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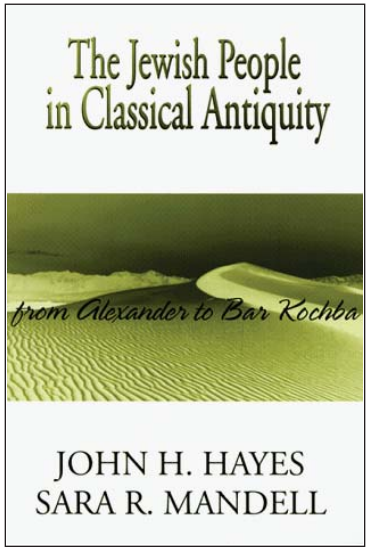

The Jewish People in Classical Antiquity: From Alexander to Bar Kochba

John H. Hayes and Sara R. Mandell

(Louisville, KY Westminster/John Knox, 1998)
246 pp. $28.00 (paperback)

Reviewed by Sidnie White Crawford

In the last 50 years, our knowledge of the "classical" period in Judea has been growing by leaps and bounds. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other archaeological treasures has provided fresh insight into this era of Greek and Roman domination. As a companion volume to *A History of Ancient Israel* by John Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (Philadelphia/London: Westminster/SCM, 1986), this book begins where the former volume left off, with Alexander the Great's conquest of the ancient Near East in 333/332 B.C.E. It concludes two hundred years later with the Jewish defeat in the Second Revolt against Rome (132–135 C.E.) led by Bar Kochba. Authors John Hayes, of Emory University, and Sara Mandell, of the University of South Florida, are to be congratulated for synthesizing the newest material in a user-friendly format.

Some of the latest thinking about the period is immediately evident in their text. Take, for example, their treatment of Roman influence in the area. Older surveys note limited contacts between Judea and Rome during the Maccabean period (142–63 B.C.E.), when the Maccabee family established an independent Jewish state; direct Roman influence is generally dated to the conquest of Judea by the Roman general Pompey in 63 B.C.E. Hayes and Mandell, however, see Roman influence as far more pervasive in the second century B.C.E., beginning with the Isthmian Proclamation in 196 B.C.E. (Rome's equivalent of the Monroe Doctrine concerning the Near East) and the Roman defeat of Antiochus III (a Seleucid ruler who had conquered Judea about 10 years earlier) in 191 B.C.E. While all scholars might not agree on the extent of Roman influence, Hayes and Mandell do an excellent job of considering the wider historical context for Judean history.

Given that this book is a survey, the authors often present a historical construct without complete argumentation. The careful reader will note that many controversial items are passed over in silence. For example, when Hayes and Mandell discuss the Essenes, they state that the group came into being in the third century B.C.E., produced 1 Enoch and Jubilees, broke with the Jerusalem establishment over the change from the solar to the lunar calendar and exiled themselves to the city of Damascus. Any one of these statements is highly controversial, as a quick perusal of Dead Sea Scroll literature will reveal. The reader is warned against accepting Hayes and Mandell's reconstructions as the product of scholarly consensus.

Nevertheless, this is an excellent book for upper-level college and graduate students or anyone with a working knowledge of Judaism in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. (The neophyte would do better to begin elsewhere, however, as the authors assume knowledge of certain terms, such as Macedonian, Seleucid, 1 and 2 Maccabees, and Josephus.) All in all, Hayes and Mandell should be commended for their achievement.

Sidnie White Crawford is an associate professor and chair of classics at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

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