

## **CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?**

1. During and after the Temple period amongst which nations were the Jews dispersed?
2. What was the population of world Jewry at the time of the destruction of the Temple?
3. What language(s) did the Jews speak?
4. What was their general level of education and observance?
5. Name at least three famous converts to Judaism who lived shortly before or after the destruction of the Temple?

This and much more will be addressed in the fourteenth lecture of this series: "Diaspora".

To derive maximum benefit from this lecture, keep these questions in mind as you listen to the tape and read through the outline. Go back to these questions once again at the end of the lecture and see how well you answer them.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This outline and source book was designed as a powerful tool to help you appreciate and understand the basis of Jewish History. Although the lectures can be listened to without the use of the outline, we advise you to read the outline to enhance your comprehension. Use it as well as a handy reference guide and for quick review.

THE EPIC OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE  
Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series II Lecture #14

DIASPORA

I. Scattered Among the Nations

והפיצך ד' בכל העמים מקצה הארץ ועד קצה הארץ. דברים כח:סג-סד

And G-d shall scatter you among all the peoples from one end of the earth to the other.  
**Deuteronomy 28:64**

A.

ויהי בימי אחשוורוש הוא האחשורש המולך מהודו ועד כוש שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה...  
ישנו עם אחד מפזר ומפרד בין העמים בכל מדינות מלכותך ודתייהם שנות מכל עם. אסתר  
א:א:ג:ח

Now it came to pass in the days of Achashverosh, this is the Acheshverosh that reigned from India to Ethiopia, over a hundred and twenty seven provinces... There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom, and their laws are diverse from those of every people. **Esther 1:1, 3:8**

B. Now these Jews are already gotten into all cities, and it is hard to find a place in the habitable earth that hath not admitted this tribe of men and is not possessed by them.  
**Strabo (63 BCE - 21CE), quoted in Josephus, Antiquities XIV 7:2**

C. The Jewish nation is widely dispersed over all the habitable earth among its inhabitants. **Josephus, The Wars of the Jews VII 3:3**

D. Africa

אמר רבי עקיבא כשהלכתי לאפריקי

Rabbi Akiva said, "When I traveled to Africa . . ." **Rosh Hashanah 26a**

E. Arabia

ערביות יוצאות רעולות. שבת סה.

Jewish women living in Arabia may go out veiled on Shabbos. **Shabbos 65a**

אמר רבי עקיבא כשהלכתי לערביא ... ר"ה כו.

Rabbi Akiva said, "When I traveled to Arabia . . ." **Rosh Hashanah 26a**

## F. Babylon

- 1) [The king of Parthia gave a habitation to Hyrcanus II] at Babylon where there were Jews in great numbers. **Josephus, Antiquities Book XV 2:2**
- 2) There was a city of Babylonia called Neerda, not only a very populous one, but one that had a good and large territory about it and, besides its other advantages, full of men also. It was, besides, not easily to be assaulted by enemies, from the river Euphrates encompassing it all around and from the walls that were built about it. There was also the city Nisibis, situated on the same current of the river. For which reason the Jews, depending on the natural strength of these places, deposited in them that half shekel which every one, by the custom of our country, offers unto G-d, as well as they did other things devoted to him, for they made use of these cities as a treasury, whence, at a proper time, they were transmitted to Jerusalem, and many ten thousand men undertook the carriage of those donations, out of fear of the ravages of the Parthians, to whom the Babylonians were then subject. **Josephus, Antiquities Book XVIII 9:1**

## G. Egypt

- 1)  
 תניא רבי יהודה אומר מי שלא ראה דיפלוסטון של אלכסנדריא של מצרים לא ראה בכבודן של ישראל אמרו כמין בסילקי גדולה היתה סטיו לפנים מסטיו כפלים כיוצא מצרים והיו בה ע"א קתדראות של זהב כנגד ע"א זקנים כל אחת ואחת אינה פחותה מעשרים ואחד ככרי זהב ובימה של עץ באמצעיתא וחזן של כנסת עומד עליה והסודרין בידו וכיון שהגיע לענות אמן הלה מניף בסודר וכל העם עונים אמן. ולא היו יושבין מעורבין אלא זהבין בפני עצמן וכספין בפני עצמן ונפחין בפני עצמן וטרסיים בפני עצמן וגרדיים בפני עצמן. וכשעני נכנס שם היה מכיר בעלי אומנתו ונפנה לשם ומשם פרנסתו ופרנסת אנשי ביתו. אמר אביי וכולהו קטלינהו טרכינוס. מ"ט איענשו משום דעברי אהאי קרא לא תוסיפון לשוב בדרך הזה עוד ואינהו הדור אתו. סוכה נא:

It has been taught (in a Braiisa): Rabbi Yehudah stated, "He who has not seen the double colonnade of Alexandria of Egypt has never seen the glory of Israel." It was said that it was like a huge basilica, one colonnade within the other, and it sometimes held twice the number of people that went forth from Egypt (1,200,000). There were in it seventy-one cathedras (thrones) of gold, corresponding to the seventy-one elders in the Sanhedrin, not one of them containing less than twenty-one talents of gold, and a wooden platform in the middle upon which the attendant of the synagogue stood with a scarf in his hand. When the time came to answer "Amen", he waved his scarf and all the congregation duly responded. They, moreover did not occupy their seats randomly, but goldsmiths sat separately, silversmiths separately, blacksmiths separately, metalworkers separately and weavers separately, so that when a poor man entered the place he recognized the members of his craft and on applying to that quarter obtained a livelihood for himself and for the members of his family. Abaye stated, "Trajan slew them all. Why were they so punished? Because they transgressed this verse: you shall henceforth return no more that way. (Deuteronomy 17:16) and they did return." **Sukkah 51b**

2)

ת"ר שנים עשר דברים שאלו אנשי אלכסנדריא את רבי יהושע בן חנניא ... נדה סט:

Our Rabbi taught: The people of Alexandria asked of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania twelve questions . . . **Nidah 69b**

3) Accordingly, the Jews have places assigned them in Egypt, wherein they inhabit, besides what is peculiarly allotted to this nation at Alexandria, which is a large part of that city. There is also an ethnarch allowed them, who governs the nation and distributes justice to them and takes care of their contracts, and of the laws to them belonging, as if he were the ruler of a free republic. Strabo, quoted in Josephus, Antiquities XIV 7:2

H. Media

מדיות [יוצאת] פרופות. שבת סה.

