PORTRAYALS OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES IN JOSEPHUS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

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ABSTRACT

The first-century Jewish sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees have been the subject of much scholarly attention, mainly because of their role in the New Testament. The works of Flavius Josephus provide critical information about these two groups, and it is sometimes supposed that the two portrayals should not be reconciled. This paper supports the argument that the two positions are in basic agreement.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

While much of the Roman Empire in the first century CE was characterized by peace and stability, the province of Judaea witnessed what has been called the “greatest war” (πόλεμον μέγιστον, BJ 1.1) ever fought between cities or nations until then. During this century, Judaism completed a dramatic shift from a temple-focused religion to a religion focused on the synagogue and the study of the Torah. Christianity was born and rapidly spread on its way to conquering the Empire within three centuries. Readers of the two primary Greek sources for these events, the New Testament (NT) and the works of Flavius Josephus, will quickly find that, though the purposes and contents of these works differ drastically, certain background information is naturally shared between the two.

The Roman Empire, for instance, is itself present in both; it is merely a backdrop for many of the NT writers, but for Josephus it necessarily played a much larger role. Two other prominent examples of shared areas of interest are critical for understanding not only the tumultuous events of first-century Palestine, but also the NT and Josephus: the Jewish groups known as the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

One might think that, if indeed these groups are crucial for understanding the NT and Josephus, some sort of scholarly consensus would have emerged concerning their origins, beliefs, and roles in the events of the first century. Unfortunately, this is not the case. As Steve Mason (1991: 1) noted, “[u]ntil recent times, scholarship on the Pharisees has been in complete disarray.” More recently,
Mason commented (2009: 329) on Luke-Acts that “it is no longer (or not yet) possible to speak of 'what we know' historically about the Judean leaders [including the Pharisees].” The Sadducees do not fare any better, for they are mentioned in the sources less frequently than the Pharisees, so we cannot be any more certain about their nature. There has been little agreement on who exactly the Pharisees and Sadducees were. A recent compilation of essays on the subject gives us the current majority opinion on one of these groups: “there is enough hard evidence to justify a judgment that the Pharisees are indeed a fact of history but not enough to produce a systematic and substantive description of their nature, beliefs and character” (Green 2007: 409). Yet it seems possible to present a mostly coherent picture of these two groups. Although the purposes of the NT authors and Josephus did not include giving detailed accounts of the Pharisees and Sadducees, there are some significant commonalities in both texts which likely resulted from historical realities. In this paper, I will show that Josephus provides a broad structure for understanding these groups, while the NT fills in some of the details.

In order to proceed with the discussion of these two groups, it is necessary to provide some background for the works in which they are discussed. Titus Flavius Josephus (37–100 CE) was an aristocratic Jewish priest, military commander, and historian. The most (in)famous event of his life occurred near the beginning of the First Jewish Revolt (66–73 CE). Josephus was appointed as military commander in Galilee. The Romans attacked his base of operations at the city of Jotapata in 67 CE,

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1 See also Neusner (2007: vii) commenting on the possibility of historical reconstruction of these groups: “[In this collection of essays] we do not undertake to homogenize the distinct sources' pictures or reconstruct a coherent account of how things really were. Prior generations of scholars have signally failed at that task.”
and when Vespasian and his army compromised the city's defenses Josephus and his men agreed to kill one another to avoid capture. Somehow, Josephus survived. He was captured by the Romans and probably wrote at least some of his works under imperial patronage. These works are the following:

1. *The Jewish War* (*Bellum Judaicum*, abbreviated *BJ*), published between 75 and 79 CE
3. *Life* (*Vita*), published 95/96 CE
4. *Against Apion* (*Contra Apionem*, abbreviated *Ap.*), published between 97 and 100 CE

Only the first three works mention the Pharisees and Sadducees. A brief review of their contents is appropriate.

The *Jewish War* details in seven books the events leading up to and surrounding the Jewish Revolt mentioned earlier, most significantly the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. It begins with a previous siege of Jerusalem by the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 BCE during the Maccabean Revolt (167–164 BCE). This successful rebellion had inaugurated a period of independence for Judea under the Hasmonean dynasty (140–37 BCE), after which Herod the Great (reigned 37–4 BCE) ascended to the throne as a client king under Rome and established the Herodian dynasty. The work ends shortly after the capture of the fortress at Masada (73 CE). The *Jewish Antiquities* takes a lengthier view of Jewish history, beginning with the ambitious goal of paraphrasing the Hebrew Bible and ending just before the Jewish Revolt. The *Life* is intended as a sort of appendix to *AJ*, and narrates (as expected) the life of Josephus, with particular attention paid to his actions during the war.

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2 I have gleaned these dates from chapter 3 of Mason's *Josephus and the New Testament* (1992: 53–84).
The other source under consideration, the NT, is a compendium of early Christian texts which came to be accepted as the word of God by Christians over the decades and centuries following its production. Athanasius’ famous thirty-ninth festal letter in 367 CE provided the first published list that included the twenty-seven books (and only those) present in modern editions of the NT (Bruce 1988: 209). These books were written by a number of authors (traditionally eight or nine) between (arguably) about 49 CE (Galatians) and 95 CE (Revelation) (Wegner 1999: 51). The dates of the individual works relevant to our discussion are as follows:

1. The Gospel of Mark (Mark, abbreviated Mk.): 45–60 CE
2. The Gospel of Matthew (Matthew, abbreviated Mt.): slightly after Mark
5. The Gospel of John (John, abbreviated Jn.): 80s, 90s CE?

The four gospels give accounts of the life of Jesus but, as is typical of ancient biographies, do not give many details. One might say they are narratives of Jesus’ death and resurrection with long introductions encompassing his birth (but only in Matthew and Luke) and ministry. As might be expected of multiple works dealing with the same subject, there is a significant amount of overlap among the gospels. However, the similarity among Matthew, Mark, and Luke is so striking that most scholars posit a literary dependency. This relationship is called the “Synoptic Problem,” and thus these three gospels are called the “Synoptic Gospels.” Several theories detailing this relationship have

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3 For more on the genre of the canonical Gospels, see Burridge 1994: 5–8. Ancient biographies in general, and the Gospels in particular, often begin with the birth or entrance into public life of the subject and end with his death. In between, we often find “selected stories, anecdotes, speeches and sayings” (1994: 7).
been proposed throughout the history of their interpretation, but the majority scholarly opinion today is acknowledges “Markan priority.” This theory posits that Mark was written first, and (in the most common version of the theory) Matthew and Luke independently borrowed material from Mark and from another source, a lost “sayings Gospel” that scholars often call “Q” (from German Quelle, “source”). It is also commonly accepted that Acts was written by the author of Luke as a sequel.

The following study then is an investigation of the Pharisees and Sadducees in these sources, in order to determine whether a coherent portrait of these groups can be found.

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4 For more information on the Synoptic Problem, see Wegner (1999: 63-67).
CHAPTER 2: THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES IN JOSEPHUS

Reading Josephus to learn about the nature and history of the Pharisees and Sadducees can be something of an exercise in futility. Of the seventeen passages in which he mentions them explicitly, only two (BJ 2.119–66; AJ 18.11–23) offer anything approaching a detailed account of their doctrines and practices. In two other passages (AJ 13.171–2, 288–98) Josephus refers back to BJ 2.119–66, as if that discussion were his definitive treatment of the subject. Josephus’ detailed accounts are insufficiently detailed, however, for the purpose of historical reconstruction. This fact should remind us that he was not explicating the details of the different sects for his ancient audience. Since that is the case, should one even try to extract information about these groups from the Josephan corpus? Yes, for two reasons: (1) there is a paucity of contemporary sources on the subject, so any treatment of these groups must deal with Josephus, and (2) despite some secondary literature that argues to the contrary, there is a common thread running through Josephus’ portrayals: he presents the Pharisees and Sadducees as political-philosophical-religious groups.\(^5\) While it is a valid point that he sometimes emphasizes one aspect, sometimes another, depending on his immediate contextual aims, this fact

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\(^5\) A different point of view is offered by Steve Mason (2007a: 3-40), who is hesitant to move quickly from Josephus’ portrayals of the Pharisees and Sadducees to historical reconstruction.
does not imply that his emphases are unhistorical. It is still a valuable exercise to compile all of Josephus' references in an attempt to construct a coherent picture.

In three of Josephus' four works — the *War of the Jews* (*BJ*), the *Antiquities of the Jews* (*AJ*), and the *Life* (*Vita*)— forms of Φαρισαῖος and Σαδδουκαῖος are attested. We shall move through these attestations chronologically by date of composition so as to note any development in Josephus' treatment of these subjects. In order to keep the pace of the discussion flowing while still maintaining comprehensiveness, I have relegated instances of these words which do not contribute to our understanding of these groups to an appendix.

**The Jewish War**

In his first work, *BJ*, Josephus claims to be compensating for the inadequacies of previous histories of the first Jewish Revolt against Rome (1.1–3). His credentials are unique: he saw the conflict from both the Jewish and Roman sides.

The first picture of the Pharisees in the Josephan corpus is not complimentary. It occurs after a passage in which the Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus has transferred his kingdom to his wife Alexandra upon his death (c. 76 BCE), instead of to his sons.

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6 The Hasmonean dynasty was a line of Jewish kings and high priests who ruled Judea and neighboring regions from the time of the Maccabean revolt (167 BCE) until Pompey besieged Jerusalem in 63 BCE. As Antipater (founder of the Herodian dynasty) rose in power, the influence of the Hasmoneans faded. Herod I (the Great) married the Hasmonean princess Mariamne I in 37 BCE, marking (arguably) the end of the Hasmonean dynasty. Herod murdered his sons Alexander and Aristobulus, the final heirs to the dynasty in 7 BCE.
(110) Now the Pharisees, a body of Jews seeming to be more reverent than others and to relate the laws rather accurately, were growing up around her [Queen Alexandra] into power. (111) Alexandra, having been reverent concerning the deity, was [habitually] heeding them too much. And they became the administrators of the whole [state], [by] taking advantage of the sincerity of the woman little by little, both persecuting and bringing home whom they wished, both loosing and binding [whom they wished]. The pleasures of royal power were completely theirs, but the costs and burdens were Alexandra's. (112) But she was clever in administering more important things, and [by] continually enlisting she organized an army of double size and gathered no mean mercenary [force], with the result that she not only secured her native land, but also was a terror to foreign rulers. And though she was ruling over others, the Pharisees [were ruling] her. (113) So they killed Diogenes, one of the prominent men, who had been a friend to Alexander, bringing a charge about his advice concerning the eight hundred who had been crucified. And they urged Alexandra also to execute those who had instigated Alexander against [the
eight hundred]; and since she surrendered to superstition,\(^8\) they were accustomed to kill whomever they wished.

\((BJ\ 1.110-13)\)

We see the Pharisees "growing up around her" (παραφύονται, 1.110), which as Thackeray (1927: 53) states, evokes the image of "suckers round a tree." That first word sets the tone for the rest of this passage. The Pharisees act as they please even concerning matters of life and death. Oddly, the one general comment from Josephus is that the Pharisees were "a body of Jews seeming to be more reverent than others and to relate the laws rather accurately" (σύνταγμά τι Ἰουδαίων δοκοῦν εὔσεβέστερον εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων καὶ τοὺς νόμους ἀκριβέστερον ἀφηγεῖσθαι, 1.110). This, however, does not outweigh the overwhelmingly negative picture in the rest of the passage, though it does introduce two key words that will be important in the rest of Josephus' works: (1) the Pharisees have a reputation (δοκοῦν, 1.110), and it is a reputation for (2) accuracy (ἀκριβέστερον, 1.110) concerning the interpretation of the Jewish law.\(^9\) The Pharisees then promptly drop off the stage in favor of the main topic, the Hasmoneans. This tangent turns out to be (along with its parallel in AJ 13.401-415) the most unflattering portrait of the Pharisees in the Josephan corpus.

Of special note here is that the main point of this passage is the political power of the Pharisees. The religious component of the group is certainly present, for their reputation for reverence

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\(^8\) Or, more positively, "faithfulness," "reverence."

\(^9\) One might also translate ἀκριβεῖα and cognates more negatively. "Rigidity" is one example.
and precision of interpretation is the ground of their political power; and it is by this reputation that they gain sway over Alexandra. That they use their power for evil is secondary.

The only other significant reference to the Pharisees in BJ (and the only one to the Sadducees) occurs during the account of the uprising of Judas the Galilean (6 CE), whom Josephus calls a “sophist of his own sect” (σοφιστὴς ἰδίας αἱρέσεως, BJ 2.118). He also points out that this sect (the Zealots) is not like the others.\(^\text{10}\) Aware that his reader may be left wondering what the other sects are like, he casts the Essenes, Pharisees, and Sadducees as three philosophical schools in his first systematic account of these three groups (BJ 2.119–166). The relevant section reads as follows:\(^\text{11}\)

(119) τρία γὰρ παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις εἰδὴ φιλοσοφεῖται, καὶ τοῦ μὲν αἱρετισταὶ Φαρισαίοι, τοῦ δὲ Σαδδουκαίοι, τρίτον δὲ ... 'Εσονοι καλοῦνται ... (162) δύο δὲ τῶν προτέρων Φαρισαίοι μὲν οἱ μετ’ ἀκριβείας δοκοῦντες ἐξηγεῖσθαι τὰ νόμιμα καὶ τὴν πρώτην ἀπάγοντες αἱρέσιν εἰμαρμένη τε καὶ θεῷ προσάπτουσι πάντα, (163) καὶ τὸ μὲν πράττειν τὰ δίκαια καὶ μὴ κατὰ τὸ πλεῖστον ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις κεῖσθαι, βοηθεῖν δὲ εἰς ἑκάστον καὶ τὴν εἰμαρμένην· ψυχὴν τε πάσαν μὲν ἄφθαρτον, μεταβαίνειν δὲ εἰς ἑτέραν σώμα τὴν τῶν ἀγαθῶν μόνην, τὰς δὲ τῶν φαύλων ἀιδίῳ τιμωρίᾳ κολάζεσθαι. (164) Σαδδουκαίοι δὲ, τὸ δεύτερον τάγμα, τὴν μὲν εἰμαρμένην παντάπασιν ἀναιροῦσιν καὶ τὸν θεὸν ἐξώ τοῦ δρᾶν τι κακὸν ἢ ἕφοράν τίθενται· (165) φασὶν δ’ ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπων ἐκλογῇ τὸ τέλος καὶ τὸ κακὸν προκείμενον καὶ κατὰ γνώμην ἑκάστου τούτων ἐκάστερον προσέναι. ψυχῆς τε τὴν διαμονήν καὶ τὰς καθ’ ᾅδου τιμωρίας καὶ τιμὰς ἀναιροῦσι. (166) καὶ Φαρισαίοι μὲν φιλάλληλοι τε καὶ τὴν εἰς τὸ κοινὸν ἀσκοῦσιν, Σαδδουκαίων δὲ καὶ πρὸς ἄλληλους τὸ ἰδίος ἀγριώτερον αἰτεῖται τὰς ὑποθέσεις ἀπειροῦντες, τοιαύτα μὲν περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἰουδαίοις φιλοσοφοῦντων εἴχον εἶπεῖν.

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\(^{10}\) Moore (1929: 373 n. 13) argues that Josephus himself does not apply the label “Zealot” to the fourth philosophy.

\(^{11}\) I have omitted sections 120–61 from the quotation. The omitted passage discusses the Essenes, whose beliefs and practices Josephus relates in extensive detail. Josephus has nothing but praise for the Essenes, and they overshadow the Pharisees.
(119) For three schools pursue wisdom among the Jews, and adherents of the one are called “Pharisees,” of the second, “Sadducees,” and the third ... “Essenes.” ... (162) Now of the two earlier\(^{12}\) [groups], the Pharisees, who seem to expound the laws with precision and who lead the first sect,\(^{13}\) ascribe everything both to fate and to God, (163) and while doing righteous deeds or not depends for the most part upon men, nonetheless in each deed fate also helps; and every soul is indestructible, but only [the soul] of the good goes into another body, and those of the wicked are punished with an eternal punishment. (164) And the Sadducees, the second group, do away with fate entirely, and they place God outside the act or the sight of any evil at all. (165) And they say that both the [doing of] good and evil lies with the choice of men and according to the knowledge of each he turns to one or the other of these. And they do away with the permanence of the soul and the punishments and rewards of the underworld. (166) And the Pharisees are both fond of one another and practice concord toward the public, but the Sadducees are rather fierce in their disposition even toward one another, and their dealings with those like them are as harsh as with foreigners. Such is what I have to say concerning those philosophizing among the Jews.

