

The Destruction of the Temple in 70 CE: Rabbinic Judaism as a New Religious
Movement

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Abstract

The Destruction of the Temple in 70 CE: Rabbinic Judaism as New Religious Movement

Judaism is one of the world's most ancient religions with a rich and varied history. This history is recognizable through the most notable Hebrew Bible stories that tell how great leaders like Moses, Joshua, and Samson spread the word of God to their followers. It was also shaped by the considerable tumult and upheaval that marked the shifts between its eras. Here it is necessary to provide an overview of the historical events that led up to the era that I intend to examine in detail, which is the era following the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 CE. In this thesis, I will argue that Judaism evolved post 70 CE for the first time within a context of a new religious movement and we need to know why this historical shift was different from the others and why it made such an evolution possible. It was not the first disruption Judaism experienced, but the Judaism that emerged followed an evolutionary path much different than in previous historical eras, which were also defined by the upheavals that created them. This is the principal argument of my thesis.

Dedication

To all those who believed in me since the very beginning. A big thanks to Dr. Turcescu who never gave up on me.

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Introduction

Judaism is one of the world's most ancient religions with a rich and varied history. This history is recognizable through the most notable Hebrew Bible stories that tell how great leaders like Moses, Joshua, and Samson spread the word of God to their followers. It was also shaped by the considerable tumult and upheaval that marked the shifts between its eras. Here it is necessary to provide an overview of the historical events that led up to the era that I intend to examine in detail, which is the era following the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 CE. In this thesis, I will argue that Judaism evolved post 70 CE for the first time within a context of a new religious movement and we need to know why this historical shift was different from the others and why it made such an evolution possible. It was not the first disruption Judaism experienced, but the Judaism that emerged followed an evolutionary path much different than in previous historical eras, which were also defined by the upheavals that created them. This is the principal argument of my thesis.

Judaism changed substantially from the religion practiced during the time of the first temple of Jerusalem, which was built by King Solomon around 950 BCE. The temple was the essential place of worship for the ancient Israelites as well as their seat of government, where all forms of administration was based, law was created, politics was conducted, and decisions related to them made. After an eventful period, the temple was destroyed in 586 BCE by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II after Israelite King Zedekiah, the puppet ruler he installed to govern Jerusalem, rebelled against him. It was a harsh punishment that eventually paved the way for building of the Second Temple. Very few Jews could remain in Jerusalem, while others

moved away to Egypt, and many were taken prisoners by the Babylonians. These were the consequences of the failed rebellion.

Eventually Babylon fell to the Persian Empire and the Persian Emperor Cyrus the Great decided to lift the ban on Jews and other exiled people living across the land. This meant that in 530 BCE the Jews were free to go back to their homeland and rebuild their city and more importantly their temple. Eventually Cyrus the Great passed away and his legacy continued with his son Darius the Great who allowed the construction of the temple to continue. The temple was finished by the spring of 516 BC and thus began a new era known as the Second Temple Judaism.

A common theme in the growth of culture is evolution, and although the heritage and nature of Judaism were evolving as the significant events around temple destruction occurred and time passed, there were several similarities in the pre- and post-586 eras, as Seth Schwartz notes in his book *Imperialism and Jewish Society from 200 BCE to 630 CE*:

I assume that the Israelite religion, as practiced before the destruction of the kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians in 586 BCE was distinct from the religion practiced by the Israelites' putative descendants, the Jews, in the Second Temple Period. The Israelites, to be sure, worshipped Yahweh, whose cult was then, as later, centred in Jerusalem, and they seem to have shared many practices with the Jews. For example, males seem to have been circumcised, pigs were rarely consumed, and mourning rituals seem to have included fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. . . . Most importantly, perhaps, there is no evidence that the Israelites possessed a single authoritative "Torah" that bore any resemblance to the Pentateuch.¹

After the destruction of the temple of Solomon, the new form of Judaism that was created eventually evolved into the tradition that will be eventually referred to as Second Temple Judaism. Schwartz goes as far as calling it the ancient Israelite religion as opposed to ancient Judaism. Then came the ancient form of Palestinian Judaism which took shape during the era of

¹ Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 20-21.

the Second Temple. The goal of this thesis is not to discuss the differences between the religious and political forms that existed during the Temple of Solomon compared to the era of the Second Temple but to discuss the theological and political changes that occurred after the Second Temple was destroyed at the hands of the Romans in 70 CE. After this event, Judaism underwent drastic changes which I will argue were necessary to its survival. The thesis will focus on the how and why this occurred and what it meant for the Jews going forward.

The Second Temple that replaced Solomon's temple lasted until its destruction at the hands of the Romans at the end of the Jewish War that took place between 66-70 CE. Thereafter, Judaism became a religion that was quite different from the one that was practiced during the time of Solomon and the Second Temple period. It was an interesting time as Judaism and Christianity were parting ways with one another and discovering what paths lay ahead for each of them. It had only been about 40 years since Jesus Christ was crucified, an event which started what initially appeared to be just another sect of Judaism, the Jesus Movement. Other branches of Judaism had also come into being: Rabbinic Judaism, which evolved from the old Pharisaic movement, Hellenistic Judaism, which was embraced by the Hellenistic Jews from Alexandria who could not read Hebrew anymore but had the Torah translated into Greek as the Septuagint, and the rather mysterious apocalyptic Judaism which developed in the communities around the Dead Sea in Israel and which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. At the time Christianity was regarded as what we would call today a New Religions Movement (NRM), but due to the complex nature and system of religion and law during the Second Temple, I submit and will argue that Judaism, after the destruction of the Temple, became an NRM as well.

During the Second Temple period, religious and political life was administered through the temple. The fundamental aspects of religious and social life at the time, such as governing

and dispute resolution in court, constituted the everyday functions of the temple. The Temple of Jerusalem was the symbol of the city and the entirety of Jewish culture and religion revolved around it. Seth Schwartz writes in his book that Judaism had three pillars:

[The] three pillars of ancient Judaism [were] the one God, the one Torah, and the one Temple... God-Torah-Temple, was symbolically central in Palestinian Judaism of the first century. If many or most Palestinian Jews had been asked what it was that made them what they were, they would have likely answered that it was the worship of their one God, in the one Temple of Jerusalem, in accordance with the laws of his Torah.²

From this text we understand how important the temple was to the Palestinian Jews. Essentially, it was the closest they could ever be to God and it was the one aspect which they were willing to die for, which they in fact later did during their war with the mighty Roman Empire.

Profound changes often happen in a society when a terrible or life-changing event occurs and for the Palestinian Jews, that event was the destruction of the Second Temple. The Romans marched in and annihilated the city, enslaved 700 000 Palestinian Jews, and sacked and destroyed the temple. Such devastating actions could result in the end of a culture and society, but what happened in this case is the event that forms one of my central topics of study. Instead of dying out, Judaism became a NRM (New Religious Movement).

In his book *Comprehending Cults*, Lorne L. Dawson writes that NRMs are a response to cultural change and an expression of cultural continuity³. If we are to take this literally, the correlation between the Palestinian Jews and cultural change happened quickly. The temple was destroyed and most of the population was either enslaved or killed. With no Temple and the

² Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 50-51.

³ Lorne L Dawson, *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*. (Toronto: Oxford University Press Canada, 1998), 39.

main interpreters of the Torah (priests, rabbis and Pharisees) taking a step back from their previous active role, Judaism had to rediscover itself and transform into a new religion.

This thesis will focus on the new form of Judaism which came into existence after the destruction of the Temple. It will examine how it became a New Religious Movement that stemmed from old Judaism and how it survived against two existential threats: an empire that destroyed its main cultural and religious centre, and a growing Jesus movement that was absorbing more and more traditional Jews into its fold.

Why did Judaism change after the Jewish War? What was next for the ancient culture that was almost destroyed and obliterated by the Roman army? Judaism was a complex way of life that amalgamated dogmatic practice and social law. The study of post-70 CE Judaism involves also studying another history, since the story of the Roman occupation in Israel is another important factor in Judaism's evolution. The Romans held the Jews in high regard as they were deemed an ancient culture that was empowered by wisdom and virtue.⁴ What changed that made the Romans want to destroy Judaism? Another unique development that occurred in this era was the birth of the Jesus movement. The strange group of people who made up this movement initially were not Christians, but Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah. In the Book of Acts 2:46-47, the early Christians were said to be at the Temple and continued with their previous traditions, but with the belief that the Messiah had come. Though they were not considered Christians yet, this was probably the earliest form of Christianity. According to the New Testament Book of Acts, "Every day they [the followers of Jesus] continued to meet

⁴ Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 122.

together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”⁵

This is an important point because one of the ways I will support classifying Judaism as an NRM is by showing the emergence of the Jesus movement as an example of how ancient Jews embodied NRM traits. Following this, it will be necessary to answer the question: was there an evolution in the Jewish religion and society following the destruction of the temple in 70 CE? If yes, how would Judaism adapt and transform after in the absence of the Temple? Judaism was entering a new era and change was needed, because with the temple went the existence of that central nerve system that controlled legal and religious jurisprudence. What stayed and continued to give the Jews an identity was the law, and that is what carried them into the new era.

History is the subject that continues to grow and evolve every single day; it is one of the most fascinating areas of study. The great Roman orator and philosopher Cicero once said “Tell me a man’s past and I shall tell you his future.” This statement applied to a whole civilization, such as Judaism, means that in my thesis I need to understand the history of Judaism in order to decipher why it changed so drastically after the destruction of the Second Temple. It is also the task of the historian. History provides numerous clues and the goal of the researcher is to solve the puzzle by putting all these pieces together. Jewish-Roman history has a plethora of material and much of it focuses on the relations between the two groups, Jews and Romans, and why the war happened but in between all that material we can draw out information to study how Judaism changed after 70 CE.

⁵ NRSV Bible, Acts 2: 46-47.

To gain an understanding of the subject matter and to fully quantify all the information available I will apply the social scientific theory of New Religious Movements to the study of Judaism. It is essential to use this theory to understand the actions of the Jews and others associated with them as I come to see how Judaism survived its near destruction at the hands of the Roman Empire. Along with survival we can see how they persevered and continued to live on as a very powerful religion for centuries after. Lorne Dawson states that a change in values happens when people migrate away from the old and come to follow a new religion. He then states that during the mid-1970s, NRMs were responding to a pervasive crisis in moral certainty among North Americans.⁶

NRMs are best conceived as “successor movements” to the political protest and cultural experimentations that flourished amongst the youth of the sixties. This was the decade of counterculture, in which the established order of life and power in society was fundamentally challenged in two ways: by relatively organized movements struggling for political change, and by more amorphous movements of lifestyle experimentation.⁷

When the destruction of the temple happened, all faith and hope faded away with the “old guard.” If we apply the theory Dawson stated in his book it can be paralleled with Judaism after the destruction of the temple, because it literally was a successor movement.

When considering the post-70 CE Judaism in its historical, political, and social contexts, one gets an understanding that a successor movement was in fact happening. As stated previously, the order that ruled was God-Temple-Torah. All three worked in harmony, but after the year 70, the temple of God was no longer there and Jews needed to figure out a new political structure with which to live and carry forward with their religious traditions. Judaism as a religion continued in three different forms that we need to examine. Understanding each along

⁶ Dawson, *Comprehending Cults*, 40.

⁷ Ibid

with their respective agenda will be decisive to my research into Judaism and the NRM model:
The Rabbinic Tradition, the Diaspora Judaism, and the Jesus Movement.

Judaism is a long and storied tradition and major changes have occurred throughout its history. Rabbinic Judaism, which stemmed as a New Religious Movement from the ashes of the Second Temple, was the last fundamental change to happen. Going forward with this thesis we shall discover the origins of the movement and the history behind the evolution of Judaism which ultimately lead to Rabbinic Judaism.

Chapter 1:

From Solomon's Temple to the Second Temple: A Societal Analysis

The Ancient Israelite religion was the precursor to what we now refer to as Second Temple Judaism and later Rabbinic Judaism. As scholar Seth Schwartz writes in his book *Imperialism and Jewish Society from 200 BCE to 640 CE*, “the Ancient Israelite Religion was distinct from the religion practiced by the Israelites’ putative descendants, the Jews, in the Second Temple period.”⁸

Judaism went through various changes throughout history and to understand why it became a New Religious Movement after the destruction of the Second Temple, we must first understand its beginnings and why it was different from the time of the Temple of Solomon. Based on the NRM methodology, it can be argued that Second Temple Judaism was an NRM of its own after the destruction of Solomon's Temple. The purpose of this chapter is to deconstruct and analyze differences between the Temple of Solomon (or the First Temple) and the Second Temple, and then to fully explain what Second Temple Judaism was about. Subsequent chapters of this thesis will expand this discussion to modern Rabbinic Judaism, which will be analyzed and integrated into the argument of how Judaism became an NRM after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE at the hands of the Romans.

Palestine/Israel has been a desirable land throughout history and today it is a sacred place for all three Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Of the three faiths, Judaism was established first, but the land was defined by a volatile history that preceded the Jewish religion. Abram Leon Sachar presents this description of it in his book *The History of the Jews*:

⁸ Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 19.

Yet it [the land] never had outward physical beauty or grace to recommend it. By comparison with the luxuriant Egypt and Babylon it was mean and humble indeed. Its few fertile areas were but oases in long reaches of barren hills and mountain ridges ...So [the various migratory groups] came in hordes, throwing themselves against the country, were repelled, they tried again or sent forth others. Some were doubtless mere vandals who killed and burnt and pillaged as they raided.⁹

The land of Palestine has been a place which people and civilizations have fought over as far back as historical records exist. However, it was not solely defined by frequent violence, as sophisticated trade networks and agricultural practices were developed in the territory early on, due to its advantageous geographic location. Many important trade routes passed from Babylon to Egypt, and even to the unknown land of the West. In other words, there was more to ancient Palestine than barbarous warfare, because it contained the strategic assets that caused the actual warfare. These were the reasons conquerors wanted to acquire this very important piece of land.¹⁰

Understanding the nature of Palestine's importance is necessary to appreciate why it was fought over for so many millennia, both before the arrival of the Israelites and after. If the fighting was not for religious purposes, as it often was in later eras, the importance of the land for trade and commerce always loomed large. Amidst this activity, the relevant question for this analysis becomes, when did the Hebrews enter Palestine and what brought them there? The biblical explanation is that it was given to them by God, and in the Bible, Yahweh orders Abraham to leave Mesopotamia to the Hebrews fighting for their land. There is historical evidence that the Hebrews entered the land and settled as a normal people would be expected to.

The first Hebrews who penetrated into Palestine were not, of course, rude savages descending suddenly, like a plague of locusts, upon a well-ordered country. The transition from the nomadic stage was not usually precipitous. Many of the nomadic tribes had lived for long periods in settled areas before breaking camp and moving on.¹¹

⁹ Abram Leon Sachar, *A History of the Jews*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 7.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Sachar, *History of the Jews*, 25.

The Hebrews therefore were not aboriginals to the land but vagrants who eventually made their way to Palestine. Other tribes had already been living there before the Jews set up their kingdom. How they got there is ultimately left to the individual's imagination: was it by the grace of God or was it by coincidence that they settled on this location while moving from place to place?

Before the Temple of Solomon existed, there was a process by which the Israelites became unified in their belief and organized as a culture. The ancient Israelite religion was the precursor to the Judaism, but what came before that? Scholars have discovered that the Ancient Israelites were nomadic peoples of different tribes who settled into the land of Palestine. Once they were there, enough religious cohesion existed between them to lead to a crude alliance. The unification came from the common Yahweh cult that they shared which formed the basis for political cohesion and tribal alliance.¹² The ancient tribes of Israel all banded together through belief in Yahweh, but at the same time there was no central sanctuary where they could have formed a common cultic centre for all of Israel. There existed multiple sanctuaries around Israel that each tribe had access to. Albertz writes in his work that as per the Martin Noth Theory, one central sanctuary did exist, but it was constantly on the move and had no set place.¹³

Cultic autonomy went with the political independence, and the distinctive Yahweh cult assured a tribal group its independence, along with loose membership of the alliance generally. Thus, at this time cultic decentralization also went with political decentralization.¹⁴

¹²Rainer Albertz, *A History of the Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period Volume 1: From the Beginnings to the End of the Monarchy*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox, 1994.), 82.

¹³ Ibid, 83.

¹⁴ Ibid.

