

The Intertestamental Period



An Open Seminar
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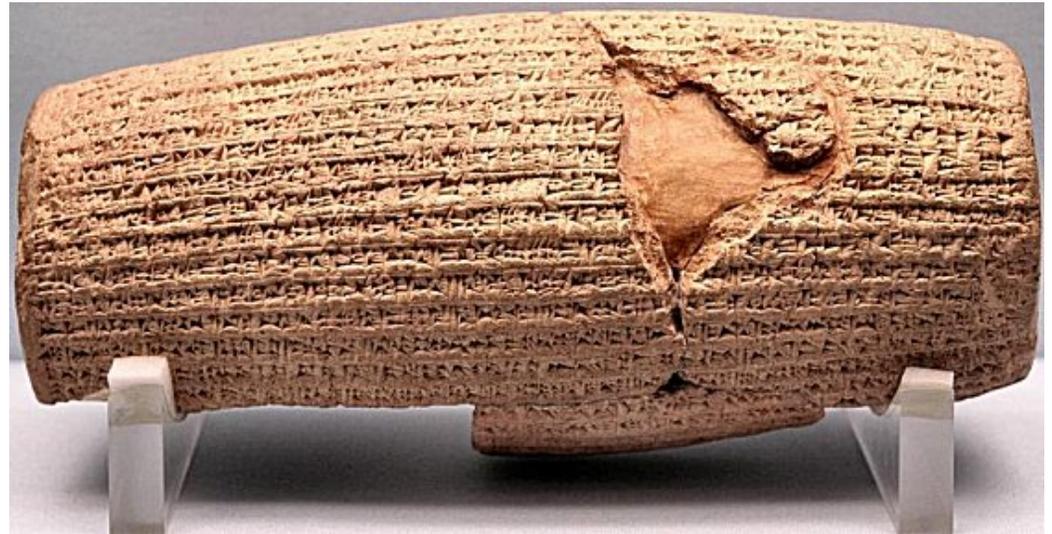
DISCOVERING THE OLD TESTAMENT

WITH SHELDON CREAVES, PH.D.



The Cyrus Cylinder

- Clay cylinder written in late Babylonian cuneiform
- 22.5 cm long by 10cm wide
- 539 BCE by Cyrus I following his seizure of Babylon
- Declares religious freedom and repatriation for all exiled peoples



