

Thumbnail Sketch of Old Testament History

The Story of the Jews is well known to Christians:

- The patriarchs in Genesis
- The Exodus and Moses leading the Chosen People in the desert for 40 years and into the Promised Land of Canaan around 1200 B.C.
- 12 Tribes form a loose confederacy (see Judges)
- United monarchy, when the Israelites demand a king. And the prophet Samuel anoints Saul as the first king of Israel (1 Sam. 8).
- David becomes the second King of Israel and the monarchy becomes hereditary (see II Sam. 7:16)
- Solomon (David's son) assumes the crown around 961, and his reign is marked by internal rebellion. Solomon builds the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 5-8).
- Divided Monarchy: Solomon dies in 922 and the kingdom splits into Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Jeroboam rules the 10 northern tribes and Rehoboam (Solomon's son) rules the southern tribes (1 Kings 11-12)
- Kingdom of Israel is destroyed by the Assyrians in 721, and the Israelites are exiled and scattered, becoming the "10 Lost Tribes." (2 Kings 17-18)
- The Babylonians conquer the Kingdom of Judah in 597, and its leaders are exiled.
- The Temple is destroyed in Jerusalem and the Judeans are exiled to Babylonia in 586 (2 Kings 24-25).
- Restoration and the Second Temple. The Persians, under King Cyrus II, conquers Babylon in 539 and allows the Judeans to return to what is now called Yehud and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, which was dedicated in 516 (Haggai, Zecharia, and Ezra)
- Ezra even reads the Torah of Moses to the newly constituted community in Jerusalem (Neh. 8-9)

- Alexander the Great brings Hellenistic culture to the Land of Israel around 333 B.C.. and on his death the land is divided into 3 parts; the Land of Israel is controlled by the Ptolemies of Egypt.
- In 200, The Seleucids gain control of the land of Israel, and Hellenism spreads more aggressively through this region.
- Revolt of the Maccabees: Judah and his sons initiate the first war for religious freedom. These are the Hasmoneans. This is a war between the Syrian Greeks/Seleucids and a civil war pitting the less Hellenized Jews vs. the more Hellenized ones (I and II Maccabees)
- Rome enters Yehud. Since the Hasmoneans are fighting all the time, Rome sneaks in and establishes its presence in the Land of Israel in 63 B.C.
- Rome appoints a series of native –born rulers, then foreign procurators to administer the territory and collect taxes.
- There are apocalyptic visions of the overthrow of Rome and the re-establishment of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel.
- **Great Revolt, 66-70:** Jewish Zealots initiate the Great Revolt against the Romans, when the Roman procurator, Gessius Florius, expropriates gold from the Temple treasury. Revolt is eventually quashed and the Second Temple is destroyed.
- According to Rabbinic legend, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai is spirited out of Jerusalem during the revolt and establishes what becomes the seed of Rabbinic Judaism at **Yavneh**.
- **The Zealots escape to King Herod’s mountain fortress, Massada, and are able to survive until 74, when the Romans finally succeed in breaching the walls. According to Josephus, the Jews on the mountain committed suicide to be spared capture and enslavement by the Romans.**
- 3 sects of Second Temple Judaism on eve of Great Revolt:
 - Sadducees did not have the oral Torah and denied resurrection (Mark 12:18); denied divine omniscience, because free will is a necessary assumption of the

Torah. They were more Hellenized and associated with the priesthood.

- Essenes: lived around Dead Sea and held to be responsible for Dead Sea Scrolls; they are an ascetic community with an apocalyptic and dualistic theology. They reject free will and claim that divine providence controls everything.
- Christians/Nazarenes: early followers of Jesus of Nazareth claim that he is the Messiah even though Jewish sovereignty had not been restored to Israel. Thus, **the Second Coming predicted the fulfillment of those earlier expectations. And Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles spreads the “good news” throughout the Roman Empire.**
- **Pharisees: claimed an oral tradition that interpreted the Torah. They believed in the resurrection and the world to come; maintained that humans have free will and God knows the future; promoted priestly party as a way for all of Israel to attain “holiness.”**
- **Rabbis: spiritual descendants of the Pharisees.**