

# **SCRIPTA CLASSICA ISRAELICA**

YEARBOOK OF THE ISRAEL SOCIETY  
FOR THE PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL STUDIES

**VOLUME XLI**

**2022**

The appearance of this volume has been made possible by the support of

Bar-Ilan University  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
The Open University  
Tel Aviv University  
University of Haifa

PUBLISHED BY  
THE ISRAEL SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL STUDIES  
<http://www.israel-classics.org>

Manuscripts in the form of e-mail attachments should be sent to one of these e-mail addresses:  
[scripta.classica.israelica@gmail.com](mailto:scripta.classica.israelica@gmail.com) or [isaacb@tauex.tau.ac.il](mailto:isaacb@tauex.tau.ac.il). For reviews, contact  
[yulia@bgu.ac.il](mailto:yulia@bgu.ac.il). Please visit our website for submission guidelines. All submissions are refereed  
by outside readers.

Books for review should be sent to the Book Review Editor at the following address: The Editors,  
*Scripta Classica Israelica*, c/o Department of General History, Ben-Gurion University of the  
Negev, P.O.B. 653 Beer Sheva 8410501, Israel.

Price \$50

© 2022 The Israel Society for the Promotion of Classical Studies  
*All Rights Reserved*

Camera-ready copy produced by the editorial staff of *Scripta Classica Israelica*  
Printed in Israel by Magnes Press, Jerusalem

# SCRIPTA CLASSICA ISRAELICA

YEARBOOK OF THE ISRAEL SOCIETY  
FOR THE  
PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL STUDIES

*Editor-in-Chief:* BENJAMIN ISAAC

*Editorial Board:*  
AVI AVIDOV  
GABRIEL DANZIG  
YULIA USTINOVA

*Editorial Assistant:* Hila Brokman

INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD  
OF *SCRIPTA CLASSICA ISRAELICA*

François de Callataÿ, Brussels and Paris  
Hubert Cancik, Berlin  
Averil Cameron, Oxford  
Hannah M. Cotton, Jerusalem  
Ephraim David, Haifa  
Werner Eck, Köln  
Denis Feeney, Princeton  
Margalit Finkelberg, Tel Aviv  
John Glucker, Tel Aviv  
Erich Gruen, Berkeley  
Benjamin Isaac, Tel Aviv

Ranon Katzoff, Ramat Gan  
David Konstan, New York  
Jaap Mansfeld, Utrecht  
Doron Mendels, Jerusalem  
Ra'anana Meridor, Jerusalem  
Maren Niehoff, Jerusalem  
John North, London  
Hannah Rosén, Jerusalem  
Brent Shaw, Princeton  
Greg Woolf, London

THE ISRAEL SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION  
OF CLASSICAL STUDIES

OFFICERS 2021–2022

President: Jonathan Price  
Secretary: Sylvie Honigman  
Treasurer: Shimon Epstein

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Moshe Blidstein  
Merav Haklai  
Lisa Maurice  
Andrea Rotstein  
Iris Sulimani

