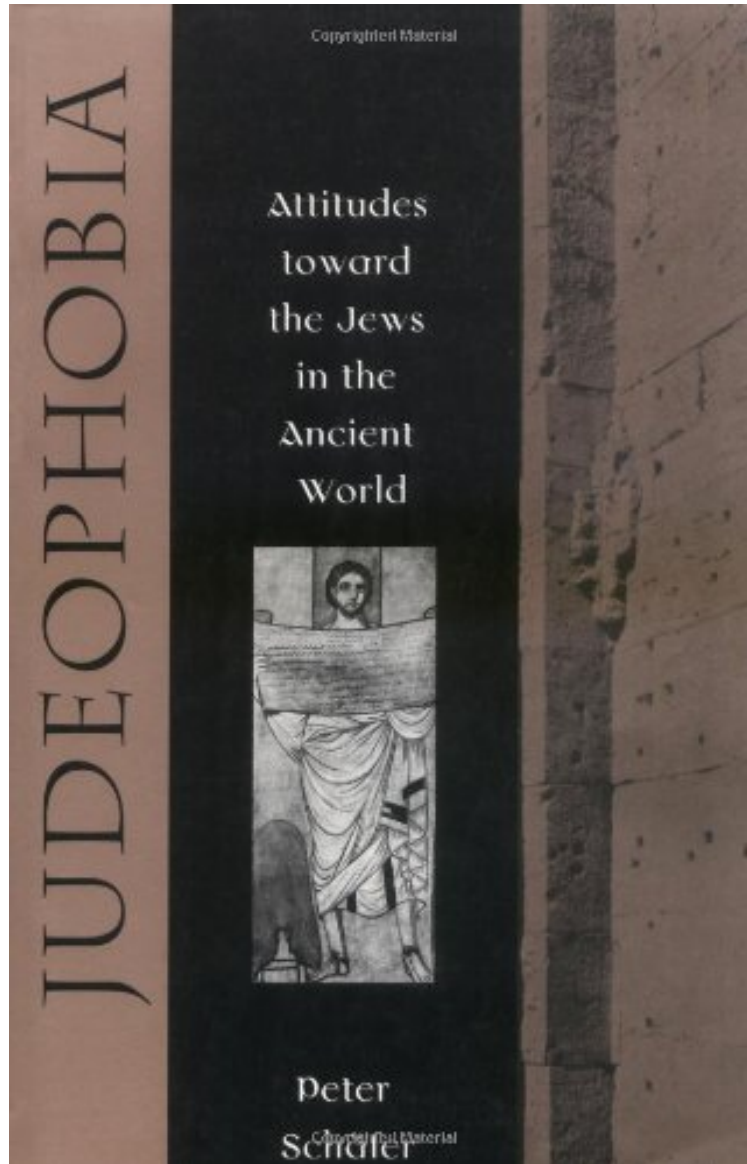


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Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World

Peter Schfer

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Peter Schfer : Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World:

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itself, which has been very helpful. Buyer beware: the Kindle edition has no hyperlinks for the endnotes, which makes the book extremely difficult to navigate. Also, when you go to the index, for example, it references page numbers that don't exist on the kindle. Very cumbersome. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Size mattered to the ancient Romans. By Shtarka I was impressed with Shafer's discussion of Roman envy of Jews' sexual libidos particularly their insecurities concerning comparative male genital size, complete with quotations from leading Roman writers of the times....yet another reason for people to hate Jews. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Was there animus against the Jews in ancient times? By Jeri Schafer finds evidence that there was. Jewish beliefs and customs alienated them from the surrounding pagan culture. Their God, who insisted on no images being created of him, was a rejection of pagan beliefs. Apion "complains that the Jews 'do not worship the same gods as the Alexandrians'" (p 39). Hecataeus and Manetho (3rd century B.C.) accused the Jews of being thrown out of Egypt due to leprosy. One famous slur is first found in Mnesias of Patara (about 200 B.C), that of accusing the Jews of ass-worship. Apion later wrote that Jews kept the head of an ass in the temple to worship "this allegation obviously ..meant to 'solve' the enigma of the mysterious cult in the Jerusalem Temple to which no foreigner had access" (p 60). Added to the sneer of ass-worship was the lurid tale that the Jews caught a Greek every year and then sacrificed him. Jewish proselytism was mentioned by a number of people in antiquity, and was apparently a source of anxiety. Their refusal to work on the Sabbath seems to have first been mentioned by Agatharchides, who wrote that Pompey was able to conquer them due to their insistence on not fighting on the Sabbath. Schafer explores both the Elephantine and Alexandrian outbursts against Jews. In Alexandria, Philo records a truly appalling level of hatred against the Jews. That they were stoned or clubbed to death. Then that they dragged the bodies through the streets "until the corpses, their skin flesh and muscles shattered by the unevenness of the ground....were wasted to nothing" (p 141). Philo regarded the Egyptians as the main source of anti-Jewish hatred. Many ancient sources complain of the unsociability of the Jews. Manetho sniffs that they will "have intercourse with none save those of their own confederacy" (p 172). Cicero portrays them as being at odds with Roman traditional values. The satirist Juvenal poked fun at their Sabbath and circumcision. Wonderful book, comprehensive and intelligent...but I found all the evidence of anti-Jewish sentiment distressed me. I have a Jewish stepfather and two Jewish stepsisters.

