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## Syria and Cilicia during the Time of Paul

Together with Phoenicia, **Syria** was a major **Jewish** center in the Second Temple period. Its proximity to **the Land of Isra'el** meant that **Jewish** life there closely resembled that in **the Land**, the **Syrian Jewish** community acting as good allies and partners. **Jewish** settlement in **Syria** in general was very ancient and was probably augmented by further immigration following the Seleucid conquest of **Judea** shortly after 200 BC (**Josephus Antiquities of the Jews 12.119, Jewish War 2.463, 7.43**). The book of **Obediah, verse 20**, witnesses the colonization of **Jews** as military settlers in **Syria**, possibly subsequent to the annexation of **Judaea** by Antiochus III in 187 BC. Josephus asserts that **Syria** possessed the largest percentage of **Jewish** inhabitants in the diaspora and that both **Jews** and **Judaizers** (**to see link click Ag - Who Were the Judaizers?**) were to be found in every city (**Jewish War 2.463, 7.43**). **Rabbinic literature records the existence of Jewish tenants, the mortgaging of land to Jews by Gentiles (Tosefta Terumoth 2:10-11), and various types of tenures on Jewish land - suggesting that some Jews might have held large estates (Tosefta Terumoth 2:13).**

**Cilicia** consisted of two major regions on the southeast Anatolian coast: **Cilicia** Trachea (or Aspera) in the mountainous region west of the Lamus River reaching to Pamphylia, and **Cilicia** Campestris (or Pedias) the fertile plain south of the **Taurus** and west of the Amanus range. The province is mentioned in the book of Judith (a deuterocanonical book, included in the Septuagint and the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles, but excluded from the **Jewish** Apocrypha), where Nebuchadnezzar dispatched Holofernes, the head of his army, to punish the inhabitants of **Cilicia** for insubordination (Judith 1:12, 2:21-25). A further rebellion is recorded in First Maccabees 11:14.

The region having become so infested with bandits that "**Cilicia**" became a virtual synonym for "**pirate,**" Pompey was forced to action against those bandits. The defeat of the "**Cilician pirates**" resulted in **Cilicia** Trachea being incorporated into the Roman Empire, both **Cilician** districts being joined to the already-existing province, which consisted of Pamphylia and Isauria. **Tarsus** became the capital of **Cilicia** under Pompey in 66 BC, the provincial territory initially extending from the Chelidonian Isles to the Gulf of Issus, with Cyprus being added in 58 BC. While constituting a district administrative unit, **Cilicia** Pedias constituted a dependency of the Legate of **Syria**, while **Cilicia** Aspera was joined to



the province of Lycaonia.<sup>34</sup>