The tribes were united by the Yahweh cult, but at the same time they were not a unified group. They would have been a stronger power in the region had they become unified, but like many forms of evolution, the unification process took time. Albertz writes that one main factor behind unification was the sharing of three different festivals that all tribes celebrated together. The first was the Feast of Mazzoth (Unleavened Bread) that was celebrated in March/April but also coincided with the beginning of the grain harvest, then came the Feast of Weeks seven weeks later. This was centred around the harvesting of the wheat. Finally, there was the Feast of Tabernacles, which was celebrated in September/October and commemorated the harvesting of Fruit and Grapes.¹⁵

The three festivals were originally agricultural festivals; they were ritual accompaniments to the harvest and served primarily to secure the powers of the blessing for the land and to express joy and gratitude for the produce that had grown and been gathered in... The communal festivals in the regular annual cycle certainly made an essential contribution towards encouraging local and regional solidarity in the Israelite tribal alliance.¹⁶

The Festivals served to unite the tribes to a certain extent, but they preceded something greater. Eventually, the tribes of Israel fought wars with their surrounding neighbors, the Philistines, and assimilated the cult of Baal into their own. The main protagonist in these events was Saul. He created the original Hebrew Monarchy, but it was David who cemented the legacy and made Jerusalem the capital city.

With his act of consecration began the romantic history of Jerusalem, now the religious and civil centre of the State, the physical symbol of Hebrew unity. Pilgrims in holiday garb, bearing presents, later flocked to its sacred shrines; merchants filled its bazaars and market places. Sentiment glorified the scenes until they furnished inspiration to countless generations of patriots and singers. And the brigand David, who founded the city, became in the eyes of the future, a pious religious leader, a favourite son of Yahweh.¹⁷

¹⁵ Albertz, *A History Vol I*, 89.

¹⁶ Albertz, *A History Vol I*, 91.

¹⁷ Sachar, *History of the Jews*, 35.

Succeeding David was his son, Solomon. It was he who built the first temple and started the legacy of temples to Yahweh. Contrary to his father, who was more concerned with expanding the territory of Israel through conquest and means of assimilation, Solomon's approach toward shaping the kingdom focused more on perfecting what was already in place. He wanted to make Israel and Jerusalem the most monumental of places.¹⁸ Though his reign was punctuated by many negative developments, Solomon built a city and a kingdom which his people were proud of, and it was these exploits which began the era of temple worship.

The history of the Ancient Israelites was one of tribal cohesion and some cultic belief. Once a central capital and religion were introduced, an organized structure to the culture and religion finally took shape. David believed it necessary to go out and conquer lands that would bring riches and glory to his people. Solomon, while eschewing conquest, consolidated what existed in place. With the events that led to the Israelites coming to Israel now summarized, I will now undertake an examination of what differentiated the Temple of Solomon from the Second Temple.

The Ancient Israelites possessed a different culture from that of the Jews of the Second temple. Although they did share some traditions, there were the key differences. The Jews of the Second temple already had an established home. Even though a portion of the population was banished at the hands of the Babylonians, the Temple which represented the house of God was still in Jerusalem. That is one significant difference between the two cultures. The Ancient Israelites were always nomadic until they finally settled down in Jerusalem with the monarchy, while the Jews of the Second temple were established in their homeland. This created, for the first time, the concept of a national identity but not in the sense of a modern nation, and as such

¹⁸ Sachar, *History of the Jews*, 39.

the Jews of the Second Temple represented a birth of a nation. In commenting on practice on the First Temple Schwartz writes,

The Israelites, to be sure, worshipped Yahweh, whose cult was then, as later, centred in Jerusalem, and they seem to have shared other practices with the Jews. For example, males seem to have been circumcised, pigs were rarely consumed, and mourning rituals seem to have included fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.¹⁹

The commonalities between the two cultures remained consistent, as these were traditions passed down to the Israelites/Jews from the covenant of Abraham with God. While many traditions changed, it is interesting to note that the oldest shared traditions between the two cultures are still practiced up to the present day like circumcision, abstention from pork, and fasting during festivals.

But on the whole, except for brief periods of pietistic reform, most Israelites were not henotheists, and they may not have known many characteristic biblical observances, such as the festivals of Passover and Sukkot, allegedly instituted either by the reformist king Josiah shortly before the Babylonian conquest or by Ezra or Nehemiah, in the fifth century.²⁰

The ancient Israelites had that set of festivals that united them in the early beginnings but the later festivals were not mentioned or celebrated in their history. This is another of the key difference. Some of the most important festivals in later Jewish tradition came after the time of the Temple of Solomon.

Some traditions that were practiced by the ancient people were, in fact, forbidden by the Pentateuch. On the Ancient Israelites, Schwartz notes that their rituals seem often to have included practices forbidden by the Pentateuch, such as skin cutting, a mourning custom. Most importantly, perhaps, there is no evidence that the Israelites possessed a single authoritative “Torah” that bore any resemblance to the Pentateuch.²¹ The fact that the Torah did not exist is a

¹⁹ Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 20.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

critical difference, as the Torah was one of the three pillars of Second Temple Judaism and represented the law handed down to Moses by God himself.

The Temple of Solomon was the main place to worship Yahweh. The temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, which is the culmination of what happened, before the eventual rebellion against them. An understanding of this series of events is necessary to give context to the demise of the temple. There was an internal conflict in the kingdom of Jerusalem that originated after Solomon's reign and this was, in effect, the first domino piece in a succession of events that would lead to the eventual destruction of Solomon's temple.

Solomon's reign (970-931 BCE) was not threatened by revolution against him. He had earned a reputation among his subjects as a strong king with little patience for insolence and betrayal. One revolt did happen during his reign, which was led by Jeroboam and quickly quashed. All detractors had decided to turn their thoughts of rebellion and revolution into loyalty and honor.²² Even though Solomon experienced some financial turmoil and other small hardships which were not well-known about during his reign, he commanded respect and loyalty from his people. He was a man of power and wisdom who was also cunning, ruthless, and vengeful to anyone who betrayed him. The same could not be said of his son Rehoboam, who inherited his father's wicked temper but lacked his visionary spirit. Rehoboam was not as apt at making strategic decisions; he lacked Solomon's wisdom and his councillors did not make up for his shortcomings, as they were as arrogant and dishonest as he was.²³ History has not judged Rehoboam kindly because he was a failed leader. A major strategic blunder sealed his fate. When he went to meet the northern tribes of Jerusalem, attempting to make a formal allegiance with them, they asked the new king for a reduction in taxes and to put an end to forced labour.

²² Sachar, *History of the Jews*, 43.

²³ *Ibid*

Rehoboam's refusal was viewed as an insult, and the leaders of the tribes did not take his response lightly. He left the northern kingdom in a hurry and when he eventually did return to Jerusalem, he found out that Judah and Benjamin were the only two tribes still loyal to him.²⁴

Such a chronic misstep never occurred during the time of Solomon and the loss of his subjects' fealty was never a possibility. The days of a stable kingdom were gone with Rehoboam's mismanagement, and Jerusalem had officially entered its decline. What followed was two centuries of political and legal turmoil, nine dynasties, and nineteen kings who shed blood trying to capture the throne, followed by more revolution and assassination.

As a kingdom in turmoil that was conquered in turn by the Assyrians and then later the Babylonians, Jerusalem and the temple were entering the final stages of their life during the era of the ancient Israelite religion. Jerusalem under Assyria prospered and experienced stability once again. Imports were welcomed and trade flourished. However, the situation did not last as the kingdom was now under the rule of external powers and was a pawn in their game of jockeying for position. When the once mighty Assyria fell at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, the calm ended. Jerusalem was not loyal to the new King, and he promptly marched into Jerusalem, sacked the city, and did exactly what the Assyrians did when they conquered, which is reduce the dynamism of the population by removing all its most important elements such as intellectuals, priests, warriors, artisans, craftsman. The rest were left with the king Zedekiah.²⁵

During the pillage, the Temple of Solomon was destroyed. It would only be rebuilt when the Babylonian empire fell into the hands of the Persians, who allowed the banished people back into Jerusalem and provided funds to begin reconstruction of the Temple to Yahweh. This began the new era of Second Temple Judaism.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Sachar, *History of the Jews*, 59.

God-Temple-Torah: Second Temple Judaism

Second Temple Judaism represented the dawn of a new era for the Jews of Palestine, as they had now experienced life under different external masters who, for better or for worse, shaped the quality of their existence. To that end, the Persians and their emperors were much kinder than the previous rulers from Assyria and Babylonia. Many Jews were allowed back into Jerusalem and to practice their religion freely. Most importantly, the Temple was to be rebuilt. In this chapter, the cultures and traditions of Second Temple Judaism, the history and theology behind it, and the way society functioned during that era will all be examined. This will allow the reader to understand the changes that happened from the Second Temple to Rabbinic Judaism.

Second Temple Judaism was a critical time in the development and establishment of Israel's contribution to world history. Jeff S. Anderson remarks on the significance of this time to Israel in his book:

The Period in which second Jewish Temple Flourished (515 BCE- 70 CE) was one of the most prolific and creative in all of Israel's history. It was a time of unparalleled literary and theological diversity. Rather than posing a rigid comparison between biblical Israel and post-exilic Judaism, it is now recognized that numerous socio-religious communities during this era envisioned themselves as the sole legitimate expression of post-classical Israel²⁶

This era set the pace and tone for the evolution of modern-day Judaism and created the fertile ground for Rabbinic Judaism, as well as other successful sects that emerged after the destruction of the second temple. The history of Second Temple Judaism is the series of events around which the focal points that form the subject matter of this thesis revolve. An in-depth

²⁶ Jeff S Anderson, *The Internal Diversification of Second Temple Judaism: An Introduction to the Second Temple Period*. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), 1-2.

survey of Second Temple Judaism is now required from three angles: the historical context, the theological context, and the communal context, to demonstrate how all three played pivotal roles in the development of Second Temple Judaism, and ultimately led the way for Rabbinic Judaism to develop thereafter.

Second Temple Judaism as an NRM?

The goal of this section is to establish that Second Temple Judaism itself was an NRM after the destruction of the Temple of Solomon at the hands of the Babylonians. Although the sources subject focus on Rabbinic Judaism as an NRM after Second Temple, I will demonstrate that the methodology applied to the later version of Judaism can also be applied from the succession of forms Judaism took from the Temple of Solomon to the Second Temple. In his book *Comprehending Cults*, Lorne Dawson writes that many variables lead people to join new religious movements. Having previously outlined the major changes Judaism underwent from the Ancient Israelite religion to Second Temple Judaism, during which it essentially forged its sense of identity, this is an appropriate juncture to bring in Dawson's work. Dawson argues that NRMs are "successor movements" driven forward by the mistakes and failures of past political movements and religions.²⁷ Scholars now agree that the people that lived during the Temple of Solomon were called the people of the Ancient Israelite Religion or the Yahwistic Religion. Second Temple Judaism established the core of what could be called "Jewishness" with traditions and holidays, and new anchors of the faith in one main Torah and a new Temple. All this, being new, signified a fresh start with God. Some may even conclude that it was a different religion altogether that happened to share some of the same values of the old. While the changes

²⁷ Dawson, *Comprehending Cults*, 40.

were significant, it does not diminish the fact the Second Temple Judaism's genesis still stemmed from the Ancient Israelite Yahwistic Cult.

The Temple was rebuilt in the year 515 BCE. It was a touchstone event to the people of Israel as the symbol of their city and culture was reborn. Many Jews lost their homeland during the years of the Diaspora. The Second Temple reaffirmed them as the chosen people of their god. The rebuilding signified the return of their place of worship and consequently, their identity. Schiffman writes that “the restoration allowed Israel to continue its ancestral worship of God in the way prescribed by its ancient literature. More importantly, it established the biblical sacrificial system as the dominant pattern of worship for the entire Second Temple period.”²⁸ National identity, rooted in the legitimacy of the set of rules that allowed the people to pray and worship their god, was restored.

During the time Jews spent in Babylon , the world was changing significantly. Empires were at war and people were constantly on the move. Instability and shiftlessness defined this ancient world. However, these destabilizing forces also, over time, enriched cultures, including the Israelites. By encountering different civilizations, inter-marriage occurred, as did the exchanging of ideas and the cross-pollination of their religion with the influences of religious content from other religions. It was inevitable that easy contact with the heathen world should encourage a latitudinarian spirit in Jewish life.²⁹ Amid this cultural upheaval, the Torah was an indispensable tool for religious leaders to preserve the identity of their people. To them, the law of God was to be strictly observed and Israel was to remain a separate people. They fought every attempt at compromise. They were the ones who ensured that, after the fifth century, Israel

²⁸ Laurence H. Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism*. (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Pub. House, 1991), 44.

²⁹ Sachar, *History of the Jews*, 87.

accepted complete dependence on the Torah as the guide of life.³⁰ The Torah was the rule book that taught the Israelites how to live the perfect life to be closer to God. It became what guided their everyday life.

The Torah and Temple were the two most important symbols of the Second Temple period. They shared the commonality of being divinely inspired. The Temple was the house of God and his sanctuary of worship, and the Torah was the Law of Moses which was passed down to him by God. He was the supreme ruler of Israel.

A Brief History of the Second Temple Era

The history of the Second Temple Era is dense and eventful (515 BCE- 70CE). While an extensive summary of this era would be helpful for the purposes of the comparison being done, it is beyond this thesis' scope. For the clarity of this paper, three major events that shaped Second Temple Judaism will be brought into focus. There are three major historical periods during Second Temple Judaism: the Persian rule, the time of Alexander and Hellenism/Maccabean Revolt, and the Roman domination of Judea. All three periods shaped Judaism in a different way. The first one, the Persian era, is argued by some scholars to be the most important.

The Persian Era began when Cyrus the Great, Emperor of Persia conquered Babylon and created the Persian Empire. The Persians, like the Babylonians, have a rich history which features many wars with the ancient Greeks, who in time would also have an influence on Jewish history. While the Persian Era was a fertile period for scholarly and creative activities, much remains unknown about the time due to how far back it is in history, as Lester L. Grabbe writes:

Some scholars have argued that the Persian Period was one of the most productive for Hebrew literature. During these two centuries, earlier Israelite literature and traditions were edited and others were written, or many scholars think; if they are right, this is one of the most prolific times

³⁰ Ibid

in Jewish literary activity. The difficulty is that this is a very obscure period in the history of the Jews.³¹

The Persian Era produced two books, Ezra and Nehemiah, which purport to describe the Jews of the time. Numerous edits of the Hebrew Bible were also undertaken.³² Not much other concrete information is known, but a sense is gained from the existing literature that slowly but surely Judaism was coming back to its anchor and centre of gravity around Jerusalem. The war between Persia and Babylon did not physically have an effect on Judah. Though Judah was linked to Persia, the battles happened elsewhere, so the population and structures of Jerusalem were essentially left unscathed. Over the next few decades, banished Jews were permitted to re-enter Jerusalem, the Temple was rebuilt, and Nehemiah returned and rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.³³

Cyrus the Great was the Persian ruler who allowed the Jews to return home and to rebuild the Temple, and his mention in the Book of Ezra is of interest. The writer describes how God's spirit had "infiltrated" Cyrus and had engendered in him the notion to allow the Jews to rebuilt their temple:

In the first year of King Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put in writing: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah."³⁴

The Jewish writers held Cyrus in very high regard, as he essentially saved their religion and culture from annihilation at the hands of the Babylonians. To be put into the same

³¹ Lester L. Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism: History and Religion of the Jews in the Time of Nehemiah, the Maccabees, Hillel and Jesus*. (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 3.

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

³⁴ The Bible, Ezra 1:1-4.

conversation as God, however, and described as being touched by his spirit gave him a unique place in history as a non-Israelite, as Jeff S. Anderson writes in his book:

The Biblical text depicts Yahweh directly inspiring Cyrus' policies of religious autonomy (Isa 45:1-7). In fact, Cyrus is directly referred to as Messiah, the only place in the Hebrew Bible where this specific term is used of a non-Israelite.³⁵

He also hazards that Cyrus may have been a monotheist, but because there is no record of his personal beliefs, that is speculation. Whatever Cyrus believed, the high esteem he was held in by the authors of the Hebrew scriptures cannot be overstated. In the Jewish tradition, the Messiah would be an anointed king and savior. In practical terms, for many Jews of that era, Cyrus effectively met those saviour criteria, since they knew that they probably would not exist without him. With the era of Cyrus finished, their Persian saving grace behind them, the Jews entered the second historical period important for this thesis, the age of Alexander the Great and Hellenism.

Alexander the Great and Hellenism

Hellenization of the known world happened when Alexander the Great embarked on his nine-year conquest for territory. He first conquered Persia (330 BCE), which gave him all the territories of the once great empire, putting Jerusalem under Hellenistic rule. This was another watershed event in Jewish history, because it led to the birth of Hellenistic Judaism. Hellenistic Judaism was a new branch of the religion, with its capital in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, home to a large Jewish population. This section will only highlight this period briefly, as the

³⁵ Anderson, *The Internal Diversification*, 14

complexity of this matter consumes entire historical volumes and its mention is only needed here to highlight historical context.