Jewish women living in Media may go out [on Shabbos] with their cloaks thrown over their shoulders [held down by an attached weight]. **Shabbos 65a**

נחום המדי אומר ... א"ל רב אחא בר מניומי לאבבי גברא רבה אתא מאתרין ... ע"ז ז:

Nachum of Media said . . . Rav Acha bar Miniomi said to Abaye: A great man (Nachum) has come from our place (Media) . . . **Avodah Zarah 7b**

I. Rome

1)

תודוס איש רומי הנהיג את בני רומי להאכילן גדיים מקולסין בלילי פסחים שלח ליה שמעון בן שטח אלמלא תודוס אתה גוזרני עליך נדוי שאתה מאכיל את ישראל קדשים בחוץ. ברכות יט.

Thaddeus, a man (leader) of [the Jewish community of] Rome, accustomed the Roman Jews to eat kids (goats) roasted whole (similar to the Paschal sacrifice) on the eve of Pesach. Shimon ben Shetach sent to him and said, "Were you not Thaddeus, I would pronounce the sentence of excommunication on you, because you are making Jews [appear to] eat holy things [sacrifices] outside their designated area (Jerusalem)."

**Berachos 19a**

2)

צדק צדק תרדוף ... אחר רבי מתיא לרומי. סנהדרין לב:

"Justice, justice shalt thou follow." (Deuteronomy 16:20) this means follow the scholars to their academies ... Rabbi Masia to Rome. **Sanhedrin 32b**

3)

דלימא רבי אליעזר ורבי יהושע ורבן גמליאל סלקון לרומי עלון לחד אתר ואשכחין מיינוקיא עבדין נבשושין ואמריין הכין בני ארעא דישראל עבדין ואמרי ההן תרומה וההן מעשר אמריין מסתברא דאית הכא יהודאין עלון לחד אתר ואקבלון בחד. ירושלמי ז:יג

The following incident occurred: Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabban Gamliel went up to Rome. They went up to one place and found little children making piles of dirt and saying, "This is what the people of the land of Israel do (make piles), and they say, "This [pile] should be "Terumah", and this [pile] should be "Maaser"" [Thereupon] they said, "This must be a Jewish neighborhood." They went in to one place and were graciously accepted. **Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 7:13**

J. Spain

אמר רבי יהודה לא אמרו שלש שנים אלא כדי שיהא באספמיה ויחזק שנה וילכו ויודיעוהו שנה ויבא לשנה אחרת. בבא בתרא לה.

Rabbi Yehudah said, "They only stated (formulated) the time period of three years to confer the rights of occupation (חזקה) in order that it might be possible for a man who is in Spain for another to occupy his field one year, and for information to be brought to him [which will also take] a year, and for him to return himself [which will take] a third year." **Bava Basra 38a**

K. Seafarers

אמר להו רב נחמן להנהו נחותי ימא אתון דלא אדעיתו בקביעא דירחא ... ר"ה כא.

Rav Nachman said to those who were going to sea, "As you will not know when the New Moon is fixed . . ." **Rosh Hashanah 21a**

אמר שמואל שאילתינהו לכל נחותי ימא ואמרו לי עוף אחד יש בכרכי הים וקיק שמו . . . שבת כא.

Shmuel said: I asked all seafarers about it, (the definition of "Kik" oil (שמן קיק) mentioned in the Mishna of Shabbos 2:1) and they told me that there is a certain bird in the sea towns called "kik" (pelican). **Shabbos 21a**

II. Population Studies

ונשארתם במתי מעט תחת אשר הייתם ככוכבי השמים לרב כי לא שמעת בקול ד' אלקך. דברים כח:סב

And you shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of the heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the Lord thy G-d. **Deuteronomy 28:62**

A.

תנו רבנן פעם אחת ביקש אגריפס המלך ליתן עיניו באוכלוסי ישראל אמר לו לכהן גדול תן עיניך באוכלוסי ישראל ונטל כוליא מכל אחד ונמצאו שם ששים ריבוא זוגי כליות כפלים כיוצא מצרים חוץ מטמא ושהיה בדרך רחוקה ואין כל פסח ופסח שלא נמנו עליו פחות מעשרה בני אדם. פסחים סד:

The Rabbis taught: Once, King Agrippa wanted to cast his eyes on the hosts of Israel (to know the population of Israel). He said to the High Priest, Cast your eyes upon the Passover sacrifices. He thereupon took a kidney from each, and 600,000 pairs of kidneys were found there, twice as many as those that left Egypt, excluding those who were unclean and those who were on a distant journey, and there was not a single Paschal lamb for which less than ten people had registered. **Pesachim 64b**

B. Now the number of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand, as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege eleven hundred thousand, the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation (with the citizens of Jerusalem), but not belonging to the city itself; for they had come up from all the country to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and were suddenly shut up by an army, which at the very first, occasioned so great a straitness among them that there came a pestilential destruction upon them, and soon afterward such a famine as destroyed them more suddenly. And that this city could contain so many people in it is manifest by that number of them which was taken under Cestius, who being desirous of informing Nero of the power of the city, who otherwise was disposed to contemn that nation, entreated the high priests, if the thing were possible, to take the number of their whole multitude. So these high priests, upon the coming of their feast which is called the Passover, when they slay their sacrifices, from the ninth hour till the eleventh, but so that a company not less than ten belong to every sacrifice (for it is not lawful for them to feast singly) and many of us are twenty in a company, found the number of sacrifices was two hundred fifty-six thousand, five hundred, which, upon the allowance of no more than ten that feast together, amounts to two million seven hundred thousand, two hundred persons that were pure and holy; for as to those that have the leprosy, or the gonorrhoea, or women that have their monthly courses, or such as are otherwise polluted, it is not lawful for them to be partakers of this sacrifice; nor indeed for any foreigners, who came hither to worship.

