

Catherine Hezser

Jewish Travel in Antiquity

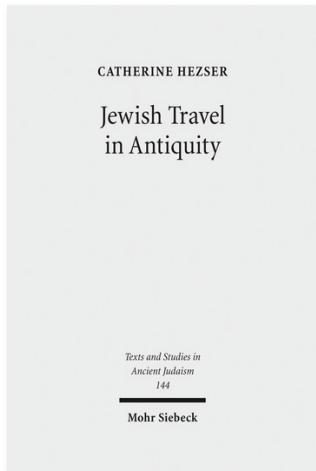
[Jüdische Reisen in der Antike.]

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This book provides the first comprehensive study of Jewish travel and mobility in Hellenistic and Roman times, based on a critical analysis of Jewish, Graeco-Roman, and early Christian literary, epigraphic, and archaeological sources and a social-historical evaluation of the material. Catherine Hezser shows that certain segments of ancient Jewish society were quite mobile. Mobility seems to have increased in the later Roman period, when an extensive road system facilitated travel within the province of Syria-Palestine and the neighbouring Middle Eastern regions. Second Temple Judaism was centralized, with Jerusalem as its central space and seat of priestly authority. In post-70 rabbinic Judaism, on the other hand, connections between rabbis could be established through mutual visits and second- and third-degree contacts only. Mobility formed the basis of the establishment of a decentralized rabbinic network in Palestine and Babylonia in late antiquity. Numerous narrative and halakhic traditions indicate the importance of mobility for communication and the exchange of knowledge amongst rabbis. It is argued that the rabbis who were most mobile sat at the nodal points of the rabbinic network and elicited the largest amount of influence. They would have combined business travel with scholarly exchange. Scholars' journeys between Palestine and Babylonia are viewed within the wider context of Rome and Persia's economic and cultural exchange in which Jews, just like Christians, may have played the role of intermediaries.

Catherine Hezser 1986 Promotion in Ev. Theologie in Heidelberg mit Schwerpunkt Neues Testament; 1992 Promotion in Jewish Studies am Jewish Theological Seminary in New York; 1997 Habilitation an der FU Berlin; seit 2005 Professorin für Jewish Studies an der School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) der University of London.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5246-6898>



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