

THE INFLUENCE OF THE PHARISAIC MOVEMENT ON THE
PRESERVATION OF A JEWISH IDENTITY DURING THE
INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

by

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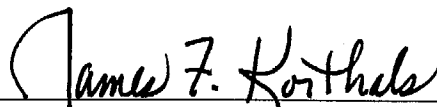
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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the influence of the Pharisees in the preservation of a Jewish Identity during the Intertestamental Period. This paper focuses on the impact of the Pharisees on the nation of Israel in both the spiritual and political arenas over and against Hellenization. Prior to the emergence of this group, traces of the mindset can be seen as far back as the return from Babylon. As such, the history prior to the emergence of the Pharisees will be examined. Regarding this historical background there are three chief sources to examine: Josephus' works, the Gospels, and the rabbinic literature of the time. From this historical background, the effect of the Pharisees may be seen upon Israel in their use of the synagogues, their interaction with the common people and based upon a comparison of the Pharisees with the Essenes and the Sadducees.

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Introduction

I began my senior year working as a therapist for two boys, both with ADHD and high-functioning Autism, both Jewish. This was my first major foray into the realm of Jewish culture. I had spoken with those who practiced Judaism before, but never to such a degree as I began to do during my senior year at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. In such a short span I witnessed firsthand the effects of the Pharisaism from Jesus' time in its modern form of Rabbinic Judaism. Kosher laws were more or less strictly enforced. Kippahs or yarmulkes¹ were worn. Both boys sported rather long payoss, the side locks of hair distinctive of those from the Jewish community. A tzitzit² was an item frequently worn by the boys as well. They attended the Hillel Academy learning the basics of mathematics, social studies, science and language arts, in addition to Hebrew and Jewish history.

However, something seemed to be missing from the equation. As part of the program to mentor and work with children with autism, the boys were to spend two twenty-four hour shifts with me, outside of their home. I was concerned as this would coincide with the Sabbath. It was strange that when I raised this concern I was told that they didn't observe the Sabbath. They rarely went to the synagogue. To a certain extent this may have been because their mother had some medical conditions, but surely, I thought, they would take the time to hold to their religious convictions. After Yom Kippur came and went uncelebrated, I began to realize that I wasn't observing religious Judaism. I was witnessing secular or cultural Judaism. In school, the boys were taught the Torah and learned about their Messiah. But all of that was secondary to simply following the Jewish rules as best they could in order to please HaShem³. It wounded me that the boys rejected Jesus outright since this is what they had been taught since they were young. It pained me to see them stuck in a system of rules and regulations, and one that had lost any meaning for them. They had no knowledge of biblical stories that could be used as a springboard into revealing the true Messiah. All of this sprang from Modern Rabbinic Judaism, the descendant of Pharisaism. It should be noted that this example is

¹ A small hemispherical cap made of cloth worn to fulfill the Orthodox Jewish law that the head must be covered at all times.

² Specially knotted ritual fringes or tassels attached to the prayer shawl; worn under the shirt.

³ In reverence for God's name as revealed in Scripture, Jews will instead refer to God as HaShem which means "the name."

only one side of the spectrum. On the other hand, there are many devout Jews who do practice Judaism with zealous fervor. Yet, the outcome is more or less the same. They are all stuck in a system of work-righteousness.

How had Judaism come to this? What happened to the strict and almost fanatical observance of the Sabbath found in the Gospels as a point of contention between Jesus and the Pharisees? Had the goal of Pharisees always been to formulate a system of work-righteousness? Or did they originally have good intentions that inevitably led them down the wrong road? These were the questions that originally started my curiosity with the Pharisees. Before any formal research began, I knew a few things concerning the Pharisees based on what I had learned in school or through teaching bible studies based on the Gospels. This knowledge was decent for a basic understanding to the background of the Gospels. Even from a casual reading of the Gospel, it is clear that the Pharisees have been leading the Jews down the wrong path. But was it always so and how did the Pharisees become such an influential spiritual power in Palestine?

While I would certainly desire to answer all of the questions raised in this introduction I realize that this is goal is unrealistic. On the one hand, not all of these questions can find a satisfactory answer given what can be known through first hand witnesses. Of such witnesses, history has lent us three. The first and most important witnesses are the Gospels. For many Christians, what is found in the Gospels makes up the entirety of their knowledge concerning the Pharisees. While it is understood that the bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God, the bible does not set as one of its goals a full introduction to the Pharisaic movement for its readers. In fact, many might have little hesitancy with the simple rule that Pharisee means hypocrite and therefore all Pharisees were bad. However, it may not be the best example of the eighth commandment to paint with such a broad brush. Again, certainly as a whole, the group had relegated itself into the realm of work-righteousness, yet there were also some members who turned to follow Jesus.

A second source of information concerning the Pharisees is the historian Josephus, himself a Pharisee. It should be noted that it is debated to what extend he was a Pharisee. At the time he wrote his *Wars of the Jews, Antiquities and Life* he was more or less confined to Rome, an outcast from his own people and a Pharisee in name only. His version of the Pharisee may be slightly biased based on his audience and his intentions.

Though Jewish in origin, his national affiliation rested mainly with Rome. Therefore he did his best to explain Rome to his Jewish audience and the Jews to his Roman audience.

The Mishna, including the Tosefta, and the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds⁴ serves as a final resource into Pharisaism, though it is the latest direct source of the three. However, these works will receive smaller attention in this paper as the main bulk of these writings occur after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. and therefore extends beyond the scope of this paper.

I will limit myself to exploring the influence the Pharisees had on the Jewish nation during their rise to power prior to the coming of Christ. Therefore, in formulating this thesis, the history of Israel during the Intertestamental Period cannot be ignored. It is in this timeframe that the people of Israel were influenced by several different cultures. Among all the different Jewish movements and groups, I propose that the Pharisees, with their widespread influence, did the most to preserve Jewish spirituality and nationality against foreign influence. It was in this effort that I believe this group overstepped its bounds, erecting the “fence around the law,” going too far in their deep-rooted desire to preserve their faith. In this effort and over time, this movement lost sight of its original goal. I intend to lay out a timeline beginning with Israel’s foreign troubles, its captivity in Babylonia and then to follow Israel’s encounters with the various regimes of the Persians, Seleucids and the Romans. It is based upon this background that the influence of the Pharisees on the common people of Israel may be observed in comparison with the other major movements at that time, the Essenes and the Sadducees.

Literature Review

There are several different camps concerning the Pharisees. It would be inappropriate to simply lump many of these authors into broad categories. However, in my brief and truncated view of literature regarding the Pharisees, I have placed certain authors under two main categories: those who deal primarily with the facts of history and those who deal with the development and characteristics of the Pharisees. Naturally there were some authors who could be placed in either category. I placed Baeck, Finkel,

⁴ The Mishna forms part of the Talmud, the central text of Judaism. It deals primarily with Jewish Law, known as the halakha. The Talmud is a record of Rabbinic discussions on Jewish law and history. The Palestinian Talmud was composed in Palestine. Of the two, the Palestinian Talmud is fragmented and incomplete. For many Jews, the Palestinian Talmud holds priority despite its less than perfect condition. The Babylonian Talmud was arranged throughout the 3rd century to the 5th Century AD. The Tosefta is simply an additional compilation of Jewish Law during the time of the Mishna (200BC).

Foesrter, Josephus, Meier, Glover, Russel, Surburg, Tarn, Taylor and Zeitlin under those authors who dealt with the history of the Intertestamental Period and the Pharisees in specific. In the category of those who dealt with the development of the Pharisees I placed Baeck, Deines, Finkelstein, Foerster, Neusner, Russel, Sigal, Simon and Surburg.

Concerning the historical authors, there is a small amount of disagreement on the particulars on the emergence of the Pharisees. While most of these authors will agree that the Pharisees began to come together as a group during the Hasmonean rule, the exact starting point is without any historical basis, as such information is missing. There was a large spectrum of opinions regarding the place of the Gospels as both historical and accurate witnesses to the Pharisees. Authors such as Baeck and Marcel view the Gospels as polemic writings that draw rough caricatures of the Pharisees. This might be expected from Baeck, who served as a rabbi in Berlin and a faculty member of the Academy for the Study of Judaism. Both Marcel and Baeck have spent time researching the synergy between Christianity and Judaism, though the bias against the Christians should not be discounted. Other authors like Neusner see the historic value of the Gospels, though they deny the Scriptures anything beyond the place of a slightly biased historical document. It is surprising that Neusner could be placed in this category as he is usually very outspoken in his writings. His writings may be seen as critical, yet he allows each collection of writings being examined its historical due. Finally, Surburg was a refreshing break from the negative criticism towards Scriptures expressed by these authors. He saw the historical value of the Gospels, not as biased documents, but as they actually are - the Word of God.

I also grouped several authors into a category that looked primarily at the motives, thoughts and attitudes of the Pharisaic movement, including their influence on Palestine and foreign influence upon the Pharisees. Since the question pertaining to foreign influence deals with my thesis directly, I will examine the writings of these authors in greater detail. Concerning foreign influence Forester, Finkel and Russell all saw a connection between the doctrine of resurrection. These authors fail to see the doctrine of resurrection in the Old Testament Scriptures. Supposedly, such doctrines as retribution, resurrection, even angelology were learned or enhanced from Persian and Chaldean paganism. Such an argument is unsubstantiated as there is an ample amount of evidence from the Old Testament concerning these doctrines.

A counter-argument claims that the Old Testament, being a human work, was reworked and revised throughout the years. Thus, such doctrines as the resurrection were interpolations or new additions. This argument can be discounted, as we know the Old Testament is not merely the work of men, but the Word of God. Though Neusner would not necessarily agree that the Pharisees assimilated such foreign doctrines into their own system of religion, he also sees that there was a certain amount of foreign influence upon the Pharisees. Of all of the authors that advocate such a stance, regardless of the degree to which they believe the Pharisees were influenced, I found Neusner to be the most important. Of all of these authors, he has written the most and is seen as one of the leading figures in modern Pharisaic and Rabbinic studies.

