

Chapter Three:

The cultural, political, and literacy environment, (in the Eastern Mediterranean region), at the time of our Lord Jesus Christ's ministry on earth.

In our modern developed world, there is a noted lack of understanding about ancient peoples in the central and eastern Mediterranean region during the time of the earthly mission of our Lord Jesus Christ. These civilizations and their national political structures, their cultural sophistication, their development, their level of literacy, and the development of their laws and jurisprudence (the right to file a complaint in the nation's courts, citizens political rights including the right to vote), are often overlooked. There is a tendency to view the disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ as superstitious, possibly illiterate, unsophisticated peoples. That was not the case. In the build up to the period of our Lord Jesus Christ's mission on earth, several significant developments among people groups and nations took place, in the central and eastern Mediterranean region.

From 500 B.C. to 1450 A.D., three Republics emerged and one follow up Republic emerged on the world scene, in the central and eastern Mediterranean region. These Republics laid the foundation for the rapid spread and importance of literacy. The use of tutors, attendance at academies/gymnasiums (universities/colleges), the concept of each citizen having some rights and protections under national laws applicable to all citizens, spurred each citizen's desire and motivation to become literate. Judicial systems (courts open to citizens to resolve civil and criminal matters), and citizen rights in terms of voting and directing public policy within their respective Republic, required literacy, which citizens embraced.

The Athenian Republic and the Greek World:

In approximately 580 B.C. the Greek City State of Athens and the surrounding area of Attica began to develop democratic structures and institutions that would result in a democratic Athenian city/state. These concepts and institutions of law and democracy, centered on certain laws and rights that were enacted, and became an inherent privilege and right of each citizen. The administration of Athens lay in the Areopagus, (a traditional council controlled by the appointed Athenian aristocracy). We first see the Ecclesia of Athens (the assembly of Athenian citizens), on the world stage, commencing approximately 594 B.C. Solon, a member of the Areopagus, in 594 B.C. allowed all Athenian citizens to participate in the Ecclesia regardless of class (creating a larger participatory democracy, not limited merely to the Athenian aristocracy).

In 461 B.C., Ephialtes, a member of the Areopagus, (and a leader of the radical democrats in the Areopagus, along with a young Pericles), proposed a reduction in the Areopagus's powers and proposed a transfer of some of those powers to a reconstituted council called: The Boule, (The Council of 500). The new members of the Boule, under Ephialtes and Pericles's reforms,

were to be elected by lot from the members of the Ecclesia. The Ecclesia of Athens, the assembly of citizens in the city/state of Athens, approved the reconstituted Boule, as did the members of the Areopagus. The Boule was originally created in 594 B.C. by Solon, and limited its membership to Athenian aristocracy.

The Ecclesia itself, was responsible for declaring war, military strategy, and electing the Strategoi, who in turn nominated and elected magistrates, (judges, who adjudicated civil and criminal matters of the Athenian citizens, and/or who moderated the assemblies of the Athenian citizens). The Ecclesia consisted of all male citizens of Athens, which met forty or more times a year. The meeting agenda of the Ecclesia was set by the Boule, (whose members were chosen by lot from the Ecclesia). A quorum of 6,000 members was required at each Ecclesia assembly. A police force of 300 Scythian slaves carried red ropes to induce the citizens of Athens to attend the meetings of the Ecclesia. Some of the members of the Boule were appointed to run the daily municipal and national affairs of Athens. The adopted constitution of Athens provided that members of the Boule were appointed to serve for one year. Ephialtes reforms were passed by the members of the Areopagus in 461 B.C.. However, Ephialtes was assassinated later that year, 461 B.C., by those who opposed the reforms.

Ephialtes, and a young Pericles, instituted reforms that prepared the way for the final development of Athenian Democracy. The reforms limited the political power of the Areopagus and established the dominance of the Ecclesia. The popular law courts were also created by these Ephialtic reforms, passed by the Areopagus in 461 B.C..

All the Greek city states started to emerge as democracies, as the Greeks progressed beyond their authoritarian political units, and Kings, into democratic city states.

The Areopagus, was a judicial court, as well as an administrative council. However, after 461 B.C. the most important court cases would be heard by The Boule. Under Athenian Statesman Solon, (630 B.C. to 560 B.C.), the Boule would hear and decide the most important cases filed with the courts. Please note the term Areopagus also refers to a physical place in Athens, a prominent rock outcropping located northwest of the Acropolis in Athens, Greece, where the Apostle Paul delivered a sermon to the Athenian leaders and intellectuals, as found in The Book of Acts Chapter 17.

Athenian Statesman Cleisthene (508 B.C.) set the size of the Boule at a membership of 500 male citizens. Athens was broken down into 10 districts. Each district would provide 50 male members of the Boule. The Boule would then draft decrees to be voted on by the Ecclesia.

Pericles (495 B.C. to 429 B.C.) is given the most credit for the building of Athenian democracy. Pericles encouraged participation in Athenian democracy by the lower classes. If both parents were Athenian citizens, their children were considered Athenian citizens. The lower classes could watch Athenian theatrical productions without paying admission. Pericles worked for the expansion and stabilization of all Athenian democratic institutions. This was accomplished by extending political representation, (the vote), to all classes of Athenian Citizens within the Ecclesia and the Strategoi. The Boule would subsequently be chosen by lot from the

Ecclesia Assembly. Keep in mind, that the members of the Strategoi, were elected by the Ecclesia. The Strategoi members would in turn select and elect Magistrates. Pericles enacted legislation that granted the lower classes access to the political systems and extended to them opportunities to serve in public offices, from which they had previously been barred, (approximately 451 B.C.).

The citizens of Athens who could vote were adult, male, free citizens, some 30% of the total population. When you consider that in the vast majority of nations, at that time, their citizens were granted no political franchise, no education, no public facilities, and no form of cultural life; the Athenian city/state's political structures and institutions were a huge advancement for humanity. In contrast, in other nations/people groups, in terms of day to day living, their citizens were given a tough agrarian life where the King took everything he wanted from their citizens/residents. Athens was creating something new and special for the average citizen. In Athens, public baths were available for the citizenry, theater was available for the citizenry, and education by private tutors was broadly available, (the citizens' would gather several families together and pool their resources, to pay for tutors for their children). Finally, the Athenian citizens were able to have a voice and vote in their political system.

Reference Books:

Philip And Alexander, Kings and Conquerors, Adrian Goldsworthy, (2020), Basic Books, Hachette Book Group

Ancient Greece, Everyday Life in the Birthplace of Western Civilization, Robert Garland, (2013), Sterling Publishing Company (Sterling New York)

Carthage and the Carthaginian Republic:

In 814 B.C. the Phoenicians, (originally from the region that is today Lebanon), founded the city of Carthage on the North African coast. From 814 B.C. to 390 B.C. they expanded their city. Carthage's economy was based on agriculture, and maritime trade routes that reached throughout the Mediterranean region. The Carthaginians intermarried with the major people groups (nations) in northern Africa, (the Numidians, Berbers, etc.). This included the wealthy and powerful families of Carthage. As Adrian Goldsworthy stated in his book: The Punic Wars, Adrian Goldsworthy, (2000), Cassell & Company, page 33: "This always seems to have been the case with the Numidian kingdoms, whose royal families enjoyed a fairly close relationship with the Carthaginian noble families, bonds that were sometimes strengthened by marriage alliances . . . "

The governing structure of Carthage was originally based upon a monarchy, but Carthage's governing structure progressed to become a Republic. Before Carthage instituted democratic structures and public voting, a Carthaginian Senate was created and instituted. The Senate, (also known as The Council of Elders), consisted of the Carthaginian aristocracy, appointed by the King. The Senate's duties consisted of advising the King of Carthage on public policy matters

and international affairs.

In approximately 390 B.C., the citizens of Carthage **elected** their first Assembly (People's Assembly) of fellow citizens. The function of the Carthaginian Assembly was to vote for or against laws proposed by the Carthaginian Senate, (also known as The Council of Elders, consisting of 200 to 300 prominent citizens who were appointed for life). Approximately 306 B.C., these two legislative bodies were electing the Carthaginian executive officers, which consisted of two senior magistrates, (Suffetes/Judges). The two senior elected magistrates, (Suffetes/Judges), governed Carthage in conjunction with the Carthaginian Senate, and the elected Carthaginian Assembly, (Popular Assembly). As Adrian Goldsworthy states in his book: The Punic Wars, Adrian Goldsworthy, (2000), Cassell & Company, page 30: "Aristotle praised Carthage for possessing a balanced constitution contributing elements of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, which allowed it to avoid the chronic instability which was the weakness of most Greek states . . .".

Richard Mills in his book: Carthage Must be Destroyed, The Rise And Fall Of An Ancient Civilization, Richard Mills (2010), Penguin Books, quoted the former elected Roman Consul, Cassius Dio, of the Roman Republic, (approximately 263 B.C.), in reference to Carthage: "If there had been no other reason, it was most difficult, if not impossible, for two "free peoples", powerful and proud, and separated from each other by a very short distance considering the swiftness of the voyage, to rule alien tribes and yet be willing to keep their hands off each other . . .", Carthage Must be Destroyed, The Rise And Fall Of An Ancient Civilization, Richard Mills (2010), Penguin Books, page 174. Former elected Roman Consul Cassius Dio's remarks clearly indicate that both the Roman Republic's and Carthage's citizens were "free peoples", who elected their Magistrates: (Consuls/Suffetes, Praetors, Aediles, Quaestors, etc., and their equivalents), as well as electing their assemblies (the Popular Assembly, the Centuriate Assembly, etc.). Their citizens had full access to their respective civil and criminal courts to press their rights and their cases. Their citizens also voted on major decisions, such as going to war. It is true that only male citizens could vote, nevertheless, this was a major move by these ancient civilizations in the direction of democracy and democratic structures. This included each nation's civil and criminal laws and rights, which were the rights and the privileges of each citizen, (including full access to their courts, and their right to defend themselves).

Literacy in the Punic language increased dramatically, as basic tutoring was sought by parents for their children. In addition, an Academy, (university), was developed and established in Carthage. Literacy became the key to engage in business, writing contracts, and to understand the national laws and regulations. Literacy was also needed to understand the campaign statements made by those running for the Carthaginian Assembly.

Reference Books:

The Punic Wars, Adrian Goldsworthy, (2000), Cassell & Company

Carthage Must be Destroyed, The Rise And Fall Of An Ancient Civilization, Richard Mills (2010), Penguin Books

The Roman Republic:

Roman legend has it that, in 753 B.C. Romulus and Remus, sons of the Roman God Mars, were raised by a she wolf and founded Rome. Romulus killed Remus in a family dispute and Romulus went on to become the first king of Rome, the settlement he founded was on seven defensible hills overlooking the Tiber River. Romulus needed to recruit citizens to protect his settlements and build an economy. Some historians say the bulk of Rome's first citizens were criminals and runaways. Romulus named the kingdom and capital city, Rome. Some historians hold, that the Roman Senate was founded early in Romulus's reign. It was not an elected body, and never became an elected body. The local patricians and aristocracy were appointed to the Roman Senate and advised the King of Rome. This practice continued until the period of Roman Kings was ended and the Roman Republic commenced. On Romulus's death, the Roman Senate would select and elect the next king, and this practice continued for each new King of Rome until the Roman Republic commenced, (509 B.C.). For the period of the Roman Kings, (753 B.C. until 509 B.C.), the Roman Senate consisted of male members who were patricians, heirs of patricians, founding families of Rome, magistrates, consuls, and censors. Members of the Roman Senate were appointed for life. When a Roman King died the Roman Senate would select and elect the next king. A Roman Kingship was not hereditary. The process was known as the "Interrex", there would be a rotation of Senators to administer Rome while the Senators nominated a candidate to replace the deceased King. The Senate would then approve the nominee for King. Some historians indicate that male Roman citizens would then formally elect the nominated the King, and the Roman Senate would then give final approval.

The Roman Senate served as advisor to the Roman King, and had influence over the Roman Constitution, legislation, finance, and foreign affairs. Only the King could make new laws, but the Senate was often involved and consulted in the process. Over time the Roman Senate grew to 300 and then to 500 members. In approximately 509 B.C. the last Roman King, Tarquinius Superbus was rejected by the people and replaced with the The Senate, the Curiate Assembly, and two elected Consuls, (Senior Magistrates), to run the government. The Senate and the Curiate Assembly, at the commencement of the new Republic were all generally chosen from the Patrician class (ruling class). As a reaction to these developments, the middle class and lower class Roman Citizens (The Plebeians), began to fight for and gain their political rights.

According to the Greek Historian Polybius, the Roman Constitution of The Roman Republic (509 B.C. to 43 B.C.), consisted of three governing entities: The People (The emerging Assemblies: The Centuriate, Tribal, Plebeian Assemblies); The Council of Elders (The Senate-appointed for life), and the two elected Magistrates: at the executive level (two elected Consuls). The original Curiate Assembly was amended into the Centuriate Assembly, the Tribal Assembly, and the Plebeian Assembly.

