

Trauma and grief are important topics for us to engage with and try to process. In regards to the Bible, the trauma and grief narrative of the Jewish people parallels our current circumstances with regards to the October 7, 2023 massacre and abductions. During this time, references and connections to the Holocaust are made.

Why does one event trigger another?

Dissociation:

Dissociation refers to a mental process where a person may feel disconnected from their thoughts, feelings, memories, or even their sense of identity in the moment. It can manifest in various ways, including:

- **Dissociative Identity:** Occurs when a person feels disconnected from their current environment or experiences a sense of detachment from their own body or surroundings.
- **Dissociative Amnesia:** Involves gaps in memory or forgetting aspects of one's identity, often associated with stressful or traumatic events.

The 20th century Holocaust remains one of the most devastating and traumatic events in human history, especially for the Jewish community. The enormity of the tragedy often leads to connections and associations between personal experiences or emotions and the collective memory of the Holocaust.

Association: making a connection

Interconnected Emotions: Funerals and mourning often evoke strong emotions like grief, loss, and remembrance. For individuals with personal or familial connections to the Holocaust, these emotions might intertwine with the historical trauma of that period.

Transgenerational Trauma: Survivors and descendants of Holocaust survivors might carry the weight of collective trauma, impacting their experiences during emotionally charged events like funerals.

Collective Memory: The Holocaust holds a profound place in collective memory, shaping how individuals perceive and relate to other tragedies or instances of loss, even if not directly related.

Coping and Emotional Connections:

Identification and Empathy: The awareness of historical tragedies like the Holocaust can foster empathy and identification with other instances of loss or suffering.

Emotional Overlaps: The emotional weight of remembering past tragedies might intersect with mourning for someone else, causing associations or reflections on broader themes of loss, injustice, or resilience.

Importance of Memory: Remembering the Holocaust and its impact remains crucial to honoring the victims and survivors while safeguarding against future atrocities. Both 4 Ezra (also known as 2 Esdras in some traditions) and 2 Baruch are ancient Jewish texts categorized as apocalyptic literature. They offer insights into eschatological themes, theological reflections, and responses to historical events, particularly surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem and **its rebuilding on the Word of God.**

Begin with Nehemiah 8

4 Ezra (2 Esdras): In honor of Ezra named with the rebuilding of the Temple with Nehemiah (Nehemiah 8)

Authorship and Date: Traditionally attributed to the prophet Ezra, although *1-4 Ezra documents were written much later*, likely in the late 1st century CE.

Themes and Content:

Eschatology and Divine Judgment: 4 Ezra explores theodicy, addressing the problem of evil and suffering in the world, especially in relation to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Visions and Revelations: The text contains visions received by Ezra, revealing insights about the end times, the fate of the righteous and the wicked, and the final judgment.

Israel's Election: It delves into the special status of Israel as God's chosen people and reflects on their suffering and future restoration.

Apocalyptic Imagery: The text employs symbolic and apocalyptic language to describe cosmic events, using allegory and visions to convey its message.

2 Baruch: Jeremiah's Scribe (Jeremiah 36)

Authorship and Date: Attributed to Baruch, who was the scribe of the prophet Jeremiah. It was likely composed in the late 1st century CE or early 2nd century CE.

Themes and Content:

Apocalyptic Visions: Similar to 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch contains visionary material, offering insights into the end times, cosmic events, and the fate of humanity.

Divine Judgment and Restoration: It explores themes of divine judgment, punishment, and restoration, addressing the suffering of the Jewish people and their hope for redemption.

Reflection on the Law: The text reflects on the significance of the Mosaic Law, its observance, and its relevance during times of distress and upheaval.

Ethical and Moral Exhortations: There are ethical teachings and exhortations encouraging righteous living and faithfulness to God, even in the face of adversity.

Both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch engage with the challenges of their time, particularly the destruction of Jerusalem and the suffering of the Jewish people. They use visionary and apocalyptic language to offer comfort, theological reflection, and hope for a future restoration, emphasizing the **importance of faithfulness, righteousness, and trust in God amid difficult circumstances.**

What is a Pharisee?

While the word "Pharisee" is conventionally used as an insult, a literal translation of the name is "separatists." Scholars are uncertain whether "separatists" is derogatory -- having been coined by their adversaries -- or denotes the group's breaking away from the immorality of their day. Further, there is no written record of their origin. At best, our earliest sources that mention the Pharisees come from Josephus, the New Testament, and the Rabbinic Literature -- all biased writings in their own regard.

(***The **last two decades** have witnessed an academic effort at finding the origin of the many Jewish sects.)

What makes the teaching credible in the past and in our day?

As a requirement for survival, every religious group must find a source of authenticity to lend credibility to its teachings. The most common method is an appeal to history. For modern Jewish sects, mimicking the Pharisees grants a historical connection to traditional Judaism, while permitting some contemporary leeway. Although Pharisaism is **scorned by many Christians**, much of the latter's theology shares similarities to the earliest known writings of the former.

