

There are five possible vestiges of toponyms mentioned in the papyrus in present Wadi Musa, in which ca. 30 active springs are known (49-50): al-Baṣṣa (line 162), al-Šīrah (ll. [45], 122, 123), Kaffat al-Ḥawāwer (ll. 184-85), Madar (l. 22) and Sarg Beni.. (l. 184). These matches and their context suggest that the village of Serila, although unknown by that name today, was located immediately to the west of the center of the present town of Wadi Musa and that Ogbana was located farther east, on the higher hills (49-50).

The word *aulē*, mentioned frequently in the papyrus, is equivalent to Arabic *dārah*, denoting not merely a courtyard, but a complex of buildings with a courtyard or open space between them, often enclosed by walls (pp. 2-3 and l. 192).⁴ The dwellings in Serila included the *aulē* Darath al-Ebad and neighbouring houses, and a large *aulē* with watchtower (83-86). Most of the property allotted to the brothers in the city of Petra were units of a house complex referred to as the *aule* once owned by Valens, son of Romanos, and two houses outside this complex as well as some dry gardens (86-88).

The inherited vineyards raise the question of wine drinking. Was wine the ultimate product of the vineyards or were they cultivated only to yield grapes and raisins as in the present day Arab villages of Mt. Hebron and elsewhere? As is well known, drinking of wine was prohibited in the ancient Nabataean tradition. Later vinepresses uncovered in Bayda, at some distance from Petra, indicate that a certain transformation in this ancestral attitude took place.⁵ Several agricultural facilities in the village of Serila are mentioned in the document (86 and lines 43-46, 120-125, 197-199): threshing floors with granaries, animal enclosures, a dung depository, a dry garden (located in front of a church). The fact that no vinepresses are mentioned is noteworthy, suggesting that no wine production was associated with the vineyards.

The authors should be praised for their achievement. Let us hope that Volume V will soon follow and the challenging project, that bears upon aspects of law, history, linguistics, papyrology and more, will be finally completed.

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Deborah Levine Gera, *Judith*, CEJL; Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter, 2014. 571 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-032304-7.

Named for its protagonist, the Apocryphal *Book of Judith* recounts how Judith saves her hometown, nation, and the Temple by beheading Nebuchadnezzar of Assyria's chief of staff Holofernes, foiling his plan to penetrate the heartland as a first step toward conquering Jerusalem and the Temple. Ostensibly a historical account, a number of features make this book metahistorical. Nebuchadnezzar unites two archetypical enemies from the First Temple period: Sennacherib of Assyria, who abolished the independent kingdom of Samaria, and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia, who defeated the kingdom of Judea, exiled its inhabitants, and destroyed the Jerusalem Temple. Furthermore, although the book purportedly sketches a pre-destruction reality — a united kingdom of "Israelites" residing on the mountain ridge with its capital in Jerusalem and its northern boundary in the Jezreel Valley — the book's events take place early in the restoration era (5:19), reflecting a theocratic regime, with a Persian backbone for the military

⁴ The Hebrew word *חצר* in domestic context have a similar meaning in the Jewish Rabbinic sources.

⁵ On this issue see: J. Patrich, 'Was Dionysos, the Wine God, Venerated by the Nabataeans?', *Aram Periodical* 17 (2005), pp. 95-113; Zeyad Al-Salameen, 'Nabataean winepresses from Bayda, Southern Jordan', *ibid.*, pp. 115-127. Grape pips were found in the ez-Zantur excavations at Petra, but the evidence for cultivation was not conclusive. See: Ch. Jacquat and D. Martinoli, 'Vitis vinifera L.: wild or cultivated? Study of the grape pips found at Petra, Jordan; 150 B.C. – A.D. 400', *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany* 8 (1999), pp. 25-30.

command, while historical Persian personalities resonate throughout the text through the mediation of Greek historiography. Also reflected in the text are events from the Hasmonean revolt with Nebuchadnezzar modeled after the second-century B.C.E. archenemy Antiochus Epiphanes. Thus, deliberately compressed in this work are six centuries and a variety of cultures, languages, and nations.

Indeed, the *Book of Judith* has achieved timeless status. Attestation to its popularity among Jews in antiquity comes from its inclusion in the *Apocrypha*, and the mark it has left on Jewish literature written in the following two centuries (the *Additions to Esther*; *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*). The work became part of the Christian Greek library, merited a translation/reworking by Jerome, and was accepted with open arms by medieval Jewry. This wealth, both of the *Book of Judith* and of the process of its preservation, adoption, and reworking centuries later, emanates from each and every page of this new translation and commentary, the meticulous work of an outstanding scholar, Professor Deborah Levine Gera, who devoted many years to their preparation.