The Roman Centuriate Assembly was designed as if it were a military unit. The male citizens were organized into Centuries, each Century had one vote. Each Century had at least

100 members. Unfortunately, the results tended to give the majority of votes to the Patricians, the wealthy, and the largest land owners

In order to contest the overwhelming influence of the Patrician Class, the Conflict of Orders (494 B.C. to 287 B.C.), battle was waged by the Plebeians to gain political rights and standing vis-a-vis the ruling class, the Patricians. In 367 B.C. The Roman Constitution was changed to create the Plebeian Assembly (with genuine powers and authority), and to require that one of the two ruling Consuls' had to be a Plebeian. In 287 B.C. Lex Hortensia, required that legislation passed in by the Plebeian Assembly was binding on all, both Plebeians and Patricians.

The Conflict of Orders, commenced due to the Plebeians feeling that they were denied their due political franchise as citizens under the Roman Constitution. The Patrician class initially dominated the Roman Senate and the Centuriate Assembly. In 494 B.C. the Plebeians prepared to leave Rome and move nearby to establish their own nation. The Patricians, not wanting to lose the Plebeians voted to create the Plebeian Assembly. 494/471 B.C. (Lex Sacrata and Lex Publilia) granted the Plebeians their own assembly where they could vote for a Plebeian Tribune and vote for Magistrates to administer justice and provide law courts for the Plebeians to resolve their legal issues. The elected Plebeian Tribune had the right to veto any law proposed by the Senate or the Centuriate Assembly. In 367 B.C. The Roman Constitution was changed to require that one of the two ruling Consuls' had to be a Plebeian, (Lex Licinius Sextia). In 339 B.C. (Lex Publilia) required the election of one Plebeian Censor, for the all important census. In 287 B.C. (Lex Hortensia), legislation voted in by the Plebeian Assembly was deemed binding on all, both Plebeians and Patricians.

In the early years of the Roman Empire, the Roman Empire operated as a confederation of self-governing cities. Defense and Foreign Affairs remained in Rome, the Italian cities and provinces generally elected their own city councils who conducted administrative duties and judicial duties under Rome's watchful eye.

However, all was not well in the greater Roman Empire. In 89 B.C. the Italian cities that were conquered by Rome commenced the Social War, with the result that Rome granted citizenship liberally throughout Italy, with a few exceptions.

The continuing Roman Senate originally consisted of the founding families of Rome (300 which grew to 1,000 families). The Roman Senate's Senators were appointed, and consisted of the founding families of Rome, appointed Patricians, and elected Magistrates (who would eventually consist of: Consuls, Praetors, and Quaestors). These various Magistrates were elected by the Centuriate Assembly and elected by the Plebeian Assembly. The Roman Senate's power was to:

- A. To weigh in on who could run for office as a Magistrate;
- B. To approve legislative measures before they went to the Assembly
- C. To advise and consult
- D. The Senate gave their views on issues and pending cases.
- E. The Senate issued a (Senatus Consultum), the report of the debate.
- F. The Magistrates generally followed the Senates' views and

conclusions on matters before the courts.

The Curiate Assembly, the original Patrician Assembly under the Roman Kings, evolved into the Centuriate Assembly, the Tribal Assembly, and the Plebeian Assembly. The authority left in the Curiate Assembly was limited to ratifying the top elected Magistrates (the Consuls and the Praetors), and ratifying the legislation which granted their authority.

The Centuriate Assembly, organized Roman male citizens into Centuries (a voting block, each with one vote). The Centuries were organized by economic class, defined by a means test. Again, each Century had at least 100 members. The Centuries would vote on legislative, electoral, and Judicial matters.

- The Centuriate Assembly:
- A. Could Declare War.
 - B. Could elect the highest ranking Magistrates: (Consuls, Praetors, and Censors).
 - C. Pass legislation granting authority to Consuls, Praetors, and Censors.
 - D. Served as the highest Court of Appeal in Judicial Cases.
 - E. Ratified the results of the Census.
 - F. The elected Consuls would preside over the election of two Censors by the Centuriate Assembly, every 5 years, to conduct a census.

The President of the Centuriate Assembly was a Consul. The elected Consul would serve a one year term and then become a member of the Roman Senate after serving that term. Keep in mind that Julius Caesar, who was quite popular, was elected Consul by the Centuriate Assembly (59 B.C.), before declaring himself a dictator (49 B.C.). Julius Caesar was also elected Consul in 48 B.C., 46 B.C., 45 B.C., and 44 B.C., by the Centuriate Assembly. The Tribal Assembly elected Julius Caesar, Pontifex Maximus, (64 B.C.), before declaring himself a dictator (49 B.C.). Caesar Augustus (Octavian) was also elected a Consul before assuming what amounted to authoritarian powers, (43 B.C., 33 B.C.). Julius Caesar was murdered by Roman Senators (44 B.C.). But keep in mind, that prior to Julius Caesar, several prior military tribunes declared themselves temporary dictator during the Roman Republic period. One example is: Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix (Sulla), who was elected Consul (88 B.C.), and declared himself a temporary dictator (82 to 80 B.C.). Roman Senators were also known to take summary justice into their own hands. Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (163 B.C. to 133 B.C.) was elected Quaestor (137 B.C.) and Tribune of the Plebeians (133 B.C.), after a notable military career, he was murdered by Roman Senators for his attempt to redistribute land and public lands from the Patrician Class to the Plebeian Class, (133 B.C.). Gaius Sempronius Gracchus, was elected Plebeian Tribune (123 B.C. to 122 B.C.), Gaius Gracchus was also murdered by a group of Roman Senators for attempting land reform. Caesar Augustus had the Roman Senate grant him lifetime tenure as Commander-in-Chief, Tribune, and Censor, which amounted to dictatorial authority.

The Centuriate Assembly also served as the highest Court of Appeals, during the Roman

Republic period. The Centuriate Assembly ratified the results of the Census taken from time to time. The Centuriate Assembly was presided over by a Consul who had almost absolute power to determine the procedure and the legality of each piece of legislation offered.

The Tribal Assembly elected lower magistrate positions. The Tribal Assembly was organized based on the 35 tribes that made up the greater Rome region. The region where a citizen resided would determine which tribe the citizen were assigned to. The tribes included Patricians and Plebeians. The Tribal Assembly would meet for legislative, electoral, and judicial purposes. The citizens were organized into one of the 35 tribes and each tribe would have one vote. The Tribal Assembly elected Quaestors, Curule Aediles, and Military Tribunes. The President of the Tribal Assembly was a Consul or a Praetor. The Praetor made all the decisions with respect to the procedure and the legality of each law proposed. The Tribal Assembly had the power to try judicial cases. The Tribal Assembly also elected the Pontifex Maximus (lifetime appointment), a high priest position.

The Plebeian Council was also organized by tribe (region), but only Plebeians could be a member and vote within their tribe. Each tribe would have one vote. In contrast, the Tribal Assembly consisted of both Plebeians and Patricians. The Plebeian Council elected two types of Plebeian magistrates:

- A. The Plebeian Tribunes (10)
- B. The Plebeian Aedile .

These offices were created in 494 B.C..

The Roman Senate had the right to veto the legislative acts of the Plebeian Council. That changed in 287 B.C. when the Roman Senate lost that right. After 287 B.C. almost all domestic legislation came out of the Plebeian Council. The Tribune of the Plebeians had the right to veto actions by the Centuriate Assembly, the Tribal Assembly, and the Senate, prior to the end of their respective convention, (before the Act/Legislation became effective).

Although Roman Citizenship was widely granted in Italy as part of the settlement of the Social War (89 B.C.), the individual citizen had to be present in Rome and be organized into a Century to vote in the Centuriate Assembly. Additionally, the individual citizen had to be present in Rome to be organized into a tribe in order to vote in the Tribal Assembly. The Assemblies only met when they were called by a Magistrate. This gave Roman citizens, living in Rome, greater influence.

The Aedile was responsible for the maintenance of public buildings in Rome and the regulation of the public festivals. The Plebeian Council elected a Plebeian Aedile and the Tribal Assembly elected a Curule Aedile. Both Aediles had responsibility for maintaining Rome.

Other elected positions. The Praetor, (A Praetor administered Roman justice in a territory under Roman control). A Curule Magistrate and Curule Aedile administered justice in Roman provinces. In 241 B.C. a Magistrate Praetor was added to the Imperium to be a regional administrator who also served as the judge for all appeals in a region or province, as well as as

serving as commander of the Roman Troops in that province. The Praetor relieved the Consuls of Judicial responsibilities. The Praetor was a commander of a Roman Army and a Magistrate assigned to judge cases. Praetorian Law, the use of prior precedent to decide cases, was an early application of Common Law principles, which continued from 367 B.C. until the end of the Roman Empire. The Urban Praetor was seated in Rome to administer Roman Justice, in Rome. In 227 B.C. the provinces of Italy, outside of Rome, had two Praetors. Further, Two Praetors were created for the administration of Sicily and Sardinia. Finally, two Praetors were created to administer Roman Justice and Roman law in Spain (197 B.C.). The dictator Sulla increased the number of Praetors to eight and transferred the provinces to the Praetors (102 B.C.), Julius Caesar raised the number of Praetors to sixteen and Caesar Augustus (Octavian) changed the Praetors to Imperial Administrators.

Under Caesar Augustus, the Roman Republic ended, the Senate now appointed the Praetors. The Centuriate Assembly and Tribal Assembly were suspended, (14 A.D.). Under Caesar Augustus, the Roman Senate presided over Legal Proceedings, appointed governors, and appointed Legates, Praetors, and Magistrates. Caesar Augustus attended the Senate debates and presided over the budget discussions and legislation in the Senate. Praetors were given jurisdiction to rule on Trust Administration and Business Law (Claudius), and given jurisdiction over the Treasury (Titus), and Guardianships (Marcus Aurelius). Praetors heard civil and criminal cases. The Urban Praetor would provide a summary to the Roman Senate.

Reference Books:

SPQR, A History of Ancient Rome, Mary Beard, (2015), Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Ancient Rome, Nigel Rodgers, consultant Dr. Hazel Dodge FSA, (2022), Anness Publishing Limited

The History of the Roman Republic, Klaus Bringmann (2007) Polity Press

The Punic Wars:

What was most unfortunate in the ancient world were the Punic Wars. In the Third Century B.C., The Carthaginian Republic, The Greek States, and the Roman Republic, all offered their citizens the right to vote for their magistrates, and their local governing authorities. Their citizens were given wide access to tutors, (to increase their literacy), and their citizens had the right to redress grievances, in their early courts and judicial systems of the ancient world. This was based on laws, proposed and passed by their elected Magistrates, Consuls, and other officials, in their respective assemblies. These laws applied to their citizens, and protected their citizens. Generally, people groups outside of these three Republics/Empires (political units), in the ancient world, had no rights vis-a-vis their governing authority. Their governing authority generally took what they wanted from their citizens, (including their children for military service), offered no avenue to literacy, no vote, and no redress of grievances in courts of law; in

fact few laws existed outside these three Republics. So, it seemed counter-productive when the three Republics declared war on each other. One such period consisted of the Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage.

A. The First Punic War: (264 to 241 B.C.).

Prior to the commencement of the First Punic War, the armies of the Roman Republic conquered the southern Italian peninsula, on behalf of, and at the request of the Roman Senate, under the leadership of the two elected Roman Consuls. The Roman armies conquered the Latin cities and the Greek cities, (that had been established by Alexander the Great and his successors) in the southern Italian peninsula region. Following the Roman conquest of these cities, the Romans liberally granted Roman Citizenship, (even before the Social War), to the residents of these conquered cities, a hallmark of the Roman Republic and later the Roman Empire. In addition, the Romans allowed the local cities (particularly the Greek cities), to continue their political system of “Polis”, the election of city councils, (for the maintenance and the legislation of local laws), and the selection and election of their own local magistrates, (for the maintenance of their courts of law, to address legal disputes). As the Roman Republic extended its empire and sphere of influence to the end of the Italian peninsula, they looked next to conquer Sicily.

The Carthaginian Republic and the Carthaginian Empire extended over north Africa, part of Spain, Corsica, Sardinia, and Sicily. For the Republic of Carthage, their main city and capital, was the large walled city of Carthage, on the coast of north Africa, where Tunisia is today. Prior to the First Punic War, Carthage’s navy ruled the western Mediterranean. The harbors in the city of Carthage were enormous and ahead of their time. One harbor was dedicated to commercial vessels and the other harbor was dedicated to Carthaginian naval vessels. Unfortunately, contrary to Carthaginian interests and goals, the Romans wanted to conquer and incorporate Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica, into the Roman Republic. Confrontation between the two great Republics was inevitable.

