

REVIEW

Daniel R. Schwartz, Zeev Weiss (eds.), *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple (Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity – 78)*, Brill, Leiden–Boston 2012, pp. 548; ISBN 978-90-04-21534-4; ISSN 1871-6636.

The destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 AD is generally perceived as an event that had an overwhelming effect not only on the later fates of the Jews, but especially on the history of Judaism. The main reason for this is that according to many scholars the destruction of the religion's central place of worship led to radical changes both in the religious life of Jews and in the social structure of Judea; one of the results of this would be the disappearance of the priestly social group. This picture has developed to a considerable degree as a result of rabbinical tradition. The correctness of this view was often questioned by scholars even in the 19th century (a concise overview of previous research in this field can be found in the D.R. Schwartz's introduction (*Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? Three Stages of Modern Scholarship, and a Renewed Effort*, pp. 1–19). It was also analyzed systematically during a series of seminars which took place in 2006–2009 at Scholion Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Jewish Studies of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. This series was closed by an international symposium held in January 2009 attended by scholars from Israel as well as several invited from Germany, Switzerland, the USA and the United Kingdom. Brill Publishers have provided us with the opportunity to see the contents of the lectures given at the symposium in print.

The subject of most of the 20 studies gathered in the book is various kinds of religious issues, yet there are also a number that go further. The editors have divided them into several groups, whose titles do not present particular difficulties in establishing what their topic is: I. *Sons of Aaron and Disciples of Aaron: Priests and Rabbis before and after 70*; II. *"The Place" and Other Places*; III. *Art and Magic*; IV. *Sacred Texts: Exegesis and Liturgy*; V. *Communal Definition – Pompey, Jesus, or Titus: Who Made a Difference?*

It is difficult to pick out any of these studies in particular, as such a selection is of course subjective in nature. To express a more general opinion, I believe that each of the texts in the volume deserves attention. Their subject is important for understanding and correctly interpreting various phenomena from the field of Judaism and Jewish culture, both in Judea itself and in the diaspora, and both in the period preceding the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and in the later one (M. Himmelfarb, *"Found Written in the Book of Moses": Priests in the Era of Torah*, pp. 23–41). An important claim that appears in the discussions of various authors is that the destruction of the Temple in no way caused dramatic consequences for the vigor with which Jews practiced their religion, nor did it lead to the complete disappearance of the priesthood (H. Birenboim, *"A Kingdom of Priests": Did the Pharisees Try to Live Like Priests?* (pp. 59–68); Z. Weiss, *Were Priests Communal Leaders in Late Antique Palestine? The Archaeological Evidence* (pp. 91–111); J. Leonhardt-Balzer, *Priests and Priesthood in Philo: Could He Have Done*

without Them? (pp. 127–153); E.G. Chazon, *Liturgy before and after the Temple's Destruction: Change or Continuity?* (pp. 371–392); M.D. Swartz, *Liturgy, Poetry, and the Persistence of Sacrifice* (pp. 393–412); N. Sharon, *Setting the Stage: The Effects of the Roman Conquest and the Loss of Sovereignty* (pp. 415–445). In spite of the destruction of the Temple, many of the religious phenomena seen as typical of the era before 70 CE did not vanish (J. Magness, *Sectarianism before and after 70 CE* (pp. 69–89); G. Bohak, *Jewish Exorcism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple* (pp. 277–300); L.I. Levine, *The Emergence of a New Jewish Art in Late Antiquity* (pp. 301–339)), and those often counted among the consequences of the Year's events in fact appeared much earlier. They came about under the influence of the social and political realities in which the Jewish diaspora lived, or as a result of the influence of cultural neighborhood (N. Hacham, *Sanctity and the Attitude towards the Temple in Hellenistic Judaism* (pp. 155–179); M. Tuval, *Doing without the Temple: Paradigms in Judaic Literature of the Diaspora* (pp. 181–239); N. Vilozny, *The Rising Power of the Image: On Jewish Magic Art from the Second Temple Period to Late Antiquity* (pp. 243–276)). However, the conclusions formed by analysis of the various pieces of evidence do not give grounds for stating that the destruction of the Temple had no effect on the religious life of the Jews (P. Mandel, *Legal Midrash between Hillel and Rabbi Akiva: Did 70 CE Make a Difference?* (pp. 343–370); J. Frey, *Temple and Identity in Early Christianity and in the Johannine Community: Reflections on the "Parting of the Ways"* (pp. 447–507)). The observations, conclusions and interpretations presented on the pages of this book prove that the events of the year 70 CE had lesser effect on the further development of Judaism than it has come to be thought. We may also draw the conclusion that the overtones of the events are of greater importance to us than to their contemporaries (R.A. Clemens, *Epilogue: 70 CE after 135 CE – The Making of a Watershed*, pp. 517–536). It is hard, though, not to agree that a fuller assessment of the influence of the destruction of the Temple on later development of Judaism is hampered by the small number of sources preserved (M. Goodman, *Religious Reactions to 70: The Limitations of the Evidence*, pp. 509–516).

Owing to the rich contents of this book, it should constitute important reading for anybody interested in the issue of the significance of 70 CE for the history of Jews and Judaism.

Edward Dąbrowa