

# Chronology of Jewish Religious History

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## Biblical Period

### **2000 to 1250 B.C.E.**

- Ancestors of the Jews migrate from Mesopotamia to the land of Canaan
- Formation of nomadic and early settlement traditions of the patriarchs; development of tribal lineages

### **1250 to 1050 B.C.E.**

- Exodus from Egyptian bondage; formation of covenantal community; conquest and initial settlement of Canaan
- Development of tribal structures and forms of national leadership

### **1050 to 587/6 B.C.E.**

- Rise and establishment of monarchy under David (ca. 1013-973); First Temple built by Solomon, son of David
- Development of ancient Israelite institutions and literature; religious creativity; emergence of classical prophecy with Amos (mid-eighth century)
- Assyrians conquer Samaria; exile of ten northern tribes (722/1 B.C.E.)
- Jerusalem temple and Judea destroyed by Babylonians; exile of Judeans to Babylon (587/6)

### **539 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.**

- Beginning of return to Zion; restoration of ancient institutions and leadership; Temple rebuilt (515) and prophecy revived
- Emergence of classical Judaism centered around the law (revelation) and its interpretation (traditions)
- Rise of Greek power and hegemony in Palestine (331); Judaism prohibited by Antiochus IV, Maccabees revolt (168), and Temple restored and purified (165)

- Development of different religious groups in Palestine, including the community around the Dead Sea; and the development of Jewish life in Alexandria; Philo combines Jewish culture with Hellenistic thought
- Emergence of Pharisees as dominant religious movement, and its consolidation of the ideals of scholarship and piety
- Rise of Roman rule; conquest of Palestine in 63 B.C.E.

## Rabbinic Period

### **70 to 700 C.E.**

- Rabbinic Judaism in formation; development of class of sages and rabbinical schools of study and interpretation
- Fall of Second Temple to Romans (70); Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai founds center for legal study and administrative rule in Yavneh (Jamnia); conference on canonization of biblical literature at Yavneh (90)
- Rabbi Judah the Prince compiles the Mishnah, the written digest of the oral traditions and rules of the Tannaim
- Establishment of Babylonian rabbinical academies and the development of vast commentaries on the Mishnah, called Talmud, by Amoraim; consolidations of these comments and other traditions produce Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds (mid-fifth-sixth centuries)
- Midrashic (nonlegal) creativity in Palestine and Babylonia

## Medieval Period

### **700 to 1750 C.E.**

- Consolidation of legal traditions and liturgy; Massoretes establish traditional text of the Bible (Rabbinic Bible)
- Jewish life spreads from Israel to Spain, Morocco, Iraq, and beyond; development of Jewish institutions and literary creativity
- Jewish life influenced by Christianity and Islamic civilizations
- Repeated persecutions and massacres of Jews, as in the Rhinelands (1040); York, England (1190); Navarre (1328); Spain (1391); Poland; (1648). Ritual burning of Talmud in Paris (1244) and Italy (1553).
- Repeated exile of Jews, as from England (1291), France (1309), Spain (1492), and Portugal (1496); ghetto introduced in Venice in 1516.
- Major thinkers (most notably Rashi, in 1040) emerge to comment upon or consolidate the biblical and rabbinical traditions; development of systematic philosophical expressions of Jewish theology (most notably by Maimonides, born in 1128); emergence of new trends in Jewish mysticism in Spain and Germany (*Zohar* is written in Spain in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century)
- Revival of Jewish mysticism in Safed, Palestine (sixteenth century), led by Joseph Karo and Isaac Luria; major compilation of Jewish law by Karo (*Shulkhan Arukh*)
- Important period of Talmudic study in Poland (sixteenth-eighteenth centuries)
- Jewish community founded in New Amsterdam, New York in 1654

## Modern and Contemporary Periods

### 1750 C.E. to Present

- Emergence of new patterns of Jewish life, due to social and ideological revolutions in Europe and challenges to old rabbinical structures in Eastern Europe
  - Development of secular Jewish enlightenment and religious reform movements in Western Europe; pietistic revival, known as Hasidism, under spiritual leadership of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem, in Eastern Europe; resistance of traditional Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe; accommodations to European culture develop in the West
  - Spread of new religious developments to America in the nineteenth century; foundation of Union of American Hebrew Congregations (Reform) in 1873 and of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Conservative) in 1886
  - Revival of Jewish nationalism, called Zionism, from 1881; Herzl writes Zionist manifesto (*The Jewish State*, 1896), and the Zionist movement is founded in 1897; resettlement of land of Israel and revival of Hebrew language; Tel Aviv founded in 1909
  - Nazi war against the Jews of Europe, 1933-45; six million Jewish noncombatants murdered during World War II; development of Jewish resistance in Europe (Warsaw Ghetto uprising, 1943); resistance spreads to Jews in Palestine
  - Jews return en masse to land of Israel and develop social, cultural, and political institutions; state of Israel founded in 1948
  - Partition of Palestine between Jews and Arabs; frequent conflicts; Six Day War (1967) and Jewish reunification of Jerusalem; ancient temple wall recovered and ancient holy sites declared accessible to all
- Revival of Jewish cultural and religious institutions in America; cultural ties deepened between Jews of Israel and Diaspora