Hellenism

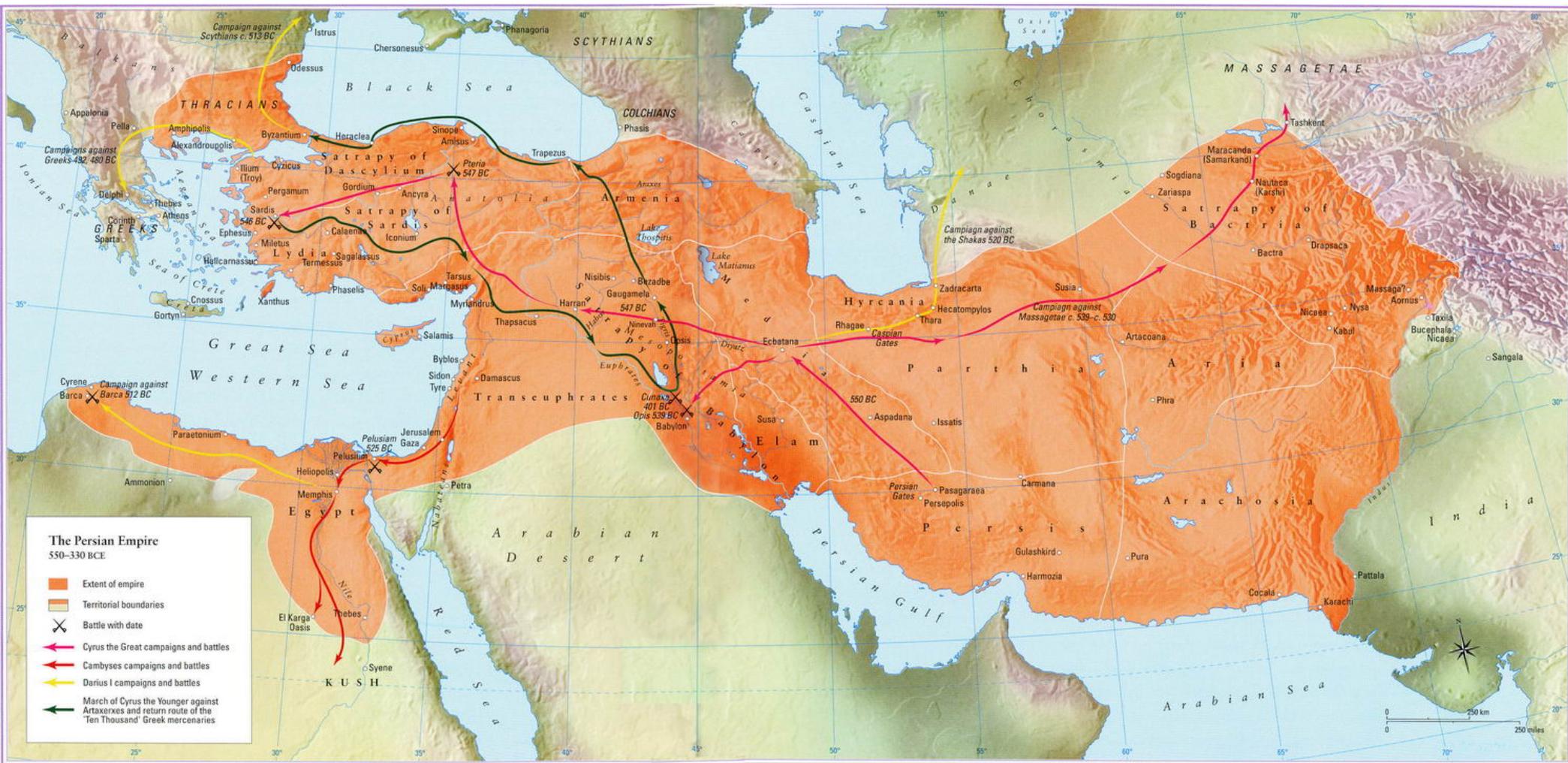
The process begun by Alexander the Great to make Greek culture the universal culture throughout the Near East.

Dates: 323 BCE to 30 BCE (Death of Cleopatra)

Carried out, unevenly, throughout the remains of Alexander's empire following his death.



