

Christianity: From its Jewish Origins to its Diversity in the 21st Century

Beth Tzedec Congregation

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Three Part Presentation

I. Judaism, Jesus and Christian Origins

167 BCE to 135 CE

II. Christendom: The Imperial Church

313 – 1054 CE

III. Protestantism and Contemporary Christianity

1517 – 2018 CE

I. Judaism, Jesus and Christian Origins

167 BCE to 135 CE

Three Turning Points:

1. Maccabean Revolt (167-164 BCE)
2. The Jewish War (66-70 CE)
3. The Defeat of Simon Bar Kochba (132-135 CE)

Anti-Judaism in the Ancient World

Attacks on the Temple

167-164 BCE

Desecration of the Temple
Seleucid Empire
Antiochus IV Epiphanes

Impact on Judaism

1. Reinforce Temple and Jewish State
2. Origins of Pharisees
3. Origins of Qumran

66-70 CE

Destruction of the Temple
Roman Empire
Roman General Titus

Impact on Judaism

1. End of Temple
2. Primacy of Rabbinic Tradition
3. Christianity a problem for Judaism



Maccabean Revolt (167-164 BCE)

Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Seleucid Emperor)
(175-164 BCE)

- Prohibits Torah Observance: Hellenizes Jerusalem
- Dececrates Temple (December 167 BCE)
 - 1 Maccabees 1:54-61
 - 2 Macc 6:1-6

Festival of Hanukkah (164 BCE)

Judas Maccabeus (167-161 BCE)

- Restoration of the Temple (164 BCE)
- Renewal of Torah Observance

1 Macc 4:36-59

2 Macc 10:1-8

— 2 Macc 1:1-9

— 2 Macc 1:10-2:16

New Movements that resulted from the Maccabean Revolt

1. **The Temple** becomes the administrative centre for Israel as an independent state.
- The Hasmonean line of high priests rules (1 Macc 10:18-21; 13:41-42)
- They aim to develop **Israel as an independent Jewish state** within the Seleucid Empire (1 Macc 13:41-42)

Maccabean Revolt (164-67 BC)

Jewish Expansion Under Hasmoneans

- Judea Before Maccabean Revolt
- Conquest of Jonathan
- Conquest of Simon
- Conquest of Hyrcanus I
- Conquest of Aristobulus I
- Conquest of Alexander Jannaeus



New Movements that Resulted from the Maccabean Revolt

2. **Martyrs** die in defense of Torah observance and in confrontation with Empire
- Reflection on such martyrdom introduces the prospect of **resurrection of the dead**

Daniel 7-12: “The Wise” (11:33; 12:1-3)

2 Maccabees: Mother and 7 sons; Eleazar (2 Macc 7:1-41; 6:18-31)

New Movements that Resulted from the Maccabean Revolt

3. **Pharisees** originate in the wake of the Maccabean Revolt (They are Lay scribes and scholars who interpreted the Torah)

- Focus on the **Written Torah**
- Development of the **Oral Torah**

New Movements that Resulted from the Maccabean Revolt

4. The **Qumran** Community is founded
 - a. The Teacher of Righteousness: A Zadokite Priest
 - b. **Eschatology**: Expectation of the end of the present age and the dawning of the age to come
 - c. **Opposition to the Temple** in Jerusalem

New Terminology Related to Martyrdom

1. Kingdom of God is at hand

Dan 2:44; 7:27 cf. Mark 1:14-15

2. The Son of Man: the agent of the kingdom

Dan 7:13-14; cf. Mark 9:1; 13:24-27; 14:62

3. Resurrection of the Dead

Dan 12:1-3; 2 Macc 7:9; 14, 23, 29; 12:44

Cf. Acts 2:36 (about Jesus)

Jewish Diaspora in Egypt

Judaism Engages Greek Culture

1. The Septuagint: Greek Translation of Hebrew Scripture (beginning ca., 250 BCE)
2. Wisdom of Solomon; Greek translation of Sirach (Alexandria; ca. 50 BCE)
3. Philo of Alexandria (25 BCE – 50 CE)
(Greek is the language of the Second Testament [i.e., New Testament])

A Reform Movement in Judaism before 70 CE

1. Jesus of Nazareth (7 BCE – April 7, 30 CE)

- a. A reformer of Palestinian Judaism (in Israel)
- b. His life and teaching
- c. His followers

2. Paul of Tarsus (10 [?] CE – 64 CE)

- a. A reformer of Hellenistic Judaism (in Diaspora)
- b. His life and teaching
- c. His followers

Major Questions

Did Jesus of Nazareth intend to start a new religion?

