

## BOOK REVIEW

Malka Z. Simkovich, *Discovering Second Temple Literature: The Scriptures and Stories That Shaped Early Judaism* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society/Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2018), 354 pages. Reviewed by David J. Zucker

In her Introduction to this work, Simkovich, the Crown-Ryan Chair of Jewish Studies and director of the Catholic-Jewish Studies program at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, writes of the “multicolored tapestry of Second Temple Judaism” (xviii) and the “astonishing diversity of Jewish knowledge, belief and practice during the Second Temple period” (xix). She also explains that “the Second Temple period contains the key to understanding how the Israelite religion of the Hebrew Bible became the normative Rabbinic religion as we now know it” and how in “the early centuries of the Common Era, the Rabbinic community living in the Land of Israel and other Jewish communities throughout the Roman world inherited a vibrant legacy from their Jewish predecessors who lived in the Second Temple period” (xv-xvi).

To explore this vibrant legacy, this multicolored tapestry, Simkovich divides her book into four sections. She begins in Part 1 with the “Modern Recovery of Second Temple Literature.” She takes us to the Cairo Genizah and its “find” by Solomon Schechter. Another chapter deals with the discovery (and sometimes pilfering) of thousands of manuscripts found in monasteries throughout the Mediterranean world and beyond, including recent discoveries in Afghanistan. Then there is a fascinating chapter devoted just to the Dead Sea Scrolls and its own exotic history. Part 2 focuses on “Jewish Life in the Second Temple Period,” as she centers on three communities: Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, each quite different from the other. Part 3, the “Worldviews of Second Temple Writers” divides into four sections. She begins with the Wisdom Seekers (Philo of Alexandria, and also the Letter of Aristeas). Next are the Sectarians (the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, *David J. Zucker, PhD, before retiring, served as Rabbi/Chaplain and Director of Chaplaincy Care at Shalom Park in Aurora, Colorado. He led North West Surrey Synagogue, Weybridge, Surrey, UK as their interim rabbi 2014-2017. His recent publications include The Bible's Prophets: An Introduction for Christians and Jews (Wipf and Stock: 2013); The Bible's Writings: An Introduction for Christians and Jews (Wipf and Stock: 2013); and [with Moshe Reiss, z"l] The Matriarchs of Genesis: Seven Women, Five Views (Wipf and Stock: 2015). His latest book is American Rabbis: Facts and Fiction Second Edition (Wipf and Stock, 2019). See [www.DavidJZucker.org](http://www.DavidJZucker.org).*

the Community of Qumran, the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Hasideans, the Sicarii and the Zealots, and also Philo's Therapeutae). "Interpreters of Israelite History" is a chapter in its own right. Here she deals with the Book of Chronicles, Jubilees, and the Psalms of Solomon. Josephus Flavius and his oeuvre merits its own chapter.

Finally, in Part 4 she turns to what she defines as the "Holy Texts of Second Temple Judaism." The Codified Bible addresses how the Masoretic Text became what it is. There are sections on the Hebrew Bible/Tanakh [MT], the Septuagint, the Syriac Peshitta, differences between the canons of the Hebrew Bible and Christian Bibles, and various targumim. In the chapter titled "Rewriting the Bible," Simkovich addresses Jubilees, the Genesis Apocryphon, Artapanus, the Testament of Abraham, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Pseudo-Philo (LAB), Ezekiel the Tragedian, the books of 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, Daniel, and Greek Esther. Many of these works are found in the 2013 JPS publication *Outside the Bible* (see below). The chapter titled the "Expanded Bible" covers such figures as Aseneth, Jannes and Jambres, and Judith. It also discusses devils, such as Satan, Beliar and Belial, Mastema, Daimonos, Diabolos, Azael/Azazel, Samael, as well as the angels including Michael the Archangel, and finally a section on the Messiah.

The book includes several helpful items: a timeline for the period, a glossary of key names, places, and books, a bibliography, indices and several pages of endnotes. The publisher has created a very valuable complementary study and discussion guide available online.

Simkovich's work is a good complement to the superb JPS three-volume, over three-thousand pages publication in 2013, *Outside The Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture* (reviewed in *JBQ* Vol. 43:4 (172) October-December 2015, pp. 268-70).

This book's Introduction is titled: "In Search of the Second Temple Era," but a definition of what exactly is the Second Temple Era is never really addressed. Does it begin with the Babylonian Exile (586 BCE) or the return of the Exiles, c. 539-538 BCE? Or when the Second Temple is completed in Jerusalem, c. 520-515 BCE? More to the point, how much further past the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE is still considered the Second Temple Era? The Bar Kokhba revolt (132-135 CE)? Until the Mishna is codified (200 CE)? How far into the Roman period (ending in the

4<sup>th</sup> century CE)? That Simkovich never offers clear answers to that matter is an unfortunate omission in an otherwise very comprehensive and informative work.



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