Introduction to Early Judaism

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Class 1: History of the Second Temple period; the making of a canon; broad strokes re: how biblical interpretations begin to take shape

Overview

Historical Timeline: Jewish life under Persia, Greece, and Rome
When did Judaism become an “ism?”
The Concept of Canon and the Latest Biblical Material
Novellas
What were Greeks and Romans Writing About Jews?

Words That I’ll be Avoiding
Old Testament
Intertestamental Period
Jew/Judean/Judahite?

Second Temple Documents
Josephus c.37-100
   Antiquities of the Jews – 20 volume work, late 90s CE
   The Jewish War – 7 volume work, 70s CE
   Vita (Life) – autobiography
   Against Apion – first systematic defense of the Jewish religion
Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE–50 CE)
New Testament
Dead Sea Scrolls
Pseudepigrapha
Apocrypha

Works of the Apocrypha

Law:
   [Jubilees]

Histories and Stories:
   1 Esdras
   Greek Esther
   Tobit
   Judith
   1 Maccabees
   2 Maccabees
   3 Maccabees

Prophecies:
   Letter of Jeremiah
   Baruch
Additions to Daniel:
   The Prayer of Azariah/The Song of the Three Companions
   Susanna
   Bel and the Dragon
Timeline

Timeline:

BCE:
587-586: Babylonians destroy the Jerusalem Temple; start of Babylonian Exile
539-538: Persia destroys the Babylonian Empire; allows Judeans to return
515: The building of the Second Temple is Complete
334-333: Persian Period ends; Alexander the Great defeats Persia and the Hellenist Period begins
200: Judea has been mainly controlled by Ptolemies (Egyptian Greeks); now they come under the control of Seleucids (Syrian Greeks)
175-164: Hasmonean Rebellion
63: Hasmonean period ends; Judea becomes a client kingdom of Rome
C. 20: Philo of Alexandria is born

CE:
6: Judea becomes fully incorporated into the Roman Empire
C. 32: Jesus is crucified by the Romans
37: Josephus is born
38-41: Riots against the Jews in Alexandria, supported by Flaccus the governor and largely ignored by Gaius Caligula the emperor
C. 40: Philo writes *Embassy to Gaius*
67-70: Jerusalem riots; Temple destroyed by Romans
135: Bar Kokhba revolt: Jews expelled from Jerusalem (which is renamed Aelia Capitolina); Rabbinic community moves to Yavneh and the Galilee
200: Mishnah edited and likely completed
500s (1st half): Babylonian Talmud edited and redacted (it will still be subject to small revisions over the next three centuries)

Samples of the Latest Biblical Texts:

I. Descriptions of Jewish Sectarianism


At this time there were three sects among the Jews, who had different opinions concerning human actions; the one was called the sect of the Pharisees, another the sect of the Sadducees, and the other the sect of the Essenes. **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. But the sect of the Essenes affirm that fate governs all things, and that nothing befalls men but what is according to its determination. And for the Sadducees, they take away fate, and say that there is no such thing, and that the events of human affairs are not at its disposal; but they suppose that all our actions are in our own power, so that we are ourselves the cause of what is good, and receive what is evil from our own folly. However, I have given a more exact account of these opinions in the second book of the Jewish War.¹

2. Josephus, Antiquities, 13.10.6

What I would now explain is this, that the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the law of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers; and concerning these things it is that great disputes and differences have arisen among them, while the Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them, but the Pharisees have the multitude of their side; but about these two sects, and that of the Essenes, I have treated accurately in the second book of Jewish affairs.

3. Josephus, Antiquities, 17.2.4.

There was a certain sect of men that were Jews, who valued themselves highly upon the exact skill they had in the law of their fathers, and made men believe they were highly favored by God...These men are those that are called the sect of the Pharisees, who were in a capacity of greatly opposing kings... accordingly, when all the people of the Jews gave assurance of their good will to Caesar, and to the king’s government, these very men did not swear, being above six thousand.

4. Josephus, Antiquities, 18 1.2-4

The Jews had for a great while three sects of philosophy peculiar to themselves; the sect of the Essenes, and the sect of the Sadducees, and the third sort of opinions was that of those called Pharisees; of which sects although I have already spoken in the second book of the Jewish War, yet will I a little touch upon them now. Now, for the Pharisees, they live meanly, and despise delicacies in diet; and they follow the conduct of reason; and what that prescribes to them as good for them, they do; and they think they ought earnestly to strive to observe reason’s dictates for practice. They also pay a respect to such as are in years; nor are they so bold as to contradict them in anything which they have introduced; and, when they determine that all things are done by fate, they do not take away the freedom from men of acting as they think fit; since their notion is, that it hath pleased God to make a temperament, whereby what he wills is done, but so that the will of men can act virtuously or viciously. They also believe that souls have an immortal vigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but that the former shall have power to revive and life again; on account of which doctrines, they are able greatly to persuade the body of the people; and whatsoever they do about divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices, they perform them according to their direction; insomuch that the cities gave great attestations to them on account of their entire virtuous conduct, both in the actions of their lives and their discourses also.