\((BJ\ 2.119,\ 162-66)\)

Josephus again tells us that the Pharisees “seem to expound the laws with precision” (οἱ μετ’ ἀκριβείας δοκοῦντες ἐξηγεῖσθαι τὰ νόμιμα, 1.162), but in this passage he adds that they “lead the first sect” (τὴν πρώτην ἀπάγοντες αἵρεσιν, 1.162). Again, he says that they attribute “everything to fate and to God” (εἱμαρμένῃ καὶ θεῷ ... πάντα, 1.162), but that people have free will. They hold to the notions of the immortal soul (ψυχήν ... ἀφθαρτον, 2.163), resurrection (μεταβαίνειν, 2.163) for the righteous, and eternal punishment for the wicked. The Pharisees are even described as “fond of one another” (φιλάλληλοι, 1.166) and as “practicing concord toward the public” (τὴν εἰς τὸ κοινὸν ὁμόνοιαν, 1.166).

This is a very different picture from the first one in BJ 1.110-13. One even wonders if Josephus

\(^{12}\) "Older" is another possible translation.

\(^{13}\) The meaning of τὴν πρώτην ἀπάγοντες αἵρεσιν is unclear: thus my translation (“lead the first sect”). Some sort of influence seems to be involved. The nature of the influence is not spelled out.
is describing the same group. In both instances the Pharisees are noted for their apparent skilled exegesis of the law, but whereas the first passage paints them as a political force, these paragraphs present them as a philosophical-theological school. This comparison reveals the difficulty of trying to extract a coherent picture of the Pharisees from Josephus.

As for the Sadducees, this passage portrays them as disbelieving entirely in fate/providence (εἱμαρμένη)\(^{14}\) and attributing everything to the free will of mankind. The soul is mortal and punishment and reward in the afterlife are non-existent. Also, the Sadducees are “rather fierce in their disposition even toward one another, [and] their dealings with those like them are as harsh as with foreigners” (Σαδδουκαίων δὲ καὶ πρὸς ἂλληλοις τὸ ἰδίον ἀγριώτερον, αἳ τὲ ἐπιμιξίαι πρὸς τοὺς ὁμοίους ἀπηνεῖς ὡς πρὸς ἄλλητρόν, 1.166). They seem to be philosophically and practically at odds with the Pharisees at nearly every point.

This digression on the point of the Pharisees and Sadducees occurs at a natural break in the story: along with the uprising, Rome has deposed Archelaus and his ethnarchy has been turned into a Roman province (6 CE).\(^{15}\) But why does Josephus feel the need to include this tangent here? The immediately preceding sentence states that Judas the Galilean was the "founder of his own sect, [he] being similar in nothing to the others" (σοφιστὴς ἰδίας αἱρέσεως οὐδὲν τοῖς ἄλλοις προσεοικώς, 2.118).\(^{16}\)

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15 Herod Archelaus was the son of the Herod I (the Great), who ruled as ethnarch of Idumea, Judea, and Samaria from 4 BCE to 6 CE.
16 Though LJS (s.v. σοφιστής) gives no gloss for σοφιστής similar to my translation “founder,” A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus gives the definition “founder (head) of a (political and religious) particular group” (Rengstorf 1983: 28).
The γάρ in 2.119 shows that Josephus is continuing this thought, and that his aim is to distance mainstream Judaism, i.e., the three sects he mentions, from the sect of the Zealots which he presents as responsible for the later rebellion against Rome, and therefore for the destruction of Jerusalem in the revolt that is the subject of this work. This is in keeping with the stated purpose of BJ, though it contrasts greatly with the picture of the Pharisees under Alexandra.

In BJ, Josephus presents Alexandra’s Pharisees as power-grabbing opportunists who use their religious influence for their political advantage. By contrast, when the three sects are portrayed as philosophical schools, the picture is far less negative though they still display some of the same characteristics (e.g., precision in matters of the law) and gain others (e.g., their harmony with the people). This inconsistency makes it easy to see how scholars such as Mason are hesitant to harmonize portrayals of the Pharisees in Josephus’ various works. Still there are commonalities, and these will be reinforced in AJ.

**The Jewish Antiquities**

In BJ 1.17, Josephus states that it was unnecessary in that work to relate the history of the Jewish people, since other Jews had previously accomplished this task adequately. After nearly twenty years, Josephus changes his mind and reluctantly decides that he should undertake this project in the Jewish Antiquities (AJ 1.7–9). While BJ purports to be an accurate portrayal of the Jewish-Roman war
and an encouragement against revolt in the eastern provinces, the purpose of *AJ* is less clear. Josephus is obviously not as qualified to relate the ancient history of the Jews as he is to do a retelling of the war. Some scholars have postulated that *AJ* was an attempt to rehabilitate his reputation with his fellow Jews after *BJ*, which in these scholars' view was Roman propaganda (Feldman 2000: XIV-XVII). Josephus claims to be under pressure from friends to publish an account of Judean history (*AJ* 1.8), and he wonders aloud whether his ancestors would approve of him passing on their history and whether any Greeks would want to know about "our affairs" (τὰ παρ’ ἡμῖν, 1.9). He frames *AJ* as a philosophical work by claiming that the reader will learn that obedience to God brings happiness (εὐδαιμονία, 1.14).

In this context, we will consider the role of the Pharisees and Sadducees in *AJ*.

The first time the Pharisees are mentioned in *AJ* is during the leadership of Jonathan Maccabeus (ruled 161-142 BCE). Josephus mentions that after defeating the Seleucid king Demetrius II in battle (143 BCE), Jonathan renewed his alliance with Rome and Sparta. He inserts a section at this point which summarizes *BJ* 2.119–166, a passage which he explicitly cites:

(171) κατὰ δὲ τὸν χρόνον τούτον τρεῖς αἱρέσεις τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἦσαν, αἱ περὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πραγμάτων διαφόρως ὑπελάμβανον, ὥσπερ Φαρισαίων ἐλέγετο, ἢ δὲ Σαδδουκαίων, ἢ τρίτη δὲ Ἐσσηνῶν. (172) οἱ μὲν οὖν Φαρισαῖοι τινὰ καὶ οὐ πάντα τῆς εἰμαρμένης ἔργον εἶναι λέγουσιν, τινὰ δὲ ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῖς ὑπάρχειν συμβαίνειν τε καὶ μὴ γίνεσθαι. τὸ δὲ τῶν Ἐσσηνῶν γένος πάντων τὴν εἰμαρμένην κυρίαν ἀποφαίνεται, καὶ μηδὲν δὲ μὴ κατ’ ἐκείνης ψήφου ἀνθρώπως ἀπαντᾷ. (173) Σαδδουκαίοι δὲ τὴν μὲν εἰμαρμένην ἀναιροῦσι οὐδὲν εἶναι ταύτην ἄξιοὺν ὑπὲρ τὰ ἄλλα."}

17 Admittedly, the *BJ* starts long before the war.
18 εὐδαιμονία was the goal of philosophy and of human existence according to Aristotle (cf. *Eth. Nic.* 10.6.1). This frequently used word was a “key term in the *Antiquities*” (Feldman 2000: 6 n. 15).
At this time there were three sects of the Jews, which were [each] accustomed to think differently about the human condition, of which the one was called [the sect] of the Pharisees, and the second [the sect] of the Sadducees and the third [the sect] of the Essenes. The Pharisees say that some but not all things are the work of fate, but some things depend upon us to happen or not. And the sect of the Essenes maintain that fate is authoritative over all and that nothing happens to men which is not according to her [fate's] resolve. And the Sadducees remove fate, thinking that it is nothing and that human affairs are not fulfilled according to her [decree], and that everything depends upon us, so that we become the reasons for good things and receive evil things from our own thoughtlessness. But about these matters I have given a more precise explanation in the second book of my Jewish History.

The issue at hand here is that of divine sovereignty and free will. The Pharisees are portrayed as the middle road between the Essenes, for whom everything is governed by fate (or providence), and the Sadducees, who abandon the notion altogether. They “say that some but not all things are the work of fate” (τινὰ καὶ οὐ πάντα τῆς εἰμαρμένης ἔργον εἶναι λέγουσι, 13.172). The Sadducees, on the other hand, believe that human free will determines the course of events without the assistance of fate/providence. For a more detailed account, Josephus directs the reader to the aforementioned BJ passage (2.119–166). The reason for the inclusion of this passage at this point in the narrative of the AJ

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19 Or "human affairs."
20 That is, his first work, BJ. While that passage (BJ 2.119–166) deals with several issues, the current passage only covers the relationship of fate to the deeds of men.
is unclear, but Baumbach (1988: 181) and most other scholars believe Josephus inserted it here without regard for the context. 21

While the former passage portrays the Pharisees and Sadducees as a philosophical school, the next relevant passage in *AJ* (13.288–98) relates a story from some forty years later, during the time of John Hyrcanus (reigned 135–104 BCE), whom Josephus claims was a follower of the Pharisees:

(288) Ὑρκανῷ δὲ φθόνον ἐκίνησε παρὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἡ τε αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν υἱῶν εὐπραγία, μάλιστα δὲ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι κακῶς πρὸς αὐτὸν εἶχον, αἱρεσίας ὅντες μία τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ὣς καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐπάνω δεδηλώκαμεν. τοσαύτην δὲ ἔχουσι τήν ίσχυν παρὰ τῷ πλῆθε, ώς καὶ κατά βασιλέως τι λέγοντες καὶ κατ’ ἀρχιερέως εὐθὺς πιστεύεσθαι. (289) μαθητὴς δὲ αὐτῶν ἦν καὶ Ὑρκανός, καὶ οἱ μᾶδροι ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἡγαπᾶτο. καὶ δὴ καλέσας αὐτούς ἐφ’ ἑστίασιν καὶ φιλοφρόνως ὑποδεξάμενος, λέγειν ἤρξατο πρὸς αὐτούς, ὡς ἴσασιν μὲν αὐτὸν βουλόμενον εἶναι δίκαιον καὶ πάντα ποιοῦντα ἐξ ὧν ἄρεσεν ἂν τῷ θεῷ καὶ αὐτοῖς (οἱ γὰρ Φαρισαῖοι φιλοσοφοῦσιν), ἡξίους γε μή, (290) εἰ τι βλέπουσιν αὐτῶν ἀμαρτώντα αὐτὸν ἄρετος, καὶ τῆς ὁδοῦ τῆς δικαιαίας ἐκτρεπόμενον εἰς αὐτὴν ἐπανάγειν καὶ ἐπανορθοῦν. τῶν δὲ μαρτυροῦσαντων αὐτῷ πᾶσαι ἄρετην, ὃς ἡ ἴσασιν, καὶ τῶν Φαρισαίων ἡ ἴσασιν, εἰς ἰδίου δὲ τῆς ἱστορίας ἀρετὴν ἔχοντα καὶ τῆς ἱστορίας ἀρετὴν ἔχοντα παραδείγματα, (291) διδασκαλεῖται τὸν Ἐλεάζαρον ἀφίθη τοις ἄξιοις μᾶς τοῖς εἰρημένοις κολάσεως. (292) τοῦ δὲ Ὑρκανοῦ τοὺς Φαρισαίους ἐρωμένου τίνος αὐτὸν ἄξιον ἡγοῦνται τιμωρίας

21 There are at least five different scholarly opinions on the subject, all of them unsatisfactory (Mason 1991: 197–201). Mason believes that “it is not yet possible to spell out the function of Ant. 13:171–173 in its context,” but that because of Josephus’ use of the phrase κατὰ τὸν χρόνον τοῦτον (“at this time,” 13.171), Josephus is presenting — for whatever reason — the “Jewish schools [as] in existence at the time of the Hasmonean Jonathan” (1991: 201). I have not found a more compelling explanation.
(πεισθήσεσθαι γὰρ οὐ μετὰ τῆς ἐκείνων γνώμης γεγονέναι τὰς βλασφημίας τιμησαμένων αὐτὸν τῷ μέτρῳ τῆς δίκης) πληγῶν ἔφασαν καὶ δεσμῶν· οὐ γὰρ ἐδόκει λοιδορίας ἕνεκα θανάτῳ ζημιοῦν, ἄλλως τε καὶ φύσει πρὸς τὰς κολάσεις ἐπεικῶς ἔχουσιν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι. (295) πρὸς τὸν λίαν ἐχαλέπηνην, καὶ δοκοῦν ἐκείνους ποιήσασθαι τὰς βλασφημίας τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐνόμισεν. μάλιστα δ’ αὐτὸν ἐπιπαρώξυνεν Ἰωνάθης καὶ διέθηκεν οὕτως, (296) ὥστε τῇ Σαδδουκαίων ἐποίησε προσθέσθαι μοίρᾳ, τῶν Φαρισαίων ἀποστάντα καὶ τὰ τε ὑπ’ αὐτῶν κατασταθέντα νόμιμα τῷ δήμῳ καταλῦσαι καὶ τοὺς φυλάττοντας αὐτὰ κολάσαι. μίσος οὖν ἐντεῦθεν αὐτῷ τε καὶ τοῖς υἱοῖς παρὰ τοῦ πλήθους ἐγένετο. (297) περὶ μέντοι τούτων αὐθίς ἔρούμεν. νῦν δὲ δηλώσω τινά παρέδοσαν τῷ δήμῳ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ἐκ πατέρων διαδοχῆς, ἅπερ οὐκ ἀναγέγραπται ἐν τοῖς Μωυσείως νόμοις, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ταῦτα τὸ τῶν Σαδδουκαίων γένος ἐκβάλλει, λέγον ἐκεῖνα δεῖν ἡγεῖσθαι νόμιμα τὰ γεγραμμένα, τὰ δ’ ἐκ παραδόσεως τῶν πατέρων μὴ τηρεῖν. (298) καὶ περὶ τούτων ζητήσεις αὐτοῖς καὶ διαφορὰς γίνεσθαι συνέβαινε μεγάλας, τῶν μὲν Σαδδουκαίων τοὺς εὐπόρους μόνον πειθόντων τὸ δὲ δημοτικὸν οὐχ ἑπόμενον αὐτοῖς ἐχόντων, τῶν δὲ Φαρισαίων τὸ πλῆθος σύμμαχον ἐχόντων. ἀλλὰ περὶ μὲν τούτων τῶν δύο καὶ τῶν Ἐσσηνῶν ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ μου τῶν Ἰουδαϊκῶν ἀκριβῶς δεδήλωται.

(288) His success and [that] of his sons caused envy toward Hyrcanus among the Jews, and the Pharisees, who were one sect of the Jews (as we have also shown above), were especially ill-disposed toward him. They have such power with the multitude that what they say even against the king and the high priest is believed immediately. (289) And even Hyrcanus was a disciple of theirs and was much loved by them. And once when he had invited them to a banquet and was entertaining them kindly, when he saw them very delighted, he began to say to them that they knew he wished to be righteous and to do everything which might please God and them (for the Pharisees advocate [these things also]); (290) indeed he was requesting [that] if they saw him doing wrong in any way and turning away from the righteous way, they should bring him back to it and correct him. When they had testified that all virtue was his, he was pleased with their praises, but a certain one of the dinner-guests, Eleazar by name, (291) being spiteful in nature and rejoicing in discord, said, “Since you wanted to know the truth, if you want to be righteous, lay aside the high priesthood, and let only ruling the people be pleasing to you.” (292) And when he [Hyrcanus] asked the reason for which he ought to lay aside the high priesthood, he [Eleazar] said, “Because we hear from the elders that your mother had become a captive while Antiochus Epiphanes was ruling.” Now this was a lie; and Hyrcanus was angry at him, and all the Pharisees
were extremely displeased. (293) A certain one, Jonathan, [who was] of the sect of the Sadducees, who hold an opinion contrary to the Pharisees, was among Hyrcanus' good friends and was saying that with the common knowledge of all the Pharisees Eleazar had made these slanders, and this would be apparent to him [Hyrcanus] when he asked them what punishment was fit for the things he [Eleazar] had said. (294) And when Hyrcanus asked the Pharisees what punishments they thought were fit for him (for he would be persuaded that the slanders had not happened with their knowledge, when they punished him with the [proper] measure of justice), they said that beatings and bonds [were fit for him]. For it did not seem [right to them for him] to be punished with death for the sake of [giving] reproaches, and in any case also by nature the Pharisees are more tolerant with respect to punishments. (295) After this [response] he [Hyrcanus] was very angry, and he started to think that the man had made the slanders with them [i.e., their consent]. And Jonathan incited him all the more, and manipulated him (296) so that he made him [Hyrcanus] join himself to the party of the Sadducees, distancing himself from the party of the Pharisees and repealing the laws established by them for the people, and to penalize those keeping them. So from this hatred for him [Hyrcanus] and for his sons increased among the masses. (297) However, about these things I will speak at another time. At the moment I want to explain that the Pharisees passed down some laws to the people from the tradition of the fathers, which have not been recorded among the laws of Moses, and for this reason the Sadducees cast them aside, who say that the written laws [alone] should be thought necessary, and those [originating] from the tradition of the fathers should not be kept. (298) And about these things they had great disputes and differences; the Sadducees had the trust only of the rich, and had no popular following, but the Pharisees had the multitudes as their allies. But concerning these two [parties] and the Essenes I have explained precisely in the second book of my Jewish War.

