Times of Transition

Judea in the Early Hellenistic Period

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This multidisciplinary study takes a fresh look at Judean history and biblical literature in the late 4th and 3rd centuries BCE. In a major reappraisal of this era, the contributions to this volume depict it as one in which critical changes took place.

Until recently, the period from Alexander’s conquest in 332 BCE to the early years of Seleucid domination following Antiochus III’s conquest in 198 BCE was reputed to be poorly documented in material evidence and textual production, buttressing the view that the era from late Persian to Hasmonean times was one of seamless continuity. Biblical scholars believed that no literary activity belonged to the Hellenistic age, and archaeologists were unable to refine their understanding because of a lack of secure chronological markers. However, recent studies are revealing this period to be one of major social changes and intense literary activity.

Historians have shed new light on the nature of the Hellenistic empires and the relationship between the central power and local entities in ancient imperial settings. The re-dating of several biblical texts to the 3rd century BCE is another major thread explored in the present volume, challenging the traditional periodization of Judean history.

This volume contains the proceedings of an international conference held at the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University in 2014. Bringing together scholars from a variety of disciplines, including Hellenistic history, the archaeology of Judea, and biblical studies, the conference and this volume appraise the early Hellenistic period anew as a time of great transition and change and situates Judea within its broader regional and transregional imperial contexts.

Times of Transition is the first volume in a new series, titled “Mosaics: Studies on Ancient Israel,” launched by the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University and co-published by Eisenbrauns, an imprint of Penn State University Press.