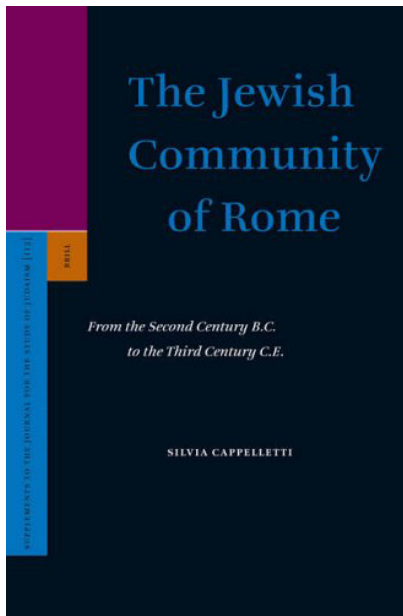


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Cappelletti, Silvia

The Jewish Community of Rome: From the Second Century B.C. to the Third Century C.E.

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This book is a revised version of a fine dissertation completed in 2004. It is not a comprehensive survey of the data for the Jewish community in Rome in the stated period but is rather a study of a few selected topics generally arranged in chronological order.

The book includes three major sections with nine unnumbered chapters. The introductory chapter is a synthetic overview of the organization of the Jewish community in Rome (3–30). Cappelletti suggests that synagogues in Rome probably were distinguished from *collegia* in Roman legal practice. She also persuasively argues that, while the synagogues may have cooperated with each other, there is no strong evidence for a general council (*gerousia*) representing the entire community.

The second chapter traces the origins of the community to Jewish traders who are attested by an expulsion from Rome in 139 B.C.E. (41–48). It concludes that major growth in the community did not occur until prisoners of war were brought to Rome after Pompey's invasion of Judea in 63 B.C.E. The third chapter deals with the expulsion of Jews from Rome in 19 C.E. (49–67). Cappelletti insightfully suggests that the ban was limited to Jewish immigrants who were not citizens of Rome and freed persons whose informal manumission had not resulted in citizenship. As in the second chapter, she follows recent

scholarship in rejecting the notion that Jews aroused Roman hostility by proselytizing. The fourth chapter argues that Claudius acted against the Jews of Rome in both 41 and 49 C.E. (69–89). Cappelletti perceptively suggests that in 41 the legal status of many Jews protected them from expulsion. She recognizes that Claudius’s concern in this case was not limited to Jews, although she claims he sought to address a Jewish threat to “public order.” She also reaffirms the dubious notion that Christianity played a role in arousing Roman opposition to Jews in 49. The fifth chapter, which is devoted to Vespasian’s rule, points out that many Jewish captives were brought to Rome after the fall of Jerusalem (91–122). It also summarizes material assembled by Tcherikover and others on the Jewish tax. The most helpful part of this chapter is the attempt to identify the officials responsible for the administration of the tax (*procurator ad capitularia Iudaeorum*; *amphodarches*; and *praktor Ioudaikou telesmatos*). In the sixth chapter, Cappelletti argues that the major source of hostility to the Jewish tax aroused among elite Romans under Domitian was his use of violence and secret accusations in its exaction, which had been repudiated by Vespasian and Titus (123–39). This represents an alternative to the popular view that elite Roman hostility was generated by the use of ambiguities in ethnic and religious distinctions to expand liability for the tax to individuals who previously had been exempt.

Chapter 7 describes the Jewish catacombs in Rome and summarizes previous research on each one with a special focus on the issue of dating (143–75). Cappelletti dates the usage of most of the catacombs from the end of the second through the fourth centuries C.E. She also emphasizes that the Jewish catacombs were often similar to those of their non-Jewish neighbors. Chapter 8 surveys the inscriptions of the community (177–91). Cappelletti argues that these reveal the importance of Greek in the community. Other points include the difficulty of identifying when the biblical translation attributed to Aquila replaced the Septuagint in the community’s rituals.

The concluding summary chapter (193–98) is followed by thirteen site plans and maps of the Jewish catacombs in Rome. The book ends with a bibliography and various indices.

Each chapter functions as a relatively autonomous unit. Cappelletti generally avoids interpretive pitfalls by taking a restrained approach to sources and restricting herself to judicious suggestions about her selected topics. The repeated emphasis on legal issues in the treatment of various expulsions and other actions taken against Jews is one of the few unifying threads and perhaps the strongest feature of the book. For example, the exploration of how legal status might distinguish precisely which Jews were affected in each event is surely a step in the right direction. There are a number of other points in which the book should help inform established debates. Thus in the discussion of the linguistic tendencies of the Jewish community in Rome, Cappelletti argues that a few

formulae in Hebrew such as the term *shalom* are a less reliable guide to the community's linguistic abilities than the use of Greek translations of the Jewish Scriptures in its ritual. Many readers may benefit from learning to apply such a balanced approach to their own study.

Among the other values of this book is its function as a catalogue of various sources related to the topics addressed in each chapter. The choice to provide abundant footnotes with quotations of many sources in the original language will prove especially helpful to readers without easy access to these sources. The book's confidence in the reliability of Acts and various rabbinic texts does not eliminate the value of bringing together various references to these sources. The book also offers a useful summary of some of the views that have been taken on the topics addressed in each chapter. These features might make this book a useful starting point for preliminary research on each of the topics that it addresses.

Specialists may be more familiar with the material found in this book thus may find it less helpful because of the limited range of sources used and methodologies applied. For example, a fuller and much more nuanced discussion of the Jewish community of Rome in the Flavian period would require a treatment of the relationship between Josephus and his contacts. This has garnered increasing interest as a result of fresh analyses of archaeological evidence not explored in this book and a vigorous application of various methods of literary criticism to the works of Josephus (e.g., see Edmondson, Mason, and Rives, *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*). Nevertheless, advanced scholars will welcome this new addition to their bibliography.

The price of this relatively small book will make it difficult to justify buying it for individuals and collections with a limited budget. However, it certainly will find a place in highly specialized research libraries.