Now this vast multitude is indeed collected out of remote places, but the entire nation was now shut up by fate as in a prison and the Roman army encompassed the city when it was crowded with inhabitants. Accordingly the multitude of those that therein perished exceeded all the destructions that either men or G-d ever brought upon the world.

**Josephus, The Wars of the Jews Book VI 9:3, 4**

C. These two Galilees, so large and encompassed with so many nations of foreigners, have always been able to make a strong resistance on all occasions of war, for the Galileans are enured to war from their infancy and have been always very numerous, nor hath the country been ever destitute of men of courage or wanted a numerous set of them,

for their soil is universally rich and fruitful and full of the plantations of trees of all sorts, insomuch that it invited the most slothful to take pains in its cultivation by its fruitfulness; accordingly, it is all cultivated by its inhabitants, and no part of it lies idle. Moreover, the cities lie here very thick and there are very many villages here everywhere so full of people, by the richness of their soil, that the very least of them contain above fifteen thousand inhabitants. **Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Book III 3:2**

D. It has been taught (in a Braiisa): Rabbi Yehudah stated, "He who has not seen the double colonnade of Alexandria, Egypt, has never seen the glory of Israel." It was said that it was like a huge basilica, one colonnade within the other, and it sometimes held twice the number of people that went forth from Egypt (1,200,000) . . . Abaye stated, "Trajan slew them all." **Sukkah 51b**

### III. Foreign Culture

הן עם לבדד ישכון מובדלין הן מן העו"א בכל דבר במלבושיהן ובמאכלן ובגופיהן ובפתחיהן. ילקוט שמעוני פ' בלק תשס"ח

"Behold a people that dwelleth alone" (Numbers 23:9) They are separated from the heathens in every aspect of lives i.e. their clothing, their food, their bodies, and their doorways [that are staggered so as not to see the private affairs of their neighbors].

**Midrash Yalkut Shimoni Balak 768**

כשיצאו ישראל ממצרים לא שינו שמם ולשונם. תנא דבי אליהו פ' י"ז

When the Jews left Egypt, [despite the fact that they lived there for over two hundred years,] they had not changed their names or tongue [into that of the dominant culture].

**Midrash Tana D'Vei Eliyohu**

גלתה יהודה אומות העולם אינן גולים אלא אע"פ שגולים אין גלותם גלות אומות שאוכלים מפתם ושותים מיינם אין גלותם גלות אבל ישראל שאין אוכלים מפתם ואין שותין מיינם גלותם גלות. אומות העולם שהן מהלכין באסקפטיות שלהם אין גלותם גלות אבל ישראל שהן מהלכין יחפין גלותם גלות. לכך נאמר גלתה יהודה. איכה רבה א:כח

"Judah has gone into exile." (Lamentations 1:3) And the other nations of the world are never exiled? Even though they are exiled their exile is not a true exile. The exile of nations that eat from their [host's] bread and drink their [host's] wine is not really exile. However, the exile of the Jews that don't eat their bread and don't drink their wine is truly an exile. The exile of the nations that walk in their [host's] feet covering is not a true exile. The exile of the Jews, however, that walk without foot covering, is a true exile. Therefore it is stated: Judah has gone into exile. **Midrash Eichah Rabbah 1:28**

## A. Foreign Names

לוקוס ולוס לא שכיחי דמסקי בשמהתייהו אבל שמהתא אחריני שכיחי ישראל (הדרים בארץ ישראל) דמסקי בשמהתייהו. רוב ישראל שבחוץ לארץ שמותיהן כשמות עובדי כוכבים. גיטין יא:

The names of Lucus and Lus are never borne by Jews but other non-Jewish names are often borne by Jews (living in Eretz Yisrael). [However,] most Jews living outside of Israel bear heathen names. **Gittin 11b**

## B. Language

1)

ויאמר אליקים ושבנא ויואח אל רבשקה דבר נא אל עבדיך ארמית כי שומעים אנחנו ואל תדבר אלינו יהודית באזני העם אשר על החומה. ישעיה לו:יא

Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, "Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it; and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall." **Isaiah 36:11**

2)

אמר רבי יוחנן אין מושיבין בסנהדרין אלא בעלי חכמה בעלי מראה בעלי קומה בעלי זקנה בעלי כשפים ויודעים שבעים לשון שלא תהא סנהדרין שומעת מפי המתורגמן. סנהדרין יז.

Rabbi Yochanan said that we only place onto the Sanhedrin those that are wise, handsome, tall, elderly, versed in witchcraft, and versed in all seventy languages so that the Sanhedrin would be able to hear testimony directly without the aid of a translator. **Sanhedrin 17a**

3)

אמר רבי יוחנן בגתן ותרש שני טרסיים היו והיו מספרים בלשון טורסי ... והן לא היו יודעין כי מרדכי מיושבי לשכת הגזית היה והיה יודע שבעים לשון. מגילה יג:

Rabbi Yochanan said that Bigson and Teresh were two Tursians and spoke in Tursi ... They didn't realize, though, that Mordechai was a member of the Sanhedrin and understood all seventy languages. **Megilla 13b**

4)

אמר רב איקא בר אבין אמר רב חננל אמר רב מאי דכתיב (נחמיה ח:ח) ויקראו בספר בתורת האלקים מפורש ושום שכל ויבינו במקרא. מפורש זה תרגום ושום שכל אלו הפסוקים ויבינו במקרא אלו פיסקי טעמים ואמרי לה אלו המסורות. נדרים לז:

Rav Ika bar Avin said that Rav Chananel said in the name of Rav the following: What is meant by the verse "And they read (under the auspices of Ezra) in the Torah of Hashem clearly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (Nehemia 8:8)?



(He answered that the word) "clearly" refers to Targum (the Aramaic translation), and (the term) "gave the sense" refers to sentence structure, and (the term) "caused them to understand the reading" refers to the cantillation: there are those that say that it refers to the exact spellings. **Nedarim 37b**

5) The language of Eretz Yisrael and Babylon

a)

אמר רבי בארץ ישראל לשון סורסי למה או לשון הקדש או לשון יונית וא"ר יוסי בבל לשון ארמי למה או לשון הקדש או לשון פרסי. בבא קמא פב:—פג.

