
In this volume of essays, many prominent scholars offer articles on selected topics in their respective areas of expertise in dialogue with the works of Albert Baumgarten. The introduction (Michael Bar-Asher Siegal, Jonathan Ben-Dov, and Eyal Regev, “Albert Baumgarten: Contextualizing the Ancient Jewish Experience,” ix–xv) outlines the book’s goal. In it, the authors relate that they asked Albert Baumgarten about his academic interests when organizing the present volume. He responded: “Perhaps the most important major theme in my work has been the determination to contextualize ancient Jewish experience as a way of shedding more comprehensive light on ancient times” (ix). The authors note this theme dominates Baumgarten’s career, beginning with his decision to enroll in doctoral studies in Greek and Roman history at Columbia University rather than maintaining his association with the Jewish Theological Seminary. This allowed him, as Baumgarten acknowledges, to shed light on our understanding of the Greco-Roman world by means of Jewish evidence. Baumgarten’s works, largely starting with his dissertation under Morton Smith, spanned a vast array of subjects from ancient history, rabbinic literature, to Greek sources that shed light on ancient Jewish society and Jewish sectarianism. Because of his unique academic background and wide-ranging interests, Baumgarten has played a major role in the synthesis of three main sources on ancient Jewish sects: rabbinic literature, Greek writings by Jews and gentiles, and the New Testament. In addition, Baumgarten is recognized as a pioneer in using social-scientific models to study Second Temple Jewish history. Consequently, because of his diverse scholarship, the editors have invited a vast array of scholars to contribute original articles in dialogue with
his publications. The following review briefly summarizes the book’s contents by each section and concludes with some remarks on the entire volume.

Section 1, “Second Temple Studies,” is the largest part of the book and includes the following nine articles. Gabriele Boccaccini (“Jewish Scholarship on the Second Temple Period from the Renaissance to Albert I. Baumgarten,” 3–20) explores Jewish scholars who have contributed to Second Temple studies since the Renaissance. Noting that Medieval Jewish scholarship was not interested in the study of Second Temple Judaism and Christian origins, and instead focused on the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic literature, Boccaccini traces the revival of interest in Judaism to the Renaissance, under the influence of Christian kabbalists. He writes that this largely began with the “rediscovery” of Flavius Josephus, as well as the availability of the first printed editions of Sefer Yosippon. As a result of this attention, by the seventeenth to eighteenth century Christian theology began to recognize that post-biblical Judaism had prepared for Jesus and his ministry. Yet, as Boccaccini notes, anti-Judaism still featured in the writings of many Christian scholars of the period. The rise and influence of Zionism later added a political dimension in the modern era as many experts sought historical exempla from the past to link with claims of the Jewish People concerning their rights and national identity.

Martin Goodman (“Philo’s Extreme Allegorists Revisited,” 21–30) examines Philo’s brief passage in Migr. 89–93 against extreme allegorists who ignore the literal meaning of the biblical commandments in their observance of Judaism. Goodman traces allegorical readings of ancient texts in the Greek world, particularly the Homeric poems and Philo’s allegorical writings, to emphasize that late Second Temple Jews took for granted the centrality of the biblical text as the basis of their faith. Consequently, he notes that it is surprising that modern scholars are not “more shocked than they are by Philo’s description of these deviant Jews” (22). Goodman believes that Philo knew those he describes in this passage, that they likely resided in Alexandria, and that he felt uncomfortably close to them. Goodman notes that Philo’s mention of this group shows that not all Jews believed in a “common Judaism” of shared behaviors, even though such Jews constituted a minority.

Maxine L. Grossman (“The Dead Sea Sectarians: Breaking the Boundaries of an Essene-Shaped Space,” 31–48) examines Pliny’s treatment of the Essenes in light of the scrolls, noting that he treats them as a non-Jewish group. This, and the celibate nature of Pliny’s treatment of the Essenes, Grossman notes, is inconsistent with the scrolls’ evidence for women in the sectarian movement and their presence in Qumran’s cemetery. She argues that we should not use the term “Essene” in connection with Qumran at all, except when discussing
the movement described in the classical sources. She agrees with Baumgarten
that celibacy poses the greatest challenge for reading the scrolls in light
of the Essenes.