After the destruction of the First Temple, during the Babylonian captivity, (586-539 BC) the Diaspora occurred as the scattering of the Jewish people to the outer regions of Europe, North Africa and Middle East, and the subsequent formation of this sect established **a critical link** between modern Jewish thought and Christian doctrine. To better understand this assertion, we will need to look at the history and development of the Pharisees. ***Consider the following an overview of Pharisaic thought before finally reviewing the foundations of Christianity.***

Keeping the faith traditions alive.

General consensus among scholars maintains that the Pharisees surfaced during the Diaspora as a means of **keeping the Jewish culture alive**. One author goes so far as to say that the theology and religion of this culture reflects psychological factors such as "suffering, exile, or massive loss."

Ellens, J. Harold. "Psychological Aspects of Biblical Apocalypticism." Pastoral Psychology. 51:2 (Nov. 2002); pp157-163.

In this case, we recognize that **hopelessness** arose during the Babylonian captivity as Jews struggled to keep their identity. Despite the belief that the Pharisees were born under this time period, the earliest, undisputable mentioning of the sect comes

from Josephus, who stated that the group gained prominence under Maccabean rule.

The **Maccabean rule**, also known as the **Hasmonean dynasty**, began after the successful revolt against the **Greek/Macedonian** Seleucid Empire in the 2nd century BCE. The revolt was led by a Jewish family known as the Maccabees, particularly led by Judah Maccabee and his brothers.

Maccabean Revolt and Rule:

- **Revolt (167 - 160 BCE):**
 - The revolt was triggered by the imposition of **Hellenistic (Greek)** practices by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who desecrated the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. This sparked a rebellion led by Mattathias, and later his son Judah Maccabee, against Seleucid rule.
- **Rededication of the Temple (164 BCE):**
 - The Maccabees successfully regained control of Jerusalem and rededicated the desecrated Temple. This event is commemorated in the Jewish festival of Hanukkah.
- **Establishment of the Hasmonean Dynasty:**
 - The Maccabean revolt resulted in a period of Jewish independence, with the Maccabees establishing their rule over Judea.
- **Maccabean Rule (c. 164 - 63 BCE):**
 - The Maccabean or Hasmonean rule lasted for about a century, with the Maccabees serving as both religious and political leaders. Their rule included a period of relative independence and self-governance for Judea.

End of Maccabean Rule:

- **Conflict and Decline:**
 - Internal conflicts within the Hasmonean family and external pressures, including Roman interference, led to a decline in Hasmonean power.
- **Roman Intervention:**
 - In 63 BCE, Roman general Pompey intervened in Judea, leading to the end of the Hasmonean rule and the incorporation of Judea into the Roman Republic's territory.

The Maccabean rule represents [a significant period of Jewish self-rule and resistance against foreign oppression](#). Though relatively short-lived, it was a time of religious and political assertion for the Jewish people, highlighted by the restoration of Jewish religious practices and the defense of Jewish identity against Hellenistic influences.

Josephus held Pharisees in high regard, their contemporaries did not look upon them as favorably. The **Essenes** claimed that they offered false interpretations and subsequently wrote in their **Dead Sea Scrolls** that they spun spiders' webs of lies. Jewish historian **Nicolaus** said that the Pharisees prided themselves too much. Despite these negative impressions, their doctrines became the foundations of modern Judaism.

The end of the Second Temple

After Jerusalem was destroyed along with the Temple in 70 A.D., the Jewish community was comprised of many factions, sects and brotherhoods. After the destruction of the Second Temple,

however, the **Pharisees were the only group to survive** through the generations. Their teachings became the basis for Rabbinic Judaism. In fact, every modern interpretation of Judaism claims Pharisaism as its ancestor. Even the early members of Reform Judaism saw themselves as the true Pharisees of their day -- modifiers of the Law to accommodate changing needs. In order to see how the Pharisees achieved such a prominent role, we need to now consider the philosophies of the group.

Realizing that Judaism should be a **mobile religion** that could not be tied to any particular area, the Pharisees took the Bible out of the Temple and brought it into local synagogues and people's homes. They did away with the Temple cult that existed at that time and made a connection with the Lord by focusing on the individual. They produced **the Mishnah and the Talmud** as a means of explaining the Law and stressed that divine revelation came from both the written and oral Torah. One scholar states that the Pharisees, with their emphasis on the authority of both the written and oral Law, are similar to the Catholic's claim that Papal leadership is equal to biblical commandment. Their philosophy eventually formed the core of most Christian teachings.

Post Temple Life

The **new synagogue life** featured prayer as an alternative to sacrifice; they believed in the immortality of the soul and resurrection of the body; and they diligently studied the Torah.

They believed in an after life and taught that redemption came from faith, repentance, and good deeds.