Did Paul of Tarsus intend to propagate a new religion?

(Both men viewed the end of the present Age as happening in the foreseeable future.)

Research on Jesus of Nazareth

Amy-Jill Levine

The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus



John P. Meier

A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus (5 volumes
3500 pages so far)



Gospels

The New Testament documents are written in Greek

The four gospels are narratives about Palestinian Jew for audiences in the Hellenistic diaspora.

One may view the gospels as documents of Hellenistic Judaism

There are no early documents about Jesus in Aramaic.

Dating the Four Gospels

- Mark ca., 68 CE in Rome or southern Syria
- Matthew ca., 85-90 CE Antioch in Syria
- Luke ca. 85-90 CE Mediterranean world; Greece, Italy or Asia Minor
- John ca., 100 CE perhaps Ephesus

Each gospel dates to the period **at or after** the Romans destroyed the Temple in **70 CE** (Tisha B'Av-
(תשעה באב)

Formation of the Gospels

Luke 1:1-4

“Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.”

Layers in the Gospels

Luke 1:1-4

1. The mission of **Jesus of Nazareth** in word and deed
2. The **oral preaching** about Jesus by eyewitnesses and ministers of the word
3. The **written documents** containing the oral proclamation
4. The **final redaction** of the particular gospel.

Study of the Layers

1. **Historical Layer**: Jesus of Nazareth (28-30 CE)
Aramaic
2. Oral Traditions (32-60 CE?): disciples of Jesus spoke Aramaic (Jews in Israel) and Greek (Diaspora Jews)
3. Written texts of the Oral Traditions (34-70 CE)
Greek (perhaps Aramaic texts that have been lost)
4. **Hand of the final author** (69-100 CE)
Greek

Jesus of Nazareth

Born: 7 BCE

Died: by execution in Jerusalem
at the hands of the Romans
Friday, April 7, 30 CE at 3:00 p.m.



Mark 6:1-6

"¹[Jesus] left that place and came to his home town, and his disciples followed him. ²On the sabbath he began to teach **in the synagogue**, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What **deeds of power** are being done by his hands!'"

Mark 6:1-6

"³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?'

And they took offence at him."

Mark 6:1-6

⁴Then Jesus said to them, ‘**Prophets** are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.’

⁵And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them.

⁶And **he was amazed at their unbelief.**

Jesus and His Family

Grew up in Nazareth

Mother: Mary

Father: Not in Mark (or John)

(Joseph: mentioned only in Matthew and Luke)

- Eldest of at least six siblings
- Brothers: James, Joses, Judas , and Simon
- Sisters: unnamed (Mark 6:3).

Trade: Carpenter (perhaps worked on construction projects at Sepphoris)

Jesus and His Family

1. As the eldest son, Jesus worked as a carpenter to support his mother, his sisters and his brothers.
2. Once he began his mission (at the age of 28), his family and kindred were not among his followers.
3. John 7:5 (“Even his brothers did not believe in him.”)

James, the brother of Jesus

1. James, the brother of Jesus, encountered him in the post-resurrection era (1 Corinthians 15:7)
2. James became a leader of the community in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19; 2:9-10, 11-12).
3. James emphasized the importance of observing Torah in the post-resurrection community in Jerusalem and beyond (Acts 21:18-24; the Letter of James).

Jesus was an Observant Jew

- Jesus attended synagogue.
- Jesus was circumcised (Luke 2:21).
- Jesus prayed the *Shema* (Mark 12:29).
- Jesus made pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem for the festivals of Passover, *Shavuot* (Pentecost) and *Sukkot* (Booths).
- Jesus taught in synagogues.
- But Jesus did not marry or have children.