The war broke out in 264 B.C., after the Roman Senate voted, (and the Roman citizens voted in the Centuriate Assembly), in favor of sending a military expeditionary force to Sicily, under the command of Appius Claudius Caudex, (one of the two elected Roman Consuls that year). That Roman military initiative, eventually resulted in the Romans gaining a foothold in Sicily at Messina, (262 B.C.). The Straits of Messina, between Rhegium, Italy and Messina, Sicily, was two miles to ten miles wide and twenty miles long. Carthaginian naval vessels would intercept Roman ships and return them to Rhegium, Italy. However, Claudius Caudex was eventually able to cross at night from Rhegium to Messina, and capture Messina with his Roman troops, (264 B.C.).

The Romans marched their troops to the southeast, to lay siege to the Greek city state of Syracuse, the only other political/military power on the island of Sicily, (other than the Carthaginians). The Romans’ goal was to pressure Syracuse to join the Romans in their objective to expel the Carthaginian army and navy from Sicily. The Romans sent two legions to Messina, Sicily. In response, the Carthaginians sent fresh armies to Agrigentum, Sicily, (central Sicily). The two Roman Consuls: Lucius Postumius Megellus and Quintus Mamilius Vitulus,

moved a force of 40,000 Roman soldiers to Agrigentum, Sicily, to commence a siege of that city. Inside the walled city of Agrigentum, the Carthaginian commander Hannibal Gisco, (not to be confused with Hannibal Barca), possessed a more modest number of soldiers, approximately 10,000. There was a stalemate for five months between the Romans and the Carthaginians, until November (262 B.C.), when the residents as well as the Carthaginian soldiers inside the city of Agrigentum, Sicily, began to run out of food. The Carthaginian Military Commander Hanno arrived from Carthage with a relief army of 30 elephants, 30,000 infantry, and 1,500 cavalry. But inside the city walls of Agrigentum, due to the Roman siege, the starvation of the city's residents and the Carthaginian infantry became severe. After several initial successful engagements against the Roman army, Hanno felt he was able to reach and relieve the city of Agrigentum and the Carthaginian army within its walls. After a long struggle of military engagements between the two armies, the Romans killed 3,000 Carthaginian infantry, 200 cavalry, and took 4,000 prisoners, as well as killing 8 elephants, however the Romans, lost 30,000 of their reinforced infantry and 540 of their reinforced cavalry. Finally, during a subsequent engagement between the two armies, the Romans eventually gained the upper hand. Nevertheless, the trapped Carthaginian army in Agrigentum was able to escape and both Carthaginian armies moved out of the area, toward western Sicily.

By 261 B.C. Rome controlled most of Sicily. The Carthaginian generals retreated to their strong points in Sicily and the coastal cities, primarily in western Sicily, where they carried out raids and garrison duty, leading to a stalemate between Carthage and Rome.

Carthage's navy ruled the Western Mediterranean Sea. The Roman Senate, determined to expel the Carthaginian navy and army from Sicily, built a navy to rival the Carthaginian navy. The Romans copied the designs of the Carthaginian navy vessels. A Carthaginian Quinquereme ran aground near Messina. The Romans captured the naval vessel and reverse engineered it. The Romans added a new feature, a Corvus, a bridge four feet by thirty-six feet, with a metal spike under the bridge. The Corvus would be dropped from a standing position on the Roman deck, onto a Carthaginian naval vessel, and the spike underneath would hold the Corvus onto the Carthaginian ship's deck. This allowed Roman soldiers to board and seize the Carthaginian naval vessels.

The Romans prepared to invade North Africa and the Carthaginian homeland.. The Carthaginians were told of the impending Roman invasion of North Africa, and sent 350 Carthaginian naval vessels, Quinqueremes, (to intercept the Roman navy and landing force). The Carthaginian navy confronted the Roman navy off of the southern coast of Sicily in the Battle of Ecnomus, 256 B.C.. The Roman Navy had 330 ships, Quinqueremes, along with transports, which were commanded by both of Rome's Consuls, who were elected in 256 B.C., Marcus Atilius Regulus, and Lucius Manilius Vulso Longus. A total of 680 warships with 290,000 sailors and marines were engaged. This is believed to have been one of the largest naval battles in world history. Even today, some 2,280 years later, their ships and their cargo are still being raised, (from the ocean floor), off the coast of Sicily.

After a long confusing day of battle at sea near Ecnomus, Rome gained the upper hand. To understand the size and scope of this naval battle, each Quinquereme was generally 145 feet long

and 30 feet wide, about half the size of a U.S. Navy Frigate and a little less than one third the size of a U.S. Navy Destroyer. There were three levels of oars manned by approximately 90 rowers, some two to a bench, some three to a bench, that attained a speed of seven to eight knots. The Romans generally carried a crew of three hundred: one hundred and twenty marines for boarding Carthaginian ships, 20 deckhands, with the balance used as rowers. The Carthaginian crews were generally the same with fewer marines for boarding of Roman ships. At the battle of Ecnomus, the Romans had 330 of these naval combat ships and the Carthaginians had 350 of these naval combat ships. Those navies would be intimidating, even in today's world. These numbers do not include the additional Roman support ships carrying horses for the calvary, troops, food, and equipment.

The Carthaginian Navy's strategic objective was for their naval ships (Quinquereme) to gain speed and ram an enemy's naval vessel with a bronze ram on the bow of the Carthaginian naval vessel, which was below the water line, in order to sink or capture the enemy's naval vessel. The Roman strategy was much the same, with the addition of the Corvus, which made it easier to get many Roman marines on an enemy ship, quickly. In the end, at the battle of Ecnomus, the Carthaginian navy lost 94 Quinqueremes either through sinking or by being captured, and the Roman navy lost just 24 Quinqueremes. It was a clear Roman naval victory over the Carthaginian navy.

After the battle of Ecnomus, Rome landed their troops in North Africa (Apsis). and marched to within 10 miles of the city of Carthage. The Carthaginian army turned the Romans back. A Roman fleet was sent to evacuate the Roman army. In a storm on the way back to Italy, Rome lost 384 ships and 100,000 men. Rome again rebuilt their fleet adding 220 new ships. The construction of this new group of Roman naval vessels was financed by loans from wealthy Roman families (the first War Bonds recorded).

By 248 B.C., Rome had taken most of Sicily but Carthage maintained several coastal cities. Between 248 B.C. to 243 B.C. a stalemate occurred. After several subsequent naval engagements in which Rome was the victor, the Carthaginians decided to abandon Sicily and negotiated an end to the hostilities by way of the Treaty of Lutatius. Carthage evacuated Sicily and paid 81 tons of silver over ten years to Rome as an indemnity. The losses on both sides were staggering. During the First Punic War, the Romans lost 700 naval vessels, and the Carthaginians lost 500 naval vessels. The official census of Rome declined by 140,000 (between 263 B.C. to 243 B.C.). The losses among the allied armies of Rome, (allies of Rome), are assumed to be three times that number. The Carthaginian losses were also staggering. The Carthaginians were forced to surrender the islands of Corsica and Sardinia to Rome, shortly after the execution of The Treaty of Lutatius, (243 B.C.).

After the first Punic War, Carthage was strengthened. Carthage expanded into North Africa including conquering all of Libya. Carthage then conquered most of Spain, (conquering much of the Iberian Peninsula). The wealth of the Spanish silver mines paid off the Carthaginian indemnity to Rome and filled Carthage's treasury.

One last note, when the Romans reversed engineered the captured Carthaginian Quinquereme,

the Romans noticed numbers and signs on each piece of the assembled vessel. The Carthaginians were mass producing the parts of their naval vessels, which they would then assemble. The Romans copied this process as well.

In 218 B.C. the second Punic War commenced over Spain. By 218 B.C. Rome had built 1,000 galleys and large fleets of naval ships.

B. The Second Punic War:

As part of the settlement of the First Punic War, Rome gave Carthage rights to most of Spain, including a mid-coastal area, which contained the city of Saguntum, on the coast of Spain. Saguntum was allied with Rome and began to raid the smaller towns and cities surrounding Saguntum, which were allied with Carthage. The Carthaginian army moved against Saguntum, in 219 B.C., and the second Punic War was underway. Hannibal Barca's father, Hamilcar Barca was a renowned general and a leader of Carthage. Hamilcar Barca was in charge of Carthage's armies in Spain and was responsible for the civil administration of Spain. Hannibal accompanied his father to Spain at the age of 9. Hamilcar Barca, Hannibal Barca's father, was killed in battle in Spain. Within a short period of time, Hannibal's brother in law, who was, at the time, the Carthaginian commander in Spain, was murdered by some fellow officers. Hannibal Barca was then elected as the new commander of the Carthaginian army in Spain and was the chief Carthaginian administrator of Spain at the age of 26, (221 B.C.).

Hannibal Barca consolidated control of the region from a seaport base (Cartagena-New Carthage), and married a Spanish princess. Saguntum, an independent city in the middle of the eastern Spanish coast was raiding Carthaginian cities and towns. Saguntum was an ally of Rome. The Carthaginian army surrounded and laid siege to Saguntum for eight months until the city fell. The Roman senate saw this Carthaginian military campaign as an act of war. Hannibal Barca assembled an army of 90,000 infantry, 12,000 cavalry, and 40 elephants and marched 1,000 miles through the Pyrenees, across the Rhone River, and the snow capped Alps into north central Italy. Hannibal faced the Roman Army of Publius Cornelius Scipio west of the Ticino River, and with 26,000 remaining soldiers, Hannibal's army and cavalry defeated the Roman Army, (218 B.C.), west of Ticino River. Hannibal's Carthaginian Army faced a second Roman Army on the left bank of the Trebia River, and gained a second major victory over the Romans. This victory helped to win over the Gauls and the Ligurians, who resided in Northern Italy, which led to numerous new army recruits for the Carthaginians. In 217 B.C. Hannibal's army faced a third Roman Army at Lake Trasimene and again defeated the Romans. Hannibal's army, exhausted and not having the numbers to lay siege to the city of Rome itself, rested.

Rome now raised 16 Roman Legions, 80,000 men, twice the size of Hannibal's Carthaginian army and allies, and confronted Hannibal at Cannae. Hannibal's army and allied armies annihilated the Roman army at Cannae. 44,000 Roman soldiers were killed compared to 6,000 Carthaginians and Carthaginian allies who were killed. The Roman defeat at Cannae stunned much of southern Italy. Despite the fact that Rome had liberally given Roman citizenship to many Italian and Greek cities and towns, many Italian and Greek cities and towns began to ally with Carthage. Hannibal pleaded with the Carthaginian Senate to send more troops and siege

machines to surround and lay siege to the city of Rome. The Carthaginian Senate felt they had committed all that they wanted to commit, for the moment. Publius Cornelius Scipio (Scipio Africanus) and fellow Roman General Quintus Fabius Maximus began to rally the Romans in Southern Italy and slowly pushed back on Hannibal's forces until the Romans regained much of southern Italy by 209 B.C.. In 208 B.C. a Carthaginian Army of reinforcements finally arrived in northern Italy following the original route through the Alps. The Carthaginian Army was led by Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal, but was defeated by a Roman Army in northern Italy.

Roman General Scipio Africanus, in order to move Hannibal out of Italy, attacked the Carthaginian forces in the Spanish city of Cartagena (New Carthage), and defeated the Carthaginians. After Scipio had secured Spain he moved his Roman Army to North Africa. Rome had an inexhaustible supply of manpower which Carthage did not, not at that level, and not in those numbers. The Carthaginian Senate recalled Hannibal back to Carthage to defend the city against the Roman Army. In 203 B.C. Hannibal withdrew his troops from southern Italy to defend Carthage. In 202 B.C. Hannibal faced Scipio's Roman Army (Scipio Africanus) near Zama. The Romans had recruiting the neighboring Numidia nation and peoples as allies and defeated Hannibal at Zama. Carthage lost 20,000 soldiers while the Roman Army only lost 1,500. In the peace treaty imposed by Rome after the Second Punic War, Carthage was only allowed to keep part of their territory in north Africa. Carthage was required to pay ten thousand talents of silver to Rome, one hundred young Carthaginian men were taken as hostages to Rome, and the city was required to give up their war elephants. In addition, the Carthaginian navy was burned in the Carthaginian harbor. The neighboring kingdom of Numidia was given a large part of Carthaginian territory. Scipio (Scipio Africanus) did not require Hannibal's surrender and respected his former rival. Scipio would not allow the Carthaginians to harm or prosecute Hannibal.

Hannibal retired to his country estate outside of Carthage. After six years, he was elected a "Suffete", one of the two Chief Executive Officers, elected to manage the City of Carthage. He rebuilt the merchant shipping of Carthage and sought to transfer some power to the common Carthaginian citizens. After running afoul of the Carthaginian aristocracy, false claims were made by the Carthaginian aristocracy to the Roman Senate, stating that Hannibal was assisting the Seleucid Kingdom in their fight against Rome. It was apparent that the charges were false but the damage had been done. Scipio Africanus, who was a member of the Roman Senate defended Hannibal, but to no avail, Scipio Africanus had lost his stature in the Senate over the years. Hannibal was forced to become an exile and Scipio Africanus and Hannibal died in the same year, essentially as outcasts from their own nations.