The Persian Empire



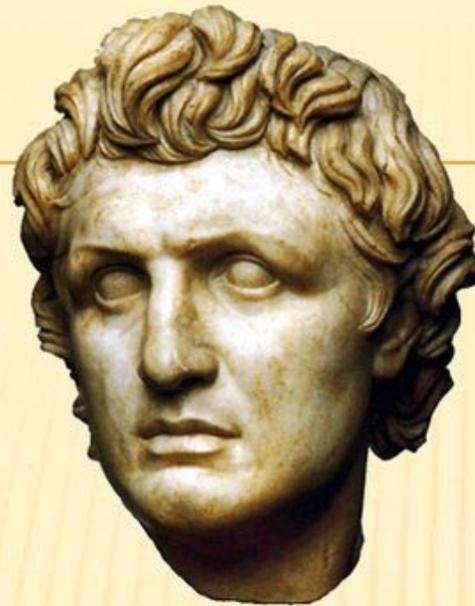
Alexander's Empire



SUCCESSORS TO ALEXANDER



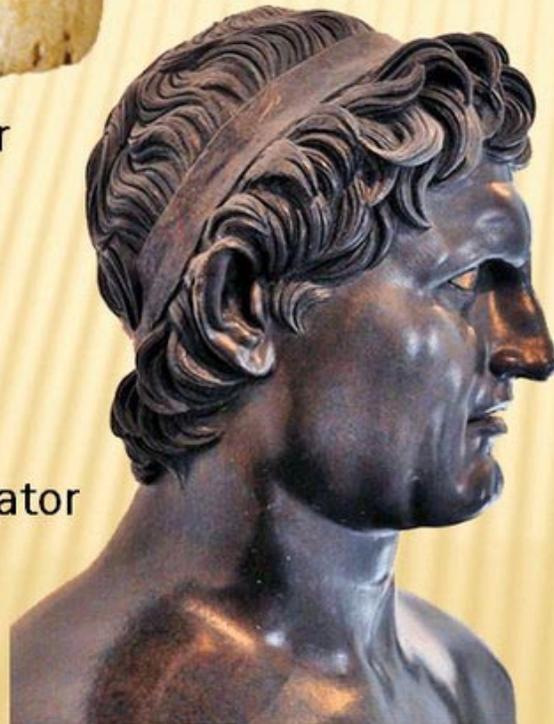
Cassander



Antigonus I Monophthalmus



Lysimachus



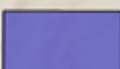
Seleucus I Nicator



Ptolemy I Soter

Successor States (Diadochi)



- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
|  | Empire of Alexander the Great
(334-323 B.C.) |  | Kingdom of the Ptolemies
(323-30 B.C.) |
|  | Kingdom of Thrace
under Lysimachus (r. 306-281 B.C.) |  | Kingdom of the Seleucids at
its height in 301 B.C. |
|  | Kingdom of the Antigonids
(306-168 B.C.) |  | Kingdom of Pontus (281-63 B.C.) |
| | |  | Kingdom of the Attalids under
Attalos I Soter (r. 241-197 B.C.) |

