

Dr. Anthony J. Tomasino, Judaism Before Jesus, Session 2, Sources for Reconstructing Jewish History

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This is Tony Tomasino and his teaching on Judaism before Jesus. This is session 2, Sources for Reconstructing Jewish History.

So, one of the things that is a question regarding this period, I already referred to the fact that we have a lot of data from this time.

And anybody who actually starts studying this finds how ironic that phrase, the 400 silent years, really is because these people were loquacious. They were anything but silent during this time. So, we're going to talk here about some of the different sources that we use and the qualities, the characteristics of those sources, and how they inform us about the events, the culture, and the developments that were taking place during the intertestamental period.

So, one of the first questions is, why do we call this the 400 silent years? What made it silent? Well again, this is a Protestant phrase. It's not really something used by the Catholics or the Orthodox folks because they actually have texts from this period that they consider part of their Bible. Protestants and Jews do not.

One of the questions which has arisen, and actually which is still battled around by both Protestants and Jews, is the question of whether or not prophecy ceased. And you see, part of the reason is this is because the book of Amos talks about this time when the days are coming, utters the Lord Yahweh, when I will send famine through the land, not a famine of bread or thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of Yahweh. A lot of people, a lot of Protestants and Jews too, have argued that this refers to the end of the prophetic period with the passing of the prophet Malachi.

And so, this time, according to Protestants, most Protestants, and Jews, is a time when God is no longer speaking in the way that he did before. So, Protestants eventually decided to remove several books that were part of the earlier tradition from the Bible that were actually part of this period. And we've come to call these books the Apocrypha from reasons for reasons that we'll see in a moment.

But these remain part of the Catholic Bible. They are various forms in different Orthodox traditions. Even among the Anglicans, typically, these are considered part of their scriptures, though not authoritative scriptures, and are considered to be good reading and so on.

And sometimes they're used even in worship. But for most Protestants, the Apocrypha is a big mystery. So, we're going to unravel that mystery a little bit here, too.

So, what are some of the sources that we got for reconstructing Jewish history? We're going to take a step back from the literary sources, and we're going to talk a little bit about the physical sources, primarily archaeology. Now, I am not an archaeologist, so what I say here is probably going to offend anybody who is. But archaeology is a remarkable science that has come into its own in the last couple hundred years.

It has become far more scientific than it used to be in the old days. But that doesn't mean that it's an exact science. It still has its holes.

And there is this big debate, live debate, among biblical scholars. There is a whole school of biblical scholars who believe that the only way to really establish Old Testament or ancient Israel history is by using archaeology. There are some who will say we just have to push the Bible aside because the Bible is biased and the Bible is a literary source, and rather, we're going to focus entirely on archaeology for reconstructing the history of Israel.

Then there's another side of the debate that says that, no, really, archaeology is an exact science. We really have to depend more upon literary sources. Now, I'm more toward that side than I am toward the other side, but archaeology even still does have its uses.

Part of the problems, of course, with archaeology have to do with the fact that it is dependent upon interpretation, as is any data. But some of the issues that we have with the archaeology of Israel, and particularly of the intertestamental period, are some of the sites that we would really, really like to be able to excavate. We can't because they are inhabited, and you can't go digging under somebody's house for the most part. So, Jerusalem, we've done some digging around Jerusalem, and they're digging underneath the city and so on.

We would really love to be able to just dig the whole place up and turn it all into an archaeological site, but that's not going to happen. So much of the information that we wish we could have, much of the data that we wish we could have, many of the artifacts, they're all buried, and they're buried under somebody's house, and we can't get to them. There's also the fact that whatever we dig up is fragmentary, typically, actually, literally fragmentary, like broken pieces of pottery that then have to be painstakingly reassembled, broken inscriptions, building walls, and of course texts, texts which we'll be talking about in a little bit that is found in various archaeological digs which are fragmentary and decayed and have to be reassembled from tiny little pieces.

So, the fragmentary nature of the evidence makes it difficult, and because it's fragmentary, the interpreters have to fill in a lot of holes. And this is where the whole subjectivity thing comes in. Because of the fact that we have to fill in these holes, we have to use our imaginations.

We have to begin to put together the puzzles if you will when a lot of the pieces are missing. And this requires us not only knowledge of the background and so on but also just a lot of creative thinking. And so, what archaeology can tell us is some things like where major battles were fought.

It can tell us things like where there were settlements, but it is not necessarily the best way of dating the settlements. There's a whole field called stratigraphy which helps us to kind of date different layers. And that's all controversial because different people have different interpretations of different layers and so on and so forth, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

So really, I feel like the best use of archaeology is to use it in connection with the literary texts and to create a picture of the ancient world using both together. Jerusalem, of course, has been a site of a great deal of excavations, as much as we can do excavations in Jerusalem. But as I mentioned, Jerusalem has been inhabited from ancient times and continues to be inhabited to this day.

There are many holy sites in Jerusalem, and you can't dig under or around them. Well, they're trying to dig under them these days, but it's difficult. And so people want you to leave those things alone.

