

Romans. Introduction 1 Background on Rome.

Roman Jewish community was very large and diverse. Estimated 50,000 in 1st Century.

Oldest Jewish community in Europe. Strabo (Augustus' time) claimed that Jews had filled every city.

Many synagogues and distinct communities. Quite a number of names known. In most quarters of Rome. Synagogues tended to be highly organized with a leader, and even a Sanhedrin in some cases.

Synagogue referred to the community, and *proseucha* was a building. We often associate synagogue with church, or building, but it really means gathering, assembly. Names known from Jewish catacombs, Augustesians, Calcaresians, Hebrews, and so forth. Little is known about building locations and nothing about what they looked like.

Jews were influential with Roman government, it being both friendly and hostile. Interaction with Rome like a pendulum. At least two expulsions, 19, the first one by Tiberius, 19 CE. The 2nd one by Claudius in 49-50 CE. Aquila and Priscilla were exiles from the latter one.

Jews had influence as evidenced by a number of petitions and organized boycotts. Gaius took away many rights, Claudius restored the rights of Jews to their worship practices, but later expelled them for riotous behavior due to "Chrestus"

Roman Jews Continued

Community Life in Rome:

Roman Jews were known to be quite “frum” observing Shabbat and ritual baths. There was much scorn heaped on them by outside writers. There were a number of fast days and some thought Shabbat was a Jewish fast day. Personal piety was highly regarded. Many inscriptions about piety.

There were many proselytes, actual converts, but many more in the synagogue who were called G-d-fearers. It was fashionable for upper crust Romans to adopt Jewish practices in their lives without converting. Horace satirized the proselytizing in the time of Augustus

It was fashionable for many leading Roman citizens to adopt Jewish practices in their lives without actually converting. This included Observing Shabbat, and keeping kosher, and extended to most personal values and worship practices.

One writer sarcastically mentioned that the synagogue was a great place to meet women as so many of the leading women of Rome were attached to and part of Jewish society, as G-d-fearers.

A number of wives of famous Romans, generals, even Nero's wife, became associated with Judaism, without having become converts.

Roman life still continued

When did the Messianic Community begin?

References associated with “Christians” begin in the 40s.

In either 41 or 49, Claudius expelled Jews from Rome because of Jews who were rioting because of someone Seutonius called **Chrestus**.

Was this a reference to Yeshua? Leon paints a picture that most of the Jews expelled were those involved with rioting about Yeshua. This would include Aquila as leaders of the Jews who had become believers in Yeshua.

Tacitus, and others would often seem to have confused Christian and Jewish communities in their writings.

Nero (or his historians) accused both Christians and Jews of destroying Rome.

A summary picture we can glean from this:

Jewish community in Rome was friendly towards Non-Jewish participation in synagogue life

The Christians until the 60s at least, were closely associated with Jews, often confused with them in this generation.

The very first sense of any distinction between Jew and Christian was the consequence of the Fire of 64. Leon calls it a sect that was essentially a part of the Jewish world.

Romans. Background and Timing

Written likely from Greece, (Corinth) either 55/56, or 56/57.

Jews were allowed back in Rome by Nero in 54.

Paul is writing then to a community that would have both Jews and Gentiles, consistent with the picture of Jewish life we have already seen.

Possible that most of the Jews had left, the non-Jews had remained and now were having to reintegrate Jews back into the community.

If so, this would help us to understand what Paul was addressing in his letter.

Purpose of Romans:

Other views: Last will and testament. Written not for Rome, but his last, best theology.

Support letter to bring to Jerusalem so he could curry support for Gentiles at the anti-Gentile Jerusalem council. And to support his anticipated travels to Spain.

Paul's comprehensive theological treatise.

Our view here: Paul is writing to a community that is learning how to reintegrate Jew and Gentile, consistent with the picture of Jewish life in Rome at that time. He is intent upon explaining the relationship of Jews to Gentiles in the Kingdom, and how that fits with a common salvation. Consistent with his directive from Jerusalem.

Romans Outline

Preamble: Romans 1:1-17. Introductions

- A. Romans 1:18-5:21** No Favoritism, in Sin and in Salvation In “being Righteoused,” and in our sinful standing before G-d there is no favoritism towards Jews on the one hand, and no special sinfulness inherent in the Gentiles.
- B. Romans 6:1 – 8:39** **Salvation is apart from Law.** No Jewish favoritism. Jews do not have a “Get into heaven free card” (or get out of jail free card)
Law does not have the function of providing salvation, but has other functions
- C. 9:1 – 11:36** ***The Focus of Law, Israel and Salvation.*** *The reason for being a believer in Messiah is to identify with the calling of Israel, to do the work of being a light to the nations. That calling has not been revoked, but now can be accomplished in power, by all children of Abraham, but only in the context of and association with Israel..*
- B’ 12:1 – 13:14** **No favoritism or division in our purpose.** All who are in Messiah and united to the calling of Israel live do their work in community. Living a G-dly life accomplishes the purpose of Israel.
- A’ 14:1 – 16:27** **No favoritism in our personal interactions.** Whether we be, Jew or Gentile, with perhaps different tasks, we each have tasks to carry out the purpose of Israel.