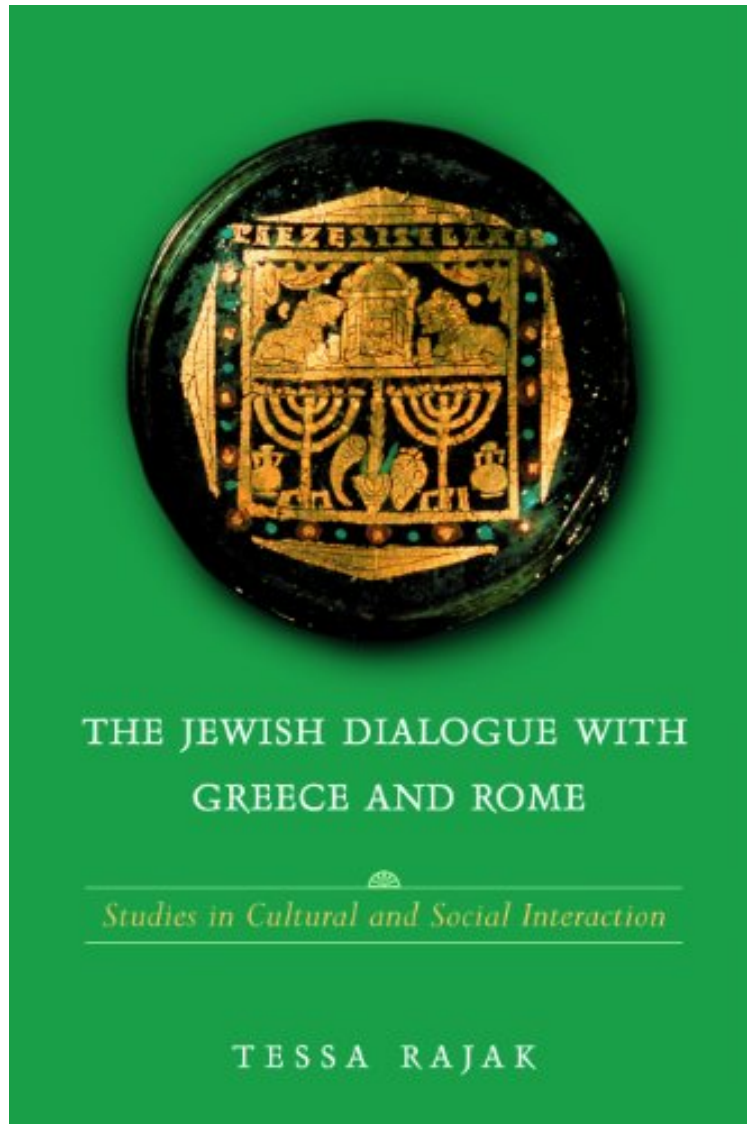


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The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction

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Reader in Classics Tessa Rajak : The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant scholarship By Jeri Rajak's collection of essays delves into the interaction between Judaism and Greece and Rome. This is a large book, close to 600 pages, and the essays cover a

wide span of subjects. The book apparently came into being because Martin Hengel, whose famous book "Judaism and Hellenism" has had enormous impact upon biblical scholarship for decades, suggested it to her. There is no way to review such a long and diverse collection, but here are some of the interesting points Rajak makes: "By the late Second Temple period, symbolic opposition to Hellenism...was an obvious part of the way in which the Jews of Palestine constructed their own identity" (p 7). Not that a distinction between "Judaism-Hellenism...is a modern invention" For there were many ways Hellenism did influence Judaism, such as in language and architecture. And, as well, Greek culture itself changed over the centuries. There is one especially interesting essay called 'Dying for the Law' in which Rajak argues that "Both the phenomenon and the ideology of martyrdom were crystallized in Greek texts written by Jews, before becoming part of Christianity" (p 101). She ties the Judaism of the Second Temple era with martyrdom tied to national identity. Difficulties for Jews living in places like Alexandria were complex. What citizenship did they really hold? "There is no doubt that the Jews, as organized communities, were often at odds with their Greek neighbors and eager for Roman backing which could forestall or terminate trouble" (p 329). Time and again, there were deliberate attacks on Jewish practices. Not to mention riots. The pagans viewed "Jews as misanthropic, self-sufficient, unwilling to share a table with any but their own kind or even to render basic human assistance" p 335). The sabbath was central to Jewish identity through the Roman world. Unlike every other citizen of the Roman era they refused to celebrate the unending pagan festivals, where theaters and city squares, even whole streets were filled with people celebrating. Everybody was there but, conspicuously, the Jews, and later, the Christians as well. This is only the briefest overview of this rich, meaty book. It is well worth the money.