Rabbi [Yehudah HaNasi] stated, "Why use the Syriac language in Eretz Yisrael where either the Holy Tongue or the Greek language could be used?" And Rabbi Yosei said, "Why use the Aramaic language in Babylon where the Holy Tongue or the Persian language could be used?" **Bava Kama 82b-83a**

b) I have also taken a great deal of pains to obtain the learning of the Greeks, and understand the elements of the Greek language, although I have so long accustomed myself to speak our own tongue, that I cannot pronounce Greek with sufficient exactness, for our nation does not encourage those that learn the languages of many nations and so adorn their discourses with the smoothness of their periods, because they look upon this sort of accomplishment as common, not only to all sorts of freemen, but to as many of the servants as please to learn them. But they call him a wise man who is fully acquainted with our laws and is able to interpret their meaning, on which account, as there have been many who have done their endeavors with great patience to obtain this learning, there have yet hardly been so many as two or three that have succeeded therein, who were immediately well rewarded for their pains. **Josephus, Antiquities Book XX 11:2**

c)

רב פפא כי הוה אתי לקמיה שטרא פרסאה דעביד בערכאות של כותים מקרי להו זה שלא בפני זה במסיח לפי תומו ומגבי ביה ממשעבדי. אמר רב אשי אמר לי רב הונא בר נתן הכי אמר אמימר האי שטרא פרסאה דחתימי עליה סהדי ישראל מגבינן ביה ממשעבדי והא לא ידעי למיקרי בדידעי ... גיטין יט:

When Rab Papa was called upon to deal with a Persian document drawn up in a heathen registry, he used to give it to two heathens to read, one without the other, without telling them what it was for, and if they agreed he would recover on the strength of it even from mortgaged property. Rav Ashi said, "Rav Huna bar Nasan has told me that Amemar has stated that a Persian document signed by Israelite witnesses is sufficient warrant for recovering even from mortgaged property." But they are not able to read it? . . .

**Gittin 19b**

6)

הלועז ששמע אשורית יצא. מגילה יז.

קראה גיפטית לגיפטים עברית לעברים עילמית לעילמים יונית ליוונים יצא. מגילה יח.

If someone who only understands a foreign language hears the Megilla in Hebrew he has fulfilled his obligation. **Megillah 17a**

If one reads it in Coptic to Copts, in Hebrew to Hebrews, in Elamean to the Elameans, in Greek to the Greeks he has fulfilled his obligation. **Megillah 18a**

C. Dress

1)

ערביות יוצאות רעולות ומדיות [יוצאת] פרופות. שבת סה.

Jewish women living in Arabia may go out veiled on Shabbos and Jewish women living in Media may go out [on Shabbos] with their cloaks thrown over their shoulders [held down by an attached weight]. **Shabbos 65a**

2)

ר' ברוקא חוואה חזא לההוא גברא דהוה סיים מסאני אוכמי ולא רמי חוטא דתכלתא ... א"ל מ"ט לית לך חוטי וסיימת מסאני אוכמי א"ל עיילנא ונפיקנא ביני נכרים כי היכי דלא לידעו דיהודאה אנא כי הוה גזרי גזירתא מודענא להו לרבנן. תענית כב.

Rabbi Berokah of Choza'ah caught sight of a person that was wearing black shoes (or black shoe laces) and did not put on blue threads (תכלת) on the corners of his garment . . . He asked him, "Why don't you wear fringes (ציצית) and why do you wear black shoes?" He replied, "That the Gentiles that amongst whom I constantly move may not know that I am a Jew, so that when a harsh decree is made against Jews I [am able to] inform the Rabbis." **Taanis 22a**

3)

א"ר אבין ואפילו תימר יכולה אשה להטמין את עצמה ולומר נכריה אני ואין איש יכול להטמין עצמו ולומר נכרי הוא. ירושלמי ע"ז ב:א

Rabbi Avin said [that the reason that the Mishnah rules that a Jewish woman is not allowed to seclude herself with a non-Jew based solely on the fear of immoral behavior and not on fear for her life is because] a Jewish woman can easily conceal her identity and say that she is not Jewish. A Jewish man cannot conceal himself and say that he is not Jewish. **Talmud Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah 2:1**

4)

רב אדא חזייה לההיא כותית דהות לבישא כרבלתא בשוקא סבר דבת ישראל היא קם קרעיה מינה. ברכות כ.

Rav Ada saw a certain non-Jewish woman that was wearing a red cloak. Thinking that she was Jewish, he ripped it off of her. **Berachos 20a**

## IV. Loyalty to the Torah

זדים הליצני עד מאד מתורתך לא נטיתי. תהלים קיט:נא

The arrogant have had me greatly in derision; yet have I not deviated from thy Torah.

**Psalms 119:51**

A. For we do not have an innumerable multitude of books among us disagreeing from and contradicting one another (as the Greeks have), but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times, which are justly believed to be divine, and of them five belong to Moses which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind until his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years but as to the time from the death of Moses until the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to G-d and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time, and how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation is evident by what we do, for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them, but it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines and to persist in them and if occasion be, willingly to die for them. For it is no new thing for our captives, many of them in number, and frequently in time, to be seen to endure racks and deaths of all kinds in the theatres, that they may not be obliged to say one word against our laws and the records that contain them, whereas there are none at all among the Greeks who would undergo the least harm on that account, no, nor in case all the writings that are among them were to be destroyed. **Josephus, Against Apion Book I Par. 8**

B. As for ourselves, therefore, we neither inhabit a maritime country nor do we delight in merchandise, nor in such a mixture with other men as arises from it; but the cities we dwell in are remote from the sea, and having a fruitful country for our habitation, we take pains in cultivating that only. Our principle care of all is this: to educate our children well, and we think it to be the most necessary business of our whole life to observe the laws that have been given us and to keep those rules of piety that have been delivered down to us. **Josephus, Against Apion Book I Par. 12**

