

Historical Survey: Roman Empire & Christianization; Mesopotamia

November 1, 2006

- Review and Prospect
- Jews and the Roman Empire 150–312
- Jews and the Christian Roman Empire 312–634
- Jews in Mesopotamia 150–637

Review and Prospect

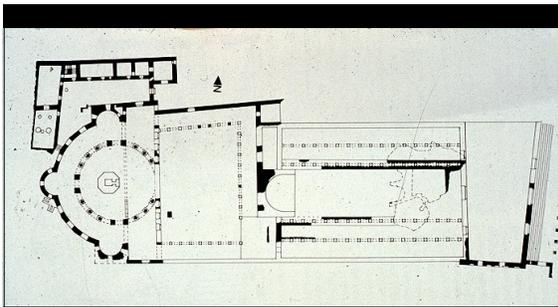
- Review:
 - Palestine:
 - Period of independence (Hasmonaeans, Herod)
 - Revolts and Roman suppression
 - Diaspora:
 - Long established, linguistically, culturally integrated
 - Some regions: military destruction of communities, 115–117
 - Others: Continued continued peace and prosperity
- Prospect:
 - Generally: Political quietism, Palestine and Diaspora
 - Diaspora *model* for Jewish communities, even in Palestine
 - Rise of the rabbinic movement. *Eventual* hegemony
 - New forms of piety (|| dominant forms of piety in late-antique & medieval world)

Jews and the Roman Empire 150–312

- "Provincialization": Judaea (now called Palestine) normalized as a Roman province
 - Governor, garrison, monumental urbanization; road building etc.)
- Collapse of older traditional elites (priests, Herodians, etc.)
- Much day-to-day rule assigned to dispersed landed urbanites—not Jews, necessarily
- Demographic reshaping of Palestinian Jews:
 - In 4th C, Jews concentrated in Galilee and south of Judaea
- Some limited autonomy with rise of Patriarch (*Nasi*) (Jaffee; Lapin: this is overstated)
- Rise of Rabbis (numerically small movement of pious, learned men); crucial for later in the course

Jews and the Christian Roman Empire 312–634

- Constantine: “Conversion” and “Toleration” 312; conquest of East 324
 - Christianization of the Empire
 - As a majority religion, probably at least a century after Constantine
 - Beginning with Constantine, increasingly the **public** face of the empire
 - Palestine: Particular locus of monumentalization
- (cont'd)



Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem
(reconstructed as of mid-fourth C.)

Jews and the Christian Roman Empire 312–634 (ii)

- Problem of Jews for Christian Empire: a fundamental theological problem
 - Theologically wrong, even criminally so; yet (ultimately unlike pagans, heretics, **tolerated**)
 - Augustine: doctrine of witness. Protected **and** subordinate; attest to consequences of rejection.
- Roman (Christian) law on Jews
 - Increasingly collapses citizens and Christians
 - Recurrent areas of concern
 - Conversion (of slaves, free; esp. of Christians)
 - Synagogues: protecting old, later prohibiting new
 - Jews in visible positions of authority/honor
 - Briefly (390s to 420s): role of Palestinian Patriarchs



Jews in Mesopotamia 150–637

- Sources:
 - Parthian period (to 224 CE), very poorly known
 - Sasanian period (224–637), better known, but from late sources
 - Knowledge about Jews almost exclusively from Babylonian Talmud (more next time). **Represents Jews from Mesopotamia (Iraq), rather than Iran**
- Distinctive **Rabbinic movement** (dependent upon Pal. tradition, but eventually claims superiority)
- Exilarch (Aram. Resh Galuta, "Head of the Diaspora")
 - Perhaps precedes Sasanians
 - Important Jewish figure under Sasanians (maintained courts etc.)
 - Esp. important administratively under Muslim rules (after 637)

Sasanian Empire (Shapur I, 241–272 CE)

(Source: Enc. Brit., Roman border added)