

Lesson 9

The Diaspora and Greek Septuagint

[Eastern Diaspora](#) [Western Diaspora](#) [Lost Tribes](#) [Temple](#) [Synagogues](#)

THE DIASPORA

The children of Israel had been sent away captive to Babylon. They hung their harps on the willows because they could not sing the songs of Zion in a strange land. From the time of their captivity, that is, from the last prophet Malachi, unto the coming of Christ would be 400 years of prophetic silence. The harps were silent and the voice of God was heard no more throughout the land.

Israel had ceased to be an independent country and was a mere slice of Mesopotamia, just another oft-conquered territory. She was taffy in the hands of vacillating monarchies for 400 years. Sometimes favorably treated, but most often downtrodden.

Few of the captives were allowed to return to the land under Ezra and Nehemiah. The remainder had already spread like wild seed over the vast then known world. In every city and every nation there were known settlements of Jews. It is no wonder that on the day of Pentecost, recorded in the book of Acts, there were men of every nation under heaven gathered for that Jewish holiday.

"Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven...Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs..."

Greek historians such as Strabo, Philo and Josephus all testify to the dispersion of Jews everywhere in the inhabited earth. Josephus declared that they were "widely dispersed in all the world among its inhabitants."

With 400 years to mingle among the inhabitants of other nations it is a wonder that there were any true Jews left. Yet the Jewish nation kept its eyes fixed on Jerusalem, generation after generation. The Law of God they carried with them became the solidifying factor. Jews still married Jews. Genealogies were meticulously kept. Lineage was still as important to the Jew as one's own name; it cannot be forgotten. So clear was the unmixed race of Jews that exact boundaries could be traced in any district within the Jewish quarter. Great care was given to research and study genealogies to preserve accurate records to establish the purity of descent. Official records regarding the priesthood, of course, were kept in the Temple. Besides this, the Jewish authorities had a general official register which mad Herod burned in an attempt to destroy records of the kingly and priestly line.

EASTERN DISPERSION:

The EASTERN DISPERSION, those who remained in the east, the Trans-Euphratic Jews numbered in the millions. One historian writes "So dense was the Jewish population in Persia that Cyrus forbade the return of further exiles lest the country be depopulated."^(p6) They were often kindly treated under the Persian regime, and again under Alexander the Great. It was the wealthiest and most influential Jews that remained behind in the countries of exile.

The Eastern dispersion remained Hebrew and tenaciously attached to mother Jerusalem. So much so that fire signals on the top of mountains relayed the signal to distant mountains the beginnings of each month's ceremonial festivities.

The Hebrew language, however, was not so easy to retain. The Jewish tongue became Aramaic, both in Palestine and in Babylonia. The common people were totally ignorant of Hebrew. It became such a crisis that translators (Methurgeman) had to be employed to translate the reading of Scriptures into the vernacular at public services. This was the origin of what is known as the TARGUMIM (or targums), or paraphrase of Scripture. The translator was forbidden to write down, or read his targum lest it be confused as equal in inspiration as the Hebrew Scripture. Their use became necessary and sanctioned until the second century A.D.

The Babylonian Jews highly respected the Law of God. With zeal they attached themselves to it in every letter. Scribes meticulously copied the original Hebrew text counting the words, letters, and accent marks lest a "jot or tittle" be lost. This zeal for preservation of the Law led to the development of the MISHNAH, or the Second Law, which served to explain and supplement the first Law. Then commentaries on the law, the MISHDRAH, became popular.

Jewish theology developed along two lines: the Halakhah, and the Haggadah.

THE HALAKHAH (from *halak*, to go) became the Rule of the Spiritual Road, and when finished had even greater authority than the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Its purpose was to explain and apply the Law.

THE HAGGADAH, on the other hand, (from *nagad*, to tell) was only personal sayings of a teacher of the law, and was only valued because of the popularity of the teacher himself. It had no authority in doctrine, practice, or exegesis. "Strange as it may sound almost all the teaching of the synagogues were based on the Haggadah," which characterized Jewish traditions of men.

