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Israel and the Diaspora in Antiquity

Lecture #2

Second Temple Judaea and the Diaspora: Equal Partners or Center-Periphery?

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Israel and the Diaspora in Late Antiquity (2)

The Mutual Relationship Between Jews in Israel and the Diaspora

A. **"Local-Patriotism", "Dual Loyalties" and Judaea-Diaspora Connections**

1. Strabo on the Jewish Diaspora (Jos., Ant. 14:115) – This people has already made its way into every city, and it is not easy to find any place in the habitable world which has not received this nation and in which it has not made its power felt.
2. Jeremiah 29:5-7 - Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters, that you may be increased there, and not diminished. Seek the welfare of the city to which I have deported you, and pray on its behalf to God, for on its welfare your own begins.
3. Philo, Flaccus 46 – For so populous are the Jews that no one country can hold them, and therefore they settle in very many of the most prestigious countries... and while they hold the Holy City where stands the sacred Temple of the most high God to be their mother city, yet those which are theirs by inheritance from their fathers, grandfathers and ancestors even farther back, are in each case accounted by them to be their fatherland in which they were born and reared, while to some of them they have come at the time of their foundation as immigrants to the satisfaction of the founders.
4. Philo, Embassy to Gaius 150 – Every city that contains magnificent works new and old is surpassed in these by the beauty and magnitude of those appropriated to Caesar, and especially in our own Alexandria.
5. Philo, Embassy to Gaius, 281-3 – As for the holy city, I must say what befits me to say. While she, as I have said, is my native city, she is also the mother city not of one country Judaea, but of most of the others, in virtue of the colonies sent out at diverse times to the neighboring lands (of) Egypt, Phoenicia, the part of Syria called the Hollow...and lying far apart, Pamphylia, Cilicia, most of Asia up to Bithynia and the corners of the Pontus, similarly also into Europe, Thessaly, Boeotia, Macedonia, Aetolia, Attica, Argos, Corinth and most of the best parts of the Peloponnesse. And not only are the mainlands full of Jewish colonies but also the most highly esteemed of the islands: Euboea, Cyprus (and) Crete. I say nothing of the countries beyond the Euphrates, for – except for a small part – they all, Babylon and the other satrapies where the land within their confines is highly fertile, have Jewish inhabitants. So that if my own home city is granted a share of your goodwill, the benefit extends not to one city but to myriads of the others situated in every region of the inhabited world, whether in Europe or in Asia or in Libya, whether in the mainlands or on the islands, whether it be seaboard or inland.

B. **Pilgrimage to Jerusalem**

6. Philo, The Special Laws, 1:69 - Countless multitudes from countless cities come, some over land, others over sea, from east and west and north and south at every feast. They take the temple for their port as a general haven and safe refuge from the bustle and great turmoil of life...friendships are formed between those who hitherto knew not

each other, and the sacrifices and libations are the occasion of reciprocity of feeling, and constitute the surest pledge that all are of one mind.

7. Acts chap. 2 - And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one heart in one place...Parthians and Medes and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and in the parts of Lybia near Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians...(see also Acts 6:9 – Then there arose persons from the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and those of Cilicia and of Asia...)

C. Financial Support for the Temple from Abroad (and for post-Temple Judaea)

8. Philo, Embassy, 214 – He (Petronius) bethought him of the vast number of people comprised in the nation, which needed to contain it – not like every other – the circumference of a single country allotted to itself alone, but, one might almost say, the whole habitable world. For it is spread abroad over all the continents and islands so that it seems to be not much less than the indigenous inhabitants. To draw all these myriads into war against him was surely very dangerous... He was frightened also by the forces beyond the Euphrates, since that Babylon and many other satrapies were occupied by Jews was known to him not only by report but by experience. For every year envoys were dispatched for the sacred purpose of conveying to the Temple a great quantity of gold and silver amassed from the first-fruits, and these envoys travel over the pathless, trackless, endless routes which seem to them good highroads because they feel that they lead them to piety.
9. Josephus, Antiquities 14:110 – But no one need wonder that there was so much wealth in our Temple, for all the Jews throughout the habitable world, and those who worshipped God, even those from Asia and Europe, had been contributing to it for a very long time.
10. Cicero, Pro Flacco 28:66-69 (Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 1, p. 197) – When every year it was customary to send gold to Jerusalem on the order of the Jews from Italy and from all our provinces, Flaccus forbade by an edict its exportation from Asia. Who is there, gentlemen, who could not honestly praise this action? The Senate often earlier and also in my consulship forbade its exportation from Asia...; where then is the ground for an accusation against Flaccus... At Apamea a little less than a hundred pounds of gold was openly seized and weighed before the seat of the praetor in the forum through the agency of Sextius Caesius, a Roman knight, an upright and honorable man. At Laodicea a little more than twenty pounds... at Adramyttium a hundred pounds... at Pergamum a small amount. The accounting for the gold is correct.

