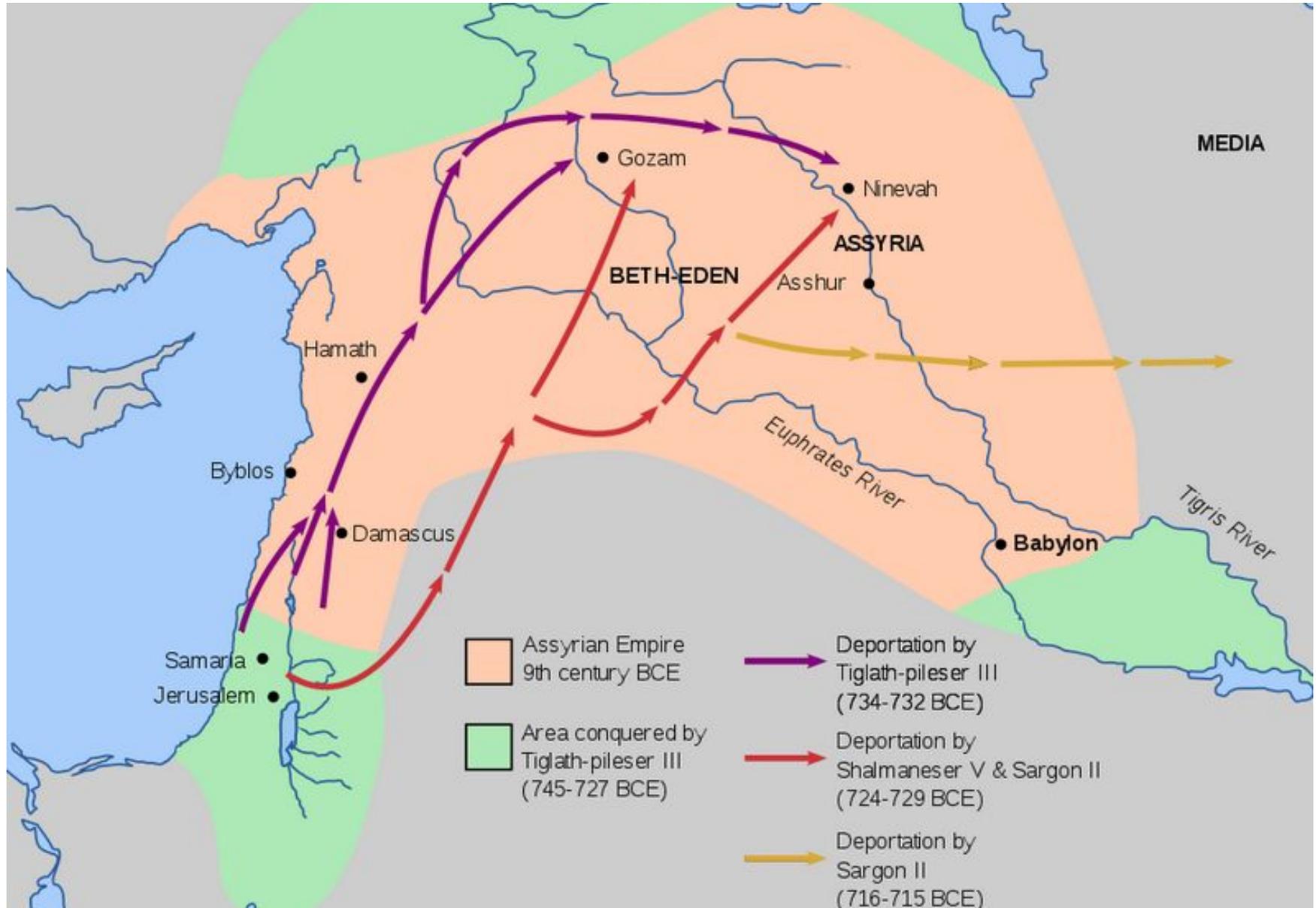


# Rise of the Pharisees

# Israel is not Judah Judah is not Israel

- Judea was comprised primarily of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and included the Levites (2 Chron. 11:12-14). Yet they are collectively referred to throughout Scripture as the “Jews” (2 Kgs 18:26, 28; Ezra 4:12; Jer. 40:11-12).
- Jews represent but a small segment of the original 12 tribes of the nation of Israel. Assyria disseminated 10 tribes and imported foreigners to mix with Israel (Samaritans).