Keep in mind, if Hannibal Barca had 25,000 to 30,000 more soldiers, Western Civilization, as we know it, with its pillars of democracy, laws, and rights running directly to the citizens with established courts to press their rights, and the centrality of literacy, Western Civilization, as we know it, would have been based in Carthage, North Africa, rather than in Rome, Italy.

C. The Third Punic War:

The Third Punic War between Carthage and Rome occurred during the period, 149 B.C. to 146 B.C.. Carthage had recovered from the Second Punic War, (219 B.C. to 202 B.C.). Evidence of Carthage's resurgence was found in discoveries by archeologists of their coins and trade (from that period), being found as far away as the Balkans, (the former Yugoslavian federation). To appease the Romans, Carthage exiled Hannibal Barca; Carthage provided grain and barley for Rome; Carthage regularly paid their reparations from the second Punic War; and Carthage gave military assistance to Rome's military campaigns. Carthage lost much of their territory to King Masinissa of the Numidian nation, who sided with Rome against Carthage in the second Punic War in the battle of Zama (202 B.C.). Even after the settlement at the end of the second Punic War between Rome and the Carthaginians, the Numidians continued to take more Carthaginian territory. When the Numidians attacked the Carthaginian city of Oroscoipa in 150 B.C., Carthage responded by sending an army of 31,000 men to fight the Numidian King. Carthage lost the battle against the Numidians and its army was annihilated. Rome now had an excuse to crush their old enemy, Carthage.

Roman Senator Marcus Porcius Cato, who witnessed the resurgence of Carthage in 153 B.C. became a persistent advocate to the Roman Senate, of the idea that Carthage must be destroyed. The Carthaginians sent envoys to Rome to explain their actions and grievances against Numidia and Numidia's King Masinissa, but they were rebuffed. Many Roman Senators had been pushing for military action against Carthage, and finally saw their chance. The Carthaginian city/ally Utica, seeing the momentum of events, defected to Rome. Utica provided a good harbor for the Roman North African invasion, just one day's sail away from the city of Rome. The Roman Senate asked for 300 Carthaginian noble children as hostages. Rome then declared war on Carthage for the third time, (149 B.C.), sending an army of 80,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry to North Africa. Carthage had 200,000 residents and prepared for a three year siege.

The Roman force was led by both elected Consuls of Rome: Marcus Censorinus and Manius Manilius. The Romans made no progress. Carthage had 21 miles of large walls around the city. This huge wall prevented the Romans from taking the city. The Romans were unable to blockade the Carthaginian port, and merchant vessels managed to resupply the city. The Carthaginians sent out fire ships to set the Roman fleet ablaze. In raids outside the city walls, the Carthaginian Army was able to destroy the Roman siege engines. An epidemic hit the Roman Army in 148 B.C., while camped outside the city of Carthage. The surrounding countryside continued to support the Carthaginians. The Carthaginian Army, itself, remained a stubborn force of resistance in the countryside. The Carthaginian city of Hippacra refused to surrender to Rome. Finally, the Numidia King Masinissa died, and was replaced by Numidian King Bithyas. King Bithyas, sent 800 cavalry to join the Carthaginian Army in a gesture of solidarity against the Romans.

In 147 B.C., elected Roman Consul Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus built a new siege wall around Carthage and its harbor. In 147 B.C. to 146 B.C., Scipio Aemilianus hemmed in the Carthaginian Army, 20 miles south of Carthage. The Carthaginian Army was unable to aid Carthage. Scipio Aemilianus then left Carthage to fight and defeat the Carthaginian Army at

Nepheris after a three week siege.

In the spring of 146 B.C. the Romans launched an all-out attack on Carthage, using the harbor area as the point of entry. The Romans broke through and street to street fighting took place over many days. When it was over, the surviving Carthaginian residents were enslaved. The city of Carthage was destroyed. The cities that sided with Rome and against Carthage, such as Utica were free from any Roman tax. Carthage was made a Roman province with Utica as its capital.

Keep in mind, that the Roman razing of Carthage included destruction of the city's university, (Academy), the Academy's library, and the main Carthage city library. The burning of all those stored scrolls which contained the writings of Carthage's philosophers, mathematicians, and scientist, and their educators, are lost to history, we will never know what was lost. Rome was insecure about Carthage's existence, and it actually took many decades for Romans to feel less insecure, according to the writings of Cicero, and other prominent Romans.

Carthage would remain uninhabited for almost a century, until the city was re-founded by Julius Caesar. This project continued with support from Caesar Augustus.

D. The Carthaginian Aftermath:

What was significant about Carthage, in terms of the history of the Christian faith, are the significant Carthaginian Christian Church leaders who arose from the ashes of the Carthaginian Republic, many decades and centuries later: St. Augustine, Tertullian, (the great Carthaginian attorney and theologian), as well as the many great Bishops of early Christendom who were from Carthage. In addition, there were important Councils of Bishops in Carthage and the Carthaginian region: The Council of Hippo (393 A.D.) and The Council of Carthage (397 A.D.) which helped determine which 27 books and letters became part of the New Testament Canon.

Reference Books:

The Punic Wars, Adrian Goldsworthy, (2000), Cassell & Company

Carthage Must be Destroyed, The Rise And Fall Of An Ancient Civilization, Richard Mills (2010), Penguin Books

Hannibal, Rome's Greatest Enemy, Philip Freeman, (2022), Pegasus Books

Roman Egypt (as shaped by the Ptolemaic dynasty) during our Lord Jesus Christ's earthly ministry :

The province of Egypt was the breadbasket of the Roman Empire and the wealthiest of the Roman provinces. The wealth and artisan skills of Egypt, as well as the culture, education, written contracts, and the use of the Greek language, also impacted the adjacent Roman

provinces such as Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. The Greek/Egyptian city of Alexandria had a per capita wealth of its individual residents that was only rivaled by Rome. The Imperial Province of Egypt, as a whole, was the wealthiest in the Roman Empire. At the time Joseph and Mary took our Lord Jesus Christ to Egypt to escape King Herod's attempts on the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, (approximately 6 B.C.), Egypt already had a substantial Jewish community. At that time (6 B.C.), the city of Alexandria, Egypt had a flourishing Jewish quarter, that had existed for almost three centuries, since the inception of the City of Alexandria, approximately 331 B.C. The City of Alexandria also had a flourishing Greek quarter, a flourishing Egyptian quarter, and a fourth quarter made up of residents from the Greek and Roman world and from neighboring African States. Thriving Jewish quarters also existed in the Egyptian Greek Cities of Naukratis, Ptolemais, and Antinoopolis, (Ptolemaic Empire).

During the period that Egypt was governed by the Greek Ptolemaic dynasty, (331 B.C. to 30 B.C.), the three primary quarters of the Egyptian city of Alexandria: Jewish, Greek, and Egyptian, each had their own "Polis", based upon the Greek political system and legal institutions found in Athens. This would mean that the Jewish quarter, and the Greek quarter, and the Egyptian quarter, would elect their own city assembly, (their own civic council), and elect their own judges (magistrates) to enforce their laws in their own courts. The leaders of the Greek states were looking for integration and stability not hegemony. When Caesar Augustus invaded Egypt and overthrew the last Ptolemy monarch, Cleopatra VII, and Roman co-Emperor Mark Anthony (approximately 30 B.C.), Caesar Augustus combined the city councils and the courts of law in Alexandria, Egypt, and in all of Egypt.

Historians state that Greek was widely spoken and written in Egypt under Roman rule (43 B.C. to 639 A.D.). Control of Egypt's wealth was the objective of several successive empires. A good part of Egypt's wealth came from their enormous amount of productive land irrigated by the Nile. The Ptolemaic empire imported Archimedes screw (or pump), from Greece which moved water uphill and watered a great part of the Egypt's fertile soil. The Nile stretched 520 miles from the Mediterranean to the Answan, creating 23,000 square miles of fertile land.

Fortunately, in order to understand the ancient world, thousands of papyrus texts have been excavated in Egypt over the last 200 years that date to the period of the Ptolemaic Empire and Imperial Roman rule over Egypt.

In 332 B.C. to 331 B.C. Alexander the Great invaded Egypt. Alexander the Great died in 323 B.C. and Alexander's childhood friend (half brother?), and fellow General, Ptolemy Sotr, assumed authority over Egypt and Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. This authority, was at first as the nominal Governor, for Alexander the Great's young children, but that changed, so that by 304 B.C. onward, Ptolemy Sotr ruled Egypt and Israel, as King. Ptolemy Sotr primarily protected Egypt from neighboring Greek Empires ruled by "Alexander the Great's" other Generals. To maintain an army, Ptolemy gave tax free land grants to soldiers, as well as regular police, and river police to maintain order.

The Greek Ptolemaic Empire organized Egypt into regions (Nomes). The Governors were Greek, and Egyptians, (many of whom had taken Greek names). The local administrators were

Egyptian, managing the census, land surveys, and taxation. Greek Ptolemaic Egypt had a dual court system (118 B.C.), the Greek “Chrematistai” (Circuit Judges in Greek legal matters), and People’s Justices “Laokritai”, were responsible for the Egyptian legal system and court cases. If a contract was written in Greek, the Greek “Chrematistai” courts had jurisdiction, if a contract was written in Demotic (Hieroglyphics), jurisdiction would be in the People’s Court “Laokritai”. This continued until Caesar Augustus reorganized Egypt, when it became a Roman Imperial Province.

i. Alexandria, Egypt:

Alexandria was founded April, 7th, 331 B.C. by Alexander the Great. Alexandria’s access to all the major Mediterranean ports and to the Nile River and Nile River Valley, caused Alexandria to become the largest and most important political and economic center of the Hellenistic world. Alexandria had two large harbors separated by a causeway to Pharos Island on which the great and famous Alexandrian Lighthouse was built, (one of the wonders of the ancient world). The Ptolemaic Empire built canals to the Nile River from Alexandria’s harbors. Alexandria was laid out in a grid system with roads running north and south and east and west. The houses, in more affluent neighborhoods, were built of stone and had porticoes and gardens. The city had several primary quarters or sections, The Royal Quarter is where the Ptolemaic Imperial Palace and cultural centers were located, (the Royal Alexandrian Library, centers of higher education, etc.), the Alpha quarter is where the courts of law were located, the Rakotis quarter, is where the Egyptians lived, the Delta quarter is where the Jewish population lived, and, of course, the Greeks had their own quarter. The Jewish community under the Greek Ptolemaic Empire was active in the political life of the city of Alexandria and in the country at large. Alexandria had many ethnic communities, due to immigration, and each community essentially had their own quarter:, the Syrians, north Africans, those from Asia Minor, Arabs, etc. all had their own quarter, or section of the city. One third of the acreage of the city of Alexandria was the Royal Quarter, “The Broucheion”. The Ptolemaic Palace, The Royal Gardens, (with a collection of exotic animals and birds), Alexander the Great’s tomb complex, The Mouseion (University), the Greek Temples, a theater, a Stadium, and a Gymnasium (college), were all built in the Royal Quarter. In terms of city administration, each community had its own Assembly and Boule selected from their Assembly, based on the “Polis” model from Athens. The Ptolemaic rulers had the last say in all matters.

Egyptian perfumes, papyrus, textiles, jewelry, metalware, glassware, and primarily their wheat, provided great wealth to Alexandria and to the Greek Ptolemaic Empire. The Ptolemaic rulers were patrons of culture and science, hoping to rival the culture and science of Athens. Philosophers, mathematicians, astronomers, artists, poets, and physicians, medical scientist, were all encouraged to relocate to Alexandria. They were provided stipends and housing. (Euclid, Archimedes, Apollonios, all taught in Alexandria), Herophilus worked on human anatomy and the circulation of the blood system, while in Alexandria.

The Mouseion, in Alexandria, Egypt, (also spelled Musaion), was a place of study of music, poetry, philosophy, medicine, science, with sites of learning, (lecture halls), much like a modern University. The Mouseion was an institute for scholars in Alexandria, located in the Royal

Quarter. Researchers and scholars assembled in The Mouseion and the Royal Library of Alexandria, (which consisted of a campus of buildings, gardens, lecture halls, and residential quarters). The Mouseion was modeled on (patterned after) Aristotle's Lyceum (essentially Aristotle's university campus), and Plato's Academy, both of which were located in Athens. They were essentially research universities and centers of higher education. Next to The Mouseion was the great Royal Library of Alexandria. Historians gauge the collection at the great Royal Library of Alexandria at somewhere between 400,000 to 750,000 scrolls and codexes. It was the greatest library of its time, on earth, and contained the works of the best known Greek authors, and had the best known Greek translations of works in every branch of learning. The position of Librarian at the Great Library of Alexandria brought distinguished scholars to the city, men such as the poet Apollonius of Rhodes, and Eratosthenes from Cyrene (who successfully measured the circumference of the earth). They served as tutors to the Royal family. Ptolemaic patronage brought scholars, in literature, learning, mathematics, and science. This continued under the Romans. Roman Imperial patronage of The Mouseion continued from Caesar Augustus forward. Augustus preserved funds for The Mouseion campus and continued the privileges and immunities of the scholars located there. Claudius increased the size of the Mouseion campus as well as increasing the funding. The teachers of the children of the Imperial Court in Rome were recruited from The Mouseion. The members of The Mouseion were a privileged sector of the Alexandrian community and were granted tax exemptions.

