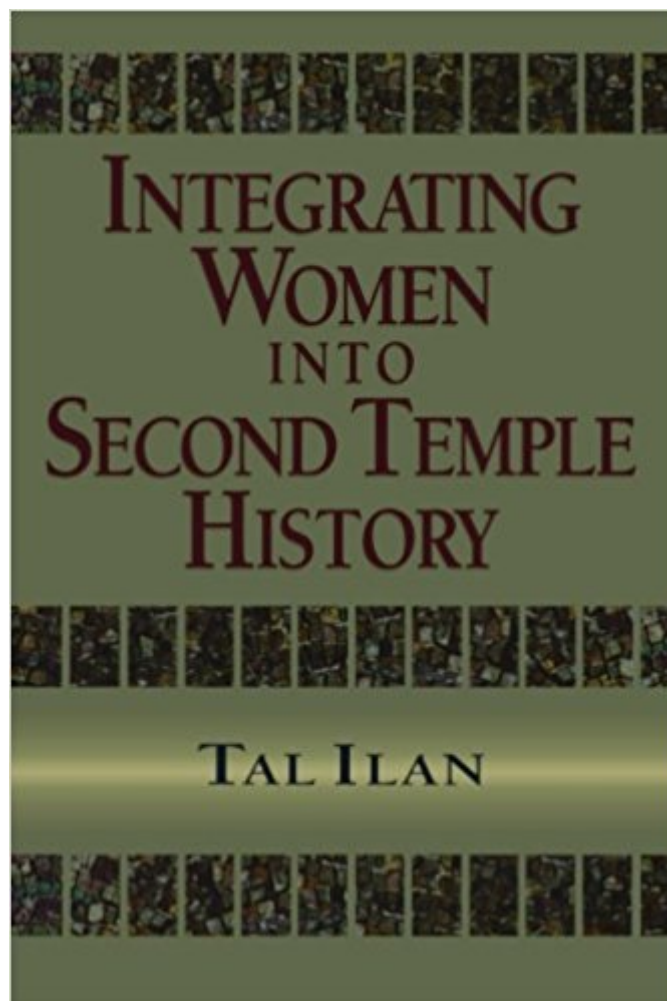


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Integrating Women Into Second Temple History



Synopsis

Most studies about women, Jewish and otherwise, are usually confined to the domestic sphere: the home, the family, the bed. Yet women were present at all historical events, and it is not only the presence but also their significance for these events which should be recognized. All the sources seem to militate against an approach which assumes the presence of women in public events: When dealing with politics, war and religion, scholars can ignore women, confining themselves instead to the woman's role in the domestic sphere. Tal Ilan here seeks to discover women in the public spaces and main events of Second Temple Judaism. The main principle guiding her is that if by chance women are mentioned in the sources, they should not be treated as a means for explaining the event but rather as an end in themselves. Thus sources showing women as remote or obscure turn out to yield much relevant material. Ilan investigates women's association with the Pharisees and other sects. She analyzes women's roles in the writings of Josephus, Ben Sira, and other important sources. Furthermore she discusses famous women like Beruriah and Berenice. The Dead Sea Scrolls play an important role in her study.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Tal Ilan received her Ph.D. from Hebrew University, Jerusalem. She is lecturer at the Rothberg School for Overseas Students at the Hebrew University. She has also served as visiting lecturer at Harvard University and visiting professor at Yale University.

Tal Ilan scours the literary and archaeological sources for insight into the lives of women mentioned in Josephus, the Mishnah and other relevant sources. For example, the royal Hasmonean Mariamme is mentioned, along with Esther/Judith/Susanna, a Judean named Julia Crispina, Beruriah, Queen Shelamzion Alexandra, etc. She also discusses the attitude of men towards women as evidenced in various documents, such as Ben Sira, Josephus and Nicolaus. When possible, she applies those conclusions to the lives of everyday women. The scholarship is reliable enough that I have ordered another book by Ilan on the image and status of women in Second Temple Judaism, but most related, scholarly books I read are easier to follow and draw clearer conclusions. For example, she often omits the English translation when using a Greek word, and, although she does admit the scantiness of the evidence frequently, occasionally jumps to conclusions. In addition, she leaves out phrases or sentences reminding the reader what a scholar or source indicated when it comes up in later parts of the chapter. This is very frustrating! For other books on women in Jesus' time, see my Listmania list on 'Women in Jesus' Time.' You can find it by clicking 'Emily Jamison' above, and scrolling down to my Listmania section.

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