To understand what happened during this era, we must define what Hellenism and Hellenization are. Hellenism is “a body of humanistic and classical ideals associated with ancient Greece and including reason, the pursuit of knowledge and the arts, moderation, civic responsibility, and bodily development.”³⁶ Hellenization can be divided into political and cultural components. The political component is best illustrated by governance during the conquests of Alexander the Great. When Alexander conquered a territory, he replaced the native king with himself as the ruler of the land or territory. He did not, however, change local customs, traditions, languages, or religion. The imperial court would be Greek, and some modifications to the administrative structure would be implemented, but no major changes to the governance in place would be effected. Alexander did not want to replace systems that existed for centuries or even millennia.³⁷ He made the strategic calculation that changing an entire system that had already been in place for so long would not have been an ideal start to his rule. Deciding to incorporate some Greek culture into the already existing Oriental culture proved to be a stroke of genius whose success subsequent generations of rulers would mimic, most notably the Romans who carried forth the spread of Hellenization, or their own version of it which became known as Romanization. The second aspect of Hellenization was the cultural component. The same policy of changing the political structure was implemented in the cultural sphere. Alexander brought in and amalgamated Greek culture with that of the Orient. As Grabbe points out,

Some regions and institutions were almost purely Greek while others remained unadulteratedly native, not to mention mixtures of various sorts. The balance of the different elements was not static, however, but constantly changing and developing. Thus, Hellenistic culture can be

³⁶ Merriam-Webster Online, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Hellenism>.

³⁷ Lester L. Grabbe, "Hellenistic Judaism." In *Judaism in Late Antiquity Part Two: Historical Syntheses*, 53-84. (Leiden-New York- Koln: Brill, 1995), 54.

adequately described only as a process. A third sense concerns the individual, focusing on the measure to which specific Greek practices were adopted or conformed to.³⁸

Alexander's subjects incorporated varying elements of his program, as people existing across a political spectrum would. The people could preserve their identity, and incorporated or followed Hellenism to the degree it made sense to them. While this policy of considerable latitude likely maintained the peace in Alexander's empire, the Greek addition to the conquered populations' lives was nevertheless a constant reminder of who their ruler was. Alexander's Hellenization policies spread to all parts of his empire, so Jews living under his rule were also affected by it. His influence was cultural and linguistic, with many ancient Jewish writings, including the Torah, being transcribed into Greek, which came to be known in Greek as the Septuagint. This literal translation of the original Hebrew Bible began around the year 270 BCE, stayed faithful to the characteristics of the original.³⁹ The geographic character of the Jewish population was influenced by Hellenization as well. More Jews were living in Greek areas, most notably Alexandria with its native Greek speakers. This was how Hellenistic Judaism was born.

This era was followed by one of the most important events in Jewish history, the Maccabean Revolt, about 150 years later. This event happened in 167-160 BCE, long after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, when his empire had already been split into four small empires by his Generals. Egypt was given to Ptolemy, Greece to the Antigonids, Persia to the Seleucids, and Anatolia to the Attalids. Jerusalem fell under the rule of the Seleucid dynasty whose kings were all named Seleucus or Antiochus. For Jerusalem, the name Antiochus IV is one that will forever live in infamy, as he ruled in a coercive and oppressive way:

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

Antiochus' policy of obliterating Yahwism proscribed most of the religious practices that defined Judaism. The Sabbath, Scriptures, sacrifice to Yahweh, circumcision, and the Jewish Festivals were all forbidden.⁴⁰

A successful rebellion was led by an older Priest named Mattathias and his five sons, who are called the Maccabees (or hammer). After a long battle against the Seleucids, Judah, one of the sons of the by then deceased Mattathias, defeated the Syrians and gained political independence for the Jews (142 BCE). He reinstated all the customs and traditions that were abolished prior to the war.⁴¹ I will now mention only briefly the third important historical period for Jewish history, the period of Roman occupation, since it will be discussed at length in chapter two.

The Roman World

Rome did not seek to break from Alexander and his Hellenization policies, as it respected and was inspired by the Greek tradition. Julius Caesar (100-55 BCE) modelled himself after Alexander the Great. Rome, like the Greeks, had conquered vast amounts of territory, and the Roman Empire grew exponentially after the conquest of Carthage in the Punic wars, when Scipio Africanus defeated the much-feared leader of the Carthaginians, Hannibal Barca. Pompeius Magnus eventually became ruler of the territory of Palestine in the name of the Roman Empire. This is a particularly important era for Judaism as it coincides the end of the Second Temple and the beginning of Rabbinic Judaism. The next section focuses on the implications of Roman rule of Jerusalem during this time of transition.

Politics, Religion, and Culture

⁴⁰ Anderson, *The Internal Diversification*, 37.

⁴¹ Anderson, *The Internal Diversification*, 41.

Second temple Judaism differed from its predecessor, Solomon's Temple Judaism, in the types of religious and political figures who guided the legal, religious, social, and political aspects of Jewish life and culture. This section will examine the Pharisees, the Temple and sacrifice. As Seth Schwartz writes in his book, Jewish society was linked to the Temple, as it was their belief in one God and his laws that were handed down to Moses in his name that defined their faith, and the main location to live out this belief was the temple.⁴²

The Pharisees were a group that ruled as the upper elite of Jewish society, and who interpreted the practical applications of the Torah to daily life. They are often mentioned in the New Testament, usually in a negative light, as well as in the works of Josephus Flavius. The word Pharisee is derived from ancient Greek and comes from the Hebrew word "Parush" that literally means separate.⁴³ Baeks, in discussing the etymology of the word further, evokes a group who insulated themselves from the tumult that was going on. Seemingly motivated by a combination of wisdom, elitism, and self-interest, the Pharisees emerged from the historical events "above the fray" of the struggles of the general population.

In the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah the story is told of those who returned from Babylonian Exile, and it is said of the best among them that they "had separated themselves (Nivdalim) unto them from the filthiness of the nations of the land" (Ezra 6:21) In the books of Maccabees, which portray the conflict between Greek and Jewish thought and life, it related how the "devout" separated themselves from those whose Judaism was less strict than their own.... Still others think [the title Pharisee] arose out of the political struggles that caused so many dissensions among the Jewish people under the Maccabean kings, and try to derive the concept of "isolation" from these struggles.⁴⁴

Later in his text, he provides another explanation which portrays the Pharisee's role more in terms of community and Holiness as it relates to the term Parush. In this view, the Pharisees would hold a monastic rather than an elitist role in the society.

⁴² Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 50.

⁴³ Leo Baeck, *The Pharisees and Other Essays*. (New York: Schocken, 1947), 3.

⁴⁴ Baeck, *The Pharisees and Other Essays*, 4-5.

In the Sifta, the old Midrash of the Akiba school to Leviticus, the word Parush, “separated”, is given as an explanatory translation of the Biblical word Kadosh, which means “holy.” In the writings of the New Testament, especially in the epistles of Paul, this word (parush) became the name of the Christian community in conformity with the tendency of a new community to appropriate the honorific titles of the old.⁴⁵

Whichever interpretation was closer to reality at the time is open for debate, but the Pharisees were insulated from society in that they had a legitimacy conferred on them and access to privileges that most did not. But far from existing in a bubble, the contribution of the Pharisees was instrumental in shaping the era of the Second Temple and later Judaism. This is because their traditions and writings eventually paved the way for Rabbinic Judaism. In his *Antiquities*, Josephus notes: “Now for the Pharisees, they say that some actions, but not all are the work of fate, and some of them are in our power, and that they are liable to fate, but are not caused by fate.”⁴⁶ His description of them is clear: they believe in a sort of divine providence that comes with their lives. They lived under the assumption that some people are placed in certain positions and aspects of life by chance, but that this chance was immutable. The Sadducees, who will be examined further on, were the rationalists of the day who believed rational choices, not fate, decided one’s standing in life.

Josephus explains the power and influence the Pharisees enjoyed in public office which gave him considerable sway on public opinion. In his version of events, they represent the voice of the people and whatever they said could be interpreted as the way of the Lord. Though he reports that the Sadducees (a group which included the priestly cast) had the political elite on their side, it was the Pharisees to whom most the population looked for guidance. Despite the observation that they formed an elite group, they were closer to the population than other highly placed groups in the society, as evidenced by their populist credentials. Josephus gives an

⁴⁵ Baeck, *The Pharisees and Other Essays*, 6.

⁴⁶ Josephus *The Antiquities of the Jews*. Translated by William Whiston. (London: Routledge, 2001.), 457.

example of how this dynamic played out in the following anecdote, when describing the Pharisees' role in the negative view the people of Jerusalem took toward King Hyrcanus:

However, this prosperous state of affairs moved the Jews to envy Hyrcanus; but they that were the worst disposed of to him were the Pharisees, who were of the sects of the Jews, as we have informed you already. These have so great a power over the multitude, that when they say anything against the king, or against the high priest, they are presently believed.⁴⁷

The story continues with the King holding an audience with the Pharisees and winning them over to gain public approval, but this was in fact a falsehood and the Pharisees themselves insisted on a punishment towards the king. The Sadducees, however, had more influence with the upper class, and they sided with King Hyrcanus: "So, the Pharisees made answer, that he deserved stripes and bonds, but that it did seem right to punish reproaches with death. And indeed, the Pharisees, even upon other occasions, are not too severe in punishments."⁴⁸

Josephus does not hide the fact that the Pharisees were a very powerful group of men who governed the Jewish people. Their influence was so great that any person seeking public approval had to go through them first. A prime example of this was when it was time to vow allegiance to Rome and Caesar:

Accordingly, when all the people of the Jews gave assurance of their goodwill to Caesar, and to the king's government, these very men did not swear, being above six thousand; and when the king imposed a fine upon them, Pherora's wife paid their fine for them. In order to requite kindness of hers, since they were believed to have foreknowledge of things to come by Divine inspiration, they foretold how God had decreed that Herod's government should cease.⁴⁹

The power of foresight and the connection to God that the Pharisees were believed to possess gave them all the leverage in dealing with anyone seeking their approval. They were also a volatile and rebellious bunch who did not hesitate to oppose power or anyone they disliked.

⁴⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 10:467.

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 2:611.

Observations we can deduce from Josephus' writings thus far are that the Pharisees were a powerful political and religious group that ruled Israel alongside the Sadducees and the King. They were a mystical group that believed in fate for each person and it was that fate that decided their own favourable destiny. They controlled the masses and everything they stated was to be followed and respected, while kings and politicians only ascended to power with their blessing. They had visions which were believed to have been handed down to them by God. This gave them a link with the revered prophets of olden times, which provided continuity in the culture in the minds of the population and, most importantly, legitimacy. The Pharisees were the most powerful group of men in Israel.

The Temple of Solomon was the main religious and political centre of religion for the ancient Israelites and symbolized Jerusalem, which was the centre of the Yahwistic Religion. After its destruction at the hands of the Babylonians, the Israelites built another temple to replace it. The second temple was built in 515 BCE until its destruction at the hands of the Roman Empire 70 CE. This mega-structure that once stood tall in the middle of Jerusalem was again the main centre of Jerusalem and now the Jewish religion. With trade, commerce, banking, religion, politics and other functions happening within it, the temple again found itself at the heart of Jewish culture. To appreciate what the loss of the temple meant to the people of Jerusalem, a detailed description of its interior functions during this period is required. This will provide context that will assist the reader in understanding how they coped with its destruction in the ensuing period.

This analysis of the Temple will draw from the works of four different ancient historians from different time periods, all of whom wrote of their experiences in the Jewish Temple. Each possessed a different outlook on the temple and all gave vivid descriptions of what it resembled

and the rituals that took place inside. The work of Hecataeus of Abdera's *Contra Apionem*, as preserved by Josephus, is the oldest text besides the Bible that explains how the temple functioned and describes temple service in detail.⁵⁰ The authenticity of these texts is not a settled matter, but the author Robert Hayward perceives them as authentic and for this the reason he put them in his text.

Of these, he says, there was one Ezekias, a high priest of the Jews, a man about sixty-six years of age, great in esteem among his fellow countrymen and not unintelligent of soul; he was still competent in speech, and in matters of business. He was skilled more than any other. Yet he says that all the priests of the Jews who receive the tithe of the revenue and administer the affairs of the community are around 1500.⁵¹

The temple was used not only for religious and dogmatic purposes but was also the administrative and commercial centre of the people. It collected taxes from citizens and priests kept the records of this and decided how tax revenues would be used. Commerce and politics were two very important functions that the temple housed. Hayward also notes that Hecataeus was a pagan and that priests were the absolute rulers of the Jewish community, retaining not only theological but fiscal authority. This shows just how important the Temple was with respect to political life in Jerusalem:⁵²

Upon these is an inextinguishable light both night and day. There is absolutely no statue or votive offering; nor is there any plant of any kind at all such as a sacred grove, or anything of such a kind. And priests spend their time in night and day, performing certain purificatory rites; and they drink absolutely no wine at all in the temple.⁵³

The temple was also the most sacred place for religious service in Jerusalem, serving as the house of God. It was no coincidence that it required a 24-hour service. The absence of any statue was an obvious nod to the commandment that Jews should not praise false idols. The

⁵⁰ Robert Hayward, *The Jewish Temple: A Non-biblical Sourcebook*. (London: Routledge, 1996), 18.

⁵¹ Hecataeus of Abdera, *Contra Apionem*. Translated by Dagmar Labow.(Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2005.), 187.

⁵² Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 21.

⁵³ Hecataeus of Abdera, *Contra Apionem*, 199.

purification services as part of temple life ensured that the light never went out inside the Jewish Temple.⁵⁴

The account of Hecataeus is somewhat controversial because it seems as if he was writing for an audience that seemed interested in the ancient Jewish religion rather than experiencing temple life as a native Jew would. A Greek born philosopher's perspective without any criticism probably meant that he gained a deep respect for the Jews and Jerusalem by observing their traditions and customs.

Aristeas was a man who belonged to the court of Ptolemy in Alexandria and the quoted paragraphs come from a letter he wrote to his brother Philocrates. Precise dating of this work is difficult. It was originally written to tell how the Laws of Moses were translated into Greek for the King's grand library, a work that was commissioned by the high priest Eleazar of Alexandria.⁵⁵ Josephus quoted the text in his works *Antiquities of the Jews*, and most historians agree that this work was probably written within the first half of the 2nd c. BCE. Scholarly consensus also holds that the author was in fact a Hellenistic Jew living in Alexandria.⁵⁶

Now the construction of the altar was made commensurate with the place and with the sacrifices which were utterly consumed in the fire; and that the ascent to it was the same kind. For the sake of decency, the place had an ascending gradient for the ministering priests, who were clothed in linen tunics reaching to their ankles.⁵⁷

Sacrifices were a constant within the temple throughout its history. They were an important aspect of the Jews' relationship to God and in the following few verses we will see yet again the importance of sacrifice according to Philo. Sacrifice was one of the most fundamental traditions, and it is important to note this because animal sacrifices ceased after the temple was

⁵⁴ Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 25.

⁵⁵ Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 26.

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Aristeas, *Aristeas to Philocrates; Letter of Aristeas*. Translated by Moses Hadas. (New York: Published for the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning by Harper, 1951.), 87.

destroyed. The presence of the tunic suggests that any form of nudity was not tolerated. Hayward quotes from Exod. 28:42-43.⁵⁸

The service of the priests is in every respect unsurpassed in the physical strength (required of them) and in its orderly and silent arrangement. For they all labour spontaneously, even though the exertion is great, each one takes care of an appointed task. And they minister without a break, some offering the wood, some the oil, and some the fine flour, some the incense, other the sacrificial portions of flesh, using their strength in different degrees for different tasks.⁵⁹

The Temple was not administered by one high priest but overseen by a committee of over 1500 in Hecataeus' account. In the theological service, each priest had his own task to fulfill. Aristeas writes that it took much physical and mental strength to be a priest, because every day could be different and breaks were not taken. The importance of their rituals was such that it demanded a rigour and a level of dedication necessary to ensure there were no mistakes.

Aristeas wrote about Judaism in a favourable light and contrasted it to the pagan leaders that ruled over his land. Alexandria was still a predominantly Greek city filled with pagans. The letters spoke of the history and greatness of the Temple and its import to the Jews. Even though the writing style was sympathetic to the Jews, it still gave an objective account on the importance of the Temple and sacrifice.

Philo of Alexandria (25 BCE- 50 CE) may be the most important Hellenistic Jewish historian and philosopher. Many of his works have been used and quoted by later generations of Christian authors. He offers one of the most contemporary descriptions of Temple and its service, and the following quotation from him depicts what the temple meant cosmologically and physically in the eyes of the Jewish people. This stresses the importance of comparing the Jerusalem Temple to the eternal temple in God's kingdom:

⁵⁸ Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 30.

⁵⁹ Aristeas, *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates*, 92.