But the doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That souls die with the bodies; nor do they regard the observation of anything besides what the law enjoins them; for they think it an instance of virtue to

¹ All translations of Josephus are by William Whiston.
dispute with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent; but this doctrine is received but by a few, yet by those still of the greatest dignity; but they are able to do almost nothing of themselves; for when they become magistrates, as they are unwillingly and by force sometimes obliged to be, they addict themselves to the notions of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise bear them.

The doctrine of the Essenes is this: That all things are best ascribed to God. They teach the immortality of souls, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for; and when they send what they have dedicated to God into the temple, they do not offer sacrifices, because they have more pure lustrations of their own; on which account they are excluded from the common court of the temple, but offer their sacrifices themselves; yet is their course of life better than that of other men; and they entirely addict themselves to husbandry. It also deserves our admiration, how much they exceed all other men that addict themselves to virtue, and this in righteousness; and indeed to such a degree, that as it hath never appeared among any other man, neither Greeks nor barbarians, no, not for a little time, so hath it endured a long while among them. This is demonstrated by that institution of theirs which will not suffer anything to hinder them from having all things in common; so that a rich man enjoys no more of his own wealth than he who hath nothing at all. There are about four thousand men that live in this way, and neither marry wives, nor are desirous to keep servants; as thinking the latter tempts men to be unjust, and the former gives the handle to domestic quarrels...

But of the fourth sect of Jewish philosophy, Judas the Galilean was the author. These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty; and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kind of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relationships and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man Lord; and since this immovable resolution of theirs is well known to a great many, I shall speak no farther about that matter; nor am I afraid that anything I have said of them should be disbelieved, but rather fear, that what I have said is beneath the resolution they show when they undergo pain; and it was in Gessius Florus’s time that the nation began to grow mad with this distemper, who was our procurator, and who occasioned the Jews to go wild with it by the abuse of his authority, and to make them revolt from the Romans; and these are the sects of Jewish philosophy.

5. Josephus, The Jewish War, 2.8.2–14:

For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of whom are the Pharisees; of the second the Sadducees; and the third sect, who pretends to a severer discipline, and called Essenes. These last are Jews by birth and seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects have. These Essenes reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence, and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue. They neglect wedlock, but choose out other persons’ children, while they are pliable, and fit for learning; and esteem them to be of their kindred and form them according to their own manners. They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued; but they guard against the lascivious behavior of women and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man.

These men are despisers of riches, and so very communicative as raises our admiration. Nor is there any one to be found among them who hath more than another; for it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have to be common to the whole order, insomuch, that among them all there is no appearance of poverty or excess of riches….they have no certain city but many of them dwell in every city; and if any of their sect come from other places, what they have lies open for them, just as if it were their own; and they go into such as they never knew before, as if they had been ever so long acquainted with them…And as for their piety towards God, it is very extraordinary; for before sunrise they speak not a word about profane matters, but put up certain prayers which they have received from their forefathers, as if they made a supplication for its rising…
For their doctrine is this: That bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of it not permanent; but that the souls are immortal, and continue forever; and that they come out of the most subtle air, and are united to their bodies as in prisons, into which they are drawn by a certain natural enticement; but that then they are set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward. And this is like the opinion of the Greeks, that good souls have their habitations beyond the ocean, in a region that is neither oppressed with storms of rain, or snow, or with intense heat, but that this place is such as is refreshed by the gentle breathing of a west wing, that is perpetually blowing from the ocean; while they allot to bad souls a dark and tempestuous den, full of never-ceasing punishments. And indeed the Greeks seem to me to have followed the same notion, when they allot the islands of the blessed to their brace men, whom they call heroes and demigods; and to the souls of the wicked, the region of the ungodly, in Hades... There are also those among them who undertake to foretell things to come, by reading the holy books, and using several sorts of purifications, and being perpetually conversant in the discourses of the prophets; and it is but seldom that they miss in their predictions. Moreover, there is another order of Essenes, who agree with the rest as to their way of living, and customs, and laws, but differ from them in the point of marriage, as thinking that by not marrying they cut off the principal part of the human life, which is the prospect of succession; nay rather, that if all men should be of the same opinion, the whole race of mankind would fail...