(AJ 13.288-98)

Hyrcanus had treated the Pharisees to a feast, which pleased them. Given that he was really interested in their approval, he then invited them to point out anything they saw in him which was not righteous.

They were all in agreement that every virtue (ἀρετή) was his, with the exception of one man named Eleazar. This man said that Hyrcanus should lay down the high priesthood because his mother had
been a captive during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (175–164 BCE).\textsuperscript{22} Josephus tells us that this was a lie, and that Hyrcanus and the other Pharisees despised the slander. The Sadducees, however, were not content to allow the matter to rest. One of them, Jonathan, was a friend of Hyrcanus and suggested that Eleazar would not have spoken so offensively without the approval of the rest of the Pharisees. He proposed a test for the Pharisees, which they failed (expectedly). Consequently, Hyrcanus believed Jonathan’s version of the story, aligned himself with the Sadducees, and revoked the legal innovations which the Pharisees had imposed upon the people. Since the Pharisees had the ear of the people, the people came to resent Hyrcanus.

Josephus now explains to the reader why the people sided with the Pharisees by giving a very brief account of the nature of the Pharisees and Sadducees. As we learn here, the Pharisees believe that there were laws to be followed which were not written in the Torah, while the Sadducees reject this notion, saying that written Scripture alone should be the source of Jewish law. The Pharisees are also portrayed as inflicting more lenient punishments than the Sadducees. The Sadducees “hold an opinion contrary to the Pharisees” (τὴν ἐναντίαν τοῖς Φαρισαίοις προαίρεσιν ἔχουσιν, 13.293), and have the confidence only of the wealthy. Then, as if the reader would have the *Jewish War* nearby for reference, Josephus directs the reader to *BJ* 2.119–166, where these claims are spelled out in more detail. Josephus is clearly aware that the reader might be unfamiliar with the intricacies of Jewish theological disputes, and so feels the need to provide this brief tangent. Overall, this passage portrays the Pharisees

\textsuperscript{22} Presumably his priestly line was tainted by this fact.
and Sadducees as contrasting political parties, with their differences being grounded in their understanding of Jewish law. The Pharisaic party is the victim of political conspiracy, while the Sadducean party is at best complacent and at worst complicit in Jonathan’s manipulation of Hyrcanus.

About thirty years later, the Pharisees again appear in a political role. With his dying words, Alexander Jannaeus (reigned 103–76 BCE) recommends to his wife Alexandra that she gain the favor of the Pharisees once she takes the throne (c. 76 BC):

(401) ἔπειτα ὡς ἀπὸ νίκης λαμπρὰς εἰς τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα παραγενομένην τοῖς Φαρισαίοις ἔξουσίαν τινὰ παρασχεῖν τούτους γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι καταστήσειν αὐτὴν τῷ θρόνῳ, δύνασθαι δὲ πολὺ παρὰ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις τούτους ἔφασκε βλάψαι τοῖς μεσοῦντας καὶ φιλίως διακειμένους ὑφελῆσαι (402) μάλιστα γὰρ πιστεύεσθαι παρὰ τῷ πλῆθῳ περὶ τῶν ἔργων τοῦ βασιλέως, τῶν ἔφασκε δὲ ὀλίγων ἐν θυμίας τῷ βασιλείαν ἐξουσίαν παρασχεῖν· τοῖς ἔφασκε δὲ ἐπαύσαι τις ἐν θυμίας ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ καὶ πάντα τοῖς ἔφασκε ποιεῖν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ πάντα τοῖς ἔφασκε ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ βασιλείαν. (405) ἡ δὲ Ἀλεξάνδρα τὸ φρούριον ἐξελοῦσα κατὰ τὰς τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ὑποθήκας τοῖς Φαρισαίοις διελέχθη καὶ πάντα ἐν πολλῷ ἐπιτρέπει ποιεῖν τοῖς Φαρισαίοις καὶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις τοῖς μεν ὀλίγων τοῖς δὲ πολλῷ ἐπιτρέπει ποιεῖν καὶ τοῖς Φαρισαίοις. (408) ἡ δὲ Ἀλεξάνδρα ἐπηρεάσθη κατὰ τῷ βασιλείᾳ καὶ τῆς ἱδρύματος καὶ τῆς ἱδρύματος κατά τῷ βασιλείᾳ καὶ τῆς ἱδρύματος κατά τῷ βασιλείᾳ καὶ τῆς ἱδρύματος. (410) ἡ δὲ Ἀλεξάνδρα τὸν ἀνδρὸς θρόνον ἐπιστάμενον κατὰ τῷ βασιλείᾳ καὶ τῆς ἱδρύματος κατὰ τῷ βασιλείᾳ καὶ τῆς ἱδρύματος. (401) Then, he [Jannaeus] said, when she had come into Jerusalem as from a glorious victory, she should offer some authority to the Pharisees; for they, praising her for this honor, would make the nation friendly to her, and these men would be able both to
harm those they hated and benefit those with whom they were disposed to be friends. (402) For most of all they have the trust of the people even if they say something about those of whom they are jealous, and he said that he himself had given offense to the nation because these men had been abused by him. ... (405) And Alexandra, having taken the fort, according to the advice of her husband discussed with the Pharisees and, having placed everything on them (both the things concerning the corpse [of Jannaeus] and the affairs of the kingdom), she calmed their anger toward Alexander, and made them more favorable and friendly [toward her]. ... (408) And she appointed Hyrcanus as high priest because of his maturity, although more because of his laid-back disposition, and she allowed the Pharisees to do everything, and she ordered the masses to obey them, and whichever of the laws (the ones that the Pharisees had introduced according to the tradition of the fathers) her father-in-law Hyrcanus had repealed, she again reinstated. (409) She had the power in name, but the Pharisees had it [in reality]. For they were accustomed to bring back exiles and release prisoners and differed not in the slightest way from despots. ... (410) And the whole country was at rest except for the Pharisees, for they troubled the queen by attempting to convince her to kill those who had recommended to Alexander that he kill the eight hundred. Then they did slaughter one of the them, Diogenes, and after him others upon others, (411) until the powerful ones came to the royal palace and with them Aristobolus...

(AJ 13.401–2, 405, 408–9, 410–11)

This is very much an echo of the passage in BJ 1.110–114 in which the Pharisees first appear in the Josephan corpus. Alexandra follows her husband's advice and, as we see in BJ 1.110–14, allows the Pharisees to run the kingdom, though she is the nominal ruler. She even allows the Pharisees to reinstate the legal innovations which had been repealed under John Hyrcanus (cf. AJ 13.288–98 above). That passage also relates that there was peace in Judea under this arrangement, save for one thing: the Pharisees pestered the queen to exterminate those who had convinced her late husband to crucify eight hundred Jews (AJ 13.380). Failing in this attempt, they resorted to vigilantism, which continued
until the “powerful ones” (δυνατοί, 13.411) came to the queen with her son Aristobulus to complain and protest the violence. Aristobulus sharply condemned his mother’s desire for power and trust of the Pharisees, and gave her several options for placating her accusers. She chose to grant these δυνατοί the guardianship of several fortresses, which was a humble (ταπεινῷ, 13.415) position. Several paragraphs later, Alexandra falls ill and Aristobulus prepares to seize power, though he is the younger brother. He is afraid that the Pharisees will take power and that they will persecute him and his family (BJ 13.423). As in BJ 1.110–114, here Josephus paints a dark picture of the Pharisees. They are politically manipulative and spiteful, and in this passage their popularity with the people is a core plot point. Their adherence to ancestral tradition (πατρῴαν παράδοσιν, 13.409) is also reiterated.

After discussing the plots of Antipater II (46–4 BCE) against his father Herod, Josephus relates an occasion from several years later (AJ 17.41–46, parallel to BJ 1.571) when the Pharisees refused to take an oath of loyalty to Herod and to Caesar:

(41) καὶ ἦν γὰρ μόριόν τι Ἰουδαϊκῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπ’ ἐξακριβώσει μέγα φρονοῦν τοῦ πατρίου καὶ νόμων οίς χαίρει τὸ θεῖον προσποιουμένων, οἷς ὑπῆκοτο ἡ γυναικωνίτες, Φαρισαῖοι καλοῦνται, βασιλεὶ δυνάμενοι μάλιστα πράσσειν προμηθεῖς, κὰκ τοῦ προὔπτου εἰς τὸ πολεμεῖν τε καὶ βλάπτειν ἐπηρμένοι. (42) παντὸς γοῦν τοῦ Ἰουδαϊκοῦ βεβαιώσαντος δι’ ὅρκων ἦ μὴν εὐνοήσειν Καίσαρι καὶ τοῖς βασιλέως πράγμασιν, οἶδε οἱ ἄνδρες οὐκ ὤμοσαν ὑπὲρ ἑξακισχίλιοι, καὶ αὐτοὺς βασιλέως ζημιώσαντος χρήμασιν ἢ Φερώρου γυνῆ τὴν ζημίαν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν εἰσφέρει. (43) οἱ δὲ ἀμειβόμενοι τὴν εὔνοιαν αὐτῆς (πρόγνωσιν δὲ ἐπεπίστευσαν ἐπιφοιτήσει τοῦ θεοῦ) προύλεγον, ως Ἡρώδη μὲν καταπάλουσας ἄρχης ὑπὸ θεοῦ ἐψηφισμένης αὐτῷ τε καὶ γένει τῷ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ, τῆς δὲ βασιλείας εἰς τε ἐκείνην περιηξούσης καὶ Φερώραν παῖδας τε ὀἱ εἰεν αὐτοῖς. (44) καὶ τάδε (οὐ γὰρ ἐλάνθανεν τὴν Σαλώμην) ἐξάγγελτα βασιλεῖ ἦν, καὶ ὅτι τῶν περὶ τὴν αὐλὴν διαφθείροντας καὶ βασιλεὺς τῶν τε Φαρισαίων τοὺς
And there was a group of Jews, called the Pharisees, which thought itself great on account of its precision with the ancient [tradition] and its keeping the laws in which the deity delights, and the women in the court were subject to them. They were very able to benefit the king since they had great ability to think ahead, though they clearly were anxious to contend with him and do him harm. (42) When all the Jewish people had sworn oaths that they would be loyal to Caesar and to the state [of Judea], these men, being more than six thousand, did not swear, and when the king penalized them financially the wife of Pheroras paid the penalty on their behalf. (43) And they repaid her kindness by predicting (they were believed to have foreknowledge on account of God's appearing to them) that by the will of God the reign of Herod and his children would cease and that the kingdom would come to her and Pheroras and whatever children might come. (44) These things did not escape the notice of Salome, and they were made known to the king, along with the news that they had corrupted some of those around the court. And the king executed those of the Pharisees most responsible, along with Bagoas and a certain Karos who exceeded those in that time in excellence of appearance and who was a favorite of him [the king]. And he killed also all those of his household who commended what the Pharisee was saying.

(AJ 17.41–44)

Josephus introduces the Pharisees as if he has not mentioned them before, and cites the traditions of the Pharisees and their strictness. Herod’s sister-in-law delivers them from the fine imposed upon them, and they, in turn, predict that she and her husband Pheroras will gain the throne for themselves. Thus, Herod executed those most to blame, along with others, including members of his own household. Possibly these Pharisees refused to swear out of some sort of religious devotion, though that is not stated explicitly. They are presented as a political force, and this is one of the few times
that a number is assigned to the Pharisees, though this of course may only be part of the overall membership of the group. These are minor points which nevertheless become part of the larger picture of the Pharisees.

After the death of Herod the Great (c. 4 BCE) and the banishment of his son Archelaus (6 CE), Josephus relates that Judea was annexed to Syria, and that the governor there (Publius Sulpicius Quirinius) ordered a census, with which most of the Jews complied. A few, however, rebelled, thinking that a census was basically slavery. Josephus calls the rebels a fourth philosophical school, but then in an effort to show that this new school is not like the others, he details the doctrines and practices of the other three philosophical schools (cf. BJ 2.119–66):

(11) Ἰουδαίοις φιλοσοφίαι τρεῖς ἦσαν ἐκ τοῦ πάνυ ἀρχαίου τῶν πατρίων, ἢ τε τῶν Ἑσσηνῶν καὶ ἢ τῶν Σαδδουκαίων, τρίτην δὲ ἐφιλοσόφους οἱ Φαρισαῖοι λεγόμενοι. καὶ τυγχάνει μέντοι περὶ αὐτῶν ἡμῖν εἰρημένα ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ βιβλίῳ τοῦ Ἰουδαϊκοῦ πολέμου, μνησθήσομαι δὲ ὅμως καὶ νῦν αὐτῶν ἐπ’ ὀλίγον. (12) οἱ τε γὰρ Φαρισαῖοι τὴν διάταν ἐξευτελίζουσιν οὐδὲν ἐς τὸ μαλακώτερον ἐνδιδόντες, ὡν τε ὁ λόγος κρίνας παρέδωκεν ἀγαθῶν ἐπονταῖ τῇ ἠγεμονίᾳ περιμάχητον ἡγούμενοι τὴν φυλακὴν ὧν ὑπαγορεύειν ἠθέλησεν. τιμῆς γε τοῖς ἡλικίᾳ προήκουσιν παραχωροῦσιν οὐδ’ ἐπ’ ἀντιλέξει τῶν εἰσηγηθέντων ταῦτα οἱ θράσει ἐπαιρόμενοι. (13) πράσσεσθαί τε εἰμαρμένη τὰ πάντα ἀξιοῦντες οὐδὲ τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου τὸ βουλόμενον τῆς ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς ἀρετῆς αὐτοῖς ἀξιοῦντες αὐτοὺς ἀναβιοῦντες δοκῆσαν τῷ θεῷ κρίσιν γενέσθαι καὶ τῷ ἐκείνης βουλευτηρίῳ καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τῷ ἠθέλεσθαι προσχωρεῖν μετὰ ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας. (14) ἀθάνατόν τε ἀρετῆς αὐτοῖς πίστις αὐτοῖς εἶναι καὶ ὑπὸ χθόνος δικαίωσις τοις τιμαῖς ὧν ἠθέλεσθαι τῷ ἐπί πᾶσι κρείσσονος ἔν τε τῇ διαίτῃ καὶ λόγοις. (16) Σαδδουκαίοις δὲ τὰς ψυχὰς ὁ λόγος συναφανίζει τοῖς σῶμασι, φυλακὴ δὲ οὐδαμῶς τινων μεταποίησις αὐτοῖς ἢ τῶν νόμων...
πρὸς γὰρ τοὺς διδασκάλους σοφίας, ἣν μετίασιν, ἀμφιλογεῖν ἀρετὴν ἀριθμοῦσιν. (17)  
eis ὀλίγους δὲ ἄνδρας οὗτος ὁ λόγος ἀρίκετο, τοὺς μέντοι πρώτους τοῖς ἀξιώμασι,  
πράσσεταί τε ἀπ' αὐτῶν οὐδὲν ὡς εἰπεῖν· ὁπότε γὰρ ἐπ' ἀρχὰς παρέλθοιεν, ἀκουσίως μὲν  
kαὶ κατ' ἀνάγκας, προσχωροῦσι δ' οὖν οἷς ὁ Φαρισαῖος λέγει διὰ τὸ μὴ ἄλλως ἀνεκτοὺς  
γενέσθαι τοῖς πλήθεσιν.

(11) There were among the Jews three philosophies from the most ancient ancestral  
times: that of the Essenes, that of the Sadducees, and those called Pharisees who lead  
philosophical lives. Indeed, it happens that I have already spoken about them in the  
second book of the Jewish War, but all the same I will recall them even now briefly. (12)  
The Pharisees reduce their standard of living, giving nothing to ease [luxury]. They  
follow what their reason [or doctrine] has judged and passed down, thinking that  
keeping what [doctrine/reason] has taught them is important enough to fight for. To  
those who have gone before them in age they submit with honor and they do not  
presume to oppose the things they propose with arrogance. (13) Though supposing  
everything to be accomplished by fate, they do not prevent the human will from  
accomplishing what it desires, since it seemed good to God to make a judgment that  
what has been willed by men should join with virtue or evil [and be submitted] to the  
council-chamber of it [fate].23 (14) And it is their belief that there is an immortal  
strength in souls and that attention to good or evil in this life results in either rewards  
or punishments under the earth, and to the latter [i.e., good souls] eternal imprisonment is allotted, and to the former [i.e., bad souls] rest in living again. (15)  
And because of these things they happen to be most esteemed among the people, and  
whatever divine worship is performed [i.e., of prayers and the doing of holy things],  
they [the people] happen to act according to by their [the Pharisees'] interpretation.  
And the cities testify to how great their virtue is by devoting themselves to their way  
of living and to their words. (16) But the doctrine of the Sadducees is that souls perish  
together with bodies, and by no means do they keep anything other than the laws. For  
they count it a virtue to dispute with the teachers the wisdom which is common to  
them. (17) And this doctrine is shared with few men, though these are first in status,  
and they get nothing done; for whenever they come to authority, against their will and  
by necessity they submit to what the Pharisee says because otherwise they would not  
be tolerable to the multitudes.

