

## LESSON OUTLINE

Download the HERITAGE DVD-ROM bookmarks for this lesson:

For Windows users

For Macintosh users

### Judah in Exile

- A** Atlas: Near East: 586 BCE
- V** Video: Show 2: Babylon, The Babylonian World
- V** Video: Show 2: Babylon, Jeremiah to the Exiles

### The Return of a Remnant

- V** Video: Show 2: Persia, Return to Jerusalem
- V** Video: Show 2: Persia, The Torah and Ezra
- M** Multimedia: The Diaspora in the Greek World

### The Coming of the Greeks

- V** Video: Show 2: Greece, Greek Civilization (part 1)
- A** Atlas: Mediterranean: 260 BCE
- V** Video: Show 2: Greece: Greek Civilization (part 2) (*Bookmarked as "Septuagint"*)

### Confronting Hellenism

- A** Atlas: Mediterranean: 260 BCE
- V** Video: Show 2: The Maccabees, Judean Kingdom
- V** Video: Show 2: The Maccabees, Qumran
- M** Multimedia: Qumran

# HERITAGE

*Civilization and the Jews*

## § The Power of the Word §

### Session 3

#### Episode 2 § Lesson 1

### Return and Rebuilding

This lesson describes the lives of the Israelite people in both the restored homeland of Judea and a vigorous Diaspora outside of Judea in the five centuries during and after the Babylonian Exile.

This Diaspora, originally in Babylonia and along the Nile, would be magnified by Jewish settlement in most of the major cosmopolitan and commercial areas throughout the succession of Persian, Greek, and Roman empires.

Meanwhile, in Judea itself, a nation was being rebuilt. Persian rule gave way to the Greeks under Alexander the Great. Amid the enticements of the attractive Hellenistic culture and the abusive treatment of the Seleucid Empire, a rebellion was fomented in Judea that established an independent Jewish state under the Hasmonean dynasty.

Internal dissension in independent Judea created many sects, such as the one that lived in Qumran and bequeathed us the Dead Sea Scrolls.

## Session 3 Return and Rebuilding

### PART 1

## Judah in Exile

The exiled people of Judah arrived in Babylonia in 586-585 BCE. They confronted a sophisticated and very different society. There, they absorbed many aspects of the general culture (such as calendrical names and the local language and writing system), but resisted a total assimilation with the religious system and values of their host country.

In fact, the exiles would largely define their ethnic and religious identity in contrast to the polytheistic, caste-oriented host environment, while settling amid the non-Judean majority among whom they lived in Babylonia.

### A Near East: 586 BCE

Atlas > 586 BCE – 72 CE > 586 >  
Mediterranean

### Atlas: Near East: 586 BCE

Nearly 600 miles separated the exiles from their homeland. The classic imperial model of conquest employed by the Babylonians involved the deportation of the “cream of the population” (political, religious, and commercial leaders) to areas of the Empire in which population growth was desirable. In theory (and generally in practice), this destroyed the national and ethnic identities of the captive peoples and homogenized the identities of the imperial population.

The Babylonian empire was extensive, and most of the other peoples of the Levant who were conquered disappeared from the pages of history, as had the Israelites of the northern kingdom. They had been similarly deported by the Assyrians more than a century earlier, and are remembered today only as the Ten Lost Tribes.

- ◆ Point out the following places of interest:
  - Jerusalem
  - Babylon
  - Extent of the Babylonian Empire
  - Ur and Haran (vis a vis Abraham)
- ◆ Click the **Map Legend** tab at the bottom, to show the distances involved on the mileage scale. Click again to make the Map Legend go away.
- ◆ Click the **Modern View** tab at the bottom to show the current map of the area. Then, click the **Historic View** tab (which replaced the Modern View tab at the bottom) to return to the map, circa 586 BCE.

## **V** Babylon, The Babylonian World

Video > The Power of the word >  
Babylon > The Babylonian World

## **V** Babylon, Jeremiah to the Exiles

Video > The Power of the Word >  
Babylon > Judean Life in Babylon

### **Review and Discussion Questions**

- The exiles were relocated to the same area near Ur from which their ancestors, Abraham and Sarah, had come a millennium earlier. How do you think the exiles viewed this happenstance? To what extent would it have influenced their views of Babylonian society?
- Why would the Babylonians have relocated the exiles from Judah (and other places) to the agricultural heartland between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers?

### **Video: Show 2: Babylon, The Babylonian World**

Babylonia was a strange and exotic land, with advanced technologies, sophisticated agriculture, a different but highly developed legal system, and a thriving imperial economy.