But the high priest of the Jews offers both prayers and thanksgiving not only for the whole race of men, but also for the parts of nature, earth, water, air, and fire, considering that the universe (which is in fact the truth) in his native land, on whose behalf he is accustomed to propitiate the ruler with supplications and entreaties, beseeching him to make what he has created a partaker of his own fair and merciful nature.⁶⁰

The implication of this was that every Temple service was dedicated not only to men of this earth but to the whole of the universe, including pagans, and the elements.⁶¹ So the Temple was not only central to Jerusalem, but also the entire cosmos and known reality, in the minds of Jewish believers as described by Philo:

For there are two temples of God, I believe, the one is this universe in which indeed the high priest is the first born, the divine logos; and the other is the rational soul, whose priest in the Man-in-Reality, whose sensible copy is that one who offers the ancestral prayers and sacrifices. To him it has been committed to put on the aforementioned tunic which closely imitates the whole heaven, so that the cosmos to many jointly offer sacrifices with mankind, and that mankind might do the same with the cosmos.⁶²

Thus, worship of God by the entire cosmos and worship by humans in the temple on earth are to be harmonized, which will eventually lead to a perfect unity between humanity on earth and the universe, as illustrated within the Temple service.⁶³ The high priest acted as a vessel to the heavenly realm. This meant that without the temple, there could be no real connection to God and heaven. Philo emphasized the importance of a harmonized unity between heaven and earth, and the Temple was the only way the Jewish people could achieve such unity and closeness to God. However, Philo did not live long enough to witness the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, a historical event that perhaps would have forced him to rethink his mystical views about the temple's role.

⁶⁰ Philo, *On the Decalogue. on the Special Laws, Books 1-3, De Specialibus Legibus*. Translated by F H Colson. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937). 66-67.

⁶¹ Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 109.

⁶² Philo, *De Somniis I* Translated by F H Colson, G H Whitaker, and Ralph Marcus. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.), 215.

⁶³ Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 11.

Philo also provided more specific details on how sacrifice was integrated into the symbiotic worldview between heaven and earth in the temple of that time: “So, then day by day, two lambs are prescribed for offering, the one at dawn, the other at the latter part of the evening. Both are for Thanksgiving, the one for the benefits of the day, the other for those granted by night, which God supplies to the race of men never endingly and continuously.”⁶⁴

The dualism we see here regarding the animal sacrifice was the division of time of day into night and of humans into man and woman.⁶⁵ Animal sacrifice was a way of praising Gods creation of the earth and its elements and giving back so that it could continue. “In the middle is the altar on incense, a symbol of thanksgiving for earth and water which is fitting should be made for the things which come from both of these. For these have been allotted the middle position of the universe.”⁶⁶ Every element inside the Temple had a connection to something cosmological. To Philo, the incense and incense altar were the cosmos which were symbols of giving thanks to God. Hayward also states that the altar may be used to give thanks for earth and water.⁶⁷

Putting the aspects described by each of these historians together reveals the importance of the Second Temple: not only did it place Jerusalem at the heart of the world and cosmic map, but it acted as a centre for commerce, politics, theology, and trade within that map. The most important aspect of the Temple though was the connection it had to God and the heavenly realm where he resided. After its destruction, the Jews had a great deal of hardship to adapt to. In the following section, I will demonstrate how the Jews, in the process of dealing with that challenge, turned Judaism into different New Religious Movements.

⁶⁴ Philo, *De Spec. Leg. I.*, 168-169.

⁶⁵ Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 119.

⁶⁶ Philo, *De Vit. Mos.II.*, 101.

⁶⁷ Hayward, *The Jewish Temple*, 123.

This chapter has summarized the origins and history of Judaism stemming back all the way to the first tribes of Israel. The holy land was always a place of war and a desirable location for merchants and tribes to set up their living areas. It was a land that was fought over even before it became a permanent residence for the ancient tribes of Israel. By researching their history, it becomes clear that the Ancient Israelites participated in their fair share of wars, which determined their future status as owners of the land. Before settling, the ancient Israelites were a nomadic population who eventually found their way into Israel, a group of different tribes which were then united by a single belief named by scholars as the Yahwistic cult. Uniting through a common belief system and a set of festivals gave rise to the royal bloodline of Jerusalem, starting with David who set up the capital in Jerusalem. Saul unified the tribes, but it was David who founded the kingdom of Jerusalem by conquering the neighboring lands.

The legacy of the first Temple began with David's son, Solomon. He made Jerusalem one of the most beautiful cities of the ancient world with his extensive building projects. Unlike his father, he did not care to conquer more land because he was more of a technocrat than a conqueror. Any stability that his reign brought was lost when the kingdom passed to his son Rehoboam, who did not possess his father's leadership abilities. Thereafter came a history of wars and conquering. Jerusalem was conquered first by the Assyrians, and later by Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians, who destroyed the temple and caused the Jewish Diaspora. Later still, the Persian Empire and Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon and inherited Judah as a province. All banished people were to be returned to their lands and Cyrus sponsored the rebuilding of the Temple. Cyrus is referred to as a Messiah in Isaiah. This marked the beginning of Second Temple Judaism.

Jerusalem saw many different eras, including Hellenism which was a very important influence in the ancient world. When Alexander the Great conquered much of the known world, Jerusalem did not escape his influence. Hellenization reached the Israelite people and with this era came the Hasmonean dynasty. The Temple was once again the political, religious, and social centre of Jerusalem, with the Pharisaic order and the priestly Sadducee order forming the ruling elite before the arrival Rabbinic Judaism.

The next chapter will analyze what led to the destruction of the Second temple at the hands of the Roman Empire. What was Roman rule like for the Israelites? What led to the outbreak of war? What did this mean for the future of the Jewish Nation? These are all questions which will be dealt with. An analysis of the different movements that emerged from the destruction of the temple, such as the Jesus Movement and the Hellenized Jews of the Diaspora, will also be undertaken. What was the legacy they left after the temple was destroyed and how did these groups go about adapting to the changes?

Chapter 2

Rome versus Jerusalem

Second Temple Judaism ended under the rule of the Roman Empire. It was under this rule that Judaism had to adapt yet again to survive. Following the survey of life during the beginnings of Judaism and Second Temple Judaism society, Religion, the Temple, and other traditions, an examination of Jewish life under Rome is required. It was not the most tranquil time for the Jews, as there were both benefits and drawbacks to living under the Romans. The Arch of Titus in Rome (dating from the first century CE) depicts the Roman victory over the Jews with Romans carrying gold menorahs and other riches away from that victory, which were used to build the Flavian Amphitheatre, what is today is called the Colosseum. To present a more in-depth account of this story, this chapter will scrutinise certain laws that were in place, the treatment of the Jewish people by and their attitude towards the Romans, and why war broke out, drawing on the works of Martin Goodman (an expert in Judaism under the rule of Rome), Adrian Goldsworthy (a renowned Roman historian), and Flavius Josephus (author of the famous book, *The Jewish War*, that tells the story of the War between Rome and Jerusalem) as sources. Verifying the details about why war broke out, what made Judaism go in a new direction, the time before the Roman rule, and the failed rebellion, is what this section will bring as support for the hypothesis of this thesis.

At the beginning of the Second Temple era, Rome was still a small city in central Italy at war with local tribes and in pursuit of its identity. Rome had seven kings who ruled before the Republican era. Battles with Etruscan neighbors, which eventually led to the conquering of the whole of Italy, started the Roman Empire. Not satisfied with their win over the Etruscans, the Romans wanted to expand their territory. They achieved this objective by engaging in three grueling Punic wars with the Carthaginians and their general Hannibal Barca. The Romans who

were victorious in the Punic wars gained land across the North African peninsula and beyond. Even though it was still technically a republic at the time of the North African victory, Rome was now truly an empire and a force to be reckoned with in the Mediterranean world. Eventually the rest of the Mediterranean was assimilated into the Roman empire, and Jerusalem was no exception. In 64 CE, neighboring Syria became a Roman province and both Aristobulus and Hyrcanus were already preparing ransoms to ally themselves with Rome.⁶⁸ Pompey Magnus, the Roman General in charge of the invasion, took the bribes from Hyrcanus and marched into the city with little resistance. Although the temple was valiantly defended, Aristobulus was defeated in 63 BCE and showcased in Pompey's victory march in Rome. Hyrcanus was now the high priest and Jerusalem was now under Roman rule, which meant it was required to pay an annual tribute to the empire.⁶⁹

Jerusalem was now captured, but the battle for it was minor in comparison to other more brutal Roman campaigns. The year 6 CE, however, can be considered one the most devastating years in Jewish history: the year Judea became a Roman province. Several decades later, the Jewish Dynasty in Palestine was officially over. Goodman highlights the implications of the Jewish state's fall to Rome:

For this misfortune, which befell Jerusalem, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus were responsible because of their dissension. For we lost our freedom and became subject to the Romans, and the territory which we gained by our arms and taken from the Syrians we were compelled to give back to them, and in addition the Romans exacted from us in a short space of time more than two thousand talents, and the royal power which had formerly been bestowed on those who were high priests by birth became the privilege of commoners.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 57.

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Goodman Quote from Josephus, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 57.

Josephus provides an account of the brutal actions carried out by Aristobulus and Hyrcanus. The Jews were an ancient people who were proud of their military victories, especially the Maccabean revolt which gave them the self-determination to govern Jerusalem. It was the ultimate humiliation for those who had fought for freedom to find themselves under foreign control and forced to pay an extra tax on top of that for being a Roman province. No one was pleased with this conquest, other than Pompey and his Roman companions who reaped the spoils. During the time that followed, the influence and power of priests was greatly diminished as it steadily flowed into the hands of the Roman governors who now controlled the province.

We now know that the Jewish attitude toward the Romans was not favourable, though this was not something new for the people of Jerusalem. Though it happened many times, it was never pleasant to be ruled by another empire, and it made each time under a foreign occupier that much harder to accept. How did the Roman occupiers, in turn, feel toward their Jewish subjects? Adrian Goldsworthy's novel *In the Name of Rome* is an important reference on what Roman attitudes were towards the Jewish people during this era. The following passage depicts a story from the time of Pompey and how he had a profound respect toward Jerusalem and the Temple:

Pompey captured the city after a three-month siege, much of the fighting taking place in and around the great Temple. The first man over the wall in the final successful assault was Faustus Cornelius Sulla, the dictator's son. After storming, Pompey and his senior officers entered the Holy of Holies inside the Temple, following the Roman urge to be the first to do anything, but out of respect removed nothing from it.⁷¹

The usual Roman tradition when conquering a city was to walk into the main centre and take it in the name of Rome. With this action, Pompey was a little more careful because the Jews were not a normal foe. We know that the Romans had a healthy respect for the Jews and their ancient culture, but they were also likely impressed by the Jews' mettle in battle and their

⁷¹ Adrian K. Goldsworthy, *In the Name of Rome: The Men Who Won the Roman Empire*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 200.

determination to keep the temple out of Roman hands. Life was marked by this ambiguity for Romans and Jews living alongside each other in Jerusalem for a time. Rome now had to maintain a strong soldier presence in Judea as a precaution against any rebellion outbreak, which we will later see happened twice during their time in Jerusalem.

The most important figure in the history of Rome and Jerusalem is Flavius Josephus, who was a critical figure in documenting events at that time. Originally from a Jewish priestly family, he was captured by the Romans and, according to legend, he predicted that (then general) Emperor Vespasian would become the head of Rome, as Roman historian Suetonius writes in his history *The Twelve Caesars*:

In Judea, Vespasian consulted the god of Carmel and was given a promise that he would never be disappointed in what he planned or desired, however lofty his ambitions. Also, a distinguished Jewish prisoner of Vespasian's, Josephus by name, insisted that he would soon be released by the very man who had now put him in fetters and who would then be emperor.⁷²

Josephus was correct in his prediction of Vespasian becoming emperor of Rome. For this, Vespasian was forever grateful to him. He was given a special status as Vespasian's personal historian, and he would later go on to write *The Jewish War* and the *Antiquities of the Jews*, which are some of the most informative documents about this time of Rome in existence.

Leading up to the first Jewish revolt, the Roman Republic had changed to the Roman Empire. Octavius Caesar had seized control after a vicious civil war with the queen of Egypt Cleopatra and the once great Roman General Marc Antony. The first emperor and victor of the civil war, Octavius now changed his title to Augustus, as he ascended to the throne and was declared Princeps of Rome. Augustus Caesar had many successors in the decades that followed, and by the time the first Jewish rebellion began, the Emperor Vespasian occupied the Emperor's throne in Rome. His son Titus, who crushed the Jewish rebellion, later became emperor.

⁷² Suetonius, Robert Graves, and Michael Grant. *The Twelve Caesars*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 10:5.

The fractious relations between the local population and the Roman occupiers defined how harsh the climate was for both Romans and Jews, marred by unnecessary brawls and deaths over trivial matters. The following passage from Flavius Josephus exemplifies up the two groups' tumultuous relationship.

Now after the death of Herod, king of Chalcis, Claudius set Agrippa, the son of Agrippa, over his uncle's kingdom, while Cumanus took upon him the office of procurator of the rest, which was a Roman province, and therein he succeeded Alexander; under which Cumanus began the troubles, and the Jews' ruin came on; for when the multitude were come together to Jerusalem, to the feast of unleavened bread, and a Roman cohort stood over the cloisters of the temple (for they always were armed, and kept guard at the festivals, to prevent any innovation which the multitude thus gathered together might make) one of the soldiers pulled back his garment, and cowering down after an indecent manner, turned his breech to the Jews, and spoke such words as you might expect upon such a posture. At this the whole multitude had indignation, and made a clamor to Cumanus, that he would punish the soldier; while the rasher part of the youth, and such as were naturally the most tumultuous, fell to fighting, and caught up stones, and threw them at the soldier. Upon which Cumanus was afraid lest all the people should make an assault upon him, and sent to call for more armed men, who, when they came in great numbers into the cloisters, the Jews were in a very great consternation; and being beaten out of the temple, they ran into the city; and the violence with which they crowded to get out was so great, that they trod upon each other, and squeezed one another, till ten thousand of them were killed, insomuch that this feast became the cause of mourning to the whole nation, and every family lamented their own relations.⁷³

This massacre was attributed to an incident where a man pulled his garments down toward the Jewish people, which led to a bloody skirmish. Tensions were high between the two groups. This was only the beginning of the violence which eventually led to the destruction of the Second Temple.

With relations quickly souring between the two groups, it was only a matter of time before a rebellion or all-out war broke out between them. In the pages that follow, the causes and effects of the Romano-Jewish war that devastated Jerusalem and ultimately destroyed the sacred Temple will be explored. Once again, the best source material for the failed rebellion is

⁷³ Josephus, *The Jewish War*. Translated by G. A. Williamson and E. Mary. Smallwood. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1981), 2:12.

Josephus' *Jewish War* books that he wrote and these passages will be utilized to gain understanding of what happened. The Romans were a centralized empire that only trusted its own people in power in conquered territories. It was no different in the province of Judea. The ruling Hasmoneans, the same freedom fighters who led the fight and eventual victory against the Seleucids, had been deposed. The Romans appointed a new ruler named Herod the Great.⁷⁴ By appointing a ruler who had Roman interests at heart, the Romans supported his rule. During his rule, Herod built up Jerusalem and quashed any unrest that arose. From a Roman perspective, Jerusalem and the province of Judea were in very secure hands. The Jewish people were loyal to the previous aristocracy and did not like the change in the city's rulers imposed by the Romans. While the Jews chafed under their diminished autonomy, Herod was there to maintain order and stability and he did so. Nonetheless, the causes that led to the outbreak of war are quite complex and are outside the scope of this thesis. To support my focus on Judaism as an NRM, some excerpts from Josephus will be cited to apprise the situation in which the war started and ended. The emperor of Rome at the time was Nero and the generals sent to pacify the rebellion were future emperor Vespasian and his heir Titus. The war happened under Nero and Vespasian's reigns with Titus finishing as victor. Here is what Josephus had to say about the causes of the war.

Hearing now that the king was gradually sinking under despondency and disease, these [Jewish] teachers threw out hints to their friends that this was the fitting moment to avenge God's honour and to pull down what had been erected in defiance of their fathers' Laws: for although it was unlawful to place in the Temple either images or busts or any representation whatsoever of a living creature, the king had nonetheless erected over the great gate a golden eagle. It was this [eagle] that these teachers now exhorted their disciples to cut down. They told them that if any danger should arise, it was a glorious thing to die for the Law of one's country; for the souls of those who came to such an end attained immortality and an eternal enjoyment of happiness; it

⁷⁴ Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 376.

was only the ignoble, uninitiated in their philosophy, who clung in their ignorance to life and preferred death by disease to that of a hero.⁷⁵

As noted in the previous chapter, Jewish law was of critical importance to the overall functioning of society and one of the main pillars of this law was the ten commandments handed to Moses from God at Sinai. One of the commandments states that no false idols should be honored. Herod was loyal to his Roman rulers as they were the ones who put him in power and dethroned the previous Hasmoneans. The Romans offered protection to anyone who paid tribute to them, and Herod did so by putting the golden eagle at the top of the main gate. The eagle was the symbol of strength and power of the Roman Empire. This was a painful reminder to residents that Judea and Jerusalem were in the hands of the Roman Empire. Upon Herod's death, they removed the Eagle as a sign of rebellion toward their rulers. This may not have started the war but it did foreshadow it. Herod died in 6 BCE. The war itself was still years away, but as Josephus notes in his works, this was a clear sign of the worsening relationship between the two nations.

