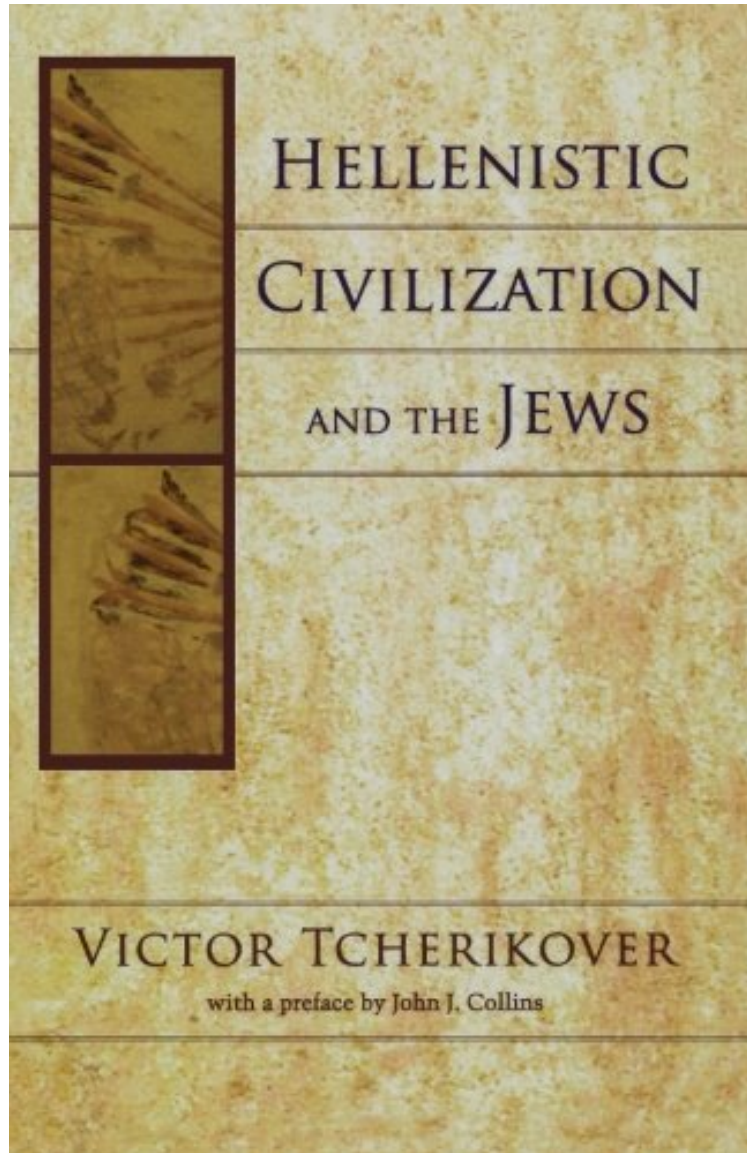


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Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews

Victor Tcherikover

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Victor Tcherikover : Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews:

24 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Abomination desolation By Mens Sana The persecution of Jewish religion by Antiochus IV Epiphanes has puzzled historians for many years, because the Syrians were generally very tolerant of other religions, as long as taxes were paid. So why did Antiochus outlaw the Jewish religion and profane the Temple? Some writers just gave up and characterized Antiochus as "mad." Tcherikover offers the first completely

