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Second Temple Jerusalem: A Jewish City in the Greco-Roman Orbit

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Introduction

By the end of the Second Temple period, in 70 C.E., Jerusalem had been under Jewish hegemony for almost one thousand years. The city had come to be regarded, by Jew and non-Jew alike, as a quintessentially Jewish city. Jerusalem's population was overwhelmingly Jewish, as were its leadership, calendar, and public institutions, first and foremost of which was the Temple.

In the course of the First and Second Temple periods, Jerusalem had evolved into the central sacred site of the Jewish people. This status was not achieved overnight, but was the result of an ongoing process spanning many centuries. Beginning with David's decision to conquer the city and transform it into his political and religious capital, it reached a peak in the First Temple period with Josiah's decision to centralize Jewish sacrificial cult in the city. Whereas beforehand it had been permissible to offer sacrifices to the God of Israel anywhere in the country, now only those sacrifices brought to the Jerusalem Temple were recognized as legitimate and sanctioned.

However, the centrality of the city became even more pronounced in the ensuing Second Temple period. Cyrus' recognition of Jerusalem by virtue of its holy Temple was to be repeated later on by Hellenistic and Roman conquerors, and Antiochus III's edict on behalf of Jerusalem upon its capture ca. 200 B.C.E. is clear testimony of this status (*Ant.* 12, 138–44). Moreover, the transformation of the city into the capital of a substantial political kingdom, first in the days of the Hasmoneans and later under Herod, further imbued Jerusalem with a status and importance heretofore unmatched.

Parallel to this enhanced political status, Jerusalem also enjoyed a heightened religious standing. Isaiah had already envisioned the city as a spiritual

focus for all nations (2:1–4), and in the aftermath of the destruction Ezekiel describes the city as the center of the world and its name as “the Lord is there” (5:5, 48:35), while II Chronicles refers to the Lord as “the God of Jerusalem” (32:19). As has been noted in previous articles in this volume, the author of Chronicles emphasizes God’s choice of Jerusalem by relating that a fire descended from heaven onto the altar David built there (I Chron. 21:26; cf. II Sam. 24:25) and by explicitly identifying Moriah of the *ʿAqedah* story with the Temple Mount (II Chron. 3:1). Deutero-Isaiah (48:2, 52:1) and Nehemiah (11:1) extend the realm of holiness beyond the Temple (Isa. 27:13; Jer. 31:22) to embrace all of Jerusalem, while Zechariah takes this one step further and includes all of Judaea as well (2:14–17). Centuries later, these ideas were elaborated in the *Letter of Aristeas* (83), *Jubilees* (8:17–19), as well as by Josephus (*War* 3, 52) and Philo (*Embassy* 37, 281). During the Second Temple period, the twin concepts of an eschatological and heavenly Jerusalem made their appearance (*Enoch* 85–90) and became even more prominent in the generation following the destruction of the Second Temple (*IV Ezra*, *II Baruch*; cf. also Rev. 21–22; Heb. 12).

The Jewish Dimension of Jerusalem in the Hellenistic-Hasmonean Period

The Second Temple period witnessed a series of efforts aimed at defining Jerusalem as the quintessential Jewish city by emphasizing its uniqueness and particularity. Ezra and Nehemiah’s attempts to separate the city and its population from the surrounding regions and peoples was a religious policy which reflected Judaea’s geographical and political isolation; this policy would be advocated by other authors and sects down to the end of the Second Temple era. We have the testimonies of a number of Greek writers from the early Hellenistic period indicating the relative success of this policy. Hecataeus of Abdera, for instance, describes the uniqueness of Jerusalem, its Temple, and people, as well as the success of Jewish society in preserving its ancestral traditions. Ben Sira advocates a similar posture, and the agenda of the second-century Hasidim seems to have had an intensive Jewish focus.¹

Moreover, during these three centuries, between Ezra and Nehemiah on the one hand and the Hasmoneans on the other, a number of practices and literary works evolved which clearly expressed a particularistic social and religious thrust. This proclivity was expressed early on in a variety of ways, from banning foreign merchants on the Sabbath, emphasizing the use of Hebrew, to driving out foreign wives.² The division of the Jewish population into priestly *mishmarot* and lay *maʿamadot*, each with semi-annual obligations in

the Temple, also seems to have evolved at this time, as did a series of halakhic requirements, such as spending the "second tithe" in the city four times every seven years.³ The emergence of apocalyptic literature in the third and second centuries is a further expression of Jewish particularism, as was the newly-established centrality of the Torah in Jewish religious life, a centrality which found expression in Sabbath and festival communal-reading frameworks that crystallized during this period.⁴