MACEDONIA

MYSIA

• Pergamon

ASIA MINOR

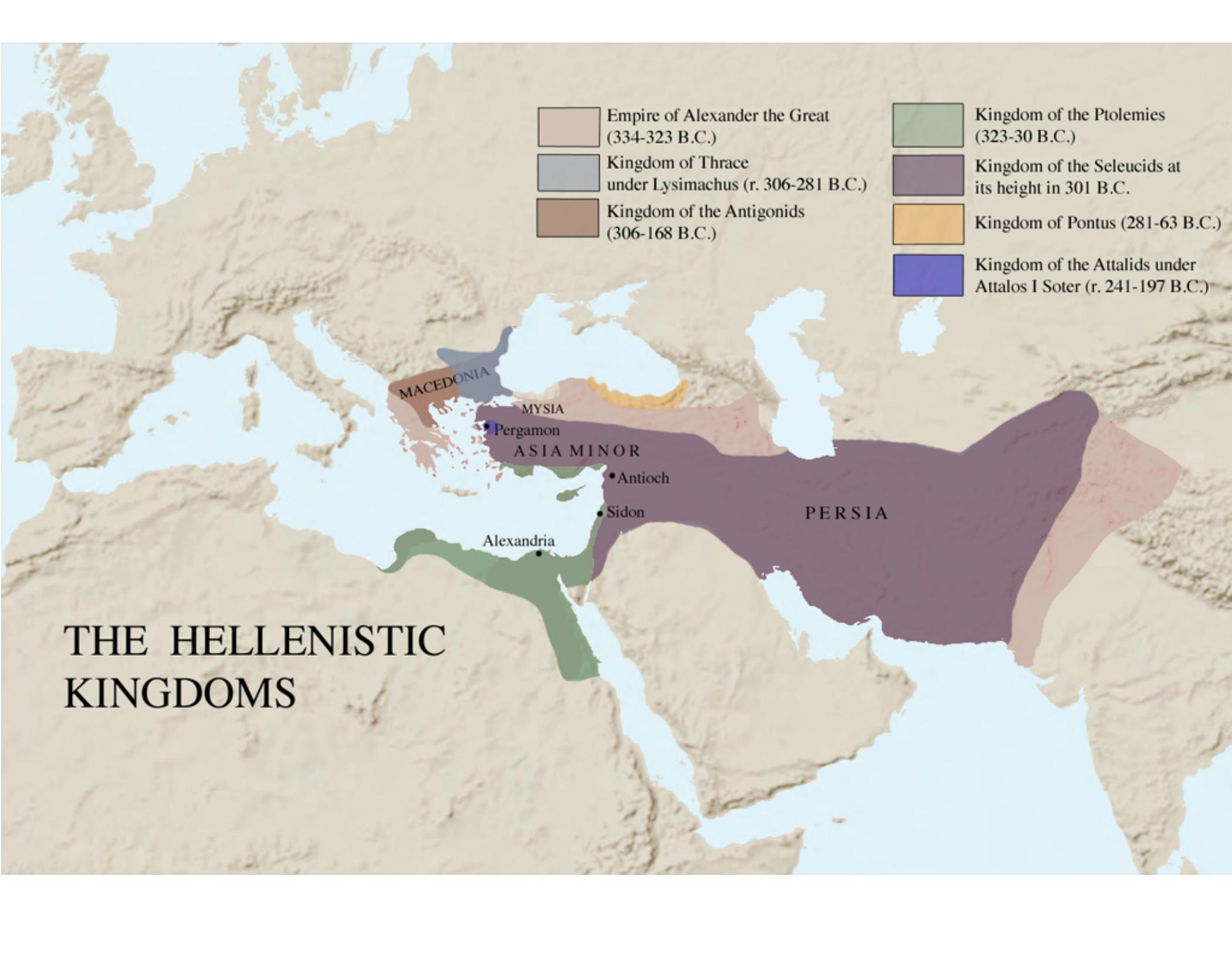
• Antioch

• Sidon

Alexandria

PERSIA

THE HELLENISTIC KINGDOMS



Greek Regard for Jewish Culture

- Both Greeks and Romans had high regard for very old cultures
- Herodotus mentions circumcision “among the Phoenicians and Syrians” although it was only practiced among Israelites
- Jews served in Alexander’s army, and Diadochi
- Plato’s “Myth of Er” may have come from an Aramaic source.



Greek Interest in Judaism

- Aristotle and others had formulated many social theories. They saw the Jews as a source of evidence to test their ideas.
- Greeks were fascinated by superficial similarities between cultures, although there were some philosophers who tried to look deeper.
- In a famous conversation between Aristotle and an unknown Jew in the mid-fourth Century, Aristotle was impressed and asserted that the Jews were descended from the Indian Philosophers.
- Greeks were also impressed by Jewish social organization, and measures in place to ensure the common welfare.

Josephus on the Greeks and Jews

“Our earliest imitators were the Greek philosophers, who, ostensibly observing the laws of their own countries, yet in their conduct and philosophy were Moses’ disciples, holding similar views about God.”



