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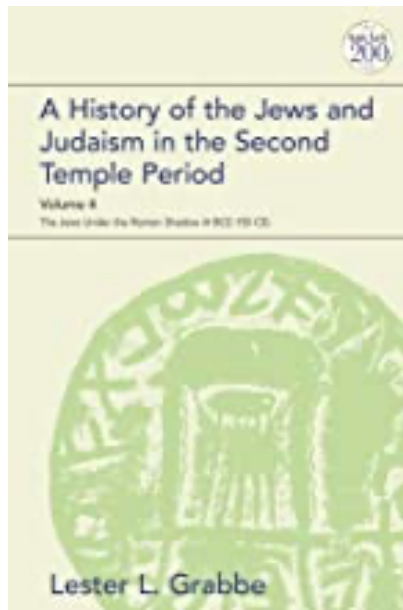
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Lester L. Grabbe

A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period, Volume 4: The Jews under the Roman Shadow (4 BCE–150 CE)

The Library of Second Temple Studies 99

London: T&T Clark, 2021. Pp. xxiii + 638. Paper. \$39.95.
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This is the fourth and final volume of a huge project begun more than twenty years ago.¹ Lester L. Grabbe's project was an ambitious one: to write a handbook covering the entire history of Second Temple Judaism. Others have confined themselves to one-volume surveys; Lester L. Grabbe has written four. In over 2,200 pages, he has covered every possible area of political, cultural, religious, economic, and social history, with a level of detail and nuance that is difficult to match. I did not find the slightest theme lacking, and each subject is treated with erudition and clarity. Can we say that this work replaces the now-classic but outdated work of Emil Schürer,² which remains one of the cornerstones of any investigation into the Jewish people at the turn of our era? Perhaps not, but it will certainly occupy a comparable place in future researches.

Obviously, detailed reading could lead to some discussions. A non-English-speaking scholar would no doubt regret the relatively small amount of space given over to historiographies in foreign languages. Here and there, one could point out works that would have been interesting or even useful to add. But this remains minimal and, for the most part, would not have changed the conclusions, which are very much in line with the most recent works. Finally, I do not always totally

1. Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, 4 vols. (London: T&T Clark, 2004–2021).

2. Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–1987).

agree with Grabbe, but the possible points are only details. It is more important to stress here the richness of what is contained in this volume (see below for a complete list of chapters).

This fourth volume continues the method of the first three, beginning with a comprehensive presentation of the available sources (21–90). Grabbe provides a very up-to-date examination of archaeological, numismatic, epigraphic, and papyrological data, in addition to Jewish, Greek, Roman, and Christian texts. Many original and very welcome developments have emerged from this approach. Of particular note are the lengthy discussion about marriage and divorce (225–37) and the presentation of Babatha and Salome Komaise (453–57). This is followed by a second thematic section, entitled “society and institutions” (93–307), and a third, entitled “historical synthesis” (311–489). The book closes with general conclusions for all four volumes (493–522), followed by a gigantic bibliography (523–85) and a wealth of useful indexes (586–638). With its detailed table of contents, this volume is designed as a practical working tool.

In this book, Lester L. Grabbe places the Jewish world in its Roman context, with useful developments on each emperor of the period, on the imperial cult, on the administration of the Roman Empire, and so on. He deals with highly complex issues that are usually left out of handbooks, such as the esoteric arts (191–98) or angelology (253–56). He includes some studies on mystical and gnostic trends (174–201), on the canonization of biblical books (212–22), on the Jewish relationship to images (222–25), and so on. This book will therefore be useful not only to historians of Judaism and early Christianity but also to specialists in religious studies and historians working on the provincial societies of the Roman world. Written in a limpid and pleasant style, it will even be within the reach of any enlightened reader.

Grabbe’s knowledge of current research is evident on every page. Abandoning older, often Marxist-inspired studies, he thinks, for example, that the worship of the temple of Jerusalem was not an economic burden for the region but rather an exceptional source of prosperity (104), in agreement with the studies (not mentioned) of Hayim Lapin;³ he estimates that Judea was prosperous in Roman times (93–111, 137) and, in particular, that taxes were light, in agreement with works that are too recent to be cited;⁴ he discusses the debate between Steve Mason and Jodi Magness concerning the fate of the sicarii of Masada.⁵ These examples could be multiplied

3. Hayim Lapin, “Feeding the Jerusalem Temple. Cult, Hinterland, and Economy in First-Century Palestine,” *JAJ* 8 (2017): 410–53.

4. Anthony Keddie, *Class and Power in Roman Palestine: The Socioeconomic Setting of Judaism and Christian Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Michaël Girardin, *L’offrande et le tribut: Histoire politique de la fiscalité en Judée hellénistique et romaine (200 av. J.-C.–135 apr. J.-C.)* (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2022).

5. Steve Mason, *A History of the Jewish War, A.D. 66–74* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Jodi Magness, *Masada: From Jewish Revolt to Modern Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

endlessly. This book offers a comprehensive overview of the most up-to-date research. It adopts well-balanced and logical conclusions on each topic.

In the end, reading this volume and the first three raises only one critical question: the choice to draw up a catalog of sources at the beginning of each volume. While this makes sense in general, it also poses some difficulties. For example, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs are presented here (69–71), but as they may have been partially produced in the Hellenistic period or, on the contrary, may only be a Christian work from the beginning of the third century,⁶ I wonder about its place in the volume devoted to the period from 4 BCE to 150 CE. Similarly, if it is true that rabbinic literature was produced in the Roman period, it has already been used in volume 3 (e.g., 421 on the rebellion during the reign of Alexander Jannaeus). In addition, in order not to multiply the pages unnecessarily, Grabbe has made the judicious choice not to repeat here the references already provided in the previous volumes concerning Greek and Roman authors (81), which implies, for the reader, that this volume is not self-sufficient. One wonders, then, whether Emil Schürer's choice of two separate volumes for the sources might not still be the simplest one. No matter.

As this project draws to a close, we must above all congratulate and thank Grabbe for having brought it to a successful conclusion. Even if research is still in progress, this book is undoubtedly destined to become an indispensable monument that will be of invaluable service to all studies of themes, whatever they may be, concerning Jews and Judaism in the Roman period.

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6. For a useful and short summary of the debate, see, e.g., Vered Hillel, "Patriarchs, Testaments of the Twelve," in *T&T Clark Encyclopedia of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and Loren T. Stuckenbruck (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 1:411–15.

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