[Footnote: Edersheim, L&T, Jewish World in Christ's Time](#)

THE WESTERN DIASPORA - HELLENISTS OR GREEKS

The Jews in the Western part of the world were less attached to the old Hebrew ways. Though they had the same innate nationalism, fervency for the Law of God, and love for Jerusalem, their minds were to be influenced in a more worldly direction. The Jews in the west became known as "Hellenists" or Greek-influenced Jews. The Greek culture made strong impressions on their lives. They were intensely Jewish to be sure, but their new culture pressed in on them on every side, whether in the forum, the marketplace, or the street. The Greek influence was all around them. Greek critical thought and philosophies brought questions and ideas foreign to their eastern brothers. Greek civilization was polished, elegant, and highly attractive. The Hellenistic Jews became the thinkers of their faith. They searched for truth, reasoned with their senses, and researched the Scriptures for deeper meanings. They studied the letter of the Law while their eastern counterparts studied the tradition of the Law. So troubling was this Greek influence to the Jewish fathers that a ban was placed on anyone who studied Greek Wisdom. Yet Greek thought and influence could not be outlawed. It was to be found everywhere in the Greek world, even at the doorstep of Palestine. [Footnote: Edersheim, Jewish Dispersion - West](#)

THE LOST TRIBES

There were originally 12 Tribes of Israel. The Northern Ten Tribes called Israel, went into captivity to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. The Southern Tribes, Judah, went into captivity to the Babylonians in 587 B.C.

Israel's tribes were so far flung to the corners of the globe that only the few that returned 'en masse' under Ezra and Nehemiah, constituted just the two Southern Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) of the twelve tribes. The other 10 tribes were for all intents and purposes lost in the morass of gentile lands.

The Lost Tribes of Israel has become the object of much speculative theology and has bred many cults. It will be interesting for the student to do some outside reading on some of these philosophical arguments regarding the Lost Tribes. Run a search for "lost tribes" on the Internet to see just what comes up.

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* * * * *
*   The tribes of Israel were 12 in number and   *
*   named after the sons of Jacob.  They are:     *
*                                                    *
*           Reuben          Gad                *
*           Simeon          Asher               *
*           Levi            Dan                 *
*           Judah           Naphtali            *
*           Issachar        (Joseph) - Ephraim & Manasseh *
*           Zebulun         Benjamin            *
* * * * *
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Jacob (whose name was changed by God to Israel when he wrestled with the angel) was the father of 12 sons who became the tribes of Israel.

The Levis were the tribe of priests and were not allotted land in the promised land, but Joshua gave them 48 towns. (Joshua 21:1-45) Joseph was the father of two tribes. Jacob adopted his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. Thus they made up for the political and military requirement of 12 tribes (Levi being excluded.)

Moses and Joshua numbered the people in a census given in the first chapter of the book Numbers. The Levites were excluded from the census and Joseph's portion was Ephraim and Manasseh.

THE TEMPLE

The Temple was the center of Jewish worship and life. It was the place of the presence of God. That is why when Antiochus VI desecrated the temple with idols and the offering of pigs on the altar the Jews considered it to be "the abomination that makes desolate." The desolation is the removal of the presence of God.

There were a number of temples beginning with the greatest of all, Solomon's temple, constructed around 1000 B.C. The Babylonians destroyed Solomon's Temple and carted away its riches.

Zerubbabel returned with exiles to rebuild the temple which was dedicated in 515 B.C. but it never came anywhere near the glory of Solomon's magnificent edifice. Ezra returned to restore worship to the temple and return the hearts of the people to the Law of God.

It was this temple that Antiochus polluted. This temple continued without being destroyed until the time of Herod, being repaired and reconstructed over a long period of time. Herod's Temple was the third of the temples. It replaced Zerubbabel's Temple entirely. Herod's temple, though not as great, rivaled Solomon's great temple. Construction was begun in 20 B.C. and was completed in just 18 months. It endured until its destruction by Titus in A.D. 70.

THE TEMPLES

Solomon's	Zerubbabel's	Herod's	Future Temple
1,000 B.C.	536 B.C.	20 B.C.	Soon?

The Hebrews consider there to have been only two temples since Herod's was a renovation of Zerubbabel's Temple. The orthodox Jews are awaiting the construction of the third temple, which will usher in the time of the Messiah. From A.D. 70 until May, 1948 the land of Palestine has been in the control of foreign nations. In 1967, with the six

day war, Jerusalem once again came under control of the Jews. Up to that point in history the holy city had been in the hands of Gentile conquerors. Even more significantly, since the Babylonian Captivity the Jews have been dispersed among all nations and have not been an autonomous state. Today for the first time in 2,500 years Israel is a nation and the dispersion is returning from the farthest corners of the globe. The next nationalistic step is to rebuild the Temple so that Messiah may come.