This volume includes twenty-seven interdisciplinary essays written by Tessa Rajak, a well-known scholar, on aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman world. The essays derive from the author's long-standing interests in the analysis of texts as documents of cultural and religious interaction, and in how Jewish communities were woven into the social fabric of Greek cities in the Hellenistic and Roman East. The book is divided into four sections: Greeks and Jews, Josephus, The Jewish Diaspora and Epigraphy, and an epilogue, which addresses modern uses and abuses of the Greek-Jewish polarity as exemplified by three nineteenth-century writers. Scholars and students from a wide variety of backgrounds will benefit. This publication has also been published in hardback, please click here for details.

'...any scholar interested in the broad subject of ethnicity in the ancient world, and in the more narrow subject of Jewish interaction with that world, would learn much. ...a timely volume full of rich pickings and one which helpfully brings together the important thoughts of a significant player in ancient Jewish studies.' James Carleton Paget, "Journal of Theological Studies, 2002." "...most welcome, an inspired idea, and a boon for scholars and students of this subject." Erich S. Gruen, "Scripta Classica Israelica, 2002." "Rajak's scholarship is solid and well-considered a convenient collection of valuable contributions to this dynamic field." James E. Bowley, "Religious Studies , 2002." "...any scholar interested in the broad subject of ethnicity in the ancient world, and in the more narrow subject of Jewish interaction with that world, would learn much. ...a timely volume full of rich pickings and one which helpfully brings together the important thoughts of a significant player in ancient Jewish studies." James Carleton Paget, "Journal of Theological Studies", 2002. "...most welcome, an inspired idea, and a boon for scholars and students of this subject." Erich S. Gruen, "Scripta Classica Israelica", 2002. "Rajak's scholarship is solid and well-considered a convenient collection of valuable contributions to this dynamic field." James E. Bowley, "Religious Studies ", 2002." "...any scholar interested in the broad subject of ethnicity in the ancient world, and in the more narrow subject of Jewish interaction with that world, would learn much. ...a timely volume full of rich pickings and one which helpfully brings together the important thoughts of a significant player in ancient Jewish studies." James Carleton Paget, "Journal of Theological Studies," 2002. "...most welcome, an inspired idea, and a boon for scholars and students of this subject." Erich S. Gruen, "Scripta Classica Israelica," 2002. "Rajak's scholarship is solid and well-considered a convenient collection of valuable contributions to this dynamic field." James E. Bowley, "Religious Studies , 2002." "...any scholar interested in the broad subject of ethnicity in the ancient world, and in the more narrow subject of Jewish interaction with that world, would learn much. ...a timely volume full of rich pickings and one which helpfully brings together the important thoughts of a significant player in ancient Jewish studies.' James Carleton Paget, "Journal of Theological Studies, 2002. '...most welcome, an inspired idea, and a boon for scholars and students of this subject.' Erich S. Gruen, "Scripta Classica Israelica, 2002. 'Rajak's scholarship is solid and well-considered...a convenient collection of valuable contributions to this dynamic field.' James E. Bowley, "Religious Studies , 2002. About the Author Tessa Rajak is currently Reader in Classics, University of Reading, and Associate Director, AHRB Research Centre for the Study of Jewish Non-Jewish Relations.