- ◆ Play this video segment until “...Babylonia and there they settled.”

### **Review and Discussion Questions**

- What would be the key challenges for the exiles from Judah in maintaining their national and religious identities?
- What were some of their assets in addressing these challenges?

### **Video: Show 2: Babylon, Jeremiah to the Exiles**

The exiles took to heart words spoken to them in the first phase of their exile, which began in 597 BCE. In Jeremiah 29:4ff, the prophet and dissident leader sent word to them about the way they should live their lives in exile. His words became the formula for Jewish life in the Diaspora until our own day.

The exiled Judeans absorbed much of their host culture yet found that Judaism could function successfully in the strange new world to which they had been deported. Deprived of King, Temple, Priesthood, and Holy Land, they evolved new customs and approaches to maintaining their identity even in exile.

- ◆ Play this video segment until “...five Books of the Bible – the Torah.”

### **Review and Discussion Questions**

- Why would Jeremiah counsel the exiles to work for the welfare of their homeland’s eventual destroyers?
- Describe the process by which a practice like the “taking of Challah” might have developed in Babylonian exile.
- Why was it important to combine the written and oral traditions of the people into the Torah while in exile?

## Session 3 Return and Rebuilding

### PART 2

## The Return of a Remnant

A more benign and enlightened empire conquered the Babylonians in 539 BCE. A year later, the Persian King Cyrus issued a decree permitting the exiled Judeans to return to their land and their capital city, Jerusalem. His edict also encouraged the returnees to rebuild their temple and their society.

Many returned, but many chose to remain in now-Persian Mesopotamia. They became the first permanent Jewish Diaspora - a community that would continue for more than 2,500 years, until its expulsion by the Iraqi government after the birth of the modern state of Israel.

### **V** Persia, Return to Jerusalem

Video > The Power of the Word >  
Persia > Rebuilding Judah

### **Video: Show 2:** Persia, Return to Jerusalem

When Cyrus issued his edict allowing the return to Judea (called “Yehud” in the Persian period), the half-century of enforced exile came to an end. But the people’s glorious memories of First Temple-era Jerusalem were hardly reflective of the reality the returnees confronted when they reached their homeland.

Although the Second Temple was completed less than a quarter-century after the return, it would take a century more before Jerusalem and Judea regained even a portion of their former glory.

- ◆ Play this video segment until “....the Jews had recovered their ancient home.”

### **Review and Discussion Questions**

- In addition to the destruction wrought by the Babylonian armies, what other factors contributed to the decrepit state of Jerusalem and Judea a half-century after the conquest?
- Not all of the people of Judah were deported by the Babylonians. In addition to the Israelites who remained in Judea, other neighboring peoples moved into the vacuum left by the exiles throughout the sixth century BCE. Discuss the reactions and tensions that might have developed between the returnees and the “local” population in Jerusalem and throughout the country.

## **V** Persia, The Torah and Ezra

Video > The Power of the Word >  
Persia > Rebuilding Judah > Play  
from previously paused location

## **M** The Diaspora in the Greek World

Video > The Power of the Word >  
Greece > Judeans in a Greek World  
> Explore Topic > The Judean  
Diaspora in the Greek World

### **Video: Show 2: Persia, The Torah and Ezra**

There are many theories about the origins of the Torah and its contents. Among modern scholars, a consensus has developed that the Torah reached its final form in Babylonia and was published in Jerusalem by Ezra, the priestly scribe, several decades after the end of the exile. It served as a legal, religious, and cultural constitution for the struggling community of returnees.

- ◆ Play this video segment until “...would enable them to restore themselves.”

#### **Review and Discussion Questions**

- Why would the promulgation of the Torah be so important to the community of returnees?
- How would you reconcile the traditional Mosaic attribution of the authorship of the Torah with the idea that Ezra and others prepared the final document in Babylonia?

### **Multimedia: The Diaspora in the Greek World**

The former exiles who chose to remain in Babylonia were only the first of Jewish Diaspora communities. In the centuries that followed, known as the Second-Temple period, Diaspora communities would develop and prosper throughout the then-known world. In fact, never again would a majority of Jews choose to live in their homeland, whether or not they were permitted to do so (as they were for most of this period).

Throughout the successive periods of Persian, Greek, and Roman suzerainty, the Jewish Diaspora proliferated in Asia and the Mediterranean basin. In fact, three-fourths or more of all Jews lived outside of Judea by the time this period came to a close in the first century CE.