But then as to the other two other orders at first mentioned: the Pharisees are those who are esteemed most skillful in the exact explication of their laws, and introduce the first sect. These ascribe to all fate [or providence], and to God, and yet allow, that to act what is right, or the contrary, is principally in the power of men, although fate does cooperate in every action. They say that all souls are incorruptible; but that the souls of good men are only removed into other bodies, but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment. But the Sadducees are those that compose the second order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men’s own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to everyone, that they may act as they please. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades. Moreover, the Pharisees are friendly to one another, and are for the exercise of concord and regard for the public. But the behavior of the Sadducees one towards another is in some degree wild; and their conversation with those that are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them. And this is what I had to say concerning the philosophic sects among the Jews.


When I was a child, and about fourteen years of age, I was commended by all for the love I had to learning; on which account the high priests and principal men of the city came then frequently to me together, in order to know my opinion about the accurate understandings of points of the law; and when I was about sixteen years old, I had a mind to make trial of the several sects that were among us. These sects are three: The first is that of the Pharisees, the second that of the Sadducees, and the third that of the Essenes, as we have frequently told you; for I thought that by this means I might, choose the best, if I were once acquainted with them all; so I contended myself with hard fare, and underwent great difficulties and went through them all. Nor did I content myself with these trials only; but when I was informed that one, whose name was Banus, lived in the desert, and used no other clothing than grew upon trees, and had no other food than what grew of its own accord, and bathed himself in cold water frequently, both by night and by day, in order to preserve his chastity, I imitated him in those things, and continue with him three years. So when I had accomplished my desires, I returned back to the city, being
now nineteen years old, and began to conduct myself according to the rules of the sect of the Pharisees, which is kin to the sect of the Stoics, as the Greeks call them.\textsuperscript{2}

7. Mishnah Yadayim 4:6-7:

The Sadducees said, "We blame [object to] you Pharisees, because you say, 'Sacred Scriptures make the hands unclean, but the books Hameram do not make the hands unclean.'" Rabbon Jochanan ben Zachai replied [ironically], "And have we nothing else to object to the Pharisees but this? They also assert that the bones of an ass are clean, but the bones of Jochanan the high priest are unclean." They [the Sadducees] replied, "According to their love [the estimation in which the bones are held] is their uncleanness, so that no one may turn the bones of his father and mother into spoons." He answered them, "In like manner [are] the sacred Scriptures; according to their love [the high estimation in which they are held] is their uncleanness; whereas the books Hameram, which are not beloved [held in no esteem], do not make the hands unclean."

The Sadducees said, "We blame [object to] you Pharisees, that ye declare the stream [which flows when water is poured from a clean vessel into an unclean one] to be clean." The Pharisees replied [with much better right], "We [may] blame [object to] you Sadducees, that ye declare a streamlet of water which flows from a burial ground to be clean." The Sadducees [further] said, "We blame [object to] you Pharisees, because ye say, 'If mine ox or mine ass cause any damage, I am bound [to make compensation], but should my bondman or bondwoman cause any damage, I am absolved [from making compensation];' if I am bound for mine ox and mine ass, respecting which there are no duties enjoined on me, [does it not follow that] for my bondman or bondwoman, respecting whom there are duties enjoined on me, it is just that I should [also] be bound [to compensate] for the damage he [or she] occasions?" [But] they [the Pharisees] replied, "Not the same rule which applies to mine ox or mine ass, that are not possessed of reason, can apply to my bondman or bondwoman, who are possessed of reason; for, should I offend them, they may [maliciously] set fire to the growing corn of another person, in order that I might be bound to pay for it."\textsuperscript{2}

8. Philo of Alexandria, Hypothetica, 11:1–18

[The Essenes] live in many cities of Judaea and in many villages and grouped in great societies of many members. Their persuasion is not based on birth, for birth is not a descriptive mark of voluntary associations, but on their zeal for virtue and desire to promote brotherly love. Thus no Essene is a mere child nor even a stripling or newly bearded, since the characters of such are unstable with a waywardness corresponding to the immaturity of their age, but full grown and already verging on old age, no longer carried under by the tide of the body nor led by the passions, but enjoying the veritable, the only real freedom. This freedom is attested by their life. None of them allows himself to have any private property, either house or slave or estate or cattle or any of the other things which are amassed and abundantly procured by wealth, but they put everything together into the public stock and enjoy the benefit of them all in common.