There has been no Temple in Israel since A.D. 70 when it was destroyed by the Romans. The bible predicts the reconstruction of the temple in the last days and the reinstatement of the sacrificial system. This will take place along with the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the children of Israel being brought back from the dispersion in the last days. It is in this new temple that Antichrist will break his treaty with Israel and commit the "abomination of desolation" just as Antiochus did. Jews are divided on their opinions as to whether the rebuilding of the temple will precede the coming of Messiah, or be done by Messiah at his coming.

As a good student of the Word of God and current events you may want to see what Orthodox Jews are saying, thinking and planning regarding the rebuilding of the temple, and the coming of Messiah. Search the Internet for topics like "[rebuilding the Temple](#)" to see what comes up.

SYNAGOGUES

It was during this Intertestamental Period that the synagogue came into use. The people of the Law needed a place to worship. Whether eastern or western Jews, they were far from the Temple of God. No one knows when the first synagogues appeared but by the time of Christ they were in every nation, in every Jewish quarter in every major city of the world.

Jews were cut off from their homeland and from the temple they loved. To preserve her faith and acts of worship while away from the temple they began to focus on the Scriptures, the TORAH (also called the Pentateuch or the first five books of the Old Testament.) Prayer, scripture and singing of psalms became the new style of worship. When Jews returned from exile they brought the concept of the synagogue with them. Judaism could be practiced anywhere the Torah could be carried. The Septuagint was read in Hellenistic synagogues and worship was conducted, at least in part, in Greek. When in Greek one person would read the PARASHA, or the lesson of the day. When done in Hebrew seven persons would read successively. Ordinary daily prayers were permitted in Greek. Any city that had 10 Jewish heads of families together could found a new synagogue.

POLITICS OF THE SYNAGOGUE

SADDUCEES

The Sadducees were the aristocrats and became the temple political party. They were few in number yet they held the reigns of political power in Palestine. They controlled the priesthood. They rejected all writings but the Torah. They rejected the doctrine of any resurrection. They believed the soul dies with the body. They denied that any oral law was in any way binding or authoritative. They interpreted Mosaic laws literally. They were fanatical about Levitical purity. They believed in free will. They rejected the idea of demons or angels as well as any spirit world.

PHARISEES

The Pharisees were the party of the Synagogue. Their roots can be traced back to the second century B.C. They held the Law of God in highest esteem, so much so that they built a theological "hedge" around the law of God with other "traditions of men" and interpretations of men. They venerated the Law (Torah) while they accepted the oral traditions as equally inspired and authoritative. They accepted the spirit world and an elaborate hierarchy of angels and demons. They believed in the resurrection of the dead and life after death. They believed in the immortality of the soul and judgment to come.

ESSENES

The Essenes were a Jewish ascetic community that lived in three known areas of Palestine: Qumran near the Dead Sea, the Essene Quarter of Jerusalem, and at Damascus. They first appeared about 200 B.C. It is likely they developed along the lines of the Pharisees but went far beyond the Pharisees in their zeal for the Law and personal holiness. They were extremely strict concerning the laws of the Torah. They lived in communities separated from the community at large. They believed in a communal ownership of property. They conducted daily worship and study of the scriptures. They made solemn oaths of piety. Marriage was avoided but not outrightly condemned. They believed that all life's events were controlled by fate. They lived apart in desert places and disassociated with the world. They so loved the Law and the writings of Scripture that they gave themselves fully to the meticulous copying of scrolls in their Scriptorium in Qumran.

It was from the Essene community that we received the Dead Sea Scrolls found stored in Qumran caves in Israel. These are some of the most ancient copies of Scripture we have.

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

In 1947 a shepherd boy was in the desert area around the Dead Sea and happened to throw stones into a cave and heard something break. There he discovered pots of stored ancient biblical scrolls and fragments of scrolls, stored there since before the destruction of the Temple. Later archeologists combed the area's caves and found many manuscripts including every single book of the Old Testament with the exception of Esther.

Amazingly these scrolls (many in extreme state of decay) had been in these caves some 2,000 years!

ZEALOTS

Zealots came on the scene during the time of Herod the Great. They were strongly nationalistic and radical. They opposed payment of taxes to the Roman Empire, or to giving one's allegiance to any but God. They opposed the use of the Greek language in Palestine. They were revolutionaries carrying out hit and run guerrilla warfare.

SANHEDRIN

The Sanhedrin, also known as the Council, was the ruling body of elders over Israel living in Jerusalem. They were the judges of Israel forming the Jewish Supreme Court. They were the rich, and belonged to the levitical tribes. They were composed of 70 head elders who decided all religious disputes and questions. Its members were chief priests, or the heads of the 24 courses of priests, and those who had been chief priests, as well as scribes and elders learned in the Law. The High Priest was the president. They tried cases involving the Law such as idolatry and false prophets. The power of capital punishment was taken away from them by the Romans just 40 years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, and about the time of Christ's death.