(AJ 18.11–17)

23 The meaning of this sentence is unclear. Cf. Feldman (1965: 12 n. a.)
The Pharisees are portrayed as living simply, and as following the traditions as handed down to them. On the issue of the tension between providence (rendered here as εἱμαρμένη, “fate”) and free will, they are again portrayed as walking a middle road. They teach the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees are highly influential among the people. The Sadducees, on the other hand, are depicted as believing that the soul dies with the body. They follow only the written law, they value disputation among themselves, and their doctrine is secretive. They accomplish nothing and when they gain office they must submit to the Pharisees so that the people will listen to them. Josephus' inclusion of this tangent at this point is necessary, for he will follow it with a more detailed discussion of the fourth philosophy (the Zealots). He is determined to blame the Zealots for the war against Rome sixty years later, and to do that he must show that the other Jewish sects were different from the Zealots, and not instigators of rebellion.

The next non- incidental reference to our groups occurs when Judea is between procurators (c. 62 CE), and the high priest takes advantage of this to summon a council of judges:

ὁ δὲ νεώτερος Ἄνανος, ὃν τὴν ἀρχιερωσύνην ἔφαμεν εἰληφέναι, θρασὺς ἦν τὸν τρόπον καὶ τολμητὴς διαφερόντως, αἵρεσιν δὲ μετῄει τὴν Σαδδουκαίων, οἵπερ εἰσὶ περὶ τὰς κρίσεις ὠμοῖ παρὰ πάντας τοὺς Ἰουδαίους, καθὼς ἤδη δεδηλώκαμεν.

And the younger Ananus, whom [we were saying] had been received as high priest that year, was audacious in manner and especially bold, had a part in the sect of the Sadducees, who are harsh in the judgments compared to all the Jews, just as we have already made clear.

(AJ 20.199)
Ananus (high priest in 66 CE) has James, the brother of Jesus, and some others tried and executed for transgressing the law. Many people, including possibly Pharisees (“those precise concerning the law”, 20.201), take offense at this action and Agrippa II (the great-grandson of Herod the Great and the last of the Herodian client-kings) removes him from the high priesthood. The Sadducees here are noted as being more fierce (ὠμοί, 20.199) in judging than any of the Jews. Since he followed the Sadducees, Ananus’ treatment of James is attributed to this attitude.

The Pharisees and Sadducees in AJ are largely portrayed as having political power (cf. 13.171–73, 13.288–98, 13.401–15, 17.41–44, 20.199). This is not inconsistent with the picture in BJ, though in AJ their political dimension is more pronounced. The popularity and influence of the Pharisees are reinforced in AJ, and many of their doctrines are reiterated: their understanding of fate, their precision with the law, their belief in the immortality of the soul and traditions beyond those found in the Mosaic law. Now we turn to the final relevant work in the Josephan corpus, the Life.

**The Life (Vita)**

The first reference to the Pharisees and Sadducees in Vita occurs in a list of the three Jewish sects; Josephus does not detail their doctrines here, but tells us that he submitted himself to each of them to determine which was best:

περὶ δὲ ἑκκαίδεκα ἔτη γενόμενος ἐβουλήθην τῶν παρ’ ἡμῖν αἱρέσεων ἐμπειρίαν λαβεῖν· τρεῖς δ’ εἰσὶν αὐται, Φαρισαίων μὲν ἡ πρώτη, καὶ Σαδδουκαίων ἡ δευτέρα, τρίτη δ’
Ἐσσηνῶν, καθὼς πολλάκις εἶπομεν· οὕτως γάρ ύμην αἱρήσεθαι τὴν ἀρίστην, εἰ πάσας καταμάθοιμι. σκληραγωγήσας οὖν ἐμαυτὸν καὶ πολλὰ πονηθεὶς τὰς τρεῖς διῆλθον, καὶ μηδὲ τὴν ἐντεῦθεν ἐμπειρίαν ἱκανὴν ἐμαυτῷ νομίσας εἶναι πυθόμενός τινα Βάννου ὄνομα κατὰ τὴν ἐρημίαν διατρίβειν, ἐσθῆτι μὲν ἀπὸ δένδρων χρώμενον, τροφὴ δὲ τὴν αὐτομάτως φυομένην προσφερόμενον, ψυχρῷ δὲ ὕδατι τὴν ἡμέραν καὶ τὴν νύκτα πολλάκις λουόμενον πρὸς ἁγνείαν, ζηλωτὴ εγενόμην αὐτοῦ. καὶ διατρίψας παρ᾿ αὐτῷ ἐνιαυτοὺς τρεῖς καὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν τελειώσας εἰς τὴν πόλιν ὑπέστρεφον.

When I was about sixteen years old, I intended to have acquaintance with our [nation’s] sects. And they are three, the first being the Pharisees, the second, Sadducees, and the third, Essenes, just as we have said many times. If I should observe them all, I thought that in this way I would choose the best. So after immersing myself in an austere life and working hard at many things, I went through the three. After I found that the experience [received] from the three was not sufficient for me, and when I learned that one with the name of Bannus resides in the wilderness, who had his clothing from the trees, and his nourishment set before him from the things growing on their own, and who washed with cold water day and night many times for purity, I became his adherent. And after I had lived with him for three years, and had completed my desire, I went back to the city. Now being in my nineteenth year I began to be involved in politics, following the sect of the Pharisees, which is similar to what is called the Stoic [sect] among the Greeks.

(Vita 10–12)

Of note is Josephus’ comment that he ended up submitting to the rules of the Pharisees, and that they are most similar to the Stoics of all the Greek schools of philosophy. Mason points out that the model of trying the various philosophical schools was a model attested by Plutarch and Cicero (2007b: 45–46).

Philosophy as a whole, not specialization in one of the schools, was the category to be studied. Josephus makes the Judean sects substitute for the Greek schools especially by making fate a central

24 Thackeray translates this as “I began to govern my life by the rules of the Pharisees.”
issue. That the schools available to Josephus were Judean, not Greek, was not particularly relevant.

Neither is it relevant that he mentions that he followed the sect of the Pharisees, since he states in other places that all those in public office must do this (cf. *AJ* 13.288, 400). The point was that Josephus had prepared himself for public life by becoming acquainted with philosophy as a whole.

Near the middle of *Vita*, at the beginning of the Jewish Revolt (66–73 CE), Josephus is appointed governor of Galilee by the rebels. Josephus' rival, John of Gischala, sent a contingent to Jerusalem, we are told, to Simon the son of Gamaliel, to persuade him to convince those in charge to remove Josephus from this office and to give it to John. We get the following description of Simon:

(191) ὁ δὲ Σίμων οὗτος ἦν πόλεως μὲν Ἱεροσολύμων, γένους δὲ σφόδρα λαμπροῦ, τῆς Φαρισαίων αἵρεσεως, οἳ περὶ τὰ πάτρια νόμιμα δοκοῦσι τῶν ἄλλων ἀκριβείᾳ διαφέρειν.

(191) This Simon was from the city of Jerusalem, and of a very well-known family, and of the sect of the Pharisees, who concerning the traditions of the fathers seem to differ from all others in precision.

(Vita 191)

Simon is described here as a Pharisee, one of those who “seem to differ from others in precision concerning the rules of their fathers.” He and the high priests colluded with three other Pharisees to remove Josephus from his position. They succeeded. This reinforces the notion that the Pharisees have authority.

25 Mason (2007b: 48) points out that Cicero (*Fat*. 39) and Tacitus (*Ann*. 6.22) also used the axis of fate to compare philosophical schools.

What are we to make of these varying portraits of the Pharisees and Sadducees? At times the sects seem to be political parties, at times philosophical schools. In *BJ* 2.119—66 we have Josephus' longest treatment of the groups, where he briefly relates that the Pharisees emphasize precision (ἀκριβεῖα) on matters of Jewish law and believe in the immortality of the soul and rewards and punishments in the afterlife. They are also mentioned as a political force under Alexandra (*BJ* 1.110-13). In *AJ*, their political influence is more pronounced, though their philosophical-religious nature is not neglected. *Vita* emphasizes that the groups are akin to philosophical schools, and that Josephus himself tried each of the sects in turn.
The diverse authors behind the composition of the New Testament were rarely concerned with giving any details about the influence, practices, or doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Yet these groups are present in the NT as part of the background of first-century CE Palestine. As explanatory information is rare, one may argue that the reader is almost always expected to have prior knowledge about these sects. Due to the large number of references to the sects in the NT, I will discuss occurrences methodically, beginning with passages from Mark and noting the synoptic parallels where relevant. I will then continue with passages from Matthew which do not have parallels in Mark (noting any useful Q material in passing), then any remaining references in Luke. We will finish by examining John, and then Acts. As with chapter 1, I have moved references which do not contribute to our understanding of the Pharisees and Sadducees to an appendix.

**Mark (and synoptic parallels)**

*Mark 2.13–2.17*
The first time we encounter the Pharisees in the NT is in Mark 2. At this point in the second Gospel, Mark has given us an introduction to John the Baptist and an account of Jesus' baptism and temptation, after which Jesus' ministry started (Mk. 1.14). Mark 2 mentions the Pharisees four times in a series of five “controversy stories,” and each time, according to Watts (2007: 131), the depiction is increasingly hostile. The first (Mk. 2.1–12) makes "some of the scribes" (τινες τῶν γραμματέων, 2.6) the antagonists; the second (2.13–17), "the scribes of the Pharisees" (οἱ γραμματεῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων, 2.16); the third (2.18–22), "they" or "the people" (implied in the verbs ἔρχονται and λέγουσιν, 2.18) who are inquiring about the practices of John the Baptist's disciples and of the Pharisees; the fourth (2.23–28) "the Pharisees" (οἱ Φαρισαῖοι, 2.24); the fifth (3.1–6), "the Pharisees with the Herodians" (οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ... μετὰ τῶν Ἡρῳδιανῶν, 3.6). The first episode does not mention the Pharisees, though the scribes in that passage seem to function as the Pharisees do in the four later episodes. Thus we will begin with the second episode:

(13) καὶ ἐξῆλθεν πάλιν παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν· καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτόν, καὶ ἔδίδασκεν αὐτούς. (14) καὶ παράγων εἶδεν Λευίν τὸν τοῦ Ἁλφαίου καθήμενον ἐπὶ τὸ τελώνιον, καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· ἀκολούθει μοι. καὶ ἀναστὰς ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ. (15) καὶ γίνεται κατακεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ, καὶ πολλοὶ τελῶναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ συνανέκειντο τῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· ἦσαν γὰρ πολλοὶ καὶ ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ. (16) καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων ἰδόντες ὅτι ἐσθίει μετὰ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν καὶ τελῶνων ἔλεγον τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· ἦσαν γὰρ πολλοί καὶ ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ. (17) καὶ ἀκούσας ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει αὐτοῖς ὅτι οὐ χρείαν ἔχουσιν οἱ ἰσχύοντες ἀλλ' οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες· οὐκ ἦλθον καλέσαι δικαίους ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτωλούς.

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27 Synoptic parallels: Mt. 9.1–8 and Lk. 5.17–26.
28 All citations of the NT are to the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland text (NA27).
(2.13) And he [Jesus] went out again along the sea; and the whole crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. (14) And as he went along, he saw Levi the [son] of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And after he got up he followed him. (15) And it happened that he [Jesus] was reclining [for a meal] at his [Levi's] house, and many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many and they followed him. (16) And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he ate with sinners and tax collectors, were saying to his disciples, "Does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (17) And when Jesus heard he said to them, "Those who are healthy have no need of a physician, but those who are ill [do]. And I did not come to call the righteous, but to call sinners."

(Mk. 2.13–17)

This passage, when taken together with the other controversy stories, is clearly intended to set Jesus' first recorded teaching in its context, primarily by placing Jesus in conflict with another group. The Pharisees are a constant prop on this stage. What can we learn about them from this passage?

First of all, we can see from the larger context that Mark assumes that the Pharisees (along with the other groups mentioned) are active in the region of Galilee, specifically in the fishing town of Capernaum. This small fishing village on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee is Jesus' first ministry base, where he calls his first disciples (Mk. 1.16–20, 2.13–14), performs his first healings (1.21–2.12), and teaches his first lessons. That the Pharisees are present here prevents us from assuming that they are active only in large population centers (s.v. "Capernaum" in Metzger 1993: 104). They are among the Jewish people wherever they are, in small towns or in the Judean capital. Secondly, in each of the conflicts we can learn about their teaching from explicit statements and contrasts with Jesus' teaching.

The passage above requires that we deal with a text critical issue prior to considering the content.

29 Synoptic parallels: Mt. 9.9–13 and Lk. 5.27–32.
The so-called traditional text reads καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι in place of the NA27 καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων. Immediately we must ask the question: is this a direct reference to the Pharisees, or to their “scribes”? The members of the Editorial Committee of the United Bible Societies’ Greek NT recognized this difficulty by giving it a “C” rating. To quote Metzger (1994: 67), “[t]he more unusual expression ... is to be preferred, since the tendency of scribes would have been to insert καὶ after οἱ γραμματεῖς under the common expression ‘the scribes and the Pharisees.’” So by the text critical rule of preserving the lectio difficilior, we will accept the text as printed above, which matches that of the UBS4 / NA27.

But who then were the scribes of the Pharisees? Why are they mentioned in connection with the Pharisees at all? One can infer from the fact that neither the scribes nor the Pharisees receive any introduction that the reader is expected to be familiar with them. We can safely assume that the

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30 The traditional text is also called the “Byzantine” text, since it was ostensibly preserved by the eastern (Byzantine) church, or the “Majority” text, since the vast majority of manuscripts contain readings of this family. Though the Byzantine text and the Majority text are not strictly identical, the identification is sufficient for our purposes. The other major family of NT manuscripts, and the one preferred by most textual critics today, is the so-called “Alexandrian” text. Almost all of the early (pre-5th century) manuscripts are representatives of this family, and many have been found (or have been thought to originate) in Egypt.

31 The editors of the UBS4 text marked each variation unit with a letter to specify how certain they were about the variant they chose to print in the text. Metzger (1994: 14) gives the details: "[t]he letter {A} signifies that the text is certain, while {B} indicates that the text is almost certain. The letter {C}, however, indicates that the Committee had difficulty in deciding which variant to place in the text. The letter {D} ... indicates that the Committee had great difficulty in arriving at a decision."

scribes share the Pharisees' concerns. And considering that this is the first occurrence of the group in the narrative — they have been given no introduction — we may also assume that the theme of the Pharisees' disputation with Jesus was known to Mark's audience. Otherwise, the appearance of the Pharisees as opponents of Jesus makes little sense. There must be a shared narrative between the author and his readers.

Returning to the text at hand, in the aftermath of Jesus' calling of a new disciple (Levi), we learn that the Pharisees have a problem with Jesus' associations. Presumably from outside Levi's banquet hall, they ask his disciples, "Does he [Jesus] eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (μετὰ τῶν τελωνῶν καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν ἐσθίει, 2.16). They are scandalized by this behavior and will not even address him directly. We must assume, probably as the original readers did, that the Pharisees segregated themselves from the categories of people just described. Jesus' arguably sarcastic response turns the tables of segregation over: the Pharisees' scribes are told that they are not welcome among his disciples, that he will only invite sinners to join him. Jesus exploits their scruples to exclude them. The Matthean parallel further emphasizes the conflict. In addition to his response in Mark, the first Gospel has Jesus quoting Hosea 6.6, “I want mercy and not sacrifice” (ἔλεος θέλω καὶ οὐ θυσίαν, Mt. 9.13). Jesus is saying that he is practicing mercy, while the Pharisees are focusing on sacrifice or, by

33 To validate our assumption that the scribes of the Pharisees and the Pharisees themselves are hardly distinguishable, the synoptic parallel in Matthew (9.11) omits any mention of the scribes and attributes the action directly to the Pharisees; Luke has "the Pharisees and their scribes" (οἱ φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς αὐτῶν, 5.30).
34 This may say as much about early Christianity as about the Pharisees themselves. One could speculate that the story of the Pharisees' interactions with Jesus was a part of something like a catechism in the early church.
synecdoche, Torah-observance (Blomberg 2007: 34). From this passage, therefore, we learn (1) that the Pharisees are distributed geographically throughout Palestine and (2) that they are concerned about purity of association. This gives us an initial framework with which to start building a picture of the Pharisees in the NT.