Enriching this edition's seven introductory chapters and commentary are Gera's mastery of fifth-to-fourth-century B.C.E. Greek literature, first and foremost, the writings of the Greek historians who focused on the Persian royal court (Xenophon, Ctesias, and Herodotus); her familiarity with ancient royal inscriptions; her conversance with biblical studies; and her firm grasp of non-canonical Second Temple period literature. These enable Gera to assess sources of influence and to locate borrowed elements in the construction of the protagonists, the plot, and the poetry and prose placed in the characters' mouths, as well as divergence from earlier patterns and unique features. Gera's background in literary studies is also put to good use: she notes literary constructions, textual coherence, rhetorical means, and irony and ridicule (see, e.g., her comment on Judith's lineage, pp. 27–8). Moreover, she makes judicious use of earlier studies spanning one and a half centuries (1865–2012). Gera has consulted nearly every study written directly on Judith, even those with which she does not agree, as well as studies on topics that interface with the book, as reflected in her enumeration of all the possible sources and parallels for each detail in the text.

Nor can we overlook Gera's expertise in Classical Greek, her mastery of Biblical Hebrew, and of the language that bridges the two: Septuagint Greek. These qualifications enable her not only to move easily between languages but also underpin the broad perspective that governs her suggested emendations and accurate rendition of the text into English.

Yet, it seems that Judith's author, who toiled to create a metahistorical message, occasionally leads the scholar astray and prevents her from noticing that the book gives voice to a number of fiercely debated theological-national issues from a distinct historical period. One such issue is theodicy, whether Nebuchadnezzar's campaign should be viewed as a divine punishment. As Gera notes, in Judith this is not the case; Judith maintains that the people of Israel in her generation are not sinful (as opposed to their forefathers: 8:18–20). The period of the Antiochan decrees reflects similar soul searching. Judith's declaration harmonizes with the position taken in 1 *Maccabees*, which refrains from self blame and attributes the conflict with Antiochus to the wickedness of the nations. An opposing stance is voiced in 2 *Maccabees*, which identifies the Hellenizing priests and their reforms as the underlying cause of divine anger, and in the *Apocryphon of Jeremiah*, which draws an explicit analogy between the destruction of the First Temple and the Antiochan decrees, blaming both generations for engaging in idol worship. Thus the *Book of Judith* confirms the Hasmonean outlook (leaving the preservation of Hellenistic influence in Judea in place).

Another issue worth exploring in greater depth relates to the response to the Antiochan decrees: activism vs. quietism. Gera maintains that Judith was composed in order to present a coherent theological worldview regarding activism (as well as the superiority of the Jewish God; see pp. 9–10) and that some details in the book can be explicated in the light of the Hasmonean revolt (pp. 41–2). Missing, however, from the discussion is the debate that ensued during the three-year period when the decrees were in force, especially the stance of the *Book of Daniel* on this issue, the quietism to which it adhered in expectation of (apocalyptic) divine intervention.

Similarly untreated is the link between the above dispute and the evasive divine role in Judith. Taking note of the book of Judith's Deuteronomistic view is not sufficient. The question is more complex: if God tenders aid, how will this be implemented?

Also unresolved is the definition of the ethnos at the core of the book. Although Gera retains the designations 'Israel' and 'Israelites' in her translation, she also points to the use of 'Judith' as an allegorical figure representing the Jewish people (p. 38) and speaks of 'Jews' in Samaria (p. 33, even though the term 'Jew' only applies from the Hellenistic period). This diversity raises questions as to the correct designation for the region where the events take place. Although admitting that this is anachronistic, Gera chose the term 'Palestine' (p. viii); at times, however, she uses 'Land of Israel' to denote the geographical space (p. 33), whereas the author names it Judea (4:1). Its metahistorical nature conceals the book's answer to these challenges, unique to the early Hasmonean era, of arriving at a definition of the ethnos and geographical space.

Greater attention is also worth devoting to the subject of religious conversion. Gera cites the scholarly debate regarding Achior: is this figure intended to mock the Hasmoneans for forcing the conquered peoples to convert to Judaism or to confirm their conversion (pp. 420–21)? Here too the question may be put differently: contemporary sources indicate that religious conversion was an innovation that stood at the epicenter of the period. Rejected by the priestly branch, the Hasmoneans nevertheless adopted this innovation because of demographic concerns.

Impacting the discussion of the language of the original is Gera's not taking into account fully the thought of, and the upheavals in, late-second-century Judea. On the one hand, she notes the biblical language reflected in the text and the affinity to Septuagint Greek — which suggest that this is a translation. At the same time, she notes the sporadic presence of choice 'idiomatic, even elegant' Greek, word play, and expressions that do not reflect a Hebrew base and background, as well as the author's reliance on a biblical text reflected only in the LXX (for an example, see pp. 279–80). The question of the original language of the book is closely linked to the discussion of where it was composed and the identity of its intended audience. Gera raises the possibility that *Judith* was composed in Greek, based on the precedent of the Jewish historian Eupolemus who wrote in Greek in the land of Israel some decades before the composition of *Judith* (pp. 96–97). There is, however, a distinct difference to be made between *Judith*'s ahistorical approach and Eupolemus's effort to impose precise chronological calculations on the biblical account, his knowledge of external historical events, his message of cooperation with, and respect for, the outside world, and his awareness of criteria for historical writing.