\textsuperscript{3} Trans. Sefaria.org.
They live together formed into clubs, bands of comradeship with common meals, and never cease to conduct all their affairs to serve the general weal. But they have various occupations at which they labour with untiring application and never plead cold or heat or any of the violent changes in the atmosphere as an excuse. Before the sun is risen they betake themselves to their familiar tasks and only when it sets force themselves to return, for they delight in them as much as do those who are entered for gymnastic competitions. For they consider that the exercises which they practise whatever they may be are more valuable to life, more pleasant to soul and body and more lasting than those of the athlete in as much as they can still be plied with vigor when that of the body is past its prime.

Some of them labor on the land skilled in sowing and planting, some as herdsmen taking charge of every kind of cattle and some superintend the swarms of bees. Others work at the handicrafts to avoid the sufferings which are forced upon us by our indispensable requirements and shrink from no innocent way of getting a livelihood. Each branch when it has received the wages of these so different occupations gives it to one person who has been appointed as treasurer. He takes it and at once buys what is necessary and provides food in abundance and anything else which human life requires. Thus having each day a common life and a common table they are content with the same conditions, lovers of frugality who shun expensive luxury as a disease of both body and soul.

And not only is their table in common but their clothing also. For in winter they have a stock of stout coats ready and in summer cheap vests, so that he who wishes may easily take any garment he likes, since what one has is held to belong to all and conversely what all have one has. Again if anyone is sick he is nursed at the common expense and tended with care and thoughtfulness by all. The old men too even if they are childless are treated as parents of a not merely numerous but very filial family and regularly close their life with an exceedingly prosperous and comfortable old age; so many are those who give them precedence and honour as their due and minister to them as a duty voluntarily and deliberately accepted rather than enforced by nature.

Furthermore they eschew marriage because they clearly discern it to be the sole or the principal danger to the maintenance of the communal life, as well as because they particularly practise continence. For no Essene takes a wife, because a wife is a selfish creature, excessively jealous and an adept at beguiling the morals of her husband and seducing him by her continued impostures. For by the fawning talk which she practises and the other ways in which she plays her part like an actress on the stage she first ensnares the sight and hearing, and when these subjects as it were have been duped she coaxes the sovereign mind...Such then is the life of the Essenes, a life so highly to be prized that not only commoners but also great kings look upon them with admiration and amazement, and the approbation and honors which they give add further veneration to their venerable name.4

9. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 5.15

(17.) Lying on the west of Asphalities, and sufficiently distant to escape its noxious exhalations, are the Esseni29, a people that live apart from the world, and marvelous beyond all others throughout the whole earth, for they have no women among them; to sexual desire they are strangers; money they have none; the palm-trees are their only companions. Day after day, however, their numbers are fully recruited by multitudes of strangers that resort to them, driven thither to adopt their usages by the tempests of fortune, and wearied with the miseries of life. Thus it is, that through thousands of ages, incredible to relate, this

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4 All translations of Philo are by C. D. Yonge.
people eternally prolongs its existence, without a single birth taking place there; so fruitful a source of population to it is that weariness of life which is felt by others. (Trans. John Bostock; Perseus.Tufts.Edu)


I have discussed the Essenes, who persistently pursued the active life and excelled in all or, to put it more moderately, in most of its departments. I will now proceed at once in accordance with the sequence required by the subject to say what is needed about those who embraced the life of contemplation... The vocation of these philosophers is at once made clear from their title of therapeutae and Therapeutrides, a name derived from θεραπεύω, either in the sense of "cure" because they profess an art of healing better than that current in the cities which cures only the bodies, while theirs treats also souls oppressed with grievous and well-nigh incurable diseases, inflicted by pleasures and desires and griefs and fears, by acts of covetous- ness, folly and injustice...

So when they have divested themselves of their possessions and have no longer ought to ensnare them they flee without a backward glance and leave their brothers, their children, their wives, their parents, the wide circle of their kinsfolk, the groups of friends around them, the fatherlands in which they were born and reared, since strong is the attraction of familiarity and very great its power to ensnare. And they do not migrate into another city like the unfortunate or worthless slaves who demand to be sold by their owners and so procure a change of masters but not freedom. For every city, even the best governed, is full of turmoil and disturbances innumerable which no one could endure who has ever been even once under the guidance of wisdom. Instead of this they pass their days outside the walls pursuing solitude in gardens or lonely bits of country, not from any acquired habit of misanthropical bitterness but because they know how unprofitable and mischievous are associations with persons of dissimilar character.

