rivals of the Qumran sect). Collins, *The Dead Sea Scrolls; A Biography*, 178.

¹⁰⁷ Collins, “‘He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See’: Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 149-50.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁰⁹ Bird, 40.

Although messianism does not comprise the majority of the scrolls, it does have a prominent position in the future hopes of the sect.¹¹⁰

The distinction between the king, prophet, and priest in the *Testimonia* (4Q175) lays the foundation for the notion of two messiahs found within the Scrolls.¹¹¹ The *Rule of the Community* (1QS 9.11) writes of the coming of the prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel. The *Damascus Document* (CD 12.23-13.1; 14.18-19; 19.10-11; 20.1) makes several references to these two messiahs, implying that there are two figures.¹¹² In addition, the *Damascus Document* cites Balaam's oracle of the star and the scepter (Num 24:17). The star is the "Interpreter of the Law" (priestly messiah), and the scepter is the "Prince of the Congregation" (royal messiah). Again, the text implies two figures.¹¹³ The royal Messiah of Israel linked with the priestly Messiah of Aaron is commonly found in the messianic expectations.¹¹⁴ The bifurcation of authority may be a reaction to the combination of the two offices by the Hasmonean dynasty.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 41.

¹¹¹ Collins, "'He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See': Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 150.

¹¹² The singular use of the word "messiah" in the *Damascus Document* has been the basis for the argument of a single messianic figure. However, the plural "messiahs" clearly used in the *Rule of the Community* (1QS 9) has firmly established the two-messiah theory within the Dead Sea Scrolls. Martin Abegg, "The Messiah at Qumran: Are We Seeing Double?" *Dead Sea Discoveries* 2, no. 2 (Jun 1995), 125-44; The *Rule of the Community* (1QS 9) contains the only passage to write unambiguously of the two messiahs. Collins, "'He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See': Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 147.

¹¹³ Collins, "'He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See': Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 154.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 156.

¹¹⁵ Collins, "'He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See': Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 158; Talmon makes a separate argument that the dual messianism reflects the political ideas of the early postexilic

Table 36. Dual Messianism in the Damascus Document and the Rule of the Community

Text	Passage
Until the Messiah of Aaron and Israel takes his stand	CD 12.23-13.1
Until the Messiah of Aaron and Israel takes his stand	CD 14.18-19
Will be delivered up to the sword when the Messiah of Aaron and Israel come	CD 19.10-11
Until the Messiah of Aaron and Israel come	CD 20.1
Doing so until there come the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel	1QS 9

Source: Martin Abegg. "The Messiah at Qumran: Are We Seeing Double?" *Dead Sea Discoveries*. Jun 1995, 2(2), 125-44, 127-28.

The *Temple Scroll* (11QT) provides a description of the ideal king. Rooted in Deuteronomy, the king's power is limited. He must be an Israelite (56.14-15), married to a Jewish woman (57.16), remain monogamous (56.18), be a follower of the Law (56.20), and not pervert judgment (57.20). In terms of judgment, he is guided by a council of twelve princes, twelve priests, and twelve Levites (57.12-13). He is subject to priestly authority. Before engaging in warfare, he must first consult with the High Priest (58.18).¹¹⁶ The description is not eschatological and does not present itself as the fulfillment of any messianic prophecy.¹¹⁷

The king's primary role is to be a military leader and a judge. This role is evident in the blessing of the Prince of the Congregation in the *Rule of the Blessing* (1QSb): "May he establish the kingdom of His people forever, may he judge the poor with righteousness, may he dispense justice with equality, and may he walk perfectly before Him in all the ways of truth." The text demonstrates a heavy dependency on Isaiah 11: "May you smite the peoples with the might of

period when Zerubbabel ruled alongside the High Priest Joshua. Shemaryahu Talmon, "Waiting for the Messiah at Qumran," in *The World of Qumran from Within: Collected Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989), 290-93.

¹¹⁶ Collins, "'He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See': Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 152-53.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 153.

your hand and ravage the earth with your scepter” (11:4), “may righteousness be your girdle and may your reins be girded with faithfulness” (11:5).¹¹⁸

The Dead Sea Scrolls share the expectation of a Davidic messiah. Although they do not use the title “son of David,” they make use of the comparable title “branch of David.”¹¹⁹ The *Pesher on Genesis* (4Q252 5:1-7) refers to “the messiah of righteousness, the branch of David” in its interpretation of Genesis 49:10.¹²⁰ Similarly, the *Sefer ha-Milhamah* (4Q285 5) refers to the “prince of the congregation, the branch of David” in its interpretation of Isaiah 10:34-11:1.¹²¹ A parallel to the *Sefer ha-Milhamah* (4Q285 5) may be found in the *Pesher Isaiah* (4Q161 3.11-25).¹²² Here, the “branch of David” is associated with the final battle.¹²³

The *Psalms of Solomon*’s depiction of the Davidic messiah as a military leader is consistent with his depiction in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the *Psalms*, he drives the enemy from Jerusalem and becomes the righteous ruler over the newly purified city. The *Pesher on Genesis* (4Q252) refers to him as the “messiah of righteousness” (5.3). The *Rule of Blessings* (1Q28b)

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 154.

¹¹⁹ Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” 167-68.

¹²⁰ *Dead Sea Scroll Study Edition*, ed. Florentino Garcia Martinez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Leiden; New York; Koln: Brill, 1997), 505.

¹²¹ Knibb, 167-68; *Dead Sea Scroll Study Edition*, 643; The biblical basis for the use of “prince of the congregation” as a Davidic messianic title is found in Ezekiel 34:24; 37:25. Knibb, 167-68.

¹²² Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” 167-68. Additional uses of the title “branch of David” are found in the *Florilegium* (4Q174 1:10-13) in its interpretation of 2 Samuel 7:11 and the *Damascus Document* (CD 7:18-21) in its interpretation of Numbers 24:17. Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” 168.

¹²³ Collins, “‘He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See’: Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 154; Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” 169; *Dead Sea Scroll Study Edition*, 315.

quotes Isaiah 11:4 in its description of his role as a righteous ruler (5:20-23). In addition, the *Pesher of Isaiah* (4Q161) provides a similar description of the Davidic messiah's role as a righteous ruler (3:21-22).¹²⁴ His role as a warrior is indicated in the *Pesher of Isaiah* (4Q161 3.21-22), the *Rule of Blessings* (1Q28b 5.24-29), the *Damascus Document* (CD 7.20-21), and in the *Sefer ha-Milhamah* (4Q285 5.4). The *Florilegium* (4Q174 1.13) refers to the "branch of David" as the savior of Israel.¹²⁵ The parallels between the *Psalms of Solomon*, the *Sefer ha-Milhamah* (4Q285), and the *Pesher of Isaiah* (4Q161) demonstrate the use of Isaiah 11:1-5 as the basis for these messianic expectations.¹²⁶

Table 37. Parallels between Dead Sea Scrolls, Psalms of Solomon, and Isaiah

Parallel	DSS	Pss Sol	Isaiah
Son / Branch of David	4Q252; 4Q285	17.23	Isa 11:1
Righteous Ruler	1Q28b; 4Q161; 4Q252	17.41	Isa 11:5
Warrior	CD; 1Q28b; 4Q161; 4Q174; 4Q285	17.226-27	Isa 11:4

Source: John J. Collins. "'He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See': Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *DSD* 2 (1995), 154; Michael A. Knibb. "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Jun 1995, 2(2), 169.

The role of the Messiah of Aaron (priestly messiah) revealed in the *Damascus Document* (CD) is to atone for the sin of the people through the offering of the prescribed sacrifices (14.19). However, the title "Interpreter of the Law" suggests that his role includes teacher. This may be based on the historical "Teacher of Righteousness," that was active at the start of the sect and is at times referred to as "the priest." They may have envisioned an eschatological High Priest

¹²⁴ Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," 169.

¹²⁵ Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," 169; *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 353.

¹²⁶ Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," 169.

modeled after the historical Teacher. The *Damascus Document* speaks of “one who will teach righteousness at the end of days” (6.11). This is likely a reference to the priestly messiah.¹²⁷ The Blessing of the Priests in the *Rule of Blessing* (1QSb) describes them as those whom God has chosen “to confirm his covenant forever and to inquire into all precepts in the midst of all His people, and instruct them as He commanded” (3:23-24). The blessing prays that God may make them “an eternal light to illumine the world with knowledge and to enlighten the face of the Congregation with wisdom” (4:27-28).¹²⁸ From the *Rule of the Congregation* (1QSa), it is made clear that the priest takes precedence over the Messiah of Israel at the common table. The *Rule of the Community* (1QS 6.3-4) reveals that he is the first to bless the food at the common table.¹²⁹

The messianic titles used in *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra* are not as commonly used in the Dead Sea Scrolls as those used in the *Psalms of Solomon*. However, there are two primary messianic texts where parallels have been discovered. The first is *11QMelchizedek* (11QMelch), which is a pesher on Leviticus 25:8-13, Deuteronomy 15:2, and Isaiah 61:1-3. It describes Melchizedek as the one who is to make atonement “for all the sons of God and for the men of the lot of Melchizedek” (2.5-8). He is to carry out the judgment of God (2.9-14). He is to free “those who

¹²⁷ Collins, “‘He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See’: Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 159-60; *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 559.

¹²⁸ Collins, “‘He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See’: Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 158-59. The *Apocryphon of Levi* (4Q451) further describes the priest. “He will atone for the children of his generation, and he will be sent to all the children of his people. His word is like a word of heaven, and his teaching conforms to the will of God. His eternal sun will shine, and his fire will blaze in all the corners of the earth. Then darkness will disappear from the earth and obscurity from the dry land.” Collins. “‘He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See’: Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 158-59.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 160-61.

establish the covenant, who turn aside from walking in the way of the people from the hand of Belial” (2.23-25). Although Melchizedek is not named the “messiah,” it is clear from the text that he is an exalted heavenly being.¹³⁰ His role and description are similar to the “son of man” described in *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra*. Both Melchizedek and the “son of man” are believed to be heavenly beings. Both are to carry out God’s judgment.¹³¹

The *Son of God* (4Q246) is the second messianic text to share parallels with *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra*. Collins argues that the author had the Danielic figure in mind and that the *Son of God* (4Q246) may be the oldest surviving reinterpretation of Daniel 7.¹³² The text follows a similar pattern and quotes from Daniel 7: “his kingdom will be an eternal kingdom” (2.5; cf. Dan 7:27)

¹³⁰ Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” 173; *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 495. Melchizedek is understood to be an angelic being. 1 Enoch 46:1 describes the son of man “like one of the holy angels.” Knibb, 173. He has been identified with the archangel Michael. J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 16; Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977), 144-45. Michael appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls as the opponent of Belial. 1QM describes his involvement in the war between the sons of light and the sons of darkness. He is described as the “Prince of Light” (13.10-11). This suggests that Melchizedek is an angelic opponent of Belial in the eschatological war on behalf of God’s people. 11QMelch describes a similar role. Eric Mason, *‘You Are a Priest Forever’: Second Temple Jewish Messianism and the Priestly Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (BRILL, 2008). Although Martinez originally understood the son of God to be an angelic being, he argues that it is more appropriate to think of him as a heavenly being. Florentino Garcia Martinez, “Messianische Erwartungen in den Qumranschriften,” *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie*, 8, (1994): 171-208. Although the author of 11QMelch ascribes a heavenly status to Melchizedek, he does not refer to him as an angel. Garcia Martinez argues that the author draws the identity of Melchizedek from biblical roots. Portraying him as both king and priest prevents the use of angelic language. The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal that Melchizedek has authority over humanity and other heavenly beings. Garcia Martinez defines him as messianic as his role in final judgment, the destruction of the armies of Belial, and salvation is consistent with the functions of messianic figures. Garcia Martinez, “Las tradiciones sobre Melquisedec en los manuscritos de Qumrán.” *Biblica* 81 (2000): 70-80.

¹³¹ Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” 173-74.

¹³² Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” 174-75; John J. Collins, “The Son of God Text from Qumran.” in *From Jesus to John: Essays on Jesus and New Testament Christology in Honor of Marinus de Jonge*. ed. Martinus C. De Boer (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1993), 71-81.

and “his rule will be an eternal rule” (2.9; cf. Dan 7:14).¹³³ Similar to *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra*, the messianic figure is endowed with characteristics attributed to the Davidic messiah.¹³⁴ He is referred to as the “son of God” and the “son of the Most High.”¹³⁵ Much as *11QMelchizedek* (11QMelch), *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra*, this figure is regarded as a heavenly being.¹³⁶ His role is to judge the earth in righteousness.¹³⁷

Table 38. Parallels between 11QMelchizedek, Son of God, 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and Daniel

Parallel	11QMelch	4Q246	1 Enoch	4 Ezra	Daniel
Son of Man	2.4-10	2.1	37-70	13.32, 37, 52	7:9, 13
Eschatological Judge	2.9-14	2.5-6	46.4-6	12.32-33	7:14

Source: Michael A. Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Jun 1995, 2(2), 174-76; *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*. ed. Florentino Garcia Martinez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Leiden; New York; Koln: Brill, 1999). 495, 1207.

The *Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521) provides a reinterpretation of Isaiah 61. However, there are notable differences between the two texts. Isaiah states that the Messiah will preach good news to the poor, bind up the brokenhearted, free the prisoners, and proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. The *Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521) adds that he will heal the badly wounded, give sight to the blind, and raise the dead. In addition, 4Q251 does not mention a messianic figure performing these acts. Rather, they are performed by God Himself.¹³⁸

¹³³ Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” 176; *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 495.

¹³⁴ Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” 176.

¹³⁵ *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 495.

¹³⁶ Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” 176. In Psalm 110:4, a promise is made to the Davidic king that he will be a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹³⁸ *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 1045; Collins, “‘He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See’: Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 161-62.

Based upon what he has identified as the primary messianic texts, Bird believes the following attributes may be ascribed to the Messiahs.

Table 39. Messianic Attributes in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Attribute	Passage
He executes judgment and subdues the Kittim and nations	CD 19.10-11; 1QSb 5.20-29; 1QM 11.6-13
He leads a new exodus	1QM 11.9-12
He is from the Davidic line	4Q161; 4Q174; 4Q252; 4Q285
He will preside over the eschatological banquet	1QSa 2.11-22
Israel's deliverance is associated with the Davidic restoration	1Q174 3.6-12
He reigns over Israel and establishes the covenant and kingdom	4Q252 5.1-5
He is the firstborn, prince, and ruler of the world	4Q369 2.1-11
He keeps the law with the congregation	4Q252 5.5
He is endowed with special insight to achieve God's deliverance	4Q381 15.1-10
Signs of healing, preaching good news, leading poor, raising dead	4Q521 2.1-4

Source: Michael Bird. *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 40-41.

There was not a common messianic expectation during the Second Temple period. Influenced by the sociopolitical climate, messianism varied among the various Judaisms. The *Psalms of Solomon*, accredited to the Pharisees, awaited the son of David to defeat their enemies and restore the kingdom. The Dead Sea Scrolls, believed to be from the Essenes, sought the restoration of the office of High Priest, and together with the royal Messiah, they would restore the Davidic kingdom. Although the expectations varied, common threads are found across the messianic texts that are rooted in the Old Testament. All believed that the restoration of Israel would be through the return of the Davidic king.

Table 40. Intertestamental Messianic Expectations

Messianic Text	Davidic	Priest	Divine
Psalms of Solomon 17 & 18	Yes	No	No
1 Enoch 37-71	Yes	No	Yes
4 Ezra	Yes	No	Yes
2 Baruch	Yes	No	Yes
Dead Sea Scrolls	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Michael Bird, *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 25-50; Michael A. Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Jun 1995, 2(2), 165-84; John J. Collins, "'He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See': Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Jun 1995, 2(2), 145-64.

Philo

Philo's messianic expectations are similar to the *Psalms of Solomon* and the Dead Sea Scrolls. A Jewish ruler will emerge to defeat Israel's enemies. The exiles will return to Palestine. Balaam's prophecy is the basis for the coming ruler (Num 24:17; *Moses* 11.289-90; *Rewards* 91-97, 163-72).¹³⁹ Philo's messianic expectations center upon national deliverance and the future Jewish ruler of the world. Although the Law is Israel's unique possession, it is the supreme principle of the world. It is his hope that the nations of the world will abandon their pagan customs and adopt the laws of God (*Moses* 2.43-44).¹⁴⁰ Israel as the head of all nations is the core element of Philo's eschatological hope.¹⁴¹ He views Moses as the God-appointed king over Israel. For his virtue, Moses is rewarded the whole world, including all its wealth and riches

¹³⁹ Bird, 42.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 41.

¹⁴¹ Peder Borgen, "'There Shall Come Forth a Man': Reflections on Messianic Ideas in Philo." in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*. ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 341-61.

(*Moses* 1.149, 155-57; *Spec. Law* 1.97).¹⁴² Full of the Holy Spirit, Moses' words are prophetic as they reveal future expectations (*Moses* 2.288).¹⁴³

Table 41. Messianic Expectations in the Writings of Philo

Attribute	Passage
Israel's triumph is due to God's kingship over the universe	Moses 1.217
Israel's triumph is contingent upon obedience to the Mosaic law	Rewards 79, 163-64
Messianic leader will rule over the nations	Moses 1.290-91; Rewards 95-97
The day of deliverance includes the reversal of the Deuteronomic curses, end of the exile, and liberty for Israel	Rewards 163-72.

Source: Michael Bird. *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 41-42; *The Works of Philo*. trans. C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993).

Jesus the Messiah and His Jewish Believers

By the time of Jesus, the strongest strand of expectation of the Jewish people was a looking forward with desperate hope to the restoration of Israel. God was to intervene in world affairs to redeem His people. He would free them from their oppressors and restore them as His chosen people.¹⁴⁴ They understood themselves as continuing to live in exile.¹⁴⁵ Rome was the new Babylon.¹⁴⁶ Along with this expectation was the belief that as part of this restoration, the nations would gather and join Israel as the people of God.¹⁴⁷ Israel and the nations would suffer through the coming tribulation, and out of it would emerge a remnant of Israel and the survivors of the nations (Isa 45:20-25; 66:19-24; Zech 14:16-21).

¹⁴² Bird, 42.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 41.

¹⁴⁴ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 137.

¹⁴⁵ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 16.

¹⁴⁶ C. Wright, 137.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 138.

This hope for restoration was expressed through messianic expectations. Although the attributes ascribed to the Messiah varied, there was a common belief that there would be a king from the line of David that would defeat Israel's enemies and inaugurate the kingdom of God. Through His ministry and after His resurrection, thousands of Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers during the Second Temple period recognized Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of the messianic promise. However, thousands more rejected Him as He had not defeated the Romans or freed Israel from foreign oppression.

Jesus

Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man (Mark 14:62). The prophet Daniel describes One like the Son of Man who is given dominion, glory, and a kingdom over all people (7:13-14). He is the One to whom God gives supreme authority. By making such a reference, Jesus claims that He inaugurated the salvation and restoration of God's people.¹⁴⁸ Further parallels between Jesus and Daniel's Son of Man may be found in Jesus' statements. He connects His description of the abomination of desolation to Daniel's description of the defiling of the Temple (Mark 13:14; Matt 24:15; cf. Dan 8:11-13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).¹⁴⁹ Both Jesus and Daniel speak of a day of suffering as a reference to the coming tribulation (Mark 13:19; cf. Dan 12:1).¹⁵⁰

The connection between the Son of Man and the Messiah was established prior to Jesus' claim. In the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra* associate the Son of Man

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 153.