Regarding history, I found Surburg and Russell to be both readable and informative. Josephus cannot be discounted as he is a primary witness to the Pharisees and gives us a portrayal of this group that is in context. There is the concern that Josephus does not write as a completely unbiased author though. According to history he was a man in between two cultures, his own Jewish background and the Romans. Living in Rome, he writes as one appealing to give his audience a better view of his own people, perhaps covering over some of the deficiencies of the Pharisees and the Jews as a whole. At the same time, he can also be seen to be trying to ingratiate himself to the Romans among whom he lived during the time of the composition of his major works.

Neusner, Baeck and Finkelstein were quintessential to read since they are Jewish authors. However, I offer a caveat to those reading these authors. Neusner, while prolific and an expert in his field, is known to make circular arguments and to remain unyielding in his own thoughts and theories. Overall his literature is insightful and up to date, though he can be quite critical and obstinate against those who differ from his set views. To my knowledge, he is still writing to this day. Finkelstein is a very detailed author. My only concern with his work is that he places too much emphasis on the socio-economic factors that supposedly formed the lines of separation between the common people and the Pharisees.

I have left Rabbinic literature in its own category. The Mishnah, the Tosefta and the two Talmuds, provide insight into the Judaism that came from the Pharisees. The Mishnah supports the Pharisees acceptance of the oral tradition. Included with these

documents is the halakha, the collective body of Jewish law. The famous 613 mitzvots⁵, compiled from the Pentateuch, are found therein. Though the Rabbinic writings are at least 200 years removed from the time period dealt with in this paper, the mindset and influence of the Pharisees can be seen from the types of regulations listed in the Mishnah. These documents served to help understand the end goal of the Pharisees and the result of their preservation on Jewish culture. However, as the Rabbinic literature springs from the Intertestamental Period and not during it, I have used these writings only as a type of touchstone into the Pharisaic mindset.

Israel prior to the Babylonian Captivity

To understand how Pharisaism evolved during the Intertestamental Period, we must take a brief look at the timeframe prior to the Babylonian Captivity. By charting Israel's spiritual climate up to the LORD's judgment first upon the Northern and later the Southern kingdom, a better understanding of the impact of the Pharisaic movement can be attained.

One can go as far back as the Israelites 430 year stay in Egypt to see the beginnings of idol worship. Soon after gaining their freedom from Egyptian slavery, the Israelites turned to worshipping a golden calf, reminiscent of the bull god Apis, whom the Israelites no doubt encountered during their protracted stay in Egypt. Only a generation later we come across Joshua's conquest of the Promised Land. From the last several chapters we read over and over again that the Israelites failed to fully dispose of the Canaanites living in the land. Many of the tribes had some difficulty dislodging one group or another from their allotted territory. Here too, we can see that these foreign nations would become a snare to the Israelites as Moses had warned. Syncretism was not at all uncommon for the Israelites. They had become so accustomed to paganism that throughout the kings after Solomon we hardly can go a chapter without coming across Asherah poles, the name Baal or worship spaces set up at the "high places". Indeed, Israel had become nigh indistinguishable from the foreign nations around it. The LORD sent his

⁵ The word "mitzvot" simply means commandments. They are known collectively as the "Law of Moses", being taken from the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. They are divided into three general categories: Mishpatim, Edot, and Chukim. The Mishpatim are those laws which make logical and ethical sense (i.e. do not murder, do not steal). The Edot resemble testimonies or creedal statements concerning Jewish belief in God. The Chukim are commands whose purpose is not readily obvious in modern times.

prophets to warn his people to turn from their idolatrous ways. But his children would not. The LORD's vengeance came in a series of conquering nations.

The first nation to threaten Israel was Assyria in the 8th century. Tiglath Pileser III was the first of the Assyrian kings to trouble the Israelites. In the 740s B.C. he began to deport the Transjordan tribes of Gad, Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Around that same time he subjugated Palestine. In response, Menaham, king of Israel paid him a tribute of a thousand talents of silver. Similarly Ahaz, king of Judah, sought help from Tiglath-Pileser when Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, marched up against him. Tiglath-Pileser agreed to aid his vassal and defeated Ahab's enemies and was honored with a gift from the royal treasuries and the Temple's silver and gold. Ahab then went to Damascus to meet with the Assyrian king and became enamored with an altar he saw there. He had a copy built and allowed both this new altar and the original altar to be used for Temple offerings. In this way he allowed syncretism to set in on a national level again.

During Ahab's reign Hoshea, king of Israel sought help from So, king of Egypt, to overthrow the new Assyrian King, Shalmaneser. From 2 Kings 17, "The king of Assyria invaded the entire land, marched against Samaria and laid siege to it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria." In transferring peoples from place to place the Assyrian conquerors were not simply exerting themselves to be cruel; they were, like Nebuchadnezzar in later times, pursuing a prudent imperialistic policy. They knew that it was in their best interest to divide their subjects, and they found it to their advantage to destroy the racial uniformity and supposed purity of the conquered peoples.⁶ While some might see the fall of the Northern Tribes in 722 B.C. at the hands of Shalmaneser and his co-regent, Sargon II, simply as part of the over political power play in the greater Mediterranean area, the book of 2 Kings continues with this stinging indictment:

“⁷ All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods⁸ and followed the practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the

⁶ Louis Finkelstein, *Pharisees: the Sociological Background of Their Faith, volume II*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), 547.

kings of Israel had introduced.⁹ The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city they built themselves high places in all their towns.¹⁰ They set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree.¹¹ At every high place they burned incense, as the nations whom the LORD had driven out before them had done. They did wicked things that provoked the LORD to anger.¹² They worshiped idols, though the LORD had said, “You shall not do this.”¹³ The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: “Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets.”

¹⁶ They forsook all the commands of the LORD their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshiped Baal.¹⁷ They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

¹⁸ So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left,¹⁹ and even Judah did not keep the commands of the LORD their God. They followed the practices Israel had introduced.²⁰ Therefore the LORD rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence.” (2 Kings 17:7-20)

The only tribe left was Judah. Hezekiah, king of Judah, witnessed the Assyrian march against the Northern tribes. However, under Hezekiah, the remaining tribe of Judah had begun to make a move back to the LORD. The high places were removed. The Asherah poles were cut down. Even the bronze snake crafted long ago by Moses, now worshipped as an idol, was broken apart and destroyed. However, Assyria was not finished with the Israelites. In 701 B.C. Sennacherib began to capture all of Judah’s fortified cities. A siege was laid upon Jerusalem. Isaiah the prophet was the LORD’s chosen messenger to bring Hezekiah words of deliverance. The city was not invaded. The LORD listened to Hezekiah’s plea and in a single night destroyed 185,000 Assyrian troops. Under Hezekiah’s rule, the remaining tribe experienced freedom from foreign rule and a return to the worship of the true God.

Unfortunately, this return to the LORD did not last long. Hezekiah’s own son turned the nation back to pagan idolatry. Under Josiah’s reign there was a temporary move to once more worship the LORD, though the LORD’s fierce anger still burned against Judah for the sins of Manasseh. Josiah’s reign ended abruptly when he went out

to face the King of Egypt, Neco, who had allied himself with Assyria. Josiah's son, Jehoahaz did not rule long. Instead, he was soon placed in chains at the hands of Neco of Egypt. His son, Eliakim, also known as Jehoiakim, was placed on the throne to be used by Neco. Egypt, then, for a brief time exacted heavy tribute from Judah. Soon after, Judah was invaded by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, making the nation once more a vassal to a foreign power. After three years, Jehoiakim marched out against Nebuchadnezzar, but he met defeat.

Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, reigned only three months. Nebuchadnezzar returned and laid siege to Jerusalem. 597 B.C. is considered the first chief deportation of the Israelites under Nebuchadnezzar. Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah ruled in his stead. He rebelled against the king of Babylon. Jerusalem was placed under siege for about three years. After the fall of Jerusalem in 586, only the poorest people were left behind to work the fields; all others were deported as before. Gedaliah was placed as governor over the people. However, he was soon assassinated for his desire to work peacefully under Babylonian rule. The remainder of the people fled to Egypt. Thus ended the era before the Babylonian Captivity.

The Return from Exile

During the seventy year exile in Babylonia, the Jews from the Southern Kingdom did not intermarry but preserved their identity by existing as separated communities in a heathen environment. In Babylonia the Jews maintained themselves as a religious community probably under the direction of the elders (Neh. 8:1;13:1).⁷ Already we can see here a slight change in attitude among the Jews. No longer were these people enamored by the glitz and glamour of a foreign nation. Instead, these people rightly saw their exile as a fitting punishment from the gracious God who had given them every warning. From Daniel we see that there were Jews who were very determined to separate themselves from anything akin to idol worship. The stories of the three men in the fiery furnace and of Daniel's own trial in the Lion's Den are examples of this. Even before the return from Babylon, there was a Jewish mindset centered on maintaining a strictly

⁷ Raymond F. Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period*. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), 12.

monotheistic religion apart from foreign influence, a characteristic later to be seen in the Pharisees.

Israel's sojourn in Babylon did not last long. The Babylonian Empire crumbled before the Persian Empire in 539 B.C. A year later Cyrus the Great, as foretold by Isaiah, enacted an empire wide restoration of the various peoples who had been deported under Babylonian rule. In addition to the restoration of land, Cyrus allowed his subjects a large amount of religious freedom. Newly returned from Babylonia, some of the children of Israel were slow in restoring their former nation. They had become used to the comfortable life in Babylon. Many Jews did not make the trek, but remained in Babylon. For the ones who did journey back to the Promised Land, the restoration of their nation was a long process with many hindrances.