So, Jerusalem is a place where we would love to have more archaeological information about Jerusalem, but we can't get to it. Qumran, of course, is a very famous site nowadays because of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which we're going to talk about in some detail later. But the site itself was a settlement and had been a minor settlement until, or a place of minor archaeological interest until, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Then, connections were made between the texts and the site. And so, Qumran has become very important for us as an archaeological site. Masada has been a site that has captured the attention and the imaginations of many a digger, many a Bible scholar, and many a common person, for that matter, because of the romantic story associated with the mass suicide of the Jews that occurred at this site.

But Masada had been around for a long time before the mass suicide of the freedom fighters during the Roman revolt against Rome. There are a number of occupation levels there, and some remarkable discoveries have come forth from Masada. I think

one of the most poignant was that a few years ago, a fragment from the Book of Ezekiel was discovered deliberately buried at Masada.

And that fragment was from Ezekiel's vision of the resurrection of the dry bones. And so it was almost as if the people there were encouraging themselves with the idea that, no, they would rise again. Not only that, but their nation would rise again.

So, Masada has been an intriguing and remarkable site and has yielded actually quite a few texts that have been of very great interest to those of us who study what we call Second Temple Judaism. More important to us, for the most part, than archaeology is the historical writers. There are a number of different sources that we use to reconstruct the history of this era.

Sometimes, they conflict with each other. Sometimes, they go on flights of fancy. But used judiciously, we find that these historical writers have a great deal of value to us for understanding what was happening in this era.

It is more explicit than archaeological data, of course; as I've mentioned, archaeology can tell us where people were and approximately when they were. It can tell us a lot of things about the daily life of common folks that maybe the historical writers didn't interest themselves in. But the historical sources really can tell us things like the names of the people involved to the extent that the archaeological data can't.

Some of these historical sources are the work of eyewitnesses. We're going to talk about some very important eyewitnesses in a few minutes here. Some of them were even participants in the events that they recorded.

That doesn't necessarily make them objective sources, but at least they can speak with some authority on the events where of they speak. Now, historical accounts are selective. One of the things we would love to know about is the life of the common person, you know.

We really don't know much about the life of the common person because most of our historical data is about great people, people whose names have great attached to the end of them. Those are the people that they really like to write about. Most of our sources are focused on the big events, not the daily events.

And so, we realize that even the picture we get from these historical sources has holes and gaps. And again, sometimes, we have to use our imagination to fill in those gaps. But nonetheless, certainly much more valuable, and I say this knowing that I'm insulting some people, much more valuable for reconstructing chronology than our, say, the archaeological finds.

One thing we have to bear in mind, of course, is that our sources are biased. And one of the things that we will find when we're talking, say, about the accounts of the Greek struggles with the Persians is they're all written by Greeks. And the Greeks didn't like the Persians.

In fact, you might say the Greeks hated the Persians, though they gave some very grudging respect, particularly to Cyrus the Great. But for the most part, their accounts show this very strong bias. And so, we always take them with a grain of salt.

Some of them we take with a whole salt shaker because they have their perspectives, which are not always favorable to the topics and to the subjects of which they write. So Greek and Roman authors. For this era, one of our most important Greek authors is Herodotus.

Herodotus wrote the history of the Persian Wars. He lived near the time the Persian Wars were fought, so he could write with a certain amount of authority. But like all Greek authors, Herodotus was very biased against the Persians.

Herodotus also had a wonderful way of writing, which made him so much fun to read. He loved to tell stories that he had heard on his trips. And so he tells us this wonderful story, for instance, of this whole village of people who would turn into wolves every full moon. He says, not to say I believe the story, but this is what they say, you know.

But this is the kind of thing that Herodotus would do. And so, when we read his accounts of the Persians, we realize that some of his account might not be always the most accurate depiction of Persian life and Persian customs. But even so, it was a great read, and since he lived so close to the events that he wrote about, he is probably one of our most reliable sources for that period.

Thucydides is an interesting fellow. Thucydides sometimes has been called the father of history because, sometimes, Herodotus has too, but more often, Thucydides, because Thucydides begins his writings with some words that might sound very familiar to those of you who read the New Testament. He says I have undertaken to write, even though other people have written about these things, I have undertaken to write an accurate account by interviewing the people who were involved and coming up with the most authoritative version of events.

Well, of course, that sounds very much like the gospel according to Luke, you know. Personally, I don't doubt that Luke was, in some sense, patterning his writing after the writing of Thucydides because Thucydides was a giant among history writers. His work also spans portions of this era.

He wrote primarily about the struggles between the Greek city states, but Persia and some Jewish events feature in his writings as well. Plutarch is quite a bit later than the period that we're writing about here. But he used a number of sources and is considered a very important source as well.

Cicero, the famous Roman orator. Cicero is an interesting guy. For a number of reasons, many of his writings have survived.

Cicero hated Jews. And it comes through in his writings. But because he hated them, he wrote about them quite a bit.

So, we can use some of Cicero's writings to help to reconstruct some of this period as well. Suetonius, another very important historian. And Hestesus is another one.

Just a number of historians whose work has come down to us in fragments embedded in other people's works, like the church father Eusebius. In many of his histories, he quotes from some of these people, other church fathers as well, have preserved fragments of a number of the Hellenistic philosophers. And so, they are very important sources to us for this period.

There you go. Most important guy by far for us is Flavius Josephus. Lived 37 to 100 AD.