¹⁴⁹ Hays, 58.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

with the Messiah. Similar associations are found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (11QMelch; 4Q246). Burkett argues that *1 Enoch* combines the attributes and functions of the Son of Man with the Davidic Messiah (Isa 11; Ps 2), Isaiah's Servant of the Lord, and with Yahweh as eschatological Judge.¹⁵¹ That Messiah will sit on God's throne and execute judgment is another Danielic attribute common among the messianic expectations (1 En 46.4-6; 4 Ezra 12.32-33; 11QMelch 2.9-14; 4Q246 2.5-6; cf. Dan 7:14).¹⁵²

The term Son of Man appears eighty-two times in the four Gospels: thirty times in Matthew, fourteen times in Mark, twenty-five times in Luke, and thirteen times in John. Jesus uses this phrase to refer to three different categories. The first references His earthly ministry, where He has authority over sin, sickness, and nature (Mark 2:10, 28). Second, He relates this term with Isaiah's suffering servant, describing how the Son of Man will suffer rejection, die, and rise again (Mark 8:31; 9:31; Luke 9:44). Third, Jesus describes the Son of Man coming in His eschatological glory to sit upon the throne as Judge (Matt 13:41-43; 19:28; Mark 14:62).¹⁵³ From Jesus' claims, He identified with the Son of Man and understood this figure to be the Messiah. His acceptance of Peter's answer and His response to the Samaritan woman that He is the awaited Messiah demonstrates an understanding of His present earthly and future eschatological role (Mark 8:29; John 4:26).

¹⁵¹ Delbert Burkett, "Son of Man in the Apocalyptic and Rabbinic Texts," in *The Son of Man Debate; A History and Evaluation*. ed. D. Burkett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 98.

¹⁵² Knibb, "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls," 174-76; *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 495, 1207.

¹⁵³ C. Wright, 150.

Although Daniel 7 does not mention the suffering and death of the Son of Man, Jesus demonstrates its relationship with the Servant of the Lord when He states that the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). This alludes to Isaiah 53:10-12 which states that the Servant will be a sacrifice for the sin of the many.¹⁵⁴ Through this association, Jesus claims He is the fulfillment of both the role of the Son of Man and the Servant of the Lord and that they are one of the same.

Early in His ministry, Jesus quotes Isaiah before the members of His local synagogue. He states that “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19; cf. Isa 61:1-2). He informs those in attendance that “today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). When asked whether He is the one to come, He references Isaiah 61 in His response. “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news preached to them” (Luke 7:22). Through these statements, Jesus is identifying with Isaiah's Servant of the Lord.¹⁵⁵ Further, He expresses Isaiah's concept of substitutionary atonement when He speaks of His blood being poured out for the forgiveness of sin for the many as a covenantal act (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; cf. Isa 53:11-12).¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 154.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 155.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 155-56.

A comparison between Jesus' statements and the text of Isaiah 61 reveals significant differences in the various acts contributed to the Messiah's arrival. The healing of the wounded, the restoration of sight, and the raising of the dead are not included in Isaiah 61. The inclusion of these acts demonstrates the reinterpretation of Isaiah during the Second Temple period. The *Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521) includes these acts with the freeing of prisoners and proclaiming the good news to the poor. This messianic expectation, known by His audience, may have influenced Jesus' reading of Isaiah and in His response to John the Baptist.

Table 42. Comparison of Isaiah 61, Luke, and the Messianic Apocalypse (4Q521)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.	Isa 61:1-2
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.	Luke 4:18-19
The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news preached to them.	Luke 7:22
Freeing prisoners, giving sight to the blind, straightening out the twisted...he will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live, he will proclaim good news to the poor	4Q521 Frags. 2 col. 2 8, 12

Source: *New American Standard Bible 1995; Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 1045.

Matthew

The Gospel author Matthew recognized Jesus as the messianic King and the One who would deliver Israel from exile.¹⁵⁷ In Chapter 1, he lists Jesus' genealogy from Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonian exile, and from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah (1-16). Matthew divides the genealogical line into four fourteen generational plots that highlight the

¹⁵⁷ Hays, 111.

story of Israel; promise, kingship, exile, and return (Messiah).¹⁵⁸ Matthew opens his Gospel with the acknowledgment that Jesus is the son of David, the son of Abraham, and the Messiah (1:1). He reinforces Jesus' identity as the Messiah with the angel's instruction to Joseph to give the name Jesus to his son since He will save His people from sin (Matt 1:21).¹⁵⁹ Matthew states that the birth of Jesus (Matt 1:23) is the fulfillment of the virgin birth foretold by Isaiah (7:14).

Matthew 2:15 quotes Hosea 11:1, "out of Egypt I called my Son." Although this text is arguably understood to refer to the nation of Israel and not an individual, Matthew relates Jesus as the fulfillment of this prophecy and to identify Him as the Son of God.¹⁶⁰ Son of God was commonly attributed to the ordination of the Davidic king, however, the Dead Sea Scrolls associate this title with messianic interpretations of Daniel 7.¹⁶¹ "He will be called the Son of God, they will call him the son of the Most High" (4Q246 2.1).¹⁶² Due to the similarities

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 113. Scholars argues that Matthew misinterpreted Hosea 11:1 to be a prophecy when it is to be correctly interpreted as a historical reflection on the original Israelite exodus. However, Beale argues that Jesus is the representative of Israel. He is able to accomplish where Israel failed. The attempt to kill the Israelite infants and Jesus' journey into and out of Egypt reflects the original pattern of the Israelite exodus. His is the eschatological exodus that was alluded to by the original exodus. G. K. Beale, "The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15: One More Time," *Journal of the Evangelical Theology Society* 55, no. 4 (12, 2012), 697-715.

¹⁶¹ Bird, 70.

¹⁶² Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls; A New Translation* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2005), 347. The Son of God in 4Q246 has been interpreted to be the Seleucid king Alexander Balas, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, an antichrist figure, the archangel Michael, a collective designation for Israel, a future Jewish non-messianic king, or the Messiah. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 155-57; Craig A. Evans, "Son of God Text (4Q246)," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 1134-37. Fitzmyer argues that this should be interpreted as a future Jewish king, however he is not the Messiah. Fitzmyer, 104-7. Collins believes that 4Q246 follows a similar sequence as Daniel 7. The reference to the Son of God, the transient and violent nature of the human kingdoms, and the transition to the people of God. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 158-59. Bird states that it is "quite likely" that

between the Son of God in 4Q246 and the Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37-71 and 4 Ezra 13, the Son of God may be interpreted as a messianic figure.¹⁶³

Matthew contains parallels with 1 Enoch. The parable of the weeds (Matt 13:37-43) and the last judgment scene (Matt 25:31-46) reveal the Son of Man's heavenly status and judicial role. All the nations will be gathered before Him and His angels. God's righteous people are promised eternal life while the condemned experience eternal punishment. Bird argues that Matthew may have been dependent upon Enochic material or that both are derived from a common source.¹⁶⁴ From 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra, it can be determined that Davidic messianism transformed into the Son of Man tradition.¹⁶⁵ Because of this, the use of the term Son of Man in 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra indicates messianism even when the title Messiah is not present.¹⁶⁶ Matthew's use of the Son of Man is loaded with messianic meaning and portrays Jesus as Israel's Messiah.¹⁶⁷

4Q246's Son of God shares a similar interpretation of Daniel's son of man found in 1 Enoch 37-71 and 4 Ezra 13, which identify the son of man as a messianic figure. Bird, 71.

¹⁶³ Bird, 71.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 72. Charlesworth suggests that with the recognition that the Enoch parables are clearly Jewish and date prior to A.D. 70, the term Son of Man can no longer be distinguished from the term Messiah. J. H. Charlesworth, "From Jewish Messianology to Christian Christology; Some Caveats and Perspectives," in *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, ed. Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988), 238. Klausner argues that there was a short period of time between the composition of Daniel and the identification of the Son of Man with the Messiah. Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel from its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1955), 230.

¹⁶⁵ Bird, 76.

¹⁶⁶ Jonathan Knight, *Jesus; A Historical and Theological Investigation* (London, England; New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2004), 137.

¹⁶⁷ Bird, 72.

Mark

Mark's first sentence identifies Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God (1:1). His story of Jesus begins with John the Baptist fulfilling the role of the messenger who was to prepare the way for the Lord (Mark 1:4; cf. Isa 40:3; Mic 3:1).¹⁶⁸ Mark wants his audience to understand that the arrival of Jesus and His kingdom preaching meant the return of God's kingly rule in Jerusalem and the restoration of Israel in accordance with Isaiah 40:9. His inclusion of Jesus' parable of the mustard seed, which puts forth large branches (Mark 4:30-32) alludes to the restoration of the Davidic kingdom denoted in Ezekiel where God plants a cedar twig that grows to produce branches and bears fruit (17:23-24).¹⁶⁹ Mark strengthens the position of Jesus as the Lord's Servant with his inclusion of cosmic signs in Jesus' eschatological discourse of future hope (Mark 13:25). These are similar to those described during the Day of the Lord (cf. Isa 13:10; Joel 2:10).¹⁷⁰

Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem riding upon a colt demonstrates Mark's identification of Jesus with the Davidic king (11:1-11; cf. Matt 21:1-10; Luke 19:28-38; John 12:12-15). Zechariah foretold that Israel's king would arrive in Jerusalem mounted on a colt (9:9). What is more significant is that Mark notes that the colt was tied (11:4). This alludes to Jacob's prophecy where the scepter will not depart Judah and that Judah will tie his colt to the choice vine (Gen

¹⁶⁸ Hays, 21.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 31.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 33.

49:10-11).¹⁷¹ This messianic interpretation of Genesis 49:10-11 is found in the *Pesher of Genesis* (4Q252). “The scepter shall not depart from the tribe of Judah” (5.1).¹⁷²

Luke

The theme of restoration continues in the Gospel of Luke. He opens with a statement that implies that the coming story of Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promise to restore Israel (1:1). He is quick to identify Jesus as the Messiah by including the angel Gabriel’s statements to Mary. Gabriel informs Mary that Jesus will be the Son of God and the Davidic King (1:32-33). He echoes God’s promise to David of an eternal kingdom and that God would be His father (2 Sam 7:12-14). From the words of Gabriel, Luke’s audience knows that Jesus is both the Son of David and the Son of God.¹⁷³ The source of Luke’s messianism may predate the time of Jesus.¹⁷⁴ His infancy narrative shares parallels with *Son of God* (4Q246). Both Luke and *Son of God* (4Q246) identify the Son of God and the Son of the Most High with the Messiah.¹⁷⁵

Table 43. Parallels between Luke Infancy Narrative and 4Q246

Luke	4Q246
He will be great (1:32)	His son will be called the Great (1.8)
He will be called the Son of the Most High (1:32)	They will call him the son of the Most High (2.1)
He shall be called the Son of God (1:35)	He will be called the Son of God (2.1)
His kingdom will have no end (1:33)	Their kingdom will be an eternal kingdom (2.5)

Source: NASB1995; Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2005), 347.

¹⁷¹ Dale Allison, *Scriptural Allusions in the New Testament: Light from the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 49.

¹⁷² Ibid., 50.

¹⁷³ Hays, 191.

¹⁷⁴ Bird, 71.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

Luke identifies Jesus with Isaiah's anointed figure (Isa 11:2; 42:1; 61:1). This messenger is to deliver the news of freedom from oppression and the restoration of Israel. Bird suggests that this text led to the concept of the coming age of deliverance found in the *Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521) and *11QMelchizedek* (11QMelch).¹⁷⁶ According to Luke, Jesus' reading of Isaiah 61 is the launch of Jesus' public ministry (Luke 4:14-30).¹⁷⁷ Bird further argues that Luke draws from a compilation of text from Isaiah in Jesus' response to John the Baptist's disciples in order to demonstrate that Jesus is the promised Messiah.¹⁷⁸ However, Luke may have drawn this compilation from an older source. The *Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521) states "setting the prisoners free, opening the eyes of the blind...He shall heal the critically wounded, He shall revive the dead, He shall send good news to the poor."¹⁷⁹

Table 44. Compilation of Isaiah Text in Luke 7:22

Jesus' Response	Isaiah
Blind receive sight	29:18; 35:5; 42:7, 18
Lame walk	35:6
Lepers are cleansed	53:4
Deaf hear	29:18-19; 35:5
Dead are raised	26:19
Good news is preached to the poor	61:1

Source: NASB1995

Luke reinforces the concept of restoration with the appearance of the angel Gabriel. His only appearance in the Old Testament is in Daniel's apocalyptic visions, where the angel brings

¹⁷⁶ Bird, 77.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 78-79.

¹⁷⁹ Wise, Abegg, and Cook, 531.

divine word that the persecution and suffering of Israel were drawing to an end (Dan 8:16-17; 9:21-24). In both Daniel and Luke, Gabriel is sent to share of the approaching end of Israel's suffering.¹⁸⁰

Luke demonstrates the link between Jesus and David beyond the genealogies and infancy narrative. The exorcisms performed by Jesus are connected to the inauguration of the eschatological kingdom (Luke 11:20). Such association to the kingdom of God may be found in the *Songs of the Sage* (4Q510).¹⁸¹ Tradition holds David (Josephus, *Ant.* 6.166-68; L.A.B. 60.1-3) and Solomon (T. Sol. 1.5-7; Wis. 7:17-21; Josephus, *Ant.* 8.45-47; Tg. Pss. 91) as great exorcists.¹⁸² David was regarded as prophetic in the writing of his psalms which match with Jesus' own prophetic claims (Luke 4:24; 13:33). Solomon was regarded as a wise king. According to Luke, Jesus' ministry was greater than that of Solomon (11:31). Bird argues that Jesus' leadership roles as exorcist, prophet, and sage are consistent with Israel's royal traditions.¹⁸³ Throughout his Gospel, Luke provides evidence to reinforce the infancy narrative's claim of Jesus as the Davidic king and the Messiah. He is the one anointed to restore Israel.

John

From the onset of his Gospel, John reveals the divine nature of Jesus. He has been with God since the beginning of creation and is the incarnation of God's Word (1:1-4). John the

¹⁸⁰ Hays, 196.

¹⁸¹ Bird, 83.

¹⁸² Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 189.

¹⁸³ Bird, 83.

Baptist refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the world's sin (1:29; cf. Gen 22:1-18). Andrew tells his brother Simon that they have found the Messiah (1:41). Philip informs Nathanael that they have found the One about whom Moses and the prophets wrote (1:45). John invites his audience to read further to understand how Jesus fulfills the role of the promised Messiah.¹⁸⁴ Much like the other three Gospel authors, it is clear that this Jewish fisherman recognized the fulfillment of the messianic promises in Jesus. To John, Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Davidic king. Only through Jesus would Israel be restored.

Peter

Peter's acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah and Davidic king centers on the resurrection event. In his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:14-41), he explains to his Jewish audience that the event they are experiencing is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and that it is the sign of the coming of the end days as foretold by the prophet Joel (2:28-29).¹⁸⁵ Peter's first statement is an announcement that the messianic promise has been fulfilled.¹⁸⁶ He informs his audience that the last days are upon them and that the promised Messiah has arrived.¹⁸⁷ For Peter, the resurrection distinguishes Jesus as the Messiah and enables Him to reign from God's right hand.¹⁸⁸ It is the

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 283.

¹⁸⁵ Eric E. Puosi, "A Systematic Approach to the Christology of Peter's Address to the Crowd (Acts 2:14-36)," *New Blackfriars* 87, no. 1009 (May 2006), *New Blackfriars* 87, no. 1009 (May 2006): 253-67; Brandon D. Crowe, *The Hope of Israel; The Resurrection of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2020), 22.

¹⁸⁶ Puosi, 259.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 261.

¹⁸⁸ Crowe, 27.

seal of Jesus' right to be called Lord.¹⁸⁹ It is His victory over death that testifies to His divine nature.¹⁹⁰

Puosi believes that Peter's sermon is the first attempt at developing a systematic Christology and may be divided into two syllogisms:¹⁹¹

Table 45. First Christological Syllogism

First Syllogism	
1 st Statement	God has fulfilled the messianic promise; therefore, we have a Messiah
2 nd Statement	Jesus is not an ordinary man. He performed miracles and was resurrected from the dead.
Conclusion	Jesus is the Messiah

Source: Eric E. Puosi. "A Systematic Approach to the Christology of Peter's Address to the Crowd (Acts 2:14-36)," 257.

Table 46. Second Christological Syllogism

Second Syllogisms	
1 st Statement	God's promise is a promise of salvation, and it is fulfilled through the Lord.
2 nd Statement	Jesus has been raised to life and to the right hand of the Father. He is the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation.
Conclusion	Jesus is the Lord

Source: Eric E. Puosi. "A Systematic Approach to the Christology of Peter's Address to the Crowd (Acts 2:14-36)," 257.

Peter acknowledges that Jesus is the Davidic king. He refers to David's statement that God would not abandon him to the realm of the dead, nor would he see decay (Ps 16:8-11). Since David had died and was buried in Jerusalem, he spoke of the Messiah's resurrection. Since Jesus

¹⁸⁹ Puosi, 265.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 264.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 257.

is the only One whom God has raised, He must be David's descendant for whom the king had written.¹⁹² Jesus is King and reigns over the eternal kingdom promised to David.¹⁹³

Peter identified Jesus with Isaiah's suffering servant. In his sermon to the crowd in front of the Temple, he states that God glorified His servant Jesus (Acts 3:13). Peter alludes to Isaiah 52:13, where God's servant shall be glorified. The theme of Peter's sermon captures the main points of the Suffering Servant hymn: denial, death, and vindication.¹⁹⁴

Table 47. Parallels between Acts 3 and Isaiah 53

Parallel	Peter	Isaiah
Denial	Acts 3:14	Isa 53:3
Death	Acts 3:15	Isa 53:4-10, 12b
Vindication	Acts 3:13	Isa 53:11-12a

Source: Craig A. Evans, "Isaiah 53 in the Letters of Peter, Paul, Hebrews, and John," in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53; Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*. ed. Darrell L. Block and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 150.

Peter's identification of Jesus with the suffering servant is made explicit when He states that God had fulfilled what He had previously announced through His prophets, that His Messiah would suffer (Acts 3:18).¹⁹⁵ Peter would make a similar statement in his sermon to Cornelius in that all the prophets bear witness that through Him all who believe receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:36). This alludes to the suffering of the servant for the sin of the masses (Isa 53:5).¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Ibid., 261.

¹⁹³ Crowe, 27.

¹⁹⁴ Craig A. Evans, "Isaiah 53 in the Letters of Peter, Paul, Hebrews, and John," in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53; Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*. ed. Darrell L. Block and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 150.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 156.

Peter would have previously learned this association of the servant with the Messiah from Jesus. He had told Peter and His disciples that the Messiah would suffer, die, and be raised from the dead (Luke 24:46). This is further substantiated by the identification of the suffering servant with the Messiah in the Aramaic paraphrase of Isaiah 52:13, “Behold, my Servant the Messiah.”¹⁹⁷

Further evidence of Peter’s identification of Jesus with the suffering servant may be found in 1 Peter 2:21-25. His statement that “He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips” is a near-direct quote from the Greek version of Isaiah 53:9.¹⁹⁸

Table 48. Quote from Isaiah 53:9 in 1 Peter 2:22

Verse	Text
1 Pet 2:22	ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἐποίησεν οὐδὲ εὐρέθη δόλος ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ
NASB1995	Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth.
Isa 53:9	ἀνομίαν οὐκ ἐποίησεν, οὐδὲ δόλον ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ
NASB1995	Because He had done no violence, nor was their deceit in His mouth.

Source: Michael W. Holmes. *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Lexham Press; Society of Biblical Literature, 2011–2013); *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). *Septuaginta: With Morphology*. Electronic ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979.

In addition to Peter’s quote of Isaiah 53:9, there are several parallels between 1 Peter 2:21-25 and Isaiah 52-53. His statement that Jesus did not revile in return (1 Pet 2:23) alludes to how the servant remained silent when led to the slaughter (Isa 53:7). That Jesus bore our sins (1 Pet 2:24) alludes to the servant being pierced for our transgressions and bore the sin for the many (Isa 53:5, 12). “By His wounds you have been healed” in the same verse alludes to Isaiah’s “By

¹⁹⁷ Evans, 150; Bruce D. Chilton. *The Glory of Israel; The Theology and Provenience of the Isaiah Targum*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 23 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 91-96.

¹⁹⁸ Evans, 157.