This introversive focus on the Jewish body polity was given a dramatic boost in the mid-second century B.C.E., with the ascendance of the Hasmoneans and the establishment of a sovereign state boasting ambitious territorial designs. Among the most prominent changes effected, the following may be noted:

1. The Hasmoneans radically altered the geographical concept of Eretz-Israel to include almost all of the territory west of the Jordan River and large tracts to its east; for the 400-or-so years beforehand, Jewish Judaea included only the region around Jerusalem, which was more or less contiguous with the Persian administrative region, Yehud.
2. Concomitant with the successful conquests, there crystallized an ideology that the Jews under Hasmonean hegemony were, in fact, reclaiming their ancestral homeland and, in fact, were obliged to eliminate all pagan worship. This led to the destruction of pagan shrines and, at times, to the death or exile of native populations (e.g., I Macc. 13:43–53). Ironically, it was precisely at this time that the institution of conversion first made its appearance in a Jewish context, as the Hasmoneans forced conversion upon the Idumeans in the south and the Itureans in the north (*Ant.* 13, 257–58, 318).
3. The Hasmonean era witnessed an enhanced prominence of the Temple in Jewish life. The Hasmoneans rose to power as defenders of the Temple and its purity from foreign cults, and this achievement played a central role in their court propaganda, as indicated by II Maccabees and the letters prefacing that book. Brief references in I Maccabees and Josephus indicate that each and every Hasmonean ruler devoted energy and funds to improving and strengthening the Temple and its surroundings.
4. Together with the above campaigns to ban idolatry and reemphasize the Temple's prominence came a greater emphasis on matters of ritual purity within Jewish society. This new focus found expression in many of the halakhic decisions ascribed in our sources to the early Pharisees and the Qumran community. In the material culture, this emphasis is evident in the appearance of ritual baths (*miqva'ot*), and this tendency is further

underscored by the almost exclusive use of local (as against imported) ware and by the more frequent recourse to using the ashes of a red heifer, intended for purification from corpse impurity. This rare sacrifice was reportedly offered seven times (five, according to another tradition) from the Hasmonean period onward, i.e., in the last two hundred years of the Second Temple period. Only two cases are noted for the previous millennium (M Parah 3:5).

5. Jewish art underwent a radical change at this time, and was now characterized by the studious avoidance of any figural representation, either human or animal. Up to this point, such depictions were not uncommon in Jewish circles, from the cherubs over the holy ark and the lions of Solomon's throne, to the figurines found in Israelite settlements and the human and animal images on Yehud coins from Persian and Hellenistic Jerusalem. The magnificent Tobiad palace in 'Iraq el-Emir (between Jericho and Amman), dating from the early second century B.C.E., is adorned with majestic figures of eagles and lions carved in stone. However, commencing under the Hasmoneans and continuing for some three centuries, human and animal representations were not to be found in Judaea. Exceptions to this rule exist, but they are few and far between.⁵
6. Finally, the emergence of Jewish sects—e.g., Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes (including the Qumran community as well), each with its own particular religious agenda—is a further indication of a more concerted Jewish emphasis at this time, at least within certain circles.

The Hellenistic Dimension of Hasmonean Jerusalem

Understanding the Jewish component of Second Temple Jerusalem is necessary for an understanding of the city and its workings—necessary but not sufficient in and of itself. Another force at work in the wake of, and even before, Alexander's conquests of the East was Hellenistic culture, and this dimension was to shape the city profoundly. The social and cultural message of the Hellenistic world was radically different from the Jerusalem of Ezra and Nehemiah. Alexander had married a Persian princess and compelled his officers and soldiers to wed Persian women. The message here was loud and clear: isolation, insulation, and estrangement were to be rejected; a meeting of cultures—symbiosis, synthesis, and even syncretism—were the order of the day. This, of course, is a far cry from the mass-divorce from non-Jewish spouses by members of the Jerusalem aristocracy that was advocated by Ezra and Nehemiah.