This is a bust we presume is of Flavius Josephus. And look at that noble nose. But Josephus was a Jewish general in the great revolt against Rome.

He also wrote several volumes of Jewish history designed for Roman consumption. Get that point here? Designed for Roman consumption. Because that's a very important point.

Now I'm going to go through it, and we're going to talk quite a while about this fellow because so much of our information is dependent upon Josephus. Josephus tells an interesting story about his childhood. He tells us he was born in 37 AD.

He was the son of Matthias, who was a priest. And his mother, of course, was also from a very fine Jewish family. And he amazed the teachers of the law with his learning as a child.

And so excelled over any of the other children, you know, that it was just undoubted that he was destined for great things. Now, you know, we read these kinds of things, and we're kind of put off by this. But hey, humility was not really considered much of a virtue for authors in those days.

No, these people were quite willing to blow their own horns, and it was expected of them. And Josephus does not disappoint in that regard. So, he tells us as a child, he amazed the teachers of the law.

He had a religious upbringing. You know, we don't know a lot about his religious upbringing. Most likely he was raised as a Sadducee.

And we'll talk a little bit more about what that means later. But for now, it was one of the major Jewish sects of the day. And we hear about them in the New Testament, of course.

At the age of 16, he went on a religious quest. He began to inquire of various teachers and learn of various Jewish religious teachings and sects and peoples. And he spent three years living in the desert with a hermit, where he studied, according to Josephus.

Once again, this is the kind of thing that the Romans loved. Now, they ate this kind of thing up. And whether Josephus actually did this or not, you know, I'm not calling the man a liar, but I could maybe exaggerate a little bit.

But at any rate, he says he spent three years with a hermit. Eventually, he decides he is going to become a Pharisee. And we'll hear a lot more about the Pharisees a little bit later.

But they are, of course, a very prominent, very important Jewish sect in the time of Jesus. And they figure a lot in the Gospels. And a fellow by the name of St. Paul also was a Pharisee.

So, he's in good company. Well, the early career of Josephus. Josephus was sent to Rome in 64 AD to help negotiate the release of captive priests.

Now, he was a young man at this point. And we're not really sure why somebody of this age would have been sent on such an important mission. But, you know, there's not really a reason to doubt that it happened, I guess.

Maybe he might exaggerate his own role in that. But there's no reason to doubt that he actually went to Rome, had been in Rome, had been part of this negotiation, and got these priests released. And when he returned home, after having been in Rome, he discovered, well, first of all, he suffered a shipwreck, which, of course, everybody suffered a shipwreck in those days.

It's just expected. So, he tells about his adventures being shipwrecked. Then he returns in 67 AD, and he finds that the country, particularly Galilee, is on the verge of revolt against Rome.

Well, by this point, it looks like war is inevitable, that the country is going to plunge into conflict against the Romans. Josephus joins up with some of the other Jewish aristocrats to try to figure out how they can limit the damage. Josephus is assigned as a general in this conflict.

He becomes a prominent figure in the defense of Galilee, according to what he says. He claims that he was actually opposed to the revolt, right from the very beginning. Now, remember, of course, he's writing for Romans.

So, you know, I really didn't want to do this, but they dragged me into it. So what could I do, right? You know, I'm kicking and screaming here, but I figure if we're going to do this, we're going to do this right. And this is this wonderful way that he justifies his own participation in the revolt.

He says, you know, I didn't want to, but if I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it well. He also loves to brag about how well he prepared his troops for this conflict with the Romans. So he was in defense of Galilee.

He says that he was opposed even by some of the native leaders in Galilee and assembled a large army to fight against the Romans. Local militia leader John of Giscala figures prominently in Josephus' accounts. Very likely, John of Giscala had written his own account of this conflict, and Josephus is trying to set the record straight, you know.

It's something, really. When we think about this, you would think that people who led a revolt against Rome would be executed, but that wasn't the way the Romans did things. For some strange reason, they were very reluctant to put people whom they considered, particularly people of nobility, to death. Crucifixion was really reserved for people that they considered to be kind of scum of the earth.

Beheading was considered a noble death, and that was given usually to people who had done some really, really bad things. But here we've got these people who led the rebellion against Rome, who were sitting around in Rome, apparently on a government pension, and writing memoirs about how they rebelled against Rome, why they did it, etc., etc., etc. John of Giscala is apparently one of these, and so Josephus is saying, huh, well, if he could do it, I can do it better.

So, one of the remarkable aspects of Josephus' story is the Jotapatha affair. And this really is one of those places where you're just kind of shaking your head and saying, nah, no way, no way. But the way Josephus tells the story, okay, so he's up in Galilee, and he's defending Galilee against the Roman soldiers.

And Galilee was really kind of the hotbed of the revolt, and they were the real heart of the movement for the liberation of Judah from the Romans. And while they're up there, we have a lot of different factions of the revolt that are each kind of pulling in different directions. So, Josephus is kind of given the task of trying to pull this together, according to him, and he fortifies a number of cities up there in Galilee, including the city of Jotapatha.

And this kind of becomes the base of the resistance. As the Roman troops came through, many of the cities immediately surrendered to the Romans because they quickly discovered that discretion was the better part of valor. And the Romans came with their super disciplined, super well-armed and equipped, uber-powerful armies, and many of the Jews said, okay, this is not what I signed up for.