His wounds we have been healed” (1 Pet 2:24; Isa 53:5). Peter’s reference to sheep going astray (1 Pet 2:25) alludes to Isaiah’s statement that “we all, like sheep, have gone astray” (Isa 53:6).¹⁹⁹

Table 49. Parallels between 1 Peter 2:21-25 and Isaiah 53

Parallel	Peter	Isaiah
Remained silent	1 Pet 2:23	Isa 53:7
Bore the sin of the many	1 Pet 2:24	Isa 53:5, 12
Healed through his wounds	1 Pet 2:24	Isa 53:5
Stray like sheep	1 Pet 2:25	Isa 53:6

Source: Craig A. Evans. “Isaiah 53 in the Letters of Peter, Paul, Hebrews, and John,” in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*. ed. Darrell L. Block and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 158.

Paul

Much like Peter, Paul is an eyewitness to the risen Christ. His encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus is the moment that he acknowledged that Jesus is the Messiah (Acts 9:3-6). Formerly an early persecutor of the church, he recognizes that the Jewish believers he originally sought to persecute were correct. Jesus is alive and exalted by God.²⁰⁰ The risen Jesus is the culmination of God’s redemptive plan and the climax of salvation history.²⁰¹ He is the guarantor of final salvation.²⁰²

In his speech at Pisidian Antioch, Paul describes David as a man after God’s heart and who will do His will (Acts 13:22). David is the prototypical royal figure from whose line the Savior Jesus will descend (Acts 13:23). For Paul, Jesus’ resurrection is the fulfillment of the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 158.

²⁰⁰ Crowe, 48.

²⁰¹ Brad H. Young, *Paul the Jewish Theologian: A Pharisee Among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1997), 31, 33.

²⁰² Crowe, 48.

Davidic covenant of an everlasting kingdom (2 Sam 7:12). Jesus is the true Son of David (Acts 13:33; cf. Ps 2:7) who, unlike David, did not experience decay (Acts 13:35; cf. Ps 16:10).²⁰³

The core of Paul's gospel was the resurrection of Jesus. This was not an unforeseen event. He understood it to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures.²⁰⁴ Paul understood that the resurrection of Jesus was consistent with all that the prophets had written and that he was not teaching anything new (Acts 24:14).²⁰⁵ In his defense before Herod Agrippa II, Paul argues that he is stating nothing more than what Moses and the prophets had foretold; the Messiah would suffer and be the first to be raised from the dead (Acts 26:23). In Rome, he would use what had been written by Moses and the prophets to persuade the Jews concerning Jesus (Acts 28:23). Paul taught of the kingdom of the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus who is the hope of Israel and for the gentiles (Acts 28:31).²⁰⁶ In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul informs his audience that Jesus died for our sins and was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3-9).²⁰⁷

The book of Romans provides evidence of Paul's identification of Jesus with the suffering servant. He understands that when Isaiah wrote of the servant, he foretold of Jesus' death and resurrection. Paul writes that "He was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was

²⁰³ Ibid., 50, 54-55.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 82.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 76.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 79, 85.

²⁰⁷ Young, 35.

raised because of our justification” (Rom 4:25). From this passage, Paul is alluding to the suffering and vindication of the servant to whom the “iniquity of us all” falls upon (Isa 53:6, 12) and will justify the many (Isa 53:11).²⁰⁸ In Romans 5:19, Paul continues to associate the sacrificial work of Jesus with the servant. He writes, “through the obedience of the One, the many will be made righteous.” According to Paul, by His act upon the cross, Jesus healed the many through His scourging (Isa 53:5), was stricken for the people's transgressions (Isa 53:8b), made himself an offering for sin (Isa 53:10b), justified the many and bore their iniquities (Isa 53:11b), and interceded for the transgressors (Isa 53:12b).²⁰⁹

Table 50. Parallels between Romans and Isaiah 52-53

Parallel	Paul	Isaiah
Delivered over for the transgressions of others	Rom 4:25	Isa 53:6, 12
Justification of the many	Rom 4:25	Isa 53:11
Obedience of the one for the righteousness of the many	Rom 5:19	Isa 53:5, 8, 10-12

Source: Craig A. Evans. “Isaiah 53 in the Letters of Peter, Paul, Hebrews, and John,” in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*. ed. Darrell L. Block and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 161.

Paul views Isaiah 52:15b as his missionary mandate. He intends to preach the good news where others have not seen or heard of Christ (Rom 15:20). Paul quotes the prophet to validate this mission. Outside the quote, other elements of Isaiah 52-53 are found in Paul's understanding of his mission. His is the good news to be proclaimed (Isa 52:7), and it is a message not always received in faith (Isa 53:1).²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Evans, 160-61.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 161.

²¹⁰ Ibid..

Table 51. Quote of Isaiah 52:15b in Romans 15:21

Verse	Text
Rom 15:21	Οἷς οὐκ ἀνηγγέλη περὶ αὐτοῦ ὄψονται, καὶ οἱ οὐκ ἀκηκόασιν συνήσουσιν
NASB1995	They who had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand.
Isa 52:15b	οἷς οὐκ ἀνηγγέλη περὶ αὐτοῦ ὄψονται, καὶ οἱ οὐκ ἀκηκόασιν συνήσουσιν
NASB1995	For what had not been told to them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand.

Source: Michael W. Holmes. *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Lexham Press; Society of Biblical Literature, 2011–2013); *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995); *Septuaginta: With Morphology*. Electronic ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979.

Biblical Evidence for the Jewish Rejection of Jesus

Not all Jewish people accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Their rejection would lead to His death and to the persecution of His followers. Some Pharisees believed that He was not the Messiah since He was not to come from Galilee (John 7:52). They disputed His testimony and attempted to stone Him when He claimed to have come before Abraham and identified Himself as I Am (John 8:21-58). The crowd attempted to stone Him at the Festival of Dedication in Jerusalem because He claimed to be God (John 10:22-39). After performing signs in their presence, many Jews still did not believe (John 12:37). The High Priest accused Jesus of blasphemy when He affirmed the High Priest's question as to whether He was the Messiah (Matthew 26:63-65). The chief priests objected to the sign that Pilate had fastened to Jesus' cross. They requested that the sign be modified to state that He claimed to be the King of the Jews (John 19:21). The chief priests, teachers of the Law, and the crowd challenged Jesus to save Himself if He was truly God's Messiah, the King of Israel (Matt 27:39-43; Mark 15:29-32; Luke 23:35).

After Jesus' ascension, His believers suffered and died for their faith. Stephen would be first, being stoned to death by the members of the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:54-60). Saul would set out

to destroy the church and sent Christian men and women to prison (Acts 8:3). Much to the approval of the Jews, Herod put James, the brother of John, to death with a sword (Acts 12:1-3). When Saul first accepted Jesus and preached in the synagogues, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him (Acts 9:23). The Jerusalem church would send him back to Tarsus when they learned that the Hellenistic Jews were plotting his death (Acts 9:30). Paul and his companions suffered at the hands of the non-believing Jews during their missionary journeys (Acts 13:50-51; 14:2-6, 19; 17:5-9, 13; 18:12-17).²¹¹

New Sect

The Jewish Christians did not set themselves apart from Judaism. They preserved their Jewish identity and continued to observe the Torah (Acts 21:24).²¹² Jewish Christians believed in the one true God and rejected the pagan gods. Circumcision remained as a sign of their commitment to the covenant and the Jewish lifestyle.²¹³ They observed the Sabbath (Acts 16:13; 17:2, 17; 18:4) and attended synagogue (Acts 9:20; 13:5, 14-15; 14:1; 17:1-2, 10; 18:4, 19, 26; 19:8; 26:11). They followed the dietary laws (Acts 10:14; 11:3, 8) and observed the festivals (Acts 20:6, 16). Jerusalem and the Temple remained their religious center (Acts 2:46; 3:1, 8; 5:25, 42; 21:26; 22:17).²¹⁴ Until Peter's encounter with Cornelius, Jewish Christians did not

²¹¹ Eckhard J. Schnabel, "The Persecution of the Christians in the First Century," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 61, no. 3 (2018): 525-47.

²¹² Skarsaune, 161.

²¹³ Circumcision and conversion to Judaism became a point of contention among Jewish Christians when confronted with the requirements for gentile inclusion. This issue was debated and resolved during the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). However, not all Jewish Christians agreed with the decision. See Gentile Inclusion below.

²¹⁴ Skarsaune, 148.

associate with gentiles (Acts 10:28). The practice of communal meals (Acts 2:46) and selling property and possessions for the common good (Acts 2:45; 4:32, 34-37) was not unique to Jewish Christianity, these were fundamental practices of the Essene sect.

Table 52. Comparison of Practices between Non-Christian Jews and Christian Jews

Non-Christian Jews	Christian Jews
Monotheism	Monotheism
Dietary Restrictions	Dietary Restrictions
Circumcision	Circumcision
Sabbath Observance	Sabbath Observance
Jerusalem and the Temple	Jerusalem and the Temple

Jewish Christians believed that the awaited restoration was found in Jesus (Acts 4:12; 10:43) and that the message of salvation had been sent (Acts 13:26).²¹⁵ Everything they taught about Jesus was in accordance with the Law and with all that is written in the Prophets (Acts 24:14; 28:23). God had fulfilled His promise to their fathers in accordance with Psalm 2 (Acts 13:33). The fulfillment of this promise started with Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and would be completed upon His return. God's eschatological promises had been inaugurated but not yet consummated (inaugurated eschatology).²¹⁶ Much as Israel was witness to God's redemption, Jewish Christians were witness to what they saw and heard through the Messiah (Acts 4:20; cf. Isa 43:10). Their mission to the gentile nations was rooted in God's call for Israel to be a "light to the nations" (Acts 13:47; cf. Isa 49:6).

²¹⁵ Alexander E. Stewart, "The Temporary Messianic Kingdom in Second Temple Judaism and the Delay of the Parousia: Psalm 110:1 and the Development of Early Christian Inaugurated Eschatology." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59, no. 2 (2016): 255-70.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 256.

The Jewish Christians' inaugurated eschatology is rooted in Psalm 110: "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" The New Testament authors quote or allude to this psalm more than any other Old Testament text.²¹⁷ Jesus was raised to share God's reign until all his enemies were defeated. His rule was not yet evident on earth. However, the "not yet" reveals a future time when His rule will be visible to all.²¹⁸

Table 53. New Testament Verses that Quote Psalm 110:1

Verse
Matt 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; Luke 20:42-43; 22:69; Acts 2:34-35; Heb 1:13

Source: NASB1995.

Table 54. Allusions to Psalm 110:1 in the New Testament

Text	Verse
He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father	Mark 16:19
Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God	Acts 2:33
He is the One whom God exalted to His right hand	Acts 5:31
Jesus standing at the right hand of God	Acts 7:55
Who is at the right hand of God	Rom 8:34
He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet	1 Cor 15:25
Seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places	Eph 1:20
Seated at the right hand of God	Col 3:1
He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high	Heb 1:3
Who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens	Heb 8:1
Sat down at the right hand of God	Heb 10:12
His enemies be made a footstool for His feet	Heb 10:13
He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God	Heb 12:2
Who is at the right hand of God	1 Pet 3:22

Source: NASB1995.

The concept of inaugurated eschatology did not originate with the Jewish Christians. As mentioned previously, the Essenes believed that God's plan for redemption had started with the

²¹⁷ Ibid., 264.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 268.

formation of their sect. They were His advance guard who was to await the arrival of the two Messiahs. The idea of “already/not yet” was part of Second Temple Judaism. The idea of a temporary messianic kingdom between the old and new age exists in Jewish apocalypses.²¹⁹ 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch* write of a future temporary messianic kingdom.²²⁰ The *Apocalypse of Weeks* found in 1 *Enoch*, speaks of a transitional period of time between the evil present and the future final judgment and eternal state. Although it does not mention a messianic figure, readers from that time would have presupposed such a figure based on its eschatological context.²²¹ *Jubilees* describes a period of longevity, blessing, and healing that will transition to the eternal state (Jub. 1.27-29; 23.26-31).²²² 2 *Enoch* divides history into seven one thousand (1,000) year periods. The seventh refers to the seventh day of rest, while the eighth refers to the eternal state (32.1-33.2).²²³ The *Psalms of Solomon*’s “the coming generation” and “a good generation” may suggest a temporary messianic kingdom on earth (18.6, 9).²²⁴ The tension between “already” and “not yet” may be found within the story of *Tobit*. The restoration of his sight is the beginning of future expectations.²²⁵

²¹⁹ Ibid., 256.

²²⁰ Ibid., 257-58.

²²¹ Ibid., 260.

²²² Ibid., 261.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid., 262.

²²⁵ Jill Hicks-Keeton, “Already/Not Yet: Eschatological Tension in the Book of Tobit.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132, no. 1 (2013): 97-117.

Non-Christian Jews referred to Jewish Christians as “the Way” and viewed them as another Jewish sect (Acts 9:2; 19:23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; 24:14). Much as there were messianic figures before and after Jesus, Jewish leaders saw them as another movement that would fade shortly after the loss of their leader (Acts 5:36-38). Jewish Christians faced opposition from non-Christian Jews due to their teaching that Jesus is the awaited Messiah (Acts 4:17; 5:28, 40). They believed they were on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6; 24:21) and for God’s promise to their fathers (Acts 26:6). Disagreements between Jewish sects were common. The Pharisees’ and the Sadducees’ debate over the issue of resurrection resulted in a heated altercation at the Council (Acts 23:6-9). Peter and John were arrested at the Temple by the Sadducees for preaching resurrection (Acts 4:1-2). Since the Jewish Christians had not committed anything against the Law or the Temple (Acts 25:8), non-Christian Jews could not find anything wrong (Acts 23:9). They resorted to the use of false witnesses (Acts 6:13) or to attempts to get Christian Jews to blaspheme in order to persecute them (Acts 26:11).

Gentile Inclusion

After Jesus’ resurrection, His disciples asked if this was the time for Israel’s restoration (Acts 1:6). Jesus is clear in His response that they are not to know the time set by the Father. In the interim, they would receive power through the Holy Spirit and be His witnesses to the nations (Acts 1:7-8). Jesus had inaugurated the kingdom of God, yet the promised restoration of Israel would await His return. His words echo Isaiah 43:10. Israel is God’s witness to Israel's

past and future restoration.²²⁶ Much as Israel knew the identity of the one true God and were to bear witness to the nations, the disciples knew the identity of the risen Messiah and were to bear witness to the ends of the world.²²⁷ Jesus calls His disciples to give evidence of who He is from their personal experiences.²²⁸ They were to share the good news of the Messiah's arrival and His atoning sacrifice. Unbeknownst to His disciples at the time, Jesus' resurrection and ascension ushered in a new age of gentile inclusion.

Pentecost saw the Holy Spirit fall upon Jesus' disciples as He had promised (Acts 2:1-4). The arrival of the Holy Spirit was characteristic of Jewish expectations regarding restoration and the new covenant.²²⁹ The prophet Isaiah foretold of a time when God would pour out His Spirit on Israel's offspring (44:3). Joel spoke of when God would pour out His Spirit on all humankind (2:28). Zechariah states that God will pour out His Spirit on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (12:10). John the Baptist understood that these prophecies would come through the Messiah. He told his followers that he baptized with water, but the one who was to come after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16). As noted

²²⁶ John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 421.

²²⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God; Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 66.

²²⁸ Oswalt, 421.

²²⁹ John W. Taylor, "The Eschatological Interdependence of Jews and Gentiles in Galatians," *Tyndale Bulletin* 63, no. 2 (2012): 291-316.

by Paul, those who placed their faith in Jesus would receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:14).²³⁰

Prior to the Roman Centurion, Cornelius and his family, the Jewish Christians had not seen anyone besides Jews receive the Holy Spirit. Cornelius was a God-fearer. However, he had not converted to Judaism. Peter and the Jewish Christians accompanying him were amazed when they witnessed the Holy Spirit fall upon Cornelius and his family (Acts 10:45).²³¹ Since Cornelius and his family received the Holy Spirit in the same manner as the Jewish Christians, Peter recognized that he could not deny them baptism (Acts 10:47). Peter understood that God accepts gentiles as gentiles and purifies their heart through faith.²³²

Although God initiated this, it caused division amongst the Jewish Christians.²³³ When Peter first returned to Jerusalem to report the event, many Jewish Christians took issue with what he had done (Acts 11:2). Although it appeared that they accepted that God had granted to the gentiles the same repentance that leads to life (Acts 11:18), the issue reappeared at the church of Antioch, where men from Judea arrived and taught the gentile Christians that they could not be saved unless they converted to Judaism (Acts 15:1).²³⁴ This contradicted what both Paul and

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Young, 36.

²³² W. Edward Glenny, "The Septuagint and Apostolic Hermeneutics: Amos 9 in Acts 15." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 22, no. 1 (2012): 1-26.

²³³ Charles Haddon Savelle, Jr., "James's Use of Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 31, no. 1 (2021): 54-71.

²³⁴ Ibid., 55.

Barnabas had reported based upon their experience with gentile Christians (Acts 14:27). This led to what is considered the most important turning point in the book of Acts, the Jerusalem Council.²³⁵

The question of the requirements for gentile believers is brought before Jesus' half-brother James and the Jerusalem church. The Lukan account of the council begins with the debate amongst the apostles and the elders to determine whether the gentiles were required to be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses (Acts 15:5-6). Peter stands and recounts the events surrounding Cornelius. He explains that God makes no distinction between the Jews and gentiles and that He cleanses the heart through faith. He concludes that both Jew and gentile are saved through the grace of Jesus Christ (Acts 7:11).²³⁶ Paul and Barnabas provide legitimacy to Peter's testimony that the gentiles were receiving the Holy Spirit with their own report of the signs and wonders that had been done through them among the gentiles (Acts 15:12).²³⁷

James responds that the reports provided by Peter, Paul, and Barnabas are consistent with prophetic expectations.²³⁸ He states that this testimony agrees with the words of the prophets (Acts 15:15). They had foreseen an event where God acquired a people from amongst the gentiles.²³⁹ The inclusion of the gentiles, apart from circumcision and the Law, has always been

²³⁵ Glenny, 1; Savelle, 54.

²³⁶ Glenny, 2.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Glenny, 10; Savelle, 57.

²³⁹ Savelle, 57.

part of God's redemptive plan. It was rooted in antiquity and was not something God suddenly decided. He had long made His intention known through the prophets. Those who sought to enforce circumcision failed to recognize what God had spoken through His prophets.²⁴⁰ His use of the phrase "just as it is written" demonstrates that he sought divine authority, believing that Scripture spoke directly on this matter (Acts 15:15).²⁴¹ Since this matter involved *halakha*, only Scripture could decide.²⁴²

James references Amos 9:11-12 to support the inclusion of gentiles as gentiles as part of the eschatological people of God.²⁴³ The passage states that God will rebuild the tent of David so that all humankind may seek Him, including His gentile believers (Amos 9:11-12). James understood that the inclusion of gentiles in the people of God as gentiles is part of the promised restoration of the Davidic kingdom.²⁴⁴ James bases his decision on the interpretation of Scripture in light of recent events.²⁴⁵ He decides gentiles are redeemed and acceptable as gentiles and do not have to become proselytes or God-Fearers.²⁴⁶ Although James' use of "after these things" (Acts 15:16) demonstrates his understanding that these events will occur after his

²⁴⁰ Savelle, 58-59; C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles: Introduction and Commentary on Acts 15-28*, ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stantoo, vol. 2, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 728.

²⁴¹ Glenny, 10; Savelle, 60.

²⁴² Glenny, 3.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Glenny, 24; Savelle, 58.

²⁴⁵ Glenny, 23.