Mark 2.18–22

The second reference to the Pharisees in Mark concerns the practice of fasting:

(18) And the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting. And they came and said to him, "Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" (19) And Jesus said to them, "Are the sons of the bridegroom able to fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they are not able to fast. (20) Days will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and then on that day they will fast. (21) No one sews a patch of new cloth on an old garment: but if they do, the patch tears from it (the new from the old) and the tear becomes worse. (22) And no one casts new wine into old wineskins; but if they do, the wine will break the wineskins and the wine and the wineskins are destroyed. But new wine is for new wineskins."

(Mk. 2.18–22)
The Pharisees are not the explicit subject in this passage, though they are likely an implied subject: "they come and they say" (ἔρχονται καὶ λέγουσιν, 2.18). Gundry argues (1993: 131–32) that "we should take 'they' as indefinite, meaning 'people'." Regardless, whether those posing the question are the disciples of John and the Pharisees, or some unnamed members of the public, there is clearly a contrast in practice here. The significance of the fasting is unclear, though possibly this confrontation contributes further to the final hostile response in 3.6 (see below).

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Mark 2.23–28

Next, Mark presents a confrontation concerning the Sabbath (2.23–27):

(23) καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς σάββασιν παραπορεύεσθαι διὰ τῶν σπορίμων, καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἤρξαντο ὁδὸν ποιεῖν τίλλοντες τοὺς στάχυας. (24) καὶ οἱ Φαρισαίοι ἔλεγον αὐτῷ· ἴδε τί ποιοῦσιν τοῖς σάββασιν ὃ οὐκ ἔξεστιν; (25) καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, οὐδέποτε ἀνέγνωτε τί ἐποίησεν Δαυίδ ὅτε χρείαν ἔσχεν καὶ ἐπείνασεν αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ μετ᾿ αὐτοῦ, (26) πῶς εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ Ἀβιαθὰρ ἀρχιερέως καὶ τοὺς ἄρτους τῆς προθέσεως ἔφαγεν, οὓς οὐκ ἔξεστιν φαγεῖν εἰ μὴ τοὺς ἱερεῖς, καὶ ἔδωκεν καὶ τοῖς σὺν αὐτῷ οὖσιν; (27) καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς, τὸ σάββατον διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐγένετο καὶ οὐχ ὁ ἄνθρωπος διὰ τὸ σάββατον· (28) ὥστε κύριός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ σαββάτου.

(23) And it happened that he [Jesus] was passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and his disciples began to make their way while picking the wheat-heads. (24) And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look! Why do they do on the Sabbath what

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35 Note that in the Matthean parallel (9.14–17), only the disciples of John pose the question, and ask "Why do we and the Pharisees fast...?" (διὰ τί ἡμεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαίοι νηστεύομεν, 9.14). Luke (5.33–39) has "they" asking the question, either referring to the people as in Mark 2.18-22, or to "the Pharisees and their scribes," (οἱ Φαρισαίοι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς αὐτῶν) which is the subject of the preceding passage in Luke (5.27–32).
is not lawful?" (25) And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he had need and he and those with him were hungry, (26) how he went into the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest and ate the loaves of the presentation, which are not lawful to eat except for the priests, and gave also to those with him?" (27) And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. (28) So the son of man is lord even of the Sabbath."

(Mk. 2.23–28)

The Pharisees bring the charge against Jesus directly this time, pointing out that Jesus' disciples may not pick wheat on the Sabbath. Jesus responds with a reference to 1 Samuel 21, where David takes the holy bread which is for priests alone (cf. Leviticus 24.9). This section has more to do with Jesus' authority than with the Pharisees themselves; they are situated in the narrative to allow Mark to exalt Jesus ("The son of man is lord even of the Sabbath," 2.28) rather than to explain the Pharisees' nature and practice. Still, we are reminded that the Pharisees were concerned about the Mosaic Law. Parallels in Matthew (12.1–8) and Luke (6.1–5) remove the reference to Abiathar, apparently indicating that their authors were cognizant that David actually went to Abiathar's father Ahimelech. Matthew's Jesus adds another reference to Hosea 6.6 in this parallel, just as he does in the parallel to the call of Levi (Mk. 2.13–17, above), while also implying that the Pharisees do not really know the law well at all: "or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and are innocent?" (ἡ οὖν ἀνέγνωτε ἐν τῷ νόμῳ ὅτι τοῖς σάββασιν οἱ ἱερεῖς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τὸ σάββατον βεβηλοῦσιν καὶ ἀναίτιοι εἰσιν; 12.5). This passage adds concerns about the Sabbath to the Pharisees' list of grievances against Jesus and further details the ways in which they are particular about the law.

36 But cf. Watts (2007: 141) for an explanation of this seeming discrepancy.
The final confrontation shows the Pharisees at their most vicious:  

(1) And he [Jesus] went again into the synagogue. And there was a man there with a paralyzed hand. (2) And they were watching [to see] if he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might bring a charge against him. (3) And he said to the man having the paralyzed hand, "Get up [and stand] in the middle." (4) And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do ill, to save a life or to kill?" And they were silent. (5) And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their obstinacy of heart, he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out and his hand was restored. (6) And the Pharisees immediately going out with the Herodians schemed against him to kill him.

The antagonism of the Pharisees against Jesus is quite pronounced: they are watching for anything that they might use against Jesus in court. There is little room for ambiguity here; Mark is clearly presenting the Pharisees negatively. In making an allusion to Deuteronomy 30.15 LXX ("... I have set before your face today life and death, good and evil" [... δέδωκα πρὸ προσώπου σου σήμερον τὴν ζωὴν...])  

37 This first part of this passage has no explicit subject; Mark 3.2 only has παρετήρουν, but the Pharisees are assumed from the previous passage and from the explicit subject in verse 6. The synoptic parallels are found in Matthew 12.9–14 and Luke 6.6–11.
καὶ τὸν θάνατον, τὸ ἄγαθὸν καὶ τὸ κακὸν), Jesus amplifies the conflict to an extreme by presenting his own way as the way of life (and good), and, as made explicit by the Pharisees' plot to kill him, their way as the way of death (and evil). Watts remarks rightly that this is "no small irony, a day [the Sabbath] in which life and the God who gives it were to be celebrated" (2007: 144). As previously, Mark presents the Pharisees negatively: they are more concerned about the details of the Mosaic law and their additions to it than about mercy.

Mark 7.1–13

The Pharisees next appear in Mark 7. Up to this point in the second Gospel Jesus has continued his teaching and healing ministry in Galilee and beyond. The role of the Pharisees has not changed, but the situation seems to have escalated, with scribes from Jerusalem joining in the attack:

(1) καὶ συνάγονται πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ τινὲς τῶν γραμματέων ἐλθόντες ἀπὸ Ἰεροσολύμων. (2) καὶ ἰδόντες τινὰς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ὅτι κοιναῖς χερσίν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἀνίπτοις, ἐσθίουσιν τοὺς ἄρτους (3) — οἱ γὰρ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ πάντες οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἐὰν μὴ πυγμῇ νίψωνται τὰς χεῖρας οὐκ ἐσθίουσιν, κρατοῦντες τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, (4) καὶ ἀπ’ ἀγορᾶς ἐὰν μὴ βαπτίσωνται οὐκ ἐσθίουσιν, καὶ ἄλλα πολλά ἐστιν ἃ παρέλαβον κρατεῖν, βαπτισμοὺς ποτηρίων καὶ ξεστῶν καὶ χαλκίων [καὶ κλινῶν]— (5) καὶ ἐπερωτῶσιν αὐτὸν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς· διὰ τί οὐ περιπατοῦσιν οἱ μαθηταί σου κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, ἀλλὰ κοιναῖς χερσίν ἐσθίουσιν τὸν ἄρτον; (6) ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· διὰ τὴν ἡμικράνειαν ἢ πεπροφθαίνων ἢ πεπραπτούσιν ἢ ἐκπειράσεις ἢ παραστασὶς ἢ ἐπιστροφῇ ἢ ἐντὸν ἔμπροσθεν ἢ ἐντὸν ἑαυτοῦ· μάθητα τηρεῖτε—(7) μάθηταν δὲ σέβονται με διδάσκοντες διδασκαλίας ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων.
(8) ἀφέντες τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ κρατεῖτε τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων. (9) καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς, καλῶς ἀθετεῖτε τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν στήσητε. (10) Μωϋσῆς γὰρ εἶπεν, τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα σου, καὶ ὁ κακολογῶν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα θανάτῳ τελευτάτω (11) ύμεῖς δὲ λέγετε, ἐὰν εἶπη ἀνθρωπος τῷ πατρὶ ἢ τῇ μητρί· Κορβᾶν, ὁ ἐστιν δῶρον, δ ἐὰν ἔξε ἐμοὺ ὑφεληθῆς, (12) οὐκέτι ἀφίετε αὐτὸν οὐδὲν ποιῆσαι τῷ πατρὶ ἢ τῇ μητρί, (13) ἀκυροῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ παραδόσει ὑμῶν ἡ παρεδώκατε· καὶ παρόμοια τοιαῦτα πολλὰ ποιεῖτε.

(1) And the Pharisees gathered to him, and some of the scribes having come from Jerusalem. (2) And when they saw that some of his disciples ate bread with profane, that is, unwashed, hands (3) — for the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands with a fist, holding to the tradition of the elders, (4) and when they have come from the market unless they immerse themselves they do not eat, and they hold many other traditions which have passed down to them, [including] the immersing of cups and pitchers and kettles and dining couches — (5) and the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with profane hands?" (6) And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you hypocrites when he said,

'We this people honors me with [their] lips,
but their heart is far removed from me;
(7) to no end do they worship me,
teaching as instructions the commandments of men.'

(8) Having left the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." (9) And he said to them, "Well do you ignore the commandment of God, so that you may set up your tradition! (10) For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'The one who speaks ill of father or mother, let him surely die.' (11) But you say, 'If a man says to his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have been owed from me is 'corban',

As in the five controversy stories in Mark 2–3, here various parties again attack Jesus. In this case, it is the Pharisees who are attacking, and they are confronting Jesus' disciples for not living according
to the “tradition of the elders” (τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, 7.3). Noteworthy is the fact that it is only “some” (τίνες) of the disciples who are drawing the Pharisees’ ire on the point of ritual purity related to handwashing. This suggests that Jesus was not concerned enough about the Pharisees’ rules to instruct his disciples either to follow them or not. We are not told that he either rebukes or commends his disciples for washing or not. Mark here also finally gives a partial introduction to the Pharisees as a group when he says in verse 3 that “the Pharisees and all the Jews, unless they wash with a fist, do not eat.” He mentions several other rituals, all related to washing. Jesus rebukes them harshly for placing their own traditions above the commandments of God (vv. 6–13) and then gives the people and later his disciples a lesson on the true meaning of purity (vv. 14–23).

Mark 10.2–9

Matthew’s account (15.1–20) of this episode has the Pharisees and scribes posing the question about hand-washing. The introduction to the Pharisees (if it may be called that) in Mark is absent in Matthew, though Mark’s “common/defiled hands” (κοιναῖς χερσίν) is clarified to say that “[the disciples] do not wash [their] hands whenever they eat bread” (οὐ … νίπτονται τὰς χεῖρας ὅταν ἄρτον ἔσθησαν). Matthew also makes the question and the counter-question directly parallel by using forms of the word “transgress” (παραβαίνω) in both. The disciples pose a direct question to Jesus in Matthew: “Do you know that when the Pharisees heard this word they were offended?” (οἶδας ὅτι οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον ἐσκανδαλίσθησαν, 15.12). And Jesus continues with two one-sentence parables (concerning plants and the blind leading the blind, the latter of which is also in Luke). Then Peter (rather than the disciples) asks him for explanation, at which point Jesus gives a similar lesson to that given in Mark on defilement, and a truncated list of vices. Matthew concludes the episode by explicitly pointing out that failing to wash one’s hands is not defiling. The Lukan parallel (11.37–41), while quite truncated, offers a few modifications. First, the inquirer is a single Pharisee, who points out that Jesus himself (rather than his disciples) does not wash before eating. Second, Jesus responds not with a lecture about the "commandments of men," but with a direct attack on the hypocrisy of the Pharisees: "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but your inside is full of greed and evil" (νῦν ὑμεῖς οἱ Φαρισαῖοι τὸ ἐξώθεν τοῦ ποτηρίου καὶ τοῦ πίνακος καθαρίζετε, τὸ δὲ ἐξώθεν ύμῶν γέμει ἁρπαγῆς καὶ πονηρίας, Lk. 11.39).
In Mark 10, Jesus begins ministering in Judea, and immediately the Pharisees ask him about the lawfulness of divorce:

(2) καὶ προσελθόντες Φαρισαῖοι ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν εἰ ἔξεστιν ἀνδρὶ γυναῖκα ἀπολῦσαι, πειράζοντες αὐτόν. (3) ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, τί ὑμῖν ἐνετείλατο Μωϋσῆς; (4) οἱ δὲ εἶπαν ἐπέτρεψεν Μωϋσῆς βιβλίον ἀποστασίου γράψαι καὶ ἀπολῦσαι. (5) ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν ἔγραψεν ὑμῖν τὴν ἐντολὴν ταύτην. (6) ἀπὸ δὲ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς· (7) ἕνεκεν τούτου καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, (8) καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν· ὥστε οὐκέτι εἰσὶν δύο ἀλλὰ μία σάρξ. (9) ὃ οὖν ὁ θεὸς συνέζευξεν ἄνθρωπος μὴ χωριζέτω.

(2) And when the Pharisees came they asked him that they might test him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" (3) And he answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" (4) And they said, "Moses permitted [a man] to write a divorce document and divorce [her]." (5) And Jesus said to them, "He wrote this command for you due to your hard-heartedness. (6) But from the beginning of creation, he (God) made them male and female; (7) for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will be as one flesh. (8) So they are no longer two but one flesh. (9) Therefore what God joined, do not let man divide."

(Mk. 10.2–9)

Jesus responds with a question, “What did Moses command you?” The Pharisees say that he allowed for a divorce if a “divorce document” (βιβλίον ἀποστασίου, 10.4) was given, and Jesus responds that this was not the intent of the command. We are given no extra information about the Pharisees in this passage. In Matthew 19:3–12, the Pharisees’ question is modified somewhat: they ask if it is lawful to divorce one’s wife “for every (any) cause” (κατὰ πᾶσαν αἰτίαν). Also of note is the famous “Matthean exception” in Jesus’ answer (cf. Mt. 5:32): Jesus allows divorce only on the grounds of sexual immorality (παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας, Mt. 5.32). Matthew also has Jesus engage in a short dialogue with
the disciples on marriage and eunuchs. Many have noted that the debate about divorce may go back to
the first-century CE Pharisees Hillel and Shammai, with Jesus more or less taking the side of the more
conservative Shammai. Hillel would have allowed divorce for any reason (Blomberg 2007: 23–24), but
this is not made explicit in our passage, and moreover would only tell us that there was a dispute
concerning divorce within the Pharisaiic ranks.

Mark's Gospel does not give any broad depictions of the Pharisees.39 We get various details of
their beliefs and practices, but no framework in which to place them. It is clear that they are basically a
foil for Jesus' teaching. Still, we can conclude from Mark that the Pharisees are concerned with purity,
particularly purity of one's associations, with tradition, particularly related to washing and fasting,
and Sabbath observance.

Matthew

Matthew 9.32–34

The first time we find a reference to the Pharisees in Matthew without a parallel in Mark is
during a healing episode:

(32) αὐτῶν δὲ ἐξερχομένων ἰδοὺ προσήνεγκαν αὐτῷ ἄνθρωπον κωφὸν δαιμονιζόμενον.
(33) καὶ ἐκβληθέντος τοῦ δαιμόνιου ἐλάλησεν ὁ κωφός. καὶ ἐθαύμασαν οἱ ὄχλοι
λέγοντες, οὐδέποτε ἐφάνη οὕτως ἐν τῷ Ἰσραήλ. (34) οἱ δὲ Φαρισαῖοι ἔλεγον ἐν τῷ
ἀρχοντὶ τῶν δαιμονίων ἐκβάλλει τὰ δαίμονια.

39 The Sadducees do not have any significant appearances in Mark.
(32) Now as they [two previously healed blind men] were going out, behold they [some people?] brought to him a mute, demon-possessed man. (33) And after the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds were amazed, saying, "Never has it appeared thus in Israel." (34) But the Pharisées were saying, "With [the help of] the ruler of demons he casts out the demons."