So many of the cities began to immediately surrender to the to the Romans. There was some resistance, and some of those cities that resisted were basically reduced to dust. Well, Jotapatha was one of the cities where Josephus decided to make his stand.

So he fortifies the city there. The Romans had to besiege the city for 47 days, and Josephus relishes in telling us about how clever he was, about the way that they defended the city, and that eventually what happens is that Titus, who was the son of the general who was leading the armies, would eventually become a Roman emperor himself, had climbed the walls in the night when the guards had fallen asleep and had opened the gates and let the Roman soldiers into Jotapatha. But so, after 47 days, the city had been taken by the Romans.

But Josephus somehow managed to escape with 30 of his soldiers, and they hid out in a cave near the city of Jotapatha. So, what do they do there in the cave? Well, Josephus is certainly like, you know, now he says, oh, these Romans, they are just so overwhelming. There's no way we can possibly conquer.

We need to surrender. There will be no shame in surrendering to such an overwhelming force. God has ordained that the Romans should conquer the whole world.

And the other soldiers are like, nah, we're not going to do that. They decide instead that they want to have an honorable death. And so, they form a suicide pact.

Josephus, on the other hand, says, wait a minute, taking our own lives, that would be a sinful thing. He says, let's do this instead. Let's kill each other.

And the way Josephus tells this, and I've tried to picture this in my mind many a time, and I haven't quite figured it all out yet, but he says that they all drew lots. And then

the men paired off. According to the number on their lots, they then proceeded to stab each other in the guts and die.

And so, the first pair of soldiers arise, and they stab each other, and they both die. And then the next pair stab each other, and they both die. Well, it just so happened that Josephus had the last number.

You kind of wonder if maybe he wasn't like, you know, stacking the chits or something here. But at any rate, so when it comes down to the final two guys and the other guys, they're about to stab Josephus, Josephus says, wait a minute, let's think of this through here for a bit here. So, what good will it do for us to kill ourselves at this point? So, the Romans have proven to be merciful people.

And, you know, suck up, you know, whatever you want to say here, you know, but the Romans have proven to be so merciful, let us present ourselves to them, and they will show mercy to us. And we will be able to be spared from this fate. And maybe we will even be able to help our country's people and our countrymen by persuading them not to oppose the Romans who have been so chosen by God.

And so, his partner agrees. And so, Josephus goes and presents himself to the Romans. We have no idea what happened to the partner after this, because he just kind of disappears.

But Josephus presents himself to Vespasian, who is the governor, or the general rather, in charge of the Roman forces. And Josephus presents himself before Vespasian. And he says, Vespasian says, I am the general of the forces that have been in charge of this area.

He says I want to help you to persuade my people to surrender. And what is more, he says, I can be of aid to you, because I am a prophet. Josephus says, and he explains this later in some of his other books, that he believes that he had the supernatural ability to interpret the oracles of the Old Testament prophets.

He is very likely making reference to the Book of Daniel and, very likely, to Daniel's vision of the four beasts. He believed that Daniel had predicted that Rome would rule the whole world.

At least that's what he says. And so, he says to Vespasian, the general, I, because of my prophetic abilities, can interpret these oracles. And these oracles tell me that you, Vespasian, shall rule the whole world.

Okay. Now, I could go into the details. I actually have written a very long article about this.

But part of the reasoning here seems to have been that Josephus interpreted the book of Daniel as saying the one who would rule over the whole world was to come from the East. In fact, Josephus says that there was an ambiguous oracle circulating among the people in those days that said a ruler was going to come forth from the East and rule over all the world. And, you know, we can't read that without thinking of Jesus.

But Josephus says, of course, this was referring to Vespasian. Anyway, so Josephus tells Vespasian that he shall be the ruler over all the world. Vespasian says, well, let's see how this plays out here.

And he has Josephus taken in chains. But he says, if what you say comes to pass, I shall release you and reward you handsomely. Well, of course, eventually, it does come to pass.

Josephus goes forward and marches around with the armies of Vespasian and attempts to persuade them to surrender to the Roman forces. Now, you might not be surprised to find out that the Jews, for many, many, many years, did not have very good feelings about Josephus. In fact, Josephus 's writings were preserved by Christians, not by the Jews.

But at any rate, Josephus definitely was, well, a traitor. And yet his words eventually came to pass because Vespasian did become the emperor of Rome. And Josephus was very handsomely rewarded.

So, he went forth and urged the Jews to surrender. After the war was over, he goes to Rome. He receives a land grant.

He received land grants in Judea from the Romans, but he preferred to live in Rome. And so he went to Rome. He was granted citizenship in Rome and was lodged in the royal palace.

And there, of course, he did what many an old general does. He wrote his memoirs. His first work was called The Jewish War.

And this was written sometime before 79 AD. His next surviving work, The Antiquities, The Vita, The Life of Flavius Josephus, was kind of his autobiography. And then a very important work, which is not appreciated nearly as much as it should be, a work called Against Apion, which was kind of an apologetic work for defending Judaism against its detractors.

So, talk about these here. The Jewish War is an account of the revolt. It starts in about 66 AD and goes to 73 AD.