²⁴⁶ Savelle, 66.

day, he does recognize a correlation between his day and the eschatological fulfillment of Amos 9:11-12. James knows that the current gentile inclusion is tied to the future restoration of Israel.²⁴⁷

Known as the Apostolic Decree, James imposes four stipulations on the gentile Christians. They are to abstain from anything sacrificed to idols, blood, things strangled, and fornication (Acts 15:20, 29).²⁴⁸ These activities are offensive to the Jews, whom they will continue to encounter in the synagogues. These four stipulations are consistent with the Law, which had previously stated conditions for the presence of gentiles amongst the Jews.²⁴⁹ Based upon the book of Leviticus, these stipulations contain prohibitions for the "alien living among you." They follow the same order as those presented in the Apostolic Decree; food sacrificed to idols (Lev 17:8-9), blood (Lev 17:10, 12), the meat of strangled animals (Lev 17:13), and sexual immorality (Lev 18:26).²⁵⁰

Gentile inclusion is present in the Gospel of Matthew. He presents Jesus as the universal hope of the Abrahamic promise to be a blessing to all (Gen 12:3). Matthew's reference to Jesus as the Son of Abraham reflects the beginning of God's covenant with Israel (Matt 1:1, 17). The

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 68-69.

²⁴⁸ Glenny, 20. Not all Jewish Christians may have agreed with James' decision. Scholars argue that Matthew's reading of Isaiah 56:1-8 suggests an end-time gentile conversion to Torah. Isaiah states that the foreigner who joins himself to God is not to profane the Sabbath and hold fast God's covenant. Those who support this interpretation argue that Matthew called for "all nations" to observe every letter of the Law. Benjamin L. White, "The Eschatological Conversion of 'All Nations' in Matthew 28.19-20: (Mis)reading Matthew through Paul." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36, no. 4 (2014): 353-82.

²⁴⁹ Savelle, 55, 60.

²⁵⁰ Glenny, 21.

Great Commission's call to make disciples of "all nations" fulfills the Abrahamic promise that all tribes will be blessed through him (Matt 28:19; cf. Gen 12:3; 22:18).²⁵¹ Matthew includes deliberate references to the gentile mission in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt 1:1-17). The mention of the Babylonian exile (Matt 1:11-12) is a reminder that God had sent the Jews to gentile nations to be His witness.²⁵² In an unusual move for genealogies of that time, Matthew includes the name of four women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. What is especially noteworthy is that the four women are gentiles or related to gentiles. Matthew deliberately demonstrates the gentile presence in the genealogy of the Messiah.²⁵³ Osborne states that their presence leads to a major motif in Matthew's Gospel; the preparation of the people of God to fulfill the Abrahamic covenant by taking the good news directly to the gentiles.²⁵⁴ Through genealogy, Matthew illustrates that Jesus is the Son of David, thus the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. He further illustrates that Jesus is the Son of Abraham and a descendant of a gentile woman who fulfills the Abrahamic covenant.²⁵⁵ Keener argues that Matthew highlights the diverse nature of Jesus. On the one hand, Jesus is the quintessential Jew as the Son of Abraham and the royal heir as the Son

²⁵¹ Steven S. H. Chang, "Hybridity and the Gentile Mission in Matthew's Genealogy." *ACTS Theological Journal*. 37 (2018), 135-42.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 143.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 70.

²⁵⁵ Chang, 146.

of David. On the other, Jesus has a gentile heritage suggesting that God had always intended for gentile inclusion. For Matthew, Jesus is the complete fulfillment of the messianic hope.²⁵⁶

For Paul, the gentile mission was not some new add-on. It was the core of what God had planned to accomplish through the nation of Israel.²⁵⁷ The Messiah was the higher purpose of the Torah. The objective of the Torah is fulfilled once the gentiles reject their idolatrous practices and accept Christ. All that was foretold by the prophets is fulfilled when the gentiles form a relationship with the one true God.²⁵⁸ The wild branches of the gentiles were to be grafted to the same olive tree as the natural branches of the Jews (Rom 11:17-24). They were to take their distinctive position in the plan of God.²⁵⁹ Paul did not cancel the Torah. As a Pharisee, he continued in its observance. The Torah applied to the Jews differently than to the gentiles. The Jews were to continue to observe the Torah as they were part of the covenant relationship with God. The gentiles had not entered fully into this covenant relationship.²⁶⁰ For the gentiles, he believed it was possible to have a righteous life without Torah observance and that both Jews and gentiles were saved through faith in Christ.²⁶¹ They received the Holy Spirit through baptism

²⁵⁶ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 80.

²⁵⁷ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 81.

²⁵⁸ Young, 27, 31.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁶⁰ The debate regarding Paul's Torah-free position is beyond the scope of this study. For its purposes, Paul supported gentile inclusion and believed that conversion to Judaism, circumcision, and Torah observance by the gentiles was not a requirement to become a Christian. Young, 21.

²⁶¹ Young, 10.

and not through observance of the Torah. Thus gentile conversion to Judaism was not required as Paul believed they were to live as the eschatological gentiles. They were to only worship the one true God between Christ's resurrection and the Parousia. In the end, God's kingdom's demographic will consist of Jews and gentiles.²⁶²

Jewish Proselytizing After Christ

As mentioned, Cornelius was the first documented gentile to become a Christian (Acts 10). However, most Jewish Christians continued to restrict the spread of the gospel to other Jews (Acts 11:19). The Christian mission to the gentiles started at the church in Antioch by Hellenistic Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene (Acts 11:20). After witnessing God working through the gentiles, Barnabas would retrieve Saul from Tarsus (Acts 11:23-25). The use of the synagogue remained the primary means to proselytize since gentiles would gather there each week to hear the Word of God in their native language.²⁶³ Paul and other Jewish Christians found a consistent presence of God-fearers and proselytes within the synagogue.²⁶⁴

Upon the ascension of Christ and the events surrounding Cornelius and his household, Jewish proselytizing to the gentiles experienced a split. Jews who accepted Jesus as the risen Messiah taught of His resurrection and the inauguration of the kingdom of God. Those Jews who denied Christ continued to preach the message of conversion and Torah observance. However,

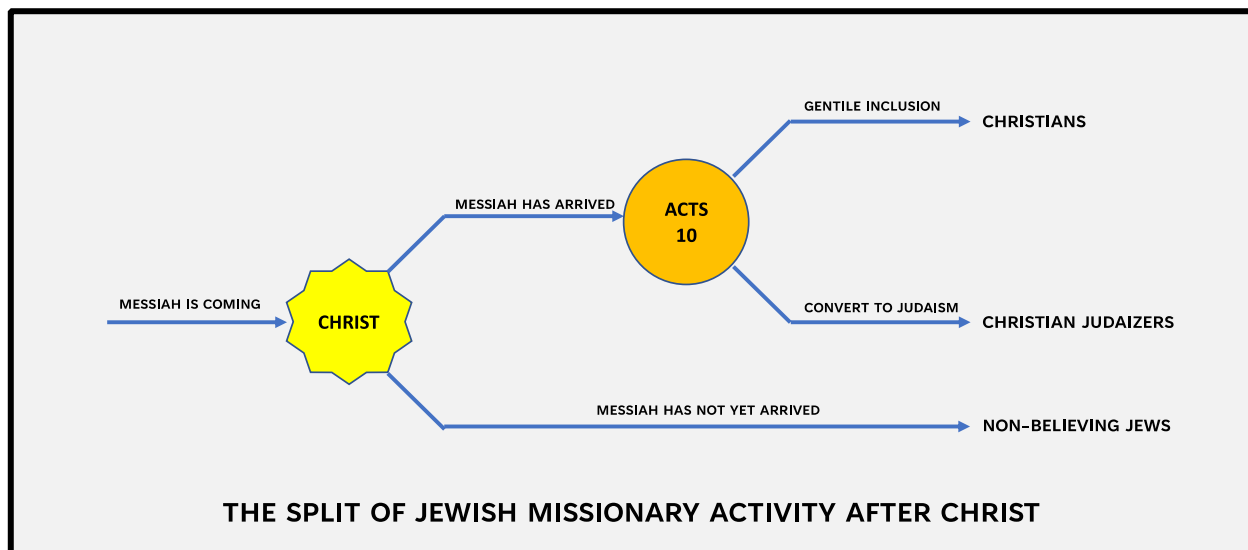
²⁶² Paula Frederickson, "Judaizing the Nations; The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel." *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010), 232-52.

²⁶³ Richard R. De Ridder, *Discipling the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bake Book House, 1971), 80, 83.

²⁶⁴ Scot McKnight, *A Light Amongst the Gentiles; Jewish Missionary Activity During the Second Temple Period* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, MN, 1991), 74.

there was an additional split among the Jewish Christians. Whereas Paul advocated non-Torah observance for gentile Christians, his position was not universally accepted.²⁶⁵ Jewish Christians were not opposed to the gentile mission. Rather they disputed the requirements for their entrance into the church. Some groups of Jewish Christians believed that gentiles had to convert to Judaism before they could become Christians. For them, the Messiah's arrival did not negate Moses's dispensation. Instead, it had perfected it. They attempted to convert gentile Christians to Judaism and taught that circumcision was a requirement to become a member of the people of God. Any uncircumcised would not be saved at the eschaton.²⁶⁶

Figure 5.1. The Split of Jewish Missionary Activity After Christ



²⁶⁵ Michael F. Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody, MA: Henderickson Publishers, 2010), 135; M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE - 117 CE)* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 395.

²⁶⁶ Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land*, 134, 136-37.

This tension between Paul and the Jewish Christian proselytizers is evident in his epistles. He speaks against circumcision in his letter to the Galatian church after they were taught that Torah observance was required to be saved (5:1-12; 6:12).²⁶⁷ Paul would refer to the Jewish Christian proselytizers as false brethren seeking to steal the freedom found in Christ (Gal 2:4). In his confrontation with Peter in Antioch, he refers to the proselytizers as the men from James. As the party of the circumcision (Gal 2:12). Paul regards them as disturbing and troubling (Gal 5:10, 12) who cause dissensions and hindrances (Rom 16:17-18). He warns the gentile Christians to beware of the dogs, the evil workers, and the false circumcision (Phil 3:2).²⁶⁸ Luke captures this same tension in the book of Acts, where a group of men from Judea arrive in Antioch and begin to teach the gentile Christians that they cannot be saved unless they are circumcised (15:1). The debate that Paul and Barnabas had with these men led to the Council of Jerusalem (15:2).

The Jewish Christian Proselytizers were not the only tension Paul would encounter. As documented in the book of Acts, his mission competed against non-believing Jews, often with violent results.²⁶⁹ In Pisidian Antioch, the non-believing Jews instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of the region (Acts 13:50-51). The Iconium Jews stirred the minds of the gentiles against Paul and Barnabas and attempted to stone them (Acts 14:2-6). In Lystra, Paul was left for dead after being stoned by the Jews from Antioch and Iconium (Acts 14:19). After Paul proclaimed the good news in the Thessalonian synagogue and drew both Jews

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 136.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 135.

²⁶⁹ Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land*, 146; Skarsaune, 171.

and gentiles to Christ, the non-believing Jews formed a mob in order to drag him before the people (Acts 17:5-9). The same non-believing Jews pursued Paul to Berea and turned the crowd against him, causing him to flee (Acts 17:13). While residing in Corinth, Paul was brought before the proconsul Gallio by the non-believing Jews, where they made false accusations against him (Acts 18:12-17).

The letter to the Colossians is his response to Jewish teaching. Gentile Christians experienced pressure to conform to the beliefs and practices of their Jewish neighbors.²⁷⁰ Paul warns the Colossian church not to be deluded by persuasive arguments or become captive through philosophy (Col 2:4, 8). They are not to be judged by their food, drink, or participation in Jewish festivals (Col 2:16-17).²⁷¹ Although some argue that Paul is confronting Jewish Christian Proselytizers, Dunn argues that the main proponents of the philosophy to which Paul refers has to belong to a Colossian synagogue.²⁷²

Paul: Case Study for Pre- and Post-Christ Jewish Mission

Saul the Persecutor

The book of Acts reveals that Paul is originally from Tarsus. However, he never mentions his ancestral home in his epistles. Rather, Paul identifies himself as being circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the nation of Israel and from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, persecutor of the church, and blameless before the Torah (Phil 3:5-6). As a

²⁷⁰ Bird. *Crossing Over Sea and Land*, 141, 145.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 142-43.

²⁷² James Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 34.

Pharisee, he studied in Jerusalem under Gamaliel, the grandson of Hillel.²⁷³ As a persecutor, he had attempted to destroy the church and had placed Jewish Christians in prisons (Gal 1:13; Acts 22:4).²⁷⁴ He was zealous for God and strictly adhered to the Torah (Acts 22:3; Gal 1:14).

His epistle to the Galatians suggests that Saul was a Jewish proselytizer. He asks the reason for his current persecution if he is still preaching circumcision (5:11). To preach circumcision was encouraging gentiles to convert to Judaism. Hillel instructed his students to love their fellow creatures and draw them near the Torah. They took Israel's mission to be God's witness seriously, evidenced by the number of God-fearers and proselytes encountered in the synagogues by the early Christians.²⁷⁵ Jesus alludes to their mission as well when he challenges the Pharisees that they would cross sea and land for a single convert (Matt 23:15).²⁷⁶ Having been taught under Hillel's grandson, Gamaliel, Saul was a Hillelite. Before his conversion to Christianity, Saul may have been engaged in this mission to bring gentiles into the obedience of

²⁷³ Young, 6, 12; The identification of Paul as a Pharisee in the book of Acts is confirmed by Paul in his epistle to the Philippians (3:5). However, he does not mention his teacher. Whether he studied under Gamaliel is a subject of debate. Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, "Paul and Gamaliel." *Review of Rabbinic Judaism*. 8, no. 1 (2005): 113-62. Although there is a minority view that debates whether Paul was a Pharisee, most scholars do not question Luke's and Paul's assertion. David Mishkin, "The Emerging Jewish Views of the Messiahship of Jesus and their Bearing on the Question of Resurrection." *HTS Theological Studies* 71, no. 1 (2015): 1-7. For the purpose of this study, it is sufficient to recognize that Paul was a Pharisee.

²⁷⁴ Young, 6, 12.

²⁷⁵ F. F. Bruce, *Paul; Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 128-29; Martin Hengel. "Die Ursprünge Der Christlichen Mission." *New Testament Studies*. 10, no. 1 (1971): 15-38.

²⁷⁶ Whether the Pharisees sought to convert gentiles or other Jews to their sect is a subject of debate. Feldman argues that Matthew 23:15 alludes to gentiles, whereas Goodman believes the Pharisees sought to bring more Jews to their sect. Bird believes there is insufficient evidence to regard Matthew 23:15 as Jewish proselytizing activities. Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 298; Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion; Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8; Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land*, 70.

the Torah and convert them to Judaism.²⁷⁷ This being the case, Saul regularly traveled between synagogues to teach prior to his encounter with Christ.

Paul the Christian

After his encounter with the risen Jesus, Paul had a consuming desire to bear witness to the gentiles. Jesus specifically tasks him with this mission (Acts 9:11).²⁷⁸ His eyewitness of the risen Christ qualifies him to be an apostle.²⁷⁹ The resurrection and the exaltation to the right hand of God proves to Paul that Jesus is the Lord of all (Acts 10:36).²⁸⁰ Jesus now becomes the epicenter of his theological motifs.²⁸¹ Paul immediately enters the synagogue in Damascus and begins teaching that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah (Acts 9:20).²⁸²

Paul's teachings are deeply rooted in Jewish thinking.²⁸³ The Old Testament was the authoritative source for his mission. He never viewed it as something new or unattached from what God had already done in the past and planned to do in the future. During his trial, Paul informs Felix that he believes in "everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets" (Acts 24:14). He was adamant about grounding his message and mission in the Old Testament. The gospel given by the prophets is the same good news Paul carried to

²⁷⁷ Bruce, 128-29; Martin Hengel, 23.

²⁷⁸ Young, 11.

²⁷⁹ Crowe, 48.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 65.

²⁸¹ Young, 42.

²⁸² Crowe, 49.

²⁸³ Young, 9.

the nations. When providing the reasoning for taking the good news of Jesus to the gentiles, he quotes Isaiah. He is to be the light to the gentiles and bring salvation to the ends of the earth (Acts 13:46; cf. Isa 49:6).²⁸⁴ Paul viewed history as moving towards the goal of God's final redemption plan and looked ahead to the restoration of Israel. He focused on Jesus as the anointed One designated to bring God's goodness to all humanity.²⁸⁵

Paul remained a Torah-observant Jew and viewed his mission as a continuation of the original Jewish mission. In his defense before the Jewish leaders in Rome, he states that he never spoke or acted against the customs or the people of their ancestors (Acts 28:17).²⁸⁶ Paul thought as a Pharisee who had studied in Jerusalem. Like other Pharisees, he believed in reward and punishment from God. Every human would either experience God's grace or His divine wrath on the day of retribution.²⁸⁷ The Torah remains Paul's primary source of faith and practice. All authority was derived from the Torah's teachings. He sought the wisdom of the Torah for guidance and direction. Within the Torah, he finds the promise of the Messiah.²⁸⁸ Paul did not cancel the Torah, nor was he the origin of Replacement Theology. Rather, the Torah served as his source to make the distinction between Jew and gentile within the plan of God. They were to

²⁸⁴ Kaiser, 75-76, 80-81.

²⁸⁵ Young, 10-11, 25.

²⁸⁶ Skarsaune, 174.

²⁸⁷ Young, 9, 11.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 11, 19.

be branches of the same Root.²⁸⁹ The Torah provided divine revelation on holy living, and he lived his life in accordance with its moral and spiritual values.²⁹⁰ Paul believed that Torah and grace were interrelated. He cannot understand the righteousness of God without the wrath of God. Jesus has shown God's righteousness and will demonstrate God's wrath.²⁹¹

The success of Paul's mission to the gentiles is built upon the ground of the Jewish mission.²⁹² His mission to the gentiles primarily focused on God-fearers that had been previously drawn to Judaism by Jewish proselytizers. It was Paul's custom to teach in the synagogue (Acts 17:2) and attempt to persuade Jews and gentiles (Acts 18:4). The gentiles already attended synagogue, believed in God, and lived in accordance with the moral precepts of the Torah.²⁹³ The God-fearers would understand Paul's Old Testament references and the role of the Messiah in Jewish eschatology and soteriology.²⁹⁴ When Paul departs from teaching at the synagogue in Corinth, he goes to the house of the God-fearer Titius Justus. The house is described as being located next to the synagogue (Acts 18:7). Even after Paul ceases to teach at the synagogue, he remained in the Jewish quarter and in close proximity to where the Jews and

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 10.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 22.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 42.

²⁹² Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations* (London, England: SCM Press LTD, 1967), 16.

²⁹³ Skarsaune, 171.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 172.

God-fearers gathered. He remained teaching there for one and a half years (Acts 18:11).²⁹⁵ In Ephesus, Paul departs the synagogue and takes the disciples to the school of Tyrannus where he taught Jews and God-fearers for two years (Acts 19:9-10). Only twice are there references of Paul addressing non-God-fearing gentiles. Once to prevent the crowd from sacrificing to him and Barnabas after healing the lame man (Acts 14:8-18). The second documented instance is when Paul addresses the Areopagus (Acts 17:16-34).²⁹⁶ It was the God-fearers who shared the good news of Jesus with their fellow gentiles that brought the entire city of Pisidian Antioch to hear the word of the Lord (Acts 13:44).²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ When Paul stated that he will go to the gentiles (Acts 18:6), this does not suggest a revolutionary change in Paul's mission. Rather, he moved away from teaching at the synagogue. His audience continued to be Jews and God-fearing gentiles. Following his time in Corinth, Paul travels to Ephesus where he spoke at the synagogue for three months (Acts 19:8). The book of Acts reveals that Paul's mission was successful in attracting both Jews and gentiles to Christ (Acts 13:43; 14:1). Skarsaune, 171.

²⁹⁶ Skarsaune, 171-72.

²⁹⁷ Bruce, 166.