There were three restorations under the Persians. The first was led by Sheshbazzar, which might have been an alternate name for Zerubbabel or simply a corruption of his uncle's name, Shenazzar. Joshua, son of Jehozadak also accompanied Sheshbazzar in leading the exiles back in 583 B.C. and laying the foundations for the Temple. It was also at this time, during the building project, that the Israelites faced opposition from their neighboring enemies, the Samaritans. The Samaritans were the result of those Jews who had remained behind in Israel, intermingling with foreign people and blending the different religions into one. From Ezra 4, their initial request to help with the building project might seem sincere. However, such an effort would have been an extension of fellowship and acceptance of their syncretistic ways. Already here, we see that Israel's mind has changed regarding the worship of foreign gods. No longer was idolatry a snare. This devout focus on God alone would later lead the Pharisees to react in opposition to those Israelites who accepted Hellenization, though whether their own focus had already gone adrift by that time is yet to be seen.

The second return from exile occurred in 457 B.C. under Ezra the scribe, well-versed in the Law of Moses and a descendant of Aaron. This restoration took place during the reign of Artaxerxes I. It is important to note that in the last three chapters of Ezra it appears that the people had begun backsliding by intermarrying with the neighboring countries. At first glance, it might be hard to understand why this would be a problem. We must remember that the Israelites had been warned to avoid intermarrying

with foreign nations lest their gods become a snare. This concept of separation from the foreigners will be a concept firmly held by the Pharisees as well.

The third return happened shortly after Ezra's in the year 444 B.C. under the guidance of Nehemiah, who might be considered a lay member. Nehemiah also faced opposition from the neighboring peoples surrounding Jerusalem. He was appointed governor of Judea and began rebuilding the walls of the city. It was also at this time, upon completion of the walls, that Ezra the scribe read the book of the Law to the people. We see a rededication of the people to the worship of Yahweh, something nearly unknown during the greater majority of Israel's monarchial history.

During this time, there was also a shift in Torah education. Previously, when the Israelites had focused on God's Word, the priests had been central to the education of the people. In Babylon there was no Temple to come to and offer the daily sacrifices. With no Temple, the priests' focus changed as well. Many became scribes. Thus the calling of the scribe, which had provided an escape to the priesthood in Babylonia, became its rival in the new commonwealth. The priest could no longer claim the sole mastery of the Law; there were laymen who excelled him.⁸ Upon returning from exile a new breed of educators had arisen. The scribes, those who continued to pursue the profession of copying Scripture, now rivaled those who remained in the priesthood. Both were expected to be learned in the Law. More learned in the inherited literature of his people than his fellows, the professional scribe was called upon, in the absence of priest or prophet, to read the Law or the ancient prophetic writings.⁹ We begin to see here the rivalry that would arise between the Sadducees, who came from the rich priestly class, and the Pharisees, made up of laymen as well as some scribes.

In addition to this shift in educational prowess, the common people had grown accustomed to study outside of the Temple. Whereas before the people had been inundated with the false religions around them, now the Israelites desired to focus on God's Word alone; now they had just such an institution to do so. Apart from the Temple, but not directly in opposition to it, was the synagogue. There can be little wonder that the synagogue won an easy victory over its adversary, the village altar, a victory all the more

⁸ Louis Finkelstein, *Pharisees: the Sociological Background of Their Faith, volume I*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), 264.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 262.

memorable because for centuries the Temple had failed to achieve it whether by force or persuasion.¹⁰ Solomon's Temple had been in Israel throughout the times of the Kings. But during that period it fell into disuse and misuse. Without the Temple, the children of Israel focus shifted from the external rituals to a deeper appreciation for God's Word. This is not to say the Israelites never fell back into the sins of legalism or formalism. Education and the promotion of Scriptural interpretation were done not at the Temple but in the synagogues. The synagogue's efficiency came also from its availability. Whereas there was only one Temple, synagogues could be found in just about every city. All of these shifts in education laid the groundwork for the influence of the Pharisee on the common people of Israel.

While the synagogue was attaining its full strength and development, Alexander's easy victory over Persia brought Judaism face to face with the most formidable adversary it had yet faced.¹¹ Alexander began his conquest of the known world in 335, subjugating Greece to himself. From there he moved into Asia, including Asia Minor. Darius III, the Persian King, was soon defeated in 333 B.C. Alexander continued down into Tyre, then Gaza, swiftly defeating one city after another. The next city in line was Jerusalem. It is here that a fabled account is told of Alexander's meeting with the high priest Jaddua. Supposedly, Alexander listened to Jaddua explain Daniel's prophecy concerning the four kingdoms and understood himself to be a fulfillment of part of the prophecy. Whether or not this was true is debatable. However, this story seems to indicate that the Jews were relatively peaceful towards Alexander or at least wished to humor him and remain on his good side by portraying him in a friendly light. When he moved on to Egypt and began his Hellenization process, Alexander was favorably disposed to the Jews there, allowing them to live in their own districts in the cities and to continue to observe their customs and worship.

At first glance, the widespread conquest of Alexander the Great may have seemed to have little impact on the Jews. However, his practice of Hellenizing those he conquered would have long lasting effects, even into the days of Jesus. The Hellenization program while generally successful met with opposition in Judea. There were two parties

¹⁰ Finkelstein, *Pharisees: the Sociological Background of Their Faith*, volume I, 568.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 570.

among the Jews: the Conservative and the Hellenistic. After the Jews in Palestine had been subjected to Hellenism for nearly a century and a half, many Jews in Jerusalem wore Greek, clothes, imitated Greek customs, and had acquired a speaking knowledge of Greek. Most of the Jewish people nevertheless loved their Jewish faith and customs.¹² There are some scholars who would claim that Hellenization influenced Jewish culture perhaps more than I would believe. T.R. Glover states:

Greek influence upon Jewish life and thought meets us everywhere. It has been calculated, we are told, that there are three thousand borrowed words, mostly Greek, in the Talmud- official and legal terms, names of plants and animals naturally enough, terms to convey abstract and scientific ideas, where Greek would seem inevitable in every language...The well-known *Selah* of the Psalms has been explained, rightly or wrongly, as a Greek musical term to strike the harp. As we have already seen, the so-called Wisdom Literature, if it begins by being thoroughly Hebrew, proverbial and Prudential, moves on to thoughts of the First Author of beauty, of the cosmos, and of immortality. It might be too abrupt to attribute interest in immortality exclusively to Greek influence, but it remarkable how little mention of it there is in the canonical scriptures, late as some of them are. The writer of Ecclesiastes is generally recognized as a cultured Jew acquainted with Greek philosophy, genially cynical, a disbeliever in immortality as he takes pains to emphasize; and his book slipped into the canon in virtue perhaps of morals saws [sic] with which he decorated it for the unsuspecting...¹³

This Hellenization process did not cease after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. Rather, it continued through next century, since Alexander's empire was divided among his generals. To the North of Israel reigned the Seleucids. In Egypt, Ptolemy was ruler. At various times, these two groups fought against each other with Israel serving as something of a buffer state. This prolonged encounter with the forces of Hellenized conquerors kept Israel from ever fully breaking free of the process started by Alexander. True, Greek influences could be seen in dress and speech. However, the synagogue preserved Judaism against the influence of the outside religions, comingled in the confines of Hellenism.

The Seleucid Empire formally began in the year 312 B.C. Eleven years later at the Battle of Ipsus, the struggle for dominance was stilled. Ptolemy lost his chance to take Palestine, though he gained Jerusalem. Seleucus won the ultimate victory. Josephus

¹² Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period*, 29.

¹³ T.R. Glover, *The World of the New Testament*. London: (Cambridge University Press, 1937), 99-100.

retells the account, making note that Jerusalem had been caught unawares because it had been focused on observing the Sabbath.

And this king seized Jerusalem by resorting to cunning and deceit. For he entered the city on the Sabbath as if to sacrifice, and, as the Jews did not oppose him-for they did not suspect any hostile act-and, because of their lack of suspicion and the nature of the day, were enjoying idleness and ease, he became master of the city without difficulty and ruled it harshly. This account is attested to by Agatharcides of Cnidus, the historian of the diadochi¹⁴, who reproaches us for our superstition, on account of which we lost our liberty, in these words. “There is a nation called Jews, who have a strong and a great city called Jerusalem, which they allowed to fall into the hands of Ptolemy by refusing to take up arms and, instead through their untimely superstition submitted to having a hard master.”¹⁵

The Ptolemies ruled for about a hundred years in Palestine, from 319 to 198 B.C. The Jews remained relatively peaceful throughout three of the five Ptolemaic rulers. Of note, it was under Ptolemy II that the work on the Septuagint began. Under Ptolemy IV, known also as Philopater, the Egyptian Jews began to be persecuted. This was caused by the Jews strict policy of letting no one enter the Holy of Holies, a feat Philopater had attempted to do during a visit to Jerusalem. His rule was not particularly sterling. The Jews grew to distrust him and his own people rebelled against him. With his death, the rule passed down to his infant son.

This premature transfer of authority allowed the kings of Macedonia and, more importantly, Syria to join together to overpower Egypt. Antiochus III, the Syrian ruler, was dissuaded from war on Egypt by the Romans. Instead a peace treaty was formed and the land was divided between the two. Palestine once again swapped hands, this time the Jews found themselves under Syrian rule.

Antiochus III was a kind ruler to the Jews, allowing them a great amount of religious freedom. In general they preferred him over the Ptolemies of Egypt. He would have served the Jews well save for one incident. Under the advisement of Hannibal the Carthaginian, Antiochus III entered into a war upon Rome. He was defeated in 190 B.C. and forced to pay a heavy tribute. To meet this steep payment, Antiochus intended to raid the various temples in his demesne. This included the Temple in Jerusalem. The good

¹⁴ Plural of diadochus, meaning “rival or successor”. This term refers to the rival generals, friends and family who fought for control after the death of Alexander the Great.

¹⁵ Flavius Josephus. Translated by William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus*. (Hartford: The S.S. Scranton Co., 1911), Book xii (1.1).

relationship which had existed between the Syrian ruler and the Jews was now dissolved. Antiochus was killed during one of these raids upon a temple in the northern part of his kingdom.

The tension between the Jews and the Syrians continued to worsen as the next leader, Seleucus IV, attempted to repeat Antiochus III's mistake of raiding the Temple in Jerusalem. This was to be carried out by his subordinate, Heliodorus. However, the Jews became vocal to the point that he decided to forgo seizing the Temple treasury. The book of 2 Maccabees attributes this to a miracle.