Josephus is presented here in this. It's primarily about Josephus, you know, but he presents himself as a dedicated soldier carrying out his duties with diligence. He claims that he is an objective writer, patterning it after the Greek histories.

Again, Thucydides seems to have been his model. An interesting thing in the writing of this work is he admits that he did not know Greek very well, which tells you a little something about the state of Jewry at this time, of Palestinian Jewry. Josephus had other people write the Greek for him.

He himself could not write in Greek. So even though he was an upper class, well-educated Jew, he did not write Greek. And I believe that many... I'm going to poke the hornet's nest again, but I do believe that many New Testament writers in particular tend to overestimate how schooled your average Jew in these days was in Greek.

And I got a lot of ire one time by suggesting that Jesus didn't know Greek. But if Josephus didn't know Greek, I don't think Jesus knew Greek either. But anyway, several tendencies of this work.

First of all, to flatter Josephus, of course. Another one is that in this work, he particularly is trying to lay the blame for the revolt on certain low-bred hotheads. Now, it wasn't the aristocrats, it wasn't the well-bred Jews who were doing this.

It was the lower classes. And a fawning, fawning picture of the Romans, as great and noble people, and especially Titus, who was by this point emperor, of course. So, Josephus knew which side his bread was buttered on, and Titus comes across as being like, well, cross between Captain America and Superman kind of thing.

He depicts the result of the revolt as God's will and as punishment for the Jews for their unfaithfulness to God. So, he lays the blame for the bloodshed, for the destruction of the temple, right in the laps of his own people. The Antiquities is another work that Josephus wrote.

This one is a very long work, and it was a history of the Jewish people, starting from Abraham and going all the way up through the time of the Roman procurators. Now, most of this stuff, we can read the whole story in the Old Testament, because that's basically his source. But we can divide it into two halves.

The first half goes up to the destruction of Jerusalem, which is the time of Nebuchadnezzar. And then the second half goes right up to the very verge of the second destruction of Jerusalem under the Romans. So, he uses a really remarkable organizational pattern.

But his main source for the Old Testament times is the Bible, and he really adds very little to what we can't read in the Bible itself, except for the way he tells it because his point of view is rather remarkable. His intertestamental account uses the Apocrypha, particularly the books of 1st and 2nd Maccabees, which we're going to talk about a little bit, and the works of a fellow by the name Nicholas of Damascus. Nicholas was actually King Herod the Great's court historian, and Josephus had access to his work.

So that's pretty remarkable. We don't have that source anymore, but we have Josephus's use of that source. He also seemed to have access to some Roman records as well.

So, in that sense, his account of the Antiquities really gives us a well-rounded-up picture of the era. One of his major tendencies here is to depict the Jews as an ancient and wise people and the ideal subjects of foreign overlords. To the Romans, new was considered bad.

New was considered an innovation. Ancient things were considered good. The Romans loved the Egyptians because they could see the ancient Egyptian monuments, and they could see that the Egyptians had this marvelous ancient old culture.

They kind of liked the Greeks because the Greeks had stories about how old they were. But the Jews they didn't know anything about the Jews, and so they thought the Jews were some of the Johnny-come-latelys on the world scene. Well, Josephus is out to fix this.

So pretty much, he tells us in the Antiquities how Abraham taught the Egyptians how to build pyramids, things of this sort. Abraham was the father of astrology. A lot of this kind of wonderful things that Josephus attributes to the Jews.

And, of course, the idea that anytime the Jews were conquered by foreigners, they proved to actually benefit the people that had conquered them. So, the life apparently was a short version of the account of the war. And this was written as a response to a fellow by the name of Justice of Tiberias.

Justice of Tiberias is in Galilee, and Justice, having read Josephus' account of the war, said that isn't how it happened. So, we can kind of understand a little bit of what Justice was saying because of what Josephus says. But Josephus has a quite different account of the war, mainly in details.

I mean, the general outlines are about the same. But again, Josephus and the upper-class Jews are depicted as reluctant participants in the revolts. They only intended to minimize the damage.

And the life pretty much depicts Josephus as a man of destiny. Like the stories that were circulating about Julius Caesar, about how a comet appeared at his birth. Josephus has similar kind of stories about himself and about how he was clearly destined from youth to become one of the great men of the world.

And then finally, *Against Apion*. And *Against Apion* is also known on the antiquity of the Jews. And here, what do we mean by antiquity? Big question is, are the Jews an ancient people? And this is what Josephus is trying to argue in mainly.

That's one of his main arguments is the Jews are an ancient people. And so the first half of this book is to defend the Jews against the charges made by Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians as well, particularly an Egyptian by the name of Manetho, that the Jews were not an ancient people. So, he criticizes the Greek historians for their inaccuracy, which is kind of ironic in its way.

He refutes this account by this Egyptian Manetho, who had said that the Jews were expelled from Egypt because they were a race of lepers. And so yeah, that's the kind of thing that leaves a sort of stain on your reputation. The second half, he refutes Apion's slanders of the Jews.

And these included things like the account of the Exodus, which was based on Manetho. And also, allegations that the Jews worshiped a donkey's head. And there was this wonderful rumor going around in Greece, that when the Greek generals, and when Pompey in particular, the Roman general, went into the Holy of Holies, that they found in there a donkey's head.