# Israel Deported, Foreigners Imported



# Impact of Babylonian Captivity

- Jews 586 (or about 150 years after Israel)
- Babylonian captivity –not Assyrian, not Israel
- Captivity, deportation, destruction of the Temple
- They could not make trips to Jerusalem and regular sacrifices at the Temple.
- They substituted the synagogue for the Temple, prayers for the Levitical rituals in the Law of Moses and the rise of scribes for the priests.

# New Leaders in Exile

- The destruction of the Temple diluted the authority of the Aaronic priesthood to the point that a new elite class arose and over time took their place, the rabbis. The term *rabbi* was not generally used until much later.
- Another type of leader arose during this period—*the scribe*. The scribe was a man whose chief interest lay in the preservation of the sacred literature.

# Scribes New Role

- Early scribes served kings as *secretaries*, such as Shaphan under Josiah (2 Kgs 22:3); other scribes took dictation, such as Baruch, who recorded what Jeremiah spoke (Jer. 36:32). They appear to be educated—able to read and write well.
- Now they became an important caste, setting down in writing copies of precious scrolls brought from the Temple.
- What 2 roles would be natural outcomes of this role?

# No Temple, Now What?

- The Scribes helped the Jews to know the Law (without prophets or the Temple) and created new institutions for this purpose of education
- The synagogue, that is, congregational worship, without a priest or ritual, came into existence as a place of teaching.

# Remember Jesus in Luke 4

- <sup>16</sup> So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. <sup>17</sup> And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: (Isa 49:8-9) <sup>20</sup> Then He closed the book, and gave *it* back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. <sup>21</sup> And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

# Language

- The Babylonian Empire passed into history in 539 BC, and the Medo-Persian Empire took its place.
- While in captivity, the average Jew could no longer speak Hebrew. Aramaic had replaced Hebrew as the language of culture and commerce in the Persian Empire.
- The custom arose of reading the Hebrew bible in the synagogue service, after which an explanation would be given in Aramaic

# Define the Problem

## Find the Solution

- 2 Kgs 17. <sup>13</sup> Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments *and* My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets.”  
<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God.
- So what is the solution?

# The Solution

- Under Joshua and Zerubbabel the Temple was rebuilt and dedicated in 515 BC. Fifty-eight years later, in 457 BC, Ezra the scribe led a second group of Jews to Judea. (Ezra 7:6)
- Once the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt, attention was given to instructing the Jews in the ways of God. Ezra and Nehemiah instituted the practice of reading the Scriptures aloud to the people, interpreting the difficult passages. (Neh. 8:7-8).

# The Message – Worship and Home

- Ez 10. Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly. <sup>2</sup> And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, *one* of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, “We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. <sup>3</sup> Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. <sup>4</sup> Arise, for *this matter is your responsibility*. We also *are* with you. Be of good courage, and do *it*.”

# Ezra and the Great Assembly

The Mishnah (ad 200) gives the earliest and most information about the Great Assembly: “Moses received the Torah from Sinai and delivered it to Joshua, then Joshua to the Elders, next the Elders to the Prophets, and finally the Prophets delivered it to the Men of the Great Assembly.” They (the Men of the Great Assembly) said three things:

1. be careful in judgments;
2. train up many disciples; and
3. make a fence around the Law.

# Great Assembly or Great Synagogue

- A succession of Jewish scholars in the second and third centuries (BC). The gap between the last prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) and Simeon the Just, high priest ca. 200 b.c., is filled by the men of the Great Assembly (Heb. keneset), sometimes referred to as the Great Synagogue.
- Identified with the assembly in Nehemiah 8-9 and attributed various legal and ritual enactments to it.