Outside of Jerusalem each town of more than 120 people had its own lesser council composed of 23 members. They possessed only the right to scourgings. The historian Josephus declared that they were composed of only 7 members, which seems more reasonable for small communities and synagogues.

HERODIANS

(Matt 22:15) Herodians were those who upheld the Herodian dynasty believing it to be a safeguard against direct heathen rule. It is said that they looked on Herod the Great, Antipas, and Agrippa as the successive Messiahs. They paved the way for apostasy by bowing to the Greek refinements, theaters, stadiums, etc. along with honoring the gods of the Greeks within Palestine.

Greek Scriptures: The Septuagint

[Septuagint](#) [OT Canon](#) [Apocryphal](#) [Pseudepigrapha](#)

THE SEPTUAGINT

The most influential aspect of hellenization was the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. By any standard of measurement Hebrew was no longer the native tongue even in Palestine. The common man spoke Aramaic or Greek, and usually both. The Hebrew Scriptures, though still read, needed to be translated in the vernacular, Greek of course. Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament were cherished and extremely expensive. This put the possibility of owning a copy out of the question for even the most well to do. Greek, however, was a formidable language known and understood by the educated and uneducated all over the then known world. Slaves were employed to copy what one dictated. Greek books were cheap and easy for the common man to read.

The Egyptian rulers (Ptolemies) who succeeded Alexander the Great were literary giants of their day. Great libraries archived writings from over the world. It was Ptolemy II that was accused of being "book mad" for his excessive expenditures on books. It was under his patronage that the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek language came into existence. It began with a rush production of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament sometime between 250 to 221 B.C. Under his orders and invitation 72 translators (six from every tribe) were commissioned to translate a valuable copy of the Old Testament. ("Josephus said that only the five books of Moses were translated by them (seventy-two), and given to King Ptolemy.") They were royally received in Egypt and the work was reportedly completed in just 72 days! Their translation received formal approval of the Jewish Sanhedrin in Alexandria. It was not long before the rest of the Old Testament books were similarly translated into the easily read and understood Greek language. It became familiarly known as the Septuagint - for the 70+ translators that brought it into being. You will often see the Septuagint represented in an abbreviated form as the Roman numeral for "seventy," LXX.

The Library That Was Lost

<http://ralphv.www3.50megs.com/egypt/lib.html>

The Septuagint became the Bible of the Jews. The influence of the translation of the Old Testament into Greek was no less revolutionary than the translation of the Bible from Latin to the vernacular of the people by the end of the Middle Ages. It led to greater proselytizing since now other nationalities could understand the Word of God. The Septuagint also became the Bible of the early Christians.

See The Septuagint

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13722a.htm>

OLD TESTAMENT CANON

"Canon" means reed, or measuring stick. It is the means by which the people of God have always measured whether a writing was inspired Scripture or just a sacred writing. It is believed the Hebrew "canon" was established principally by Ezra as a result of the Babylonian Captivity. Ezra was God's instrument to bring the remnant back to Palestine to reinstitute worship and sacrifices. God had awakened the Hebrews to the cause of the dispersion as being neglect of the Law of God. Ezra made it to be read from morning to midday while the people listened. He was called the "ready scribe of the law of Moses" (Ezra 7:6 and Nehemiah 8:9). The zeal for the law in the hearts of the people can be seen in Nehemiah 8:1-8. The arrangement of the Old Testament canon by Ezra accounts for his title of "priest" becoming mingled in with that of "scribe."

By the Middle of the InterTestamental Period it is evident from the writings and history of the time that the canon was already prescribed. Josephus refers to the Hebrew canon as being composed of 22 books of Scripture at his time. The Hebrew bible became the basis of the Old Testament Scriptures for both Protestants and Catholics. The Christian church splits some of the books into 1st and 2nd books, and separates Ezra and Nehemiah, and includes the minor prophets as each a separate book, giving them 39 books to the Old Testament.

Jesus referred to the Scriptural canon as "the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms." (Luke 24:44) Jesus alluded to the canon of Scripture in Matthew 23:35 when he said, "...from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom you slew between the temple and the altar." (i.e. From Genesis to Chronicles, or from the first book of the Old Testament canon to the last, which was the book of Chronicles.)