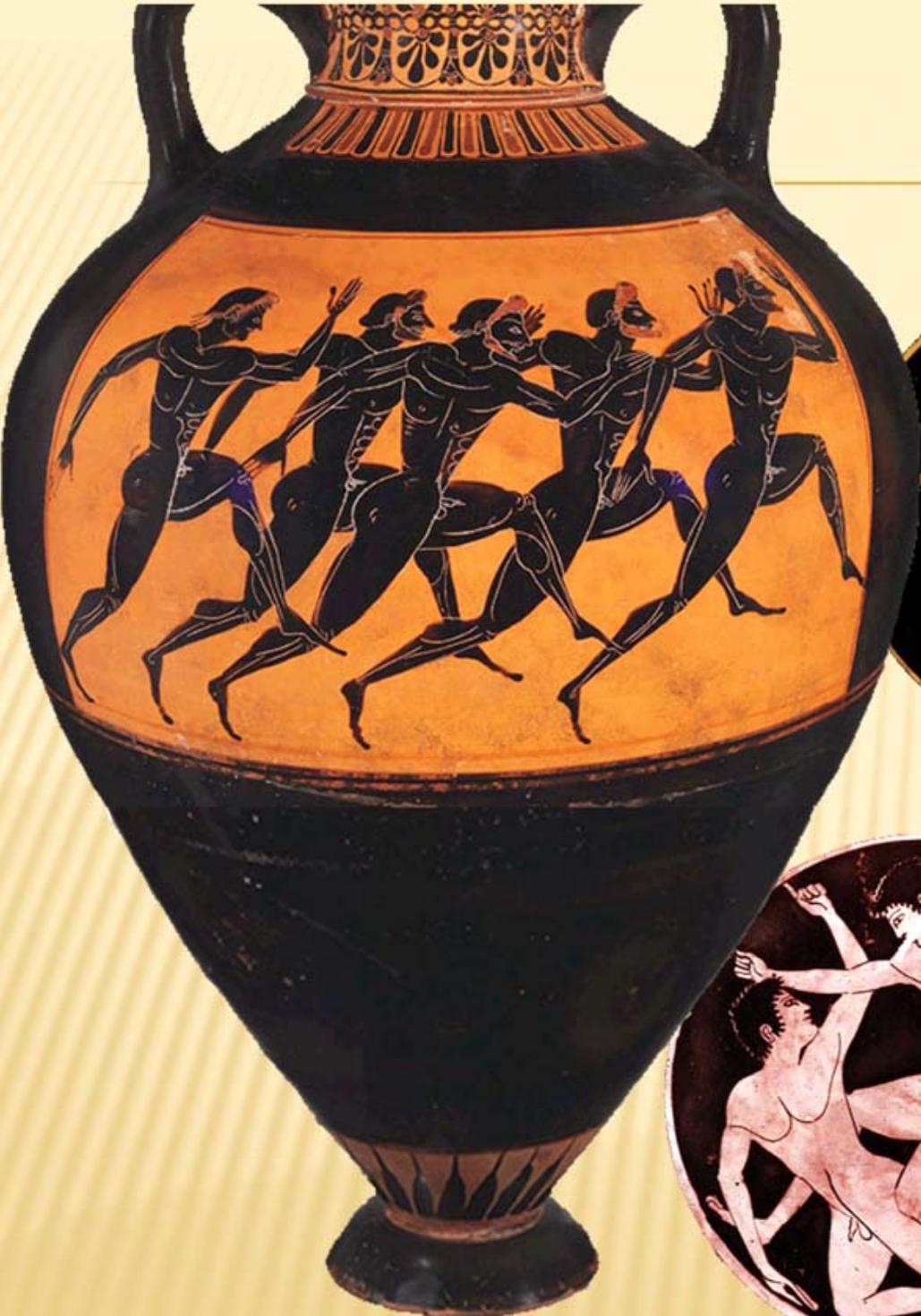
Artapanus on Moses

“As a grown man [Moses] was called Mousaeus by the Greeks. This Mousaeus was the teacher of Orpheus.... [Moses] bestowed many useful benefits on mankind, for he invented boats and devices for stone construction and the Egyptian arms and the implements for drawing water and for warfare, and philosophy. Further, he divided the [Egyptian] state into 36 nomes and appointed for each of the nomes the god to be worshiped, and for the priests the sacred letters, and that they should be cats and dogs and ibises [hieroglyphs].... He did all these things for the sake of maintaining the monarchy firm.... On account of these things then Moses was loved by the masses, and was deemed worthy of godlike honor by the priests and called Hermes, on account of the interpretation of the sacred letters.”

Joining the Hellenic Club

- You couldn't become Greek, but you could become a non-barbarian
- Hellenization included the founding of many cities on the Greek model
 - Cities had their own Greek patron god
 - Greek festivals, celebrations, sacrifices, sporting events
 - Non-barbarians could participate and even hold office, provided they participated in cultural events.
 - While this shut out many Jews, some were allowed to hold office if they displayed particular talent.
 - The center of hellenistic commercial and political life were the *Gymnasia*.

HELLENIST ATHLETICS



Jews in the Gymnasium

Many gymnasia made allowances for Jews, such as buying non-pagan oil for anointing and massage.

The problem was with circumcision, which the Greeks found ridiculous and even offensive.

Several forms of corrective surgery were available to “reverse” the circumcision.



Jews Under the Ptolomies

Ptolomies used the existing priesthood bureaucracy to collect taxes.

Priests were tax-exempt

High Priest served as Pharaoh's spokesman, and was thus effectively the ruler of Judea.

Hellenization starts to appear in rural areas.

Lost control of Palestine to the Seleucids in 198 BCE.