The devotion of greater space in the introduction to exploration of principle questions, such as those outlined above, alongside its stand on disputed and anomalous opinions in scholarship, could have simplified and shortened the commentary, providing the reader with a more definitive picture. For example, in a discussion of the frequently mentioned issue of who takes the initiative and implements rescue, God or Judith, Gera presents Rakel's view (1999): God takes the initiative but Judith reflects the Hellenistic attitude, in which, influenced by the philosophy of an abstract, distant God, He cannot be revealed in the world and Judith is his "epiphany" (p. 318). The rejection of this far-reaching conclusion some one hundred and fifty pages later (p. 458) could be easily overlooked by a reader who did not explore the book from beginning to end.

Let me conclude with further praise. Not only is the book esthetic, printed readably, it has very few mistakes or technical flaws among which I note: the reference (p. 308) should not be to rulers who became slaves but to rulers and slaves threatened by swords. Contrary to the statement (p. 259), *Jubilees* — a book dear to my heart — and Qumran literature give evidence for an overarching prohibition against marrying a nephew (this mistake stems from Gera's reliance on an outdated study by Grinz [1957]). A more significant technical observation: I find the decision not to divide the introductory text to the sections of the commentary and the commentary itself into paragraphs surprising. This results in crowded pages making the discussion more difficult to follow (e.g., pp. 180, 200, 204, 272, among others).

Nonetheless, these comments by no means detract from the importance of this edition, whose scope and depth obviate the necessity for any other attempts at translation and commentary on *Judith*. Gera's edition and commentary constitute a significant contribution to the field.

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Seth Schwartz, *The Ancient Jews from Alexander to Muhammad*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. xi + 190 pp. Online ISBN: 9781139649476; Hardback ISBN: 9781107041271; Paperback ISBN: 9781107669291.

After an introduction that sets down some of the questions and goals that underlie this little volume, its six main chapters survey and analyze, following a chronological structure, the history of the Jews in the approximately twelve centuries from Cyrus (despite the volume's title) to Muhammad. A short final chapter on the importance of the Jews' history for the study of antiquity, a 'Bibliographical Essay' that surveys scholarship for each of the chapters, and an index complete the work.

The book appears in a Cambridge series, 'Key Themes in Ancient History', which is 'designed in the first instance for students and teachers of Classics and Ancient History', and Schwartz is very well aware of that orientation. Schwartz frequently uses the term "internalist" to denote a point of view that is much more usual: one that studies the Jews in this period from the point of view of Jewish history, or from the point of view of Christian history. In contrast, Schwartz's own mission is to deal with the Jews as part of the ancient world, to present their history in the context of the history of the series of empires that ruled them, beginning with the Persians and the Hellenistic kingdoms and down through the Romans. The book's focus is on the Roman period, to which four of its six main chapters are devoted.

To illustrate just how conscientiously Schwartz hews to his mandate, I'll note two topics the book more or less ignores: apart from the introduction, it says next to nothing either about the history of Judaism, its theology or its law, or about the history of Christianity; and it says even less about the Jews who lived beyond the Euphrates—for although their history and cultural creativity in the *period* addressed by the book were of fundamental importance for Jewish history, and hence necessary for any "internalist" history of Jews in the period, they were beyond the world normally addressed by 'students and teachers of Classics and Ancient History'.

Schwartz has two other main aims as well (as he tells us in his Introduction, pp. 16-17), and they are basically complementary. The first is his concern to introduce his readers to the evidence for his reconstruction of the past, and to its problematics. Frequently he positions himself as something of an optimistic skeptic: he tells readers about "maximalist" and "minimalist" views concerning this or that topic, typically with the former being older and the latter more recent, and then he positions himself somewhere in between. That is, he is not so naïve or fundamentalist as to take his sources at face value, but neither is he so confined to literary interests and so uninterested in "what really happened" as to avoid building upon less than conclusive evidence, or discovering something of an historical "kernel" in an otherwise suspicious source. To some extent his warrant for doing so derives from his second additional aim, which is to show how reasonable application of models can help historians do their job responsibly. In taking these stands, just as in his choice of "Jews" (rather than "Judeans") to denote the people whose history he is recounting, Schwartz is adopting positions on issues that are subject to lively debate; he has participated in such debates in the past, and in his Introduction he clearly explains his views.

Turning to the body of the book, we can see that, as may be expected from such a birds-eye view of a millennium, it presents an easily grasped schematic account of the Jews' history in this period, especially insofar as it relates to the empires that ruled them. It is a story of up and down and up again.