HONORARY MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY

Hannah Cotton  
Ranon Katzoff  
Ra'anana Meridor

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
MARGALIT FINKELBERG, Fifty Years of the Israel Society for the Promotion of Classical Studies .....	1
RACHEL ZELMICK-ABRAMOVITZ, An Epic Formula in Herodotus .....	5
CARSTEN HJORT LANGE, Augustus as Commander in Chief: Approaching Strategy and Leadership in (Civil) War .....	31
WERNER ECK, Ein Grabbau für einen Legionssoldaten in Jerusalem, erbaut von seinem Bruder. Zur Aussagekraft einer Inschrift, publiziert in IEJ 70, 2020 .....	57
JONATHAN PRICE AND MORDECHAI AVIAM, A Greek Inscription and Architectural Fragments, Possibly of a Synagogue, from Sejara (Ilaniya) .....	63
JOSEPH PATRICH, ERAN MEIR AND AHARONI AMITAI, A Provincial (Praetorium) in Tiberias? The Archaeological Finds and the Evidence of the Literary Sources .....	77
<b>REVIEW ARTICLE</b>	
Ellen Birnbaum and John M. Dillon, <i>Philo of Alexandria: On the Life of Abraham. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary</i> (by Cana Werman) .....	109
<b>BOOK REVIEWS</b>	
Robin Lane Fox, <i>The Invention of Medicine: A History from Homer to Hippocrates</i> (by Ido Israelowich) .....	119
Tosca Lynch and Eleonora Rocconi (eds.), <i>A Companion to Ancient Greek and Roman Music</i> (by Amir Yerucham) .....	120
Tazuko Angela Van Berkel, <i>The Economics of Friendship: Conceptions of Reciprocity in Classical Greece</i> (by Gabriel Danzig) .....	122
Daniela Dueck, <i>Illiterate Geography in Classical Athens and Rome</i> (by Jerry Toner) ....	125
Erich S. Gruen, <i>Ethnicity in the Ancient World—Did It Matter?</i> (by Craige Champion)	128
John Glucker, <i>Classics and Classicists. Selected Essays, 1964-2000</i> (by Voula Tsouna)	131
María-Paz de Hoz, Juan Luis García Alonso and Luis Arturo Guichard Romero (eds.), <i>Greek Paideia and Local Tradition in the Graeco–Roman East</i> (by Balbina Bäßler)	134
Jonathan J. Price, Margalit Finkelberg and Yuval Shahar (eds.), <i>Rome: An Empire of Many Nations: New Perspectives on Ethnic Diversity and Cultural Identity</i> (by David Potter) .....	136
Katell Berthelot and Jonathan Price (eds.), <i>In the Crucible of Empire: The Impact of Roman Citizenship upon Greeks, Jews and Christians. Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion</i> (by Lucia Cecchet) .....	140
Oswaldo Cavallar and Julius Kirshner, <i>Jurists and Jurisprudence in Medieval Italy: Texts and Contexts</i> (by Ido Israelowich) .....	142
<b>OBITUARIES: KLAUS BRINGMANN</b> (by YITZHAK DANA) .....	145
<b>DISSERTATIONS IN PROGRESS</b> .....	147
<b>PROCEEDINGS: THE ISRAEL SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL STUDIES</b> .....	153

Erich S. Gruen, *Ethnicity in the Ancient World—Did It Matter?* Berlin and Boston: Walter De Gruyter, 2020. 210 pp. ISBN: 978-3-11-068565-7.

In his latest book, Erich Gruen (G.) takes up some old chestnuts that have preoccupied him for decades: themes of ethnicity and cultural identity in antiquity. On these topics, G.'s earliest studies focused on republican Rome: *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy* (1990) and *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (1992). He later turned his attention to the Jewish experience in the Greek and Roman worlds: *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (1998); *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (2002); *The Construct of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism* (2016); and *Fragmentary Jewish Historians and Biblical History* (2019). The present volume is wide-ranging, encompassing Greek, Roman, Jewish, and early Christian constructions of group identity (Chapters 10 and 11 [pp. 185–214], examine the putatively “racial reflections” of Paul and the idea of Christians as a “third race,” respectively). In some ways, the book complements the earlier work, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (2011). The present study tackles race and ethnicity in the ancient world through a series of case studies, several of which focus on particular authors ranging from Herodotus to Philo, Josephus, and Paul.

G. opens with consideration of the quintessential Greek term for ethnic articulation and contrast: *barbaros* (Chapter 1: “Were Barbarians Barbaric?,” 11–41). The title cleverly indicates the trajectory of the argument to follow, which is in keeping with overall findings of *Rethinking the Other*. According to G., Greek society was accommodating of what we should call ethnic difference; much more multi-cultural than many modern scholars have allowed. The chapter serves as a preview of more in-depth studies to follow, touching on the barbarian category in Herodotus, Polybius, Diodorus, Strabo, Philo, and Josephus. G. concludes (41), “Greeks prized their distinctiveness, to be sure. But that distinctiveness did not require a branding of the non-Greek as sub-human, uncivilized, and beneath contempt....that disposition stood at a considerable distance from any concept of congenital inferiority. Racism had not yet reared its ugly head.”