John the Baptist and Jesus

Baptism by John the Baptist

- At the age of 28, Jesus left his family in Nazareth to become a disciple of John the Baptist
- John the Baptist may have been an Essene at one time. John lived in the Judean wilderness.
- Jesus's baptism is his call to be a prophet
- Subsequently, Jesus left John and taught in the villages of Galilee

Qumran, John, and Jesus

- The community at Qumran (which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls)
 - opposed the corruption of the Jerusalem Temple authorities and
 - expected the end of the Age to happen soon.
- John the Baptist was a similar type of Jewish reformer.
- Jesus was a reformer who picked up on some of these traditions but lives in villages, not in the wilderness.





Message of Jesus

1. Jesus proclaimed the **kingdom of God** in words and deeds.

Words: “The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Good News.” (Mark 1:14-15)

Deeds: “If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast our demons, know that the kingdom of God has come among you” (Matt 12:28).

Message of Jesus

2. The full realization of the kingdom of God will take place soon.

“Truly, I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the **kingdom of God** has come with power.” (Mark 9:1)

Message of Jesus

“Then they will see **the Son of Man** coming in clouds with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven... But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come...” (Mark 13:26-27, 32-33).

Jesus and his Disciples

1. Jesus identified **12** “apostles,” whom he trained.
The 12 symbolically recall the 12 tribes and therefore the **restoring of Israel**.
2. Jesus and his disciples directed their message almost exclusively to Jews and only occasionally to gentiles.

We know by name some of the women who were his disciples: **Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, Salome.**

Jesus and Pharisees

1. Jesus shared table hospitality with Pharisees more than with any other identifiable group.
2. Pharisees were among his followers (e.g. Nicodemus in the Gospel of John), and became central to the early post-resurrection community.

Jesus and Pharisees

1. The significance of the Oral Torah is a focal point of his contentions with some Pharisees.
2. Jesus opposed fixations on purity laws.
3. Jesus agreed with Pharisees on central issues.
(e.g. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”)

Jesus Aspects of Oral Torah

So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” He said to them, “Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honours me with their lips but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.’ You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human traditions. (Mark 7:6-8)

Jesus and Sadducees (Temple Authorities)

- Jesus relativized the Temple to the coming of the kingdom of God.
- He declared the Temple would be destroyed.
- A turning point that led to his arrest was his driving money changers out of the Temple precincts (Mark 11:15-19).
- Note the precedents:
 - Jeremiah 7:1-15; 26:1-6
 - John the Baptist
 - The community at Qumran

The Plot Against Jesus

The Roman authority executed Jesus.

A group of Sadducees initiated a plot to do away with him in reaction to his denunciations of Temple management.

Jesus had allies among Pharisees and some priests (some of whom joined the Jesus movement after the death of Jesus).

Timeline of the Execution

Roman Public Display at Passover

Friday, April 7, 30 CE

1:00 a.m.

Roman soldiers pick up Jesus in
Gethsemane (Mount of Olives)

3:00-4:00 a.m.

Meeting of a group of Sadducees

5:00 a.m.

Peter denies associating with Jesus

9:00 a.m.

Pilate greets the populace on Passover

12:00 p.m. Crucifixion

3:00 p.m. Death

The Post-Resurrection Events

- Jesus was buried before sunset on a Friday.
- Women who were his disciples found his tomb empty when they visited the tomb at daybreak on the Sunday.
- None of his disciple expected Jesus to return from the dead. (All of them were terrified by his execution.)

The Post-Resurrection Encounters

Within 40 days of Jesus's burial (Passover to Shavuot)

1. Jerusalem: Luke and John
2. Galilee: Matthew

- The risen Jesus becomes manifest only to some disciples
- They come to recognize him through encounter and conversation
- In demeanour and appearance, he is rather ordinary (e.g., a gardener, a traveller, a person by the Sea of Galilee)

The Meaning of Jesus' Resurrection

The disciples' proclamation that Jesus was risen is a declaration that

- the present age has ended and
- the age to come Age has begun.
- God has conquered death.
- This is a cosmic event: the Age to Come has begun.