This kind exists in many places in the inhabited world, for perfect goodness must be shared both by Greeks and the world outside Greece, but it abounds in Egypt in each of the nomes as they are called and especially round Alexandria. But the best of these votaries journey from every side to settle in a certain very suitable place which they regard as their fatherland. This place is situated above the Mareotic Lake on a somewhat low-lying hill very happily placed both because of its security and the pleasantly tempered air. The safety is secured by the farm buildings and villages round about and the pleasantness of the air by the continuous breezes which arise both from the lake which debouches into the sea and from the open sea hard by. For the sea breezes are light, the lake breezes close and the two combining together produce a most healthy condition of climate. The houses of the society thus collected are exceedingly simple, providing protection against two of the most pressing dangers, the fiery heat of the sun and the icy cold of the air. They are neither near together as in towns, since living at close quarters is troublesome and displeasing to people who are seeking to satisfy their desire for solitude, nor yet at a great distance because of the sense of fellowship which they cherish, and to render help to each other if robbers attack them. In each house there is a consecrated room which is called a sanctuary or closet and closeted in this they are initiated into the mysteries of the sanctified life. They take nothing into it, either drink or food or any other of the things necessary for the needs of the body, but laws and oracles delivered through the mouth of prophets, and psalms and any thing else which fosters and perfects knowledge and piety. They keep the memory of God alive and never forget it, so that even in their dreams the picture is nothing else but the loveliness of divine excellences and powers. Twice every day they pray, at dawn and at eve...
and these they take as a kind of archetype and imitate the method in which this principle is carried out. And so they do not confine themselves to contemplation but also compose hymns and psalms to God in all sorts of meters and melodies which they write down with the rhythms necessarily made more solemn.

For six days they seek wisdom by themselves in solitude in the closets mentioned above, never passing the outside door of the house or even getting a distant view of it. But every seventh day they meet together as for a general assembly and sit in order according to their age in the proper attitude, with their hands inside the robe, the right hand between the breast and the chin and the left withdrawn along the flank. Then the senior among them who also has the fullest knowledge of the doctrines which they profess comes forward and with visage and voice alike quiet and composed gives a well-reasoned and wise discourse. He does not make an exhibition of clever rhetoric like the orators or sophists of today but follows careful examination by careful expression of the exact meaning of the thoughts, and this does not lodge just outside the ears of the audience but passes through the hearing into the soul and there stays securely. All of the others sit still and listen showing their approval merely by their looks or nods. This common sanctuary in which they meet every seventh day is a double enclosure, one portion set apart for the use of the men, the other for the women. For women too regularly make part of the audience with the same ardor and the same sense of their calling. The wall between the two chambers rises up from the ground to three or four cubits built in the form of a breast work, while the space above up to the roof is left open. This arrangement serves two purposes: the modesty becoming to the female sex is preserved, while the women sitting within ear-shot can easily follow what is said since there is nothing to obstruct the voice of the speaker.

They lay self-control to be as it were the foundation of their soul and on it build the other virtues. None of them would put food or drink to his lips before sunset since they hold that philosophy finds its right place in the light, the needs of the body in the darkness, and therefore they assign the day to the one and some small part of the night to the other. Some in whom the desire for studying wisdom is more deeply implanted even only after three days remember to take food. Others so luxuriate and delight in the banquet of truths which wisdom richly and lavishly supplies that they hold out for twice that time and only after six days do they bring themselves to taste such sustenance as is absolutely necessary...But to the seventh day as they consider it to be sacred and festive in the highest degree they have awarded special privileges as its due, and on it after providing for the soul refresh the body also, which they do as a matter of course with the cattle too by releasing them from their continuous labor.
II. But How Prevalent Is This Sectarianism?

1. Philo, Flaccus, 55

There are five districts in the city, named after the first five letters of the written alphabet, of these two are called the quarters of the Jews, because the chief portion of the Jews lives in them. There are also a few scattered Jews, but only a very few, living in some of the other districts. What then did they do? They drove the Jews entirely out of four quarters, and crammed them all into a very small portion of one; and by reason of their numbers they were dispersed over the sea-shore, and desert places, and among the tombs, being deprived of all their property; while the populace, overrunning their desolate houses, turned to plunder, and divided the booty among themselves as if they had obtained it in war. And as no one hindered them, they broke open even the workshops of the Jews, which were all shut up because of their mourning for Drusilla [the emperor’s sister] and carried off all that they found there, and bore it openly through the middle of the market-place as if they had only been making use of their own property.