Table 55. Paul's Teaching Venues and Audiences According to the Book of Acts

City	Teaching Venue	Audience	Acts
Damascus	Synagogue	Jews	9:20
Jerusalem	Not specified	Jews	9:28-29
Antioch	Not specified	Jews, God-fearers	11:26
Salamis	Synagogue	Jews	13:5
Pisidian Antioch	Synagogue	Jews, God-fearers	13:14; 14:21
Iconium	Synagogue	Jews, God-fearers	14:1, 21
Lycaonia	Not specified	Not specified	14:6,
Lystra	Not specified	Gentiles	14:6, 15, 21
Derbe	Not specified	Not specified	14:6, 21
Perga	Not specified	Not specified	14:25
Philippi	Side of river	God-fearing women	16:13
Thessalonica	Synagogue	Jews, God-fearers	17:1-2
Berea	Synagogue	Jews, God-fearers	17:10
Athens	Synagogue, marketplace, Areopagus	Jews, God-fearers, gentiles	17:17, 22
Corinth	Synagogue, House of Titius Justus	Jews, God-fearers	18:4, 7
Ephesus	Synagogue, School of Tyrannus	Jews, God-fearers	18:19, 19:8-9
Troas	Upper Room	Jews, God-fearers	20:8
Rome	Rented Quarters	Jews, God-fearers	28:23, 30-31

Source: NASB1995

During the Second Temple period, the Jewish diaspora constituted the primary channel for the Christian mission. Paul and his fellow Jewish Christians encountered proselytes and God-fearers at the synagogues to which they traveled.²⁹⁸ The God-fearers would share the gospel with their gentile neighbors, causing the church to grow beyond the Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers. This later influx of non-God-fearing gentiles is evidenced by Paul's writings becoming hard to understand and being distorted by the untaught (2 Pet 3:16).²⁹⁹ During the Second Temple period, Jews were God's witness to the nations of the past and future restoration of Israel, which would bring salvation to all humankind. Jewish Christians shared with the gentiles

²⁹⁸ Jeremias, 16.

²⁹⁹ The large influx of non-God-fearing gentiles into the church may be contributed to the removal of the requirements of circumcision and Jewish ritual observance. Skarsaune, 174.

the arrival of the Messiah and the inauguration of the kingdom of God. The wild branches grafted into the Olive tree with the natural branches continue to be God's witness until Jesus' return.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

God has a specific purpose for the nation of Israel. They are part of His universal salvation plan and His witness to the world. He promises to make Israel a great nation (Gen 12:2). They are to be holy and a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:5-6) through whom He will bless all the people of the world (Gen 12:3). Although the exile and the ensuing diaspora was punishment for disobedience, it was part of God's plan. After having established a national identity while a kingdom, the Jews carried this identity with them into their diaspora communities. This identity distinguished them from their gentile neighbors, living as God had originally intended for humanity. During this second exile, Israel is witness to His past and future restoration. God is revealed to the gentiles through the nation of Israel. It is part of His two-stage salvation plan. Stage One, establish the nation of Israel. Stage Two, bless the nations through Israel.

Jewish diaspora communities were well-established across the Mediterranean region during the Second Temple period. The diaspora Jews built synagogues and taught God's word in the vernacular language. They lived in concentrated areas as a distinct people and attracted the curiosity and awe of their gentile neighbors (Deut 4:6-8). Some gentiles would respond negatively to the Jewish strangeness, while others would become attracted to Judaism. They would attend synagogue and learn about God. Some would become God-fearers while others fully converted to become proselytes. The apostle Paul and other Jewish Christians encountered gentiles who knew God and were prepared to receive the good news of Christ.

His Chosen People: God's Purpose for Israel

God's formation of the nation of Israel is part of His universal salvation plan for humanity. He establishes Israel for His purpose and not for Israel's.¹ His plan for Israel is subservient to His plan for salvation.² Their election is not one of privilege. Instead, it is one of responsibility.³ The foundation of this plan is God's promise to Abram (Gen 12:1-3). Considered one of the key revelations in Scripture, it reveals God's rescue plan.⁴ Abram's election is for the sake of mission.⁵ God has a two-stage redemptive plan for humankind. First, He will form Abram into a great nation. Second, He will reveal Himself to all of humanity through this nation (Isa 49:3).⁶

Israel is not to live as an isolated nation.⁷ Rather, God calls them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:5-6). This call is instructive in how they are to fulfill their

¹ John F. Walvoord, "The Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant," *The Bibliotheca Sacra* 102, no. 405 (1945): 27-36.

² Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose* (Downers Grove, Ill: Apollos/InterVarsity Press, 2016), 86-87.

³ John N. Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 571-72.

⁴ Williamson, 77.

⁵ Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 35.

⁶ Christopher. R. North, *The Second Isaiah; Introduction, Translation, and Commentary to Chapters XL-LV* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), 143.

⁷ Jo Bailey Wells, *God's Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 49.

unique role in God's redemptive plan. They are to mediate and intercede as priests between God and the wayward nations.⁸

Israel is God's witness (Isaiah 43:10). The evidence of His claim of unique divinity rests on Israel's testimony.⁹ It is not something they did. It is something they are.¹⁰ Israel is the living evidence that He is God alone.¹¹ Israel experienced His past deliverance, and they will experience His future deliverance.¹²

A Blessing to All (Genesis 12:1-3)

God calls Abram to leave his country for the land that God would show him (Gen 12:1). God makes Abram a three-part promise. He will make Abram into a great nation. He will make Abram's name great. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through Abram (Gen 12:1-3). Later, God explains that Abram will become known as Abraham and that he will be the father of a multitude of nations (Gen 17:5). God informs Abraham that this promise will pass to his descendants (Gen 17:7). In addition, God promises that He will give Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan (Gen 17:8). In Mamre, God affirms that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through Abraham (Gen 18:18). God tells Abraham that He will greatly

⁸ Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of the Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 65.

⁹ Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 121.

¹⁰ Oswalt, *The NIV Application Commentary: Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 423.

¹¹ Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 123.

¹² *Ibid.*, 124.

multiply his descendants and that “in your seed, all the nations of the earth will be blessed” (Gen 22:17-18).

This three-part promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) lays the foundation for God’s universal plan of salvation for all humankind. Abram is promised that he will become a great nation.

However, the purpose of this great nation is revealed in the third part. It is not for the purpose of Abram’s prosperity. The purpose of the great nation is so all the families of the earth may be blessed. The great nation is the means for God to reveal Himself to the world.

Table 56. Key Scripture of the Origin of Israel

Verse	Subject	Description
Gen 12:1-3	Abram	God’s three-part promise to Abram. He will make Abram a great nation. He will make Abram’s name great. He will bless all the families of the world through Abram.
Gen 15	Abraham	Covenant-cutting ceremony between God and Abraham. Establishment of the single, unilateral, and eternal covenant.
Gen 17:5-8	Abraham	God affirms His covenant promise. God tells Abraham that he will be a father to a multitude of nations, that the covenant will extend through his descendants, and that they will possess the land of Canaan.
Gen 18:18	Abraham	God affirms that the nations will be blessed through Abraham.
Gen 25:11	Isaac	God blesses Isaac after the passing of his father Abraham.
Gen 25:23	Rebekah	God informs Isaac’s wife Rebekah that her older son Esau will serve her younger son Jacob.
Gen 28:13-15	Jacob	God reaffirms His promise to Jacob that his descendants will be numerous and that through them all the peoples of the earth will be blessed.
Gen 35:9-12	Jacob	Jacob’s name is changed to Israel. God reaffirms His promise that his descendants will become a great nation.
Gen 46:2-4	Jacob	God calls Jacob to relocate to Egypt, where He will make him into a great nation.

Source: NASB1995.

Nature of the Abrahamic Covenant

God’s promises to Abram become the Abrahamic covenant. The nature and conditionality of this covenant are a subject of scholarly debate. Most scholars agree that the promise in Genesis 12:1-3 is a pre-covenant promise and that the covenant between God and

Abram was ratified ten years later when the covenant-cutting ceremony was held (Gen 15).¹³ It is the nature and conditionality of Genesis 17 and 22 that are debated among scholars. However, the evidence reveals that the Abrahamic covenant is singular, unilateral, and eternal.

Singular

Williamson's position is that Genesis 15 and 17 are two separate covenants. Genesis 15 is a temporal royal land grant. This covenant focuses on the first part of God's three-part promise to Abram that He would make him a great nation.¹⁴ He believes Genesis 17 is a separate covenant that focuses on the third part of God's three-part promise to bless all the families of the earth through Abram.¹⁵ Niehaus disagrees with Williamson. He believes Genesis 15 is where God entered into a single covenant with Abram, and Genesis 17 describes supplemental information.¹⁶ He further disagrees with Williamson that the covenant is a royal land grant as

¹³ It may be argued that God's pre-covenant promise to Abram was conditional. God commands Abram to "go forth" from his country and depart from his relatives and his father's house. Should Abram obey, God promises to make him a great nation, bless him, make his name great, bless those who bless Abram, curse those who curse him, and bless all the families of the earth through Abram (Gen 12:1-3). Scripture reveals that Abram "went forth" as God commanded him (Gen 12:4). In the ancient Near East, to depart relatives and the father's house was to completely disengage from family. God's promised protection may be in replacement of the protection Abram received from his family. Jonathan Grossman, *Abram to Abraham; A Literary Analysis of the Abraham Narrative* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang AG, 2016). Although an agreement was made between a Lord and his vassal, scholars do not consider Gen 12:1-3 to be a covenant between God and Abram. In the ancient Near East, covenants between parties were ratified with a covenant-cutting ceremony. The covenant cutting ceremony between God and Abram is conducted ten years later (Gen 15). David Andrew Dean, "Covenant, Conditionality, and Consequence: New Terminology and a Case Study in the Abrahamic Covenant," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57, no. 2 (2014): 281-308. Abram's pre-covenantal obligation to "go forth" and leave his family was satisfied prior to the covenant-cutting ceremony. When the covenant is ratified between God and Abram, no covenantal obligations are placed on Abram.

¹⁴ Williamson, 86-87.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

¹⁶ Jeffrey J. Niehaus, "God's Covenant with Abraham," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 2 (2013): 249-71.

gifts of land bestowed upon loyal vassals did not require warfare.¹⁷ Dean agrees with Niehaus that Genesis 15 is the single covenant made between God and Abraham. He believes Genesis 17 is God reaffirming His covenant with Abraham before instructing him of the new covenant regulations.¹⁸ Williamson, Niehaus, and Dean agree that Genesis 22 is not a separate covenant. Rather, it is a test of Abraham's faith.¹⁹

Since Genesis 15 contains the only instance of a covenant-cutting ceremony, the Abrahamic covenant is a single covenant between God and Abraham. Genesis 12:1-3 is God's three-part pre-covenant promise to Abram. Genesis 15 is the ratification of that promise into a covenant through the performance of a covenant-cutting ceremony. Genesis 17 is God's affirmation of His covenant with Abraham before presenting further covenant regulations. Genesis 22 is a test of Abraham's obedience to the covenant regulations.

Unilateral / Unconditional

Williamson regards Genesis 15 as a unilateral covenant. God's promise to Abram to make him a great nation does not require any action on Abram's part.²⁰ He regards Genesis 17 as a bilateral covenant. It is conditional upon human behavior. God will continue to bless the families of the earth through the great nation as long as Abraham and his descendants remain

¹⁷ Ibid., 267.

¹⁸ Dean, 281-308; George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 17, no. 3 (Sep 1954): 49-76.

¹⁹ Williamson, 90; Niehaus, 250; Dean, 308.

²⁰ Williamson, 86-87.

faithful to God.²¹ Mason agrees, identifying the preamble of Genesis 17 as evidence of the bilateral nature of the covenant. He argues that God instructs Abraham to walk blamelessly before Him in order to receive the covenantal promises (17:1).²² Niehaus views Genesis 15 as both unilateral and bilateral. It is unilateral in that God will see His plan accomplished. It is bilateral in that any individual may remove themselves from the covenant relationship through disobedience.²³ Davidson argues that the Abrahamic covenant is unilateral in nature as it is God's promissory oath to Abraham.²⁴ Dean agrees that the Abrahamic covenant is unilateral. God is the only active oath-taker, and He cannot bind the passive covenant-maker. As the active covenant-maker, God has the covenant obligation to make Abraham into a great nation and to bless the families of the earth through this nation.²⁵

The Abrahamic covenant is unilateral, as God is the only oath-taker. As the active covenant maker, God has the covenant obligation to make Abraham into a great nation and bless the people of the earth through this nation. As the passive covenant maker, Abraham does not

²¹ Ibid., 90.

²² Steven D. Mason. "Eternal Covenant" in *the Pentateuch; The Contours of an Elusive Phrase*, Vol. 494 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2008), 94.

²³ Niehaus' position suggests a more collective than an individual understanding of the covenant relationship. God will continue to bless the families of the earth through the nation, which consists of those who remain obedient. Niehaus, 260-61.

²⁴ Robert Davidson. "Covenant Ideology in Ancient Israel," in *The World of Ancient Israel*. ed. R. E. Clements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 338.

²⁵ Dean employs George E. Mendenhall's definition of the ancient Near Eastern covenant as a solemn promise made binding by an oath. The oath-taker can only bind themselves and cannot bind the passive covenant-maker. Because of this, the very foundation of the covenant is unilateral. In the ancient world, if the covenant were to be bilateral, the covenanting parties would enter into a double covenant where they both bound themselves to identical oaths. Dean, 308; Mendenhall, 714.

have covenant obligations. Instead, he has covenant regulations since he lives under the rule of the sovereign. Although there are penalties for disobedience to covenant regulations, this does not nullify the covenant or release God from His covenant obligations.²⁶

Eternal

Williamson regards Genesis 15 as temporal. He argues that there is no language that defines the covenant as eternal. However, he regards Genesis 17 as an eternal covenant.²⁷ Niehaus believes Genesis 15 is an eternal covenant as God will see His plan finished.²⁸ Dean agrees as God is the active oath-maker who has covenant obligations that cannot be nullified by any action by Abraham or his descendants.²⁹ God's affirmation of His covenant obligations to Abraham's son Isaac (Gen 25:11), his grandson Jacob (Gen 28:13-15; 35:9-12), and his descendant Moses (Exod 32:10) demonstrates the eternal nature of the covenant. God's covenant with Abraham is part of His universal redemption plan and is not for Israel's benefit.

Based upon the evidence, the Abrahamic covenant is singular, unilateral, and eternal. God's promise to Abram is the foundation of His universal redemption plan. He elects Abram and his descendants to become the nation through whom He will reveal Himself to the world. It is a single covenant for God's missional task. It is unilateral in that it is part of God's plan, and He will see it fulfilled. It is eternal as God's plan is eternal.

²⁶ Dean, 308.

²⁷ Williamson, 86-88.

²⁸ Niehaus, 260-61.

²⁹ Dean, 308.

Table 57. Key Scripture of the Eternal Abrahamic Covenant

Verse	Subject	Description
Gen 12:1-3	Promise	God promises Abram that He will make him into a great nation through whom the peoples of the earth will be blessed
Gen 15	Covenant Obligation	Covenant cutting ceremony where God establishes His promise that Abram's descendants will be as numerous as the stars and possess the land of Canaan
Gen 17	Covenant Regulation	Affirmation of God's covenant with Abram. Abram's name is changed to Abraham, and the covenant regulation of circumcision is established
Gen 22	Covenant Test	Abraham's obedience to covenant regulation is tested when God commands him to sacrifice his son Isaac
Exod 32:10	Eternal Covenant	After God plans to destroy the Israelites for their disobedience, God keeps his promise to make Abraham's descendant Moses a great nation
Lev 26:14-45	Punishment	God outlines the punishment for disobedience of the covenant regulations, including removal from the land. God's covenant obligations remain.
Deut 28:15-68	Punishment	God outlines the punishment for disobedience of the covenant regulations, including removal from the land. God's covenant obligations remain.

Source: NASB1995.

Separate from the Land Promise

The promise to become a great nation is separate from the land promise. In Genesis 12:2, God promises to make Abram a great nation should he “go forth” to the land He will show him. Abram departed his relatives and traveled to Canaan when God first promises to give the land to his descendants (Gen 12:7). The land promise is outside the original promise to make Abram a great nation. The land promise does not place any conditions on Abram. In Genesis 13:15, God makes the land promise eternal. During the covenant-cutting ceremony, God ratifies the eternal land promise with Abram (Gen 15:7, 18). He reaffirms this promise in Genesis 17:8.

However, the promise to become a great nation remains separate from the land promise. Biblical evidence reveals that Israel became a great nation prior to entering the land of Canaan and the fulfilment of the land promise. God instructs Jacob to relocate to Goshen and promises that He will make him into a great nation (Gen 46:3). The Israelites in Goshen increased from seventy to a number where Pharaoh feared that they might exceed that of the Egyptians (Exod

1:9). When the Israelites depart Egypt, they number six hundred thousand (600,000) men (Exod 12:37).³⁰ The establishment of nation of Israel is confirmed in the Offering of First Fruits. Moses instructs the Israelites to state before God that their “father was a wandering Aramean, and went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; but there he became a great, mighty, and populous nation” (Deut 26:5). Prior to entering the land of Canaan, the nation of Israel was circumcised at Gilgal (Jos 5:8-9).

The nation of Israel existed for four hundred and seventy years (470) prior to entering the land of Canaan. They are a distinct people group governed by divine law that is not tied to a geographic location. Moses warned that disobedience to the Mosaic covenant would result in removal from the land (Lev 26:33; Deut 28:36, 63). This is God’s punishment for their disobedience and the Israelites would only be restored to the land after they had repented (Lev 26:41; Deut 30:1-5). However, during this time, God does not retract His promise that Israel will be a great nation through whom the people of the earth will be blessed. God states that during the time of exile, He will not reject them, destroy them, or break His covenant with them (Lev 26:44). Israel remained a nation during the Babylonian exile and while residing in diaspora communities. Second Temple Jews shared a common national identity and understood that their citizenship was not contingent upon residence in the land of Palestine. Josephus often referred to

³⁰ Including the women and children, the population of the nation of Israel exceeded over one million (1,000,000). R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*. vol. 2. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 119.

Jews as members of a nation (*Ag. Ap.* 1.1).³¹ Philo identifies the Jews as a nation (*Moses* 2.43-44).³² This identification as a Jewish nation is important to their sense of identity and mission.

Table 58. Key Scripture of the Establishment of the Nation Outside Canaan

Verse	Subject	Description
Gen 46:3	Nation	God tells Jacob to relocate to Egypt, where He would make him into a great nation
Gen 47:27	Goshen	Israelites settled in Goshen, where they acquired property and increased in number
Exod 1:7, 9	Population	Israel's population increased so that they filled the land of Egypt, and Pharaoh stated that they had become too numerous
Exod 12:37	Population	The Israelites numbered six hundred thousand men, not including women and children, when they departed Egypt
Exod 12:40-41	Time in Egypt	The nation of Israel lived in Egypt for four hundred and thirty (430) years before they departed for the land of Canaan
Deut 26:5	Nation	Moses tells how Jacob traveled to Egypt, where he became a great nation that was powerful and numerous
Josh 5:2-9	Nation	Joshua circumcises the nation after wandering in the wilderness for forty (40) years

Source: NASB1995.

Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation (Exodus 19:5-6)

God's universal plan of salvation requires Israel to be more than a great nation. The purpose of Israel as a nation is to bless all the people of the earth. God instructs the Israelites that they work for Him. They are His possession. He has elected them to fulfill a specific role in His salvation plan. They are to be His kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:5-6). This is more of a responsibility than a privilege.³³ Now that Israel is a nation, God has launched the second stage of His plan. He will reveal Himself to the world through His chosen nation.³⁴

³¹ John M. G. Barclay. *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora; From Alexander to Trajan (323 B.C.E – 117 CE)* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 405.

³² Ibid., 406.

³³ Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 571-72.

³⁴ North, 143.

As priests, Israel is to mediate and intercede between God and the gentile nations.³⁵ As the ministers of God (Isa 61:6), Israel is to create the opportunity for a relationship between God and the world. They represent God through their participation in His mission and represent humanity through prayer.³⁶ In order to be priests, they must first become holy.