So that's what the Jews supposedly were worshipping. There's this wonderful graffiti, which was found in Rome, which has a picture of a Jew bowing before a donkey's head. And it says underneath that, here's this Jewish fellow worshipping his god.

Graffiti was a big thing in Rome. At any rate, so Josephus said, no, we do not worship a donkey's head. Also, there was this rumor that the Jews would sacrifice a Greek every year.

Again, there was this story that when Pompey entered the Holy of Holies, there were so many things that he saw. But one of the things was he found a Jew tied, or rather a Greek tied up there, who was going to be sacrificed. Oh, please, thank you, rescue me from these horrible, horrible Jewish people.

So yeah, this is this whole thing of what we call blood libel. You know, this goes back to such ancient times, and it keeps popping up again, and again, and again. Of course, we know that after it was said that the Jews were sacrificing Greeks and

particularly Greek babies, eventually, when Christians became prominent in the Roman Empire, that charge was shifted over to the Christians.

It was the Christians who were, you know, drinking blood. What were they drinking the blood of? They were drinking the blood of Gentile babies, of course, you know. And now, of course, we know that's Hollywood celebrities who are doing that, they say.

But at any rate, the point is that this is a very ancient kind of charge that keeps popping up over and over and over again. And it seems like it's somehow in our brains, it's like one of the most heinous things that we can come up with. And so this is one of the charges that the Greeks and Romans were making against the Jews.

And so, Josephus had to refute that. And also, the idea that the Jews had produced no famous people. And so here again, Josephus had to go through and talk about how the Jews basically had invented everything.

So, there are some remarkable bits of, we might say, hyperbole in here, but it is fascinating reading in a lot of ways. But one of the really more important aspects of the book against Appian is its discussion of the production of the Jewish scriptures, and has become very important for us along those lines. And we'll get back to that when we talk about the Apocrypha.

Philo of Alexandria. Now, I'm not going to talk about Philo of Alexandria much, because he doesn't write a lot of history. But really, he was one of the most prolific Jewish authors of this era.

He left a lot of books behind, and a lot of them have survived to this day. Philo lived from about 20 BC to about 50 AD. He lived in Alexandria, which was like the center, the hub of philosophy and culture in the Eastern world.

Alexandria was near the Delta region in Egypt, founded by Alexander the Great. So, he was a Jewish nobleman. He is a philosopher.

He was a philosopher of kind of a platonic school. He was very well schooled in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. And he used a lot of the ideas, particularly of Plato, to explain Jewish theology.

Philo of Alexandria became very important to Christians later on, particularly to Augustine, Saint Augustine, who used Plato in much the same way that Philo did. Some of his works of importance include Every Good Man is Free, his Embassy to Gaius, which is his historical work, which tells about how he and a group of Jews went to Rome in order to speak to Emperor Caligula, who had tried to force the Jews

to set up a statue of himself in the temple in Jerusalem. And so, Philo had to go to Rome in order to talk Caligula out of that plan.

First and Second Maccabees are both in the Apocrypha, two very different historical accounts of the Jewish revolt against the Greeks. First Maccabees was written originally in either Hebrew or Aramaic. I tend to think Hebrew probably because of the fact that it is a nationalistic document and the language of nationalism for the Jews in this era was Hebrew.

Even though Aramaic by this point was already more widely used, Hebrew was still considered the national language. And if you wanted to really connect with the people, you used Hebrew. So I believe that probably it was written originally in Hebrew.

But it only survives in Greek translation. Again, this is a work that the Jews didn't seem to have a lot of interest in. It's never mentioned in the Hasmoneans, the people who were in charge of this revolt against the Greeks and their leadership.

In its religious outlook, it's very interesting because it seems to have a kind of a Sadducean sort of sense about it. And again, this word is kind of an anachronism at this point of history. But one of the things that we read, for instance, in one of the speeches found in First Maccabees is that the general is trying to encourage his troops by telling them that if they go out and they die, their names will have honor and that even though they die, that they will be remembered as great people and their families will receive honor after them.

No mention at all of afterlife or of resurrection of the dead or anything of that sort. The focus is on the importance of honor and doing the right thing in this world in this time. Now, this is in contrast to Second Maccabees.

Second Maccabees is the abridgment, the way we have it in our Apocrypha, an abridgment of what was originally a multi-volume account of this revolt against the Greeks. This was originally written in Alexandria in Egypt, and it was written in Greek. In some ways, when you read this book, it reminds you of Christian martyrologies.

In other words, it uses these examples of suffering as a way of encouraging people to stand firm against oppression, to stand strong against those people who would try to separate them from their faith. And so, we have this remarkably gruesome story of this Jewish mother who allows her seven sons to be tortured to death and wonderful details about the torture. And each one of them dies singing the praises of the Lord and talking about the curses that shall fall upon those who have offended the people of God and who have accosted them.

But more Pharisaic in its religious outlook, because this Jewish mother here, who gives up her sons, encourages them by telling them that even though they die now, they shall rise after their death and shall be honored and receive glory after they have given their lives. And one of the sons even dies telling his persecutors, he says, you can take my life, but I shall rise again. But as for you, this is interesting, he says, as for you, you shall have no resurrection.