2. Philo, On the Embassy to Gaius, 370

It was owing to these considerations that we were able to hold up our heads for a while, but there were other circumstances which terrified us and kept us in great perplexity and distress to hear what the emperor would decide, and what he would pronounce, and what kind of sentence he would ultimately deliver; for he heard the general tenor of our arguments, though he disdained to attend to some of our facts. But would it not be a terrible thing for the interests of all the Jews throughout the whole world to be thrown into confusion by the treatment to which we, its five ambassadors, were exposed? For if he were to give us up to our enemies, what other city could enjoy tranquility? What city would there be in which the citizens would not attack the Jews living in it? What synagogue would be let uninjured? What state would not overturn every principle of justice in respect of those of their countrymen who arrayed themselves in opposition to the national laws and customs of the Jews? They will be overthrown, they will be shipwrecked, they will be sent to the bottom, with all the particular laws of the nation, and those too which are common to all and in accordance with the principles of justice recognized in every city.

3. Philo, The Special Laws, 2.167

It amazes me that some dare to charge the nation with an anti-social stance, a nation which has made such an extensive use of fellowship and goodwill toward all people everywhere that they offer up prayers and feasts and first fruits on behalf of the common race of human beings and serve the really self-existent God both on behalf of themselves and of others who have run from the services which they should have rendered. These are the things they do for the entire race of human beings.

4. Philo, Migration of Abraham, 87–95

There are some men, who, looking upon written laws as symbols of things appreciable by the intellect, have studied some things with superfluous accuracy, and have treated others with neglectful indifference... for although the seventh day is a lesson to teach us the power which exists in the uncreated God, and also that the creature is entitled to rest from his labours, it does not follow that on that account we may abrogate the laws which are established respecting it, so as to light a fire, or till land, or carry burdens, or bringing accusations, or conduct suits at law, or demand a restoration of a deposit, or exact the repayment of a debt, or do any other of the things which are usually permitted at times which are not days of festival. Nor does it follow, because the feast is the symbol of the joy of the soul and of its gratitude towards God, that we are to repudiate the assemblies ordained at the periodical seasons of the year; nor because the rite of circumcision is an emblem of the excision of pleasures...
and of all the passions, and of the destruction of that impious opinion, according to which the mind has imagined itself to be by itself competent to produce offspring, does it follow that we are to annul the law which has been enacted about circumcision. 

Radical Allegorizers

This passage points to an intra-Alexandrian Jewish debate about how to live as a Jew

5. Josephus, Antiquities, 14.7.2

And let no one wonder that there was so much wealth in our temple, since all the Jews throughout the habitable earth, and those that worshipped God, nay, even those of Asia and Europe, sent their contributions to it, and this from very ancient times. Nor is the largeness of these sums without its attestation; nor is that greatness owing to our vanity, as raising it without ground to so great a height: but there are many witnesses to it, and particularly Strabo of Cappadocia, who says thus... “there were four classes of men among those of Cyrene; that of citizens, that of husbandmen, the third of strangers, and the fourth of Jews. Now these Jews are already gotten into all cities; and it is hard to find a place in the habitable earth that hath not admitted this tribe of men, and is not possessed by them; and it hath come to pass that Egypt and Cyrene, as having the same governors, and great number of other nations, imitate their way of living and maintain great bodies of these Jews in a peculiar manner, and grow up to greater prosperity with them, and make use of the same laws with that nation also. Accordingly, the Jews have places assigned them in Egypt, wherein they inhabit, besides what is peculiarly allotted to this nation at Alexandria, which is a large part of that city. There is also an ethnarch allowed them, who governs the nation, and distributes justice to them, and takes care of their contracts, and of the laws to them belonging, as if he were the ruler of a free republic. In Egypt, therefore, this nation is powerful, because the Jews were originally Egyptians, and because the land wherein they inhabit, since they went thence, is near to Egypt.”

6. 2 Maccabees, 6:1–11:

Not long after this, the king sent an Athenian senator to compel the Jews to forsake the laws of their ancestors and no longer to live by the laws of God; 2 also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it the temple of Olympian Zeus, and to call the one in Gerizim the temple of Zeus-the-Friend-of-Strangers, as did the people who lived in that place. Harsh and utterly grievous was the onslaught of evil. 4 For the temple was filled with debauchery and reveling by the Gentiles, who dallied with prostitutes and had intercourse with women within the sacred precincts, and besides brought in things for sacrifice that were unfit. 5 The altar was covered with abominable offerings that were forbidden by the laws. 6 People could neither keep the sabbath, nor observe the festivals of their ancestors, nor so much as confess themselves to be Jews. On the monthly celebration of the king’s birthday, the Jews were taken, under bitter constraint, to partake of the sacrifices; and when a festival of Dionysus was celebrated, they were compelled to wear wreaths of ivy and to walk in the procession in honour of Dionysus. 8 At the suggestion of the people of Ptolemais a decree was issued to the neighbouring Greek cities that they should adopt the same policy towards the Jews and make them partake of the sacrifices, 9 and should kill those who did not choose to change over to Greek customs. One could see, therefore, the misery that had come upon