C. Our transgressors of them are but few, and it is impossible, when any do offend, to escape punishment. **Josephus, Against Apion Book II Par. 19**

D. Nor was our nation unknown of old to several of the Grecian cities and indeed was thought worthy of imitation by some of them. For no other people but we Jews have avoided all discourses about G-d that any way contradict one another, which yet are frequent among other nations, and this is true not only among ordinary persons,

according as every one is affected, but some of the philosophers have been insolent enough to indulge such contradictions, while some of them have undertaken to use such words as entirely take away the nature of G-d, as others of them have taken away his providence over mankind. Nor can any one perceive among us any difference in the conduct of our lives, but all our works are common to us all. We have one sort of discourse concerning G-d, which is conformable to our law and affirms that he sees all things; as also, we have but one way of speaking concerning the conduct of our lives, that all other things ought to have piety for their end, and this anybody may hear from our women and servants themselves. **Josephus, Against Apion Book II Par. 20**

E. Now as for ourselves, I venture to say that no one can tell of so many, nay, not of more than one or two that have betrayed our laws, not even out of fear of death itself. I do not mean such an easy death as happens in battles, but that which comes with bodily torments and seems to be the severest kind of death of all others. Now I think those that have conquered us have put us to such deaths, not out of their hatred to us when they had subdued us, but rather out of their desire of seeing a surprising sight, which is this: whether there be such men in the world who believe that no evil is to them so great as to be compelled to do or to speak anything contrary to their own laws. Nor ought men to wonder at us, if we are more courageous in dying for our laws than all other men are, for other men do not easily submit to the easier things in which we are instituted: I mean working with our hands, and eating but little, and being contented to eat and drink, not at random, or at every one's pleasure, or being under inviolable rules in lying with our wives in magnificent furniture, and in the observation of our times of rest; while those that can use their swords in war and can put their enemies to flight when they attack them, cannot bear to submit to such laws about their way of living. Our being accustomed willingly to submit to laws in these instances renders us fit to show our fortitude upon other occasions also. **Josephus Against Apion Book II Par. 33**

F. For amongst most other nations it is a studied art how men may transgress their laws; but no such thing is permitted amongst us, for though we be deprived of our wealth, of our cities, or of other advantages we have, our law continues immortal, nor can any Jew go so far from his own country, nor be so affrighted at the severest lord, as not to be more affrighted at the law than at him. **Josephus Against Apion Book II Par. 39**

G.  
 אדריאנוס שחיק טמיא שאל לר' יהושע בן חנניה א"ל אנא טב ממשה רבך א"ל למה דאנא חי והוא מת וכתוב כי לכלב חי הוא טוב מן האריה המת אמר ליה יכול את לגזור דלא ידלק בר נש נור תלתא יומין אמר ליה אין לעידן עמיה סלקון תרויהון על איגר פלטין חמי תננא סליק מן רחיק א"ל מה כן א"ל איפרכיא ביש עאל אסיא ובקר יתיה וא"ל עד דשתי חמימי לא מיתסי א"ל תיפח רוחיה עד דאת קיים בטלה גזרתך. ומשה רבינו משעה שגזר עלינו לא תבערו אש בכל מושבותיכם ביום השבת לא מדליק יהודאי נור בשבתא מיומוהי ועדיין לא נתבטלה גזירתו עד השתא אמרת את כן דאנא טב מיניה . מדרש רות רבה:ג:ב

Hadrian, may his bones be crushed, asked Rabbi Yehoshua, "I am better than Moshe your teacher." "Why?" He replied, "Because, I am alive and he is dead. It is written 'For a live dog is better than a dead lion.' (Koheles 9:4)" He (Rabbi Yehoshua) replied, "Can you decree that no one will be allowed to light a fire for three days?" He replied, "Yes!"

At night [after he had made the decree] they both went up to the roof of the palace. They saw smoke rising from afar. [They went to the source of the smoke and] asked them, "What is this all about?" [Why did you violate the decree?] They replied, "The mayor [of village] became sick and a doctor came in to visit him in the morning and told him that he wouldn't become better unless he drank hot water." [Rabbi Yehoshua] remarked to him (Hadrian), "May his spirit be deflated! (referring to Hadrian) Even while you're alive your decrees are ineffective. Moshe our teacher, [on the other hand], from the time he decreed upon us: You shall not burn a fire wherever you live on the day of the Sabbath (Exodus 35:3), there hasn't been a Jew who has lit a fire on the day of the Sabbath. How can you say that you are better than he?" **Rus Rabbah 3:2**

H. Hecateus also produces demonstrations of their resolute tenaciousness of their laws when he speaks thus, "Alexander was once at Babylon and had an intention to rebuild the temple of Belus that was fallen to decay, and in order thereto, he commanded all his soldiers in general to bring earth thither. But the Jews, and they only, would not comply with that command, nay, they underwent stripes and great losses of what they had on this account, until the king forgave them and permitted them to live in quiet." He adds farther, "When the Macedonians came to them into that country and demolished the old temples and the altars, they assisted them in demolishing them all, (but for not assisting them in rebuilding them) they either underwent losses or sometimes obtained forgiveness." He adds, farther, "These men deserve to be admired on that account." **Josephus Against Apion, Book I Par. 22**

## V. Education

אני זאת בריתי אותם אמר ד' רוחי אשר עליך ודברי אשר שמת בי בפיו לא ימושו מפיו ומפי זרע ומפי זרע זרעך אמר ד' מעתה ועד עולם. ישעיה נט:כא

As for Me, this is My covenant with them, says G-d. My Spirit, which rests upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth nor from the mouths of your children, nor from the mouths of your children's children, says G-d, from now on to all eternity. **Isaiah 59:21**

## A.

התקין שמעון בן שטח ... שיהיו התנוקות הולכים לבית הספר. ירושלמי כתובות פרק ח

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב ברם זכור אותו האיש לטוב ויהושע בן גמלא שמו שאלמלא הוא נשתכחה תורה מישראל ... ותיקן שיהו מושיבין מלמדי תנוקות בכל מדינה ומדינה בכל עיר ועיר ומכניסין אותו כבן שש או כבן שבע. בבא בתרא כא.

