



Judaism, the First Phase: The Place of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Origins of Judaism

Joseph Blenkinsopp

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Most studies of how early Judaism related to the non-Jewish world and how it was perceived by others start no earlier than the Hellenistic period. Joseph Blenkinsopp argues that we must go further back, to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and its temple and the liquidation of the political and religious infrastructure — monarchy, priesthood, scribalism, prophecy — which had sustained the Judean state for centuries.

Moving beyond the ideologically driven approaches of scholars over the past two centuries, he explores such pragmatic issues as the emergence of a distinctive group identity in the aftermath of the fall of the Judean state, the degree of continuity-discontinuity between national identity before the exile and competition among distinct group for legitimacy after it, and the historical realities behind the idea of a “restoration” in a fundamentally different world, with neither monarchy nor statehood and a much-diminished temple.

Judaism, the First Phase is a fresh — and potentially stunning — look at Jewish origins, tracing the legacy of Ezra and Nehemiah. Ideal for scholars and students.

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