The translation of the Hebrew Bible (The Tanakh), into Greek, (The Septuagint) is associated with The Mouseion.

The appointed members of the Royal Museum of Alexandria, under the Emperors of Rome, was a position that was used to reward scholars and important political figures in Rome, (some of whom had no intellectual pursuits).

Alexandria, Egypt becomes significant to the Christian community, since John Mark, the author of "The Gospel According to Mark", written in Greek, was the first Christian Bishop in Alexandria. The great Catechetical School of Alexandria (Didaskaleion), was located in Alexandria. The Catechetical School of Alexandria was the first Christian Seminary, with such luminaries of the early church as: Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Pantaeus, Heraclas, Saint Jerome (writer of Jerome's Latin Vulgate, the translation of New and Old Testament Canons into Latin), Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea, etc., teaching or attending classes there. Many of the great early Bishops of the Christian Church were from Alexandria, such as Bishop Alexander (who along with his assistant, and later Bishop, Athanasius), helped to write, and vote for the Nicene Creed. And the later prominent Bishops who helped to write and voted for the Chalcedonian Creed, many were from Alexandria, Egypt. The standards that the Catechetical School of Alexandria maintained: (including Christian orthodoxy, embracing the Church Creeds of faith, and the Statements of faith, based on the New Testament Canon, and adopted by the Councils of Bishops); followed the standards and academic excellence upheld by the scholars at The Mouseion for their various subjects and disciplines. Finally, the availability of papyrus and vellum for scrolls and codexes, is very significant. The scriptoria located in Alexandria, would hire recent graduates of The Mouseion and The Gymnasium to sit in groups of 25 to scribe what was dictated to them from a reader of documents. A senior editor would go through their

finished work to make sure it was a perfect copy. In this way, every book and every letter of The New Testament canon, was transcribed and copied for us to have and use and read today. This was based upon the scholarship and scriptoriums of Alexandria, Egypt, written on Alexandrian papyrus and/or on vellum. Certainly, a foundation was being laid for the church, for their theological foundations, their orthodoxy, and their written and adopted Creeds of our Faith. Copies of the books and letters of the New Testament Canon, copied onto codexes in Alexandria, Egypt, were copied primarily in the Alexandrian Scriptoriums, in Greek.

ii. Greater Egypt:

At the various Nome capitals of Egypt it would not be unusual to find Greek style baths and buildings and possibly a Gymnasium. Memphis, Egypt, near modern day Cairo, was primarily Egyptian but contained many Greeks, therefore a Greek quarter, and also had a Jewish quarter, and a Phoenician quarter. In middle Egypt, the Nome capital Herakleopolis, had a large Jewish settlement with their own civic representation and their own courts of law.

iii. Ptolemaic and Roman Administration:

For legal and administrative purposes, in Ptolemaic Egypt, Greek was the primary language in use. Papyrus was used for tax registers, land surveys, correspondence, and official bureaucratic matters. Having the Greek language, both reading and writing, taught to all (especially to children) was critical to the success of the Ptolemaic Empire. Therefore, all teachers were exempt from numerous taxes, including the salt tax, this practice (exemption) continued under the Roman Emperors. School texts and exercises were preserved on ostraca and papyrus. The ancient school texts printed on ostraca and papyrus, further demonstrates that children were taught the basics of reading in Greek, they were taught arithmetic and literature (the works of Homer). The Ptolemaic Empire functioned on Greek written records: for contracts, land title, sale of grain, land surveys, the census (of people and livestock), in order to assess taxes.

A system of locks and canals were used to move water from lower canals to higher canals, as well as use of Archimedes screw (pump) to move water up to higher levels for irrigation, and for agriculture in general. The Aswan dam was built by the Ptolemaic Empire.

Large amounts of wood and pitch were imported to build the Ptolemaic navy and merchant ships.

During the Ptolemaic Empire, Athenian coinage was introduced. The coins were minted in Memphis, Egypt and issued in gold, silver, and bronze.

Diplomatic relations between Rome and Greek Ptolemaic Egypt commenced in 273 B.C. when Rome sent diplomats to Egypt to buy grain, while Hannibal Barca was invading Italy, (according to Polybius, 210 B.C.). Around 116 B.C. there is evidence of Romans visiting Egypt on business and as tourists, this included Roman Senators and Magistrates. When Antiochus IV (Seleucid Empire) attempted to invade Egypt, (the Ptolemaic Empire), Roman diplomats and generals told Antiochus IV to withdraw from Egypt, and he did.

During periods of Ptolemaic leadership succession (due to death of a king), the children would travel to Rome to gain support for their claim to the Ptolemaic throne. Cleopatra VII succeeded her father in 51 B.C. and in 48 B.C. Julius Caesar supported her claim to the throne of Egypt, while he was in Alexandria, Egypt. After Julius Caesar's murder (44 B.C.), Mark Antony became her Roman consort and in 30 B.C. they lost the battle of Actium to Octavian, who then took the title of Caesar Augustus, when he had captured Alexandria, Egypt (30 B.C.). Caesar Augustus continued the Ptolemaic and Greek institutions in Egypt, under Roman Imperial rule.

During the Ptolemaic period Egypt saw growing urbanization as the elite moved to central cities in their regions. The new capital of Alexandria saw an increase in population that rivaled Rome's.

iv. Roman Administration:

Roman provisional administration continued the existing Ptolemaic bureaucracy in Egypt. Egypt was ruled by a Prefect Governor of Egypt and Alexandria. The Prefect held supreme power in all legal, financial, military, and administrative matters within Egypt. Although the Prefect issued rules and orders and opinions in legal cases in Latin, they were also translated into Greek. Greek remained the primary language in Egypt, and throughout the period of Roman Imperial rule. The central administration and legal structure in Egypt, established by the Ptolemaic Empire, was run by a mix of Romans appointed by the Emperor and former Ptolemaic administrators.

The Romans depended heavily on the Alexandrian indigenous elite to fill lower-level administrative staff positions, most of which were attached to the Office of the Prefect. The magistrate responsible for bringing cases into the Prefect's court (The Eisagogeus), was also attached to the Office of the Prefect. The accountants (The Eklogistai), or auditors who reviewed the taxes and revenues collected by the Nomes, were also attached to the Office of the Prefect.

During the Roman period, the forty Nomes created by the Ptolemaic Empire stayed in place, e.g. forty administrative districts. The Nomes varied in size and population and differed culturally and administratively. Each Nome had a capital (Metropolis) after which the Nome was named. The metropolis was the administrative, social, economic, and cultural center of the Nome. Each Nome was further organized into administrative districts based on the Roman model.

There were three Greek cities built in the early Ptolemaic Empire period: Alexandria, Naukratis, and Ptolemais, a fourth was added later, Antinoopolis. These Greek cities enjoyed a certain independence from the provincial officials. They elected their own city councils, elected their own municipal magistrates, and passed their own laws. Alexandria was more restricted since it was the capital for Rome's Prefect in Egypt. The Nomes were overseen by appointed Governors. Alexandrian citizens were usually appointed as the Governors (Strategoï) over a Nome or collection of Nomes. Alexandrian citizens were also appointed as the Royal Scribes for each Governor. Private contractors: Romans, Alexandrians, and former soldiers, collected the taxes. Village scribes kept detailed records of land assessment for tax purposes, rents, and

population records.

Roman citizens were exempt from many duties and taxes, (including poll taxes). Citizens of all four Greek cities in Egypt were also exempt from many duties and taxes, (including the poll taxes). Members of professions: philosophers, advocates (attorneys), doctors, father's with five or more children, and the physically disabled were also exempt from many duties and taxes, (including the poll taxes). The census was important for the Poll Tax, it was levied on all males, except those listed above. Taxes were also levied on farm land, and wheat was taken in payment to be transported to Rome for the Roman population, and to feed the Roman Army. Alexandrian currency was used to pay taxes. There was also a Salt Tax, a Sales Tax, and a tax on finished goods. The census was performed every 14 years in Egypt. License fees were paid by monopolies, including an oil production monopoly.

Record keeping was crucial. A state archive of public records was established in each Nome Capital. Legal documents were drawn up and recorded through registration offices in each village. A special registrar of land conveyances and ownership rights to private land had been established in each Nome Capital (metropolis). Copies of all public records and private contracts were kept at two central archives in Alexandria, Egypt.

The provincial legal experts (Nomikoi) interpreted the law for their Nome's courts of law. Papyri evidence of petitions and court proceedings show that the litigants or their attorneys relied in their arguments on prefectual edicts and accumulated decisions on similar cases, relying on precedent. This is the first evidence of Common Law being applied in courts of general jurisdiction based on prior precedent (final judgments in prior cases), This was the institutionalized system of legal jurisprudence in Egypt that existed and that was applied in the courts from 331 B.C. to 642 A.D., quite a few centuries before the common law based on precedent was ever applied to courts of general jurisdiction in Britain, to decide and adjudicate cases.

Under the Ptolemaic Empire there were two courts of general jurisdiction, the Greek and the Egyptian, depending on whether a contract or transaction was written in Greek or the Demotic language. When Caesar Augustus incorporated Egypt, as an Imperial province of the Roman Empire, both of the courts, were merged. At that point, all Egyptians were subject to a unified code of laws, that would be referred to in contracts. This unified code of laws and practices combined the laws and practices of both the Greek courts and the Egyptian courts. Roman Judges would apply the law of the Egyptians to decide disputes between non-Roman litigants. Edicts of the Prefect and final court decisions were prominently displayed in Alexandria and the Chora (Egyptian areas outside of Alexandria). Roman citizens and inhabitants of the four Greek cities had their own civil law courts.

v. The Roman Military:

The Roman military in Egypt was structured as follows: Each Roman Legion had 5,000 men which made up 10 Cohorts. The first Cohort had 1,000 men, and Cohorts 2-10 had 450 men each. Cohorts 2 through 10 were further divided into Centuries.

Originally, the soldiers in the Roman Legions were intended to be limited to Roman citizens, but local recruitment of Alexandrians (and recruitment in other Egyptian cities) increased over time. Evidence in ancient papyrus scrolls (after 20 A.D.) indicates that many Roman Legionaries were recruited from Egypt and from north Africa to serve in the Roman Legions in Egypt. They were granted Roman Citizenship upon discharge, which was significant.

In support of the Roman Legions were the non-Legionary Auxiliary Units, cohort infantry units of 450 men and cavalry units of 500 men. The most common type of Auxiliary Unit in Roman Egypt was a mixed unit of both infantry and cavalry troops.

The troops in the Auxiliary units were a mixture of Egyptians, north Africans, Syrians, and folks from modern day Turkey (the Byzantine Empire-Eastern Roman Empire). After serving in the Auxiliary units these soldiers acquired Roman Citizenship upon their discharge.

Another semi-military organization were the “Skopelarioi”. The “Skopelarioi” were Egyptians who were recruited, in a compulsory based service, to defend the Roman Roads throughout Egypt by walking the roads in small companies. They also watched these roads as lookouts, from guard towers. When Mary and Joseph brought our Lord Jesus Christ to Egypt to avoid King Herod and his attempt to kill our Lord Jesus Christ, the roads that Mary and Joseph would have used, would have been built by the Romans. Roman Roads throughout the Roman Empire, consisted of 50,000 miles of hard surface highways. The highways were made of lime and concrete and also used local building materials. The roads would have been guarded by “Skopelarioi” to protect the travelers and caravans along these Roman Roads. There would have been quite a bit of cross traffic from Jewish families, who lived in the Greek Egyptian cities, traveling back and forth to Jerusalem, and Judea, and Galilee, for religious festivals, and to see their families. Joseph and Mary had the Magi’s gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense to finance their stay in Egypt. The Father prepared the way for them.

The Ptolemaic navy was acquired by Caesar Augustus after he defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra VII at the battle of Actium. The Ptolemaic naval ships were used as escort ships to protect the shipping of grain and other goods from Alexandria to Rome. Another set of former Ptolemaic naval ships, now Roman ships, would patrol the Nile river.

There were three Roman Legions in Roman Egypt, one assigned to Alexandria, and two dispersed throughout the Chora, in groups of three Cohorts (450 soldiers each), to Memphis (today’s Cairo), along the border with Sudan/Ethiopia, and in the Nome Capitals and Greek cities. The Roman soldiers, who were non-Italians, would take Roman names upon their discharge, as they gained their Roman Citizenship. Many of the Roman Legionaries (both Italian and non-Italian) appear to have been literate in Greek, as many of their papyri letters have survived to this day. They were paid well and they had opportunities for promotion, if they stayed in the Roman Legions.

vi. More on Alexandria:

For purposes of Alexandria, the Roman historian Diodorus of Sicily called Alexandria “the first city of the civilized world”. The Italian historian Ammianus Marcellinus (Fourth Century A.D.) called Alexandria “The crown of all cities”.