Charlotte Hempel (“Self-Fashioning in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Thickening the
Description of What Rule Texts Do,” 49–65) examines the Rule Texts, particu-
larly the Damascus Document and the Community Rule, as refined literary
creations on par with the emerging Bible. Building on Baumgarten’s insistence
that we should not accept the self-description of our subjects as the final word,
Hempel proposes that scholars view the Rule texts as offering accounts of care-
fully curated communities that serve to create group identity as well as reflect-
ing it. Grossman highlights kinship relationships and economic deprivation
to show that the members of the movement reflected in these texts (re-)fash-
ioned their identity as they joined, remained in, or left the movement, while
struggling with kinship and economic pressures.

Sylvie Honigman (“Social and Economic Upheavals and the ‘De-
Traditionalization’ of Judean Society in Hellenistic Times: The Background to
Sectarianism,” 67–86) highlights Baumgarten’s seminal book The Flourishing
of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era,1 which she notes laid the groundwork
for understanding members of sectarian communities in terms of their social
status. Clues in the Scrolls, such as the requirement that members share prop-
erty, reveal that many came from the economic, social, and educational elite.
Community members nevertheless maintained kinship ties. Surveying a vast
array of literary and archaeological evidence, Honigman shows that several
social and economic problems were recurrent or endemic in Judea, particu-
larly those that involved deportations, the destruction and relocation of village
communities, and individual flight from fiscal and economic oppression, par-
ticularly from the efficient and sometimes oppressive levying of taxes by the
Ptolemies in Syria and Phoinikē.

Steve Mason (“John of Gischala and Simon bar Giora from Gerasa: A
National Revolt?,” 87–108) examines John of Gischala and Simon son of
Giora(s), whom Josephus referred to as the two “tyrants” largely responsible for
Jerusalem’s destruction. Mason sees the human past as chaotic and unknowa-
ble in any comprehensive way. Consequently, he believes the task of the histo-
rian is the investigation of problems. In his enlightening analysis of the causes
of the outbreak of the First Jewish Revolt, Mason proposes that Jerusalem’s
enduring conflicts were not with Rome, but with its aggrieved neighbors,

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1 Albert I. Baumgarten, The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era. JSJSup, 55 (Leiden:
Brill, 1997).
particularly Samaria beginning with the Hasmoneans, who destroyed its temple. This situation changed under Nero, who used Samaritan soldiers in Judea. Mason notes problems with Josephus’s different depictions of John and Simon. He emphasizes that neither fled to Jerusalem to fight the Romans: neither had any long-term plan to fight Titus; and neither led a revolt against Rome from Jerusalem. Rather, both were largely stuck in the city by circumstances beyond their control.

Eyal Regev (“The Practice of Piety: The Puritans and Qumran,” 109–126) compares several aspects of Puritan ideology with the rites, practices, and spiritual life of the Qumran sects. Recognizing that the term “Qumran sectarians” was not a unitary group, he highlights similarities between these movements and the Puritans, particularly their shared sense of guilt and sin. Regev shows that a comparison between these groups helps us better to understand the system of worship at Qumran, which included confessions, prayers, communal treatises, and wisdom tests designed for private worship and contemplation.

Daniel R. Schwartz (“Who Brought on Antiochus's Decrees?: On the Chaotic and ‘Worthless’ Prehistory of Bickerman’s Gott der Makkabäer,” 127–46) examines Bickerman’s influential thesis that Jewish Hellenizers led Antiochus Epiphanes to impose his decrees against Judaism. Schwartz, noting that several scholars, including Baumgarten, have looked to the contemporary context in which Bickerman lived to explain the development of his unique thesis, takes a different approach. Schwartz shows that the genesis of his influential theory rests in an earlier book that he deemed “worthless.” After examining Bickerman’s scholarship before his influential publication, Schwartz demonstrates that he later came to the realization that the Epitomator’s interpretation preserved in his version of 2 Maccabees differs from its author, Jason. It was this new understanding, and the Epitomator’s view that sin was the source of the problem and not, as in 1 Maccabees, a clash between Judaism and Hellenism, that ultimately led Bickerman to his famous conclusion. Schwartz, through diligent detective work, shows that Bickerman was greatly influenced in the development of his thesis by Constantin Gutberlet’s 1920 commentary on 2 Maccabees.

Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra (“The Place of 4QMMT in the Corpus of Qumran Manuscripts: Beyond the Susman-Schiffman Dichotomy,” 147–62) examines the consensus that the core group of Yahadic texts are to be associated with the Essenes, some of whom lived at Qumran, and who practiced a halakah found in 4QMMT. The legal interpretation in this Qumran text is commonly held to have overlapped with those of the Sadducees described in early rabbinic

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2 E.J. Bickerman, Der Gott der Makkabäer Untersuchungen über Sinn und Ursprung der makka-
bäischen Erhebung (Berlin: Schocken, 1937).
literature. Stökl Ben Ezra examines a third option: MMT’s author did not live at Qumran, was not a member of the Yahad movement that authored the core sectarian texts but was a Sadducee whose work later became part of the collection known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Section II, “Rabbinics and Early Christianity,” includes the following seven contributions. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal (“Public Confession in the Babylonian Talmud and in Contemporary Christian Sources,” 165–88) explores how public confession in the Babylonian Talmud, especially in Tractate Soṭa, is found and explained in primary sources from the ancient Near East, biblical, and rabbinic literature. Although not arguing for a direct influence, the author highlights similar discussions in Christian writings whose attitudes towards confession help us better to understand the rabbinic corpus. Both bodies of literature, in particular, emphasize the benefit of enlisting the community to be part of the process of repentance.

Jonathan Ben-Dov (“Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi and the Roman Year,” 189–204) investigates neglected debates in ancient rabbinic sources in which Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi embraces the Roman Julian year and compromises the all-encompassing authority of the rabbinic luni-solar year. Ben-Dov notes that the position this rabbi espouses denies the typical rabbinic emphasis on the role of human agency in time reckoning, which he suggests may be explained as a political-economic act or as evidence for an interest in cosmology, especially tracing the sun’s path, that arose in the Rabbi’s generation.

Shaye J. D. Cohen (“Are Women and Gentiles ‘Persons’ (Adam, Benei Adam) in the Eyes of the Mishnah?, 205–15) examines the use of the term adam in the Bible and the Mishnah. Unlike the Torah, which uses adam as an inclusive term, in the Mishnah it is restrictive and refers primarily to Israelite men. Cohen proposes this shows that in the history of Judaism there were voices that denied the humanity of gentiles from within the rabbinic tradition, and that in medieval Judaism some authorities claimed women were lesser humans than male Jews.

Steve D. Fraade (“‘Reading Leads to Translating’ in a Multilingual Context: The View from Early Rabbinic Texts (and Beyond),” 217–31) investigates several rabbinic texts that speak of targum as an extension of reading and, in some instances, as the beginning of intensive study. Translation in these writings, moreover, serves as a bridge between reading and interpretation. Targum, as used in the synagogue and private study, Fraade stresses, functions as an “inter- nal translation,” in which reading and targum are performatively interlinked for a shared audience.

Maren R. Niehoff (“Celsus’s Jew in Third-Century Caesarea: Tracing Hellenistic Judaism in Origen’s Contra Celsum,” 233–50) proposes that Origen’s Contra Celsum incorporates a Jewish critique of Christianity, authored by an Alexandrian Jew versed in Homeric scholarship that he applied to the New
Testament, which Celsus used. Origin, in turn, tried to dismantle the Jewish voice as a dilettante invention of Celsus that does not fit a real Jew, which makes Origin’s book difficult to interpret. Nevertheless, his book, Niehoff proposes, provides a glimpse of a thriving Jewish culture in Greek based on Greek Bible translations and debates over the New Testament.

Adele Reinhartz (“The Fourth Gospel and the First Century Outreach Campaign to the Gentiles,” 251–65) explores the likelihood that the Gospel of John, while possibly written by a Jew, primarily reached out to gentiles who did not belong to the Jesus movement. This interpretation addresses the Gospel’s repeated references to gentiles and its pervasive use of the language of persuasion.