Shimon ben Shetach instituted that children should go to day school (yeshiva ketana).

**Yerushalmi Kesubos Chap. 8**

Rav Yehuda said that Rav said the following, "May Yehoshua ben Gamla be praised because without him the Torah would be forgotten from Israel ... He instituted that teachers would be set up in every state and city and that the students would be required to go from the ages of six or seven." **Bava Basra 21a**

B. Our principle care of all is this: to educate our children well. Josephus, Against Apion Book I Par. 12

C. But for our people, if anybody but asks any one of them about our laws, he will more readily tell him all than he will tell his own name and this is in consequence of our having learned them as soon as we became sensible of any thing and of our having them, as it were, engraven on our souls. **Josephus, Against Apion Book II Par. 19**

D.

הוא היה אומר בן חמש שנים למקרא בן עשר למשנה בן שלש עשרה למצות בן חמש עשרה לתלמוד. אבות ה:כ"א

בנוהג שבעולם אלף בני אדם נכנסים למקרא יוצא מהן ק'. ק' למשנה יוצא מהם י'. י' לתלמוד יוצא מהם א' [להוראה] ה"ד אדם אחד מאלף מצאתי. ויקרא רבה ב:א

He (Rabbi Yehuda ben Taima) used to say: A five year old begins Scripture; a ten year old begins Mishnah; a thirteen year old becomes obliged to do Mitzvos; a fifteen year old begins the study of Talmud. **Avos 5:21**

It is commonplace that of the thousand that come in to study Scripture one hundred come out [well versed]. Of the hundred [that come] to study Mishnah ten come out [well versed]. Of the ten that come to study Talmud one will come out fit to make Halachic decisions. This is the meaning of the verse, "One man among a thousand have I found." (Koheles 7:28) **Midrash Vayikrah Rabbah 2:1**

E. But they call him a wise man he who is fully acquainted with our laws and is able to interpret their meaning, on which account, as there have been many who have done their endeavors with great patience to obtain this learning, there have yet hardly been so many as two or three that have succeeded therein, who were immediately well rewarded for their pains. **Josephus, Antiquities Book XX 11:2**

F.

מה היה תחלתו של רבי אליעזר בן הורקנוס. בן עשרים ושתים שנה היה ולא למד תורה. פעם אחת אמר אלך ואלמוד תורה לפני רבן יוחנן בן זכאי אמר לו אביו הורקנוס אי אתה טועם עד שתחרוש מלא מענה ... שמע עליו הורקנוס אביו שהיה לומד תורה אצל רבן יוחנן בן זכאי אמר אלך ואדיר אליעזר בני מנכסי. אבות דר' נתן:ו:ג

What was the beginning of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanus' [development]? He was twenty two years old and he had not yet learned Torah. One day, he [made up his mind and] said, "I shall go and learn Torah by Rabban Yochanan son of Zakai." [On that same day,] his father told him, "You will not eat, until you plow a complete furrow."

Hyrkanus, his father, heard that he was learning Torah by Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai and said, "I shall go and disinherit Eliezer my son." **Avos D'Rabbi Noson 6:3**

G.

הוי מתאבק בעפר רגליהם זה רבי אליעזר ושותה בצמא את דבריהם זה רבי עקיבא. מה היה תחלתו של רבי עקיבא אמרו בן ארבעים שנה היה ולא שנה כלום פעם אחת היה עומד על פי הבאר אמר מי חקק אבן זו אמרו לו המים שתדיר נופלים עליה בכל יום אמרו לו עקיבא אי אתה קורא אבנים שחקן מים מיד היה רבי עקיבא דן קל וחומר בעצמו מה רך פסל את הקשה דברי תורה שקשה כברזל על אחת כמה וכמה שיחקקו את לבי שהוא בשר ודם מיד חזר ללמוד תורה. הלך הוא ובנו וישבו אצל מלמדי תינוקות א"ל רבי למדני תורה אחז רבי עקיבא בראש הלוח ובנו בראש הלוח כתב לו אלף בית ולמדה היה לומד והולך עד שלמד כל התורה כולה. אבות דרבי נתן ו:ב

"Sit in the dust of their feet" (Avos 1:4) refers to Rabbi Eliezer and "Drink in their words thirstily" (ibid.) refers to Rabbi Akiva. What was the beginning of [the career of] Rabbi Akiva? They (Sages) said that Rabbi Akiva was forty years old and he hadn't yet learned any Torah. Once he was standing at the mouth of a well. He asked, "Who carved out this rock?" They replied, "The water that constantly falls on it every day. Akiva! Don't you know the verse: The waters wear down the stones. (Job 14:19)?" At once Rabbi Akiva made his own logical inference, "If that which is soft (water) has the power to bore through that which is hard (stone), the words of Torah that are as hard as iron most certainly has the power to make an engraving on my heart which is [merely] flesh and blood." At once, he turned around [and went] to learn Torah.

He went together with his son and they both sat by an elementary school teacher. He said to him, "Rabbi, teach me Torah!" Rabbi Akiva held one end of the [writing] tablet and his son the other end. He (the teacher) wrote down the alphabet and he (Rabbi Akiva) learned it. He kept on learning until he had learned all of the Torah. **Avos D'Rabbi Noson 6:2**

H.

מרגלא בפומייהו דרבנן דיבנה אני בריה וחברי בריה אני מלאכתי בעיר והוא מלאכתי בשדה אני משכים למלאכתי והוא משכים למלאכתי כשם שהוא אינו מתגדר מלאכתי כך אני אינו מתגדר במלאכתי. ושמא תאמר אני מרבה והוא ממעיט שנינו אחד המרבה ואחד הממעט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לאביו שבשמים. ברכות י"ז.