So, we see here the idea being formed that the righteous shall rise to a life of glory and honor, whereas the unrighteous just going to lie in the dirt. Other literary sources that are not so historical in nature also help us to fill in our period here; these shed light on ancient beliefs, ancient culture, and so on. These include, of course, the Bible itself, because some books of the Bible actually are produced in this period that we would call the intertestamental period.

There's a lot of argument, of course, among scholars about the dating, particularly of certain books of the Old Testament, books like Daniel, Esther, and Ecclesiastes, also certain portions of other books, like certain portions of the book of Zechariah, for instance, are believed to have been written actually during this, what we call the intertestamental period. Now, again, that's all debatable, and finding any kind of certainty in that that is difficult, but what cannot be denied, what cannot be denied is that these texts throw a great deal of light on the circumstances and situations that occurred in the intertestamental period. A number of prophetic texts speak of events which will occur in the intertestamental period, and one of the most important of these is Daniel, which, while many biblical scholars believe it was written in this era, whether we believe it was written here or not, what we do know is that it gives us some details about the era that we would not have known otherwise.

There are some details about, for instance, the struggles between some of the some of the Greek kings in this era that we only know from the book of Daniel, so there's some fascinating little bits of information to be found in some of these texts if we're willing to comb through it all. And now comes the Apocrypha. I've been mentioning the Apocrypha a number of times.

The Apocrypha is a collection of stories and texts, all Jewish in origin, that were omitted from the Bible, but they have been included in Greek translations that were used by early Christians. There are a lot of interesting questions regarding the Apocrypha because there are still a lot of things we don't understand about where this came into existence and how it came into existence. The interesting thing is none of the books of the Apocrypha are mentioned in the Apocrypha.

The early church fathers, a hundred years later, use the Apocrypha extensively. We get to the time of Saint Jerome, who did a translation of the Bible from Greek into Latin, and Jerome rejected the Apocrypha. In fact, he is the guy who came up with this phrase Apocrypha, this term for it.

He said these books are obscure; we don't know exactly where they came from, and so for that reason, he didn't think they should be considered scripture. And in his Latin text, the books were actually omitted from his translation. Then the next generation, as soon as Jerome passed away, quickly put them back in again.

So, Jerome didn't have quite the pull he thought he had. So, there are still questions about why, where, how, and to whom these were considered scripture. These books were written between 400 BC, probably actually the earliest one may have been maybe from like 300 BC or so.

But anyway, the latest of the books of the Apocrypha were probably written around 90 AD, but is again a Jewish text and tells of events that relate to the destruction of the temple. Protestants regard the text of the Apocrypha to be non-authoritative. We do not read the Apocrypha as scripture, as authoritative.

We follow Jerome in this. We follow more closely Martin Luther in this. But the point being that in our Protestant Bibles, these works are not included.

They are included in Catholic Bibles still. For reconstructing Jewish history in this period, the books of the Maccabees are especially important. And we will be talking about them and depending upon them extensively.

Josephus depended upon them extensively in his retelling. But interestingly enough, Josephus too makes it very clear he did not regard these books as scripture. So, contents of the Apocrypha, besides the books of 1st and 2nd Maccabees, include narratives, stories, some fascinating stories.

The story of Tobit is probably one of the older books of the Apocrypha. This tells the story of a young man who is aided by an angel in order to overcome a demon. And in the end, he gets the girl.

So, a lovely little entertaining story. The story of Judith is a story of a young woman who uses her wiles to seduce a foreign general and gets his head. At the end of the story, she gets to present his head to everybody and says, looky, looky, I killed your general.

So, yeah, a kind of remarkable story. Sometimes it's been called the anti-Esther because Judith is a woman who refuses to compromise her Jewish principles or her Jewish honor in order to save her people and yet comes out saving her people in the end anyway. The book of, well, the story of Susanna.

The story of Susanna and the story of Belle and the Dragon. These are additions to the book of Daniel. These are stories about Daniel which sometimes have been called

the world's earliest detective stories because in these stories, Daniel uses his wits in order to figure out and uncover the machinations of some wicked pagan priests and some wicked Jews in the case of Susanna.

First, Esdras is the story of Ezra but it's told from a different perspective and this text is written in a Greek perspective kind of. Third, Maccabees is kind of a prequel to First Maccabees and it tells about some of the persecution that led up to the revolt. Fourth, Maccabees, an expansion of tales from Second Maccabees.

Not all of these are in the Catholic Bible. Some of these stories actually appear in other collections that other people regard as apocrypha. Additions to biblical texts include additions to the book of Esther and these include several prayers.

They include a vision at the beginning of the book of Esther and a vision interpretation at the end of the book of Esther. As you might be aware, Esther is the only book of the Old Testament that includes no mention of God and apparently somebody in the intertestamental period was a little bit annoyed by that fact. Not only no mention of God, but no mention of prayer, no mention of sacrifice, no mention of piety, no mention of Jerusalem.

Really, no trappings of Jewish religion at all. Well, the Septuagint, the apocrypha fixed that and the Greek version includes this vision at the beginning where Mordecai sees a vision which predicts the trouble that's going to come upon the Jewish people. It includes a very long prayer by Mordecai, a very long prayer by Esther, and then the interpretation of the vision at the end of the book.