Moreover, what had been of marginal significance before Alexander became

much more central after his conquest. The impact of Hellenism on the Near East in general, and on Judaea and Jerusalem in particular, was considerable. From the very beginning of this era, there are indications of Jerusalem's participation in the life of the wider Hellenistic world, such as its diplomatic relations with Sparta, which developed in the third and second centuries B.C.E. or its use of imported Rhodian wine, as attested by the discovery of hundreds of stamped amphora handles dating from the mid-third to the late second centuries B.C.E. Several books written or edited in the third century B.C.E., e.g., *Ecclesiastes* (*Qohelet*) and the *Song of Songs*, appear to reflect either Hellenistic genres (in the case of the latter) or the questioning of traditional Jewish values resulting, *inter alia*, from the impact of Hellenistic culture (in the case of the former). Contrastingly, a number of other books written at about this time express opposition to certain hellenizing tendencies, as, for example, *Ben Sira* and *Jubilees*, although even these exhibit a certain measure of outside influence.⁶

The *pièce de résistance* of Hellenization in Judaea, occurred in 175 B.C.E., when the high priest Jason converted Jerusalem into a Greek *polis* replete with *gymnasium* and *ephebeium* (II Macc. 4). Whether this step represents the culmination of a 150-year process of Hellenization in Jerusalem, or whether it was the initiative of only a small coterie of Jerusalem priests with no wider cultural or social ramifications, has been debated for decades.⁷ The answer may well lie somewhere between these two polar positions. In any event, Jason's move constituted a bold step in the city's adaptation to the wider world, a process which would be interrupted—albeit only temporarily—by the persecutions of Antiochus IV and the resultant Maccabean revolt.

A further stage in the Hellenization process took place under Hasmonean rule. The motivation of the Hasmonean revolt has often been misunderstood. It has been contended that this revolt came in protest to the process and progress of Hellenization in Judaea, but this is patently not the case. The Maccabees revolted in response to the persecutions imposed by the king—a most exceptional policy for an enlightened Hellenistic king. It was an extreme measure and was undoubtedly motivated by the most unusual of circumstances, although there is little scholarly agreement as to precisely what these were.⁸ Following their victory, the Hasmoneans themselves quickly adopted Hellenistic mores; they instituted holidays celebrating military victories (Nicanor Day on the 13th of Adar), as did the Greeks; they signed treaties with Rome and forged close alliances with the upper strata of Jerusalem society, whose hellenized proclivities are attested by names such as Alexander, Diodorus, Apollonius, Eupolemus, Antiochus, Numenius, Antiochus, Jason, Antipater, and Aeneas.⁹

Under Hasmonean rule (141–63 B.C.E.), instances of Hellenization within Jerusalem became more commonplace. The document in I Macc. 14, recording the public appointment of Simon as leader, high priest, and *strategos*, is written in a style strikingly reminiscent of documents from the Hellenistic world. The structure of this declaration, the claims put forward to justify and explain this appointment, the use of purple robes and gold ornaments by the Hasmoneans, the dating of an era commencing with Simon's appointment, and, finally, recording the text of this document on bronze tablets and placing them in a prominent place in the Temple area and in the (Temple?) treasury are well-known Hellenistic practices.

Beginning with the second generation, the Hasmoneans began adopting Greek names in addition to their Hebrew ones: John Hyrcanus I (134–104 B.C.E.), Aristobulus I (104–103 B.C.E.), Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 B.C.E.), Salome Alexandra (76–67 B.C.E.), Aristobolus II (67–63 B.C.E.), Hyrcanus II (63–40 B.C.E.), and, finally, Antigonus (40–37 B.C.E.). Hellenization in the Hasmonean court is likewise reflected by the hiring of foreign mercenaries and, more poignantly, by the assumption of royalty by Aristobolus I, Alexander Jannaeus, and Aristobolus II. No less telling in this regard is the sole rule of a queen, Salome Alexandra. Her smooth and unchallenged succession may well have been facilitated by contemporary Ptolemaic practice.