What followed in between that year and the year of the rebellion were intermittent small skirmishes. The direct cause of the rebellion, which was seven decades in the making, was resentment and hostility that had built up over a long period. In Adrian Goldsworthy's view, the incompatibility of the cultures and the assurance it gave of the Jews remaining second class citizens is what led to the war:

It was not an easy province to control, for the culture and religion of its monotheistic population set them apart from the rest of the polytheistic Roman world. By pagans the Jews (and later Christians) were seen as perverse, almost indeed as atheists, for they denied the very existence of other gods. Even if they were granted Roman citizenship, religious taboos prevented Judean aristocrats from following a career in imperial service. Therefore, it proved impossible to absorb them into the elite of the Empire.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 1:33.

⁷⁶ Goldsworthy, *In the Name of Rome*, 332.

As stated before, the Jews were a very proud people and had a rich history, and would not allow them to be subjugated by just anyone. Their persistence and loyalty to their faith historically was their greatest asset as it won them many wars and gained their freedom from the hands of the Seleucids and others. This time, however, faith would not be their greatest asset but their worst enemy. Their stubbornness and failure to adapt to Roman laws would eventually prove to be their undoing.

Judea was a troubled region, struggling to fit into the Roman system and frequently subject to procurators who failed to understand its peculiarities and who were all too often corrupt and repressive. Sporadic outbreaks of rebellion occurred from 4 BCE onwards and finally erupted in the summer of 66 CE into a major rebellion. The procurator marched on Jerusalem to quell the rising with a show of force, but suffered defeat.⁷⁷

The populace was never happy with the rule of the Herodians, the puppet rulers imposed upon them by their captors, the Romans. Eventually the Herodian bloodline ended and the Romans put their own procurators into power to maintain the stability, but that was unsuccessful as relations worsened. Eventually war broke out and Vespasian and his son Titus would lead a grueling military campaign against the Jewish people. It was a long war that caused the death and enslavement of over one million Jewish people.

Now the number of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand; as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege eleven hundred thousand, the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation [with the citizens of Jerusalem], but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were all of a sudden shut up by an army, which, at the very first, occasioned so great a straightness among them, that there came a pestilential destruction upon them, and soon afterward such a famine, as destroyed them more suddenly.⁷⁸

Here is the passage from Josephus that confirms the number that were slain during the Jewish war. The number was compounded due to the festival of Passover and the pilgrimage of

⁷⁷ Goldsworthy, *In the Name of Rome*, 33

⁷⁸ Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 6:9.

Jews from all over the known world came to the Holy Land and pay their tributes to God. This time it was not a pleasant experience that awaited them.

Now as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be the objects of their fury [for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other work to be done], Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne; and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. This wall was spared.⁷⁹

In the end the unthinkable happened, with General Titus destroying the Temple at the order of his father Vespasian. Jerusalem never recovered, the Temple was never rebuilt, and Judaism now had to find a way to survive in the face of extinction. This was the end of the Second Temple and through this destruction came the genesis of a new form of the religion, Rabbinic Judaism. As Lorne Dawson writes in his book, NRMs are a sort of successor movement to the previous institution that was once the leading force. Moving in a new direction was an awakening. William G. McLoughlin notes:

Great awakenings mark periods of fundamental ideological transformation necessary to the dynamic growth of the nation in adapting to basic social, ecological, psychological, and economic changes. It constitutes the awakening of people caught in an outmoded, dysfunctional world view to the necessity of converting their mindset, their behavior, and their institutions to more relevant or more fundamentally useful ways of understanding and coping with the changes in the world they live in.⁸⁰

The events that occurred at the hands of the Romans were surely an awakening to the Jewish people and they now knew drastic change was needed to survive extinction. While the religion ultimately survived, different groups splintered off, which will be the focus of the next part of this Chapter. Rabbinic Judaism will be introduced briefly here, but the section will focus on the people who made up the Jesus movement. The fate of the diaspora Hellenized Jews in the

⁷⁹ Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 7:1.

⁸⁰ William G McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America*. Master's thesis, (University of Chicago, 1978. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), Lorne Dawson, *Comprehending Cults*, 63.

wake of the Temple's destruction, and the mysterious apocalyptic sect of Judaism will also be explored.

Successor Movements; Rabbinic Judaism, Jesus Movement, and Hellenistic Jews

In this section, the three successor religious movements that succeeded Second Temple Judaism will be examined through the lens of the NRM method that is central to this thesis. Rabbinic Judaism is the most important movement to rise from the ashes of the Temple as it followed in the footsteps of its Pharisaic forefathers and essentially became the mainstream contemporary form of Judaism that is followed today. A small introduction will be given to Rabbinic Judaism before a bigger, more in depth study will conclude the thesis in the third chapter. To classify Rabbinic Judaism as a NRM, an outline of what other aspects of the old religions were left behind is required; there was seven hundred years of history left behind and there was no way everyone's interpretation of the ancient scriptures and laws would be unanimous. By looking at each of these so-called successor movements, an understanding emerges of the direction Judaism was taking. The Jesus movement eventually became Christianity, and the Hellenistic Jews' journeys continued to take shape as well.

The Jesus Movement

Christianity did not come into existence immediately following the death of Jesus. Christianity derives from the Greek word "Christos" which means "anointed one."⁸¹ This is what the Christians would come to call their savior, Jesus Christ, but before then it was very hard to

⁸¹ Charles Freeman, *A New History of Early Christianity*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 42.

distinguish what made a Christian a Christian. The event that marked the beginning of official Christianity was the Edict of Milan 313 CE, when Constantine the Great issued an order to give full legal rights to all religions around the Empire.⁸² In 325 CE he summoned the council of Nicaea to encourage Christianity to clarify some of its teachings (e.g. the divinity of Jesus) to establish the parameters that would make Christianity a set religion with scripture and law.⁸³ Much more happened in the interim of those years, as Christians were constantly persecuted at the hands of the Romans and overlooked by their Jewish brethren, but a quote on how the Jewish Christians eventually diverged from the mainstream and moved on from the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE describes a lengthy process. “Having started as a Jewish sect among other Jewish sects, Christianity eventually followed a separate course. Prior to 70, that gradual parting of ways met with only mild irritation on the part of the Jews: Christians were brothers who had gone astray by believing in Jesus: they were estranged relatives.”⁸⁴

For the sake of this thesis we shall call them Jewish Christians, as they were not radically different from their Jewish counterparts. While no New Testament existed in the earliest times, they associated with the tradition already known to them, Second Temple Judaism, referred to even then as the Law and the Prophets. There is evidence that Jewish Christians were praying in synagogues until the fourth century when Christian Bishop John Chrysostom wrote *Adversos Judaeos*, which condemned praying in synagogues and celebrating Jewish holidays as evil.⁸⁵ It was evident that some still considered Judaism/Christianity a single religion even after the main

⁸² Gerrard Vallee, *The Shaping of Christianity: The History and Literature of Its Formative Centuries (100-800)*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1999.), 108.

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Vallee, *The Shaping of Christianity*, 19-20.

⁸⁵ Charlotte E. Fonrobert, "Judaizers, Jewish Christians, and Others." In *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 554-58. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 554.

branch of Christianity was established. The Jewish Christians followed what mainstream Jews were doing, praying in Synagogues and celebrating festivals without a temple. Life after 70 CE was evolving in two camps: for regular Jews who did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and for the Jews who did believe in Jesus.

The category of “Jewish Christian” is used often in the effort to understand the impact of Paul’s mission to the Gentiles. The early Judean and Galilean followers of Jesus, minus Paul might have formed nothing more than a group of Jews who believed that Jesus’ life and death had significance for their lives, not much different from, say, Jews who followed the Jewish messianic pretender Sabbatai Zvi in the seventeenth century or other messiah figures in later Jewish History.⁸⁶

This is very interesting because there is no “clean break” between the faiths: Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah carried on with their normal customs and traditions; their sect just believed that prophecy had become a reality for them. It was not a new religion but an extension of their belief that previously stated that a messiah was coming forth. The term Jewish Christian, therefore, means that they were believers in Christ but they preserved and enforced Jewish practice in their everyday lives.⁸⁷

Jewish-Christians were gradually forced out of the church mainstream. They first split into two branches, so to speak, and became alienated from the church in quite different circumstances. First, Christians who merely wished others to uphold the practice of Jewish law or favored a return to it could be called “Judaizers”; echoes of their activity are found in the New Testament “circumcision party” (Acts 11:2, 15:5) and in Ignatius’s letters. They were censored. Second, Christians who not only wished others to keep the law but were intent on compelling all converts to continue with the practice of the law of Moses were called “Ebionites” (the “poor”) by the church fathers from Irenaeus on. They insisted that those who embraced Christianity also embraced Judaism as a fuller way of imitating Jesus, a Jew who had come to fulfill the Jewish law, not to abrogate it.⁸⁸

So far, there are two sects that came out of the Jewish Christian movement who were still essentially Jewish. It can be gleaned from the passage taken from Fonrobert’s essay that Jewish Christians were people who still believed in the Laws of Moses and customs given to them from

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Vallee, *The Shaping of Christianity*, 35.

⁸⁸ Ibid

God, but believed that the prophecy had been fulfilled with the coming of Jesus to earth. Eventually Jewish Christians of the Jesus movement would come of age and form mainstream Christianity, but other groups were formed from this belief in Jesus who still followed the law as well. Can they be classified as an NRMs? By the descriptions given to us by Rodney Stark, they absolutely can. "People are more willing to adopt a new religion to the extent that it retains cultural continuity with conventional religion(s) with which they are already familiar."⁸⁹ The last few paragraphs describe cultural continuity, but at the same time following a new trend which was the belief in Jesus Christ. This NRM phenomenon is applicable to all new forms of Judaism, but can be applied to the Jesus movement as well because they did in fact go in a different direction while keeping the fundamentals of the religion intact. The Jesus movement basically developed its own social structure based on the prophecies of the Torah being fulfilled. They accepted that the Messiah had come down to earth and the prophecies contained in the sacred writings of Moses came to fruition. They also dismissed the notion that Jesus was not the Messiah. Roy Wallis's theory explains how cults come to reject, accept, or just remain indifferent to certain beliefs, "A new movement may embrace the world, affirming its normatively approved goals and values, it may reject that world, denigrating those things held dear within it; or it may remain accommodating to it."⁹⁰ It casts a favourable light on what the people of the Jesus movement did. They embraced the world they were born into, they insisted on following the laws of Moses and continuing its traditions, but at the same time they rejected the notion that the Messiah did not come to earth. The core difference between the Jesus movement and regular Judaism was the acceptance of the fact that the Messiah was sent to save

⁸⁹ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 55.

⁹⁰Roy Wallis, *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 4.

them. Keeping the customs and traditions while accepting the tenet that Jesus was in fact the son of God separated the two faiths.

Rabbinic Judaism: A Short Introduction

The biggest movement to come out of the Second Temple was the Rabbinic movement which today is known as Rabbinic Judaism. It was the ultimate successor movement of the Pharisaic order. Many studies have been done linking Pharisaic to Rabbinic Judaism such as Anette Yoshiko-Reed's article titled "When Did the Rabbis Become Pharisees?", in which she studies the literary evidence of the New Testament contained in the work of rabbis.

Among the results have been waning of confidence in the possibility of reconstructing a single "Pharisaic-rabbinic Judaism" by correlating rabbinic traditions with references from Josephus and the New Testament, and an intensification of debate about the degree of continuity in Palestinian Judaism after the failed rebellions of the first and second centuries CE.⁹¹

The evidence is there to conclude that both traditions share many commonalities, which is consistent with Stark's notion that NRMs are successor movements that borrow traditions and rituals from the older tradition. When comparing the Yoshiko Reed's excerpt to Dawson's and Stark's arguments of successor movements, it becomes clear that Rabbinic Judaism was in fact becoming an NRM. Rabbinic Judaism marked a new age for the Jewish People, the same way as was outlined in Chapter One when an analysis was done of the way in which society functioned in the era of the "God-Temple-Torah" triad. All that remained after the destruction was God, because the temple was obliterated and the Torah was now under the guidance of the Rabbinic Order. New aspects emerged during this era. The Temple was replaced with the synagogue and

⁹¹ Annette Y Reed, "When Did Rabbis Become Pharisees? Reflections on Christian Evidence for Post-70 Judaism". In *Envisioning Judaism: Essays in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, 859-96. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013.), 3.

it became the new place of worship and administration. The Torah is regarded as the written law of Moses, and the Rabbinic order brought forth the Oral law, the Mishnah, which was a new set of rules that the Rabbis created to help them convince the people to follow their rules and orders. The synagogue and Mishnah were the faces of the new Rabbinic movement that differentiated from the previous Second Temple order. We will further explore these commonalities in the next chapter, concluding finally with an explanation of how Rabbinic Judaism is in fact an NRM.

Hellenistic Judaism

Hellenistic Judaism was a phenomenon that had existed for some centuries prior to the destruction of the Second Temple, but without a main capital to identify with. What happened to the diaspora Jews after the destruction of the temple? This section of the chapter will focus on the Jews of the diaspora and how they lived. A brief history was explained in chapter one but it is worth noting again that Alexandria in Egypt housed a giant Hellenized Jewish population dating back to the time of Alexander the Great. The Jews of the Diaspora had many of the same traditions and ideas in common like their brethren in Judea but it was ultimately their language and geography which made them unique.

Jews in the Diaspora had much in common with their kindred in Judea, but inevitable differences existed, caused by their environment and a situation in which they were a definite minority. They could not take the views and religion of their neighbors for granted. There was the constant presence of pagan cults and shrines which might influence them or, more likely, their children.⁹²

The Diaspora Jews were challenged by where they lived. Being surrounded by other cultures that were predominantly pagan meant the constant threat of cultural assimilation. The Diaspora Jews, it seemed, were always in search of an identity and that did not change after the

⁹² Lester L Grabbe, . "Hellenistic Judaism." In *Judaism in Late Antiquity Part Two: Historical Syntheses*, 53-84. (Leiden-New York- Koln: Brill, 1995), 58.

destruction of the Temple. Martin Goodman writes that the Diaspora Jews had hopes that a new Temple would be built, but these hopes were dashed when Roman Emperor Nerva has passed away.⁹³ It was Roman Policy that temples were to be rebuilt in time but the case of the Jews was slightly different from other cases that the Romans had experienced.

The Jewish case became exceptional: most likely Rome refused to allow the Temple to be rebuilt because they did not want the population to have another rallying cry or centralized gathering point. The high Priesthood, however, was now defunct, and Rome saw no need to appoint a new high priestly leader in Jerusalem.⁹⁴

The Jewish people were a special case and throughout their history were always seemingly looking to escape rule from the hands of their invaders, while Rome was no longer interested in long, grueling battles with the Jews. They hoped that simply forbidding them to rebuild their temple was sufficient to keep peace in the land. What was the connection to the Jews of the Diaspora? Goodman writes that a revolt happened in the Diaspora because of failed attempts to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.⁹⁵ Nerva was the Roman Emperor who considered the rebuilding of the Temple but this plan was foiled when the new Emperor Trajan halted any plans to rebuild the Temple. The likely reason behind this was that he had fought in the Jewish War under Vespasian and probably had little sympathy for the Jews and their religious needs. The small revolts happened in between the years 115-117 CE. Within that time, Roman historian Cassius Dio stipulated that the Jews had killed 240,000 Greeks, but as Goodman mentions, most ancient historians could not be trusted to generate any sort of credible statistics. As the war happened in Cyprus at the end of 117 CE, Roman General Lucius Quietus put an end to the war

⁹³ Martin Goodman, "Jewish History, 331 BCE- 135 CE." In *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 507-13. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 512.

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Ibid

and soon thereafter legislation was passed forbidding the Jews from living on the island. Any record of any Jewish community ceased after 117 CE.⁹⁶

Another challenge for the Diaspora Jews was the constant cultural tug of war they felt between being Jewish or fully accepting Hellenism. It is an interesting area of study as it represents a mix between two very distinct and influential groups. The Jews of the Greek-speaking world referred to themselves as they Ioudaioi.⁹⁷ It meant Judeans in Greek. The use of a Greek word for self-identification was the perfect amalgamation of the two cultures and it gives further evidence that the Jews of the Diaspora, no matter how far away they were, were still proud of their religious and ethnic origins linking them back to Jerusalem. They did enjoy borrowing traditions and customs from their Greek speaking neighbors as well. It is well documented that the Jews of the Diaspora did in fact borrow lots of pagan traditions.

Seth Schwartz develops a theory in his book, in an entire chapter devoted to the Jewish people living in the Greek speaking states of the Roman empire. He writes that the Jewish people incorporated pagan gods in their art. It was not just for aesthetic purposes, but for the pagan meaning behind them. Incorporating both pagan and Jewish art may have been fashionable, but it had a deeper meaning. These next two passages taken from Schwartz' book *Imperialism and Jewish Society* depict what exactly pagan symbolism in art meant for the Jews in Greek speaking cities.