Alexandria was built based upon the traditional model (replica) of Greek cities, primarily Athens. The city contained a theater, Council Halls, The Law Courts, The Mouseion (University), The Gymnasium (College), the large outdoor Hippodrome (for chariot races), Jewish Synagogues, and Greek Temples. The wealthy of Alexandria had stone homes with gardens, and great reception halls. At its peak, Alexandria had 500,000 residents. “Hellenes” were originally understood to be Greeks, “Hellenes” were later defined by the level of their education, or an individual’s position working in the Ptolemaic/Roman administration. Alexandrian citizenship was gained through a Greek education, at a Greek institution such as the Mouseion and/or the Gymnasium. Alexandrian citizenship was also gained through military service. Alexandrian citizenship meant you were exempt from the poll tax, your children could attend the Mouseion, and/or the Gymnasium, and you could a candidate for and be elected as a Magistrate in Alexandria. Alexandrian citizenship was often a prerequisite to gaining Roman citizenship and participation in the Roman administration.

Alexandria was the first cosmopolitan metropolis, as its residents were: Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Jewish, North African, Ethiopian, Arab, Persian, and Indian. But Alexandria remained basically Greek. The Roman historian Strabo stated that Alexandria was the largest trading port in the world reaching the entire Mediterranean Sea, and to the south through canals to Lake Mareotis to the Nile River and the Red Sea, for trade with India, Africa, and Arabia. The Romans also built roads from Alexandria to the Red Sea which were protected by Roman garrisons.

The great Royal Alexandrian Library (one of the wonders of the ancient world) was burned down by 642 A.D.. Some historians put the burning of the great collection at a much earlier date. This resulted in the loss of some 750,000 scrolls and Codexes. The loss was enormous as many of the scrolls and codexes had no second copy in another location. The scrolls and codexes of the accomplished Greek philosophers, physicians, scientists, who wrote scrolls on anatomy, astronomy, the scrolls of the accomplished Carthaginian writers, and the accomplished Roman writers, and the accomplished Egyptian writers, were lost forever.

The Greek culture and language continued to be emulated, copied, and incorporated into Roman culture, during the Roman Empire period. The Greek language was the linguistic coin of the realm, although the Romans also promoted the use of the Latin language and script, (but, the Romans appreciated and emulated Greek culture and Greek language as a measure of their personal sophistication). In the Eastern Mediterranean region, the written and spoken Greek language dominated the Eastern Roman Empire, (As mentioned earlier, the Romans had their earliest Roman Coins minted using the Greek language).

Papyrus letters excavated at archaeological sites in Egypt revealed the common practice of

parents sending their children to tutors arranged by groups of parents. These excavated Papyrus letters, detailed the cost and quality of their children's education, during the Ptolemy Empire and the Roman Empire periods. Parents felt obligated to have their children at least attain a basic literacy of both reading and writing in the Greek language. In the case of children of parents who were well off, and for government officials, or military officials, their children pursued more advanced course work, not only in reading and writing in the Greek language, but also math, philosophy, science, and rhetoric. Keep in mind, Israeli children were also taught to read and write in the Hebrew language, by their local synagogue leaders.

In summary, these were literate and somewhat sophisticated people groups. They built the roads, the cities, and the great ships, that would carry the Apostles and their followers to preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ worldwide. In the next section of this chapter, we see that although the Israelis benefitted from "Hellenization", they rejected the Greek Gods, to serve Yahweh only, opening the door for the coming of the Messiah, God the Son, Jesus Christ.

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Alexander the Great, the conquest of Israel, and Greek cultural influence on Israel:

i. The Greek Ptolemaic Empire and Judea, Samaria, and Galilee:

Before the arrival of "Alexander the Great" from Macedonia (Greece), Persia counted Israel (Judea, Galilee, Samaria), as one of their territories. The rulers of Persia: Cyrus, and then Darius, granted the Jewish people a great deal of autonomy. Nehemiah was named governor of Judea by Darius. Nehemiah went on to rebuild the walls around the city of Jerusalem, to rebuild the Temple, the fortifications, and the city itself. "Alexander the Great" defeated the Persian King

Darius in what is today eastern Turkey and northern Syria. “Alexander the Great” moved south to Jerusalem and then Egypt, (332 B.C.). King Darius moved his armies eastward to what is today Iraq and Iran, to preserve what he could of the Persian Empire.

Rather than confronting “Alexander the Great”, the Jewish High Priests welcomed “Alexander the Great” into Jerusalem, and in turn, “Alexander the Great” continued the policies of the Persians (Cyrus the Great), and recognized the Jewish nations right to live by their own laws. “Alexander the Great”, gave the Jewish nation a degree of autonomy.

However, with “Alexander the Great” came Greek culture, tutors, the Greek language, religion, sport, and Greek Stoic Philosophy. In 323 B.C., after Alexander’s death, Alexander’s cousin, (half brother?), General Ptolemy Sotr, arrived at Jerusalem. The city of Alexandria, Egypt was being built, according to the wishes of “Alexander the Great”, prior to his death. Ptolemy Sotr moved many Jewish people, and Jewish families, to the unpopulated city of Alexandria, Egypt. This movement of Jewish families to Alexandria placed the city of Alexandria on a more stable, populous, administrative, and civic course. In Jerusalem, a Greek garrison was posted at the Baris Fortress, north of Jerusalem.

Ptolemy Sotr was the first in the generations of the Ptolemaic dynasty to rule in Egypt from 323 B.C. to 30 B.C.. As stated previously, Ptolemy Sotr instituted the Hellenization process which consisted of immersing a large part of the Israeli population in the instruction and learning of the Greek language, Greek writing, math, and Greek culture. Ptolemy Sotr encouraged Jewish folks to migrate (in many cases by force), to the new unpopulated Greek City of Alexandria, and to several other new Greek Cities being established and built by the Greeks in Egypt. The Jewish community was also encouraged to consider Athens and Macedonia.

Ptolemy Sotr recruited members of the local Jewish community in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, to be government administrators and officials, working on behalf of the Ptolemy Empire in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. This policy also encouraged the use of contracts, business transactions which were written in Greek, as well as encouraging the use of Deeds to Land, and Land Sale Contracts to be scribed in the Greek language, in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. How widespread this practice was in Israel, under the Ptolemy Empire, is open to debate. Use of the Greek language and Greek writing was widespread in Egypt within a relatively short period.

Ptolemy Sotr’s son, Ptolemy II Philadelphos showed the Jewish people favor. The Jewish High Priest in Jerusalem, sent the books of the Jewish Tanakh to Ptolemy II Philadelphos in Alexandria. Ptolemy II Philadelphos had the books of the Tanakh translated into Greek (The Septuagint). Ptolemy II Philadelphos recruited Jewish folks who had been relocated to Alexandria, Egypt, to translate the Tanakh from Hebrew to Greek. Ptolemy II Philadelphos respected Jewish scholarship.

So, for more than one and a half centuries, Israel was subject to occupation by Greek nation/states and as a consequence, Israel was subjected to the process of Hellenization.

Plotemy Sotr built Alexandria, Egypt into one of the world's greatest Greek cities. Plotemy Sotr founded Alexandria's museum and the world renowned Alexandria Library. Plotemy Sotr recruited Greek scholars to lecture in Alexandria. Plotemy Sotr also commissioned the great Pharos lighthouse, which, as mentioned earlier, was one of the wonders of the ancient world.

Jerusalem and Judea was a self-administered, semi-autonomous state during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphos and Ptolemy III, son of Ptolemy II Philadelphos. The Sanhedrin, (the supreme Jewish legislative and judicial court), was the governing body of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. The Sanhedrin assembly was made up of Sadducees and Pharisees. The Sanhedrin governed the civil, criminal, and the religious sphere of Jewish life. The Sanhedrin judged legal disputes under Jewish law.

Apparently, the Jewish High Priest had to pay the King for the privilege to be High Priest in Jerusalem. In 240 B.C. a Jewish man, Joseph, nephew of the High Priest Onias II, outbid the High Priest (Onias II) to become The High Priest for the entire region (Judea, Samaria, Galilee). Joseph was competent and helped Israel raise itself economically. In 241 B.C. Ptolemy III while on a diplomatic visit to Jerusalem sacrificed at the Jerusalem Temple, with the High Priest attending, to ensure the Jewish nations' continued support of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

Greek culture was incorporated into the lives of many of the Jewish residents of Judea and Galilee under the Ptolemaic Empire. Some of the 29 Greek cities of Israel had a high level of Hellenistic culture, based on the model of Athens. Papyrus letters from the third century B.C. exhumed in Israel confirm the Hellenistic cultural quality of the cities. Use of the Greek language and writing in Greek became more common among the Jewish people. By the beginning of the second century B.C., the influence of the Hellenistic Age in Judea was quite strong. The writer Jesus ben Sirach denounced the Hellenizers in Jerusalem (180 B.C.) but he was forced by authorities to temper his words.

ii. The Greek Seleucid Empire and Judea, Samaria, and Galilee:

A. The Seleucid King Antiochus "The Great":

In 198 B.C. the Greek Seleucid Empire/nation (to the north, Syria to the border of India) defeated the Greek Ptolemaic Empire/nation, and seized Israel from the Greek Ptolemaic Empire. Jerusalem now had a new conqueror to deal with.

The Seleucid King Antiochus, in 198 B.C., entered Jerusalem with the support of the Jewish people. Antiochus promised to repair the Temple, to repair the walls of Jerusalem, to repopulate the city, and reconfirmed the rights of the Jewish people to govern themselves, in accordance with the laws found in The Torah. The High Priest Simon and the members of the Sanhedrin had a good working relationship with Antiochus "The Great", King of the Greek Seleucid Empire/Nation. The Greek Seleucid Dynasty maintained hegemony over Israel from 198 B.C. to 140 B.C. During this same timeframe, the Carthaginian General Hannibal Barca invaded Italy.

The Jewish people flourished under the Greek Seleucid King Antiochus, "The Great", as

Josephus in his book "Jewish Antiquities" states in quoting King Antiochus: "Since the Jews, upon our first entrance in their country, demonstrated their friendship towards us, and when we came to their city (Jerusalem), received us in a splendid manner, and came to meet us with their senate (The Sanhedrin), and gave abundance of provisions to our soldiers, and to the elephants, and joined with us in ejecting the garrison of the Egyptians, (Ptolemaic troops), that were in the citadel, we have thought fit to reward them, and to relieve the condition of their city, which has been greatly depopulated by such incidents as have befallen the inhabitants and to bring those that have been scattered abroad back to the city. And in the first place, we have determined, on account of their piety towards God, to bestow on them, as a pension, for their sacrifices of animals that are fit for sacrifice, for wine, oil, and frankincense, the value of twenty thousand pieces of silver, and (six) sacred artabrae of fine flour, with one thousand four hundred and sixty medimni of wheat, and three hundred and seventy-five medimni of salt. . . . He also published a decree through all his kingdom in honor of the temple, which contained what follows: 'It shall be lawful for no foreigner to come within the limits of the temple, which thing is forbidden also to the Jews, except to those who, according to their own customs, have purified themselves. Nor let any flesh of horses, or of mules, or of assess, be brought into the city, whether they be wild or tame; nor that of leopards, or foxes, or hares; and in general of any animal which is forbidden for the Jews to eat. . . . Let them only be permitted to use the sacrifices derived from their forefathers, with which they have been obliged to make acceptable atonements to God. . . . Thus Antiochus bore testimony to our piety and faithfulness. . . ." "Jewish Antiquities", (Book 12, Chapter 3), "Revised and Expanded The New Complete Works of Josephus", translated by William Whiston, Commentary by Paul L. Maier (1999), Kregel Publications

The new High Priest Simon and the Sanhedrin repaired the Temple, and rebuilt the fortifications. Jerusalem essentially was a theocracy with Simon as the High Priest and the Sanhedrin as the legislative body to govern Jerusalem. The Temple was the center of Jewish life. There were again, daily Jewish ritual sacrifices of animals occurring at the Temple. During festivals, many pilgrims would enter Jerusalem, during this period of the Seleucid Empire's hegemony over Israel.

King Antiochus also exempted priests, scribes, and singers of the temple from the poll tax and the crown tax. And all inhabitants of Jerusalem were exempt from tax for three years. When Syrian King Antiochus died, his brother, Syrian King Antiochus IV, Epiphanes inherited the throne of the Greek Seleucid Empire. The Syrian King Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, had no respect for Judaism, The Torah, or the worship of Yahweh.

During this time, the implication is that many tutors were available and hired by groups of Jewish residents for their children and themselves, as the Greek language and Greek writing seemed to be in common use among the population of Jerusalem. Although, a sizable portion of the population, may have only been semi-literate. Literacy in the Hebrew language was a given since it was taught to the Jewish children in their local synagogue. A sizable part of the Jewish population in Jerusalem were considered to be Hellenistic Jews, actively engaged in trade, business contracts, Hellenistic events, and profiting from their relationship with the Seleucid Empire.