Several burial monuments and graves discovered in Hasmonean Jerusalem similarly reflect a significant appropriation of Hellenistic forms. The two principal remains of such funerary monuments, the priestly Bnei Hezir tomb from the Qidron Valley to the east of the city and Jason's tomb (also probably belonging to a priestly family) to the west (in today's Rehavia neighborhood), were both built in typical Hellenistic fashion—the former with its facade in classic Doric style (columns, pilasters, and frieze), the latter with its single Doric column and pyramid-like monument. Both tombs feature *kukhim* (or loculi, rectangular niches cut perpendicularly into the tomb's wall for primary burials), a burial arrangement which reached Judaea from Alexandria and Palestine's southern coastal region (e.g., Marisa). The tomb of Jason features scenes of merchant- and warships, a gazelle, as well as a series of menorah graffiti. Both of these tombs feature a variety of inscriptions, one in Hebrew in the Bnei Hezir tomb, and Greek and Aramaic ones in Jason's tomb.¹⁰

The tiny bronze coins minted by the Hasmoneans are a fascinating example of the cultural synthesis of Hellenistic and Jewish traditions. The very issuance of coins for economic and political purposes clearly reflects contemporary practice of both established kingdoms and newly-founded political entities seeking recognition and legitimacy. While only inscriptions in ancient Hebrew script (the First Temple precursor of the Aramaic square script introduced into Jewish society in the Persian period) appear on the coinage of Hyrcanus I and

Aristobolus I, Greek inscriptions appear under Alexander Jannaeus. These inscriptions bear the Greek name of the ruler as well as his Greek title, i.e., βασιλεύς; the Hebrew inscriptions, by contrast, bear the ruler's Hebrew name (Yoḥanan, Judah, Jonathan, Mattathias) as well as the title "high priest" or "king." On occasion, these bilingual inscriptions appear on either side of the same coin.¹¹

Moreover, the symbols appearing on these coins were, with rare exception, borrowed from the surrounding Hellenistic world: anchors, cornucopiae, a wheel or star design, and floral representations. However, in this regard the Hasmonean rulers introduced one very unique element: no images of living beings—neither animal nor human—appear on any of their coins. Thus, the artistic and epigraphical components of the coins minted in Jerusalem under Hasmonean auspices reveal a fascinating symbiosis of Jewish and Hellenistic elements, reflecting the desire of the Hasmoneans to live comfortably in both the Hellenistic and Jewish worlds; this is the message they wished to convey via one of the most public vehicles at their disposal. In a similar vein, contemporary Phoenician coins exhibited native symbols together with Phoenician and Greek legends. Hasmonean numismatic evidence is thus significant on two counts: it reflects the vision and policy of those who ruled, while the message contained therein was aimed at the population at large for whom these coins were made.

Other evidence from Hasmonean society, though limited, likewise points in the direction of Jewish and Hellenistic symbiosis. This thrust is reflected, for example, in the archeological finds from the Hasmonean palaces at Jericho. There we find, side by side with the large swimming pool and pavilion, the latter in Doric style and following Hellenistic aristocratic tastes, a series of ritual baths (*miqua'ot*) reflecting the Hasmoneans' priestly commitment to maintain their ritual purity with regularity. Even a book as hostile to the Jewish Hellenizers and their reforms as II Maccabees, written toward the end of the second century B.C.E., reflects a certain ambivalence. II Maccabees was the first to use the terms "Judaism" (2:21; 8:1; 14:38) and "Hellenism" (4:13) as contrasting values and clashing cultural forces. Yet, the book itself was written in Greek, patterned in the tradition of Greek "pathetic" historiography, while borrowing Greek literary motifs in its narratives. This was not the only such case in the literary sphere. At about the same time, the Greek translation of the book of Esther utilized the finest of Greek linguistic and stylistic techniques, especially in the additions to the Hebrew text which focused on particularistic values, emphasizing the chasm between Greek and Jew (i.e., between Haman and Mordecai). It is explicitly stated that this Greek translation was carried out in Jerusalem.