Chapter 2 (“Herodotus and Greekness,” 42–55) argues that Herodotus routinely explodes putatively rigid group stereotypes, emphasizing borrowing, sharing, and adaptation. Herodotus, according to G., had reservations about any notions of “unadulterated ethnicity.” The historian certainly respected the power of customs in shaping human behavior (*locus classicus*, 3.38.1–4), but he knew well that they were themselves susceptible of transformation, modification, and even extinction. Custom as a causal explanation certainly “could not go to the heart of ethnic identity” (55).

Chapter 3 (“The Racial Judgments of Polybius,” 56–71), is a revision of a paper G. presented at an international conference on Polybius held in Thessaloniki in May of 2016. Here G. argues that a study of Polybian usage of *genos* and *ethnos*, words which should reveal stereotypical vilification and condemnation of out-groups according to some racist ideology or Hellenic cultural chauvinism, actually show no signs that the Achaean historian subscribed to ideas of innate, congenital group characteristics.

Chapters 4–5 (72–112) take up issues explored in G.'s books of 1990 and 1992 on Roman republican collective identities. As Roman imperial expansion advanced, Rome's society and culture necessarily became truly multicultural. G. paints a picture of “multiple identities,” “tangled perspectives,” and “constructed ethnicities” in republican Rome. They evinced, in G.'s felicitous phrasing, a “composite identity that could accommodate a variety of peoples” (6). There was “diversity” in “unity” here, according to G., with the nearly obligatory citation in this regard of Ennius and his *tria corda* at Gell. *NA* 17.17.1 (103). On the whole, one is inclined to agree.

Otherwise, the “politics of incorporation,” as I have called the key to Rome’s imperial success in various publications over the years, could hardly make sense. But gliding over startling events like the Bacchanalian pogrom of 186 BCE, the confiscation and burning of Greek religious texts by praetorian edict, periodic expulsions of Greek intellectuals from the metropole, or scurrilous remarks against targeted groups in Juvenal—to take but a few examples—may give us pause with some of G.’s seamless pronouncements.

Chapters 6–9 (113–184) shift the focus to Jewish “ethnicity” in antiquity, considering the Jews and mixed marriages (113–130), Hellenistic Jews’ ideas on “race” and religion (131–149), Philo and Jewish “ethnicity” (150–165), and Josephus’ “ethnic” vocabulary (166–184). Again, the thrust of the chapter is that questions of ethnicity and race are non-starters. In some instances, however, the reader may feel as if the argument takes on a Procrustean character. For example, the *Book of Tobit* seems to insist upon endogamy, and in no uncertain terms (see esp. *Tobit* 1.9, 4.12). G. admits that Tobit suggests that “some ardent advocates of tribalism were around.” (127). How many? How ardent? Of course, evidence does not allow us to answer these questions. In the conclusion to Chapter 6, G. observes, “The Bible, in short, offers little support for the thesis that mixed marriages compromised the ethnic purity of the Chosen People” (130). The cumulative impact of passages discussed in the chapter suggest that this may well have been the case. The point is simply that in some instances, contradictory evidence seems to be dismissed and absorbed into the overall reading by means of special pleading. An example is G.’s treatment of Josephus’ statement that the Zealots sought alliance with the Idumaeans because “they knew them to be a tumultuous and undisciplined *ethnos*” (*BJ* 4.231). Why should the sentiment be dismissed because some texts “express the views of characters in the story, not necessarily Josephus’ own opinion” (176)? Do they not provide evidence for Jewish ideas on Idumaeans’ “ethnicity,” just the same? Do we need the imprimatur of Josephus’ own opinion?

The same sort of argument surfaces in the Roman chapters. Evidence for “Roman racism” (Cicero, Seneca, Tacitus, Petronius, Martial, Juvenal) regarding out-groups is dismissed. Seneca, for example, calls Jews a “most wicked *gens*” (*apud* August. *CD* 6.11). But to observe that, “this is a fragment quoted by a much later author, and we do not know the context” (86) hardly diffuses it. Or take Cicero’s seemingly xenophobic statements, jettisoned as “comments from heated forensic contests” (81). If Cicero was “tailoring his rhetoric to the occasion” (82), one asks whether the rhetorical move would have made any sense, unless it struck a chord with its audience. Moreover, the point that such ideas were “tailored” for rhetorical needs of the moment is well taken. In fact, considering the interface between political elites and their non-elite constituencies, we might even call democratic Athens and republican Rome “rhetorical societies.” But we should not err in another direction and disregard an author’s sentiments because they do not fit well with the main body of his or her thought. Quentin Skinner taught us this long ago in exposing the methodological fallacy of the “mythology of coherence.” As for “ethnic” slurs in Cicero’s philosophical works (*De Natura Deorum*, *Tusculan Disputations*), they can be discounted by G., as in the case of Josephus’ characterization of Idumaeans, because they are put into the mouths of others (82).