There arose a dispute as to who would be the High Priest in Jerusalem. Onais, the High Priest had failed to pay his tax to the Seleucid King, and his nephew Joseph did pay the tax, and was recognized as the High Priest followed by Simon, and finally, when Onais died, Onais's younger son, Menelaus became the High Priest in Jerusalem. However, Onais's brother Jason was a rival to Menelaus for the High Priesthood over Jerusalem. As Josephus stated: “. . . Now as the former High Priest, (Jason), raised a rebellion against Menelaus, who was ordained after him, the multitude were divided between them both. And the sons of Tobias took the part of Menelaus, but the greater part of the people assisted Jason; and by that means Menelaus and the sons of Tobias were distressed, and retired to Antiochus (King Antiochus IV Epiphanes), and informed him that they were desirous to leave the laws of their country, and the Jewish way of living according to them, and to follow the King's laws, and the Grecian way of living. Thus, they desired his permission to build them a Gymnasium at Jerusalem. And when he had given them leave, they also hid the circumcision . . . Accordingly, they left off all the customs that belonged to their own country, and imitated the practices of the other nations.” Jewish Antiquities, (Book 12, Chapter 5), “Revised and Expanded The New Complete Works of Josephus”, translated by William Whiston, Commentary by Paul L. Maier (1999), Kregel Publications.

In the midst of these developments, High Priest Onias made his trek to Antioch to buy his High Priesthood from King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, however Onias's brother Jason offered King Antiochus more than Onias, and it was Jason who became the new High Priest in Jerusalem. Jason wanted to Hellenize Jerusalem. He wanted to replace the Sanhedrin with an elected assembly that reflected the concept of a Greek polis. Further, King Antiochus IV Epiphanes built a Greek Gymnasium, in Jerusalem. A Greek Gymnasium was an institution of higher learning and an institution that promoted athletics. It was established for male athletics first, and for academics and higher education of males second. However, this was an insult to the more pious members of the Sanhedrin, and the Jewish community. The younger members of the Jerusalem community were being further Hellenized through the establishment of this Greek Gymnasium in Jerusalem. The athletics were carried out in the nude, which was an additional insult to the more modest and pious Jewish communities who wished to practice Judaism, without Greek influence. The more pious Jewish communities were besides themselves, with these developments. Somewhere in all this, the former High Priest Onias was murdered. Jason had proven to the Jewish community in Jerusalem that he was not worthy to be their High Priest.

Subjects taught at the Greek Gymnasium were: philosophy, literature, rhetoric, mathematics, and music. Philosophers and Sophists would be brought in to conduct lectures at the Gymnasium. Gymnasiums were large structures with covered porticos, which provided lecture areas where philosophers, and professionals would give lectures to the students. So, many Israelis were torn by the cultural advantages of association with the Greeks, but were also very offended by the Greek secular, pagan world view.

The next High Priest, Menelaos, came to pay King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, for the privilege of being High Priest, apparently using High Priest Jason's money without his permission. After this, things got worse.

Many Hellenistic Jews, had become wealthy during the Seleucid Empire period, and lived in the Upper City portion of Jerusalem, (the western hillsides).

After Rome had defeated Hannibal, Rome turned their attention to conquering Greece and the Greek Seleucid Empire/Nation. The Seleucid Empire lost their military battles to the Romans and the Seleucids had to surrender their fleet, and his elephant corps to Rome. Jerusalem was thriving at this time economically. Tithes from the Jewish community in Alexandria, Egypt came into the Temple in Jerusalem. This also increased the wealth, in Jerusalem.

B. Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes:

The transition from the Seleucid King Antiochus “The Great”, to the Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, was disastrous for the Jewish people and the Jewish nation. Antiochus IV Epiphanes moved against the Ptolemaic Empire and tried to conquer Alexandria, Egypt, however, as Josephus states in “Jewish Antiquities”, Antiochus IV Epiphanes was driven not only from Alexandria, but out of all Egypt, by the declaration of the Romans, who charged him to leave that country alone.

Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes was not like his father Seleucid King Antiochus “The Great”. Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes was remembered as a King who more closely resembled the dark and evil reputations of Nero and Caligula, both of whom would later rule in Rome. Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, took the process of Hellenization of Israel to extremes,(167 B.C.). Many Jewish people in Jerusalem used both Greek and Hebrew names. The more pious Jewish people did not look favorably on these developments.

In the early part of the second century B.C., Hellenized Jews took control of the high priesthood itself. As high priest from 175 B.C. to 172 B.C. Jason established Jerusalem as a Greek city, with Greek educational institutions. His ouster by an even more extreme Hellenizing faction, which established Menelaus, as high priest, occasioned a civil war in which Menelaus was supported by wealthy aristocrats and Jason by the masses. The Syrian King Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, intervened at the request of the Menelaus party.

In 167 B.C., King Antiochus IV Epiphanes forced the Israelites to give up their sabbath, and the Seleucid’s instituted sacrifices to Zeus in the second Temple in Jerusalem.

According to Josephus, referring to King Antiochus IV Epiphanes: “. . . that the King came up to Jerusalem, and pretending peace, he got possession of the city by treachery; at which time he spared not so much as those that admitted him into it (Jerusalem), on account of the riches that lay in the Temple; but, led by his covetous inclination (for he saw there was in it a great deal of gold, and many ornaments that had been dedicated to it of very great value), and in order to plunder its wealth, he ventured to break the league he had made. So he left the Temple bare, and took away the golden candlesticks, and the golden altar (of incense), and table (of show bread), and the altar (of burnt offering); and did not abstain from even the veils, which were made of fine linen and scarlet. He also emptied it of its secret treasures, and left nothing at all remaining; and by this means, cast the Jews into great lamentation, for he forbade them to offer those daily

sacrifices which they used to offer to God, according to the law. And when he had pillaged the whole city, some of the inhabitants he killed, and some he carried captive, together with the wives and children, so that the multitude of those captives that were taken alive amounted to about ten thousand. He also burned down the finest buildings; and when he had overthrown the city walls, he built a citadel in the lower part of the city, for the place was high and overlooked the Temple; on which account he fortified it with high walls and towers, and put into it a garrison of Macedonians. . . . And when the King had built an idol altar upon God's altar, he killed swine upon it, and so offered a sacrifice neither according to the law, nor the Jewish religious worship in that country. He also compelled them to forsake the worship which they paid their own God, and to adore those whom he took to be Gods; and made them build temples, and raise idol altars in every city and village, and offer swine upon them every day. He also commanded them not to circumcise their sons, and threatened to punish any that should be found to have transgressed his injunction. He also appointed overseers, who should compel them to do what he commanded. . . . But the best men, and those of the noblest souls, did not regard him, but did pay a greater respect to the customs of their country than concern as to the punishment which he threatened to the disobedient; on which account they every day underwent great miseries and bitter torments; for they were whipped with rods, and their bodies were torn to pieces, and were crucified, while they were still alive, and breathed. They also strangled those women and their sons whom they had circumcised, as the king had appointed, hanging their sons about their necks as they were upon crosses. And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed, and those with whom they were found miserably perished also." Jewish Antiquities", (Book 12, Chapter 5), "Revised and Expanded The New Complete Works of Josephus", translated by William Whiston, Commentary by Paul L. Maier (1999), Kregel Publications

The Jewish people in Jerusalem would not sacrifice to King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, as God, as memorialized by Josephus above. So, in 167 B.C. Antiochus IV marched his army against Jerusalem to punish the Jewish people and to crush the Jewish faith. King Antiochus IV Epiphanes captured Jerusalem in 167 B.C., and murdered thousands of Jewish residents. King Antiochus IV Epiphanes handed over Jerusalem to Menelaos, the new Greek governor of Jerusalem. King Antiochus IV Epiphanes outlawed any Jewish sacrifices or any Jewish services in the Temple. Antiochus IV Epiphanes banned the Sabbath, banned the Torah, and banned circumcision on pain of death. The Temple in Jerusalem was used to worship the Greek God Zeus. Menelaos, his newly appointed Governor, enforced these decrees.

Jewish people who participated in the Sabbath were burned alive or crucified. Women who had their children circumcised would be thrown off the walls of Jerusalem with their babies. The Torah was torn to shreds and burned publically, and anyone found with a copy of the Torah was put to death. The Jewish residents resisted and endured. Their hearts and thoughts turned to the scriptures which referred to the coming promised Messiah. Martyrdom was considered a virtue.

This gave rise to the Maccabee revolt, which resulted in Israeli self-rule, (home-rule), under the Hasmonean Dynasty (140 B.C. to 37 B.C.). The Seleucid Empire was, during this period, pre-occupied with the Roman Armies invading their western empire in what is today Turkey.

iii. The Maccabees Revolt, The Independent Jewish Nation, and the Hasmonean Dynasty

In response to Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes actions, (167 B.C.), Mattathias and his five sons began a rebellion, against Seleucid King Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, and Antiochus's General Apelles. Mattathias had many, many Jewish people as his allies. Josephus states that at the beginning of the rebellion Mattathias had rallied the Jewish people. Mattathias, with his sons, who had swords with them, killed a man making sacrifices to Zeus, and killed King Antiochus IV's Epiphanes' General, Apelles, who compelled them to sacrifice, with a few of his soldiers. According to Josephus: "He also overthrew the idol altar, and cried out, 'If', said he 'anyone be zealous for the laws of his country, and for the worship of God, let him follow me.' And when he had said this, he hurried into the desert with his sons, and left all substance in the village. Many others did the same also, and fled with their children and wives into the desert and dwelt in caves." " Jewish Antiquities", (Book 12, Chapter 6), "Revised and Expanded The New Complete Works of Josephus", translated by William Whiston, Commentary by Paul L. Maier (1999), Kregel Publications

Mattathias lived near Jerusalem. Rather than sacrifice to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Mattathias took his five sons and joined with pious Jewish group known as the Righteous Hasidim. Mattathias and his five sons went to the mountains surrounding Jerusalem, joining others there, to conduct a guerilla war on the Greek Seleucids. But they would not fight on the Sabbath. The Greeks took advantage of this. After Mattathias died, his son Judah assumed control of the Jewish forces in the hills surrounding Jerusalem. Judah defeated three Syrian armies in a row. Judah then defeated Antiochus IV Epiphanes' Viceroy, Lysias, and his entire army. At the same time, Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, was fighting the Parthians (Persia), in Mesopotamia, (modern day Iraq). While fighting the Parthians, King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, had an epileptic fit in his chariot and died.

As Josephus stated: "When Apollonius, the general of the Samaritan forces, heard this, he took his army and hurried to go against Judas, who met him, and joined battle with him, and beat him, and killed many of his men, and among them Apollonius himself, their general, whose sword being that which he happened to wear, he seized upon and kept for himself . . ." " Jewish Antiquities", (Book 12, Chapter 7), "Revised and Expanded The New Complete Works of Josephus", translated by William Whiston, Commentary by Paul L. Maier (1999), Kregel Publications.

Further Josephus wrote: ". . . Judas assembled the people together, and told them that after these many victories which God had given them, they ought to go up to Jerusalem and purify the temple, and offer the appointed sacrifices. But as soon as he, with the whole multitude, was come to Jerusalem, and found the temple deserted, and its gates burned down, and plants growing in the temple of their own accord, on account of its desertion, he and those that were with him began to lament, and were quite confounded at the sight of the temple; so he chose out some of his soldiers, and gave them order to fight against those guards that were in the citadel, until he should have purified the temple. When therefore he had carefully purged it, and had brought in new vessels, the candlestick, the table (of show bread), and the alter (of incense),

which were made of gold, he hung up the veils at the gates, and added doors to them . . . they lighted the lamps that were on the candlestick, and offered incense upon the altar (of incense), and laid the loaves upon the table (of show bread), and offered burnt offerings upon the new altar (of burnt offering). . . . Now Judas celebrated the festival of restoration of the sacrifices of the temple for eight days, and omitted no sort of pleasures thereon; but he feasted them upon very right and splendid sacrifices; and he honored God and delighted in hymns and psalms. Rather, they were so very glad at the revival of their customs, when, after a long time of intermission (3 years), they unexpectedly had regained the freedom of their worship, that they made it a law, for their posterity, that they should keep a festival on account of the restoration of their temple worship, for eight days. And from that time to this we celebrate the festival, and call it Lights (Hanukkah). . . . I suppose the reason was, because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that from there was the name given to that festival. Judas also rebuilt the walls around the city, and reared towers of great height against the incursion of enemies, and set guards therein. He also fortified the city Bethsura, that it might serve as a citadel against any distresses that might come from our enemies.” ” Jewish Antiquities”, (Book 12, Chapter 7), “Revised and Expanded The New Complete Works of Josephus”, translated by William Whiston, Commentary by Paul L. Maier (1999), Kregel Publications

A. The Seleucid civil wars and competition for the Seleucid throne:

The death of King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, created a political vacuum and initiated a fight for the Seleucid throne, which also created an opportunity for the Israelis united behind Judas, Mattathias’s son, (The Maccabees). Alexander I Balas, (a general of King Antiochus IV Epiphanes), pretended to be the son of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and assumed the throne of the Seleucid Empire. Demetrius I who was in line for the Seleucid throne, fought Alexander I Balas, in battle, and was killed, (150 B.C.). Demetrius II Necator (son of Demetrius I), brought over an army from Crete to challenge Alexander I Balas, for the Seleucid throne. In 146 B.C. the Greek Ptolemaic Empire (Egypt) supported Demetrius II’s claim to the Seleucid throne. In 147 B.C. Mattathias’s son Jonathan defeated Demetrius II’s general Apollonius, in their battle for Judea. In 142 B.C. Demetrius II Necator recognizes Simon, (son of Mattathias) as High Priest in Jerusalem, and the Seleucid garrison in Jerusalem is evacuated, (de facto recognition of independence for Judea and de facto recognition of the Hasmonean dynasty). In 140 B.C. Demetrius II Necator’s rival, the boy king Antiochus VI, is killed by his tutor Diodotus, who proclaims himself the Seleucid King, and calls himself Tryphon. In 138 B.C. Demetrius II Necator is captured by the Parthians and taken captive, until 129 B.C.. Demetrius’s brother Antiochus VII, attacks Tryphon and defeats Tryphon, who commits suicide. In 134 B.C. Antiochus VII invades Judea, besieges Jerusalem, and makes John Hyrcanus, son of Simon, son of Mattathias, The High Priest in the Hasmonaean kingdom and does not interfere with Jewish Religion or the Jewish state.