Thus, far from stifling Hellenistic influence, Hasmonean rule was actually

catalytic. To maintain diplomatic relations, support a bureaucracy, build a military force, create a kingdom, and develop its capital, Greek language and ways had to be learned. As Bickerman has aptly remarked with regard to a number of Hellenistic native rulers who took over in the wake of the Seleucid collapse: "Cosmopolitanism was the price of independence."¹²

Herodian Jerusalem and the Process of Hellenization

With the Roman conquest of the East and the subsequent ascension of Herod as king of Judaea, a new era opened for Jerusalem that was marked by a far greater intensity of contact with, and integration into, the surrounding culture. The reasons for this increased contact are threefold. First and foremost was Rome's establishment of an empire whose borders embraced the entire *oikumene*. With control of these areas firmly secured, Rome justifiably boasted of a *pax Romana*, an era which allowed for freedom and security of movement. Internal boundaries essentially disappeared and the flow of traffic, be it of a commercial, social, religious or cultural nature, now became commonplace. As a result, Jerusalem was linked more firmly than ever to a network of urban centers in the Roman East.¹³

A second factor behind Jerusalem's increased international contacts relates to Herod himself. Without a doubt, the most fundamental operative principle of Herod's public policy was the integration of his Judaeian kingdom into the warp and woof of the Roman world. Herod's ability to maintain and strengthen political connections was proven time and again in the course of his 33-year reign.¹⁴ His political loyalty was matched by a fascination with the cultural and social world of his time, both in its Hellenistic and Roman versions. As has been well documented archeologically over the last generation, Herod directed much of his enormous energies to promoting Hellenistic-Roman civilization, in its many ramifications, throughout his kingdom and beyond.

Finally, a third factor which had considerable influence on the cultural milieu of Herodian Jerusalem was linked to the dramatically-expanding Jewish Diaspora.¹⁵ With rare exception, these communities were highly acculturated socially and culturally. Herod actively encouraged the involvement of Diaspora Jewry in the life of Jerusalem. He took the initiative by bringing a number of priestly families to Jerusalem from Egypt and Babylonia. Moreover, his rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple on a monumental scale served not only as a source of inspiration for Jews everywhere, but also as an inducement and attraction for many to visit the city, primarily in the framework of the pilgrimage festivals. Jews from throughout the Diaspora were among the mul-

titudes streaming into the city in the course of the year. One has only to read Acts 2:9–11 to realize the extent of their presence: therein appears a list of places whose languages could be heard on the streets of the city during a festival. The gatherings of pilgrims in Jerusalem appear to have represented a microcosm of the entire Roman world, bringing a wide range of cultures into the city.

Of no less significance to our discussion is the fact that permanent communities of Diaspora Jews were likewise to be found in Jerusalem. The existence of such communities is attested in three sources: rabbinic literature, which takes note of a synagogue of Alexandrians in Jerusalem (T Megillah 2: 17); the Theodotus inscription, which speaks of a Jerusalem synagogue founded by Jews from Rome;¹⁶ and Acts 6:9, which lists a series of Diaspora synagogues in the city established by Jews from Alexandria, Cyrene, Asia, Cilicia, and a synagogue of freedman. The extent of this permanent form of Diaspora presence in the city is unknown but, together with the constant stream of visitors from abroad, their influence on city life and affairs was undoubtedly considerable.

How did the above-noted developments impact on the city, and what impressions might a visitor to Jerusalem have had? Even before entering its walls, one could not help but be struck by the many funerary monuments surrounding the city.¹⁷ As was the case with the earlier Hasmonean period, burial remains from the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E. offer clear evidence of Hellenistic influence. The monuments in the Qidron Valley (the so-called Absalom and Zechariah tombs) are typical Hellenistic monuments that could be found throughout the Roman East. Wealthy Jerusalemites copied the finest examples of Hellenistic architecture when building those tombs, which featured solid square bases, columns, capitals, architraves, and cornices, all conforming to regnant Hellenistic styles. Often these monuments were capped with a *tholos* or pyramid, both ubiquitous architectural elements throughout the East.

Diaspora Jews as well seem to have expended sizable sums of money on funerary monuments in Jerusalem. Nicanor of Alexandria, who contributed a magnificent gate to the Temple, also erected an impressive tomb on the crest of today's Mount Scopus. But what may have been the most magnificent tomb of all was that of Queen Helena of Adiabene and her royal family to the north of the city. Pausanias takes note of this tomb together with that of King Mausolus of Halicarnassus whose mausoleum became one of the seven wonders of the world: "I know many wonderful graves and will mention two of them, the one at Halicarnassus, and one in the land of the Hebrews."¹⁸

