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Special Issue: The Impact of the Hellenistic and Roman Empires upon Israel: A Comparative Perspective

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This special issue of the *Journal for the Study of Judaism* contains five papers that were originally presented at an open call session of the program unit Hellenistic Judaism on November 19, 2018, at the SBL Annual Meeting in Denver. The call for that session, “The Impact of the Hellenistic and Roman Empires upon Israel: A Comparative Perspective,” invited speakers to compare the ways the Hellenistic and Roman empires had an impact upon Israel, and the Jewish responses to the challenges of those different contexts,

The history of the people of Israel is a history of encounters with empires. Ancient historians have emphasized continuities between the Hellenistic kingdoms and the Roman empire, but how did the Jews themselves, both in Judea and the diaspora, perceive these imperial powers? How much continuity did they see between them? And in what ways were the Jewish answers to the challenges posed by these different imperial contexts similar or dissimilar?

During the 2018 annual board meeting of the journal and its supplement series, subsequent to that session, those board members who had attended the session proposed to invite the speakers to rework and submit their articles to our journal. All presenters agreed, and although the usual double-blind review process was impossible, each article received criticism from one of the members of our editorial board, in all cases leading to substantive revisions of the original articles. The five articles in this special issue indeed all address the original call of the Hellenistic Judaism session, by focusing on the comparative perspective, analyzing through case studies, how and why Jewish responses to the Hellenistic and Roman imperial contexts did differ.

As editor, I wish to thank the two chairs of the Program Unit Hellenistic Judaism, Lutz Doering and Sandra Gambetti, for conceiving of and organizing this session; Katell Berthelot, chair of the session, for asking the speakers on behalf of the journal to contribute to this special issue; the six authors of the five articles, for their willingness to contribute and substantively and promptly revise their articles; four members of our editorial board, Steve Mason, John Collins, Sarit Kattan Gribetz, and Ben Wright, for providing important feedback; as well as this issue's copy-editor, Diederik Broeks, and the journal's desk-editor, Brenda Kaldenbach, for their assistance and professional work in a time of crisis.