A frequent saying of the Rabbis of Yavneh (Jamnia): I am G-d's creature and my fellow (unlearned Jew) is G-d's creature. My work is in the city and his work is in the country. I rise early for my work and he rises early for his work. Just as he has no desire to usurp my work, I have no desire to usurp his. If you say [the reason he has no desire to study Torah is because] I accomplish much and he [if he would begin to study Torah in his

spare time late in life] would only accomplish little, we have learned: Whether one accomplishes much or accomplishes little it is all the same [in G-d's eyes], provided he directs his heart to Heaven. **Berachos 17a**

## VI. Rabbinic Authority

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך. דברים לב:ז

Ask thy father, and he will tell you; thy elders, and they will say unto you.

**Deuteronomy 32:7**

A. These (the Pharisees) have so great a power over the multitude that when they say anything against the king or against the high priest they are presently believed.

**Antiquities Book XIII 10:5**

B. The Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them, but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side. **Antiquities Book XIII 10:6**

C. Whatever they (the Pharisees) do about divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices, they (the body of the people) perform according to their direction; insomuch that the cities gave great attestations to them on account of their entirely virtuous conduct, both in the actions of their lives and their discourses also. **Antiquities Book XVIII 1:3**

D. Our transgressors of them are but few, and it is impossible, when any do offend, to escape punishment. **Josephus, Against Apion Book II Par. 19**

## VII. Converts

אר"א לא הגלה הקב"ה את ישראל לבין האומות אלא כדי שיתוספו עליהם גרים. פסחים פז:

Rabbi Elazar said: The Holy One Blessed be He exiled Israel among the nations only for the purpose that converts might be attached to them. **Pesachim 87b**

A. They also made proselytes of a great many of the Greeks perpetually, and thereby brought them to be a portion of their own body. **Josephus, The Wars of the Jews VII 3:3**

B. It was about this time that Helena, queen of Adiabene, and her son Izates, changed their course of life, and embraced the Jewish customs, and this on the occasion following: Monobazus, the king of Adiabene, who had also the name of Bazeus, fell in love with his sister Helena and took her to be his wife and begat her with child. But as he was in bed with her one night, he laid his hands on his wife's belly and fell asleep and



seemed to hear a voice which bade him take his hands off his wife's belly and not to hurt the infant that was therein, which by G-d's providence would be safely born and have a happy end. This voice put him into disorder, so he awaked immediately and told the story to his wife, and when his son was born, he called him Izates. He had indeed Monobazus, Izates' elder brother, by Helena also, as he had other sons by other wives besides.

Now, during the time Izates abode at Charax-Spasini, a certain Jewish merchant, whose name was Ananias, got among the women that belonged to the king and taught them to worship G-d according to the Jewish religion. He, moreover, by this means became known to Izates and persuaded him, in like manner, to embrace that religion. He also, at the earnest entreaty of Izates, accompanied him when he was sent for by his father to come to Adiabene. It also happened that Helena, about the same time, was instructed by a certain other Jew and went over to them.

And when he perceived that his mother was highly pleased with the Jewish customs, he made haste to change and to embrace them entirely, and as he supposed that he could not be thoroughly a Jew unless he were circumcised, he was ready to have it done. But when his mother understood what he was about, she endeavored to hinder him from doing it and said to him that this thing would bring him into danger and that as he was a king he would thereby bring himself into great odium among his subjects, when they would understand that he was so fond of rites that were to them strange and foreign and that they would never bear to be ruled over by a Jew. This it was that she said to him and for the present persuaded him to forbear. And when he had related what she had said to Ananias, he confirmed what his mother had said, and when he had also threatened to leave him, unless he complied with him, he went away from him, and said that he was afraid lest such an action being once become public to all, he should himself be in danger of punishment for having been the occasion of it, and having been the king's instructor in actions that were of ill reputation, and he said that he might worship G-d without being circumcised, even though he did resolve to follow the Jewish law entirely, which worship of G-d was of a superior nature to circumcision. He added that G-d would forgive him, though he did not perform the operation, while it was omitted out of necessity and for fear of his subjects. So the king at that time complied with these persuasions of Ananias. But afterwards, as he had not quite left off his desire of doing this thing, a certain other Jew that came of Galilee, whose name was Eleazer, and who was esteemed very skillful in the learning of his country, persuaded him to do the thing, for as he entered into his palace to salute him and found him reading the law of Moses, he said to him, "Thou dost not consider, O king, that thou unjustly breakest the principal of those laws and art injurious to G-d himself, by omitting to be circumcised, for thou oughtest not only to read them, but chiefly to practice what they enjoin thee. How long wilt thou continue uncircumcised?"

But, if thou hast not yet read the law about circumcision, and doest not know how great impiety thou art guilty of by neglecting it, read it now." When the king had heard what he said, he delayed the thing no longer, but retired to another room and sent for a surgeon and did what he was commanded to do. He then sent for his mother and Ananias his tutor, and informed them that he had done the thing, upon which they were presently struck with astonishment and fear, and that to a great degree, lest the thing should be openly discovered and censured and the king should hazard the loss of his kingdom, while his subjects would not bear to be governed by a man who was so zealous in another religion, and lest they should themselves run some hazard because they would be supposed the occasion of his so doing. But it was G-d himself who hindered what they feared from taking effect; for he preserved both Izates himself and his sons when they fell into many dangers, and procured their deliverance when it seemed to be impossible, and demonstrated thereby, that the fruit of piety does not perish as to those that have regard to him, and fix their faith upon him only; but these we shall relate hereafter.

But as to Helena the king's mother, when she saw that the affairs of Izates's kingdom were in peace and that her son was a happy man and admired among all men and even among foreigners, by the means of G-d's providence over him, she had a mind to go to the city of Jerusalem in order to worship at the temple of G-d which was so very famous among all men and to offer her thank offerings there. So she desired her son to give her leave to go thither upon which he gave his consent to what she desired very willingly and made great preparations for her departure, and gave her a great deal of money, and she went down to the city of Jerusalem, her son conducting her on her journey a great way. Now her coming was of very great advantage to the people of Jerusalem, for whereas a famine did oppress them at that time and many people died for want of what was necessary to procure food withal, queen Helena sent some of her servants to Alexandria with money to buy a great quantity of corn and others of them to Cyprus to bring a cargo of dried figs, and as soon as they came back and brought those provisions which was done very quickly, she distributed food to those that were in want of it and left a most excellent memorial behind her of this benefaction which she bestowed on our whole nation, and when her son Izates was informed of this famine, he sent great sums of money to the principal men of Jerusalem. However, what favors this queen and king conferred upon our city Jerusalem shall be further related hereafter. **Josephus, Antiquities Book XX 2:1,3,4-5**

C.

