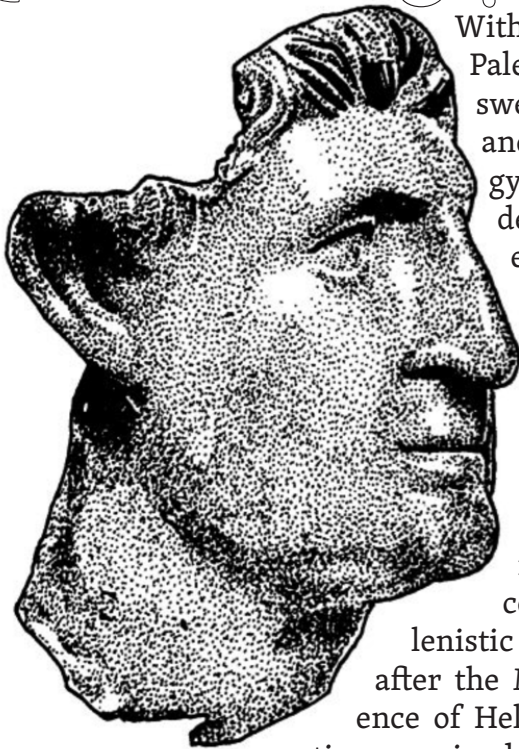


ISRAIAH



With Alexander the Great's conquest of Palestine in 332 B.C., Hellenistic culture swept into Israel, including Greek games and competitions. As a result, arenas and gymnasiums began to appear in Israel. A descendant of one of Alexander's generals, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who reigned over Palestine (175-164 B.C.), even had a gymnasium built in Jerusalem. Apparently many Jews, including some priests, participated in the events held there (see 1 Macc. 1:14; 2 Macc. 4:9). For many Jews the spectacle of a gymnasium in Jerusalem was repulsive (not least because athletes competed in the nude). Although Hellenistic games became less prevalent in Israel after the Maccabean revolt (167 B.C.), the presence of Hellenistic culture and athletic competition remained in Israel. Herod the Great (47-4 B.C.)

built, among other things, a stadium and hippodrome in Caesarea, a theater in Jerusalem, and possibly a hippodrome in Jericho. By the first century, Jews in Palestine and in the Diaspora, and of course Gentiles throughout the Mediterranean world, were familiar with competitive games.



←The open area (palaestra) of the gymnasium at Pompeii with gladiators' rooms to the left.

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OUTING