I am arguing here that pagan art used by Jews had a specifically pagan religious meaning, but not necessarily a simple one. Whether or not large numbers of Jews regularly worshipped the Greek gods, their ubiquity as symbols is profoundly important as an indication of the post revolt collapse of any normatively Jewish ideological system. Even where traces of the old system are detectable, as at Beth Shearim, a site that is transitional between high and late empire and atypical in the concentration of especially Jewish pious people buried there, these traces still coexist with standard urban paganism.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Shaye Cohen, "Judaism and Jewishness." In *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 513-15. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 513.

⁹⁸ Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 159.

Schwartz then speculates that including pagan art into Jewish culture may have been a way for the Diaspora to flaunt social status to the others around them, but it is not the most plausible argument. Who exactly were they showing off their wealth and fortune to? Being Roman was not just for the elite but for anyone in the empire, so the idea of associating pagan art with social strata doesn't make sense. The most logical reasoning behind the pagan markings would have come from the philosophy of good fortune. Both the Jewish and pagan religions had traditions which favoured fortune.

We would do well to remember that civic paganism incorporated magical and paradoxical elements that partly compensated for its status as a theodicy of good fortune just as Judaism, in its covenantal form no less a theodicy of good fortune, had done in the Second Temple period: both systems cut across class lines.⁹⁹

What this amalgamation meant was that the incorporation of pagan symbols was likely an attempt to capture the best fortune from both set of cultures that ruled the city. For the Jews, it was the best of both worlds. They were staying loyal to their traditions and customs while attempting to embrace the good fortune of their rulers. Logically it made sense for them to attempt such action, as it would have also improved their favour with the Romans. The way the Diaspora Jews moved on from the destruction of the Temple was essentially by assimilating customs and traditions from their neighbors and melding them into their own.

One of the most popular and most decorated traditions of the ancient world that brought good fortune to those who searched it was to make a sacrifice to the Sibylline oracles. Sure enough, the Diaspora Jews embraced this tradition.

Jewish appropriation of pagan traditions took a multitude of forms. The Sibylline Oracles constitute an instance of the first order. No more dramatic example of the practice exists than the adaptation and recreation of those texts. Collections of the Sibyl's pronouncements, duly edited,

⁹⁹ Ibid

expanded, or invented, had wide circulation in the Graeco-Roman world—long before Jewish writers exploited them for their own purposes.¹⁰⁰

The cultural tug of war had been going on for centuries and the use of the Oracle was a pivotal point in the Diaspora culture, as it was a tradition the pagans used to look for good omens in the future. Even though they borrowed many traditions from the pagans, they remained loyal to their brethren in Judea and had the Temple as the main center for anything Jewish in the same way. It came as no surprise that the Diaspora Jews took the destruction of the Second Temple badly and wanted to cause some trouble for their Roman captors. At the same time as this, the Jewish people of the Diaspora also wanted to strengthen their ties with the Romans and improve their fortunes with both cultures.

When examining Hellenistic Jews through the prism of NRMs, the theory once again applies, as evidence tells us they were their own distinct culture that borrowed elements from both cultures. Religiously and socially they were Jewish, practicing the customs and holidays that the Jews from Judea practiced, and their loyalty was toward the Jewish Temple. Culturally, linguistically, and socially, however they were very Greek. The revolt in 115 CE tells us that they were looking for a successor movement. Angry for what had happened during the destruction of the Second Temple, they were trying to ignite a new movement for themselves. They ultimately failed at this, but Diaspora Jew culture continued. The Jews of the Diaspora kept living like they always had, and transitioned to synagogues like the rest of the Jewish world did after the destruction of the Temple.¹⁰¹

In the work of Lorne Dawson, this part of an NRM movement would fall under the category of Social integration. He states that there are four steps to this process: adaptive

¹⁰⁰ Erich S. Gruen, *Jews, Greeks, and Romans in the Third Sibylline Oracle*. In *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World*, 15-38. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 15.

¹⁰¹ Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 129.

socialization, combination, compensation, and redirection.¹⁰² All four aspects are realized in the case of the Diaspora Jews. The socialization process happened through geography and demographics. The Diaspora Jews became integrated and influenced by the people and culture that surrounded them. In most cases, people adapt to the environment they are in, in the way Jews of the Ancient Israelite religion did for example. The Diaspora Jews combined their culture with the pagan one and their compensation was that of good fortune. The tangible result was that it became a new way forward for them to survive and become favored in the eyes of their rulers.

Another theory which complements Dawson's socialization theory on this topic is Bryan Wilson's theory that NRMs appeal to the masses by giving them a greater sense of community. The diaspora Jews considered the Temple in Jerusalem their holy place, but even after its destruction they still had a powerful communal element within their society that drove them forward. Wilson's study concerned the NRM movements of the late 1960s and 1970s, but his theory could also be applied to the Hellenized Jews and how they progressed. He states that in the modern world, natural community has disappeared, and that NRMs of modern times return that sense of community to those who seek it out.

Yet there is no doubt that they hanker after the benefits of community, seek contexts in which they are personally known, and in which they share responsibilities with others. New religious movements can supply precisely this context in a way that no other social agency can do... because the celebration of truth is also a celebration of community in which the truth is cherished—for all these reasons, religious groups provide the intrinsic, as well as the symbolic, benefits of community.¹⁰³

The Jewish people of Alexandria were part of a grander community that shared the religious and social interests of people of Israel, but in their evolution, they needed to adjust to

¹⁰² Dawson, *Comprehending Cults*, 46.

¹⁰³ Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 134.

their community and those who surrounded them, especially to the city's Greek culture. They ultimately moved forward by accepting elements from both Judaism and Hellenism.

This chapter explained the Roman rule over Jerusalem, and the causes and consequences of war between the occupiers and the occupied. Jerusalem remained consistent in not being an easy territory to control after it was conquered. History's best example highlighting this is the Maccabean revolt. When a nation drives its invaders out and becomes free to govern itself as the Jews did, it serves as a testament to a people's resolve forever. Sometimes reality makes this impossible, which is what happened when Pompey conquered the city and it became a province of Rome. Tensions never completely subsided in this territory because the Jews did not like outside rule. The Romans eventually had Jewish royalty govern the city. Josephus represents the best firsthand source of this war as he chronicled the war from a Roman perspective, and it was from his work that scholars know some of the most intricate and intimate details leading up to and after the war. Josephus's tale is interesting; as someone who was once part of the Jewish rebel force, and who then became highly placed with the Romans as a special advisor when he prophesized the emperorship of Vespasian, he was uniquely placed to tell the story of this era.

The notion of Judaism devolving into a series of NRMs after the destruction of the temple was explored in this chapter. After the priestly order fell, with no governing body or administrative centre to manage the affairs of the people, Judaism fell into chaos. This coincided with the period when Christianity was growing at a rapid pace and it marked the start of where the two religions started developing separate identities. The Hellenized Jews of this period also had to turn their lot around after the destruction of the temple. Both developed their own identity

thereafter. The most influential part of Judaism that came about was the Rabbinic order. In the final chapter, the remaining topics of the synagogue, the existence of an Oral law and Written Law, and how the Rabbinic order developed a new system that was completely different from that of their predecessors will be dealt with. It was these reforms and laws that made it possible for Rabbinic Judaism to be an NRM. Incorporating arguments and analysis from various experts on the NRM movement will support this thesis' argument on why Rabbinic Judaism became an NRM.

Chapter 3

Rabbinic Judaism: A Way Forward

In the previous chapters, the origins of Judaism and its evolution from a small tribe of Bedouins to a kingdom which expanded as far as modern day Israel were outlined. Many words can be used to describe Jewish history but uneventful is not one of them. After that, the nature of the war between the Jews and Romans was examined, which leads into the topic of this thesis: Judaism as an NRM post 70 CE. The Jesus Movement and the Hellenistic Jews were studied and those movements may be classified as NRMs after the fall of the Second Temple. The most important and successful branch of Judaism to come out of this chain of events was Rabbinic Judaism. It is the most practiced form of Judaism around the world today, and its origins can be traced all the way back to 70 CE, when the Temple was destroyed at the hands of the Romans. Not presenting Rabbinic Judaism with the movements of the previous chapter was an editorial choice due to its significance and historical importance. As its history is the most integral to the argument of this thesis, Rabbinic Judaism will be fully explored in this standalone chapter on how its creation and evolution flowed from the destruction of the Second Temple. What shall then be presented is the justification and final analysis reviewing the evidence provided by the writings of Rodney Stark and Lorne Dawson in their respective research to finally make the case that Judaism post 70 CE is a New Religious Movement. This will be done with the goal of incorporating logical claims made by the authors in support of the argument my overall thesis is based on, and linking it back to evidence provided in the previous chapters to reiterate the NRM connection to all movements across Judaism post-70 CE, which forms the other central plank of this thesis.

Rabbinic Judaism

According to J. Neusner, “The history of the formation of Judaism tells the story how philosophy became religion, which was then re-presented as theology.”¹⁰⁴ In its purest form, Rabbinic Judaism is a complicated branch of Judaism whose tenets and practice take years of study to fully grasp. This thesis will only touch on certain aspects which pertain to the subject matter at hand as appropriate. The most interesting aspect of Rabbinic Judaism that differentiated it from previous branches was the creation of an Oral Torah. The same Neusner writes “The Hermeneutics of Rabbinic Judaism governs the explication of the two components of the Torah, the written (“Old Testament”) and the oral, which is written down in the Mishnah and other documents.”¹⁰⁵

The Rabbis codified an Oral Torah called the Mishnah, which they claimed was handed down to Moses at the same time the written Torah was given to him on Mount Sinai. This tradition was previously never seen in Jewish history as the Torah was canonized in 200CE.¹⁰⁶ The use of the expression “hermeneutics” in the citation merits further clarification. This style of methodology is used in theological and religious scholarly work. It is the gold standard in the interpretation of religious texts. Neusner in his essay gives a brief but precise definition of the expression: “The methodological understanding of permanently fixed life-expressions we call explication...explication culminates in the interpretation of the written records of human existence...the science of this art is hermeneutics.”¹⁰⁷ In the study of theology as it relates to

¹⁰⁴ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in Late Antiquity*. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 161.

¹⁰⁵ Neusner, *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, 175.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ Neusner, *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, 161.

religion, the use of hermeneutics is indispensable, but its relevance to the rest of this paper is in the information it was used to uncover. It does not form part of the thesis itself.

The Synagogue

What does the Temple have to do with Rabbinic Judaism? Since the Roman period, the Pharisees and Sadducees were the authority within the Temple. When those movements faded away after 70 CE, the Rabbis then replaced the temple with the synagogue as their place of learning and order. Now the importance of the synagogue and what it meant to the Jewish people after 70 CE will be examined. The Second Temple was the most important structure ever built in Jewish history and served as the home of God, politics, culture, and anything related to Jewish culture. It was centred for religious purposes, which in Jewish society pre-70 CE revolved around the God-Temple-Torah triad. It was the standard vehicle that governed the religious life in Judaism, and its importance was unparalleled: “One temple for the one God,” stated Josephus.¹⁰⁸ Cohen goes on to write that Jews throughout the ancient world venerated the temple. Once the temple was gone, the Jewish people needed a new place to gather, worship, and keep their traditions intact.

The synagogue was a unique and innovative institution that played a central role in Jewish life in antiquity, leaving an incredible mark on Christianity and Islam as well. It was the most prominent public space in Jewish communities throughout the Greco-Roman world (excluding pre-70 CE Jerusalem and perhaps several Jewish cities in Galilee) and was always the largest and most monumental building, often located in the centre of a town or village. After 70 CE, it came to replace the Temple in Jerusalem as the central religious institution in Jewish life.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Shaye. J.D. Cohen, *Judaism and Jewishness*, 514.

¹⁰⁹ Lee I. Levine, "The Synagogue." In *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 519-21. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 518.

Some scholars argue that the synagogue is an institution dating from the exilic time, while others do not agree with that idea.¹¹⁰

Lee Levine gives some brief but helpful background on what synagogues were before and after the destruction of the Temple. They already played a prominent role in Jewish life pre-70 CE, serving mostly as meeting places and educational spaces.

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.¹¹¹

This is the story of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Luke going to the synagogue and teaching alongside the local rabbis. The New Testament chapters have been used a source to interpret traditions of ancient Judaism. Here one is used as evidence to demonstrate that synagogues were used before the destruction of the Temple as places of meeting and learning. Considering Jesus Christ was first and foremost a Jew, he also followed Jewish customs and traditions. After the Temple was destroyed, the synagogue took on a much greater role in Jewish community. The reasons for this vary from social significance to accessibility. As it was time for a change within the ranks of religious Judaism, the leadership needed to revamp their way of worshipping God.

The first positive aspect of this development was the location. “Location. Unlike the Temple, the synagogue was universal in nature and enabled Jews everywhere to organize their communal life and worship ritual.”¹¹² The accessibility of the synagogue essentially meant that

¹¹⁰ For the latter opinion, see Anders Runesson, “The Origins of the Synagogue in Past and Present Research--Some Comments on Definitions, Theories, and Sources,” *Studia Theologica* 58, no. 1 (2004), 60-76; for the former opinion, see John Van Seters, “The Tent of Meeting in the Yahwist and the Origin of the Synagogue,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 29 no. 1 (May 2015) 1-10.

¹¹¹ The Bible, Luke 4:16-16.

¹¹² Lee I. Levine, *The Synagogue*, 518.

prayer and worship could be held in any city or place that had a synagogue. It is very different from the previous tradition which held that the center of religion was in the Temple in Jerusalem. This was also an improvement for Jews of the Diaspora who no longer needed to travel to Jerusalem to worship God in the proper Jewish way, not that the Diaspora Jews saw the Temple's destruction as a positive development. It is worth restating the point from previous chapter that although the destruction of the Temple shaped the way the Diaspora tradition of Judaism evolved, it represented a hardship to the community at the time.

The second aspect was the democratization of leadership. "Leadership. Anyone could hold a leadership position in the synagogue; functionaries were not restricted to a specific socio-religious group, as was the case in the Temple, where only priests could officiate."¹¹³ This was a true departure from the Pharisee and Sadducee traditions. They no longer had a monopoly on spiritual leadership, opening the door for anyone to come up and become a leader within the community. Rabbis later took up this opportunity the most enthusiastically, and the synagogue was where they carried out their activities.

The third aspect which differentiated Jewish tradition from Temple to synagogue was the tradition of worship. Levine writes: "Worship. The synagogue provided a context for forms of worship other than the sacrifices that had dominated the Temple ritual, eventually embracing a wide range of religious activities, including scriptural readings, targum (the Aramaic translation of Scriptures), communal prayers, hymns, sermons, and piyyut (religious poetry)."¹¹⁴ This was the end of animal sacrifice. The Jews moved into a more cerebral tradition of scripture reading, the dynamic was changed and the more primitive way of praising God was eventually abandoned.

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ Ibid

The last aspect of the synagogue that greatly differentiated it from the Temple was the participation factor. The Temple had very limited participation and the lower class was not allowed in. The synagogue was governed by a different dynamic. “Participation. The synagogue included a wide range of worshippers in its ritual, unlike the Jerusalem Temple setting, where almost everyone in attendance remained in the outer ‘Women’s court,’ unless they themselves were offering sacrifice. Worshippers in the synagogue, both men and woman, were present throughout the entire service.”¹¹⁵ This was the most important aspect of the synagogue. Everyone was involved no matter their gender, whereas it was previously dominated by male priests. This new movement of integrating everyone was vital not only in keeping the community together, but in broadening it and making it sustainable.

The synagogue of Late Antiquity’s primary historical significance was that it constituted the core institution for Jews everywhere. Despite its geographical, linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity, this communal institution and ongoing expansion of its religious component provided a common framework for all Jewish communities. In a sense, the function fulfilled by the central and unique Jerusalem Temple in the pre-70 era was now carried out, *mutatis mutandis*, by the locally based, yet universally present, synagogue.¹¹⁶

The Jewish Temple was the most important and monumental building throughout Jewish history, but its destruction revealed that there was a need and an opportunity for great change. The Jewish people needed to find a solution and a substitution for their lost Temple. The synagogue was the perfect fit, because it was already established as an important centre in every day Jewish life. At this point it took the previously unimaginable step further and became the centre for religious activity as well.