The gold is in the treasury, no embezzlement is charged, it is just an attempt to fix odium on him...

11. Philo, Embassy, 313-315 – "Gaius Norbanus Flaccus proconsul to the magistrates of the Ephesians, greeting. Caesar has written me that the Jews, wherever they may be, regularly according to their old peculiar tradition, make a rule of meeting together and subscribing money which they send to Jerusalem. He does not wish them to be hindered from doing this. I therefore write to you that this is what he orders to be done" (cf. Jos., Ant. 16:166 – edict of Augustus).

12. Tacitus, Historiae V, 5:1 - ...the other customs of the Jews are base and abominable, and owe their persistence to their depravity; for the worst rascals among other peoples, renouncing their ancestral religions, always kept sending tribute and contributing to Jerusalem, thereby increasing the wealth of the Jews. Again, the Jews are extremely loyal toward one another, and always ready to show compassion, but toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity.
13. Tosefta Shekalim 2:3-4 – He removed (funds) from the first (contributions) and proclaimed: Behold this is from Eretz Israel for all of Israel, and covered (the remainder) with leather spreads, because the people of Syria come and contribute additionally. He removed from the second (contribution) and proclaimed: Behold this is from Ammon and Moab and from cities surrounding Eretz Israel, and covered with leather spreads, because those of Babylonia come and add to it. He removed from the third (layer) and proclaimed: Behold this is from Babylonia and Media and those lands far from Eretz Israel, for all of Israel, and he would not cover.
14. Lev. Rabbah 5:4 (= PT Horayot 3:25a) – “A man’s gift maketh for him, and brings him before great men” (Prov. 18:16) – Once R. Eliezer and R. Joshua and R. Akiva went to the harbor area of Antioch, to make a collection for the support of the sages. There was a man there by the name Abba Judan, who used to provide maintenance liberally [for the needy]. He subsequently became impoverished, and when he saw our rabbis there, his face turned the color of saffron. When he came to his wife she said to him: Why is your face sickly? Said he to her: My rabbis are here and I do not know what to do. His wife, who was saintlier than he, said: We have nothing left except your field, go sell half of it, and give them the proceeds. (He did, and) they prayed for him saying: May the all-present make good your deficiency. After some days he went to plough the half field he had retained, and as he was ploughing his cow fell and its leg was broken. When he went down to lift it up, The Holy One Blessed be He gave light to his eyes, and he found a treasure there. Said he: My cow’s leg was broken, but it turned out to be for my benefit. When our rabbis came there again, they inquired after him, saying: How is Abba Judan doing? They were told: He is Abba Judan the possessor of servants, Abba Judan of goats, Abba Judan of camels, Abba Judan of oxen. Who can catch a glimpse of Abba Judan?! When he heard of the rabbis’ presence, he went out to meet them. They said: How is Abba Judan doing? He replied: Your prayer has produced fruit and fruit of fruit. They said to him: As you live, even though others gave more than you, we wrote you down at the head of the list (or: book). Then they took him and gave him a seat with themselves, and they applied to him this verse: “A man’s gift maketh room for him, and brings him before great men”.
15. Theodosian Code XVI 8:11 (14 April 399) - It is a matter of shameful superstition that the Archsynagogues, the presbyters of the Jews, and those they call Apostles, who are sent by the patriarch on a certain date to demand gold and silver, exact and receive a sum from each synagogue, and deliver it to him. Therefore everything that we are confident has been collected when the period of time is considered, shall be faithfully transferred to our Treasury, and we decree that henceforth nothing shall be sent to the aforesaid. Let the populace of the Jews know, therefore, that we have removed this depredatory tax. If, however, people shall be sent to perform this task of exaction by that despoiler of the Jews, they shall be handed over to the governors, in order that they shall be sentenced as violators of our laws.