The prayers of Azariah and the story of the Song of the Three Hebrew Children. So, these are additions to the book of Daniel which include Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego praying and singing in the fiery furnace. The prayer of Manasseh.

The book of Kings tells us that Manasseh was a very wicked person who brought the nation to ruin. The book of Chronicles, however, adds the rest of the story and tells us that Manasseh eventually repented. Well, in the apocrypha we find this wonderful long prayer, this very poetic prayer where Manasseh repents of all of his sins and turns his heart back to the Lord.

The letter of Jeremiah, which is an adjuration against idol worship, is stuck at the end of the book of Jeremiah. Psalm 151 which is an addition to the book of Psalms. Furthermore, we got some wisdom texts.

The Wisdom of Ben Sira is a remarkable book. Originally, it was written in Hebrew by a fellow by the name of Ben Sira, and his grandson translated it into Greek because he said, I want everybody to be able to read my grandfather's words. And so we have

this wonderful text here which records mostly Proverbs, but really, in some ways, the book is much more well organized than the book of Proverbs in the Old Testament.

Some of the work here is remarkable in its insight, others very insulting, particularly in his views of women, but a wonderful window into some of the attitudes of people during this period written around probably about 200 BC or so. The Wisdom of Solomon is another text, another collection of Proverbs from this era as well. In my opinion, not quite up to the level of Ben Sira but still very interesting reading.

And then there's the book of 2nd Esdras or sometimes known as 4th Ezra which is an apocalyptic text. Most people believe it was written around 90 AD after the Romans had destroyed Jerusalem. It was clearly retouched in its transmission by Christians but most people believe it was originally a Jewish text.

And this story, this book, gives us a lot of light on the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish attitudes after that time. Very heavy in its expectations regarding the coming of the Messiah who was going to restore the nation even after its destruction. Then we've got this book of Baruch which is of mixed genres, which is sometimes poetic, sometimes prophetic, and sometimes wisdom text.

A very interesting book of a variety of works written in the name of Baruch. Now, almost certainly Baruch didn't write it, but even so it makes for a very fascinating read. Baruch is an example of the phenomena that we call pseudepigrapha, or pseudepigraphy if you will, which basically means false inscriptions.

Writings composed primarily in the Second Temple period, though pseudepigraphy probably goes back earlier than that and also lasts quite a while after that, but usually these texts were written in the name of some long dead saint. For instance, the book of 4th Ezra, written in 90 AD, claims to be a revelation given to Ezra, the guy who was the governor of Judea or Judah back way in the days of the Persian Empire. So, in the book of Baruch, again, we have this text written in the name of Jeremiah's scribe, even though it almost certainly originates many centuries later.

Some areas of the Church preserve these texts, and not all of them are in the Apocrypha, some of them were preserved in Ethiopia, some of them were preserved in areas of Russia, and in other areas, some of them pop up among the Dead Sea Scrolls, but some people, some Christians, consider these books to be authoritative and read them as if they were scripture. Some of the most important of the pseudepigrapha include 1st Enoch, and 1 Enoch is a text written in the name of Enoch, and we're going to spend quite a while talking about 1 Enoch later, because it's a really important text and it tells us a lot about developing ideas about angels, and this book actually gets quoted in the New Testament. In the book of Jude in the New Testament, he talks about how the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment.

That's a quote from the book of 1st Enoch. 1st Enoch was very likely a composite text written over a period of maybe a century or more, but certainly originates in the time before Jesus. The book of Jubilees is a book that was very important to the Dead Sea Scrolls community, and the account in Jubilees is an account, a sort of a pseudo-Moses text.

It's written in the name of Moses, and it divides history into a series of 49-year periods of Jubilees. Then in addition to these texts, which have survived in copies, typically, and oftentimes in translations, we also have manuscripts that have been discovered. These are texts that date primarily from before the time of Jesus.

We have some texts from the Elephantine Papyri. We will be talking about those later when we talk about Persia. From the Greek era, we have some texts we call the Zenon Papyri, which is not really as significant as the Elephantine Papyri, but nonetheless gives some interesting insights into the administration of the Greek empires after the time of Alexander.

And then, of course, there's the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are the most famous of these texts. First discovered in 1947, and then in several subsequent discoveries that went all the way up through 1960. And in fact, new texts are still being discovered even in these days.

But the main body of the discoveries took place between 47 and 60. Okay, they contain manuscripts of biblical books and other texts dating from 200 BC to about 70 AD, probably for the latest of these texts. Among the other texts that we find among the Dead Sea Scrolls, we have religious documents, which are the product of a group we call the Dead Sea Sect.

And oftentimes, these are identified as the Essenes, who we'll talk about them later before we talk about the Dead Sea Scrolls. And yeah, these texts will all figure a little bit later in some of our lectures. At that time, we will be able to see how these texts have thrown light upon the culture, the developments, the ideas that were prominent among the Jews in the intertestamental period, and how these ideas shaped the world of the New Testament.

This is Tony Tomasino and his teaching on Judaism before Jesus. This is session 2, Sources for Reconstructing Jewish History.