Moving Forward into a New Light

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ Levine, *The Synagogue*, 521

In the coming pages of this thesis we will examine in depth the movement of Rabbinic Judaism. The institutions of the Pharisees and Sadducees were already examined in Chapter One and they will only be mentioned throughout this last chapter as needed because the reader has already been given background on these predecessors of Rabbinic Judaism. This section will begin with a quote from renowned scholar Lawrence Schiffman, from his book *Text to Tradition*: “Rabbinic Judaism represented the fruition of ideas already part of the earlier approaches, and provided an eventual rallying point around which a consensus emerged. The Judaism of the rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmuds was deeply rooted in that of their predecessors.”¹¹⁷

If we touch upon Lorne Dawson’s theory of a successor movement when discussing NRMs and some of the references that he listed in his work, we can look at his theories of successor movements and how NRMs take an already pre-existing set of traditions and ideas and use them to move forward into a new light. In the above quoted passage Schiffman confirms that Rabbinic Judaism took ideas and traditions from the past and moved forward with them until there was a new system that everyone could agree upon. It was a necessary change for the Jewish faith to survive in the aftermath of 70 CE, as “the shift from Second Temple Judaism to rabbinic Judaism was not a mere chronological transition but a substantive change.”¹¹⁸ The Jewish people had just gone through the most traumatic event of their history: their temple and institution were lost. Lorne Dawson, writing about the Deprivation theory, uses an explanation borrowed from Charles Y. Glock’s work *The Role of Deprivation in the Origin and Evolution of Religious Groups* and states that deprivation¹¹⁹ amongst a group of people with shared experience and no

¹¹⁷Lawrence Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism*. (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Pub. House, 1991), 4

¹¹⁸ Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition*, 1

¹¹⁹ Deprivation is “the state of not having something that people need; the state of being deprived of something.” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deprivation>.

existing solution with the current institution (in this case the Pharisaic order) will lead them into a new direction. A new direction with a movement builds on an already existing deprivation.¹²⁰

If we apply what Schiffman writes to the theory of deprivation for NRMs, this is what the Rabbinic movement did for the Jewish people: it offered them a solution to a situation in which they were deprived. It gave them hope with an already existing set of traditions that were then modified in a new way to better suit their needs. One way of going about this was the creation of the Mishnah or the Oral Torah, which Rabbis claim was handed down to Moses at the same time he was handed down the written Torah.

“Moses received the Torah at Sinai and committed it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, and the elders to prophets....” At the beginning, there were collective bodies of learned people and teachers—the elders, the prophets, and after them” the men of the great synagogue.” Toward the end of this period of collective and anonymous teaching, Simeon the Righteous and Antigonus are singled out as, respectively, “one of the last survivors among the men of the great synagogue” and the disciple who received his teaching. Then came the pairs of sages, until Hillel and Shammai, to whom both the founding authorities of the Mishnah, the patriarchs and the sages are connected. Moses to Joshua, therefore, the Torah has been passed from one generation to the next by a continuous chain of tradition, which links the Mosaic revelation to the authorities cited in the Mishnah itself and to their followers.¹²¹

It was imperative that the Rabbinic order linked the Mishnah to the written Torah to give itself legitimacy in the eyes of the Jewish people. An original story linking it to some of the biggest names in Jewish history was a sensible way of doing this. The Mishnah was one of the major differences between the Judaism of the Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism, and as Neusner stated, the oral Torah was canonized in 200 CE.

The Mishnah proposed changes to an already existing set of laws, by integrating a new set of rules to mix with the older tradition. In theory, this was their way of imposing their rules

¹²⁰ Charles Glock, "The Role Of Deprivation in the Origin and Evolution of Religious Groups." In *Religion and Social Conflict*, 24-36. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), Lorne Dawson, *Comprehending Cults*, 74.

¹²¹ Gabriele Boccacini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History, from Ezekiel to Daniel*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2002), 1.

and traditions on this newfound movement they had just created. Jonathan Klawans wrote an academic paper in the Jewish Annotated New Testament on the Law after the destruction of the Second Temple and this passage from it helps to understand why the rabbis added new laws:

Rabbinic Judaism also developed fuller systems of law to deal with marriage, civil matters, and criminal law, all the while maintaining the memory of laws concerning matters of purity and sacrifice that were no longer practiced following the Temple's destruction. These come to be recorded in the first great literary monument of rabbinic Judaism, the book known as the Mishnah.¹²²

Working with an already pre-existing system that the general populace was accustomed to made this transition easier. After all, the Rabbinic order did not appear overnight and the transition from Pharisaic Judaism to Rabbinic was also not instantaneous. The ideas of the previous institution were still fresh in people's minds. With the invention and justification of the oral Torah, it made it that much easier for the people to adjust and accept these new laws. The oral Torah and the new distinct set of laws was the Rabbinic movement's way to put its stamp on this new movement. A passage taken from Klawan's paper explains exactly what these new laws meant from a theological and social perspective:

To be sure, traditional Judaism teaches that the oral Torah is co-eternal with the written.... The Pentateuch does not stand on its own, and indeed is quite often insufficient in its plain sense. Neither Christians nor rabbinic Jews have come to abolish the Law... Christians and Jews have fulfilled the Torah/Pentateuch by finding its deeper meanings somewhere else, be it the New Testament for Christians, or the Oral Torah for Jews.¹²³

Fulfillment of the Written Torah was the exact rhetoric used by the Rabbinic order to justify its co-existence with the Oral Torah. The Rabbinic order was adapting itself to an already existing condition to set their movement in motion:

New Religious movements, whether in the Christian, Buddhist, or any other tradition, are not in the strict sense revivals of a tradition: they are more accurately regarded as adaptations of religion to new social circumstances. None of them is capable, given the radical nature of social change,

¹²²Jonathan Klawans, "The Laws." In *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 515-19. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 518.

¹²³ Ibid

of recreating the dying religions of the past. In their style and in their specific appeal they represent an accommodation to new conditions.¹²⁴

This original piece was written about NRMs that were based upon Christian and Buddhist traditions, but the same logic can be applied to Judaism. Social upheaval came in large quantities for the Jewish people. The Temple's destruction meant a complete overhaul and revamp of their traditions of prayer and worship. The change was very radical, because the Temple was the house of God and all traditions and laws of Judaism were practiced and decided there. It left a heritage and a set of conditions that the Rabbis duly took note of, and then started creating their own version of what they deemed was law and Tradition. The Mishnah is the culmination of that process. When discussing Rabbinic Judaism and the traditions it brought forward, it becomes clear that the Jewish religion was forming a new identity and that the old identity under the Pharisees was no longer existed. This was not a banal change but a radical transformation that gave Judaism a new face and identity that has carried forward until today.

Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity: Ideas and Traditions

Rabbinic Judaism was paralleled by early Christianity and it was born at a time when both religions could be classified as NRMs. Both stemmed from Second Temple Judaism. Both used the Torah to justify the existence of their beliefs (Christianity) and a set of new laws (Mishnah) which was created by the Rabbinic leaders of the community.

Rabbinic Judaism was no less innovative than Christianity. The sages stressed the centrality of the Torah by claiming its pre-existence and expanding its boundaries to include the oral Torah, and strengthened the bond between ethnicity and Judaism into an unprecedented identification. In doing so the sages sacrificed part of the rich intellectual heritage of ancient Judaism, exactly as the Christians did.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Bryan Wilson, "Secularization" Religion in the Modern World." In *The World's Religions*, 953-66. (London: Routledge, 1988), 965.

¹²⁵ Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, 34.

One of the major changes that Judaism, on the one hand, underwent was the cultural link that the Rabbinic leadership instilled into their communities. This gave the public a new sense of urgency to keep their culture alive to respond to the threat of possible future destruction, by identifying them now as a race of people inextricably linked to their religious beliefs. Christianity, on the other hand, took a different approach to the successor movement concept, by affirming that ethnicity was no longer a prerequisite to faith and the Torah was subordinated to the Messiah. Like Rabbinic Judaism, it sacrificed a part of the rich intellectual heritage of ancient Judaism.¹²⁶ As Rodney Stark writes in his work *The Rise of Christianity*, “Conversion to new, deviant religious groups occurs when, other things are being equal, people have or develop stronger attachments to members of the group than they do to non-members.”¹²⁷ This is what the Rabbis did with their Jewish community. It was not a conversion to a new religion per se, but a transition to a new form of the religion that deviated from the previous form of Judaism, wherein the philosophy of an already existent faith community that members had a much stronger attachment to was the backbone. It is interesting to compare the similar ways in which these two successor movements that were born out of Second Temple Judaism evolved within an NRM framework, producing different results. Membership in Rabbinic Judaism was through birthright and Christianity became a religion anyone could join. These two traditions have carried on until present day. Doctrines and the technicalities of liturgical practices have been added throughout the past two millennia, but for the most part principles behind membership have stayed consistent in both cases.

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 18.

The rise of Rabbinic Judaism was a development that resulted from thousands of years of prior history, which included many different traditions and philosophies as previously outlined in this work. It was the end of Judaism's long evolution from the Ancient Israelite Religion to Rabbinic Judaism.

Some traditions taken from the past had to be included for the NRMs to progress, just as others had to be cast aside. Boccaccini writes that "history is full of paternities disclaimed and forgotten for the sake of ideology and replaced by ideological pedigrees aimed to highlight a philosophical or religious truth underneath the historical processes."¹²⁸

We know the sages had the strongest interest in eradicating even the memory of their Judaism with previous Judaism, which in their eyes would have contaminated the autonomy of their tradition. Between themselves and Scripture they created an artificial bridge –a chain of sages. Led by the belief that the truest origins of their movement lay not in history but in the miracle of God's eternal will. They projected themselves into the past and modeled the past on themselves. What better way to validate their own tradition than making themselves the trustees of the tradition since the earliest times?¹²⁹

Regardless of what they said or did, the Rabbis needed to maintain a connection to the oldest traditions to legitimize themselves as the rightful interpreters of the Torah and be a credible way forward for the Jewish people. At the same time, any institution arising from a previous one always had to impress something distinctive on its subjects. There was no better way to accomplish this than to get rid of some old traditions which were no longer relevant to their thought and belief system. For the most part Judaism kept traditions afloat in its slow evolution. Christianity also used this method to forge its identity as well.

Historiographical and systematic analysis of extant sources suggest that there was in fact a line of continuity between pre-Rabbinic Judaism exactly as there was a line of continuity between some pre-Christian Judaism and early Christianity. Like Christianity and any other intellectual or religious phenomena in history, Rabbinic Judaism emerged not in a flash of revelation but as a modification or variant of previous systems of thought that, in turn, developed from earlier

¹²⁸ Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, 40.

¹²⁹ Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, 39.

systems, and as a modification or variant of social groups, that, in turn, developed from previous groups.¹³⁰

Ideas and traditions are at the forefront of what unites a community. Throughout Jewish history, the idea that Yahweh called Jewish people to become his chosen people has been the backbone of their collective history. Traditions united the earliest tribes of Israel and they continued to until the Second Temple period. As the religion evolved, these ideas and traditions provided continuity for the religion. As E.P. Sanders writes in his book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, which compares ideas and traditions: “One may consider the analogy of two buildings. Bricks which are identical in shape, color, and weight could well be used to construct two different buildings which are totally unlike each other. Ideas and traditions are not Judaisms, but constituent elements of Judaism.”¹³¹ Rabbinic Judaism continued to use the ideas and traditions of the past so it could move forward.

Arthur Lovejoy writes that “ideas are the most migratory things in the world.”¹³² Boccaccini expands on this concept with his analysis of the topic: “Ideas are raw ingredients that are borrowed, exported, adapted, recycled, within different systems of thought, cooked according to the most diverse recipes.”¹³³ Ideas as well as traditions are borrowed all the time and throughout the course of history this has been the case not only for the Jewish people but for everyone involved in the evolution of the Western world. An example of this is the Ancient Roman Pantheon. The Romans included new societies’ sets of religious beliefs into the Roman Pantheon whenever a new city or kingdom was conquered as a way of pacifying the defeated

¹³⁰ Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, 41.

¹³¹ EP Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 13.

¹³² Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being; a Study of the History of an Idea*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 4.

¹³³ Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, 30.

population under their rule. Another example of a Roman adoption of foreign ideas and traditions was the worship of the Egyptian Goddess Isis before soldiers went into battle, which they thought brought them good luck on the dawn of war. Borrowing ideas was a common practice in the ancient world, and for the Rabbinic order to do it within its own religious tradition was nothing new or revolutionary.

The rise of Rabbinic Judaism followed the destruction of the Second Temple at the hands of the Romans, which then essentially destroyed the political and religious foundation of the Sadducees. Like a true successor movement, Rabbinic Judaism took what worked from the past and integrated it into their new form of Judaism. To fully comprehend the evolution of Rabbinic Judaism, all historical factors must be considered from beginnings of the Ancient Israelite Religion, and the same must be done for Christianity as well, which would never have existed had it not been for Judaism.

Italian philosopher and Renaissance historian Eugenio Garin states what an intellectual historian must do to understand why a group of people or societies change:

The intellectual historian's task is to be aware of plurality of philosophies, understand the many voices, put them in context, identify their relations with the social groups in which they emerged, assess what they meant for these groups, how they acted if they acted, how they change, and how they decline—human thoughts, how they were created by people, how they changed people.¹³⁴

This quote is very helpful in reminding the historian of the necessity to look at all possible angles and information available, if they are to truly understand what happened to the community they are studying.

Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity shared a common background in the sense that they took ideas from the previous institutions' main set of laws and rules, the Torah, and

¹³⁴ Eugenio Garin, "Osservazioni Preliminari a Una Storia Della Filosofia." In *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History, from Ezekiel to Daniel*, by Gabriele Boccaccini, 40-41. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2002), 41.

formulated new and updated ideas and traditions to justify their beliefs as NRMs. How they went about it was entirely different, but the parallel with the old institution was there. Both are successor movements to the Second Temple tradition, and they are the two movements rose out of the ashes after the Romans had completely destroyed the temple. The Torah was used to justify the Oral Torah (Mishnah) because it was the most effective way the Rabbis could justify their leadership. They also used the Torah to make Judaism more than just a religious and national identity, but an ethnic identity as well. The ethnic angle was one of the major differences between the older Second Temple Tradition and the newly formed Rabbinic Tradition. While they did eradicate lots of former traditions and ideas, they also borrowed heavily from the older tradition. Christianity moved in a completely different direction, as ethnicity was not used to propagate their agenda and the Torah was used to justify the Messiah. Both religions arose as NRMs from the temples destruction and both used the exact same formula to grow and make themselves strong forces that have lasted up to the present day.

Justifying Rabbinic Judaism as an NRM

The goal of this thesis was to discuss Judaism in the light of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the ongoing effects of that event. The Romans did not have any sympathy toward the Jewish people and their political hierarchy; after the Jewish people lost the battle, the temple was sacked and everything associated with it ceased to exist. Throughout the course of this thesis, the changes that happened within Judaism after the fall of the Temple and the number of different sects that rose in its aftermath have been explored. Doing so led to discussion of how religious, political, and institutional changes justified Rabbinic Judaism (and its counterparts) as New Religious Movements. The following section will narrow the focus solely to the NRM thought process and what made Rabbinic Judaism a NRM.

In his book *The Aftermath of Catastrophe: Founding Judaism 70- 640*, Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner explains the events that forever changed Judaism, which parallel the trajectory of an NRM:

Three possibilities presented themselves, represented by the dates of 586 BCE, 70 CE, and 1492 and 1497: Hurban Bayit Rishon, the destruction of the First Temple, Hurban Bayit Sheni, the destruction of the Second Temple, and 1492 and 1497, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal. All three marked axial events. Each stood for renewal, rebirth, and renovation of the communities of Judaism.¹³⁵

We can connect this back to Lorne Dawson's statement that the NRMs of the 1960s can be conceived as successor movements in a time of political and social unrest, and cultural experimentation.¹³⁶ This notion can be applied to Judaism post-70 CE. Rabbinic Judaism emerged during a time of political turmoil and experimented with an already existing set of rules, adapting them to its own ideas to create something workable. It was a brilliant strategy and fits

¹³⁵ Jacob Neusner, *In the Aftermath of Catastrophe: Founding Judaism 70-640 AD*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 7.

¹³⁶ Dawson, *Comprehending Cults*, 40.

the description that Neusner gives of the renewal, rebirth, and renovation of a community. He reiterates how it relates to the destruction of the Second Temple:

In the aftermath of 70 came the Mishnah and the companion documents of Rabbinic Judaism... Of these three moments, the destruction of the Second Temple struck me as the most compelling model, the most relevant one. The Torah that was compiled after 586 was subsumed within the Rabbinic system.¹³⁷

He explains what the Rabbinic order used to justify the motives and ideas that they brought forward for this new movement they were then proposing. His statement of 70 CE being the most relevant model is absolutely accurate because Rabbinic Judaism has been the standard for Jewish people since its inception. Earlier in the chapter Glock's deprivation model was considered as something Rabbis seemingly used to build a solid foundation, by taking an innovative idea and using it to build a movement out of deprivation. Taking it a step further, the Lofland-Stark model of conversion can be applied to the Rabbinic movement to add another dimension to the justification. Lofland and Stark both studied a religious movement during the 20th century called the Unification Church (or the Moonies), and their conclusions were based on the research compiled by studying this group's conversion and thought process. It involves a seven-step process which will be outlined next:

The model stipulates that for persons to convert to a cult they must (1) experience enduring, acutely felt tensions in their lives, (2) within a religious problem-solving perspective (as opposed to psychiatric or political problem-solving perspective), (3) which leads them to think of themselves as a religious seeker. With these three "predisposing conditions" in place, the individuals must then (4) encounter the cult to which they convert at a turning point in their lives, (5) form an affective bond with one or more members of the cult, (6) reduce or eliminate extra-cult attachments, and (7) be exposed to intensive interaction with other converts.¹³⁸

It is important to clarify that this study was not intended to be used on ancient forms of religion that predated the Moonies by more than 1500 years, but much of the Lofland-Stark model of conversion is useful to explain why the Jewish people needed to move away from the

¹³⁷ Ibid

¹³⁸ Dawson, *Comprehending Cults*, 75-76.

older Second Temple movement to the new and reformed Rabbinic movement. We must also take into consideration that these people, the Jews, were not converting to a new Religion, but experiencing a cultural and instructional change from an old religion to a newer and more modern movement.