(Mt. 9.32–34)

Though short, this passage portrays the Pharisees in two important ways. First, their opinion of Jesus differs from that of the crowds. In fact, they must be speaking to the crowds, since they refer to Jesus in the third person. Second, the Pharisees' belief in demons and thus spiritual realities is assumed here. They "assume the successful expulsion of evil influences" (Davies 1991: 140), but they challenge the source of Jesus' authority.

Matthew 22.23–24; 23

The next significant reference to our groups occurs in a series of questions posed by the Pharisees and Sadducees to test Jesus, much like in Mark 2–3 above. The first question and response episode yields no information, but the second gives us a one-clause introduction to the Sadducees:

(23) ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ προσῆλθον αὐτῷ Σαδδουκαίοι, λέγοντες μὴ εἶναι ἀνάστασιν, καὶ ἐπηρώτησαν αὐτὸν (24) λέγοντες· διδάσκαλε, Μωϋσῆς εἶπεν· ἐάν τις ἀποθάνῃ μὴ ἔχων τέκνα, ἐπιγαμβρεύσει ὁ ἀδελφός αὐτοῦ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναστήσει σπέρμα τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ.

40 Matthew 12:22–24 also has a similar accusation, but this time the “ruler of demons” is named Beelzebul (Βεελζεβούλ). Mark also names him, but this time the scribes, not the Pharisees, are the ones accusing Jesus (3:22). Luke simply says “some of them” (τινὲς δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν, 11.15), i.e., some of the people. Matthew 12 and Luke also include a lengthier response from Jesus.
(23) On that day Sadducees, who say the resurrection does not exist, came to him, and questioned him (24) saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If any man dies without children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up a child for his brother.'"

(Mt. 22.23–24)

For our purposes, Jesus' answer is less important than information that the Sadducees do not believe in resurrection. That they would ask a question which assumes the very thing they deny is odd; this is probably a trick question. Keener points out that they are actually critiquing the doctrine here by showing that it leads to "impossible dilemmas" (1999: 527). With his answer, Jesus is able to silence the Sadducees and then the Pharisees, after which we are told that "no one ... dared from that day to ask him [questions] any longer" (οὐδὲ ἐτολμησέν τις ἀπ’ ἐκείνης τῆς ἡμέρας ἐπερωτῆσαι αὐτὸν οὐκέτι, Mt. 22.46).

With his opponents thus silenced, Jesus delivers a sermon on the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the scribes to the crowds and to his disciples:

(2) ... ἐπὶ τῆς Μωϋσέως καθέδρας ἐκάθισαν οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι. (3) πάντα οὖν ὅσα ἐὰν εἴπωσιν ύμίν ποιήσατε καὶ τηρεῖτε, κατὰ δὲ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν μὴ ποιεῖτε· λέγουσιν γὰρ καὶ οὐ ποιοῦσιν. (4) δεσμεύουσιν δὲ φορτία βαρέα [καὶ δυσβάστακτα] καὶ ἐπιτιθέασιν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὤμους τῶν ἀνθρώπων, αὐτοὶ δὲ τῷ δακτύλῳ αὐτῶν οὐ θέλουσιν κινῆσαι αὐτά. (5) πάντα δὲ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν ποιοῦσιν πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· πλατύνουσιν γὰρ τὰ φυλακτήρια αὐτῶν καὶ μεγαλύνουσιν τὰ κράσπεδα, (6) φιλοῦσιν δὲ τὴν πρωτοκλισίαν ἐν τοῖς δείπνοις καὶ τὰς πρωτοκαθεδρίας ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς (7) καὶ τοὺς ἀσπασμοὺς ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς καὶ καλεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, Ῥαββί...

(13) οὐαὶ δὲ ύμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι κλείετε τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν ἐμπροσθὲν τῶν ἀνθρώπων· ὑμεῖς γὰρ οὐκ εἰσέρχεσθε οὐδὲ τοὺς εἰσερχομένους

41 Symoptic parallel: Lk. 20.27-40.
ἀφίετε εἰσελθεῖν.  
(15) οὐαὶ υμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι περιάγετε τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὴν ξηρὰν ποιῆσαι ἕνα προσήλυτον, καὶ ὅταν γένηται ποιεῖτε αὐτὸν υἱὸν γεέννης διπλότερον ήμῶν.
(16) οὐαὶ υμῖν, ὁδηγοὶ τυφλοὶ οἱ λέγοντες, δς ἂν ὁμόσῃ ἐν τῷ ναῷ, οὐδὲν ἐστίν· δς δ᾽ ἂν ὁμόσῃ ἐν τῷ χρυσῷ τῷ ναοῦ ὄφειλει. (17) μωροὶ καὶ τυφλοὶ, τίς γὰρ μείζων ἐστίν, ὁ χρυσός ἢ ὁ ναὸς ὁ ἁγιάσας τὸν χρυσόν; 
(23) οὐαὶ υμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι ἀποδεκατοῦτε τὸ ἡδύοσμον καὶ τὸ ἄνηθον καὶ τὸ κύμινον καὶ ἀφήκατε τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου, τὴν κρίσιν καὶ τὸ ἔλεος καὶ τὴν πίστιν· ταῦτα [δὲ] ἐδείπνοσα κάκεινα μη ἀφιέναι...
(25) οὐαὶ υμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι καθαρίζετε τὸ ἐξωθεν τοῦ ποτηρίου καὶ τῆς παροψίδος, ἔσωθεν δὲ γέμουσιν ἐξ ἁρπαγῆς καὶ ἀκρασίας. (26) Φαρισαίε τυφλέ, καθάρισον πρῶτον τὸ ἐντὸς τοῦ ποτηρίου, ἵνα γένηται καὶ τὸ ἐκτὸς αὐτοῦ καθαρὸν...
(29) οὐαὶ υμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι οἰκοδομεῖτε τοὺς τάφους τῶν προφητῶν καὶ κοσμεῖτε τὰ μνημεῖα τῶν δικαίων, (30) καὶ λέγετε· εἰ ἡμέθα ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν, οὐκ ἂν ἡμέθα αὐτῶν κοινωνοὶ ἐν τῷ ἁματί τῶν προφητῶν. (31) ὥστε μαρτυρεῖτε ἑαυτοῖς ὅτι υἱοὶ ἐστε τῶν φονευσάντων τοὺς προφητας.

(2) "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on the seat of Moses. (3) Therefore do and keep whatever — everything! — they tell you, but do not act according to their deeds. For they speak and do not act. (4) And they tie up burdens heavy and hard to bear and place them on the shoulders of men, but they do not want to move them with their finger. (5) And they do all their deeds in order to be seen by men; for they make their prayer-bands wide and their tassels long, (6) and they love the place of honor at meals and the first seats in the synagogues (7) and greetings in the marketplaces and being called 'Rabbi' by men...
(13) "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees — hypocrites! — because you shut the kingdom of heaven before men. For you yourselves are not going in nor do you allow those trying to enter in to enter in. (15) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees — hypocrites! — because you go across sea and dry land to make one convert, and when he becomes one you make him twice as much a child of Gehenna [hell] as yourselves.
(16) "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, [his oath] is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he owes it.' (17) Fools and blind ones, which is greater, the gold or the temple that makes the gold holy? ...

43 Verse 14 is present in the Majority text, but not in NA27. See the critical apparatus of NA27 for details.
(23) "Woe to you, scribes and **Pharisees** — hypocrites! — for you give a tenth of mint and dill and cumin and you pass by the weightier things of the law: justice and mercy and faith...

(25) "Woe to you, scribes and **Pharisees** — hypocrites! — for you cleanse the outside of the cup and plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. (26) Blind Pharisee! Cleanse first the inside of the cup, so that the outside of it also might become clean! ...

(29) "Woe to you, scribes and **Pharisees** — hypocrites! — for you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the memorials of the righteous ones, (30) and you say, 'If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners in the blood of the prophets.' (31) So you testify against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets...

(Mt. 23.2–7, 13–17, 23, 25–26, 29–31)

If we assume that contained within the "woe" statements there are references to real practices of the Pharisees, we can learn the following things about them. First, they have positions of authority, ranging from some sort of law-making to teaching (23.2–7). Second, they proselytize and have a wide geographic distribution (23.13–15). Third, they follow the tithing requirements of the Mosaic Law (23.23). Fourth, they "build" (οἰκοδομεῖτε) the tombs of the prophets. Of these characteristics, we have seen the first and third before. The second is in agreement with their presence in the backwater town of Capernaum in Mark 2 (see p. 37), though it is not mentioned there that they proselytize. In the fourth we have new information: the Pharisees take care of the tombs of the prophets. It is not clear exactly what that entails, but Jesus' point is, of course, that if they had been alive during the time of
the prophets, the Pharisees and scribes would have put the prophets in the very tombs they now maintain.44

Matthew, like Mark, gives us insight into particular practices without giving a broad picture of our groups. We see examples of the Pharisees’ influence over the people, their belief in demons, and their practices of proselytism, tithing, and washing. Josephus also tells us that the Sadducees do not believe in resurrection.

\[\text{Luke}\]

Luke 7:36–40

The following passage does not add new information to our understanding of the Pharisees, but reinforces the existing picture. We see again the importance that the Pharisees attached to the purity of one's associations, assuming that this Pharisee who invites Jesus to dine with him is representative of all:

(36) ἠρώτα δέ τις αὐτὸν τῶν Φαρισαίων ἵνα φάγῃ μετ’ αὐτοῦ, καὶ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Φαρισαίου κατεκλίθη. (37) καὶ ἰδοὺ γυνὴ ἥτις ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἁμαρτωλός, καὶ ἐπιγνοῦσα ὅτι κατάκειται ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ Φαρισαίου, κομίσας ἀλάβαστρον μύρου (38) καὶ στὰς ὀπίσω παρὰ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ κλαίων ἤρξατο βρέχειν τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἤλειφεν τῷ μύρῳ. (39) ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Φαρισαῖος ὁ καλέσας αὐτὸν εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ λέγων, οὗτος εἰ ἦν προφήτης, ἐγίνωσκεν ἂν τίς καὶ ποταπὴ ἡ γυνὴ ἥτις ἔπεται αὐτοῖ,
Now a certain Pharisee asked him to eat with him. And when he had come into the house of the Pharisee, he reclined [at the table]. (37) And behold a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she recognized that he was reclining in the house of the Pharisee, [she] brought an alabaster vase of ointment (38) and standing behind [him] near his feet she wept and began to wet his feet with her tears and wipe [them] with the hair of her head, and kiss his feet and anoint [them] with ointment. (39) And when the Pharisee who had invited him saw [this], he said to himself, saying, "If he were a prophet, he would have known who and of what sort is the woman who touches him, that she is a sinner." (40) And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he said, "Teacher, say it."

(Lk. 7.36–40)

A woman who is described as a “sinner” (ἁμαρτωλός) anoints Jesus with an expensive ointment, and the Pharisee rebukes him for allowing it. Jesus uses the opportunity to teach on forgiveness and to forgive her sins.

Luke 16.13-14

In Luke 16, Jesus is in the midst of teaching several parables. He concludes one of them as follows:

(13) "No one is able to be a slave to two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold fast to one and despise the other. You cannot be a slave
to God and Mammon [wealth].” (14) And the Pharisees, being lovers of money, heard these things and ridiculed him.

(Lk. 16.13)

Nowhere else in the NT is the φιλάργυροι (“loving money”, 16.14) of the Pharisees mentioned. Again the primary goal of the NT in its portrayal of the Pharisees is to contrast them negatively with Jesus' teaching. Luke follows this pattern exactly.

**John**

John 1.19–28

Like the other evangelists, John apparently saw no need to provide an introduction to the Pharisees. When we first encounter them in his Gospel (1.24), they have sent a delegation of priests and Levites to discover who John the Baptist claims to be:

(19) καὶ αὐτῇ ἔστιν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου, ὅτε ἀπέστειλαν [πρὸς αὐτὸν] οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἀπὸ Ἰεροσολύμων ἱερεῖς καὶ Λευίτας ἵνα ἐρωτήσωσιν αὐτόν, σὺ τίς εἶ; (20) καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτόν· τί οὖν; σὺ Ἠλίας εἶ; καὶ λέγει· οὐκ εἰμί. ὁ προφήτης εἶ σύ; καὶ ἀπεκρίθη· οὔ. (22) εἶπαν οὖν αὐτῷ· τί λέγεις περί σεαυτοῦ; (23) ἔφη· ἐγὼ φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· εὐθύνατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, καθὼς εἶπεν Ἰσαὰκ ὁ προφήτης.

(24) καὶ ἀπεστάλμησον ἰδαν ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων. (25) καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτόν καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· τί οὖν βαπτίζεις εἰ σὺ οὐκ εἶ ὁ Χριστός οὐδὲ Ἠλίας οὐδὲ ὁ προφήτης; (26) ἀπεκρίθη αὐτός· ὁ Ἰωάννης λέγων ἐγώ βαπτίζω ἐν ὑδαίνις μέσος οὐκ ἠτίκεν ὄν νῦν ὑμῶν ἐστηκέν ὑπὸ ὑμῶν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ἴδιον ὁ προσωπικὸς ὁ προφήτης ἐγὼ ἐστιν ἔρχομαι, (27) ὁ πρότερος μου ἔρχομαι, εἰ σὺ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγώ, οὐκ ἔστηκεν ὁ προφήτης.
(19) And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem that they might ask him, "Who are you?" (20) And he confessed and did not deny, and confessed, "I am not the Christ." (21) And they asked him, "What, then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" And he answered, "No." (22) Then they said to him, "Who are you? [Tell us] so that we might give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" (23) He said,

"I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness,

'Make straight the way of the Lord,'

as Isaiah the prophet said."

(24) And they were sent from the Pharisees. (25) And they asked him and said to him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ nor Elijah nor the prophet?" (26) John answered them saying, "I baptize with water; in your midst has stood one whom you do not know, (27) the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." (28) These things happened in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

(Jn. 1.19–28)

The reader has already been introduced to John the Baptist in the Prologue of this Gospel (1.1–18) as one who was "sent from God" (ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, 1.6) "in order to give testimony to testify concerning the light" (μαρτυρίαν ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ τοῦ φωτός, 1.7), and as one who "was not ... the light" (οὐκ ἦν ... τὸ φῶς, 1.8). This passage features John, who will soon fade into the background to be replaced by Jesus, as was John's purpose. The role played by the Pharisees in this episode is almost irrelevant; they are not present, but they do exert an influence. We learn from this passage that the Pharisees have some authority: they are able to send priests in an apparently official delegation from

45 Cf. Jn. 3:30, "It is necessary for that one [Jesus] to increase and for me to decrease" (ἐκεῖνον δεῖ αὐξάνειν, ἐμὲ δὲ ἐλαττοῦσθαι).
Jerusalem to interrogate John. One might even read from the ἐκ in 1.24 that some or all of these priests and Levites were members of the Pharisaic party (Köstenberger 2004: 63).46 For our purposes it is irrelevant whether any Pharisees were actually present at this questioning, since they obviously set the agenda: "Who are you? Tell us so that we might give an answer to those who sent us" (1.22). The questions asked must then illuminate some of the particular concerns of the Pharisees, namely about the identity (variations of σὺ τίς εἶ, 1.19; 1.21; 1.22) and authority (τί οὖν βαπτίζεις, 1.25) of John.

The significance of these questions is not clear, but possibly, as being in authority, they are conscious of the potential threat to their power that John poses, either directly or by stirring up the people and provoking the wrath of Rome.

John 3.1–5, 9–12

After Jesus has called his first disciples (2.35–51), performed his first miracle (2.1–12), and turned over the tables in the Temple, we find the famous account of his conversation with Nicodemus:

(1) ἦν δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων, Νικόδημος ὄνομα αὐτῷ, ἄρχων τῶν Ἰουδαίων· (2) οὗτος ἦλθεν πρὸς αὐτὸν νυκτὸς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Ῥαββί, οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐλήλυθας διδάσκαλος· οὐδεὶς γὰρ δύναται ταῦτα τὰ σημεῖα ποιεῖν ἃ σὺ ποιεῖς, ἐὰν μὴ ἢ ὁ θεὸς μετ’ αὐτοῦ. (3) ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ἐὰν μή τις γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν, οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ. (4) λέγει πρὸς αὐτὸν [ὁ] Νικόδημος· πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος γεννηθῆναι γέρων ὄν; μὴ δύναται εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ δεύτερον εἰσελθεῖν καὶ γεννηθῆναι; (5) ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν

46 The variant reading which inserts οἱ before ἀπεσταλμένοι would make the verb non-periphrastic. This would strengthen Köstenberger's interpretation, though he does not adopt this reading. His translation is, "Now they had been sent from among the Pharisees" (2004: 57). See the apparatus of NA27 for manuscript details.
(1) Now there was a man of the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; (2) he came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you have come as a teacher from God. For no one is able to perform these signs which you perform unless God is with him." (3) Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless a man is born from above, he is not able to see the kingdom of God." (4) Nicodemus said to him, "How is a man able to be born, though old? Surely he is not able to enter into the womb of his mother a second time and be born?" (5) Jesus answered, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and spirit, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God." ... (9) Nicodemus answered and said to him, "How can these things be?" (10) Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel and you do not understand these things? (11) Truly, truly I say to you: what we know we speak and what we have seen we testify [about], and you [plural] do not receive our testimony. (12) If I told you [pl.] about earthly things and you [pl.] do not believe, how if I tell you [pl.] about heavenly things will you [pl.] believe?"