As God's holy nation, they distinguished themselves from the other nations. They were to be in the world but not of the world. They lived according to God's code of ethics and embodied His original creational intent and eschatological goal for all humanity.³⁷ This attracted the curiosity and awe of the surrounding nations, who recognized their righteous wisdom and the nearness of their God (Deut 4:5-8).³⁸ He worked amid the Israelites and revealed Himself to the watching world.³⁹

God's Witness (Isaiah 43:10)

The nation of Israel is called God's witness (Isa 43:10). They are not asked to be His witness. They are His witness. It is not something they do. It is who they are. Israel is the living evidence of God's past deliverance and will be the evidence of His future deliverance. He will

³⁵ Merrill, 65.

³⁶ Tim Chester, *Exodus for You* (Epsom: The Good Book Company, 2016), 142; Philo, *On the Life of Moses*, 1.149.

³⁷ Andrew S. Malone, *God's Mediators: A Biblical Theology of Priesthood* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 136; Goheen, 30.

³⁸ Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission; The Glory of Christ in All Time and Space* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 107; Goheen, 41.

³⁹ Robert Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations: A Study of the Old Testament Conception of Israel's Mission to the World*. trans. John Penney Smith (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 79.

use Israel to demonstrate His incomparability and reveal Himself to the world.⁴⁰ God's ultimate plan is for the world to know and worship Him (Isa 66:19-20). Nations are drawn to God as they witness His activity through Israel. The Second Temple period diaspora Jews acted as God's witness. They proclaimed His glory and taught of His future restoration of Israel and of all humanity.

The Second Temple Period Diaspora: God's Purpose for the Second Exile

The prophet Isaiah foretold that God would send survivors of Israel to the nations that had not heard of His fame or seen His glory (Isa 66:19-20). These nations would witness the redemptive power of God through Israel (Isa 62:2). During the Second Temple period, Jewish diaspora communities were well-established across the Mediterranean. Jewish populations existed in Egypt, North Africa, Syria, Asia Minor, and Rome. Some Jews sought asylum in Egypt to evade the Babylonians.⁴¹ Others were brought there as slaves or military personnel.⁴² In addition, Alexandria's promise of economic advantage attracted Jews to the region.⁴³

Proximity

The migration of the Jews, whether voluntary or involuntary, placed them in close proximity to their gentile neighbors. Jewish communities emerged in gentile cities across the Mediterranean region. The nation of Israel existed within the boundaries of the gentile nations.

⁴⁰ Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 124.

⁴¹ Paul R. House, *I, 2 Kings*. vol. 8. The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 113.

⁴² Barclay, 22.

⁴³ Ibid.

Egypt

Jewish immigration to Egypt increased after its defeat to Alexander in 323 B.C. With Syria and Egypt under the same administrative control, migration from Syria to Egypt became easier.⁴⁴ Although some Jews freely migrated to Egypt, there is evidence that some were forced. The *Letter of Aristeas* claims that Ptolemy I (305-282 B.C.) relocated one hundred thousand (100,000) Jews for military service or to serve as slaves. Thirty thousand (30,000) Jews were settled in garrisons and forts across the kingdom as part of their employment in the Ptolemaic army (*Let. Aris.* 12.27). These Jews may have been captured during the Syrian Wars, which followed the division of Alexander's empire.⁴⁵ The Ptolemaic and Seleucid practice of land grants in exchange for military service may explain the presence of Jewish populations in the Egyptian countryside.⁴⁶

Alexandria's Jews accounted for forty percent of the city's population and an eighth of Egypt's population.⁴⁷ By A.D. 38, they were concentrated in two of the city's five quarters.⁴⁸ Alexandria became the largest Jewish population outside Palestine.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁵ Barclay, 22.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 22-23.

⁴⁷ Richard R. De Ridder. *Disciplining the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1971), 68.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

North Africa

The Jewish population would grow beyond Egypt and migrate to Cyrenaica and other regions of North Africa (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.118). Various forms of evidence support the existence of these Jewish diaspora communities. Tripoli contains archeological evidence of synagogues and catacombs dating from early B.C.⁵⁰ Carthage possesses records of Jewish colonies from as early as the construction of the First Temple.⁵¹ Moroccan Jews claim that their ancestors did not go into Babylonian exile.⁵²

Syria

Much like Egypt, Jews were relocated to Ptolemaic Syria as part of the military or to serve as slaves.⁵³ Those in Seleucid Syria may have been Babylonian Jews who served in the Seleucid army and relocated to Antioch (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.119). Biblical evidence supports the existence of Jewish communities and synagogues in Syria. Christians fled to a Jewish community in Antioch to avoid persecution (Acts 11:20). The purpose of Saul's trip to Damascus was to persecute Christian Jews (Acts 9:1-2).

Asia Minor

Antiochus III's letter to his governor Zeuxis dated from the third century B.C., is the earliest evidence of Jewish communities in Asia Minor. He instructed the relocation of two

⁵⁰ Sidney Mendelssohn. *The Jews of Africa* (London: Kegan Paul, 1920), 64.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Barclay, 244.

thousand (2,000) Jewish families from Mesopotamia and Babylon to strategic locations in Phrygia and Lydia, where they would be given land and permitted to practice their laws without interference (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.147-53). The documented seizure of the temple contributions in 62 B.C. provides further literary evidence of a significant Jewish presence in Asia Minor. The seizure being valued at one hundred thousand (100,000) drachmae suggests a Jewish population of over fifty thousand (50,000) males between the age of twenty and fifty in each of the cities of Apamea and Adramyttium.⁵⁴ The accusations of atheism and misanthropy made by Greek rhetorician Apollonius Molon argues not only for a sizable Jewish presence, but for the distinctiveness of their lifestyle (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.79, 148, 258). The book of Acts provides biblical evidence of Jewish communities in Asia Minor. The apostle Paul visits synagogues in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth (Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1-2, 10; 18:4). The presence of synagogues is evidence of well-established Jewish communities in Asia Minor.

Rome

The existence of Jewish communities in Rome during the Second Temple period is supported by literary and archeological evidence. The existence of inscriptions, synagogues, and burial sites demonstrate a prominent Jewish community.⁵⁵ During his visit to Rome in A.D. 37, Philo noted a large population of Jewish freedmen. Jews flooded the Roman slave market after

⁵⁴ Cicero, *Pro Flacco*, 28.68.

⁵⁵ Barclay, 289.

Pompey's victory in 63 B.C. Between that time, they had attained manumission and Roman citizenship.⁵⁶

Identity

The diaspora Jews lived according to God's code of ethics and reflected His value system. They demonstrated God's standard of justice and His model of life and society. The Jews were the embodiment of God's original creational intention and eschatological goal for humanity.⁵⁷ The Jews distinguished themselves from the gentiles through their belief in a single God (monotheism), their dietary restrictions, the practice of circumcision, the observance of the Sabbath, and the centrality of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Monotheism

Unlike their polytheist neighbors, the Jews worshipped a single God and did not participate in idol worship. They believed that only the Jews knew how to worship Him properly and that only the Jerusalem Temple was sacred.⁵⁸ There was to be a single temple for a single God, and the Jerusalem Temple was the only location where He accepted sacrifices (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.193; Philo, *Spec. Law* 1.67).

Dietary Restrictions

The diaspora Jews followed the dietary restrictions outlined in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. This included abstinence from pork, considered a national food by the

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 430-33.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 430-31.

Romans.⁵⁹ Out of fear of consuming food that may have been tainted by pagan worship, the Jews avoided social engagements with gentiles.⁶⁰

Circumcision

God commanded Abraham and his descendants to perform circumcision as a sign of their covenant (Gen 17:10-12). The diaspora Jews continued this practice to demonstrate their commitment to this covenant regulation. In their view, Torah observance was impossible without being circumcised.⁶¹ This requirement would extend to male proselytes to complete their conversion to Judaism (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.257-58).⁶² In addition, any gentile male desiring to marry a Jewish woman had to be circumcised before they were permitted to wed.⁶³

Sabbath

The diaspora Jews ceased all work on the Sabbath. They did not engage in financial or legal matters on this day.⁶⁴ Those serving in the military did not fight, march, or perform any work on the Sabbath (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.276).⁶⁵ The Jews recognized the Sabbath as a sign of

⁵⁹ Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 167.

⁶⁰ Barclay, 434.

⁶¹ J.N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1975), 136.

⁶² Barclay, 439.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 441.

⁶⁵ Feldman, 159-61.

their relationship with God.⁶⁶ It was a day to gather at the synagogue for worship and instruction. They heard the Torah expounded and learned how to observe Jewish customs (Philo, *Spec. Law* 2.62-63).⁶⁷

Jerusalem and the Temple

The centrality of the Temple was an important aspect of the Jewish identity. The Jews believed that the Temple was God's presence on earth.⁶⁸ Jerusalem was considered the religious center.⁶⁹ Tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims traveled to the city for the major festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.⁷⁰ Jewish males between the age of twenty and fifty contributed a half-shekel each year as Temple tax.⁷¹ They understood it as a ransom for their souls and that it brought social and physical salvation (Philo, *Spec. Law* 1.77-78). The collection of the tax provided a sense of local community for the Jewish individual.⁷²

⁶⁶ Barclay, 441.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 417.

⁶⁸ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus; An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*. trans by F.H. and C. H. Cave (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1969), 75.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Barclay, 419; Jeremias, 62.

⁷¹ Barclay, 417.

⁷² Ibid., 418.

Intermarriage

The diaspora Jews were concerned with keeping marriage bonds between Jews or between Jews and proselytes.⁷³ The preservation of the Jewish identity is accredited to this effort of keeping the nation pure. Since the offspring followed the ethnicity of the father, the responsibility of preserving the continuity of Judaism fell upon the Jewish women. The women's fathers shared this responsibility since they ensured their daughter's virginity and arranged the marriage.⁷⁴ The Jewish position on exogamy is reflected in the writings from that time. Philo wrote that it was taboo for a Jewish woman to receive the alien seed of an uncircumcised man (*QG* 3.61). Josephus shared a similar sentiment, when he wrote that circumcision was instituted to prevent Abraham's offspring from mixing with foreigners (*Ant.* 1.192).

It was believed that exogamy diluted or destroyed the commitment of the Jewish partner to their ancestral traditions.⁷⁵ Both Philo and Josephus write of the corrupting influence of foreign women (Philo, *Moses* 1.295-305; *Spec. Law* 1.54-58; 3.29; *Virtues* 34-44; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.141-44). The residential concentration of Jews made endogamy more likely.⁷⁶ This practice was adopted as part of the Jewish identity.

⁷³ Ibid., 410.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 411-12.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 108.

⁷⁶ Feldman, 79.

Table 59. The Jewish Identity

Distinctive Trait	Description
Monotheism	Belief in the one true God.
Dietary Restrictions	Abstinence from the foods listed in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.
Practice of Circumcision	All Jewish males must be circumcised to demonstrate their commitment to the Abrahamic covenant.
Sabbath Observance	Cease all work on the seventh day.
Centrality of Jerusalem and the Temple	The Jerusalem Temple is God's presence on earth. Sacrifices must be made at the Temple.
Intermarriage	Exogamy is prohibited. Only marriage between Jews is permitted. Gentiles desiring to marry a Jew must first convert to Judaism.

Source: John M.G. Barclay. *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996); Louis H. Feldman. *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

The Synagogue

The synagogue was a common element within the Jewish diaspora communities. The earliest evidence of their existence is the Egyptian prayer houses dating from the third century B.C.⁷⁷ Although Jerusalem remained the religious center of Judaism, the synagogue offered a place for instruction and worship.⁷⁸ It became the location to acquaint the world with the Word of God and where gentiles learned about Judaism.⁷⁹ The apostle Paul and other Jewish Christians encountered God-fearers and proselytes in synagogues across the various diaspora communities (Acts 13:43; 14:1).

The survivors of the Babylonian exile had been sent to live among the nations (Isa 66:19-20). By the time of Christ, Jewish communities were well-established across the Mediterranean

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ De Ridder, 77.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 80.

region, and the synagogues were the center for worship and instruction for both Jews and gentiles. The diaspora Jews lived a lifestyle that attracted the attention of their gentile neighbors.

Language

The practice of interpretation dates to the Elephantine as these overseers of the “southern gate” bore the title “overseer of all interpreters.”⁸⁰ There is biblical evidence of the use of translators as an interpreter was used as an intermediary between Joseph and his brothers (Gen 42:23). Upon their return from exile, a translator is used as Ezra reads the Hebrew Bible from a wooden platform (Neh 8:8). During the Persian times, the *targumim* emerged as the Aramaic language began to replace Hebrew as the *lingua franca* in the ancient Near East. The public reading of the Torah in synagogue required that the written text be rendered in Aramaic. Every book of the Old Testament with the exception of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel have *targumim*.⁸¹ The weekly Torah reading was translated into the vernacular language by the *meturgeman*. He was separate from the reader and had to interpret without the use of written text.⁸²

After the conquest of Alexander the Great, Greek became the *lingua franca* in the Eastern Mediterranean. It was the spoken and written language for everyday use and for Jewish religious

⁸⁰ Heidemarie Salevsky, “The Origins of Interpreting in the Old Testament and the *Meturgeman* in the Synagogue,” *The Bible Translator* 69, no. 2 (2018): 184-98.

⁸¹ Ibid, 189.

⁸² Ibid., 193.

purposes. This led to a Greek-speaking Judaism and to the translation of the Torah into Greek.⁸³

The sons and daughters of diaspora Jews communicated God's Word in their native language.⁸⁴

Effectiveness of Israel's Witness

Few scholars would refute the presence of Jewish communities across the Mediterranean region or that their lifestyle appeared foreign to their gentile neighbors. What is refuted is their acceptance of gentile converts to Judaism and, if so, whether they actively engaged in proselytization. The evidence shows that Second Temple period Judaism was favorable to gentile conversion. In addition, it reveals that they actively proselytized the gentiles. This was accomplished through their centripetal mission. They were called to "be" and not to "do." The nature of who they were drew the attention of the gentiles and attracted them to Judaism.

Favorable to Gentile Conversion to Judaism

Second Temple period Judaism accepted gentile converts. The biblical, literary, and archeological evidence dispels any counterarguments. This evidence reveals the presence of gentile God-fearers and proselytes in the synagogues throughout the Jewish diaspora.

⁸³ Tessa Rajak, "The Jewish Diaspora in Greco-Roman Antiquity," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 72, no. 2 (2018), 146-62.

⁸⁴ De Ridder, 84.

Biblical Evidence

The book of Esther shares of a mass conversion of gentiles to Judaism (8:17).⁸⁵ The author of 2 Chronicles distinguishes the God-fearers from the Israelites (5:6).⁸⁶ In the New Testament, Luke's writing demonstrates an awareness of the distinction between God-fearers and proselytes.⁸⁷ Matthew's quote of Jesus' comment to the Pharisees that they would travel sea and land to make a single convert to Judaism reflects a favorable position towards gentile conversion (Matt 23:15).⁸⁸ According to the book of Acts, one of the chosen seven is a proselyte from Antioch (6:5).⁸⁹ Paul and the other apostles encountered God-fearers and proselytes at the synagogues as they traveled the diaspora region (Acts 13:42; 14:1; 17:4, 12; 18:4).⁹⁰ Philip baptized an Ethiopian that was either a God-fearer or a proselyte (Acts 8:25-39).⁹¹

Literary Evidence

The literary works of Jewish authors Philo and Josephus demonstrate that they were favorable to gentile conversion. Philo wrote that the gentiles who traveled from Egypt with the

⁸⁵ Feldman, 290.

⁸⁶ Michael F. Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, 2010), 49.

⁸⁷ Bird, 51; Terence Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 432-34.

⁸⁸ Feldman, 298.

⁸⁹ F. F. Bruce, *Paul; The Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 128.

⁹⁰ Scot McKnight, *A Light Amongst the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity During the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 74.

⁹¹ Bruce, 128.

Israelites were converted to Judaism (*Moses* 1.27-47). He further wrote that the Pentateuch commands Jews to love proselytes as themselves (*Virtues* 103-104).⁹² The *Testament of Levi* and the *Wisdom of Solomon* state that the Law was granted to the Jews for the enlightenment of all people (*T. Levi* 14.4). Active conversion language is found in the *Letter to Aristeeas* and the *Sibylline Oracles*.⁹³ In his literary work, Juvenal makes the distinction between God-fearers and proselytes.⁹⁴

Archeological Evidence

There are several inscriptions that were discovered within ancient synagogues which demonstrate that groups of gentiles were attached to the Jewish communities. The strongest archeological evidence was an inscription found in the Aphrodisias synagogue. It contains a list of thirteen people consisting of Jews, three proselytes, and two God-fearers.⁹⁵ The inscription demonstrates that the Jews made the distinction between proselytes and God-fearers.⁹⁶

Centripetal Mission

The Second Temple period Jewish mission was centripetal. They were not to go or do, as a holy nation and a kingdom of priests, they are called to be.⁹⁷ They were to be distinctive

⁹² Feldman, 295.

⁹³ Ibid., 294-95.

⁹⁴ Bird, 49.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 48.

⁹⁶ Feldman, 367.

⁹⁷ Mortimer Arias. "Centripetal Mission or Evangelization by Hospitality" *Missiology: An International Review* 10, no. 1 (January 1982): 69-81.

people and an attractive sign of what God had originally intended for humanity,⁹⁸ Living as a distinct people among the nations, they attracted the gentiles to God.⁹⁹ It was the good deeds and the Jewish lifestyle that led to the majority of gentile conversions to Judaism.¹⁰⁰ Israel is God's witness of His past and future restoration (Isa 43:10). The idea of a centripetal mission is supported in that it is God who will reveal Himself to the gentiles through Israel.¹⁰¹

The Old Testament provides evidence of Israel's engagement in this centripetal mission. Gentiles would encounter God working through Israel during the exodus, as a kingdom, and after the Babylonian exile.

- Pharaoh and the Egyptians acknowledge the power of God working through Israel during the exodus
- The prostitute Rahab protects the Israelite spies and asks to be spared from God prior to the fall of Jericho
- The Gibeonites avoid destruction through deception and sue for peace out of their fear of God
- All the kings of the earth hear of the wisdom of king Solomon
- Men and the Queen of Sheba travel to Israel to hear and test king Solomon's wisdom

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Martin Hengel and Anna Marie Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch; The Unknown Years* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 75-76.

¹⁰⁰ McKnight, 67-68, 77.

¹⁰¹ North, 143.

- Naaman experiences the healing power of God
- Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges God after several encounters with His power

Active Proselytization of Gentiles

Second Temple period Jews actively engaged in the proselytization of the gentiles. God's interventions make Israel the light to the world. It is through Israel that He converts the nations.¹⁰² Rabbi Hillel taught that Jews were to love their fellow creatures and draw them toward the Torah (*Pirkei Avot* 1.13).¹⁰³ Several Jewish groups and individuals actively converted gentiles to Judaism and incorporated them into their communities. Their mission was two-fold. First, they assisted gentiles in abandoning their pagan ways and adopting Judaism. Second, they encouraged God-fearers to complete the conversion to Judaism.¹⁰⁴ The Second Temple period Jews accomplished their mission to the nations by being in proximity (diaspora), providing a location to educate (synagogue), and teaching in a form that would be understood (language).

Diaspora

The diaspora served as their primary channel.¹⁰⁵ Israel was exiled among the nations so that gentiles would join the Jewish people.¹⁰⁶ They understood themselves to be a nation without

¹⁰² Martin-Achard, 79.

¹⁰³ Bruce, 128.

¹⁰⁴ Bird, 149-50.

¹⁰⁵ Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations* (London, England: SCM Press LTD, 1967), 11, 16.

¹⁰⁶ De Ridder, 75-76; Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Pirkei Avos: Chapters of the Fathers*, trans. Daniel Haberman (Spring Valley, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 2014), 87b.14.

any fixed locality. Those who accepted the Jewish religious customs were integrated into the political and social community.¹⁰⁷ The diaspora Jews composed an estimated twenty percent of the eastern Mediterranean population.¹⁰⁸ Such high visibility created an opportunity to glorify God before the gentiles.¹⁰⁹ The diaspora Jews are described as the “so-that” people. They are blessed so that they may be a blessing to others. They are further described as the “come and join us” people. They invite the world to participate in God’s mission.¹¹⁰

Synagogue

The distinctive lifestyle of the Jewish people attracted the gentiles to the synagogue. The synagogue became the central meeting place for Jews and gentiles where they became acquainted with the Word of God.¹¹¹ The synagogue played a key role in the conversion of gentiles to Judaism.¹¹² As they became more educated in Judaism, gentiles became God-fearers or fully converted to become proselytes.¹¹³ The proselytes acquired a new ethnicity and were fully assimilated into the Jewish community.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion; Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 2.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Goldenberg, *The Origins of Judaism: From Canaan to the Rise of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 180.