The tension came to a head during the reign of the Syrian ruler Antiochus IV. The distinction between those who remained true to Judaism and those who endorsed Hellenization was sharpened. The position of high priest ceased to be a hereditary position, and was soon sold to the highest bidder. Many of the bidders proved themselves to be Hellenizers and sought to change Israel from the inside out. The conflict between Antiochus IV and the Jews continued to escalate:

It soon became obvious that, although he had the support of the Hellenizers in Jerusalem, his policy of Hellenization was violently opposed by the bulk of the people who, in addition, refused to acknowledge Menelaus as high priest. Accordingly Antiochus determined to wipe out the Jewish religion altogether. He set about destroying those very features of Judaism which, ever since the time of the Captivity, had been regarded as distinctive characteristics of the Jewish faith. All Jewish sacrifices were forbidden; the rite of circumcision was to cease; the Sabbath and feast days were no longer to be observed. Disobedience in any of these respects carried the penalty of death. Moreover, books of the Torah were disfigured or destroyed; Jews were forced to eat swine's flesh and to sacrifice at idolatrous altars set up throughout the land. Then to crown his deeds of infamy he erected an altar to Olympian Zeus on the altar of burnt offerings within the Temple court (I Macc.1:54). It is this altar which the writer of the Book of Daniel calls 'the abomination that desolates' (Dan.11.31).¹⁶

Force and brutality did not triumph over their faith, which ultimately resisted the onslaught of paganistic Hellenism. A party of opposition was formed, headed by scribes, whose origin is traced back to Ezra.¹⁷ This group was the Hasidim, the forerunners of the Pharisees. In addition, another group emerged, the Maccabees, who would have a greater impact on Israel as a whole. A man named Mattathias would be instrumental in causing a revolt that freed Israel from Syria. The Israelites would soon be ruled by their own

¹⁶ D.S. Russell, *Between the Testaments*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 28-29.

¹⁷ Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period*, 32.

people, though here too the influence of Hellenization would be seen in the rulers of the Hasmonean dynasty.

The Challenge of Hellenization under the Hasmoneans

Up to this point in history there is no record of a group named the Pharisees. However, by following Israel's timeline, the trends and characteristics of the Pharisees can be seen. A strong sense of nationalism, along with a fervent desire to follow the Torah, had arisen among the Jews upon the return from exile. A sense of urgency to preserve the Jewish faith and identity in the war against foreign influence is easily highlighted during the Intertestamental Period, specifically during the Maccabean revolt and the Hasmonean Dynasty. As such, a greater focus will be given on this time period for it is out of this hundred year period (164 B.C.-63 B.C.) that the Pharisees emerge and directly influence the nation of Israel in the preservation of Jewish religion and Jewish life.

We begin with the story of the Maccabees. Mattathias, a Jew living in Modein of the Hasmonean family line was commanded to sacrifice on a heathen altar by Appelles, an officer of the Syrian army, as public demonstration of Syria's control over Israel. This attempt was met with disaster. Mattathias did not comply. Instead, he responded back, "Far be it from us to desert the law and the ordinances" (1 Macc. 2:21). His stance did not remain in obstinate pacifism. When another Jew came to offer the sacrifice in deference to the Syrians, Mattathias killed him as well as Appelles. He then destroyed the altar and rallied all who wished to follow him and remain faithful to the Law. This handful of insurgents [the Maccabeans] was joined by a troop of Hasidim. We are justified in recognizing these 'mighty warriors of Israel, every one who offered himself willingly for the law (1 Macc. 2:42) as the first Jewish sect.¹⁸ This small group, enlarged by the Hasidim, fled into the desert, striking fear into the Syrians and their own Jewish brothers who had given up the Jewish faith.

Mattathias soon died, passing on the guerilla war to his son, Judas Maccabeus, the Hammer. For the next two years, Judas Maccabeus won sortie after sortie against the Syrians, specifically against the commander Lysias. In 164 B.C. he was able to enter Jerusalem and rededicate the Temple. Yet all was not peaceful for the Jews. During this

¹⁸ Marcel Simon, *Jewish Sects at the Time of Jesus*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 19.

time, Antiochus IV died while fighting in the East. His reign passed to his son, still a child. In Antiochus V's stead, a general named Philip served as regent. With Philip serving as the de facto king, Lysias wished to come to peace with the Jews so that he could lay claim to the title of Syrian king.

Peace was made between the Syrians and the Jews. The Jews were once more allowed religious freedom. However, the people still remained under foreign rule. The new high priest, Alcimus, remained in favor of the Syrian culture. Judas, once the great champion for the freedom of the Jewish faith, had now turned his sights to the political realm. As a result, the Hasidim, previously staunch supporters of the Maccabees, now withdrew their aid from him and remained strictly a religious organization. The situation in Israel again threatened the loss of the worship of the true God.

At this particular time the Jewish nation was divided into three groups: the Maccabees, the Hasidim, and the Hellenists. Upon the death of Judas, the Hellenists, previously forced underground, appeared and reasserted themselves. Alcimus, a Greek lover, was the high priest. He placed unbelieving Hellenists in important positions and tore down the partition of the temple separating the court of the Jews from that of the Gentiles.¹⁹

After Judas had passed away, his brothers Jonathan and Simon fled to the desert, allowing Israel to once more sink back into Hellenistic hands. Whereas Judas had been a military man, Jonathan was a man of cunning and intrigue. In time he soon had the two claimants for the Syrian throne, Demetrius I and Alexander Balas, seeking him for military support. For his support of Balas, Jonathan was appointed to the office of high-priest. As he was of the priestly line, the Jews were not at all distressed by this fact. For now, they had the office of the king and the high-priest in one man. The Hasidim also joined the Maccabean ruler again at this time. Jonathan's dealings with Syria during a time when Syria was suffering from internal conflict led to his downfall. Under the guise of friendship, a Syrian general captured Jonathan and had him killed. Israel's hope for a nation separated from foreign influence was once more stifled.

The last living son of Mattathias, Simon, became the leader of the Maccabean party. Under his rule, the hope for a Jewish nation was realized. The Jewish people conferred upon Simon the position of absolute sovereign, and made the office of ruler of

¹⁹ Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period*, 36.

the nation hereditary in his family.²⁰ Simon made peace with the Syrians and Romans, freeing Israel from being ravaged by more conflicts. He also took to restoring Israel's devastated countryside. Cities were fortified and the Temple was secured. He was quite harsh against apostate Jews, though this was not unexpected from one who wished to keep Hellenism out of Israel. His relatively peaceful reign was short-lived. His son-in-law murdered him. Despite this, the Hasmonean line had been established as the leading line of the small city-state of Jerusalem.

John Hyrcanus, the son of Simon, took over the high priesthood. As the first official Hasmonean ruler, he did much to extend the borders of Israel, now recognized by the Roman Senate as an independent nation. However, Hyrcanus was not free of the corruption brought about through politics. While he initially began with religion freedom in mind, he set his goals more on establishing a nation to rule than anything else. The Jews had noted this and became dissatisfied with the Hasmoneans. Not only had they taken over the high priesthood, they had become increasingly worldly and irreligious. By the time of John Hyrcanus the growing breach within Judaism had materialized into two parties whose names now emerge for the first time as Pharisees and Sadducees.²¹ The divisions between the Hellenists and the Faithful, between the aristocrats and the common, between the priests and the laymen had finally come to reached the limit.

This schism continued to worsen during the rule of the Hasmoneans. How far the virus of Hellenism and aristocratic ambition had infected the Hasmonean family became evident when John Hyrcanus died (104 BC) leaving the throne to his wife and the high-priesthood to his eldest son, Aristobulus. The Greek name which the new high priest bore is unimpeachable testimony to his preference for the culture against which his family had so valiantly and successfully struggled.²² Aristobulus I, son of John Hyrcanus, succeeded his father. His rule was short but he continued the trend of supporting Hellenization in Palestine. His wife, Alexandra, was chosen to succeed him. She began by freeing her brother-in-law, Alexander Jannaeus, appointing him as high priest and then marrying him, effectively making him king. Even though Israel's territory was expanded even further during his reign, his pro-Hellenic stance and his harsh rule alienated him from

²⁰ Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period*, 39.

²¹ Russell, *Between the Testaments*, 32.

²² Finkelstein, *Pharisees: the Sociological Background of Their Faith*, volume II, 610.

many his people, most especially the Pharisees. A large section of the people, with the sympathy of the Pharisees, revolted against the brutal soldier; after six years of civil war and much misery he mastered the revolt, and the final picture is of Jannaeus reclining at dinner among his harem and watching the crucifixion of the last six hundred rebels.^{23 24}

Alexandra, twice widowed, resumed rule over Israel. At Jannaeus' death it has been suggested by a few authors²⁵ that he urged her to make amends with the Pharisees. Whether or not this was true, Alexandra did much in her nine-year rule to negotiate peace with the Pharisees, as well as the Jews in general. However, the peace she established crumbled in a fight between her two sons. One, Hyrcanus II had been appointed to the position of high priest. The other, Aristobulus II, with the backing of the Sadducees, rebelled against his brother, forcing him to give up the mantle of high priest as well as King. Even in this struggle we see that the Sadducees had entered into the political arena, whereas the Pharisees remained chiefly focused on religion. The struggle between the sons of Alexandra continued, exacerbated by the Idumean governor Antipater²⁶, who would soon establish his own dynasty some thirty years later. The fight was put to an end when Rome, on the appeal from both brothers, entered in as arbitrator.

The Jews under the Romans

During the Hasmonean Dynasty the Pharisees, according to Josephus, began to enter into the spotlight. The Pharisees certainly ran into trouble with the Hellenizing Hasmoneans and the compromising Sadducees. They had labored to keep Israel focused on the Torah. However, this new foreign oppressor reinvigorated the Jews to a greater sense of nationalism than ever before. While certainly the Pharisees resisted the influence of these foreign nations, the group maintained a stance of passive resistance. The days of warring and shedding blood as the Maccabees had done were at an end for all save the Zealots and radicals.²⁷

²³ W.W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilization*. (New York: World Publishing Company, 1961), 236.

