

Daniel R. Schwartz

Reading the First Century

On Reading Josephus and Studying Jewish History of the First Century

[Das erste Jahrhundert deuten. Ein Vorschlag zur Lektüre des Josephus und zur Deutung des ersten Jahrhunderts.]



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The writings of Flavius Josephus provide much of what we know about the first century CE – which witnessed the birth of Christianity, the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem, and the concomitant rise of rabbinic Judaism. However, Josephus was an author, not a video camera, and what he wrote often reflects much apart from what actually happened in the first century: Josephus' works were affected both by his literary models and by current events, and they functioned in various ways for Josephus as an individual and also as a Jew and a Roman, writing in a time of tumult and radical change. Moreover, as all ancient works, texts by Josephus often raise such basic philological questions as what the original text is, what it means, what sources (if any) it reflects, and how it relates to other texts. Daniel R. Schwartz argues that by building from the bottom up – first establishing the text and its meaning, then moving on to issues of Josephus' models, sources, and purposes, as well as comparing his testimony with that supplied by other relevant sources, such as the works of Philo and the New Testament – we may nevertheless reconstruct, with some confidence, the events and processes of this crucial era.

Daniel R. Schwartz Born 1952; 1971 immigrated to Israel; 1979 PhD; since 1979 teaching at Dept. of Jewish History, Hebrew University, Jerusalem; since 1995 full professor; since 2011 academic head of Mandel Scholion – Interdisciplinary Research Center in the Humanities and Jewish Studies.

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