¹⁰⁹ Jeremias, *Jesus’ Promise to the Nations*, 11, 16.

¹¹⁰ Goheen, 63.

¹¹¹ McKnight, 77; De Ridder, 80.

¹¹² McKnight, 76.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹¹⁴ Barclay, 403.

Language

Language was another major factor in the success of the Jewish mission. The translation of the Hebrew Bible into the vernacular permitted the gentiles to read and hear the Scripture in a familiar language.¹¹⁵ The Greek Bible became the great apostle. The Jewish mission would not have enjoyed its level of success without the translation of the Scriptures.¹¹⁶

Evidence of Active Proselytization of Gentiles

The diaspora provides the largest amount of evidence for gentile conversion to Judaism.¹¹⁷ Evidence of Second Temple period Judaism proselytizing is found in various forms; biblical, literary, archeological, and populace response.

Biblical Evidence

The book of Acts and Paul's epistles reveal encounters with Christian Judaizers instructing gentiles to become circumcised in addition to their faith in Christ. Paul and other early Christian leaders encountered opposition from non-Christian Jewish proselytizers.¹¹⁸ Paul warned the early church against Christian Judaizers and non-Christian Jews who continued to attempt to convert gentiles to Judaism. Jesus' half-brother James would address the debate about whether it was still required for gentiles to convert to Judaism in order to become members of the people of God (Acts 15).

¹¹⁵ De Ridder, 83, 86.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 84.

¹¹⁷ Bird, 77.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 133.

Literary Evidence

The *Testament of Levi* states that the law was granted to the Jews for the enlightenment of all people (14.4). The *Wisdom of Solomon* claims that Israel was to give the law to all humanity (18.4). Jewish literary works contained apologetics for their gentile readers.¹¹⁹

Archeological Evidence

Inscriptions found at the synagogues in Sardis and Aphrodisias list prominent God-fearing members. They were attached to the Jewish community and were distinguished from the proselytes.¹²⁰

Populace Response

Second Temple period Jews experienced a negative backlash from gentiles due to their missional activities.¹²¹ The number of gentile converts was so great that it attracted the attention of the cultural elite.¹²² Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus referred to proselytes as the worst kind of rascals due to the renouncement of their ancestral religions. He further states that the paying of the Temple tax contributed to the wealth of the Jews (*Histories* 5.5.1-2). In 139 B.C., Jews were expelled from Rome for attempting to proselytize Romans.¹²³ They were expelled from Rome again in 19 B.C. for the same reason (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.81-84).

¹¹⁹ McKnight, 76; Goodman, 14.

¹²⁰ Bird, 46.

¹²¹ Feldman, 299.

¹²² Bird, 77, 81.

¹²³ McKnight, 73.

Gentile Response to Second Temple Judaism

The diaspora Jews lived among the gentile nations. Jewish communities were well-established across the Mediterranean region. Their lifestyle was distinct and appeared foreign to their gentile neighbors.¹²⁴ Synagogues were the center of worship and instruction in Judaism. The Hebrew Bible was translated and taught in the vernacular language. The Jews' centripetal mission attracted the curiosity and awe of the gentiles. They proselytized to reveal the one true God and to assist their gentile neighbors in abandoning their pagan ways. Some gentiles became God-fearers while others fully converted to Judaism. However, the Jewish lifestyle received both negative and positive responses from the gentiles.

Negative Response

The Jewish customs of circumcision, Sabbath observance, festivals, and dietary restrictions were first to attract the gentiles' attention and criticism.¹²⁵ However, the Jewish rejection of idol worship and abstinence from pork brought accusations of being atheists, unsociable, unpatriotic, and misanthropic.¹²⁶ They served as the fundamental reason for pagan antisemitism.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Sevenster, 119.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Emil Schurer, John. MacPherson, Sophia. Taylor, and Peter Christie, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 153.

¹²⁷ Sevenster, 89.

Table 60. Negative Gentile Response to Second Temple Judaism

Accusation	Description
Atheism	The Jewish rejection of polytheism and idol worship was viewed by the gentiles as intolerance for their gods.
Atheism	Jews did not participate in the prevailing cult and rejected the state gods.
Unsocial	Jews viewed as unsociable due to their dietary restrictions, which caused them to separate themselves from gentiles during meals.
Unpatriotic	Jews were viewed as unpatriotic and suffered accusations of political disloyalty for their refusal to worship the local gods and engage in religious practices.
Unpatriotic	The Jewish abstinence from pork which was considered a national dish by the Romans.
Misanthropy	Jews separated themselves from gentiles and abstained from certain foods.
Misanthropy	The Jewish practice of circumcision.
Misanthropy	The Jewish practice of endogamy.

Source: Barclay, 431, 436; Sevenster, 96-97; Feldman, 150, 154-55, 167.

Literary Evidence of Negative Responses to Second Temple Judaism

The Greek historian Diodorus stated that the Jews' refusal to share meals with other nations best illustrated their hatred for humanity (Diodorus Siculus 34[35].1.2. The Greek historian Hecataeus wrote that the lifestyle introduced by Moses was hostile towards gentiles and encouraged Jews not to associate with non-Jews (Diodorus Siculus 40.3.4). The book of Esther contains accusations of misanthropy. Haman states that the Jews keep their own laws and ignore the laws of the king (Esth 3:8).

Positive Response

Despite the negative responses, several gentiles responded positively to Judaism. Eastern cults presented gentiles with intriguing rituals and the promise of blessings, prosperity, and salvation in this world and in the next.¹²⁸ Some gentile intellectuals were attracted to a God who rewarded virtue, interacted with the world through intermediaries, and had sovereignty over

¹²⁸ Bird, 84-85.

creation.¹²⁹ The diaspora Jews modeled an attractive lifestyle which caused many gentiles to adopt Judaism and become God-fearers and proselytes. Several characteristics of Judaism were attractive to the gentiles: antiquity, ritual, healing, virtues, economic and civil benefits, and identity.

Table 61. Positive Gentile Response to Second Temple Judaism

Characteristic	Description
Antiquity	Judaism is considered to have a high degree of authority due to its distinguished history, as the Greeks and Romans believed the earliest humans were closest to the gods.
Ritual	The Jewish practices of prayer, almsgiving, calendrical observances, Scripture instruction, purity laws, and Sabbath observance provided an attractive means to have a continuous communion with a divine being.
Healing	Magic in the ancient world was thought to be the ability to petition the gods to accomplish particular tasks, manipulate people, and exert power over the spiritual realm. Illness was often identified as the result of an invading spirit that the appropriate spells could only drive out. The Jews were considered excellent magicians due to their ability to dispel demons and cure illness.
Virtues	Jews were admired for their wisdom. The ability to interpret dreams was a highly regarded aspect of wisdom.
Economic Benefits	Judaism did not place a heavy financial burden upon its adherents.
Civil Benefits	Jews were exempt from military service during Julius Caesar's rule.
Identity	Gentiles of low social standing were attracted to the group loyalty and values of the Jewish identity.

Source: Feldman, 177, 201; Bird, 86-87, 89-90; Justin. *Historic Phillippicae*, 36.2.6-10; Strabo, 16.2.36.

The Jewish identity attracted the curiosity and awe of their gentile neighbors. Some responded negatively and made accusations against the diaspora Jews. In contrast, others sought to adopt the Jewish lifestyle and to know God. The Jewish identity was an essential component of their centripetal mission. The nature of "being" and living as God originally intended roused the interest of their gentile neighbors. These gentiles attended synagogues to learn more about Judaism and to know God. They would abandon their pagan lives and adopt the Jewish identity. By the time of Jesus, the synagogue was filled with God-fearers and proselytes.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 89.

Intertestamental Period

From the time the Jews were permitted to return to Palestine in 538 B.C. to the time of Jesus' birth, their oppressors changed from the Persians, to Alexander, to the Ptolemies, and to the Seleucids. After a brief period of pseudo-independence as the Hasmonean dynasty, they would fall under Roman oppression. During the time of Alexander and his successors, Jewish living was influenced by Greek thought and culture.

Table 62. Key Events from Alexander the Great to Herod the Great

Date	Event
538 B.C.	Jews permitted to return to Palestine
332 B.C.	Palestine falls under the rule of Alexander the Great
320 B.C.	Palestine under Ptolemaic rule
198 B.C.	Palestine under Seleucid rule
166 B.C.	Maccabean revolt
164 B.C.	Jerusalem captured and the Temple restored
143 B.C.	The semi-independent Hasmonean dynasty is established
63 B.C.	Rome invades and Judea becomes a client state
37 B.C.	Hasmonean dynasty replaced by Herodian dynasty
6 B.C.	Judea, Samaria, and Idumea become the Roman province of Judaea

Source: Oskar Skarsaune. *In the Shadow of the Temple; Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 28.

Jewish Sects

The Maccabean revolt and the Hasmonean dynasty that followed would bring the emergence of three Jewish sects: the Pharisees, the Essenes, and the Sadducees (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.171-73). The Pharisees sought to purify Israel by restoring ancestral traditions. They focused on the Torah and matters of purity and Sabbath observance.¹³⁰ The Essenes rejected the Hasmonean rulers' adoption of the role of both king and high priest. They believed they were the

¹³⁰ N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God. I. The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 187-89.

true Israel living in exile until God's promise of restoration and redemption was fulfilled. The Essenes held an inaugurated eschatology as they believed they were called into existence to prepare for the final confrontation with the enemy. They were the advance guard awaiting the arrival of the two Messiahs (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.171-73).¹³¹ The Sadducees were the leading aristocracy who wielded considerable political power after the Hasmonean dynasty. Herod the Great selected the High Priest from their ranks as they did not pose a threat to his power. Rome held Sadducees accountable for the conduct of the Jewish populace.¹³²

Messianic Expectations

Jewish messianism started to emerge in the mid-second century B.C. after the collapse of the Hasmonean dynasty. The resulting sociopolitical climate in Palestine triggered a reinterpretation of scriptural traditions that evolved into messianic expectations. After the death of Herod the Great in 4 B.C., several socio-religious movements emerged that expressed a growing expectation and hope for God's intervention.¹³³ Israel believed that they were still in exile.¹³⁴ Their hope for national deliverance (restoration eschatology) is anchored in the Old Testament.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Ibid., 207-208.

¹³² Ibid., 209-10.

¹³³ Michael Bird, *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 34.

¹³⁴ See Chapter 5 for the debate surrounding the Jewish Exile.

¹³⁵ Bird. *Are You the One to Come?*, 36-37.

Though there is little evidence of such messianic expectation in the early fifth to late second century B.C., the Old Testament does provide a proto-messianic notion that the future of Israel is linked to the Davidic line (2 Sam 7:12-16).¹³⁶ Nathan's oracle reveals that God will provide David with a physical descendant who will build a house for His name. God will establish his kingdom forever, and there will be a filial relationship between him and God. The promise of an eternal Davidic house and kingdom establishes the covenant between God and David.¹³⁷ This covenant relationship is a prominent theme in the royal psalms and becomes the basis of hope for the future restoration of Israel (Ps 2; 72; 89; 132). It contains the base ingredients for messianic expectations: kingship, future hopes, and national restoration. The fusion of the royal ideology with eschatological hopes resulted in emerging messianic expectations.¹³⁸

This fusion of royal ideology with eschatological hopes is revealed in the writings of the prophets. Hosea writes that in the latter days, the northern tribe will repent and seek out David, their king (3:4-5). Micah states that the Davidic king will rise again from Bethlehem (5:1-2). Amos reveals that God will raise up the fallen booth of David (9:11). Isaiah writes of a child being born that will bring endless peace to the throne of David and his kingdom, who will uphold it with justice and righteousness (9:6-7). This shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse (Isa 11:1). That the Spirit of the Lord rests upon him reveals a special relationship with God (Isa 11:2; cf.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 25, 27.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 27.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 27-28.

61:1). Jeremiah shares how God will raise up a righteous branch of David who will reign as king and act wisely (23:5). God's act of releasing the exiles from slavery will coincide with His raising of the Davidic king (Jer 30:8-9). Ezekiel reveals that God will make David the shepherd over His flock (Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25). From these prophetic passages, this proto-messianic notion centered on kingship.¹³⁹

Table 63. Old Testament Proto-Messianic Passages

Proto-Messianic Notion	Passage
Scepter	Gen 49:10
Star	Num 24:17
Davidic Covenant	2 Sam 7:12-16
Lord's Anointed	Ps 2
Shoot of Jesse	Isa 11:1-6
Suffering Servant	Isa 53
Branch of David	Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 6:12
Shepherd over God's flock	Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25
Son of Man	Dan 7:9, 13-14
Booth of David	Amos 9:11

Source: Michael Bird. *Are You the One to Come?: The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 34-35.

The Emerging Messianic Hope

Messianic expectations were diverse in form and content. Not everyone held to a single uniform hope for the coming Davidic king.¹⁴⁰ Expectations were projected upon them to align with known and celebrated concepts of liberation. The authors of *Psalms of Solomon* 17-18 and the *War Scroll* (1QM) understood the Messiah to be an earthly warrior. *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra* describe a preexistent and transcendent figure. The *Damascus Document* and other Dead Sea

¹³⁹ Ibid., 30.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 26.

scrolls believe there are two Messiahs. One is royal, while the other is priestly (1QS 9.11; CD 12.22-23; 13.20-22; 14.18-19; 19.34-20.1; CD-B 1.10-11; 2.1; 1QSa 2.17-22).¹⁴¹

Several titles are used to refer to the Messiah. He is the “Messiah of Israel” (1QSa 2.12, 14, 20), the “Messiah of Righteousness” (4Q252 frag. 1 5.3-4), the “Lord’s Messiah” (Pss. Sol. 117.32; cf. 18.7), the “Lord of the Spirits and His Messiah” (1 En. 48.10), “My Son the Messiah” (4 Ezra 7.28), and the “Messiah of Aaron and Israel” (CD 12.23-13.1; 14.19; 19.10-11; 20.1; 1QS 9.11). Other times he is referenced without the title messiah. He is the “Son of Man” (Dan 7:13-14; 1 En. 46.1-5; 48.2; 62.1-15; 63.111; 69.27-29; 71.14-17; 4 Ezra 13.1-13, 25-16), the “Branch of David” (4Q161 frags. 8-10.15, 22; 4Q252 5.3; 4Q285 frag. 5.3-4; T. Jud. 24.4-6), the “Scepter” (1QSa 5.27-28; 4Q161 frags. 2-4 2.9-13; frags. 5-6 3.17; frags 8-10, 22-26; 4Q252 5.2), the “Star” (T. Levi 18.3; T. Jud. 24.1; Sib. Or. 5.158-60), the “Son of God” (4Q246 1.9; 2.1), the “Chosen One” (1 En. 39.6; 40.5; 45.3; 48.6; 49.2, 4; 51.3, 5; 52.6, 9), the “Righteous One” (1 En. 38.2; 53.6), the “Rod” (CD 7.19-20), the “Prince” (Ezek 34:24; 37:25; Dan 9:25-26; CD 7.20; 1QSa 5.20; 1QM 3.16; 5.1; 4Q285 frags. 4-6; Jub. 31.18; Sib. Or. 3.49-50), and the “King” (Sib. Or. 3.286-87, 652).

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Although there are divergent views of the Messiah, Collins attempts to provide a definition. The messianic figure is an agent of God during the end days. Although not always called messiah, he is anointed.¹⁴² Boda ascribes the following attributes to the Messiah:¹⁴³

Table 64. Second Temple Period Messianic Attributes

He is regal and priestly
He acts as a royal arbiter between the people and God
He reigns over Israel
He defeats Israel's enemies
He represents Israel before God

Source: Mark J. Boda. "Figuring the Future: The Prophet and Messiah." in *The Messiah in the Old and New*, 36-43.

Several parallels are found between the Prophets and the Intertestamental writings. The *Psalms of Solomon* and several of the Dead Sea Scrolls share parallels with Isaiah 11:1-5. They view the Messiah as an earthly warrior, who is a descendant of David, and will be a righteous ruler.

Table 65. Parallels between DSS, Psalms of Solomon, and Isaiah

Parallel	DSS	Pss Sol	Isaiah
Son / Branch of David	4Q252; 4Q285	17.23	Isa 11:1
Righteous Ruler	1Q28b; 4Q161; 4Q252	17.41	Isa 11:5
Warrior	CD; 1Q28b; 4Q161; 4Q174; 4Q285	17.226-27	Isa 11:4

Source: John J. Collins. "'He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See': Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *DSD* 2 (1995), 154; Michael A. Knibb. "Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls." *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Jun 1995, 2(2), 169.

Parallels are found between *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Daniel. They identify the Messiah with the Davidic king and Daniel's son of man. The *Son of God* (4Q246) quotes from Daniel 7 citing that "his kingdom will be an eternal kingdom" (2.5; cf. Dan 7:27)

¹⁴² John J. Collins, "'He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See': Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 2 (1995): 145-64.

¹⁴³ Mark J. Boda, "Figuring the Future: The Prophet and Messiah," in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 36-43.

and “his rule will be an eternal rule” (2.9; cf. Dan 7:14). The messianic figure is regarded as a heavenly being and the eschatological judge.¹⁴⁴

Table 66. Parallels between Melchizedek, Son of God, 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and Daniel

Parallel	11QMelch	4Q246	1 Enoch	4 Ezra	Daniel
Son of Man	2.4-10	2.1	37-70	13.32, 37, 52	7:9, 13
Eschatological Judge	2.9-14	2.5-6	46.4-6	12.32-33	7:14

Source: Michael A. Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Jun 1995, 2(2), 174-76; *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*. ed. Florentino Garcia Martinez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Leiden; New York; Koln: Brill, 1999). 495, 1207.

The intertestamental writing demonstrates the emerging messianic hope preceding the arrival of Jesus. These writings reveal how the Second Temple period Jews interpreted the prophets, Isaiah and Daniel. The prophets spoke of a coming Messiah that would restore Israel. Although the expectations varied, common threads are found across the messianic texts that are rooted in the Old Testament. All believed that the restoration of Israel would be through the return of the Davidic king. As the diaspora Jews continued to live in exile, they awaited His arrival to lead the second Exodus.¹⁴⁵

Jesus of Nazareth

Son of Man

Jesus claims to be the Son of Man, whom the prophet Daniel describes as having dominion, glory, and a kingdom over all people (7:13-14). God has given Him supreme authority, and through this authority, He has inaugurated the salvation and restoration of God’s

¹⁴⁴ Michael A. Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” *Dead Sea Discoveries*. 2, no. 2 (June 1995): 165-84; *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*. ed. Florentino Garcia Martinez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Leiden; New York; Koln: Brill, 1999), 495.

¹⁴⁵ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 16, 18.

people.¹⁴⁶ Jesus employs this term to refer to three categories. The first references His earthly ministry, where He has authority over sin, sickness, and nature (Mark 2:10, 28). The second associates this term with Isaiah's suffering servant, describing how the Son of Man will suffer, die and rise again (Mark 8:31; 9:31; Luke 9:44). The third describes how He is coming in His eschatological glory and sit the throne as Judge (Matt 13:41-43; 19:28; Mark 14:62).¹⁴⁷ For Jesus, he understood the Son of Man and the Messiah to be the same.

