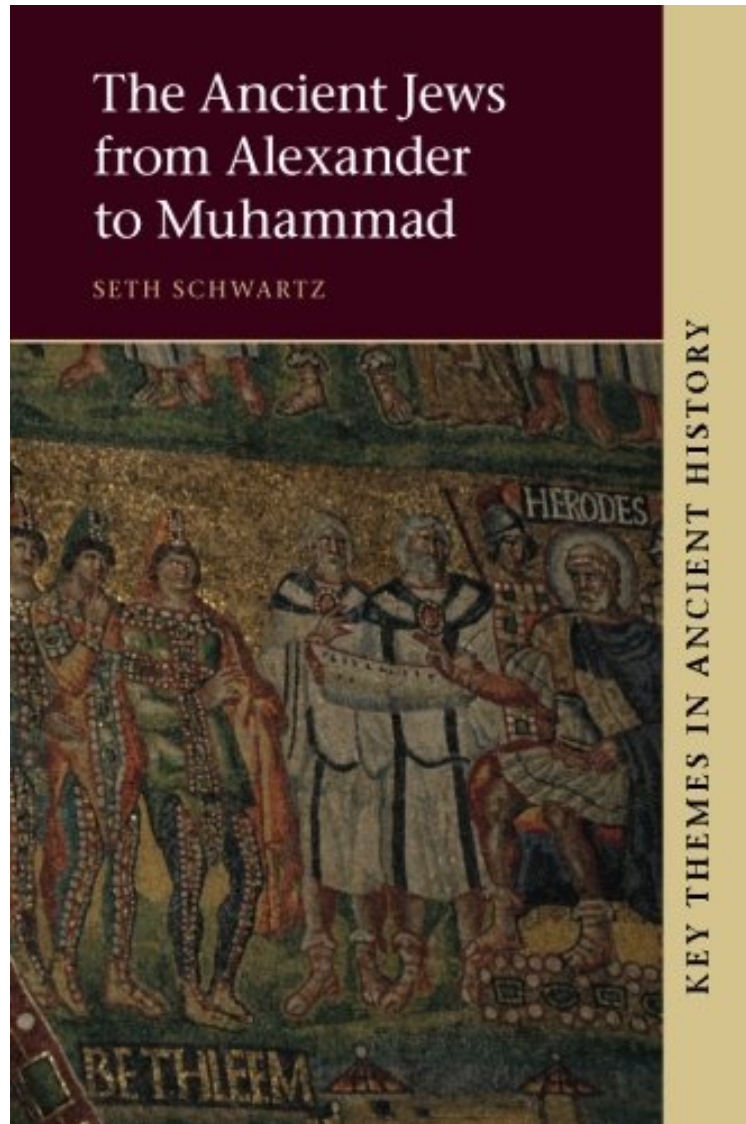


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## The Ancient Jews from Alexander to Muhammad (Key Themes in Ancient History)

Seth Schwartz

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**Seth Schwartz : The Ancient Jews from Alexander to Muhammad (Key Themes in Ancient History)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ancient Jews from Alexander to Muhammad (Key Themes in Ancient History):

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Jews in Antiquity: What We Know about and How We Know ItBy S FinehirshThere are three groups of readers who will find Seth Schwartz's new book -- "The Ancient Jews from

Alexander to Mohammed" -- a must read: 1) anyone interested in Jewish history, 2) general fans of books on Ancient History, Classicism and early Christianity, and 3) the general reader of histories who care about questions of historiography, particularly in the study of Antiquity. For those interested in Jewish History what is compelling about Professor Schwartz's latest volume is that, unlike some of the widely publicized books for a popular audience, here is the story narrated by a leading scholar in the field who is among historians who have taken a fresh naturalistic, and perhaps moderately revisionist, view of the story of Jews in the ancient world. One might be surprised to learn that there is anything new to say about a tale that has been researched and retold over and over again for the last 150 years, but this is a highly readable book that sees events and dramatis personae without looking through the distorting lens of religiosity or ideology. As the Lucius N. Littauer Professor of Classical Jewish Civilization at Columbia University and throughout his career, Professor Schwartz has contributed dozens of highly cited scholarly articles and books on Jewish antiquity, but here he has produced a book that is immediately accessible by the interested non-scholar as well as those casually curious about the topic. For the students of Jewish history, this book has to be considered an assigned text. For the wider audience of Ancient History, Classical Greece and Rome, and early Christianity, Professor Schwartz provides an eye-opening exposition of the importance of ancient Palestine in the world of Alexander's successors, Roman politics, Christianization of the empire, development of Jewish-Christian boundaries, and post-Constantine Roman law. Who knew (among us non-scholars, that is) that the Colosseum in Rome is a monument to the victory over the Jewish rebels by the Flavian emperors Vespasian and Titus -- "mission accomplished" or as they stated it: *ex manubiis belli*, "from the spoils of the war"? For all readers, this book poses the question of what can we know about the ancient world. There is discussion throughout the chapters, footnotes, and in a critical bibliographic essay on the literature in the field. But more importantly, the book grapples with the question of what is knowable about societies that are so remote in time and condition from our own and which left us extremely limited archival material. Professor Schwartz asserts a methodology that might be called tentative positivism that integrates the entire record of available text, papyri, epigraphy, coinage, and archeology, which are then infused with modern social theory to create the most likely, evidence-based minimal hypotheses. For Schwartz, a text may be sacred, but the test of historicity is context. I have been a student of Professor Schwartz -- an experience that allows me to report that the narration of "The Ancient Jews from Alexander to Mohammed" is written in his own voice with his humor, his occasional sarcasm and characteristic bluntness, his suspicion of authority including his own, and his ever present keenness of insight. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Up to date information and useful for curricular development. By Cantor R. Eichaker. Up to date information and useful for curricular development. Chronology is tedious at times when subject matter fragments for the sake of historic context. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good Stuff, Indeed! By Robert G. Better than expected!

This is an accessible and up-to-date account of the Jews during the millennium following Alexander the Great's conquest of the East. Unusually, it acknowledges the problems involved in constructing a narrative from fragmentary yet complex evidence and is, implicitly, an exploration of how this might be accomplished. Moreover, unlike most other introductions to the subject, it concentrates primarily on the people rather than issues of theology and adopts a resolutely unsentimental approach to the subject. Professor Schwartz particularly demonstrates the importance of studying Jewish history, texts and artefacts to the broader community of ancient historians because of what they can contribute to wider themes such as Roman imperialism. The book serves as an excellent introduction for students and scholars of Jewish history and of ancient history.

"This is a fine book. It gives a clear story, one that is well-founded; and it introduces readers both to the ancient sources and to modern ones, including very recent, scholarly literature." Daniel R. Schwartz, *Scripta Classica Israelica*. About the Author Seth Schwartz is the Lucius N. Littauer Professor of Classical Jewish Civilization and Professor of History and of Classics at Columbia University. He is the author of *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 BCE to 640 CE* (2001), which received the National Jewish Book Award and was a finalist for the Koret Book Award, and *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (2010).