(See Daniel 12:1-4)

Paul: Proclamation of Resurrection in the Hellenistic Diaspora



Paul's Background

- Native of Tarsus
- A diaspora Pharisee
Spoke Greek, probably also Aramaic,
read Hebrew.
- By trade a tent maker
- Paul was not married
- Had a sister and a nephew

Paul: Damascus Road Experience

- Paul encountered the Messiah as the risen Jesus ca. 35 CE
- Paul experienced this event as a call to be a prophet like Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-9).

“God, who had set me apart from the womb of my mother, was pleased to reveal his son in me so that I might proclaim him among the gentiles” (Galatians 1:16)

Paul: A Pharisee captivated by the Age to Come

Paul's credentials: Philippians 3:4-6

“...circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”

Age to come has begun with the resurrection of the Messiah.

Paul and Torah

Galatians 5:14

For the whole law [Torah] is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

In the age to come, the Spirit of God enlightens an individual to live according to the will of God.

Admitting Gentiles

- Until 49 CE, membership in the Jesus communities was limited to Jews and converts to Judaism.
- In a meeting in Jerusalem in 49 CE, under the leadership of Peter and James, gentiles were allowed to become full members of the communities providing they observed the Noachian commandments (Acts 15:1-23; Galatians 2:1-14).

Communities of Jews and Gentiles

The word of 'ה to Abram:

- “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3).
- The foreigners will join themselves to יהוה (Isaiah 56:6-8).

With the dawning of the Age to come in the resurrection, Paul set about building inclusive communities representing the fullness of Judaism.

Synagogue-based Communities

- Paul's communities were composed of Jews and gentile "God fearers" who attended synagogue.
- All gentiles, who joined the communities, continued attending synagogue in order to learn the Torah and the Prophets.

Paul on Jews who Oppose his Reform of Judaism

Rom 9:4-5

“⁴They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises;
⁵to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

Paul on Jews who Oppose his Reform of Judaism

Rom 11:28b-29

“...as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”

What is a Church?

Greek: *Ekklesia* translation of Hebrew: *Qahal*

a. The assembly of Israel at Sinai

Deuteronomy 4:10; 9:10

b. The assembly to whom Ezra reads the Torah (with interpretation!)

Nehemiah 7:72b-8:12

Judaism and the Jesus Communities after 70 CE



Diverse Christian Traditions in the New Testament

Five primary traditions, all originating with Jews:

- Jesus (Gospels)
- Peter (1 Peter and Gospels)
- James (Letter of James)
- Paul (Seven original letters)
- John (Gospel and 1, 2, 3 Letters of John)

The earliest level the Gospels were composed for Jewish audiences.

Anti-Judaism in the Gospels

Reflect Tensions within Synagogues

The final editing of Matthew, Luke and John took place after 70 CE.

- Looking back on the destruction of the Temple
- Contain polemics against Pharisees and synagogues (Matthew 21:35-46; 23:1-23; cf. 27:25)
- React to being expelled from synagogues (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2)
- These are all local situations and do not refer to a general ban of Christians from all synagogues.

The Destruction of the Temple

After 70 CE, Judaism had to redefine itself.

The Pharisees assumed leadership.

- Torah focus
- Written Torah and Oral Torah
- Council of Yavneh: Identify the 24 scrolls of the Tanakh

Some synagogues discouraged the presence of sectarian groups. However, there was no world wide exclusion of Christian from synagogues.

The vital role of synagogues for churches: Learning Scripture

1. **First century** CE (e.g., Acts 13:5, 14-49)

Scrolls of the Torah, Prophets and Writings

Instruction on the core meanings of the sacred texts (cf. debates about resurrection!).