D. Political Influence and the 'Jewish Lobby'

16. Cicero, Pro Flacco 28:66 (see above, #10) – There follows the odium that is attached to the Jewish gold. This is no doubt the reason why this case is being tried not far from the Aurelian steps. You procured this place and that crowd, Laelius, for this trial. You know what a big crowd it is, how they stick together, how influential they are in informal assemblies. So I will speak in a low voice so that only the jurors may hear; for those are not wanting who would incite them against me and against every respectable man. I shall not help them to do this more easily.
17. Josephus, Antiquities 13:353-354 – Now there were some of her (Cleopatra's) friends who persuaded her to seize Alexander (Jannaeus) and to overrun and take possession of the country, and not to sit still and see such a multitude of brave Jews subject to one man; but Anania's counsel was contrary to theirs, as he said that she would do an injustice by depriving an ally of the authority that belonged to him, and this – a man that is related to us; "for I would not have thee ignorant of this, that whatever injustice you do to him will make all us that are Jews your enemy".
18. Josephus, Antiquities 14: 127-132 - When Caesar, after his victory over Pompey (48 BCE) and the latter's death was fighting in Egypt, Antipater, the governor of the Jews, under orders from Hyrcanus (II, the Hasmonean High Priest) proved himself useful to Caesar in many ways. (Josephus proceeds to describe how Antipater, with three thousand heavily-armed Jewish soldiers, intervened to support the various components of Caesar's armies, but the Jews from the district of Onias opposed Caesar at first). Antipater, however, persuaded them too to side with his party on the ground of their common nationality, especially when he showed them a letter from the High Priest Hyrcanus in which he urged them to be friendly to Caesar and receive his army hospitably...
19. Ant. 17:300 - ...but as for Archelaus (the son of Herod) he had a new source of trouble at Rome, with the following: An embassy of Jews had come to Rome (from Judaea)...that they might petition for the liberty of living by their own laws. Now the number of ambassadors that were sent by the authority of the nation was fifty, to which were joined over eight thousand Jews that were already in Rome...the ambassadors...accused Herod of his iniquities...(claiming) he had taken for himself that uncontrollable authority which tyrants exercise over their subjects.
20. Ant. 16:27ff. - It was also at this time (14 BCE) when they (Herod and Marcus Agrippa) were in Ionia, that a great multitude of Jews...took advantage of their opportunity to speak out freely, and came to them and told them of the mistreatment which they had suffered in not being allowed to observe their own laws and in being forced to appear in court on their holy days because of the inconsiderateness of the examining judges. And they told how they had been deprived of the monies sent as offerings to Jerusalem and of being forced to participate in military service and civic duties...[although] the Romans had always permitted them to live in accordance with their own laws. While they were protesting in this fashion, the king (=Herod) induced Agrippa to listen to them as they pleaded their cause, and he assigned Nicolaus, one of his friends, to speak in behalf of their rights. (Now follows a long speech by Nicolaus, at the end of which Agrippa conforms the rights of the Jews).

E. Halakhic Influence and CalendarRegulation

21. Mishna Rosh ha-Shana 2:4 – And from what place did they kindle the flares? From the Mount of Olives (they signaled) to Sarteba, and from Sarteba to Grophina, and from Grophina to Hauran, and from Hauran to Bet Biltin. They did not go beyond Bet Biltin, but there the flame was waved to and fro, up and down, until one could see the whole Golah (=Babylonia) as a sea of fire.
22. BT Sanhedrin 11b (and parallel sources) – It once happened that Rabban Gamaliel was standing on a step (or: steps) on the Temple Mount and the well-known scribe Yohanan was standing before him... "Take one sheet" he said "and write an epistle...to our brethren the exiles in Babylon and to those in Media and to all the other exiled in Israel, saying: "May your peace be great forever. We beg to inform you that the doves are still tender and the lambs still too young and the crops are not yet ripe; (and so) it seems advisable to me and to my colleagues to add thirty days to this year".
23. Tosefta Ketubot 4:9, ed. Lieberman p. 68) – When the people of Alexandria would betroth women, another [man] would come and seize her from the marketplace. The case came before the sages, who wished to declare their children bastards. Hillel the Elder said to them: 'Bring me your mother's marriage contract (*ketubbah*). They produced it before him and in it was written: 'When you enter my house you shall be my wife' (the BT Bava Mezia 104a, adds: and they did not render their children bastards).
24. BT Sukkah 20a – In ancient times, when the Torah was forgotten from Israel, Ezra came up from Babylon and established it. It was again forgotten, and Hillel the Babylonian came up and established it. Yet again, it was forgotten and R. Hiyya and his sons (3rd century CE) came up and established it.