אונקלוס בר קלונימוס איגייר שדר קיסר גונדא דרומאי אבתריה משכינהו בקראי איגיור . . .  
ע"ז יא.

[When] Onkelos the son of Kalonymos became a proselyte, the Emperor sent a contingent of Roman soldiers after him [to arrest him], but he attracted them by citing Scriptural verses and [instead of arresting him,] they became converts to Judaism . . .

**Avodah Zarah 11a**

D.

א"ר יהודה מנימין גר מצרי היה לי חבר מתלמידי רבי עקיבא . . . יבמות עו:

Rabbi Yehudah said, "Miniomin, the Egyptian convert, was a friend of mine among the disciples of Rabbi Akiva . . ." **Yevamos 76b**

E.

בו ביום בא יהודה גר עמוני לפניהם לבית המדרש ... ידים ד:ד

That same day, Yehudah the Amonite convert came before them to the Study Hall ...

**Yadaim 4:4**

F.

רב שמואל בר יהודה הוה קאי קמיה דרב יהודה א"ל ... אנא גר אנא ... יבמות קא:

Rav Shmuel bar Yehudah was standing in the presence of Rav Yehudah. He said to him, "... I am a convert . . ." **Yevamos 101b**

G.

ר' יהודה הנדואה גר שאין לו יורשין הוה . . . קדושין כב:

Rav Yehudah, the Indian, was a convert that had no heirs . . . **Kiddushin 22b**

VIII. A Light Unto the Nations

אני ד' קראתיך בצדק ואחזק בידך ואצרך ואתנך לברית עם לאור גוים. ישעיה מב:ו

I the L-rd have called thee in righteousness and will hold thine hand and will keep thee and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the nations. **Isaiah 42:6**

A. "There were four classes of men among those of Cyrene: that of citizens, that of husbandmen, the third of strangers, and the fourth of Jews. Now these Jews are already in all cities; and it is hard to find a place in the habitable earth that hath not admitted this tribe of men and is not possessed by them. It has come to pass that Egypt and Cyrene, having the same governors, and a great number of other nations, imitate their way of living and maintain great bodies of these Jews in a peculiar manner and grow up to greater prosperity with them and make use of the same laws with that nation also. Accordingly, the Jews have places assigned them in Egypt where they live, besides what is peculiarly allotted to this nation at Alexandria, which is a large part of that city. There is also an ethnarch allowed them, who governs the nation and distributes justice to them and takes care of their contracts and of their laws as if he were the ruler of a free republic. In Egypt, therefore, this nation is powerful, because the Jews were originally Egyptians and because the land where they inhabit, since they went thence is near to Egypt. They also removed into Cyrene because this land adjoined to the government of Egypt, as well as does Judea, or rather was formerly under the same government." And this is what Strabo says. **Josephus, Antiquities XIV 7:2**

B. In the meantime, the people of Damascus, when they were informed of the destruction of the Romans, set about the slaughter of those Jews that were among them, and as they had them already cooped up together in the place of public exercises, which they had done out of the suspicion they had of them, they thought they should meet with no difficulty in the attempt, yet did they distrust their own wives who were almost all addicted to the Jewish religion, on which account it was that their greatest concern was how they might conceal these things from them, so they came upon the Jews, and cut their throats, being in a narrow place, in number ten thousand and all of them unarmed and this in one hour's time without any body to disturb them. **Josephus, The Wars of the Jews II 20:2**

C. Since the Jewish nation is widely dispersed over all the habitable earth among its inhabitants, so it is very much intermingled with Syria by reason of its neighborhood and had the greatest multitudes in Antioch by reason of the largeness of the city, wherein the kings, after Antiochus, had afforded them a habitation with the most undisturbed tranquillity, for though Antiochus, who was called Epiphanes, laid Jerusalem waste and spoiled the temple, yet did those that succeeded him in the kingdom restore all the donations that were made of brass to the Jews of Antioch and dedicated them to their synagogue, and granted them the enjoyment of equal privileges of citizens with the Greeks themselves. Since the succeeding kings treated them after the same manner, they both multiplied to a great number and adorned their temple gloriously by fine ornaments and with great magnificence in the use of what has been given them. They also made proselytes of a great many of the Greeks perpetually, and thereby, brought them to be a portion of their own body. **Josephus, The Wars of the Jews VII 3:3**

D. As to the Grecians, we are remote from them in place rather than different from them in our institutions, insomuch that we have no enmity with them nor any jealousy of them. On the contrary, it hath so happened that many of them have come over to our laws and some of them have continued in their observation, although others of them had not courage enough to persevere and so departed from them again.

We have already demonstrated that our laws have been such as have always inspired admiration and imitation unto all other men, nay, the earliest Grecian philosophers, though in appearance they observed the laws of their own countries, yet did they in their actions and their philosophic doctrines follow our legislator and instructed men to live sparingly and to have friendly communication one with another. Nay, farther, the multitude of mankind itself have had a great inclination of a long time to follow our religious observances, for there is not any city of the Grecians nor any of the barbarians nor any nation whatsoever whither our custom of resting on the seventh day has not come, and by which our fasts and lighting up lamps and many of our prohibitions as to our food are not observed. They also endeavor to imitate our mutual concord with one another and the charitable distribution of our goods and our diligence in our trades and our fortitude in undergoing the distresses we are in, on account of our laws. What is here matter of the greatest admiration: our law hath no bait of pleasure to allure men to it, but it prevails by its own force, and as G-d himself pervades all the world, so hath our law passed through all the world also. **Josephus Against Apion II 11,40,**

E. For it is very truly affirmed of this Pythagoras that he took a great many of the laws of the Jews into his own philosophy. **Josephus, Against Apion Book I Par. 22**