Adiel Schremer (“How Can Rabbinic Narratives Talk History?” 267–95) examines the problem of using rabbinic sources to reconstruct history which, as Baumgarten and others have highlighted, is problematic since this body of literature is profoundly a-historic in nature. Schremer focuses on miracle stories because they reveal challenges facing the authors and the tensions within which they believed they were operating. He illustrates this though the example of the tannaitic tradition of the four who entered an orchard/paradise, viewing it as a response to the disturbing fact that these rabbis had left rabbinic circles. This story attempts to conceal that at least some of these sages had left the confines of the rabbinic world. By telling a story which avoids the issue of their spiritual transgressions, the author aims at vindicating them and acquitting them of the charge of heresy. The result is a tale in which they were spiritually injured through their use of illegitimate mystical experiences to divert their sin from heresy to a lesser transgression.

Part III, “Sociological Models and Ancient Judaism Former Students in Dialogue,” includes articles by Baumgarten’s students, all of whom are internationally recognized for their contributions in their respective fields of expertise. Stephanie E. Binder (“Contre Apion 1.183–205; 11.43: Quelle audience pour les passages attribués à Hécatée?,” 299–316) examines the historiographical treatise preserved in a quotation from Josephus’s Apion commonly identified as the work of Pseudo-Hecataeus. Through a detailed investigation of the author’s likely audience, Binder concludes that the text is pseudonymous and aimed at a Jewish-Hellenistic audience rather than a Greek one.

Shlomit Kendi-Harel (“Yom Hakippurim: Day, Year, or Eschatological Jubilee?,” 317–39), explores Yom Hakippurim as an eschatological jubilee in the Dead Sea Scrolls and related literature to explain its development into a Year of Atonement, characterized as a sabbatical year and a Jubilee with eschatological overtones. The article illustrates this through a close reading of Jubilees 50,
Divrei Moshe, and 11QMelchizedek to show how the biblical Yom Hakippurim developed into an eschatological jubilee in which the temple rituals do not take place in the entire land, and in which the day expands into a year, possibly a jubilee, without animal sacrifice.

Hillel Newman (“Religious Conviction (Religion) and Ethical Practice (Morality) in a Jewish Group in Antiquity: Strengthening a Sociological Approach,” 341–59) focuses on the link between religious conviction (“religion”) and ethical practice (“morality”) in the Qumran community. Through an analysis of the Damascus Document, the author highlights the extent to which the Qumran community acted in a biblical and Hellenistic context to sanction a perceived connection between religion and morality. The obligatory social code of this group is restricted to those who follow the same religious convictions.

Samuele Rocca (“The Jews among the Middle Ruling Class of Roman Italy?: An Elaboration of a Thesis by Paul Veyne,” 361–78) builds on the work and terminological insights of the Roman historian Paul Veyne to argue that the Jewish communitarian leadership (“notables”) were part of the “middle ruling class” of Rome. Rocca supplements Veyne’s understanding of social class to show that upper-class Jews of Roman Italy belonged to a peculiar sub-culture of the plebeian elite. Rocca demonstrates this through an extensive study of archaeological evidence and inscriptions.

Section V, “Epilogue,” contains reflections from Baumgarten’s children Elisheva, Shoshana, Margalit, and Naama Baumgarten (“Remembering it Well: In Lieu of a Retrospective,” 381–84) discussing his scholarship from a familial perspective, which highlights his love of Broadway musicals, vaudeville theater, and his interest in the people writing history and what influenced them.

This volume is unique among the many multi-authored books dealing with Second Temple Judaism, Christianity, rabbinic literature, and related fields, for the breadth of its coverage. No scholar will be familiar with everything covered in this volume, which makes it an invaluable reference book. Attracting many of the leading scholars in their respective disciplines, in addition to some of Baumgarten’s most successful former students, the editors have produced a valuable work that virtually every scholar interested in Second Temple Judaism, Christianity, and rabbinic literature should consult. Although many

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of the leading experts in this book write on subjects upon which they have devoted much of their professional careers, none repeats their prior scholarship or reprints earlier publications. Rather, what makes this book unique is that, through their reflections on Baumgarten’s methodology, many of the contributors highlight their methods of doing scholarship. The bibliographies and discussions in all articles in the volume are current. This book is ideal for scholars and students alike to read in full as well as sample the best scholarship in many fields. This volume is a wonderful tribute to a scholar whose immense contributions continue to generate new scholarship in many areas of religious studies.

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