Paul in Rome reasoned the way of salvation "persuading them concerning Jesus from the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning to evening." (Acts 28:23)

Here is the way the Hebrews divide the Old Testament canon composed of 24 books. The Septuagint organized it into 22 books which corresponds to the number of the Hebrew alphabet.

THE LAW (TORAH)	THE PROPHETS (NEBIIM)	THE WRITINGS (HAGIOGRAPHA)
Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Joshua Judges Samuel Kings Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel The Twelve (Minor Prophets)	Psalms Proverbs Job Song of Solomon Ruth Lamentations Ecclesiastes Esther Daniel Ezra-Nehemiah Chronicles

THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS

"Apocrypha" comes from the Greek word "hidden." Today we think of it as meaning "false," but it really is a word that describes a particular body of Greek writing from the InterTestamental Period. The Apocrypha contains books such as...

I Esdras II Esdras Tobit Judith Baruch Psalm 151	The Wisdom of Solomon History of Sussana Bel and the Dragon I & II Maccabees III & IV Maccabees Fourth Ezra	Song of the Three Holy Children The Prayer of Manasses Ecclesiasticus Additions to Esther Epistle of Jeremiah Prayer of Azariah
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These books are available over the Internet for your reading.

Read from the Apocrypha

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/noncanon/apocrypha.htm>

The Jews of the Dispersion in Egypt placed high value on these books and included them in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, but they were rejected later by the Jews of Palestine. Today the Jews themselves repudiate the Apocrypha.

New Testament References

There is nothing in the Apocryphal books that cannot be duplicated in the canon of Scripture. There is evidence that early Christians used the Apocryphal books, or at least were familiar with them, yet they were never esteemed as highly as the inspired books of the Old and New Testament. Jude is the only one who mentions anything contained in the Apocryphal books when he referred to Enoch, the seventh from Adam, having prophesied of the end of the age. (Jude 14,15) Others see Paul as having alluded to them as well in 2 Tim. 3:8. Eph. 5:14, Heb. 11:24. (Other possible quotes from Apocryphal literature are found in John 7:38, James 4:5-6)

The Roman Catholic Church has long used the Apocryphal books and in 1546 A.D. declared 11 of them to be canonical. For this reason they appear today in the Roman Catholic Bible. The Apocryphal books remained in use until the Reformation. Since the Reformation most Protestant Christians have decided to follow the Hebrew canon and disallow the Apocryphal books.

While not Scripture, it is not harmful for Christians to read the Apocryphal books, if for no other reason than to be familiar with Jewish history and traditions. It is admitted that these books have value only in their historical and literary value.

Why Rejected

Their canonicity has been rejected by the Protestants for the following reasons:

1. They were never quoted by Jesus, and only Jude ever alluded to them.
2. The early church Fathers of the first century regarded them as uninspired.
3. They did not appear in the ancient Hebrew canon.
4. They are inferior in quality and content as compared to the canonical books. Some contain errors and teachings contrary to the inspired Scriptures.

(See AW Pink, Commentary on John, p 472, on false doctrines in the Wisdom of Solomon and comments on Matthew 16:13,14 and John 9:1-5)

THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

There was another group of spurious writings, not Hellenistic, but Palestinian in nature. These were the Pseudepigrapha writings, so called because, except for one, they bear false names of authorship. They have been characteristically described as missionary, anti-heathen, and apocalyptic in nature. They contained strong messianic and prophetic overtones, predicting the threefold events of the end times:

1. the coming of Messiah
2. the rebuilding of the Temple,
3. and the gathering of the lost tribes from all lands.

The disciples and the friends of Jesus, even all of the family of Jews dispersed or living in the land were pregnant with the expectation of the soon appearing of the glorious deliverer, the Messiah.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to put them into a chronological sequence. Many have been lost since the InterTestamental Period. Here is a list of those writings. These are available for your reading on the Internet.

Read from the Pseudepigrapha

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/>

1. Book of Jubilees
2. The Book of Adam and Eve
3. Life of Adam and Eve-Slavonic Version
4. A Fragment of the Apocalypse of Moses
5. The Martyrdom of Isaiah
6. First Enoch
7. The Letter of Aristeas
8. The Apocalypse of Adam
9. The Revelation of Esdras
10. The Second Treatise of the Great Seth
11. The Testament of Abraham

Take the time to read The Book of Adam and Eve from the Pseudepigrapha. It will give you a new appreciation for sin and its consequences and Adam and Eve's great sorrow after being expelled from the garden. Think of it as a novel with biblical implications.

End of Lesson