Taking a fresh look at what the Greeks and Romans thought about Jews and Judaism, Peter Schfer locates the origin of anti-Semitism in the ancient world. Judeophobia firmly establishes Hellenistic Egypt as the generating source of anti-Semitism, with roots extending back into Egypt's pre-Hellenistic history. A pattern of ingrained hostility toward an alien culture emerges when Schfer surveys an illuminating spectrum of comments on Jews and their religion in Greek and Roman writings, focusing on the topics that most interested the pagan classical world: the exodus or, as it was widely interpreted, expulsion from Egypt; the nature of the Jewish god; food restrictions, in particular abstinence from pork; laws relating to the sabbath; the practice of circumcision; and Jewish proselytism. He then probes key incidents, two fierce outbursts of hostility in Egypt: the destruction of a Jewish temple in Elephantine in 410 B.C.E. and the riots in Alexandria in 38 C.E. Asking what fueled these attacks on Jewish communities, the author discovers deep-seated ethnic resentments. It was from Egypt that hatred of Jews, based on allegations of impiety, xenophobia, and misanthropy, was transported first to Syria-Palestine and then to Rome, where it acquired a new element: fear of this small but distinctive community. To the hatred and fear, ingredients of Christian theology were soon added a mix all too familiar in Western history.

[Judeophobia] casts new light on , and suggests a new understanding of, an area that has been a controversial field ever since Theodor Mommsen, in...his *Römische Geschichte* in 1884, made the 'rather casual statement' that 'hatred of the Jews and Jew-baiting are as old as the Diaspora itself'...[It is a] learned and absorbing book. (Bernard Knox *New Republic*) A well-informed and intelligently argued book. It is also admirably readable. (Jasper Griffin *New York of Books*) An elegant, persuasive, and comprehensive book...It is no exaggeration to say that Judeophobia changes the way we think about Judaism in the Greco-Roman world. (Alan Mendelson *History [UK]*) In Judeophobia Peter Schfer makes a major contribution to the social history of Judaism in antiquity...The book is written in a clear style appropriate for non-specialists. Non-English language terms are transliterated and, in most cases, translated the first time they are used. Schfer's thesis is that the origins of anti-Semitism can be traced to three successive centers of conflict: Egypt, Syria-Palestine, and Rome. Schfer's attempt to disentangle the unique aspects of the growth of anti-Semitism in each of these three centers is one of the most important contributions of the book...This book deserves to be read by anyone interested in the origins of anti-Semitism. Its main arguments will undoubtedly become a source for discussion and debate in future research. Schfer deserves our thanks, both for his courage in pursuing a difficult topic with such frankness and for the numerous insights that he has contributed to research on this topic. (Allen Kerkeslager *Journal for the Study of Judaism*) Schfer has given us a masterly account of the early history of antisemitism. (Robert Goldenberg *Shofar*) Schfer demonstrates his mastery of the sources...[and] isolate[s] with great clarity key elements in the history of antisemitism. (Nicholas De Lange *Patterns of Prejudice*) From the Back Cover Taking a fresh look at what the Greeks and Romans thought about Jews and Judaism, Peter Schafer locates the origin of anti-Semitism in the

ancient world. Judeophobia firmly establishes Hellenistic Egypt as the generating source of anti-Semitism, with roots extending back into Egypt's pre-Hellenistic history. About the Author Peter Schfer is University Professor of Jewish Studies and Director of the Institut fr Judaistik, Freie Universitt Berlin.