Criticism of the book, therefore, rests on conceptual and methodological grounds. First of all, Greek, Roman, Jewish, and (even) early Christian intellectuals constituted an elite, literate minority, whose views cannot unproblematically be taken as representative of societal stances on “ethnicity” and “racism” as a whole. Moreover, as noted, the fact that an ancient author does not vouch for any particular example of “ethnic” prejudice, does not rule out evidence he presents for “ethnic” or “racial” prejudice. For an example, we read that Josephus provides instances of

hostility to “barbarians” (*BJ* 1.255; *Ant.* 15.130), which are “not in the historian’s own voice” (39). According to G., these are not the views of Josephus, and only questionably those of Herod or Vespasian. Somehow these observations are supposed to disarm the evidence. Whose ideas were they, then? How does this line of argumentation show that they had no reality? If the reader would not immediately recognize them, do passages such as these even make sense? Do they not rather argue for the prevalence of such ideas?

At a deeper level lie phenomena of “ethnicity” and “race” themselves. They are clearly emotive words, such as Koebner and Schmidt (1965) called “empire” and “imperialism.” As such, can they usefully serve as analytical categories? G. is well aware of the problem, and he sees in ethnicity “a flexible and malleable character that defies consistent or comprehensive definition” (7). For its part, “race” is more troublesome, as it “carries unwanted baggage in our time” (1). “Ethnicity” consequently becomes the preferred term, even though “severance of race from ethnicity seems increasingly hollow” (2). G. for the most part leaves the problem there, and a certain amount of slipperiness and fuzziness therefore plagues the book throughout. Would it not have been better to define and delimit these terms as they would be used, thereby rendering them intelligible tools for analysis? Long ago Michael Banton and Fredrik Barth provided reasonably clear working definitions on race and ethnicity, respectively, upon which one could build (G. mentions Barth in a footnote; Banton’s works are absent from the bibliography). On race and racism, some would say that these are constructs of relatively recent times; they had to await Gregor Johann Mendel’s experiments with peas and the Darwinian revolution. That position, by the way, could well serve G.’s general position in this book.

It is time to sum up. To my mind, the statement on methodology at the conclusion underscores the book’s major shortcoming. “Investigation of the subject here has refrained from imposing a definition or constructing a frame into which to fit the ancient evidence” (215). This means, in truth, that by the end of the book we know that the ancients did not adhere to certain pathways of thought and feeling, but we have little idea as to what those pathways might be.

These criticisms must be placed in proper context, and in closing I want to emphasize this study’s many virtues. G.’s book exhibits qualities we have come to expect from him over his stellar career: absolute mastery of sources, meticulousness of research, impeccable attention to detail (I find only one typo: failure to close parentheses in text at 207 n. 32), and an engagingly strong, even muscular, prose style. And the overall contention is convincing; namely that ancient Greeks, Romans, Jews, and early Christians did not view differences they observed in out-groups, even when they seem to express hatred for them, as stemming from some congenital, unalterable cause. The overall thesis is, in my view and with a few reservations, sound and compelling. “The book argues that ancients expressed the collective identities of their societies less in terms of ancestry, genealogy, and inherent character than in a conglomerate of traditions, practices, and shared convictions. In other words, cultural commonality counted for more than shared lineage” (6). G. states that the thesis is “clear, if controversial.” I do not find it to be so controversial, but for the reasons stated above (definitional and methodological), I think it could be somewhat clearer.

Craige Champion

Syracuse University  
[cbchamp@syr.edu](mailto:cbchamp@syr.edu)