plausible explanation I've seen: the Jewish Hellenists (the Ahmed Chalabi's of their time) in Jerusalem suckered Antiochus into supporting their power grab. When the larger Jewish population refused to acquiesce, Antiochus, who had bought the Hellenist line, thought he was being rebelled against. As a result, he attempted to wipe out the enemies of the Jewish Hellenists. Thus, years of war and the "abomination that makes desolate." (The "abomination" is also a sore-thumb clue that the Book of Daniel was written in this period.)Tcherikover was one of the first historians to find the beginnings of the Hasidim in the period of the Hasmonaean revolt, and to trace the Hasidic party as it developed into the party of the Pharisees, which in turn formed the basis for the Rabbinate. So far, the only other title I've seen comparable to the Tcherikover is Emil Schrer's multi-volume, time-payment plan "History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ" (Geza Vermes' New English Edition). If you're on a tight budget, this is the one to buy. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A classic, written to be studied by all those who care about the co-relation between the Hellenic civilization and the Jewish. By Almir Lima Andrade A classic, written to be studied by all those who care about the co-relation between the Hellenic civilization and the Jewish world. I was very happy with the purchase. Delivery carried out successfully and within combined. A new safe option for me, I got in my house here in Brazil. I recommend both the book and the website Almir 30 of 33 people found the following review helpful. This Book is in the Wrong Place if it is not in your Library By Kevin Morrow Tcherikover introduces a new approach to the concept of "Hellenization" in the eastern lands of the Mediterranean world by approaching the topic from the historical situation prominent both in Syria and Egypt. Unlike other historians who deal with the pan-Hellenic campaigns of Alexander and the extensive results that Hellenism had in the Levantine countries of Syro-Palestine, Tcherikover introduces the concept of "dualism" that was a major factor in the relationship between the Greek elements and the ancient oriental elements. This provides a valuable perspective when considering the extent of Greek influence on Syria-Palestine during the Hellenistic Age. In light of the historical evidence, Hellenism encountered difficulty "taking root" in Syria-Palestine, and in some respects the Greeks were influenced more by oriental culture. This was due in large part to the establishment of cleruchies (katoikiai) or agricultural communities, inhabited with recruits from the army (p.20). Says Tcherikover, "The fate of the military settlers in Egypt demonstrated decisively that the oriental village was not only uninfluenced by the people of Greek culture . . . but possessed the power of fusing the stranger with itself . . ." (21). Tcherikover provides many important considerations as a means for understanding the ineffectiveness of Greek culture in Syria-Palestine. First, one must understand that the initial "bearers" of Greek civilization were not the "standard-bearers" of Greek cultural expression; neither were they its patrons. Rather, they were soldiers who became farmers and merchants (115). Following in their footsteps was a mixed group of traders, peasants, mercenaries and "undefined persons" without a fixed occupation (34). Says Tcherikover, "It is doubtful if they were capable of shouldering the great task of diffusing Hellenism among the eastern nations" (34). The second factor concerns the method of establishing Greek poleis, or more precisely, the conversion of ancient oriental cities into Greek poleis. First, every Greek town was founded near or on an ancient urban center. Secondly, the local population received all rights and privileges as Greek citizens. This was a part of the "international fusion" policy common with the Ptolemies and Seleucids in Syria-Palestine, for it had been the policy of Alexander. As a result of this "fusion," the current culture, long established in the region had an overriding effect on the newcomers. Another good example of how ancient customs prevailed against Hellenism is provided in Tcherikover's discussion on Koine Greek. During the Ptolemaic regime, the Egyptian language prevailed and assumed the form of a "holy tongue" and the language of the common people. In the Hellenistic Fayum, natives frequently employed the assistance of interpreters when conducting "official" business or communicating with the authorities (21). Aramaic remained both the spoken and literary tongue in Syria (34). Several other examples involve the adoption of oriental religion and the naming of towns. With the latter, it was common for the ancient name to outlive the Greek name. In Jordan, Rabbath-Ammon (Amman) survived "Philadelphia" (101). In Israel, Paneas (Banias) survived "Caesarea Philippi" (101). For the most part, it can be said that the Greek appearance in this hybrid culture was generally Greek (speech of business, architecture), but the content (religious customs, art) remained oriental in origin. Says Tcherikover, "We must be careful not to set too high an estimate on the cultural value of the Greek towns of Palestine and on their influence over the country's population" (116). The "dualism" that Tcherikover expounds throughout the book is a most interesting aspect to the study of the Hellenistic and Roman periods in the Middle East. It is crucial when evaluating the history from both the side of the Greek elements that infiltrated the east after the conquests of Alexander, and the Oriental elements. This is not the usual topic among conversations about these particular time periods. As Tcherikover stated throughout the book, many people place too high an estimate on the cultural influences of Hellenism in the Middle East without commenting on the Oriental side of the issue. It is difficult if not impossible to weigh the amount of influence on either side, but Tcherikover provides an excellent treatment on the topic. I really enjoyed reading this book and recommend it for any serious study on the Hellenistic-Roman periods (334 BCE - CE 135).

The encounter between Jews and Greeks marked one of the most revolutionary meetings in the ancient world, for in that encounter politics, economics, culture, and religion changed dramatically. Victor Tcherikover, who devoted his entire scholarly life to the study of the Hellenistic period, offers here a benchmark assessment of that encounter. In this

reprinted edition of his most famous work, including a new preface by University of Chicago Professor John J. Collins, Tcherikover uniquely combines "analyses of two of the most intriguing episodes of Jewish history in antiquity: the events that led to the Maccabean rebellion and the struggle for rights in Alexandria in the first century C.E." (from the preface).

From the Back Cover "Thorough Provocative study of contacts between Hellenism and ancient civilizations of Near East." --American Historical Association's Guide to Historical Literature About the Author Victor Tcherikover was born in 1894 in St. Petersburg. He fled Russia during the revolution and eventually went to Berlin, where he taught until 1925, when he left for Palestine. He was one of the first teachers at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.