them. For example, two women were brought in for having circumcised their children. They publicly paraded them around the city, with their babies hanging at their breasts, and then hurled them down headlong from the wall. Others who had assembled in the caves nearby, in order to observe the seventh day secretly, were betrayed to Philip and were all burned together, because their piety kept them from defending themselves, in view of their regard for that most holy day.

7. The Letter of Aristeas 9–11, 16–19, 139–159

Demetrius of Phalerum, the president of the king's library, received vast sums of money, for the purpose of collecting together, as far as he possibly could, all the books in the world. By means of purchase and transcription, he carried out, to the best of his ability, the purpose of the king. On one occasion when I was present he was asked, “How many thousand books are there in the library?” and he replied, “More than two hundred thousand, O king, and I shall make endeavor in the immediate future to gather together the remainder also, so that the total of five hundred thousand may be reached. I am told that the laws of the Jews are worth transcribing and deserve a place in your library.” “What is to prevent you from doing this?” replied the king. “Everything that is necessary has been placed at your disposal.” “They need to be translated,” answered Demetrius, “for in the country of the Jews they use a peculiar alphabet (just as the Egyptians, too, have a special form of letters) and speak a peculiar dialect. They are supposed to use the Syriac tongue, but this is not the case; their language is quite different.” And the king when he understood all the facts of the case ordered a letter to be written to the Jewish High Priest that his purpose (which has already been described) might be accomplished...

These people worship God the overseer and creator of all, whom all men worship including ourselves, O King except that we have a different name. Their name for him is Zeus and Jove… Sosibius and some of those present thus said, “It is worthy of your magnanimity to offer the release of these men as a thank offering to the Most High God. You are highly honored by the Lord of all, and have been glorified beyond your ancestors, so if you make even the greatest thank offerings, it befits you.” ...

Now our Lawgiver being a wise man and specially endowed by God to understand all things, took a comprehensive view of each particular detail, and fenced us round with impregnable ramparts and walls of iron, that we might not mingle at all with any of the other nations, but remain pure in body and soul, free from all vain imaginations, worshiping the one Almighty God above the whole creation. Hence the leading Egyptian priests having looked carefully into many matters, and being cognizant with (our) affairs, call us " men of God ". This is a title which does not belong to the rest of mankind but only to those who worship the true God. The rest are men not of God but of meats and drinks and clothing. For their whole disposition leads them to find solace in these things. Among our people such things are reckoned of no account. but throughout their whole life their main consideration is the sovereignty of God. Therefore lest we should be corrupted by any abomination, or our lives be perverted by evil communications, he hedged us round on all sides by rules of purity, affecting alike what we eat, or drink, or touch, or hear, or see. For though, speaking generally, all things are alike in their natural constitution, since they are all governed by one and the same power, yet there is a deep reason in each individual case why we abstain from the use of certain things and enjoy the common use of others. For the sake of illustration I will run over one or two points and explain them to you. For you must not fall into the degrading idea that it was out of regard to mice and weasels and other such things that Moses drew up his laws with such exceeding care, All these ordinances were made for the sake of righteousness to aid the quest for virtue and the perfecting of character. For all the birds that we use are tame and distinguished by their cleanliness, feeding on various kinds of grain and pulse, such as for instance pigeons, turtle-doves, locusts, partridges, geese also, and all other birds of this class. But the birds which are forbidden you will find to be wild and carnivorous, tyrannizing over the others by the strength which they possess, and cruelly obtaining food by preying on the tame birds enumerated above and not only so, but they seize
lambs and kids, and injure human beings too, whether dead or alive, and so by naming them unclean, he gave a sign by means of them that those, for whom the legislation was ordained, must practice righteousness in their hearts and not tyrannize over any one in reliance upon their own strength nor rob them of anything, but steer their course of life in accordance with justice...Our legislator taught us therefore that it is by such methods as these that indications are given to the wise, that they must be just and effect nothing by violence, and refrain from tyrannizing over others in reliance upon their own strength. Wherefore all the rules which he has laid down with regard to what is permitted in the case of these birds and other animals, he has enacted with the object of teaching us a moral lesson. For the division of the hoof and the separation of the claws are intended to teach us that we must discriminate between our individual actions with a view to the practice of virtue. For the strength of our whole body and its activity depend upon our shoulders and limbs. Therefore he compels us to recognize that we must perform all our actions with discrimination according to the standard of righteousness -more especially because we have been distinctly separated from the rest of mankind. For most other men defile themselves by promiscuous intercourse, thereby working great iniquity, and whole countries and cities pride themselves upon such vices. For they not only have intercourse with men but they defile their own mothers and even their daughters. But we have been kept separate from such sins. And the people who have been separated in the aforementioned way are also characterized by the Lawgiver as possessing the gift of memory. For all animals " which are cloven-footed and chew the cud " represent to the initiated the symbol of memory. For the act of chewing the cud is nothing else than the reminiscence of life and existence. For life is wont to be sustained by means of food wherefore he exhorts us in the Scripture also in these words: "Thou shalt surely remember the Lord that wrought in thee those great and wonderful things". For when they are properly conceived, they are manifestly great and glorious; first the construction of the body and the disposition of the food and the separation of each individual limb and, far more, the organization of the senses, the operation and invisible movement of the mind, the rapidity of its particular actions and its discovery of the arts, display an infinite resourcefulness. Wherefore he exhorts us to remember that the aforesaid parts are kept together by the divine power with consummate skill. For he has marked out every time and place that we may continually remember the God who rules and preserves (us). For in the matter of meats and drinks he bids us first of all offer part as a sacrifice and then forthwith enjoy our meal. Moreover, upon our garments he has given us a symbol of remembrance, and in like manner he has ordered us to put the divine oracles upon our gates and doors as a remembrance of God.