Furthermore, the use of stone chests (ossuaries) for secondary burial of

bones first appears in the time of Herod and quickly became the dominant form of secondary burial down to the time of the city's destruction. Why such a practice crystallized in Jerusalem at this time has been a subject of considerable speculation.¹⁹ However, it would appear most plausible, given the date of their appearance and the fact that their use declined precipitously following the year 70, that the use of ossuaries was a product of Roman influence. Romans likewise used small stone boxes, along with the better-known urns, for gathering their ashes following cremation. Although the adoption of such ossuaries by Jews would have required a large measure of adaptation, viewing this Roman practice as the inspiration for the use of ossuaries can best explain the dating of this Jerusalem burial custom. As it first appeared in the Herodian era, it reflects the profound impact Rome was having on the city. It would also explain the timing of this custom's disappearance. Once the city was destroyed, the social and cultural matrix which supported it also disappeared, and the practice then began to sink into oblivion. If this line of reasoning is to be accepted, then the introduction of ossuaries may be construed less as a statement of particular Jewish religious beliefs than as a social convention which the relatively affluent Jerusalemites borrowed from the Romans.

Once in the city itself, our visitor would undoubtedly have been struck by the many similarities between Jerusalem and other Greco-Roman urban centers. The three towers to the north of Herod's palace, the Antonia fortress north of the Temple, public buildings such as the *bouleuterion*, agora, Xystus, as well as the palaces and residences of the wealthy classes in the Upper City, almost always followed Hellenistic-Roman styles.²⁰

Excavations of the city's Jewish Quarter after 1967 offer remarkable evidence of the extent to which this wealthy, oft-priestly, stratum of Jerusalem society imported and adopted the regnant artistic styles and material goods from the surrounding world. Among the most relevant finds in this regard are mosaic floors featuring geometric and floral designs, frescoes often similar to those found at Pompeii (emphasizing architectural designs, colored panels, imitation marble, and architectural and floral motifs), a glass decanter from Sidon, imported western and eastern terra sigillata, fine (or thin-walled) ware, Pompeian red ware, Italian amphorae, and perfume bottles. Herodian society, and this includes the remains from Jericho and Herod's desert fortresses, as well as Jerusalem, was strikingly different from its Hasmonean predecessor in the quantity and quality of imported wares imported into the country. Whereas Hasmonean society had relied primarily on local ware, the Herodian upper classes utilized foreign-made ceramics to a far greater extent. Thus, from this aspect as well, the wealthy residential neighborhoods of the Upper City of Jerusalem and elsewhere were well ensconced in the wider Greco-Roman material culture.²¹

Three major structures in and around the city were erected by Herod as entertainment institutions. In a relatively detailed account, Josephus records the functions of these buildings during the games organized by the king (*Ant.* 15, 267–79). The theater was the setting for dramatic and musical performances, the amphitheater for bloody spectacles between gladiators or animals, or between gladiators and animals, while the hippodrome featured chariot and perhaps foot races. Herod constructed these buildings with the intention of introducing well-known and widespread Greco-Roman institutions into his capital, thereby placing Jerusalem in the cultural forefront along with other major urban centers of the East. No sizable Roman city with any modicum of civic pride would do without one or more of these institutions, much as any respectable modern city would do without a center for the performing arts, museums, or major sports facilities. However, Herod was not content with simply erecting these structures; he also allocated considerable sums of money to promote quadrennial spectacles, to which he invited the foremost athletes and performers of the time.

The pièce de résistance of Herod's building projects in the city was the rebuilding of the Temple. The king's munificence in this regard knew few bounds. He doubled the size of the Temple Mount area, creating the largest *temenos* (sacred precinct) known in the ancient world. Around three sides of this *temenos* he built porticoes, and along the fourth a monumental basilica (royal stoa) measuring well over 250 meters. This basilica was the largest-known building of its kind at the time. In the overall plan of this complex, Herod utilized a recognized Hellenistic model. Similar *temenoi*, with their artificial platforms, porticoes, basilicas, and temples, are known from North Africa, Syria, and Asia Minor, and this type of building, referred to as a *caesareum*, is described by Philo and other Greco-Roman authors of this period. Herod thus adopted this overall model and its components with regard to his showcase Temple.²²