B. The Hasmoneans and the rise of self-rule in Israel:

Kenneth Atkinson in his book “A History of the Hasmonean State, Josephus and Beyond:(2016) Kenneth Atkinson, T & T Clark, Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, James H. Charlesworth, Executive Editor, page 27 states: “Judas was the oldest and most famous son of Mattathias. He assumed leadership of the revolt immediately after his father’s death, and quickly

achieved renown as a warrior and a military commander. The author of 1 Macc. 3:1-9 recounts his valor and portrays him as the savior of his people. In 164 B.C.E. he captured Jerusalem, cleansed the temple, and reinstated the sacrificial rites. His achievement has subsequently been celebrated with the Festival of Hanukkah.”

Further, Kenneth Atkinson states: “After Judas died in battle, his brother Jonathan took over command of the rebellion. It was during his reign that the Hasmoneans began to negotiate with their former Seleucid foes to bring stability to their fledgling kingdom . . . The family’s unique combination of religious zeal and political acumen proved to be its greatest strength. . . “
“A History of the Hasmonean State, Josephus and Beyond:(2016) Kenneth Atkinson, T & T Clark, Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, James H. Charlesworth, Executive Editor, Page 28

Simon was the last surviving son of Mattathais. He was High Priest of the Temple in Jerusalem and head of the Hasmonean state. Kenneth Atkinson states: “The author of 1 Maccabees states that Jonathon earlier had sent ‘Numenius son of son of Antiochus and Antipater son of Jason’ to Rome. Their task was to renew Judeas’s treaty with Rome. Because the Senate gave his delegation letters of safe conduct for their return, this was a tacit acknowledgment that the Republic backed the Hasmoneans. . . . it prompted Demetrius II to recognize him as high priest to avoid any potential confrontation with the Roman Republic.” A History of the Hasmonean State, Josephus and Beyond:(2016) Kenneth Atkinson, T & T Clark, Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, James H. Charlesworth, Executive Editor, page 37.

iv. The Roman Empire’s hegemony over Judea, Samaria, and Galilee

The Romans invaded Israel in in 63 B.C., and replaced the current Hasmonean Dynasty with their own proxy, King Herod the Great, in 37 B.C.. Herod had married into the Hasmonean Dynasty. Herod married Mariamne 1, the granddaughter of Aristobulus II (The Hasmonean King: 66 B.C. to 63 B.C.), as well as the granddaughter of Hyrcanus II (The Hasmonean King: 67 B.C. to 66 B.C.). In 40 B.C. the Roman Senate voted to endorse Herod the Great, as King of Galilee, Judea, and Samaria; which he assumed in 37 B.C..

The Greek culture and language continued to be emulated, copied, and incorporated into Roman culture, during the Roman Empire period. The Greek language was the linguistic coin of the realm, although the Romans continued to promote the use of the Latin language and script. In the Eastern Mediterranean region, the written and spoken Greek language dominated the Eastern Roman Empire.

Greek influence reached its peak under King Herod I who built a Greek theater, amphitheater, and Hippodrome in or near Jerusalem

v. Greek Literacy in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee:

From 331 B.C. to 140 B.C. the Jewish residents of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria were ruled by Greek Empires. These Greek Empires immersed a large part of the Jewish population in Greek

literature, Greek writing, and Greek culture. All commercial contracts and land sale contracts were scripted in Greek. When Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, tried to outlaw Judaism and impose worship of Greek Gods on the Jewish people, the Jewish people under Mattahais and the Hasmoneans revolted and won self rule. The Hasmoneans continued to have political, commercial, and cultural relations with the Ptolemaic Empire, the Seleucid Empire, and the Roman Empire. Did literacy in the Greek language and Greek script survive between the beginning of the Hasmonean dynasty in 140 B.C. and the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, approximately 6 B.C.?

The books: "Greek in Jewish Palestine/Hellenism in Jewish Palestine" written by Saul Liberman, with an introduction by Dov Zlotnick (1994), The Jewish Theological Seminary of America New York and Jerusalem. Saul Liberman states: ". . . This comparative study will convince the student of the close contact between Jewish Palestine and the Hellenistic world in general . . ." "Greek in Jewish Palestine/Hellenism in Jewish Palestine" Saul Liberman, with an introduction by Dov Zlotnick (1994), The Jewish Theological Seminary of America New York and Jerusalem, page 6.

Saul Liberman stated, in describing Greek literacy in the first century A.D.:

"The Greek language took hold of all classes among all the nations in the Mediterranean world. The Jews were no exception in this respect. We have already seen how deeply Greek penetrated into all classes of Jewish society in Palestine. The Rabbis spoke to the people in their language, and if in the midst of their Aramaic speeches they often inserted Greek words and expressions they had very good reasons for it.

Our Talmudic dictionaries overlooked the very important fact that the Rabbis took whole sentences from Greek proverbs current among the people, from Greek legal documents, literature and similar sources. . . ." "Greek in Jewish Palestine/Hellenism in Jewish Palestine" Saul Liberman, with an introduction by Dov Zlotnick (1994), The Jewish Theological Seminary of America New York and Jerusalem, "Greek in Jewish Palestine, The Greek of the Synagogue", Page 39.

Further, "The Rabbis elucidated the verses of the Bible not only by means of quoting from Jewish sources but sometimes also from Greek law and literature as well as proverbs. R. Eleazar (b. Pedath, Tiberias III c.) in drawing a parallel between the behavior of the Lord of the world and that of an earthly king, began his explanation with a Greek proverb." "Greek in Jewish Palestine/Hellenism in Jewish Palestine" Saul Liberman, with an introduction by Dov Zlotnick (1994), The Jewish Theological Seminary of America New York and Jerusalem. "Greek in Jewish Palestine, The Greek of the Synagogue", Page 37.

What is fascinating about these passages, is that the Jewish nation and the Jewish people, in the spirit of the Hasmonean High Priest/monarch Simon, (Simon Maccabeus, 135 B.C.), adopted and kept the best of Greek language and culture, (with respect to contracts, language, literature, and commercial relations with neighboring countries), while maintaining their devotion to Yahweh, in terms of worship, fellowship, and discipleship, and maintaining their worship and their sacrifices at the Jerusalem temple, as well as faithfully attending services at their local synagogue. This showed an ability by the Jewish people to remain faithful to Judaism, while

interacting, and intellectually staying connected, with the Greek world and the Roman world, during the period of the Hasmonean dynasty, followed by the Roman Empire's dominion. The Maccabees revolt, which is the basis of Hanukkah, in which the Jewish nation rejected the Greek Gods, and re-embraced their Judaism and the worship of Yahweh, seems to be a genuine introduction to the birth of Christ, in a Christian sense.

vi. Capernium:

Our Lord Jesus Christ's base of operation in Galilee, was Capernium, (see Matthew 4:13, 9:1, Mark 2:1, and John 6:24). Capernium was an ancient city on the Sea of Galilee. It was a garrison town, (Tetrarch Herod Antipas's, military was stationed there). Capernium had an administrative center, and a major Customs Station, as Capernium was on the Via Maris, which was the main trade route between Asia Minor, Syria (Damascus), and Jerusalem, and Egypt (Alexandria, and Memphis). Capernium had around 1,500 to 3,000 residents in the first century A.D.. It was an important commercial stop on the trade route, where registration (and tolls) were required by caravans at the Customs Station. This required scribes, accountants, and tax officials, to administer the Customs Station.. Literacy in the Greek language was required for purposes of reading and writing (drafting contracts, reviewing or creating manifests for the Caravans, calculating the tolls/taxes, etc.).

Fishing was the primary profession in Capernium. There is speculation, since large fresh water lakes were rare in the Middle East, that fishing on the Sea of Galilee was generally thought to have been highly regulated, and that Peter and Andrew, and John and James, would have been required to purchase fishing rights, and may have purchased those fishing rights as a group, or as a co-op.

The main Capernium synagogue was built by a Roman Centurion (see Luke 7:6-10). Jairus's daughter was raised from the dead in Capernium. Capernium was considered a city of merchants located on the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee itself, at its widest point is 7 ½ miles wide and at its longest point is 13 miles long, with a maximum depth of 157 feet. It is a fresh water lake, feed by the Jordan River, and is also known as the Sea of Kinneret, the Lake of Gennesaret, and the Sea or Lake of Tiberius. The White Synagogue in Capernim was large, and had much in common with a mid-sized Churches in Western Europe.

The Capernium harbor had a long promenade of 2,500 feet of paved stone, supported by an 8 foot wide sea wall. Several piers extended 100 feet into the lake to load and unload cargo and passengers from the Sea of Galilee. Some of the piers are paired and curve toward each other, which formed protected pools. Other piers were triangular in shape. The actual fishing boats were 26 ½ feet long, and 7 ½ feet wide providing room for 15 on board, with two rowing stations on each side of the fishing boat.

Final Thoughts:

From 331 B.C. to 153 B.C. the Jewish nation was under Greek cultural and political rule (first the Greek Ptolemaic Empire and then the Greek Seleucid Empire), which included immersion of much of the population into the Greek language (reading and writing) and culture. Many of the Jewish people were encouraged (forced?) to relocate to Greek cities in Egypt (Alexandria, etc.). The Jewish nation rejected the Greek Gods and the worship of Greek Gods and in turn, participated in the Maccabees revolt to re-institute Judaism and the worship of Yahweh at the Jerusalem temple and in their local synagogues. The Maccabees revolt brought self-rule to Israel with the Hasmonean dynasty. The Jewish nation followed the example of their High Priest/monarch Simon Maccabeus, and retained the use of the Greek language and writing for contracts, grant deeds, records, and commercial relations with their neighbors, while re-instituting Judaism and the worship of Yahweh in the Jerusalem temple and synagogues throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. The Israelis, for the Ancient world, were literate. This would also apply to our Lord Jesus Christ and his disciples. The Apostle Thomas was a scribe who worked for the Rabbi Jairus. (Rabbis, and Pharisees often worked as lawyers, as well). The disciple Matthew was a tax collector working at the Capernium Customs House, reviewing contracts, manifests, accounting records, all written in Greek, to assess his taxes and tolls. The Apostle Matthew was also the author of: "The Gospel According to Matthew", Peter, Andrew, John, and James had to negotiate the purchase of their fishing licenses/rights to fish in the Sea of Galilee, most likely as a co-op of the four of them and their fishing boats. To negotiate the fishing contracts and sign the fishing contracts and provide an accounting of the fish that they had caught would require literacy in Greek. The Apostle Peter wrote or dictated to one of his disciples the letters of "1 Peter" and "2 Peter". The Apostle John wrote "The Gospel According to John", John also wrote or dictated to one of his disciples: "1 John", "2 John", and "3 John". The physician Luke wrote "The Gospel According to Luke", and the "Book of Acts". The Apostolic Father John Mark, wrote: "The Gospel According to Mark". Paul, of course, was a scholar who studied Greek, and the Greek philosophers, and the Torah. Paul was required to write his work, and his conclusions, in Greek to be reviewed by Gamaliel. Paul was the writer of the letters: "Romans", "1 Corinthians", "2 Corinthians", "Galatians", "Ephesians", "Philippians", "Colossians", "1 Thessalonians", "2 Thessalonians", "1 Timothy", "2 Timothy", "Philemon", "Titus", and most likely "Hebrews". So, these folks had a level of sophistication and literacy which is not always properly attributed to them.

Books for Reference:

"Greek in Jewish Palestine/Hellenism in Jewish Palestine" Saul Liberman, with an introduction by Dov Zlotnick (1994), The Jewish Theological Seminary of America New York and Jerusalem

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