# Gradual Change

- The Great Assembly was—at least from the beginning—composed of *only* priests, with the High Priest as its head. However, the priests used other Levites who did much of the actual teaching.
- These Levites gradually represented the professional class among the people, made up of scholarly *scribes* who were already beginning to assume the role of teachers of the Scriptures.

# Scribes

- The scribes were content to work under the leadership of the priests of the Great Assembly in expounding the Scriptures in a mostly straightforward fashion. However, once Ezra and Nehemiah passed from the scene, the scribes' preeminence would accelerate.

# How did the Scribes power grow?

- Great Assembly was originally composed of only priests (or priestly scribes). Over time, however, this would change. The hereditary, Aaronic requirement for membership in the Great Assembly gradually became unimportant; rather, what became important was the level of scholarly *knowledge* possessed by the scribe. *Knowledge* equaled power and prestige.

# Creating law to help the Law

- The century about 430 to 330 BC, was a century of relative peace and quiet, but one of gradual change. During this entire period the Jews were allowed complete freedom by the Persians to practice their own customs, traditions and religion as they saw fit.
- Over time, the Jews in Jerusalem in the Great Assembly moved from simply interpreting Scripture to creating laws and ordinances of their own.
- This was before the Pharisees party.

# Status of Interpretations

- The scribes' writings gradually assumed semi-inspired status and eventually, over a period of several decades practically replaced the Word of God altogether.
- The scribes encouraged knowledge, they created literature; they formulated laws.
- In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah the influence of the scribes was slight, a century later their ideas had become tremendously influential.
- Their discussions concerning Scripture became embodied in traditional interpretations of the Bible

# Here come the Greeks

- Within a generation of Alexander's conquest of Palestine, the entire ancient East ruled by the Greeks had—new ideas, new names for old gods, new methods of administration, a new language, and new markets for trade—all of which changed the East from the quiet of easygoing Persian rule.
- One of the key changes of this period was the dismantling of the Great Assembly. Within 20 years after the coming of the Greeks, the Great Assembly disappears from history as an organized body.

# Greek Influence

- Hellenism, Greek influence, on Jewish culture and religion must not be underestimated.
- Without the guidance of the Great Assembly, many Jews began to adopt Greek customs.
- Almost everything the Greeks brought to the Jews was antagonistic to the laws of God; the rule of Scripture was rapidly being replaced by Hellenistic ideas.

# Resistance, but only in part

- In part, the scribes resisted the liberal ideas of Hellenism, finding them contrary to Scripture. But then, there was Greek *logic*—utterly irresistible to the scholarly mind of the scribe.
- These leaders replaced the old and approved allegorical approach with a new logical approach.”

# Another Influence among the highest class

- Those best equipped to resist the temptation of Hellenism proved the most vulnerable. Instead of realizing the humble, *servant nature* of their God-given role, the priesthood clearly identified itself with the nobility, the upper class, the elite of Judah.
- it was the upper classes, the rich, the senior priests, who were most tempted.
- Greek culture had its greatest effect on the upper classes—the nobility, that is, the chief families among the priests who lived in Jerusalem.

# The Priests Everything Greek

- In 198 BC, the Seleucid kingdom of Syria forced the Egyptians to give up Palestine.
- With the coming of Antiochus IV (*Epiphanes*) in 175 BC. the corruption of the Aaronic priesthood reached its height.
- This “reform party” paid Antiochus a large sum of money to remove the current High Priest, Onias III, and appoint his Hellenized brother, Jason, to the coveted office.

# The Common People

- 2 Maccabees informs us that under Jason's influence the Hellenizing process reached such a pitch that the priests ceased to show any interest in the services of the altar; scorning the Temple and neglecting the sacrifices. They disdained all that their ancestors had esteemed, and set the highest value on Hellenic honors” (2 Macc. 4:13-15).
- The common people ascribed to the upper classes, the priesthood, abandonment of the principles of the Law which the scribes had taught.