Other aspects of the Temple complex likewise reflect Hellenistic influence. The architectural components of some of these buildings discovered in archaeological excavations conform to regnant Greek traditions; the columns, capitals, basilical plan, lintels, etc. all follow Hellenistic architectural models. There should be nothing particularly revolutionary in such a realization. As noted, Jews have never possessed an architectural tradition of their own, and their buildings borrowed heavily from the architectural and artistic styles in vogue in contemporary society. Solomon's Temple itself had been patterned after a typical Phoenician temple plan.²³

In moving from place to place within Jerusalem, our imaginary visitor would have been struck by his or her ability to communicate linguistically in all parts of the city.²⁴ Although Latin and Hebrew might have been heard at

times, these languages were spoken by only a small minority of the population, the former only by visiting Roman officials and soldiers. Almost everyone in the city spoke either Aramaic or Greek (or both). The latter appears in about 37% of the city's inscriptions and was certainly the preferred language of the city's Diaspora population. The monumental Theodotus inscription from a Jerusalem synagogue, as well as Acts' description of the Hellenist wing of the early church (the term "Hellenist" probably referring to the language of these people as well as their origin), attests to the use of Greek by the foreign-born. Aramaic is evidenced not only in the phrases ascribed to Jesus in the gospels, but also by a series of documents dating from this period (letters, the marriage document [*ketubah*], and several literary works).

Tertullian once asked: "*Quid Athenis et Hierosolymis?*" ("What has Athens in common with Jerusalem?"). On the basis of our examination of the city, its practices, composition, and institutions at the end of the Second Temple period, we would have to answer: a great deal! Jerusalem was affected by Hellenistic and Roman culture as was Athens.

Nevertheless, as in the earlier Hasmonean period, our presumed visitor to the city could not help but be struck at the same time by some significant differences between Jerusalem and other Roman cities. Perhaps one of the most immediate realizations was in the public realm. In contrast to other urban landscapes, Jerusalem was bereft of any figural art.²⁵ The ubiquitous statues of deities, emperors, prominent citizens, and animals which might have graced the streets, plazas and public buildings elsewhere were not to be seen. Although the Jews were not adverse to figural representations in other periods of their history, during these particular centuries, as noted above, there was a general consensus that such depictions were to be eschewed.

The Temple was the one institution which, more than any other, bestowed upon the entire city a distinct Jewish ambience. Not only were its holidays, rituals, and leadership determined by Jewish tradition, but the rhythm of daily life was dictated by the Jewish cycle of holy days and holidays, all of which were focused on the Temple Mount. Symbolic of this preeminence was a stone found at the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount with the inscription בית התקיעה—a place of trumpeting.²⁶ This discovery jibes well with Josephus' account that a priest would announce the onset and conclusion of Sabbaths and holidays by sounding a trumpet from the walls of the Temple Mount (*War* 4, 582). Moreover, leaders of almost all the major sects of first-century Jewish society were wont to meet their students and conduct other affairs in the Temple Mount area.

But the presence of the Temple as a unique Jewish institution was felt on an even wider scale. Given the requirement of ritual purity for everything

connected with its precincts, this concern became part of everyday life for much of the population. One of most salient expressions of this concern was the emergence of a vigorous stone vessel industry. A wide range of everyday utensils (including tables) were created in stone.²⁷ Stone became the preferred medium as it is not susceptible to impurity as is ceramic ware, for example. Although such vessels have been found in almost all Jewish settlements, the largest quantity has turned up in and around Jerusalem. The ever-increasing use of ritual baths (*miqva'ot*) at this time further emphasizes this concern for purity. Not only were such baths located near the entrances to the Temple for those about to enter its precincts, but they became a regular feature among certain sects (e.g., the Essenes), among the priests living in the Upper City, and even in many agricultural installations throughout Judaea whose produce might find its way to the Temple.²⁸ Certain practices that were widespread in the Hellenistic and early Hasmonean periods, such as importing foreign wines, had now disappeared. Almost no Rhodian jar handles have been found in Herodian and post-Herodian Jerusalem.