²⁴ This number is disputed to be either six hundred or eight hundred. Cf. *Foerster and Russell*.

²⁵ Russell and Tarn.

²⁶ This is the same Antipater who was the father of Herod the Great of the Biblical record.

²⁷ This can be seen in the various rebellions that occurred in this time period, such as the 1st Jewish War (66-73A.D.) and the Bar Kokhba Rebellion that ended in 135 A.D.

Rome had been waiting for an opportunity to enter Palestine and assimilate these lands into its own growing empire. The invasion of Jerusalem was accomplished in 63 B.C. The intervention of the Romans under Pompey resulted initially in a substantial reduction of the Jewish state.²⁸ However, the Jews would soon enjoy a greater amount of freedom again thanks to the shrewd diplomacy of Herod the Great. In 44 B.C. Julius Caesar had been assassinated and war broke out between Mark Anthony and Octavian, soon to be Caesar Augustus. This war, and Herod's own part in it, would have a long-lasting impact on the condition of the Jewish state. During this time, Herod had sided with Anthony in return for a substantial amount of control in Judea alongside his brother Phasael. Antigonus, one of the last of the Hasmonean line, staged a coup against Herod and Phasael with help from the Parthians. In response, Phasael ended up committing suicide and Herod fled to Rome to request help. Anthony, still in control, had Herod elected king of the Jews by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C. However, tension remained between Octavian and Anthony. In 31 B.C. Anthony was defeated in the Battle of Actium. In a rather fortunate turn of events, Herod found himself in the good graces of Octavian, now Caesar Augustus, who allowed him continued control over Palestine, even expanding his current territory.

In this last segment concerning the historical background prior to and surrounding the Pharisees, Herod is a prime example of the curious blend of cultures that had been occurring in Palestine. On the one hand, though Idumean by birth and never fully respected by the Jews as a Jew, he understood his people's desire to maintain their Jewish heritage. His sympathy towards the Jewish lifestyle harkens back to the days of the earliest Maccabean rulers. When he had to besiege Jerusalem and win his kingdom back from Antigonus, he sent animals into the city so that the Temple sacrifices could continue on unhindered.

He allowed nothing that contradicted the Jewish belief in the one God to enter the specifically Jewish territory. No portrait of Caesar was imported into Jerusalem, nor did he permit the minting of any coin with Caesar's image. He even used his influence successfully on behalf of the Jews in the Roman Empire and succeeded in enabling Jews in the Diaspora to live henceforth according to

²⁸ Werner Foerster, *From the Exile to Christ: A Historical Introduction to Palestinian Judaism*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 71.

the Law. After his death the Romans maintained this same attitude towards the land of Palestine as well as to the Jews in the Diaspora.²⁹

Despite his endeavor to allow his people to maintain their Jewish heritage, Herod was personally receptive to all things Greco-Roman. His influence may be seen in the names of many Palestinian cities such as Caesarea and Sebaste, also known as the “city of Augustus”. He was a supporter of the Olympic games, initiating similar games to be held in Jerusalem every four years. “Just as it was Herod’s aim to be both Jew and Greek in his own person, so it was his aim generally to lead Jews and Greeks into harmonious co-existence.”³⁰ “Under Herod and his sons the policy of Hellenization went on apace...” He married Mariamne, the granddaughter of Hyrcanus in an effort to placate his peoples “but even this could not reconcile the people to his Idumean birth and his plans to Hellenize the kingdom.”³¹ Despite his efforts, there were those among the Jews, such as the Pharisees, who strongly opposed his desire to intermingle the two cultures.

As seen in this historical introduction, the Jews were in the position to be influenced by several foreign nations. In the past the Jews willingly took on the pagan practices of the nations around them. It is remarkable that during this Intertestamental Period they were not influenced to a greater extent. In fact, a different spirit was displayed. Many of the Jews opposed the foreign oppressors, as highlighted by such groups as the Hasidim and the Maccabees. It is in these groups and in the general trends of those times that we see the foundations for the Pharisees being laid.

The Development of the Pharisaic Movement

Most sources designate the origins of the Pharisees to sometime during the beginning the Hasmonean Dynasty. “According to Josephus the Pharisees existed in the time of Jonathan (160-143 B.C.), but elsewhere he states that they first appear historically in conflict with John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.).”³² Marcel sees this dating as even less exact. “A precise date cannot be assigned to the birth of Jewish sectarian life as a whole,

²⁹ Foerster, *From the Exile to Christ: A Historical Introduction to Palestinian Judaism*, 84.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

³¹ Russell, *Between the Testaments*, 36.

³² *Ibid.*, 49.

nor to that of its various component groups.”³³ However the Pharisaic culture had long been in development. These trends may be seen as far back as the return from exile. Originally Nebuchadnezzar had entrusted Gedaliah with the administration of the country. His rule lasted only two months, after which he was assassinated. Cyrus would eventually allow the Jews to migrate back to their broken nation in his edict of 538. This meant that Judah became a semi-autonomous satrapy of Persia. Zerubbabel was appointed governor by Darius. Later, Ezra and Nehemiah also served as leaders, watching the people reconstruct the city of Jerusalem and then the Temple. Without a king to lead the people, the central leading figure soon became the high priest who led the people spiritually. In time the high priest was looked to for more than just spiritual leadership. “In the postexilic period the high priest became important in the life of the Jewish national, even the political interests of the Jews became centered in him. This was especially true after the revolt of the Maccabees, when the priestly and kingly offices were exercised by the same person.”³⁴

After the exile, the people of Judea recognized their need to center themselves back on the Word of God. The high priest would have been seen as the prime leader to help the people achieve this goal. However, during the prolonged stay in Babylon, the people had already begun to study the word without the Temple. The synagogue became the place of learning and interpretation of the Torah. This would become essential in the Pharisees’ influence over the nation. “After the return from Babylonia, emphasis was on the study of the Law in the synagogues at the expense of worship in the temple.”³⁵ The Temple had been central to the Jews. Even at this point, many still revered the Temple. However, the Temple lost its place to the synagogue in practice if not in perception. “Where no priest or prophet could be found, the scribe was needed in the reestablished homeland, as he had been in Babylonia, as synagogue functionary.”³⁶ Here we see the subtle shift in influence from the priests to the scribes and teachers of the Law. As noted earlier, the priests no longer was the sole expert on the Law. He had to contend with the scribe, who may have been far more acquainted with the Law, having translated and

³³ Simon, *Jewish Sects at the Time of Jesus*, 17.

³⁴ Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period*, 53.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

³⁶ Finkelstein, *Pharisees: the Sociological Background of Their Faith*, volume I, 263.

studied it during the exile. The importance of this change can be seen in the emergence of the Pharisees not from among the priestly ranks like the Sadducees, but rather from the laymen who dedicated themselves to learning and studying the Law in their own time. It should be noted here that while certain tendencies of the Pharisees, such as a deep devotion to the study of Law, can be seen in this new emergent group of scribes, it would be faulty to make the claim that the scribes found in the Gospels are simply another name for the Pharisees. Only in Mark 2:16 do we read that there were “scribes belonging to the Pharisees.” Elsewhere, such as Matthew 5, 12, 20 and 23, the New Testament treats the scribes and Pharisees as separate groups. Neusner adds:

The scribes form a distinct group-not merely a profession-in the Gospels’ accounts of Jesus’s opposition. Scribes and Pharisees are by no means regarded as one and the same group. To be sure, what the scribes say and do not say is not made clear. One cannot derive from the synoptic record a clear picture of scribal doctrine or symbolism, if any, although one certainly finds an account of the Pharisaic law on ritual uncleanness and tithing” ... “Mishnaic literature obviously will miss the distinction between Pharisees and scribes, both of whom are regarded as sages. But we have no reason to suppose all scribes were Pharisees, any more than that all Pharisees were scribes.³⁷

The connection however between this emergent group and the Pharisees apart from the priests cannot be missed. Both utilized the synagogue for the study and promulgation of the doctrines of the Scriptures. Not every scribe was a Pharisees. Not every Pharisee was a scribe. However, the movement to study the Torah apart from the priests, outside of the Temple, can be seen in both groups.

Beside the fervent study of the Torah seen in the scribes, the Pharisees also seem to have shared their zeal for the Law with a group known as the Hasidim. The name Hasidim means “pious ones”. In this we see that same idea of separation or difference between the group and the others, either the common folk or the foreigner. The Hasidim were very zealous for the Law. They were equally zealous in opposing foreign influence. This streak of national pride can be seen as far back as the exile in Babylon. “Persecutions and isolation fostered the development of this spirit [of nationalism], which was advanced among Jews during Babylonian Captivity, where they were a minority, and after their return, when conditions forced them to again stress their identity and national

³⁷ Neusner, Jacob. *From Politics to Piety: the emergence of Pharisaic Judaism*. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1979) pgs. 64, 67.

origin.”³⁸ The Hasidim formed as a counter-movement to the growing threat of Hellenization. “The orthodox Jews, and in particular the Hasidim or Pious Ones (predecessors of the Pharisees), were deeply incensed at these happenings and indeed at the spread of Hellenistic influence generally.”³⁹ The Hasidim desired to bring the nation back to repentance and renewal through a life of separation and opposition to foreign influence. “Their fanatical legalism was a definite characteristic of the Pharisees of the Gospels. For more than a generation they had opposed the activity of the priestly aristocracy that had aided and abetted the Hellenizing ways of the Seleucid kings.”⁴⁰ Though the evidence is lacking that the Hasidim were the direct forerunners of the Pharisees, it is safe to say that the same spirit of the Pharisees can be seen in the Hasidim.

Along side the Pharisees, there were two other chief groups that had emerged during the Intertestamental Period. On the one hand there were the Sadducees, who had developed among the aristocratic priests. On the other, there were the Essenes, who shared the same fanatic zeal for separation, but took this policy to the extreme in removing themselves completely from the rest of the nation. A comparison of these groups helps depict the amount of influence each group had on the people living in Palestine.

