

## **The Jews of Ancient Egypt**

Torah in Motion  
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In the late Second Temple period, Egypt was home to hundreds of thousands of Jews. Many of these Jews observed Shabbat, practiced their dietary laws, and circumcised their sons. They also read their holy scriptures in synagogues and even produced biblical interpretations. These Jews drew the attention—and concern—of Jewish leaders in Judea, who wanted Jewish communities of Egypt to look to them for guidance and advice. This series will explore the little-known history of the Jews of Egypt in the Hellenistic era, and will consider why this history is crucial to our understanding of how Judaism was practiced in the pre-rabbinic period.

Class 1: Introduction: The Jews of Egypt in the Hellenistic Age

Class 2: The Judeans of Elephantine; The Jews of Leontopolis

Class 3: The Jews of Alexandria

Class 4: Relations between Judean Jews and Egyptian Jews

### **TIMELINE:**

**BCE**

587-586: Babylonians destroy the Jerusalem Temple; Babylonian Exile complete

539-538: Persia destroys the Babylonian Empire; Cyrus allows Judeans to return

515: Building of the Second Temple is complete

334-333: Alexander the Great defeats Persia and the Hellenist Period begins

200: Judea has been mainly controlled by Ptolemies (Egyptian Greeks); it now comes under the control of Seleucids (Syrian Greeks)

167–164: Hasmonean Rebellion; Judea gains autonomy from the Greeks; Hasmonean dynasty begins

63: Pompey invades Jerusalem; Judea now controlled by Roman client kings

c. 20: Philo of Alexandria is born

**CE:**

6: Judea becomes a province of Rome

37: Josephus is born

38-41: Riots against the Jews in Alexandria,

66-73: The Jewish War; Jerusalem riots; Temple destroyed by Romans in 70 CE

115–118: Jewish uprisings throughout the Roman Empire

132–135: Bar Kokhba revolt: Jews expelled from Jerusalem

200: Mishnah edited and likely completed