(Jn. 3.1–5, 9–12)

Here John tells us several things about the Pharisees, even though he only speaks of an individual and not of the whole group. First, as Nicodemus was "ruler of the Jews" (ἀρχων τῶν Ἰουδαίων, 3.1), we know that one could be in authority and be a Pharisee at the same time. This authority "almost certainly refers to the Sanhedrin, the highest national body in charge of Jewish affairs" (Köstenberger 2004: 118). Second, it is clear that not all Pharisees were opposed to Jesus; there was division within the party (cf. Jn. 6.45–52 below). The fact that Nicodemus came "by night" may suggest that the timing...
of his visit was motivated by fear of his fellow rulers or teachers (cf. Jn. 9.22, where there is agreement to expel from the synagogue those who believe in Jesus).  

Third, there is some relationship between the Pharisees, Sanhedrin members, and teachers, since Nicodemus is described as all three in this passage. At the very least it is possible to belong to all three groups at once (though perhaps one of them implies another: e.g., Pharisees are teachers).

**John 4.1–3; 7.32–36; John 7.45–52**

Several passages are here presented together, since they reinforce the same attributes of the Pharisees, namely, their influence and authority. The following passage shows an awareness of the power of the Pharisees, for they sent messengers to interrogate John. Jesus is more successful at making disciples than John, so he leaves town:

(1) Ός οὖν ἔγνω ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἤκουσαν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ὅτι Ἰησοῦς πλείονας μαθητὰς ποιεῖ καὶ βαπτίζει ἢ Ἰωάννης (2) — καίτοιγε Ἰησοῦς αὐτὸς οὐκ ἐβάπτιζεν ἀλλ' οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ — (3) ἀφῆκεν τὴν Ἰουδαίαν καὶ ἀπῆλθεν πάλιν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν.

(1) Therefore when Jesus realized that the Pharisees had heard that he was making and baptizing more disciples than John (2) — though in fact Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples [did] — (3) he left Judea and went away again into Galilee.

(Jn. 4.1–3)

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47 Ridderbos (1997: 123–24) disagrees: "one can hardly, in light of all the facts, call Nicodemus a model of fear."

48 The significance of the article ὁ before διδάσκαλος has been debated. Wallace (1996: 223) and BDF (§273.1) call this the "par excellence" or "well-known" article. Ridderbos (1997: 132) objects: "[this] article does not mean that Nicodemus is the teacher in Israel par excellence but has representative meaning."
By the time we reach the following mention of the Pharisees, it has already been stated that the Jews (or “Judeans,” Ἰουδαῖοι) wanted to kill Jesus (5:18; 7:1). This is ambiguous, especially since many believed in him (7:31). The Pharisees are then grouped with the chief priests in sending officers to arrest him:

(32) ἤκουσαν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι τοῦ ὀχλου γογγύζοντος περὶ αὐτοῦ ταῦτα, καὶ ἀπέστειλαν οἱ ἁρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ὑπηρέτας ἵνα πιάσωσιν αὐτόν. (33) εἶπεν οὖν οὗ τις ἤησον ἐπὶ χρόνον μικρὸν μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμι καὶ ὑπάγω πρὸς τὸν πέμψαντά με. (34) ζητήσετέ με καὶ οὐχ εὑρήσετε [με], καὶ ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγώ ὑμεῖς οὐ δύνασθε ἐλθεῖν. (35) εἶπον οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι πρὸς ἑαυτούς· ποῦ οὗτος μέλλει πορεύεσθαι ἃ ὑμεῖς οὐχ εὑρήσατε αὐτόν; μὴ ἐπὶ τὸν τῆς διασπορᾶς Ἑλλήνων μέλλει πορεύεσθαι καὶ διδάσκειν τοὺς Ἑλλήνας; (36) τίς ἐστιν ὁ λόγος ὃν εἶπεν· ζητήσετέ με καὶ οὐχ εὑρήσετε [με], καὶ ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγώ ὑμεῖς οὐ δύνασθε ἐλθεῖν;

(32) The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering these things about him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent attendants to arrest him. (33) So Jesus said, "I am with you a little while and (then) I am going away to the one who sent me. (34) You will look for me and you will not find me, and where I am going you are not able to go." (35) So the Jews said to themselves, "Where is this one about to go where we will not find him? Surely he is not about to go into the diaspora of the Greeks and teach the Greeks? (36) What is this word which says, "You will look for me and not find me, and where I am going you are not able to go?"

(Jn. 7.32–36)

Later in this chapter, the officers return to the chief priests and Pharisees (7.45) empty-handed, citing Jesus' powerful speech, “A man never spoke in this way!” (οὐδὲποτε ἐλάλησεν οὕτως ἄνθρωπος, 7.46).

The Pharisees are incredulous that the officers were so easily deceived, and note that none of
their number has followed Jesus. When Nicodemus speaks as the voice of justice, they accuse him of being a Galilean. Nicodemus’ concern for what is lawful highlights the ire of the other Pharisees:

(45) ήλθον οὖν οἱ ὑπηρέται πρὸς τοὺς ἁρχιερεῖς καὶ Φαρισαίους, καὶ εἶπον αὐτοῖς ἑκεῖνοι· διὰ τί οὐκ ἠγάγετε αὐτόν; (46) ἀπεκρίθησαν οἱ ὑπηρέται· οὔδεποτε ἐλάλησαν οὗτως ἄνθρωπος. (47) ἀπεκρίθησαν οὖν αὐτοῖς οἱ Φαρισαίοι· μὴ καὶ ύμεῖς πεπλάνησθε; (48) μὴ τις ἕκ τῶν ἁρχόντων ἐπίστευσεν εἰς αὐτόν ἢ ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων; (49) ἀλλὰ οἱ ὕπατος οὗτος ἢ μὴ γινώσκων τὸν νόμον ἐπάρατοι εἰσίν. (50) λέγει Νικόδημος πρὸς αὐτούς, ὁ ἐλθὼν πρὸς αὐτόν [τὸ] πρὸτερον, εἷς ὦν ἢ ἕκ τῶν ἁρχόντων· (51) μὴ ὁ νόμος ἡμῶν κρίνει τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐὰν μὴ ἀκούσῃ πρῶτον παρ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ γνῶ τί ποιεῖ; (52) ἀπεκρίθησαν καὶ εἶπαν αὐτοῖς· μὴ καὶ σὺ ἐκ τῆς Γαλιλαίας εἶ; ἐραύνησον καὶ ἴδε ὅτι προφήτης ἐκ τῆς Γαλιλαίας οὐκ ἐγείρεται.

(45) So the attendants came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" (46) The attendants answered, "A man never spoke in this way!" (47) So the Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? (48) Who of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? (49) But this crowd which does not know the law is accursed." (50) Nicodemus, the one having gone to him previously, being one of them, said to them, (51) "Surely our law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing?" (52) They answered and said to him, "Surely you also are not from Galilee? Search and behold: no prophet rises up from Galilee."

(Jn. 7.45–52)

This part of the Gospel of John confirms for us that the Pharisees were in positions of power.

John 7.53–8.6a

Immediately after the episode with Nicodemus, we find a reference to the Pharisees in the well-known passage of the adulterous woman:
(7.53) And each one went to his [own] house, (8.1) and Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. (2) And again at dawn he went into the temple, and all the people came to him and when he had sat down he began to teach them. (3) And the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman having been caught in adultery, and when they had stood her up in the middle [of the crowd] (4) they said to him, "Teacher, this woman who was committing adultery has been caught in the act; (5) now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Therefore what do you say?" (6) Now [for the purpose of] testing him they said this, so that they might have charges to bring against him.

(Jn. 7.53–8.6a)

This passage is one of the most famous in the Gospels; it also contains a significant text critical issue. Bruce Metzger comments (7.53–8.11), “The evidence for the non-Johannine origin of the pericope of the adulteress is overwhelming” (1994: 187). That this story was not originally a part of the fourth Gospel is likely, but since what it implies about the Pharisees does not contradict what has been presented so far, we will consider it. Besides, as Ridderbos argues, "in the judgment of many" it is an "historically authentic tradition from the life of Jesus" (1997: 287). As we have seen above, the Pharisees here are particular about their following of the Mosaic law. In this particular case the issue is the punishment for adultery.⁴⁹ Their question "did not arise from any perplexity on their part"

⁴⁹ Their challenge is a reference to Deuteronomy 22.22–24, where the punishment for adultery is that both the man and woman must be stoned.
(Ridderbos 1997: 288), but from a desire to test (πειράζοντες, 8.6) Jesus, a common theme in the Gospels.

*John 8.12–14*

In the next passage (8.12–30), John portrays the Pharisees as concerned for the Mosaic requirement to provide multiple witnesses:

(12) πάλιν οὖν αὐτοῖς ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων· ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου· ὁ ἀκολουθῶν ἐμοὶ οὐ μὴ περιπατήσῃ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ, ἀλλ' ἔξει τὸ φῶς τῆς ζωῆς. (13) εἶπον οὖν αὐτῷ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι, σὺ περὶ σεαυτοῦ μαρτύρεις· ἡ μαρτυρία σου οὐκ ἔστιν ἀληθής. (14) ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· κἂν ἐγὼ μαρτυρῶ περὶ ἐμαυτοῦ, ἀληθής ἐστιν ἡ μαρτυρία μου, ὅτι οἴδα πόθεν ἦλθον καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγω· ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐκ οἴδατε πόθεν ἔρχομαι ἢ ποῦ ὑπάγω.

(12) Therefore Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world; the one who follows me will surely not walk in darkness, but he will have the light of life." (13) So the Pharisees said to him, "You testify about yourself; your testimony is not true." (14) Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about myself, my testimony is true, because I know from where I came and where I am going; but you do not know from where I come or where I am going."

(Jn. 8.12–14)

It is of note that in Num. 35:30, Deut. 17:6, and Deut. 19:15 multiple witnesses are required to enact the death penalty, and in John already several times the Judeans/Pharisees have wanted to kill Jesus (cf. 5:18, 7:1).

*John 9.13–17*
John 9 starts with a lesson for Jesus' disciples about sin and the purposes of God. Jesus heals a blind man, and some of those who had known the man before bring him to the Pharisees (though we are not told why), and some of them make the point that Jesus, in healing the man, does not keep the Sabbath. Other Pharisees say that sinners are not able to perform miracles (σημεία). The Pharisees disagree among themselves:

(13) ἄγουσιν αὐτὸν πρὸς τοὺς Φαρισαίους τὸν ποτε τυφλὸν. (14) ἦν δὲ σάββατον ἐν ᾗ ἡμέρᾳ τὸν πηλὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἀνέῳξεν αὐτοῦ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς. (15) πάλιν οὖν ἦρωτον αὐτὸν καὶ οἱ Φαρισαίοι πῶς ἀνέβλεψεν. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· πῆλον ἐπέθηκέν μου ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς καὶ ἐνιψάμην καὶ βλέπω. (16) ἔλεγον οὖν οἱ Φαρισαὶ τινες· οὐκ ἔστιν οὗτος παρὰ θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὅτι τὸ σάββατον οὐ τηρεῖ. αἱ άλλοι δὲ ἔλεγον· πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος ἁμαρτωλός τοιαῦτα σημεῖα ποιεῖν; καὶ σχίσμα ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς. (17) λέγουσιν οὖν τῷ τυφλῷ πάλιν· τί σὺ λέγεις περὶ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἠνέῳξέν σου τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς; ὁ δὲ εἶπεν ὅτι προφήτης ἔστίν.

(13) They brought to the Pharisees a man who was once blind. (14) And it was on the Sabbath that Jesus had made the mud and opened his eyes. (15) So again also the Pharisees asked him how he had regained his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." (16) So some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How is a sinner able to perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. (17) So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he opened your eyes?" And he told them, "He is a prophet."

(Jn. 9.13–17)

From this point in the chapter, the leaders are called Judeans (Ἰουδαῖοι). They call the man in, along with his parents, to ascertain whether he was really born blind. If we can assume these Judeans are the Pharisees (and the Pharisees do reappear in verse 41), we have a stark contrast between the lesson that Jesus taught his disciples about birth defects (the man did not sin, vv. 2–3) and the Pharisees’
understanding of birth defects ("You were born in utter sin," v. 34). The man is thrown out, finds Jesus, and becomes his disciple. Jesus condemns the Pharisees at the end of the chapter:

(39) And Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who see may be made blind." (40) Those of the Pharisees with him heard these things, and they said to him, "Surely we also are not blind?" (41) Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

(Jn. 9.39–41)

John 11.45–50, 53

After Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and many of the witnesses subsequently follow Jesus (Jn. 11), we are told that the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Sanhedrin to discuss what should be done about this man who performed many signs (πολλὰ ... σημεία):

(45) πολλοὶ οὖν ἐκ τῶν Ιουδαίων, οἱ ἐλθόντες πρὸς τὴν Μαριὰμ καὶ θεασάμενοι ἃ ἐποίησεν, ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν· (46) τινὲς δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀπῆλθον πρὸς τοὺς Φαρισαίους καὶ εἶπαν αὐτοῖς ἃ ἐποίησεν Ιησοῦς. (47) συνήγαγον οὖν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι συνέδριον, καὶ ἔλεγον, τί ποιοῦμεν, ὅτι οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος πολλὰ ποιεῖ σημεῖα; (48) ἐὰν ἄφωμεν αὐτὸν οὕτως, πάντες πιστεύσοιμι εἰς αὐτόν, καὶ ἐλεύσονται οἱ Ρωμαίοι καὶ ἀφοῦ τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ ἰδίου τοῦ Θεοῦ. (49) εἷς δὲ τῶν Φαρισαίων ἀρχιερεὺς, ἀρχιερεὺς ἐκ τῶν ἰερευνών Ἰησοῦν, ἔλεγεν, εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἀπολύσῃ τὸ ἐθνὸς καὶ τὸν συνεδρίον. (50) οὐδὲ λογίζεσθε ὅτι συμφέρει ὑμῖν ἵνα εἰς ἄνθρωπον ἀποθάνῃ ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ μὴ ὅλον τὸ ἔθνος ἀπολέσῃ. ... (53) ἀπ’ ἐκείνης οὖν τῆς ἡμέρας ἐβουλεύσαντο ἵνα ἀποκτείνωσιν αὐτὸν.
(45) Therefore many of the Jews who had come with Mary and had seen the things which he did believed in him; (46) and some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. (47) So the high priests and the Pharisees gathered together the Sanhedrin and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. (48) If we allow him to act thus, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." (49) And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You do not know anything, (50) nor do you consider that it is advantageous for you that one man should die for the people and not that the whole nation should be lost." ... (53) So from that day on they planned to kill him.

(Jn. 11.45–50, 53)

We see here the Council anxious about the political ramifications of the people’s growing belief in Jesus. They worry that the Romans will take away “both our place and our nation” (ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν τόπον καὶ τὸ ἔθνος, 11.48). The high priest Caiaphas rebukes their stupidity, and recommends that the policy of the Sanhedrin should be to find a way to put Jesus to death. We see here again that the Pharisees are members of the Sanhedrin, and thus wield political authority, but that they are subordinate to the Roman Empire and fear the consequences of arousing the ire of that Empire which can remove them from power.

*John 12:42–43*

Again emphasizing the power (this time religious / social) of the Pharisees, the author of the fourth Gospel tells us that they had the power to expel people from the synagogue:
(42) δὲ τῶν ἀρχόντων πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τοὺς Φαρισαίους οὐχ ὡμολόγουν ἵνα μὴ ἀποσυνάγωγοι γένωνται; (43) ἠγάπησαν γὰρ τὴν δόξαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων μᾶλλον ἤπειρ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

(42) Nevertheless indeed even many of the rulers believed in him [Jesus], but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it lest they be excluded from the synagogue; (43) for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.

(John 12.42–43)

John 18.3

The last time we see the Pharisees in the fourth Gospel, they have lent soldiers to Judas Iscariot so that he could betray and arrest Jesus. That they had power to send soldiers once again attests to their political power:

ὁ οὖν Ἰούδας λαβὼν τὴν σπεῖραν καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων ὑπηρέτας ἔρχεται ἐκεῖ μετὰ φανῶν καὶ λαμπάδων καὶ ὅπλων.