Epilogue A: Jewish Sects in the New Testament:

Matthew 22:23-40

The same day some Sadducees came to him, saying there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, saying, 24"Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies childless, his brother shall marry the widow, and raise up children for his brother.’ 25Now there were seven brothers among us; the first married, and died childless, leaving the widow to his brother. 26The second did the same, so also the third, down to the seventh. 27Last of all, the woman herself died. 28In the resurrection, then, whose wife of the seven will she be? For all of them had married her." 29Jesus answered them, ‘You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. 30For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 31And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, 32“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is God not of the dead, but of the living.’ 33And when the crowd heard it, they were astounded at his teaching.
34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’


Epilogue B: The Earliest References to Jewish Sectarians (2nd century BCE)

1 Maccabees 7:8-18

8 So the king chose Bacchides, one of the king’s Friends, governor of the province Beyond the River; he was a great man in the kingdom and was faithful to the king. He sent him, and with him he sent the ungodly Alcimus, whom he made high priest; and he commanded him to take vengeance on the Israelites. So they marched away and came with a large force into the land of Judah; and he sent messengers to Judas and his brothers with peaceable but treacherous words. But they paid no attention to their words, for they saw that they had come with a large force.

12 Then a group of scribes appeared in a body before Alcimus and Bacchides to ask for just terms. The Hasideans were first among the Israelites to seek peace from them, for they said, ‘A priest of the line of Aaron has come with the army, and he will not harm us.’ Alcimus spoke peaceable words to them and swore this oath to them, ‘We will not seek to injure you or your friends.’ So they trusted him; but he seized sixty of them and killed them in one day, in accordance with the word that was written, ‘The flesh of your faithful ones and their blood they poured out all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them.’ Then the fear and dread of them fell on all the people, for they said, ‘There is no truth or justice in them, for they have violated the agreement and the oath that they swore.’ (NRSV) [cf. 1 Maccabees 2:37-47]

2 Maccabees 14:1-11

3 Now a certain Alcimus, who had formerly been high priest but had willfully defiled himself in the times of separation, realized that there was no way for him to be safe or to have access again to the holy altar, and went to King Demetrius in about the one hundred and fifty-first year, presenting to him a crown of gold and a palm, and besides these some of the customary olive branches from the temple. During that day he kept quiet. But he found an opportunity that furthered his mad purpose when he was invited by Demetrius to a meeting of the council and was asked about the attitude and intentions of the Jews. He answered:

6 ‘Those of the Jews who are called Hasideans, whose leader is Judas Maccabeus, are keeping up war and stirring up sedition, and will not let the kingdom attain tranquillity. Therefore I have laid aside my ancestral glory—I mean the high-priesthood—and have now come here, first because I am genuinely concerned for the interests of the king, and second because I have regard also for my compatriots. For through the folly of those whom I have mentioned our whole nation is now in no small misfortune. (NRSV)