The first noticeable difference is the relationship and interaction with the common people, also known as the *am-ha-aretz*.⁴¹ The Essenes appealed to some. In fact, recruiting others to join them was the only way of increasing and maintaining their following. Except for a few exceptions, the Essenes were celibates. Altogether “the Pharisees never lost sight of their aim to take in the whole nation and did not desire to lose sight of it; therefore they could not join others on the road to the Essene monastery.”⁴² Since the Essenes were the least influential of the three and never

³⁸ Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period*, 54.

³⁹ Russell, *Between the Testaments*, 27.

⁴⁰ Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period*, 33.

⁴¹ Am-ha-aretz is a Hebrew expression meaning the people of the land. This term is frequently used as a reference to the common folk.

⁴² Foerster, *From the Exile to Christ: A Historical Introduction to Palestinian Judaism*, 66.

mentioned in the Gospels, I will focus chiefly on the differences between the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

The difference between the learned layman and the priest had been discussed previously. In general, the Sadducees were comprised mostly of priests and the Pharisees of laymen. “The rivalry between the two sects can be viewed from several perspectives. For one thing, it was set within social categories: the Pharisees represented a sort of middle class over against the great priestly families.”⁴³ The Pharisees were revered by the common people because they maintained something of a middle ground between the perfectionist Essenes and the elite priestly class. These men were both learned in the Law and sought to bring about the perfection of not only themselves, but of the nation as well through education. Such control can be seen even in the time of Josephus. “As late as the time of Josephus, after the Pharisees had been in full control of Jewish life for more than century, it was still true that the richest families adhered to their ancestral Sadducism. The Pharisees had been able to win over to formal allegiance most of the upper middle class and some of the patricians but the highest aristocracy resisted them to the last.”⁴⁴

The Pharisees also differed from the Sadducees regarding their theological views. The chief source of contention between the two groups was their view on Scripture and tradition. The Sadducees accepted only the Pentateuch as authoritative. The Pharisees accepted the whole Tanakh⁴⁵ along with the oral tradition. “We have every reason to suppose that the Pharisees possessed traditions apart from Scripture. The testimonies of two independent sources, Josephus and the Gospels, as well as of the rabbinic traditions about the Pharisees are clear on that point.”⁴⁶ Finkelstein questions the motives of the priesthood, including that of the Sadducees on this selective choice of doctrinal source material. He believes that the Pharisees were not deviating from God’s Word by including the oral traditions of their fathers. On the contrary, the Sadducees, by relying only on the Pentateuch, had attempted to hinder the Pharisees in their quest to bring

⁴³ Simon, *Jewish Sects at the Time of Jesus*, 33.

⁴⁴ Finkelstein, *Pharisees: the Sociological Background of Their Faith*, volume I, 80.

⁴⁵ The name Tanakh is taken from the Hebrew letters that designate the categories found in the Hebrew Bible. It is comprised of the Torah, the Nevi’im and the Ketuvim, which roughly translate to the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.

⁴⁶ Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: the emergence of Pharisaic Judaism*, 80.

holiness to all the people instead of just to the elite ranks of the priests.⁴⁷ However, even though it was the goal of the Pharisees to bring the whole nation into a state of holiness, their desire for separation, even keeping themselves from fully interacting with their own people, cannot be excluded. “[Pharisaism] still did not entirely forget its original aim. As late as the Mishna the term ‘Pharisee’ was still used as an antonym of ‘am ha-arez.’⁴⁸

A distinct conflict between the Pharisees and the Sadducees can be seen in the New Testament on the doctrine of the resurrection. In Mark 12, the Sadducees attempted to trap Jesus in a question on the marriage and resurrection. In Acts 23, Paul turns the Pharisees and the Sadducees against each other by raising this same question of the resurrection.⁴⁹ The impact of these doctrinal views on the common people cannot be missed. The Pharisees spoke of a retribution for evil, a restoration of the fortunes of God’s people and a peacefully resurrection. Filled with feelings of animosity towards the foreign oppressors, the *am-ha-aretz* naturally gravitated towards this message.

The impact the Pharisees had on the common people, over and against the Essenes and the Sadducees, is easily understood. The Sadducees used the Torah to limit and control the people. By adhering only to the Pentateuch, they backed up their sole claim to authoritative power. If the synagogue had not come along, the people may have been content to let the priests maintain their lofty position of power. With the introduction of the synagogue the Sadducees no longer held the greater amount of influence over the people. The impact of this can be seen in that “[the Pharisees] were loved by the lower classes because of their devotion to the Law and their religious zeal but feared by the upper classes on account of their power over the people.”⁵⁰ The Essenes can hardly be factored into this equation at all since they left the common people and settled in the wilderness.

The reason why, of all the various groups in Judaism, Pharisaism alone was preserved, lies in the fact that it was the logical continuation and fulfillment of the line that had begun with Ezra and Nehemiah. Sadduceism, for all the zeal it

⁴⁷ Finkelstein, Louis. *Pharisees: the Sociological Background of Their Faith, volume II*, 634 ff.

⁴⁸ Finkelstein, *Pharisees: the Sociological Background of Their Faith, volume I*, 76.

⁴⁹ Overall, the impression is that the Pharisees were doctrinally closer to Jesus than the Sadducees. Just before the time of Christ two schools of thought, the House of Shammai and the House of Hillel, had arisen in Pharisaism. It is interesting to note that Hillel spoke on many of the same topics as Jesus.

⁵⁰ Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period*, 55.

could muster on behalf of the Law, had become spiritually enervated. It had lost sight of the goal of capturing the whole nation and contented itself with the old status quo. The Essene groups had withdrawn from the life of the people; it is no coincidence that the New Testament does not mention them... The Pharisees, however, logically and persistently pursued the one aim of fulfilling the whole life of the nation with a decisive “yes” towards the Law, and thus became the typical expression of Judaism in its religious aspect.⁵¹

The Gospels give some insight into the character of the Pharisees as well. There is only one passage which might depict the Pharisees in a relatively decent light.⁵² There are other places in Scripture that do not necessarily portray the Pharisees in a bad light. Jesus does recognize that outwardly, they did lead very moral lives. They were exemplars of civic righteousness.⁵³ There were believers who were of the Pharisee party.⁵⁴ At the very least, there were some in the party who had not completely discounted Jesus.⁵⁵ However, for the most part, Jesus speaks nothing but condemnation against this group, emphasizing their hypocrisy. “The accusation of hypocrisy and punctiliousness was not one against which the Pharisees could defend themselves. If by hypocrisy was meant their self-control, and by punctiliousness their insistence on the mastery and observance of detail in the Law, they were indeed guilty of both.”⁵⁶ However, the Christ saw their hypocrisy as more than a meticulous love for the Law. He saw in their hearts that they had elevated the Law as a means for salvation. The book of Matthew is notable for Jesus’ “seven woes” against this group. Throughout the book we see the Pharisees come against him. At first they sought a sign from him to back up his testimony. But when Jesus spoke against their outward practices they rejected him.⁵⁷ Outside of the Gospels we see the Christians still struggling against this group. Their influence had led to problems with

⁵¹ Foerster, *From the Exile to Christ: A Historical Introduction to Palestinian Judaism*, 168-169.

⁵² Luke 13:31. The Pharisees warn Jesus that Herod wished to kill him. There is some debate on whether this warning was sincere or a half-hearted attempt to force Jesus out of the area.

⁵³ Matthew 5:20.

⁵⁴ Acts 15:5; John 3. The story of Nicodemus is a well known example of a Pharisee turned Christian.

⁵⁵ John 9. A split is caused in the party. Some refused to accept Jesus on the basis that he was breaking the Sabbath. Others recognized that he had performed a miracle and that he must be from God.

⁵⁶ Finkelstein, *Pharisees: the Sociological Background of Their Faith*, volume I, 98.

⁵⁷ A list of indictments against the Pharisees include the following: love of money, prideful displays of prayers, reverence for the letter of the Law but not the spirit, heaping legalistic laws upon proselytes, disdain for ‘sinners and tax collectors’. These and other indictments may be found in Matthew 23.

legalism regarding circumcision. This would be the main source of contention in the letter to the Galatians. The only positive record of the Pharisees outside of the Gospels occurs in Acts 5. Here, a single Pharisee, Gamaliel, was able to dissuade the Sanhedrin from killing Peter and John outright.

The Gospels also do not deny the amount of influence the Pharisees had over the *am-ha-aretz*. The evangelist John records “many even believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue.”⁵⁸ From the story of the blind man in John 9, the fear of being thrown out of the synagogues is evident in the parents’ refusal to give a proper account. In these examples, the influence is not positive. Rather, it is an influence directed by fear.

There are several authors who would see the above observations as hyper-critical. Baeck offers this thought on the Gospels: “The passages of the Gospels that refer to the Pharisees have no historical significance; in them our term is not used in its historical connotation but only serves the purposes of ridicule and deprecation.”⁵⁹ Though Neusner sees some historical value in the Gospels, he too, has little positive to say on the portrayal of the Pharisees presented therein. “Whenever the narrator needs someone to ask a question that allows a stunning response on the part of Jesus, he calls forth the Pharisees. When a villain is needed to exemplify obviously unsavory spiritual traits, the Pharisees serve quite well.”⁶⁰ It is easily recognized that the Pharisees have long had a bad reputation. Marcel believes this is only because “the picture drawn by the Gospel writers, sometimes exaggerated to the point of caricature, has retained only the most questionable traits and the most conspicuous faults of the sects.”⁶¹ Overall, the view towards the Pharisees in modern scholarship is one of tempering the rather harsh view found in the Gospels by trying to find connections between the Christians and the Pharisees. This is twisting the plain words of the Gospels, of Christ himself, out of context. God’s Word is clear. Whatever the original intentions of the Pharisees, they had become a legalistic

⁵⁸ John 12:42.