Although Christianity states that salvation comes from God alone, Paul wrote, "Faith without works is dead." By adapting the Law to new situations, the Pharisees maintained a reputation of

being progressive thinkers. By focusing on religious actions rather than political affiliations, they managed to keep out of trouble during times of civil strife.

Pharisee Separatists Movements away from politics:

As noted, the earliest mentioning of the Pharisees came from the same time period as the Maccabean regime. While they enjoyed a brief interlude as a favored party under Queen Alexandra's rule, they split from the Hasmonians during the dynasty's infighting for power. Instead of vying for political glory, they believed in a **separation of religious groups and government organizations**. They focused on scholarship and intellectual pursuits as their main drive. Their absences from positions of secular authority would serve as a saving grace during the Roman occupation. Later, **Christians would call for a separation of Church and State**, while still recognizing the sanctity of government by saying, "Render unto Caesar." (Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:17)

One of the reasons of the Pharisees' withdrawal from politics was their **obsession with purity**. Their stress on cleanliness with inanimate objects closely resembled their views of the body. Their division of cups into exterior and interior mimicked their view of the body. It is no small consequence that Jesus would divide external purity such as hand washing from internal defilements such as slander. (Matthew 23: 26)

The Pharisees took purity away from the priests and made it a responsibility of each individual.

They also extended cleanliness to all aspects of daily life such as eating, prayer, and reading the Torah. Ever so concerned with purity, the group maintained that people should cleanse themselves before praying. Similarly, Jesus once said that no one

may make an offering to God if he has a quarrel with another person. The pharisaic teachings that were adopted by Christians extend far beyond the realm of purity. Much of the latter's doctrine is borrowed from the former's writings.

One component of religious history has been that the word "Pharisee" has come to mean "hypocrite." The Pharisees were pious in their practices and were well respected for their observance to the Law. Their ideas led to two of the world's monotheistic religions.

By sidestepping the vocational priests so that the individual could strive for purity, the Pharisees set the tone for Martin Luther's emphasis on the priesthood of believers. (1 Peter 2:5)

Before Jesus had given the Golden Rule, Hillel -- one of Pharisaism's most influential thinkers -- summarized the Torah by saying, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man." Christian writers in the first century C.E. adapted much of their adversary's apocalyptic tradition.

How do we—humans—engage with the spiritual world?

The Pharisees were the first to develop innovative ways of envisioning **human encounter with the transcendent world**. They took the Torah to be pre-existent and heavenly.

Likewise, the Son of Man became transcendent. (John 1) The first chapter of The Gospel of John tells of The Word that became flesh. Christians also adopted the Pharisaic penchant for proselytizing. (Acts)

Matthew 23:15, Pharisees sent missionaries to seek Gentile converts to Judaism. Missionaries under Hillel were very successful at winning over non-believers until Roman Christians

made their activities illegal and forced Judaism to become a closed religion.

Despite current dogma, Jesus actually embraced many of the Pharisaic teachings; he only opposed hypocritical practices [7,3,18,24, see Matt. 6:1- 8]. According to one author, Jesus agrees with the Pharisees that "God's work in human history is happening precisely through the life and destiny of this people of Israel.

Examples where Jesus respects the Pharisees

Matthew 5:20:

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks about righteousness surpassing that of the scribes and Pharisees:

"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20 ESV)

In this passage, Jesus sets a higher standard of righteousness, emphasizing the internal righteousness of the heart over external displays, which the Pharisees were known for.

Nicodemus (John 3:1-21):

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council, approached Jesus respectfully to discuss matters of faith and spiritual rebirth.

Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43; Matthew 27:57):

Joseph of Arimathea, described as a rich man and a member of the Sanhedrin (which included Pharisees), showed respect for Jesus by providing a tomb for his burial.

Instances of Positive Engagement:

Luke 13:31-33:

Some Pharisees warned Jesus about Herod's intentions to kill him. While Jesus responded with caution and continued his work, this interaction implies a level of concern or goodwill from those Pharisees.

Acts 5:34-39 (Post-Jesus):

Gamaliel, a Pharisee and respected teacher of the law, advised caution regarding the treatment of the apostles after Jesus' death. He referenced previous failed movements and urged the council to let the apostles' activities run their course, suggesting that if it were of human origin, it would fail.

Jesus not only respected the Pharisees, but several of their members supported him in kind. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were sympathizers. (Luke 13:31)

Paul with the Sanhedrin Acts 22-23

Paul either was or had been a Pharisee. (Philippians 3:5)

The two sides may have had disagreements, but they certainly held mutual respect for each other. A tragedy of modern scholarship and belief occurred when both Jews and Christians **failed to recognize their common ancestor**. Through the

historical development of the Pharisees and their abundant teachings, both religions have enjoyed a unique intellectual background. The real credibility for both groups will come when they accept their common beginnings.