



Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E. (Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World)

Seth Schwartz

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This provocative new history of Palestinian Jewish society in antiquity marks the first comprehensive effort to gauge the effects of imperial domination on this people. Probing more than eight centuries of Persian, Greek, and Roman rule, Seth Schwartz reaches some startling conclusions--foremost among them that the Christianization of the Roman Empire generated the most fundamental features of medieval and modern Jewish life.

Schwartz begins by arguing that the distinctiveness of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and early Roman periods was the product of generally prevailing imperial tolerance. From around 70 C.E. to the mid-fourth century, with failed revolts and the alluring cultural norms of the High Roman Empire, Judaism all but disintegrated. However, late in the Roman Empire, the Christianized state played a decisive role in "re-Judaizing" the Jews. The state gradually excluded them from society while supporting their leaders and recognizing their local communities. It was thus in Late Antiquity that the synagogue-centered community became prevalent among the Jews, that there re-emerged a distinctively Jewish art and literature--laying the foundations for Judaism as we know it today.

Through masterful scholarship set in rich detail, this book challenges traditional views rooted in romantic notions about Jewish fortitude. Integrating material relics and literature while setting the Jews in their eastern Mediterranean context, it addresses the complex and varied consequences of imperialism on this vast period of Jewish history more ambitiously than ever before. *Imperialism in Jewish Society* will be widely read and much debated.

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