So Judas, having taken a cohort and attendants from the high priests and Pharisees, went there with torches and lamps and weapons.

(Jn. 18.3)

John emphasizes the political and social influence of the Pharisees. Less than the other Gospels, He focuses almost exclusively on the fact that they are members of the Sanhedrin and have the authority to put people out of the synagogue. They also have some contingent of guards or soldiers available to them. Only twice (7.53–8.6a and 8.12–14) does John show us the Pharisees' concern for issues related to the Mosaic law (adultery and the multiple witnesses requirement).
The first reference to our groups in Acts is to the Sadducees. Peter and John have healed a lame beggar, and have been teaching in the temple:

(1) λαλούντων δὲ αὐτῶν πρὸς τὸν λαὸν ἐπέστησαν αὐτοῖς οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ ὁ στρατηγὸς τοῦ ἱεροῦ καὶ οἱ Σαδδουκαίοι, (2) διαπονούμενοι διὰ τὸ διδάσκειν αὐτοὺς τὸν λαὸν καὶ καταγγέλλειν ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ τὴν ἀνάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν, (3) καὶ ἐπέβαλον αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας καὶ ἔθεντο εἰς τήρησιν εἰς τὴν αὔριον· ἦν γὰρ ἑσπέρα ἤδη. (4) πολλοὶ δὲ τῶν ἀκουσάντων τὸν λόγον ἐπίστευσαν καὶ ἐγενήθη [ὁ] ἀριθμὸς τῶν ἀνδρῶν [ὡς] χιλιάδες πέντε.

(1) And while they [Peter and John] were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees stood near them, (2) troubled because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. (3) And they laid hands on them and put them into custody until the following day. For it was already evening. (4) But many of those who heard the message believed, and the number of men was about five thousand.

(Acts 4.1–4)

Strangely, Luke seems to be taking care to list out the parties involved in instigating the arrest, and the Pharisees are not mentioned. The most likely explanation for this is that the groups mentioned were more associated with the temple than were the Pharisees. More significantly, Luke here affirms the Sadducees' dislike of the doctrine of resurrection.

Acts 5.34–35
In Luke’s second volume, the Pharisees play a much smaller role than they do in the Gospels: they appear in only four passages. In the first of these, we see that there is at least one Pharisee (Gamaliel) in the Sanhedrin, who advises the Council to release the apostles. His rationale is that, if their message is “of men” (ἐξ ἀνθρώπων, 5.38), then their movement will fail like the movements of Theudas and Judas the Galilean, but if it is of God, then the members of the Council might be found to be fighting against God (θεομάχοι, 5.39).

(34) ἀναστὰς δὲ τις ἐν τῷ συνεδρίῳ Φαρισαῖος ὄνόματι Γαμαλιήλ, νομοδιδάσκαλος τίμιος παντὶ τῷ λαῷ, ἐκέλευσεν ἔξω βραχὺ τοὺς ἰδίους ἀνθρώπους ποιῆσαι, (35) εἶπέν τε πρὸς αὐτούς, ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται, προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τούτοις τί μέλλετε πράσσειν.

(34) And a certain Pharisee in the Sanhedrin named Gamaliel, a law-teacher honored by all the people, after he stood up he gave a command to have the men go outside for a while, (35) and he said to them, "Israelite men, consider among yourselves what you are about to do against these men."

(Aacts 5.34–35)

This shows that not all the Pharisees were opposed to Jesus. As with Nicodemus in John 3 and the Pharisees in Acts 15, at least some Pharisees were not antagonistic towards Jesus and the early church.

Acts 15.5

In Acts 15, during the so-called “Jerusalem Council,” a dispute arises between Paul and Barnabas and those preaching that circumcision is a prerequisite for salvation. We see that some of
the first Christians were also from the sect of the Pharisees, or at least were still influenced by their interpretation of the law, for the Pharisees in the church declare that the gentiles who had been converted by Paul had to be circumcised and keep the Mosaic law. The Council ruled against the Pharisaic faction, and chose not to burden the gentile converts with such requirements:

ἐξανέστησαν δὲ τινες τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς αἱρέσεως τῶν Φαρισαίων πεπιστευκότες λέγοντες ὅτι δεὶ περιτέμνειν αὐτοὺς παραγγέλλειν τε τηρεῖν τὸν νόμον Μωϋσέως.

Now some of the believers who were of the sect of the Pharisees stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to require them to keep the law of Moses."

(Acts 15.5)

Acts 23.6–10

In Acts 23, Paul has returned to Jerusalem from his missionary journeys, and has been imprisoned by the Roman tribune.

(6) γνοὺς δὲ ὁ Παῦλος ὅτι τὸ ἓν μέρος ἐστὶν Σαδδουκαίων τὸ δὲ ἐτερον Φαρισαίων ἐκραζὲν ἐν τῷ συνεδρίῳ· ἄνδρε ἀδελφοί, ἐγὼ Φαρισαῖος ἐίμι, υἱός Φαρισαίων, περὶ ἐλπίδος καὶ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν [ἐγὼ] κρίνομαι. (7) τοῦτο δὲ αὐτοῦ εἰπόντες ἐγένετο στάσις τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ Σαδδουκαίων καὶ ἐσχίσθη τὸ πλῆθος. (8) Σαδδουκαίοι μὲν γάρ λέγουσιν μὴ εἶναι ἀνάστασιν μὴ τὰ πνεῦμα, Φαρισαίοι δὲ ὁμολογοῦσιν τὰ ἀμφότερα. (9) ἐγένετο δὲ κραυγή μεγάλη, καὶ ἀναστάντες τινὲς τῶν γραμματέων τοῦ μέρους τῶν Φαρισαίων διεμάχοντο λέγοντες οὐδὲν κακὸν εὑρίσκομεν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τούτῳ· εἰ δὲ πνεῦμα ἔλαλησεν αὐτὸ μὴ ἐγελος; (10) πολλῆς δὲ γίνομεν στάσεως φοβηθείς ὁ χιλίαρχος μὴ διασπασθῇ ὁ Παῦλος ὤπ’ αὐτῶν ἐκέλευσεν τὸ στράτευμα καταβὰν ἁρπάσαι αὐτὸν ἐκ μέσου αὐτῶν ἀγείνει τε ἐἰς τὴν παρεμβολὴν.

(6) Now when Paul realized that one part was Sadducees and the other Pharisees he cried out in the Sanhedrin, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; concerning
the hope of the resurrection of the dead I am being tried." (7) And when he spoke this, discord arose between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the multitude was divided. (8) For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection nor angel nor spirit, and the Pharisees profess a belief in them all. (9) And there was a great outcry, and some of the scribes of the party of the Pharisees, after they stood up, contended, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel spoke to him — ?" (10) Now when the discord increased, the tribune, being afraid that Paul would be torn apart by them, commanded the army to go down to take him from their midst, and to bring him into the headquarters.

(Acts 23.6–10)

Paul is put before the Sanhedrin, which is, as we have seen, composed of Pharisees and Sadducees, and uses their contrary beliefs about resurrection to turn them against one another. Luke provides a bit of editorial commentary (v. 8) on their respective beliefs: the Pharisees believe in resurrection and the existence of supernatural / immaterial beings, while the Sadducees do not.

Acts 26.5

In the midst of his defense in the court of King Agrippa, Paul makes the following claim:

προγινώσκοντές με ἄνωθεν, ἐὰν θέλωσι μαρτυρεῖν, ὅτι κατὰ τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἵρεσιν τῆς ἡμετέρας θρησκείας ἔζησα Φαρισαῖος.

[The Jews] have known me for a long time, if they want to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived as a Pharisee.

(Acts 26.5)

This is the only time in the NT that the Pharisees are described with a form of ἀκριβεῖα. Words with this root are quite common in Josephus' discussions of the Pharisees.50

Though the Pharisees and Sadducees have a smaller role in Acts than in the Gospels, the picture of these groups in Acts is more varied than in the Gospels. Resurrection is a prominent theme (4.1–4, 23.6–10). The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 gives us a unique view of a Pharisaic group within the early church; they are concerned with circumcision and general adherence to the Mosaic law. This aspect is in agreement with the portrayals of the non-Christian Pharisees in the Gospels.
If nothing else, one thing is clear about the Pharisees and Sadducees in Josephus and the NT: we are left with more questions than answers. How did these groups develop? How did one join these groups? Were they closed groups or did people simply take the label upon themselves? The list goes on. Nevertheless, we have gained some answers from the survey in chapters 1 and 2, and now we can compare the two data sets.

First, it should be said that the portraits painted by Josephus and the NT authors of our groups are not as incompatible as is sometimes supposed. There are significant differences, most prominently within the Josephan corpus, but the primary difference (which is not contradictory) is that Josephus presents the Pharisees and Sadducees from the perspective of one who has been in leadership as an aristocratic priest and military commander and is painting Jewish history with broad strokes, particularly in the *Jewish Antiquities*, whereas the parts of the NT in which these groups are mentioned are much less concerned with a grand view of Jewish history than with narrating the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the implications thereof, along with the beginnings of the church. So in the Gospels particularly, we seem to have a view of these groups from the grassroots level, while Josephus, who had at least been an initiate into these two groups, presents them from a different
A prominent example of a compatible difference between these perspectives is the issue of the ἀκριβεῖα ("strictness" or "precision") of the Pharisees. This is one of the attributes Josephus most consistently ascribes to the Pharisees (BJ 1.110–13; 2.119–166; AJ 13.171–72; 13.288–98; 17.41–46; Vita 191–97), but a word with the same root is only used once in the NT in reference to the Pharisees (ἀκριβεστάτην; Acts 26.5). If the Pharisees were so well-known for their ἀκριβεῖα, why does the NT not mention it except for one passing reference by Paul (and that to himself)? The answer becomes clear if we remember Josephus' broad perspective and the close-up approach of the NT. When we consider the matter in this way, we find that the NT does talk about this characteristic of the Pharisees. Repeatedly they ask Jesus questions to test him, questions which relate to issues of Jewish law, whether of the Torah itself or about the "traditions of the elders" (παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, 7.3). We have questions or confrontations about associating with sinners (Mk. 2.13; Lk. 7.36), fasting (Mk. 2.18–22), the Sabbath (Mk. 3.1–6), hand-washing (Mk. 7.1–13), the punishment for adultery (Jn. 7.53–8.11), multiple witnesses (Jn. 8.12–14), and circumcision (Acts 15.5). One might even say that the primary purpose of the Pharisees in the NT is to ask questions about the law so that Jesus can teach or heal in response to their inquiries. It is easy to see that the outline of the ἀκριβεῖα of Josephus' Pharisees is filled in by the Gospel writers. There is no need to posit a contradiction.

When Josephus presents his Pharisees and Sadducees (and Essenes) as philosophical schools (BJ 2.119–66; AJ 18.11–23), it is generally supposed that he does so to make the various parties of this
religion and culture comprehensible to his Greco-Roman audience. While the NT offers no such systematic treatment of the doctrines of our groups, the two presentations agree where they do overlap. Josephus mentions in both of these “philosophical school” passages that the Pharisees believe that the soul is indestructible and that there will be a resurrection (of some sort), and that the Sadducees believe the opposite. The NT supports this view, most notably when Paul uses this belief to turn the Sanhedrin against itself (Acts 23.6–10).  

Given the importance of the concept of resurrection for the NT, it is surprising that this point is not emphasized more, but the two portraits do agree. Additionally, the fact that the NT makes no mention of the Pharisees’ and Sadducees’ notions about fate suggests that Josephus framed the issue of providence in terms of fate for his Greco-Roman audience. The NT has less need for this framework, and even though some books (e.g., Luke) clearly target a gentile audience, they still assume a certain amount of knowledge about the various groups and characters active in Judea, Galilee, and the surrounding regions during the life of Jesus and the growth of the early church. It would be useful to explore the reasons behind this assumption in the NT.

One difference which is more difficult to reconcile concerns the sort of authority and influence the Pharisees had over the people. Josephus tells us that they were in “harmony with the people” (τὴν εἰς τὸ κοινὸν ὁμόνοιαν, BJ 2.166), that they were “credible to the people” (δήμοις πιθανώτατοι, AJ 18.15), etc. In these passages they almost seem to be a grassroots organization. Their influence stems from their ἀκριβεία, and this is also what leads Alexandra to entrust them with power. Curiously,

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51 Also cf. Mt. 22.23–24 and Acts 4.1–4 on the Sadducees’ doctrine of resurrection.
Matthew shows us a bit more detail about how their influence with the people might function in practice in 9.32–34 when the Pharisees are seen attempting to turn the crowds against Jesus. In chapter 23 (verse 4), Matthew has Jesus say that the Pharisees pile heavy loads (presumably of regulations) on people, but offer no help. This suggests that the influence of the Pharisees on the people was not entirely appreciated.

So while it is impossible to produce a detailed account of the nature and practices of the Pharisees and Sadducees from the available sources, we do see that Josephus and the NT are basically compatible in their depictions of these groups. Though this compatibility does not always give us the multiple attestations that would strengthen our confidence in each individual characteristic mentioned, it at least shows us that a primitive reconstruction is possible. And there is great value in attempting this reconstruction; these sects provide essential background information which improves our understanding of both the works of Josephus and the NT.
APPENDIX A: INCIDENTAL OCCURRENCES OF ΦΑΡΙΣΑΙΟΣ AND ΣΑΔΔΟΥΚΑΙΟΣ

I have classified a number of the 170 occurrences of the words Φαρισαῖος and Σαδδουκαῖος in Josephus and the NT as “incidental.” These references present no new information about these groups, but are presented here for completeness.

**Josephus**

*BJ* 2.411: The phrase “most notable Pharisees” (τοῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων γνωρίμοις) is used, and would possibly reinforce the authority of the Pharisees if it were not so vague.

*AJ* 13.415: This is the finale of *AJ* 13.401–15, part of which is discussed above. This reference was removed in order to shorten the length of the quote.

*AJ* 15.3: Herod honored a Pharisee named Pollion and his follower Samaias for encouraging the citizens to accept Herod after the Roman Senate appoints him King of the Jews.
Pollion and Samaias are mentioned again when Herod required the people to take an oath of allegiance to him. Pollion and Samaias would not, and he did not punish them out of respect.

This is the finale to AJ 17.41–44, which is discussed above.

A Pharisee named Saddok helps Judas the Galilean in his rebellion (6 CE).

This passage is a discussion of the “fourth philosophy” (practiced by the Zealots), who are said to have much philosophical/theological agreement with the Pharisees.

Josephus (as a character in the narrative) consulted with the “leading men of the Pharisees” (τοῖς πρώτοις τῶν Φαρισαίων). As in BJ 2.411, this is too vague to contribute anything new to our understanding of the Pharisees.

Several of those sent from Jerusalem to force Josephus to step down as commander in Galilee are Pharisees.

Some Pharisees come to test Jesus. This theme is sufficiently attested elsewhere.

Jesus tells his disciples to “beware the leaven of the Pharisees” (βλέπετε ἀπὸ τῆς ζύμης τῶν Φαρισαίων).

This passages reiterates the testing motif. This time the issue is about taxes.
Mt. 3.7: John the Baptist opposes the Pharisees and Sadducees as they come for baptism.

Mt. 5.20: In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells his listeners that their righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees.

Mt. 12.38: Parallel to Mk. 8.11 above.

Mt. 16.1: Also parallel to Mk. 8.11 above.

Mt. 16.6, 11–12: Parallel to Mk. 8.15 above.

Mt. 21.45: The Pharisees realize Jesus is talking about them in his parables.


Mt. 22.34: Following Mt. 22.23–24 (discussed above), the Pharisees witness Jesus silencing the Sadducees.

Mt. 22.41: The Pharisees test Jesus with a question.

Mt. 27.62: The Pharisees and the chief priests visit Pilate after Jesus' death and burial.

Lk. 7.30: This is a reference to the fact the Pharisees were not baptized by John the Baptist.

Lk. 12.1: Parallel to Mk. 8.15 above.

Lk. 13.31: Some Pharisees tell Jesus that Herod wants to kill him.

Lk. 14.1–3: Jesus asks the Pharisees a question.

Lk. 15.2: This is a passing reference to the Pharisees' concern for purity.
Lk. 17.20: The Pharisees ask Jesus about the coming of the kingdom of God.

Lk. 19.39: The Pharisees complain about Jesus' “Triumphant Entry.”

Jn. 11.57: The Pharisees plot against Jesus.

Jn. 12.19: The Pharisees complain about Jesus’ “Triumphant Entry.”

Philippians 3.5: Paul says that he was a Pharisee.
APPENDIX B: MAP OF PALESTINE

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Neusner, Jacob and Bruce D. Chilton, eds. 2007. *In Quest of the Historical Pharisees*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.