# A step too far

- In 171 BC, Antiochus found it necessary to replace Jason as High Priest with the still more pro-Greek Menelaus who was *not* of the Aaronic line.
- Antiochus' move ranged from forbidding circumcision and Sabbath observance to desecrating the Temple itself.
- Rise of the Maccabees – resistance and war

# End of the Maccabees that is Hasmonean Dynasty

- The last Maccabee, Simon, became High Priest and ruler and at his death at 135 BC. Judea was now independent.
- Simon formed a second Great Assembly—but one quite different from Ezra's time. The aristocracy which had dominated previous assemblies [i.e., minor ruling councils] had in the meantime become identified with the Hellenizing Jews, so that, if they were represented at all, they were outvoted.
- This assembly—which would later develop into the *Sanhedrin* of Jesus' day.

# The New Leaders

- At some point during the period in which the Hasmonean dynasty ruled Palestine, three distinct groups emerged within the Jewish community—the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes.
- The Essenes withdrew themselves from Jewish life but provided spiritual guidance to their adherents.

# Sadducees

- The upper classes and the aristocratic priesthood organized themselves [for their own political gain] into the Sadducee party to back the political activities of the Hasmoneans.
- Many of the priests were outright Hellenists and steeped in the pagan philosophies of that culture. Not only that, many of them had sided with Antiochus Epiphanes against the Common People during the Maccabean Revolt.

# Sadducee Aristocrats

- The aristocratic and official element of the population—which became known as the Sadducees—unhesitatingly declared every law that was not specifically written in the Torah to be a dangerous and reprehensible innovation. However, the opposition of the Sadducees only gave an additional drive to the spread of the oral law by the scribes, later known as rather, later associated with the Pharisees.

# Pharisees

- The Great Assembly formed by Simon of the Maccabees—was composed entirely of Sadducean priests and wealthy aristocrats
- Hyrcanus II, as High Priest about 76 BC, appointed many Pharisees to the Sanhedrin which, up to that point, had been controlled by the Sadducees. The Pharisees were now in a position to influence both the religious and civil heads of the commonwealth
- The Pharisees created an aristocracy of learning

# Pharisees Education

- As the Pharisees gained in popularity and influence during the Hasmonean period, the synagogue began to play an increasingly important role.
- In their battle against Greek education, the Pharisaic pious Jews began, from the end of the second century BC, to develop a national system of education. To the old scribal schools were gradually added a network of local schools where, in theory at least, all Jewish boys were taught the Law.
- This development was of great importance in the spread and consolidation of the synagogue and in the birth of Pharisaism as a movement rooted in popular education.

# Pharisees and the Synagogue

- While the Sadducees priesthood prided itself for being of the blood line of Aaron, the Pharisees created an aristocracy of learning.
- The scribes and Pharisees accomplished this not only through their schools, but through the synagogues.
- The Pharisees made the synagogue the dominant institution in Jewish life, around which the entire life of the community revolved.

# Synagogue not the Temple

- By the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the day was gone when Jewish religion depended upon priest and sacrifice, even upon the Temple itself which was destroyed in 70 AD.
- In fact, the Pharisees' made the synagogue the heir to the Temple.
- Ideally, the scribes and Pharisees should have used the synagogues to teach the Scriptures *and* point the people to the Temple. But the rivalry between the Pharisees and the Sadducees was simply too deep.
- With the destruction of the Temple came the end of the Sadducees.

# Pharisees guide the Jewish Religion

- A network of local schools was of great importance in the spread and consolidation of the synagogue and in the growth in popularity of the Pharisees as a movement rooted in popular education.”
- The scribes' so-called oral law, having finally, after decades of development, come to life as *the* central doctrine of the Pharisaic party, and of the Jews religion.
- Torah has a range of meanings. It can most specifically mean the first five books of the OT, and is usually printed with the rabbinic commentaries.