Historical Survey: Roman Empire & Christianization; Mesopotamia

Review and Prospect

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

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Review and Prospect

- Review:
  - Palestine:
    - Period of independence (Hasmonaean, Herod)
    - Revolts and Roman suppression
  - Diaspora:
    - Long established, linguistically, culturally integrated
    - Some regions: military destruction of communities, 115–117
    - Others: 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
Gradual Romanization 1st C. BCE-2nd CE

Views of a colonnaded street, theater. Beth Shean (Scythopolis)

Diaspora: 1st CE–5th (Not 3rd!?) CE
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 rulers (after 637)

Sasanian Empire (Shapur I, 241–272 CE)
(Source: Enc. Brit., Roman border added)