However, this connection between the Son of Man and the Messiah was established prior to Jesus. *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra* associate the Messiah with the Danielic Son of Man and His role as God's judge. *1 Enoch* states that "this Son of Man whom you have seen is the One who would remove the kings and the mighty ones from their comfortable seats (46.4-6)."¹⁴⁸ *1 Ezra* shares that "this is the Messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days, who will rise from the prosperity of David... he will set them living before his judgment seat, and when he has reproved them, then he will destroy them" (12.32-33).¹⁴⁹ Such associations may be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. "Their kingdom will be an eternal kingdom... they will judge the land justly, and all nations will make peace" (4Q246 2.5-6).¹⁵⁰ "Melchizedek will carry out the vengeance

¹⁴⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 153.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁴⁸ *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha; Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, volume 1, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1983), 34.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 550.

¹⁵⁰ *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 495.

of Go[d's] judgments" (11QMelch 2.9-13)¹⁵¹ The Danielic Son of Man was interpreted by the authors of the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Gospel as the Messiah who would sit on God's throne as judge. When Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man, He was identifying with the Messiah.

Son of God

The term Son of God was often attributed to the ordination of the Davidic king. However, the Dead Sea Scrolls associate this term with the messianic figure of Daniel 7.¹⁵² "He will be called the son of God, and they will call him the son of the Most High" (4Q246 2.1). Matthew identifies Jesus as the Son of God with his reference to Hosea 11:1. "Out of Egypt I called my Son" (Matt 2:15). Although this is arguably a historic reflection on the original exodus, Matthew relates it to a prophetic fulfilment.¹⁵³ Mark begins his Gospel by stating that Jesus is the Son of God (1:1). In Luke's account, the angel Gabriel shares that Jesus will be called the Son of the Most High and the Son of God (1:32, 35). Gabriel's statement is a direct parallel of 4Q246. Both the Dead Sea Scroll and Gospel authors identified the term Son of God with the Messiah.

The Servant

Jesus launches His earthly ministry by quoting Isaiah 61:1-2 (Luke 4:18-19). By stating that "this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing," (Luke 4:21) Jesus claims to be the Isaianic

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 1207.

¹⁵² Bird, 70.

¹⁵³ Hays, 113.

Servant of the Lord.¹⁵⁴ He affirms this claim in His response to John the Baptist’s disciples. “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Luke 7:22). There are notable additions to Jesus’ interpretation of Isaiah 61; He healed the wounded, restored blindness, and raised the dead. The source of these additional acts may be found in the Dead Sea Scroll *Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521).

Table 67. Comparison of Isaiah 61, Luke, and Messianic Apocalypse (4Q521)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.	Isa 61:1-2
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.	Luke 4:18-19
The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news preached to them.	Luke 7:22
Freeing prisoners, giving sight to the blind, straightening out the twis[t]ed...he will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live, he will proclaim good news to the poor.	4Q521 Frags. 2 2.8, 12

Source: *New American Standard Bible 1995; Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 1045.

Jesus’ statement that the Son of Man was to “give His life a ransom for the many” (Mark 10:45) alludes to Isaiah 53:10 which states that the Servant will be a sacrifice for the sin of the many.¹⁵⁵ Peter identifies Jesus with the suffering servant when he announces that God had fulfilled what He had previously announced through His prophets, that His Messiah would suffer (Acts 3:18).¹⁵⁶ This is further supported by his quote of Isaiah 53:9 in 1 Peter 2:22 and the

¹⁵⁴ C. Wright, 155.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 154.

¹⁵⁶ Craig A. Evans, “Isaiah 53 in the Letters of Peter, Paul, Hebrews, and John,” in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53; Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*. ed. Darrell L. Block and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 150.

parallels between 1 Peter 2:21-25 and Isaiah 52-53. Peter quotes Isaiah when he states that “who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth” (Isa 53:9). The following parallels may be found. He remained silent (1 Pet 2:23; cf. Isa 53:7). He bore the sins of the many (1 Pet 2:24; cf. Isa 53:5, 12). Humanity is healed through His wounds (1 Pet 2:24; cf. Isa 53:5). The people stray like sheep (1 Pet 2:25; cf. Isa 53:6).¹⁵⁷

Table 68. Parallels between 1 Peter 2:21-25 and Isaiah 53

Parallel	Peter	Isaiah
Remained silent	1 Pet 2:23	Isa 53:7
Bore the sin of the many	1 Pet 2:24	Isa 53:5, 12
Healed through his wounds	1 Pet 2:24	Isa 53:5
Stray like sheep	1 Pet 2:25	Isa 53:6

Source: Craig A. Evans. “Isaiah 53 in the Letters of Peter, Paul, Hebrews, and John,” in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53*;

Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology. ed. Darrell L. Block and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 158.

Paul identifies Jesus with the suffering servant. Parallels are found between the book of Romans and Isaiah. Jesus was delivered over for the transgressions of others (Rom 4:25; cf. Isa 53:6, 12). His suffering will justify the many (Rom 4:25; cf. Isa 53:11). The many are made righteous through Jesus’ obedience (Rom 5:19; cf. Isa 53:5, 8, 10-12).¹⁵⁸ Paul quotes Isaiah as validation for his mission to the gentiles. “They who had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand” (Isa 52:15b).

¹⁵⁷ C. Wright, 156.

¹⁵⁸ Evans, 161.

Table 69. Parallels between Romans and Isaiah 53

Parallel	Paul	Isaiah
Delivered over for the transgressions of others	Rom 4:25	Isa 53:6, 12
Justification of the many	Rom 4:25	Isa 53:11
Obedience of the one for the righteousness of the many	Rom 5:19	Isa 53:5, 8, 10-12

Source: Craig A. Evans. "Isaiah 53 in the Letters of Peter, Paul, Hebrews, and John," in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*. ed. Darrell L. Block and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 161.

Although the Son of Man accounts in Daniel 7, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* do not include His suffering and death, through Jesus' statements, He reveals that the Son of Man and the Servant of the Lord are the same. Jesus is the Servant of the Lord whose atoning death restored people with God and He is the Son of Man who will serve as the eschatological judge.

Davidic King

Matthew states that Jesus is the Son of David (1:1). He uses Jesus' genealogy as evidence of the Messiah's relationship with Israel's king (1:2-16). Luke uses the words of the angel Gabriel to reveal that God will give Jesus the throne of His father David (1:32). Similar to Matthew, Luke uses Jesus' genealogy as evidence of Jesus relationship with David (3:23-38). Mark alludes to the restoration of the Davidic kingdom with Jesus' parable of the mustard seed. He tells how the smallest of seeds "grows and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches" (Mark 4:30-32). This is a parallel with Ezekiel 17:23-24 which shares how God will plant a twig that will grow to produce branches and bear fruit.¹⁵⁹ Jesus' arrival to Jerusalem on a colt further identifies Him with the Davidic king (Matt 21:1-10; Mark 11:11; Luke 19:28-38; John 12:12-15). The prophet Zechariah foretold that the Israel's king would

¹⁵⁹ Hays, 31.

arrive mounted on a colt (9:9). That the colt was tied (Mark 11:4) alludes to Jacob's prophecy that the scepter would not depart Judah and that Judah would tie his colt to a choice vine (Gen 49:10-11). Peter references David's statement in Psalm 16:8-11 where God would not abandon him to the realm of the dead. Peter argues that since David had died and Jesus had been raised, David was referring to his descendent Jesus. It is Jesus who will rule the eternal kingdom.¹⁶⁰

The opening chapters of John's Gospel reveal the divine nature of Jesus. He has been with God since the beginning of creation and is the incarnation of God's Word (1:1-4). Matthew states that the birth of Jesus is the fulfillment of the virgin birth foretold by Isaiah (Matt 1:23; cf. Isa 7:14).¹⁶¹ Paul was an eyewitness to the risen Christ. His encounter with Jesus caused him to acknowledge Him as the Messiah (Acts 9:3-6). He is the culmination of God's redemptive plan and the guarantee of final salvation.¹⁶² Paul acknowledges that Jesus is the true son of David (Acts 13:33).¹⁶³ Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:14-41) may have been an early attempt to develop a systematic Christology divided into two syllogisms.¹⁶⁴ The Gospel authors understood the Messiah to embody the roles of the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Servant of the Lord, and the Davidic king. Part of this understanding is derived from the Pseudepigrapha and the Dead Sea Scrolls. In addition, they understood Jesus' divine nature.

¹⁶⁰ Crowe, 27.

¹⁶¹ Hays, 113.

¹⁶² Crowe, 48.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

¹⁶⁴ Eric E. Puosi, "A Systematic Approach to the Christology of Peter's Address to the Crowd (Acts 2:14-36)," *New Blackfriars* 87, no. 1009 (May 2006): 253-67.

Table 70. First Christological Syllogism

First Syllogism	
1 st Statement	God has fulfilled the messianic promise; therefore, we have a Messiah
2 nd Statement	Jesus is not an ordinary man. He performed miracles and was resurrected from the dead.
Conclusion	Jesus is the Messiah

Source: Eric E. Puosi. "A Systematic Approach to the Christology of Peter's Address to the Crowd (Acts 2:14-36)," 257.

Table 71. Second Christological Syllogism

Second Syllogisms	
1 st Statement	God's promise is a promise of salvation, and it is fulfilled through the Lord.
2 nd Statement	Jesus has been raised to life and to the right hand of the Father. He is the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation.
Conclusion	Jesus is the Lord

Source: Eric E. Puosi. "A Systematic Approach to the Christology of Peter's Address to the Crowd (Acts 2:14-36)," 257.

New Sect

The Jewish Christians did not set themselves apart from Judaism. They preserved their Jewish identity and continued to observe the Torah (Acts 21:24).¹⁶⁵ Jewish Christians believed in the one true God and rejected the pagan gods. Circumcision remained as a sign of their commitment to the covenant and the Jewish lifestyle.¹⁶⁶ They observed the Sabbath (Acts 16:13; 17:2, 17; 18:4) and attended synagogue (Acts 9:20; 13:5, 14-15; 14:1; 17:1-2, 10; 18:4, 19, 26; 19:8; 26:11). They followed the dietary laws (Acts 10:14; 11:3, 8) and observed the festivals (Acts 20:6, 16). Jerusalem and the Temple remained their religious center (Acts 2:46; 3:1, 8;

¹⁶⁵ Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple; Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 161.

¹⁶⁶ Circumcision and conversion to Judaism became a point of contention among Jewish Christians when confronted with the requirements for gentile inclusion. This issue was debated and resolved during the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). However, not all Jewish Christians agreed with the decision. See Gentile Inclusion below.

5:25, 42; 21:26; 22:17).¹⁶⁷ Until Peter's encounter with Cornelius, Jewish Christians did not associate with gentiles (Acts 10:28). The practice of communal meals (Acts 2:46) and selling property and possessions for the common good (Acts 2:45; 4:32, 34-37) was not unique to Jewish Christianity, these were fundamental practices of the Essene sect.

Jewish Christians believed that the awaited restoration was found in Jesus (Acts 4:12; 10:43) and that the message of salvation had been sent (Acts 13:26).¹⁶⁸ Everything they taught about Jesus was in accordance with the Law and with all that is written in the Prophets (Acts 24:14; 28:23). God had fulfilled His promise to their fathers in accordance with Psalm 2 (Acts 13:33). The fulfillment of this promise started with Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and would be completed upon His return. God's eschatological promises had been inaugurated but not yet consummated (inaugurated eschatology).¹⁶⁹ Much as Israel was witness to God's redemption, Jewish Christians were witness to what they saw and heard through the Messiah (Acts 4:20; cf. Isa 43:10). Their mission to the gentile nations was rooted in God's call for Israel to be a "light to the nations" (Acts 13:47; cf. Isa 49:6).

The Jewish Christians' inaugurated eschatology is rooted in Psalm 110: "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" The

¹⁶⁷ Skarsaune, 148.

¹⁶⁸ Alexander E. Stewart, "The Temporary Messianic Kingdom in Second Temple Judaism and the Delay of the Parousia: Psalm 110:1 and the Development of Early Christian Inaugurated Eschatology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59, no. 2 (2016): 255-70.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 256.

New Testament authors quote or allude to this psalm more than any other Old Testament text.¹⁷⁰ Jesus was raised to share God's reign until all his enemies were defeated. His rule was not yet evident on earth. However, the "not yet" reveals a future time when His rule will be visible to all.¹⁷¹

The concept of inaugurated eschatology did not originate with the Jewish Christians. As mentioned previously, the Essenes believed that God's plan for redemption had started with the formation of their sect. They were His advance guard who was to await the arrival of the two Messiahs. The idea of "already/not yet" was part of Second Temple Judaism. The idea of a temporary messianic kingdom between the old and new age exists in Jewish apocalypses.¹⁷² *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* write of a future temporary messianic kingdom.¹⁷³ *The Apocalypse of Weeks* found in *1 Enoch*, speaks of a transitional period of time between the evil present and the future final judgment and eternal state. Although it does not mention a messianic figure, readers from that time would have presupposed such a figure based on its eschatological context.¹⁷⁴ *Jubilees* describes a period of longevity, blessing, and healing that will transition to the eternal state (Jub. 1.27-29; 23.26-31).¹⁷⁵ *2 Enoch* divides history into seven one thousand (1,000) year periods.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 264.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 268.

¹⁷² Ibid., 256.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 257-58.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 260.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 261.

The seventh refers to the seventh day of rest, while the eighth refers to the eternal state (32.1-33.2).¹⁷⁶ The *Psalms of Solomon*'s "the coming generation" and "a good generation" may suggest a temporary messianic kingdom on earth (18.6, 9).¹⁷⁷ The tension between "already" and "not yet" may be found within the story of *Tobit*. The restoration of his sight is the beginning of future expectations.¹⁷⁸

Non-Christian Jews referred to Jewish Christians as "the Way" and viewed them as another Jewish sect (Acts 9:2; 19:23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; 24:14). Much as there were messianic figures before and after Jesus, Jewish leaders saw them as another movement that would fade shortly after the loss of their leader (Acts 5:36-38). Jewish Christians faced opposition from non-Christian Jews due to their teaching that Jesus is the awaited Messiah (Acts 4:17; 5:28, 40). They believed they were on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6; 24:21) and for God's promise to their fathers (Acts 26:6). Disagreements between Jewish sects were common. The Pharisees' and the Sadducees' debate over the issue of resurrection resulted in a heated altercation at the Council (Acts 23:6-9). Peter and John were arrested at the Temple by the Sadducees for preaching resurrection (Acts 4:1-2). Since the Jewish Christians had not committed anything against the Law or the Temple (Acts 25:8), non-Christian Jews could not

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 262.

¹⁷⁸ Jill Hicks-Keeton. "Already/Not Yet: Eschatological Tension in the Book of Tobit." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132, no. 1 (2013): 97-117.

find anything wrong (Acts 23:9). They resorted to the use of false witnesses (Acts 6:13) or to attempts to get Christian Jews to blaspheme in order to persecute them (Acts 26:11).

Gentile Inclusion

After the Holy Spirit fell upon the gentile God-fearer Cornelius and his family, Peter understood that God accepted gentiles as gentiles.¹⁷⁹ His decision to baptize without requiring Cornelius to convert to Judaism triggered a debate between the Jewish Christians.¹⁸⁰ At the Jerusalem council, Jesus' half-brother James would interpret the reports of gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit as being consistent with prophetic expectations.¹⁸¹ He recognizes that the inclusion of the gentiles as gentiles is part of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom.¹⁸² They are members of the eschatological people of God (Amos 9:11-12).¹⁸³ In place of conversion to Judaism, the gentiles are to abstain from anything sacrificed to idols, blood, things strangled, and fornication (Acts 15:20, 29).¹⁸⁴

Paul believed the gentile mission was the core of what God had planned to accomplish through the nation of Israel.¹⁸⁵ The purpose of Israel was to restore humanity back to God. Paul

¹⁷⁹ W. Edward Glenny, "The Septuagint and Apostolic Hermeneutics: Amos 9 in Acts 15." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 22, no. 1 (2012): 1-25.

¹⁸⁰ Charles Haddon Savelle, Jr., "James's Use of Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 31, no. 1 (2021): 54-71.

¹⁸¹ Glenny, 10; Savelle, 57.

¹⁸² Glenny, 3; Savelle, 58.

¹⁸³ Glenny, 3.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁸⁵ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 81.

recognized gentile inclusion as the fulfillment of that mission. They were to live as the eschatological gentiles. In the end, the demographic of God's kingdom is to consist of Jews and gentiles.¹⁸⁶

The Split in the Jewish Mission

The Synagogue remained the primary means to proselytize where gentiles gathered each week to hear the Word of God in their native language.¹⁸⁷ Paul and the other Jewish Christians found a consistent presence of God-fearers and proselytes.¹⁸⁸ However, the Jewish mission would encounter a split after the ascension of Jesus. Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah taught of His resurrection and the inauguration of the kingdom of God. Those who denied Christ continued to teach conversion and Torah observance. There was an additional split among the Jewish Christians. Some believed that Jesus' arrival did not negate Moses' dispensation. Instead, it had perfected it. They continued to teach gentile Christians that conversion to Judaism was still required to become a member of the people of God.¹⁸⁹

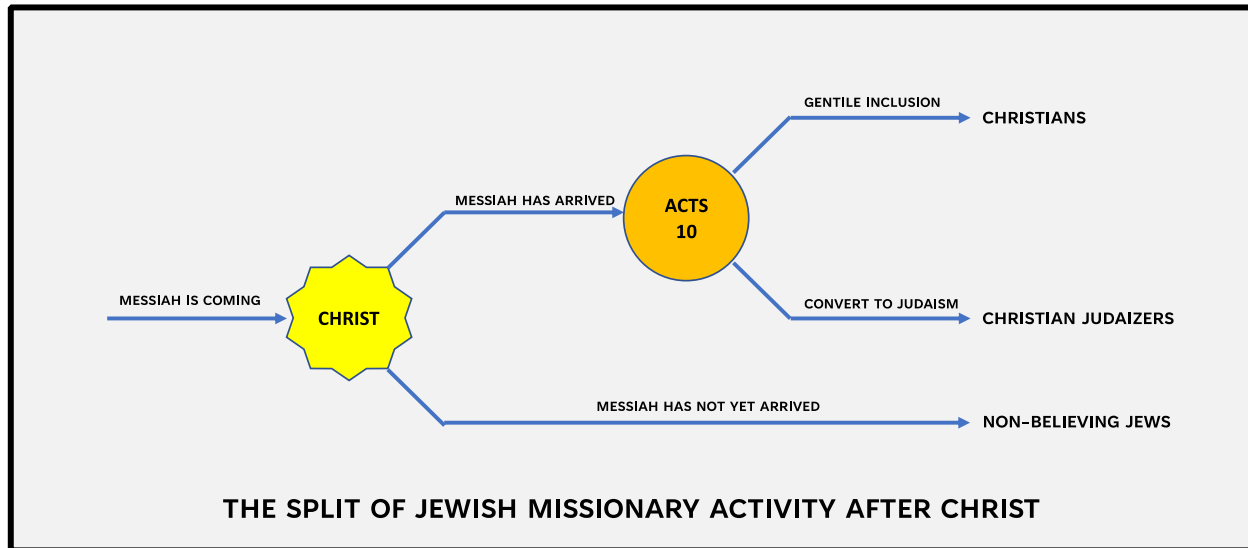
¹⁸⁶ Paula Frederickson, "Judaizing the Nations; The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010), 232-52.

¹⁸⁷ De Ridder, 80, 83.

¹⁸⁸ McKnight, 74.

¹⁸⁹ Bird, 134, 136-37.

Figure 6.2. The Split of Jewish Missionary Activity After Christ



The Jewish diaspora constituted the primary channel for the Christian mission.¹⁹⁰ Paul and other Jewish Christians shared the good news of Jesus with God-fearers and proselytes who had been attracted to Judaism, attended synagogue, and knew God. The Jewish mission preceding the birth of Jesus had prepared the nations for His arrival. The Second Temple period diaspora Jews served as God's witness. Their commitment to a lifestyle that reflected God's original intention for humanity was distinct from their gentile neighbors. Drawing their curiosity and awe, many gentiles attended synagogue and learned of God. There, they would be taught the prophecies of the future restoration of Israel and the coming Messiah. They were fully prepared to receive the good news of Christ and accept Him as their savior.

¹⁹⁰ Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 16.

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