The first step is the experience of enduring. The Jewish people endured much during the time of the destruction of the Second Temple. Hundreds of thousands were killed in war and many more were then sold into slavery by the Romans for punishment of the battle lost.¹³⁹ They essentially were battered and beaten into the ground. It was not only the Jews of the Holy Land who fought against the Romans, but Jews in the surrounding areas as well, such as the city of Caesarea which had a larger Jewish population during the time of the outbreak of the revolt.¹⁴⁰ This was a battle that not only affected Jews of Jerusalem but Jews from all around the known world.

The second step, which emphasizes a religious problem-solving framework, should be considered alongside the introduction of the Mishnah by the Rabbis and the new set of religious laws that followed, which were corroborated using the ancient laws as well. The Mishnah was edited by the Rabbi Judah and he brought forward all the laws and made them into one volume. "The publication of the Mishnah was an integral part of his [Judah's] attempt to extend the power of the Patriarchate."¹⁴¹ Putting all the works into one document made it easier for him and his followers to focus on one collection, his.¹⁴² Now there was no question on who the real authority was; the Mishnah set the precedent as the book of Laws for the people to follow.

¹³⁹ Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 6: 420-422.

¹⁴⁰ John R. Curran, "The Jewish War: Some Neglected Regional Factors." (*Classical World* 101, no. 1 (2007): 75-91), 84.

¹⁴¹ Shaye Cohen, "Judaism to the Mishnah." In *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of Their Origins and Early Development*, 195-225. (Washington DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992), 221.

¹⁴² Ibid

The third step would then set out the group as a religious seeker: the Jewish people were not seeking religion per se as they already had that in their lives, but it can be safely asserted given the subject matter that has been covered that they were seeking a change for the better within their own religion. This is what the Rabbinic order offered, an improved and more stable movement, as opposed to the old order which had just failed them. “The Mishnah implicitly presents itself as a source of authority, endorsing the right of its human authors to debate and legislate.... It gave the rabbinic learning a secure base on which to build for the future.”¹⁴³ Cohen suggests that the Mishnah was a source of authority not only for the Rabbinic order to establish itself a tool that gave stability to the population by presenting them with a code of laws that they could follow. These laws were new and their codification meant progress, and the formation of a new institution with a clean slate. The fact that the Mishnah was a source of authority meant it was a pillar of strength for the Rabbis who then shared this strength with the Jewish people.

Steps four and five were already pre-conceived before the change had happened as the cult or religion in this case was already there for them and all that was needed was to move in a new direction. The whole familial aspect of community was already in place when the Rabbinic Order made Judaism a more ethnic movement after the destruction of the Temple. The ancient synagogue during the Second Temple period was the main institutional building in any Jewish city that was building on this idea of community. “In the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, the term “synagogue” was used to refer to the community as well as its central building.”¹⁴⁴ This is backed up by the fact that it was used in the Bible as well in the Book of Acts, when Apostle Paul visited a synagogue:

“From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath, they entered the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent

¹⁴³ Ibid (222,223)

¹⁴⁴ Lee Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 1.

word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak.”¹⁴⁵

Levine writes that in Ancient Judea, Rome, and Egypt, inscriptions were found that reinforce the notion of community within the Synagogue.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, it can be stated that even before the ethnic turnaround under Rabbinic Judaism, the aspect of community was one of the main pillars of the Jewish people. Historically speaking, it has remained one of their most consistent cultural traits.

The idea of an ethnic community was what set the wheels in motion for a more exclusive religion in a world where Christianity was accepting many converts and the pagan religion also had accepted many new converts. Step six, which states that adherents to NRMs had to detach themselves from the older traditions, was being carried out by the Rabbis, who distanced themselves from the previous order and abandoned older traditions such as animal sacrifice, while allowing for worshipping now to be done in a Synagogue, which was not an accepted practice under the regime of the Second Temple. Academic work on Rabbinic Judaism has expanded substantially and research and study have provided understanding of how Rabbinic Judaism differentiated itself extensively from that of its predecessor, Second Temple Judaism. “The Rabbinic literature is not the timeless and universal summary of Jewish belief that it was once taken to be.”¹⁴⁷ The Mishnah itself was created after the destruction of the Temple, between the conclusion of the Bar Kochba revolt and the end of the 2nd century CE. Judaism by this time had already existed for over one millennium. The change was necessarily drastic, as Judaism of the Second Temple was ultimately a failure. “Second Temple Judaism was discontinuous with

¹⁴⁵ The Bible, Acts, 13:14-15.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁷ Mark Adam Elliot, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 4.

both Scripture as it represented a sustained and organized development and interpretation of the biblical traditions, and the Second Temple period.”¹⁴⁸ Shaye Cohen states that it was not because of time that Judaism changed, but because it needed to. “The Shift from Second Temple Judaism to Rabbinic Judaism was not a mere chronological transition but a substantive change.”¹⁴⁹

The last step is extensive interaction with other members of the religion. This comes into play with the whole notion of a bond between Judaism ethnicity and community. The most important place where all of this happened was the synagogue. This thought process brought the community closer together, as they now regarded themselves as people linked by culture and religion, something that other religions of the ancient world lacked. The synagogue played a very important role in making these interactions happen, as the place where the Rabbis took it upon themselves to preach their Mishnah. “In fact most often claims about, descriptions of, and references to ‘the synagogue’ and its activities comment on Judaism as a religious or ethnic tradition.”¹⁵⁰ It was a place where they could share a common religious practice with same people of the same ethnicity and this was one of the aspects that Rabbinic order implemented, Judaism was to become more of an ethnic vehicle, as Boccacini stated earlier in this chapter. Without the synagogue, the communal importance of the Rabbinic tradition would never have been realized. “More significantly, synagogues provided the socio-political and religious setting without which the formative stages of Judaism and Christianity can hardly be understood.”¹⁵¹ The synagogue was a community center for religious gatherings as well as many other functions that were previously carried out in the temple. “Contrary to popular beliefs, synagogues served for a variety of functions that contemporary western culture would regard as properly belonging

¹⁴⁸ Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition: A History of the Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* (1991), 1.

¹⁴⁹ Shaye JD Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 210.

¹⁵⁰ Runesson, Binder, Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue from Its Origins to 200 CE*. (Boston-Leiden: Brill, 2008) ,1.

¹⁵¹ Runesson, Binder, Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 5-6.

to municipal institutions. These included council halls, law courts, schools, treasuries, and public services.”¹⁵² The communal interaction for members of an NRM must come in a common place where they can all meet and gather together. The synagogue was one such place for the Jewish people. Without it and its Rabbinic leaders, the Jews would have no place to congregate to exchange ideas, dialogue, and pray together. Culture, religion, and politics were all important domains that contributed to the importance of the synagogue, because it was the relevant place to engage with them.

The Lofland-Stark model of conversion to an NRM can be applied, with slight adaptation, to the Rabbinic movement, since many of the points the movement brought forward fall into place with its evolution after 70 CE. Rabbinic Judaism was a successor movement which stemmed from Second Temple Judaism. When using the notion of a successor movement, Glock’s theory of deprivation, and the Lofland-Stark model of conversion, it becomes clearer why Rabbinic Judaism may have been an NRM after 70 CE.

Rabbinic Judaism represented a major shift in the history of Israel and the Jewish people. We saw how many times throughout history Jewish society, religion, and culture changed after certain events, but those changes pale in comparison to what happened in 70 CE. The destruction of the Temple meant that no place of worship or government existed for the Jews anymore, and that the reign of the Pharisee and Sadducee orders was over. The Rabbinic order took some time to come out as the major driving force behind the change, but when it did, one of its first orders of business was the creation of the Oral Torah. This was the vehicle they used to implement their own ideas and traditions and finally move away from the Pharisaic and Sadducee set of ideas and traditions. The Synagogue became a major part of worship and replaced the Temple as

¹⁵² Runesson, Binder, Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 8.

an institution. Instead of having just one place to worship God, Jewish people now had many places. It was a turn of events that forever changed Judaism and that has carried forward until the present.

Conclusion

Judaism is one of the world's most ancient and storied traditions, with such a lengthy timeline that it was bound to be subject to major changes. The historical record confirms this statement about Judaism, from its roots as religion that was practiced by Bedouin tribes who happened to settle in the land of Israel, to the Rabbinic tradition Judaism that stared death right in the eye and emerged stronger, in a very Darwinian turn of events. The basis of this thesis comes from the notion that Rabbinic Judaism's break with traditions from the Second Temple era parallels the NRMs that rose to popularity in the mid twentieth century while the hippie movement in the western world was predominant. Lorne L. Dawson is one the leading scholars on this subject and it was his work *Comprehending Cults* that provided the original inspiration for this paper. In his work, he chronicles the different experiences from the research he has done on different NRMs over time. Rodney Stark is another major source whose research on NRMs I consulted, and his work *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* further strengthened the connections made in my thesis.

Judaism is a religion with a deep history and to argue that it was an NRM at a certain point in this history is challenging. Through my research and years of study, I feel that I have gathered enough evidence to highlight the connection of the ancient era with NRMs when paralleled with movement of the 20th century. With the application of theories and studies in this body of knowledge, most notably the Lofland and Stark seven-step model, I have convincingly demonstrated that Rabbinic Judaism was in fact a New Religions Movement after the fall of the Second Temple in 70 AD.

From the very beginning, Judaism has always been a major hub for cultural change. The Holy Land, as it is known to the Jewish people, was a very popular place for nomadic people and conquerors alike. In its early stage, it was a hotbed of conflict amongst vagrants and tribesmen for its prized trade routes to Egypt and the land of Babylon. This is how the ancient Israelites made their way here, who were united under one religious belief. According to Martin Noth's theory, a sanctuary to Yahweh existed but not in one place but constantly on the move. The first major era of Judaism was the era of the Temple of Solomon and it was during this time that Jerusalem and the Yahwistic Israelites established themselves as a major civilization in the ancient world. Solomon erected a grand temple in Jerusalem that would serve as the central hub for all religious, political, and economic activity. His father, King David, was the historical figure who conquered the lands surrounding Jerusalem and made them into his kingdom. Solomon essentially established Jerusalem's permanence by undertaking grand architectural projects and making it one of the most beautiful cities of the ancient world. Shortly after his death, the downfall of Jerusalem started as it was conquered by numerous succeeding empires, starting with the Assyrians, who then lost a war to the Babylonians, who destroyed Solomon's temple. The Israelites were split up as the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar instituted laws that dispersed the people of the Jerusalem. With their temple gone and the elites banished, the Israelites then regained hope for their future with the arrival of the Persian Empire, which later reinstated all banished people to their rightful lands and whose king Cyrus the Great sponsored the rebuilding of the temple. This started the Second Temple Era.

Early in its history Judaism was bounced around by different rulers and it was finally under the Era of Persia that they would finally re-emerge from the abyss as a cohesive entity. The Second Temple was different from the era of King Solomon and it was the dawn of a new

historical era that preceded the rise of Rabbinic Judaism. The Israelites were introduced to new enemies such as the Ancient Greeks and Romans, who would ultimately be their last occupying rulers.

The Second Temple era was the most defining era in Jewish history, because Judaism re-established itself historically and geographically after the tumult of the previous eras disrupted a consistent and linear history. Now that the Temple was rebuilt, it was time for the Israelites to flourish in history, and they did. Second Temple Judaism was defined with the following God-Temple-Torah Triad. All three complemented each other and dominated the religious, social, and political aspects of Jewish life. The Temple was the main institutional centre for all three as well, the house of God where the priests debated religious, social, and economic matters. Two elite classes, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were well respected and held the most influence on matters in Israel. There existed another Jewish sect in Alexandria, Egypt. These people who were known as the Hellenistic Jews also made pilgrimages to the Temple. Jerusalem thrived and then almost died under the Second Temple due to the Romans. In grueling war with the Israelites, the Romans sacked and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. Only one wall still stands today. The war with Rome had long-lasting ramifications on Jerusalem and the Israelite culture; without the Temple, it was almost impossible for the culture and religion to survive. The Sadducees gradually lost relevance after this time as faith and confidence in them dwindled. The Pharisees gained relevance by evolving into the Rabbis. Through the destruction of the Temple, different movements arose and later flourished. An important point to remember is that another sect of Judaic tradition started prospering at the same time, the Jesus movement. The Temple's destruction had a lasting effect on the followers of Jesus Christ, and on the Hellenistic Jews as

well. The most important event of this period was the birth of Rabbinic Judaism, which filled the void the Second Temple left behind.

Before understanding why Rabbinic Judaism was an NRM, we had to understand what happened with the Hellenistic Jews and the Jesus Movement. The latter was a special movement in the history of Judaism, as they practiced and prayed in synagogues and continued the Jewish way of life, but differed in their belief that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. The reason why the Jesus movement can be thought of as an NRM is its conformity to cultural continuity, which is a main justification for converting to an NRM. The new way of life offered cultural continuity with the previous system, but differed from it in significant enough ways that allowed it to move forward. Like their Jewish cousins, the Jesus movement followers upheld the laws and traditions of Moses and the Torah.

The Hellenistic tradition in Judaism is very important element in this study because of the way in which Jews evolved alongside their Greek neighbors. They continued to practice their Jewish faith, but at the same time they adopted many Hellenistic customs, actions which would have been deemed blasphemy by their counterparts in Jerusalem. The Hellenistic Jews were always in a cultural tug of war between Hellenism and their basic Jewish beliefs. An example of this was their adoption of the Sibylline Oracles. After the destruction of the Temple, they had hopes of a rebuilding it, but that dream never came to fruition as the Emperor Nerva, who would have sponsored the rebuild, passed away.

NRM concepts were used to explain this period in the Hellenistic Jews' development. Dawson's four step socialization theory, which states that a culture must adhere to these four steps – adjustive socialization, combination, compensation, and redirection – applies. Bryan Wilson's theory that the newcomers to NRMs are enamored with the cultural sense of

community that they have to offer, also finds currency in the Hellenistic situation. Hellenistic Judaism fostered its strong sense of community that existed for a long period and derived its resilience from its unique situation: a Jewish culture that was surrounded by Hellenistic Greek speaking cities.

Rabbinic Judaism was the single most important Jewish movement that was generated from the destruction of the Second Temple. Rabbinic Judaism would go on to become the mainstream Judaism that is still practiced today, which gives an idea of its importance. The Rabbis and the leadership instilled many changes that would leave their mark on the people, religion, and political aspects of life of that time and beyond. The first important change which happened under the Rabbinic order was the rise of the Synagogue. With the temple destroyed, the people needed a place to worship and gather together. It essentially replaced the Temple as the main cultural centre of Judaism with the Synagogue. Rabbis would lead their religious preaching here, the community would gather, and it was the main hub of everything Jewish. Rabbis also instilled an ethnic tradition into Judaism. The religion became much more exclusive, and the use of animal sacrifice was abolished. The most important change that was made was the addition of the Mishnah, the Oral Torah. The Rabbis stated it was told to Moses at Sinai when he was given the Written Torah. This was the Rabbis' strategic way of imposing their rule over Jewish social, economic, political, and religious life. Rabbi Judah, the father of the Mishnah, documented the laws, which were then adopted by others in the Rabbinic Order.

The Lofland-Stark seven step process was the model I used in my work to justify Rabbinic Judaism as an NRM. It was through this process we could see a step-by-step version of events of how and why Rabbinic Judaism became a New Religious Movement post-70 AD. The story of Judaism is one of the deepest and most interesting stories that has made its way to the

21st century and it continues to evolve today. With the multiple beatings Judaism took over the course of its history at the hands of many different empires, one could say it is almost a miracle that it has survived this long. Paralleled with the numerous wars and major shifts in tradition that Judaism has endured makes it seem almost impossible that it has survived. The main strength of Judaism through the ages has been its strong sense of community. The Rabbis capitalized on this strength and used it as their platform to keep Judaism alive. Moving in a new direction was the single most important action the Rabbinic order took upon themselves to carry out. In doing so, they assured that the tradition of Judaism and its glorious history survived.

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