- ◆ Click on the button **The Judean Diaspora in the Greek World** to play the Autoplay multimedia presentation.
- ◆ At the conclusion of the Autoplay, you may choose to review the developments in each century by clicking the Forward-Arrow at the bottom.

#### **Review and Discussion Questions**

- With return to their homeland as an option, why would most Jews choose to settle in other places?
- What does the general pattern of Diaspora development suggest about the livelihoods and interests of Diaspora Jewish communities?

### PART 3

## The Coming of the Greeks

The people of Israel had been subjugated by many empires and had survived military defeats – and even an exile. But a much greater challenge was to be presented by the Greek civilization that, under Alexander the Great, wrested control of Judea from the defeated Persians. The Greeks were the first great cultural imperialists: they not only advanced their empire through military means; they stabilized their empire through the promulgation of their attractive, highly advanced culture.

In the Diaspora, Jews attempted to balance their Judaism with the enticements and allure of Greek civilization and through literacy in Greek. While holding to their ethnic heritage, Diaspora communities increasingly partook of the Hellenistic culture and language.

### V Greece, Greek Civilization

Video > The Power of the Word >  
Greece > Heirs to Alexander

### Video: Show 2: Greece, Greek Civilization

The Greeks had developed an astonishingly high culture centuries before the Macedonian Alexander the Great conquered most of the known world. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were already legendary Greek figures, and the magnificent architecture and arts of Athens were already “classical” long before Judea was annexed to the Greek Empire.

Jews, both in Judea and in conquered Diaspora communities, were enticed by the richness of this new and vibrant Hellenistic culture.

- ◆ Play this video segment until “....civilization to the barbarians.”

### Review and Discussion Questions

- What was so alluring about Hellenistic culture?
- Why was the adoption of Greek culture among subject-peoples so important to Alexander and his successors?

### A Mediterranean: 260 BCE

Atlas > 586 BCE – 72 CE > 260 >  
Mediterranean

### Atlas: Mediterranean: 260 BCE

Alexander’s death precipitated a succession battle among his key generals. Ptolemy gained dominion in Egypt, while Seleucus created an empire in the Levant. Judea, as usual, found itself in the middle – caught between assertive Asian and African empires. For a century, it was under Ptolemaic rule, and then was annexed by the aggressive Seleucids, based in modern Syria.

## V Greece: Greek Civilization

Bookmark: "Septuagint"

Video > The Power of the Word >  
Greece > Judeans in a Greek World

In the Ptolemaic capital, Alexandria, hundreds of thousands of Jews constituted a major component of the city: their cultural and demographic influence has been likened to that of New York City Jewry in modern times.

- ◆ Discuss the extent of Ptolemaic Egypt in 260 BCE.
- ◆ Point out Alexandria in Egypt, and Jerusalem.

### Review and Discussion Question

- Recount other situations in which Judea/Israel's strategic position as an intercontinental crossroads was a decisive factor in its history.

### Video: Show 2: Greece: Greek Civilization

As in modern Diaspora Jewry, most Diaspora Jews assimilated to their host-societies' cultures, adopted their languages, and became rusty or illiterate in Hebrew. This phenomenon probably accounts for the first translations of the Torah into other languages.

- ◆ Play this video segment until "....Jews now spoke only Greek."

### Review and Discussion Question

- The Greek translation is called the Septuagint, from the traditional ascription of the translation of 70 Jewish scholars who comprised the translation committee. Traditional sources also assert that the translation was performed to ready a Greek version for shelving in the great library of Alexandria...rather than for use in the pews of Alexandrian synagogues. Which theory makes more sense, and why?

PART 4

## Confronting Hellenism

When Judea passed from Ptolemaic to Seleucid control, Judea and its citizenry faced, for the first time, the full-blown challenge of assimilation versus separation. Eventually, the tension between these polar approaches to Hellenism erupted in a civil war that also necessitated political and cultural emancipation from the oppressive Seleucid Greeks.

While the traditional story explaining the Maccabean revolt and the festival of Chanukah emphasized the battle versus the Greeks, it was – first and foremost – a bloody civil war for the soul of Judaism.

**A** Mediterranean, 260 BCE

Atlas > 586 BCE – 72 CE > 260 > Mediterranean

**V** The Maccabees, Judean Kingdom

Video > Power of the word > The Maccabees > A New Judean Kingdom

**Atlas: Mediterranean, 260 BCE**

- ◆ Point out the Ptolemaic-Seleucid border of 260 BCE
- ◆ Then, time-progress to 165 BCE by clicking on the time-scale on the left, and point out the absorption of Judea into the Seleucid Empire.
- ◆ Zoom-in, by clicking with the magnifying glass just above Samaria, to provide more detail on the area of Judea.