⁵⁹ Leo Baeck, *The Pharisees and other Essays*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), 12.

⁶⁰ Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: the emergence of Pharisaic Judaism*, 72.

⁶¹ Simon, *Jewish Sects at the Time of Jesus*, 30.

group, focused on the exercise of obtaining inner righteousness through scrupulous outward practices.

The Contributions of the Pharisees to the Preservation of a Jewish Identity

Having explored the historical background and examined certain characteristics of the Pharisees, their overall impact on the preservation of Judaism may be observed. The Intertestamental Period served as a time of change and constancy for the Jews. On the one hand, the world around them was both broadening and becoming dangerously smaller and familiar as the pagan world, especially the Greek world, invaded politics, the marketplace, and to certain extent even the religious world. On the other hand, there were those among the Jews who resisted the change. Some opted to resist the change with force. Others chose to remove themselves completely from the rest of the world. And finally there were those who recognized that certain changes simply needed to be accepted to thrive in this new world, while the core of their belief could not change. In this last group, I place the Pharisees.

We begin at the start of the Intertestamental Period. The Jews had recently lost their prized Promise Land to foreign invaders. Returning from the exile, many changes had to be made to their previous way of life. The land needed to be rebuilt. The Temple sacrifices and rituals were restarted. The synagogue was now incorporated into the weekly routine. The question that needs to be asked at this point is whether or not the changes made ran deeper than in external matters. On the topic of foreign influence, there are some who claim that new doctrines on angelology and the resurrection were adopted into Judaism. Finkelstein sees these doctrines, or adaptations, as part of the natural growth of a religion. Concerning the prophet Zechariah he comments “He is the first in Jewish literature to mention Satan, the angel of evil, who clearly replaced for him the Zoroastrian Ahriman.”⁶²⁶³ Finkelstein’s low view of Scripture also contributes to his interpretation on Isaiah, citing that a nameless apocalypticist makes the very first suggestion of a resurrection in Scripture. It is curious then, that though he ascribes these changes to the influence of the Babylonians and Persians, he takes note of the Pharisees

⁶² Finkelstein, *Pharisees: the Sociological Background of Their Faith, volume I*, 173.

⁶³ Zoroastrianism is a religion based on the teachings of Zoroaster. Essentially Zoroastrianism highlights dualism. There are two gods, Ahura Mazda, god of good and Angra Mainyu or Ahriman, the god of evil, who are in a cosmic struggle. Eventually Ahura Mazda would overcome Ahriman and restore all things into himself.

struggle. “To avoid being lost in Canaanitic superstition, Persian insobriety, Egyptian licentiousness, and Roman ferocity, which had conquered Greece itself, the Pharisee determined to hold on with almost superhuman strength to the traditions of his ancestors.”⁶⁴ It would appear from his perspective that the Pharisees clung to the traditions and the Law in order to hold onto something Jewish in an evolving religion that was quickly being overrun with foreign ideas. In support of Finkelstein’s view on foreign influence, Werner Foerster sees a connection to Israel’s time spent away from the Promised Land and this sudden emergence of new doctrines: “But it cannot be denied that the formulation of these new ideas resulted from the influence of an exotic and Gentile climate of thought, namely Iranian Zoroastrianism, with which the Jews became acquainted in Babylon during the Persian period.”⁶⁵ Russell, an otherwise decent historian concludes, “The influence of Zoroastrianism, and indeed of the whole Perso-Babylonian culture, is amply illustrated in the writings of the Jewish apocalyptists of this period and even, though to a lesser extent, in the works of Pharisaic Judaism.”⁶⁶ On the other hand, Surburg, who served as a counter-historian to Russell notes that such doctrines were not new by any means. “The two eschatological doctrines of immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body are alleged to have been acquired by the Jews as a result of their contacts with Zoroastrianism. Long before the Babylonian Captivity, the Jews expressed their hope in an afterlife and their belief in the resurrection of the body. Passages in Job and Isaiah clearly set forth these doctrines.”⁶⁷ Angelology was not something new or expanded upon either. Satan was present in the book of Job as well. Angels have made their appearances since Genesis. The historians who promote the idea that these doctrines were added because of foreign influence fail to see the Scriptures not as a work in progress that was altered to fit the prevailing themes of the times, but rather as one long consistent message, inerrant and unchangeable.

Eventually the Babylonian and Persian cultures were assimilated into the Greek culture in one form or another. As Hellenization overtook the world, the Jews would be faced with this same foreign influence. “It is important in this connection to observe that

⁶⁴ Finkelstein, *Pharisees: the Sociological Background of Their Faith*, volume I, 99.

⁶⁵ Foerster, *From the Exile to Christ: A Historical Introduction to Palestinian Judaism*, 44.

⁶⁶ Russell, *Between the Testaments*, 22.

⁶⁷ Surburg, *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period*, 16.

Hellenism was a syncretistic system beneath whose surface the thought and beliefs of many old eastern religions continued to exercise a potent influence.”⁶⁸ It would be a mistake to claim that Hellenization had no impact at all upon the Jews. The question is how did the Pharisees, who arose in opposition to Hellenization, fend off such influence? Or can we find some Hellenistic influence even within this group? Jacob Neusner, a leading expert on the Pharisees, contributes to this point:

Thus Palestinian Judaism overall, and the Pharisaic sect in particular are to be seen as Jewish modes of a common, international cultural “style” known as Hellenism. The Jews were not an isolated or provincial people, and their “philosophy” was not incomprehensible, at least in form, to the rest of civilized mankind. The Jews, on the contrary, responded to the challenge of Hellenism by shaping a uniquely Jewish form of that common culture.⁶⁹

What I would see as a characteristic of Pharisaism designed to adhere to the Jewish way of life over and against the Hellenistic lifestyle is one of the factors Neusner attributes to a Hellenized Pharisee party. He saw Hellenism in the Pharisees in their “stress on tradition as the guide to the formation of social life and personal values. The concept of a truth outside of Scriptures opened the way to the accommodation of new ideas and values within the structure of inherited symbols-holy words, holy deeds, holy doctrines.”⁷⁰ Russell joins Neusner in the premise that the Pharisees were Hellenized and worked to formulate a Jewish form of the Hellenistic system. “It was inevitable that [the Pharisees] should be influenced, and influenced deeply, by the Hellenistic environment in which they lived; the surprising thing is that their response to it was not much greater and that, despite the pressure brought to bear upon them, they were able to maintain their distinctive Jewish faith.”⁷¹ This theory seems to attempt to straddle the notion that the Pharisees incorporated foreign concepts and yet were able to maintain their own religion at the same time. Instead, the strict observance to the Law and the words and traditions of their forefathers was a movement within Judaism to hold on to their now revitalized religious life. Where others might see capitulation to foreign ideology, I see opposition and preservation.

⁶⁸ Russell, *Between the Testaments*, 21.

⁶⁹ Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: the emergence of Pharisaic Judaism*, 9.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁷¹ Russell, *Between the Testaments*, 13.

Before and throughout the Intertestamental Period the trends of Pharisaism, a love for the Torah and the oral tradition, a concern to maintain all things Jewish, and a strict adherence to the Torah as opposed to the acceptance of pagan religion, are all in place. “The goal of the Pharisees’ struggle was the preservation of the strict purity and cohesion of the Jewish community.”⁷² It was through the synagogue, a necessity that emerged during the exile, that the Pharisees were able to exert influence over the Jews and prevent a greater amount of Hellenistic influence. The synagogue served as a foil to the Temple. Whereas the Sadducees, who had ignored parts of Scripture and the Jewish faith in order to maintain their positions, controlled the Temple, the Pharisees controlled the synagogue. The popularity of the synagogue was largely due to its accessibility. For some, the Temple was only visited during the three high festivals. The synagogue was accessible in all areas where the Jews who were scattered in the Diaspora lived. The synagogue was utilized by the Pharisees with almost prophetic vision. “The influence of Pharisaism was more and more widely disseminated throughout Palestine and the Diaspora through the synagogues. This already established network, which had previously sustained the religious life of Israel, enabled Judaism to overcome the crisis following the destruction of the temple quickly, and apparently, easily.”⁷³ It was through the synagogue that Judaism was preserved. The Sadducees who maintained the Temple could not impact the *am-ha-aretz*. The Sadducees held ideas that did not match with the common people’s hopes for retribution against the wicked. As the priesthood was a position of power, many were more interested in retaining their aristocracy, even at the loss of religious convictions. Rather, the Pharisees had direct contact with the everyday Jew. In the synagogue, the Pharisee was an equal master of God’s Word to the aristocratic Sadducee. The Pharisee’s advantage was that he was able to directly teach his audience the basic doctrines. While this would allow self-imposed false doctrine to trickle into Judaism, foreign doctrines were kept out.

Concluding Remarks

The history of the Pharisees is a convoluted one. The exact date of the origin of this group cannot be pinpointed. However, as shown throughout this paper, their history was long in the making. Returning from exile, the Israelites recognized what their

⁷² Baeck, *The Pharisees and other Essays*, 11.

⁷³ Simon, *Jewish Sects at the Time of Jesus*, 34.

fraternization with foreign religions meant for their existence. The whole nation joined together to make a concerted effort to remain faithful to the LORD. The synagogue was one such feature that helped the Israelites focus on this task. After Alexander's conquest, the Greek way of life had spread throughout the known world. The Jews were not free of the sweeping power of Hellenization. However, when forced to break faith with Judaism, to do things forbidden by the LORD, there were some who resisted. One of the groups that sprang from this opposition to Hellenization was the Pharisees. Though they eventually succumbed to the allure of the political realm, they never lost sight of their initial goal to separate themselves and, through education, separate their fellow Jews from the foreign nations around them. It was through the synagogue that they disseminated this philosophy. The use of the synagogue and their interactions with the common people as exemplars of a lifestyle pleasing to the LORD left an indelible mark on Judaism. It is unfortunate that the Pharisees, so zealous to preserve the truth of God's Word, fell into the realm of work-righteousness. However, it cannot be denied they had a hand in the preservation of Judaism during the Intertestamental Period. Their lasting impact can be seen in Rabbinic-Judaism today. The Jews still hold tenaciously to the Torah and the oral tradition and reject all things foreign in order to preserve their religion.