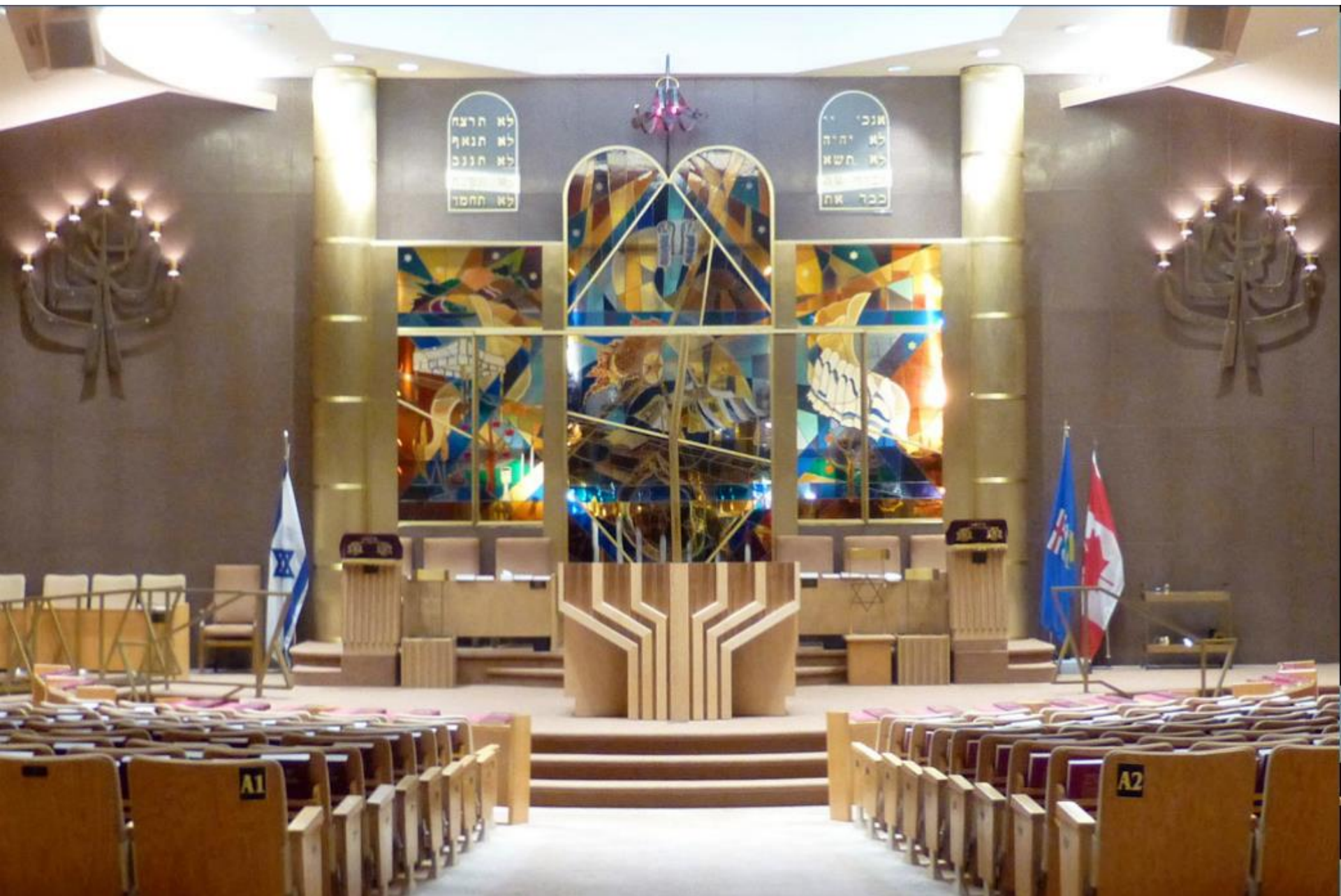
2. **Second century** CE (e.g., Justin dialogue with Trypho)

Scrolls of the Torah, Prophets and Writings

Christians Partaking in the Passover with Jewish Families

3. Third and Fourth Century

- a. Origin of Caesarea (184-253 CE)
- b. The Council of Arles (314 CE)
- c. Admonitions for Christians not to partake in the Passover celebrations of Jewish families.



לא תרצח
לא תנאף
לא תזנב
לא תחמד

אנכי
לא יהיה
לא תשא
כבוד אלה

A1

A2