**Video: Show 2: The Maccabees, Judean Kingdom**

Transitioning from benign Ptolemaic rule to Seleucid rule in 198 BCE was fairly smooth, with the usual amount of political realigning relative to the new imperial regime. But a power-mad Seleucid king, Antiochus Epiphanes, began the first-recorded religious oppression. His goal was to obliterate the decidedly non-Hellenistic Jewish particularity that was widespread in Judea.

One family, the Hasmoneans, led the revolt and civil war against Greek rule and Jewish inclinations toward Hellenism. Their success, aided by threats to the eastern borders of the Seleucid Empire, the death of Epiphanes, and the general erosion of Seleucid imperial vigor, resulted in independence and a century of Judean self-rule under the Hasmonean dynasty.

- ◆ Play this video segment until “....traditions of the people had triumphed.”

**Review and Discussion Questions**

- Notwithstanding the victory we now celebrate on

## V The Maccabees, Qumran

Video > The Power of the Word >  
The Maccabees > Qumran

## M Qumran

Video > The Power of the Word >  
The Maccabees > Qumran > Explore  
Topic > Play

Chanukah, the Hasmoneans themselves became increasingly Hellenized. The Maccabees' grandchildren were probably more Hellenized than the Jewish leadership that Judah Maccabee fought against. How did this happen?

- Are there core Jewish beliefs and practices that constitute boundaries at which a Jewish community must draw the line or disappear?

### Video: Show 2: The Maccabees, Qumran

One of the results of Hasmonean liberation and leadership in Judea was a rejection of their rule by even more traditional and dissident Jews. The Hasmoneans were from a rural levitical priestly family, and their progressive assumption of the offices of High Priest and King were unacceptable to those who felt that these offices were reserved for, respectively, Zadokite and Davidic descendants.

One of the more extreme groups among these dissident sects – probably the Essenes mentioned in various historical accounts – withdrew from Judean society, relocating to the shores of the Dead Sea. There, they left us a legacy that was discovered starting in 1947 CE.

- ◆ Play this video segment until “...the oldest known copies of texts from the Hebrew Bible.”

### Review and Discussion Questions

- The people at Qumran awaited the end of the world and the inauguration of the messianic age. What might have led them to believe this?
- Are there any modern analogies to the self-imposed isolation of this community?

### Multimedia: Qumran

The people who withdrew to Qumran established an unusual ascetic Jewish community that endured – with a brief break – for more than two centuries. Some connect them with a proto-Christian community, some with a dispossessed priestly clan, some with an apocalyptic cult that prepared for a coming war between the righteous and sinners.

What is certain is that this community collected and created a vast literary legacy, lost for almost two millennia after Qumran's destruction by the Romans in 68 CE. Only in modern times would the Dead Sea Scrolls, and their attendant controversies, re-emerge to engage the world.

- ◆ Play the Autoplay, pausing if desired at the Psalms scroll (11QPs), to point out familiar parts (and variations, such as the paleo-Hebrew orthography of the divine name) to those who know Hebrew.

- ◆ Among the three panels that appear at the end of the Autoplay, click **A Catalogue of The Dead Sea Scrolls**, and use the right slider to survey the contents,.....commenting on those scrolls with which you are familiar.

### Review and Discussion Questions

- Among the scrolls, certain books of the Bible appear more frequently than others. Looking at the books of the Torah, why might there be so many more preserved scrolls of Deuteronomy than of the other books? Why so many copies of Isaiah and Psalms?
- Other than the possibility that the absence of the book of Esther is entirely due to accident, why might that book have not had popularity at Qumran or acceptance by this community?

### Pointers to the Next Session:

The Romans were shortly to arrive. The Hasmonean period of Judean independence would conclude in 63 BCE. Passionate sectarianism had arisen during the century of Hasmonean rule, and would continue to inflame the nation in its century and a half as a Roman colonial property.

There would be moments of greatness in the Roman period, and Judea would rise to become a key Roman asset in the eastern Mediterranean. Jewish institutions would be created and flourish, and the enhanced Second Temple of Herod would become one of the marvels of the ancient world.

But the corruption of the Roman imperial rulers and their Jewish collaborators, coupled with intra-Jewish sectarian rivalries would eventually erupt in the Great Revolt, ending the Second Temple period. This would begin a seemingly endless enforced Diaspora for the Jewish people.