Appendix A

Annotated Bibliography

Baeck, Leo. *The Pharisees and other Essays*. New York: Schocken Books, 1947

A leader of Progressive Judaism, Baeck served as something of a teacher of Judaism during his time in Nazi concentration camps. He is pleasant in his writings, citing from Jewish literature and sources where appropriate and other times simply commenting on what he knows from his own experience. His first essay deals primarily with the Pharisees. He does not pretend to know everything, as such knowledge is unobtainable. However, he does provide the clues one would need to have a balanced view of this sect. Also, he views the New Testament as a harsh indictment against the Pharisees, claiming this Gospels use the name Pharisee only as a source of ridicule and contempt.

Deines, Roland. "The Social Profile of the Pharisees." *New Testament and Rabbinic Literature* (Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 2010)

The Pharisees are given a prominent amount of influence according to Deines. He agrees with E.J. Sanders in that more or less the groups in Judaism were homogenous, though he maintains a three-fold distinction of the mina groups, the Pharisees, Essenes, and Sadducees.

Finkel, Asher *The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth*. Leiden ,Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1964

Asher Finkel compares the teachings of Jesus with those of the Pharisees, categorizing the arguments according to a common background, the controversial teachings of the Pharisees and the written and oral tradition of the Hasmonean and Herodian period. It is in the last section of the book that Finkel deals with the viewpoints of the Pharisees prior to Christ's coming. Finkel sees Jesus as if he were practically a Pharisee himself, observing many of the same principles, claiming that Jesus' indictment of the Pharisees were only against the House of Shammai and not the Pharisee group as a whole. His condemnation therefore is not concerning the Pharisees' system of work-righteousness but simply that one house was too strict and legalistic.

Finkelstein, Louis. *Pharisaism in the Making: Selected Essays*. New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1972

Finkelstein serves as a valued resource for examining the various facets of Pharisaism. His selected essays, having been written over several decades, displays a vast amount of research and work in pre-Maccabean and Maccabean history. Though somewhat wordy and tedious, if one wishes to understand some of the common thoughts regarding the synagogue, the origin of the Pharisees and basic Pharisee practices.

Finkelstein, Louis. *Pharisees: the Sociological Background of Their Faith, volume I and II*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938

These combined volumes serve as an expansion on the previous mentioned title. Again, the mindset behind several of the precepts are scrutinized and defended. He does seem to make a great deal of the social-economic differences between the common people, the “am-ha-aretz,” and the Pharisees. The struggle between the rich and the poor is highlighted perhaps to too great an extent.

Foerster, Werner. *From the Exile to Christ: A Historical Introduction to Palestinian Judaism*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964

From the exile to Christ certainly serves as an introduction to Palestinian Judaism. Foerster provides an easy start to those just entering into the field with a basic knowledge of the history of the Intertestamental Period. He carefully and concisely goes through the timeline, highlighting the key figures and events in a systematic fashion.

Glover, T.R. *The World of the New Testament*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1937

T.R. Glover describes the various groups involved during the Intertestamental Period decently, though this book is something more akin to a primer on the topic than a lengthy description and examination of these groups. The groups themselves, consisting of the Greeks, the Jews, and the Romans, are broad and factions within these larger groups are not given space or consideration. Therefore a skewed picture might be drawn.

Josephus, Flavius. Translated by Whiston, William. *The Works of Josephus*. Hartford: The S.S. Scranton Co., 1911

Any one who wishes to examine any part of Jewish life around the time of Jesus must be familiar with Josephus. There are some discrepancies within the greater works of Josephus when compared to one another, but overall, he is qualified to write on the history of his own people. There is some concern on his handling of the Pharisees in that he claims to have chosen the Pharisees over the other two main groups after only a brief examination. To what extent he practiced Pharisaism is unknown. It should also be noted that, as the axiom states “history is written by the victors,” he simply may have been writing more on the Pharisees simply because they were the only group that had survived the destruction of the Temple.

Meier, John P. “The Quest for the Historical Pharisee: A Review on Roland Deines, Die Pharisäer.” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61 (November 1999): 713-722

John Meier, a Catholic scholar, is noted more for his series concerning Jesus, the Marginal Jew. However, even in that series, as well as in his review of Roland Deines, he does show he is knowledgeable of the Pharisees. He is an honest historian, trying to make conclusions or refrain from making conclusions based on what facts can be seen. In his review of Roland Deines, he is somewhat critical, noting Deines tendency to broaden the definition of what it is to be a Pharisee and thereby grant a larger amount of influence to this group.

Neusner, Jacob. *Early Rabbinic Judaism*. Leiden ,Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1975

Neusner is one of the most prominent names in Jewish studies today. I appreciate his forthrightness in admitting that there are many things that simply cannot be adequately known or understood about the Pharisees prior to the Josephus and the Rabbinic literature of the 2nd century. In spite of this disclaimer he write extensively on Judaism. This particular volume examines rabbinical literature concerning the Pharisees prior to 70 A.D. As such this proved invaluable since very little is written concerning the Pharisees from this time period.

Neusner, Jacob. *From Politics to Piety: the emergence of Pharisaic Judaism*. New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1979

Here Neusner deals with many of the problems surrounding an examination of the Pharisees given the resources available. Josephus is an apt but flawed historian. The

Gospels are polemical in nature and the Talmuds and Mishna describe Judaism two to three hundred years after the emergence of the Pharisees. In the later portions of this book he also presents arguments against other popular authors on the subject of Pharisaism and Rabbinism.

Russell, D.S. *Between the Testaments*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960

Along with Foerster, Russell's *Between the Testaments* serves the beginner as a decent introduction to the time surrounding Jesus Christ. In particular he concerns himself with the popular thoughts circulating within Judaism. Readers should be warned though that he is one of the many authors who has bought into the premise that certain ideas promoted by the Pharisees, such as immortality, angelology and the resurrection, came from the Jews interaction with the Babylonians and Persians, the Greeks and the Romans.

Sigal, Phillip. *Judaism: The Evolution of a Faith*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986

Sigal traces the changes within Judaism through its entire history. He sees no connection between the Pharisees and the Rabbis who came after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. He also explains that the Hellenization of Palestine had little effect on Judaism, aside for a few fringe groups who blurred the lines of different religions into a form of syncretism.

Simon, Marcel. *Jewish Sects at the Time of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967

Marcel deals with the Pharisees as progressives of their time, pushing the oral tradition to expand the common concepts of religious practices as well as implement ideas previous unknown to the Jews.

Surburg, Raymond F. *Introduction to the Intertestamental Period*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975

Surburg pleased me greatly in that he did not count the New Testament as simply another historical source, biased and polemic, but rather as the Word of God. Though brief, he provides an excellent overview of the Intertestamental Period, examining the major sects of Judaism as well as looking at the literature of that time such as the

Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha to sketch an outline of common thought during that time.

Tarn, W.W. *Hellenistic Civilization*. New York: World Publishing Company, 1961

An entire chapter is devoted to Hellenism and the Jews. Tarn is a very detailed author. Despite his excellence in history, he does see parts of Old Testament Scripture as later additions or interpolations, thereby relegating the Old Testament as Jewish literature and nothing more.

Taylor, Nicholas H. "Herodians and Pharisees: the historical and political context of Mark 3:6; 8:15; 12:13-17." *Neotestamentica* 34 (October 2000): 299-310.

Taylor writes on the connection between the Herodians and the Pharisees, chiefly in their opposition to Jesus. While such an alliance might have been possible during the Herodian rulers, Taylor sees this as less than likely during the reign of Antipas, who ruled for the chief part of Jesus' life on earth. He does take well to note that there were distinct groups within Judaism and even within these distinct groups there was not always agreement.

Zeitlin, Solomon. "Pharisees: a historical study." *Jewish Quarterly Reviews* 52 (1961): 97-129

The origin of the Pharisees is discussed. Zeitlin does quite well noting the various thoughts and theories surrounding Pharisaism. However, he seems to promote the idea that the Pharisees had believed in ideas and concepts previously foreign to Jews, ideas such as immortality and fate.

Appendix B

Rabbinic Judaism

Concerning Pharisaism and its connection to Rabbinic Judaism, Jacob Neusner has much to say. For many in the scholarly world, the connection between the Pharisees and the Rabbis is unmistakable. I myself believe that the evidence is too great to discount the connection between the Pharisaic version of Judaism prior to the destruction of the Temple and the Rabbinic-Judaism that follows 70 A.D. Though I do see a connection I thought Neusner's words to be too valuable not to include.

It is customary to refer to the Judaism represented by Talmudic and cognate literature as "Pharisaic-rabbinic" or sometimes merely as "Pharisaic." Little effort has gone into defining, let alone differentiating, Pharisaism and rabbinism. The reason is that the rabbinic *Heilgeschichte*, which shapes and predominates in virtually every account of the history of Judaism in late antiquity ("the Talmudic period"), regards the rabbis known after the destruction of the Second Temple in A.D. 70 as the heirs and continuators of the Pharisees of the period before that time. This unilinear view of a unitary tradition simply represents a modern continuation, in secular garb, of the rabbinic history of the oral Torah. That history holds that along with the written Torah (Pentateuch), an oral Torah was revealed at Sinai to Moses, passed on from him to Joshua, then to the Judges, the Prophets, the Men of the Great Assembly, the scribes, the "sages" of Second Temple Pharisaism, and finally, to the rabbis, who wrote it all down in the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the two *gemarot*, Babylonian and Palestinian, and related compilations—all containing the revelation of Sinai. Since the Talmudic rabbis saw all their predecessors as rabbis, beginning with Moses "our rabbi," it was natural to regard their immediate antecedents as no different from themselves. The oral Torah was seen to constitute a single, continuous tradition, and its history would produce "Pharisaic-rabbinic" as readily as "Biblical-talmudic" Judaism.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: the emergence of Pharisaic Judaism*, 50.

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