Conclusion

In measuring the urban dimensions of this interplay between Judaism and Hellenism²⁹—from the material culture, to the institutions, languages, and diverse social and religious practices—the impact of the latter on Jerusalem must be judged as most significant. Indeed, Jerusalem had a great deal in common with its pagan neighbors of the first century. Nevertheless, within the context of this extensive influence, there were many instances when a foreign influence was seriously altered in the process of adaptation to Jewish practice, or were even rejected entirely because they offended Jewish sensibilities. Moreover, as we have seen, there were numerous instances in which strong Hellenistic proclivities existed side by side with distinctly Jewish behavior. Thus, the hippodrome seems to have been located not far from the Temple, and most homes of the wealthy in Jerusalem's Upper City included Hellenistic-Roman decorations alongside their ritual baths. Even Herod himself was careful to avoid figural representations in his palaces and public buildings (at least in Judaea), and he likewise demanded circumcision before allowing female members of his family to marry non-Jews. All these nuances were at play in the city at one and the same time, and in a wide variety of areas in city life. It is thus important to underscore the need for a balanced picture in order to appreciate the totality of this phenomenon.

In short, Jerusalem occupied a most unusual position within Jewish Palestine. On the one hand, it was the most Jewish of all cities, given the presence

of the Temple, the priesthood, and the leadership of almost all sects and religious groups, not to speak of the many religious observances associated specifically with this city. On the other hand, Jerusalem was also the most hellenized of Jewish cities, both in terms of its population, languages, institutions, and general cultural ambience. Jerusalem's Janus-type posture made it a truly remarkable city, for Jewish society in particular and within the larger Roman world in general.

Notes

1. *Hecataeus*: M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1974–84), I, 20–44; Ben-Sira 1:1 and throughout; *Hasidim*: I Macc. 2:42; 7: 12–17.
2. Ezra 9–10; Neh. 13.
3. M Ta'anit 4:2–3; S. Safrai, "Religion in Everyday Life," *The Jewish People in the First Century*, eds. S. Safrai and M. Stern, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1974–76), II, 817–28.
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6. M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1974), I, 107ff.
7. For different views on this question, see E. Bickerman, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees* (New York, 1962), 93–111; V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1961), 117–203.
8. In addition to Bickerman (above, note 7), see Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (above, note 6), 255–309.
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16. R. Riesner, “Synagogues in Jerusalem,” *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, ed. R. Bauckham (Grand Rapids, 1995), 192–200.

17. For a summary of these finds, see H. Geva, “Jerusalem,” *NEAEHL*, II, 747–57; N. Avigad, “The Rock-Carved Facades of the Jerusalem Necropolis,” *IEJ* 1 (1950–51), 96–106; L. Y. Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel* (Jerusalem, 1994), 264–80. See also A. Kloner, “The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period,” Ph.D. dissertation (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1980) (Hebrew).

18. *Description of Greece* 7, 16, 4–5, M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1974–84), II, 196.

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24. On the languages of first century Jerusalem, see, for example, J. A. Fitzmyer, “Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.,” *CBQ* 32 (1970), 501–31; J. N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek? How Much Greek Could the First Jewish Christians Have Known?* (Leiden, 1968); K. Treu, “Die Bedeutung des Griechischen für die Juden im römischen Reich,” *Kairos* 15 (1973), 123–44; Ch. Rabin, “Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century,” *The Jewish People in the First Century* (above, note 3), 1007–39; G. Mussies, “Greek in Palestine and the Diaspora,” *ibid.*, II, 1040–64; T. Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* (Philadelphia, 1984), 46–58; idem, “The Location of Cultures in Second Temple Palestine: The Evidence of Josephus,” *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting* (above, note 16), 1–14; M. Hengel, *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (London, 1989), 7–18;

25. Avi-Yonah, “Jewish Art and Architecture,” *World History of the Jewish People* (above, note 20), 250–63; R. Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel* (Leiden, 1988), 65–119.

26. *NEAEHL*, II, 740.

27. Y. Magen, “Jerusalem as a Center of the Stone Vessel Industry during the Second

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28. D. Amit, "Ritual Baths in Har Hebron—Points of Reference for Reconstructing Jewish Settlement in the Second Temple Period," *Studies on Judaea and Samaria: Proceedings of the Third Congress—1993*, eds. Z. Erlich and Y. Eshel (Qedumim, 1994), 157–89 (Hebrew); idem, "'Jerusalem' Ritual Baths from the Second Temple Period in Har Hebron," *Studies on the Land: Festschrift in Honor of Y. Felix*, eds. Z. Safrai et al. (Ramat Gan, 1997), 35–48 (Hebrew).

29. This subject is presented more elaborately in my *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?* (Seattle, 1998), Chap. II.