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ELEMENTS OF ANCIENT JEWISH NATIONALISM

David Goodblatt argues that nationalism can be found in the ancient world, contrary to the widespread view that it is a modern phenomenon. He argues that concepts of nationalism compatible with contemporary social scientific theories can be documented in the ancient sources from the Mediterranean Rim by the middle of the last millennium B.C.E. In particular, the collective identity asserted by the Jews in antiquity fits contemporary definitions of nationalism. After the theoretical discussion in the opening chapter, the author examines several factors constitutive of ancient Jewish nationalism. He shows how this identity was socially constructed by such means as the mass dissemination of biblical literature, the retention of the Hebrew language, and the priestly caste. The author also discusses each of the names used to express Jewish national identity: Israel, Judah, and Zion.

David Goodblatt is Professor of History at the University of California, San Diego, where he holds the Endowed Chair in Judaic Studies. Previously he taught for more than a decade in the Jewish History Department of the University of Haifa and was the Louis L. Kaplan Professor of Jewish History at the University of Maryland. He is the author of *Rabbinic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia* and *The Monarchic Principle: Studies in Jewish Self-Government in Antiquity*.

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For

Keren, Michael Moshe, Grace Ayelet



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List of Abbreviations

AASOR	<i>Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJ	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates Judaicae</i>
AJSR	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
B.C.E.	Before the Common Era
BCH	<i>Bulletin de Correspondence Hellénistique</i>
BJ	<i>Bellum Judaicum</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BJSUCSD	Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego
CA	Josephus, <i>Contra Apionem</i>
CAH	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
CAJ	<i>Cambridge Archaeological Journal</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
C.E.	Common Era
CHI	<i>Cambridge History of Iran</i>
CHJ	<i>Cambridge History of Judaism</i>
CII	<i>Corpus inscriptionum iudaicarum</i>
CRINT	Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DJPA	M. Sokolov, <i>Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period</i>
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
EI	<i>Eretz-Israel</i>
EJ	<i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i>
ET	English translation
GLAJJ	M. Stern, <i>Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism</i>
GCS	<i>Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte</i>
HAR	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IDB	<i>Interpreters' Dictionary of the Bible</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
INJ	<i>Israel Numismatic Journal</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JDS	<i>Judean Desert Studies</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
JH	<i>Jewish History</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRASS	<i>JRA Supplementary Series</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSS	<i>JSOT Supplement Series</i>
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSS	<i>JSP Supplement Series</i>
JSQ	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
JSSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies Supplements</i>
JStJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSTS	<i>Library of Second Temple Studies</i>
MGWJ	<i>Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
NC	<i>Numismatic Chronicle</i>
NEA	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
NEAEHL	<i>New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i>

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NEB	New English Bible
NT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTP	J. H. Charlesworth, <i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i>
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
PG	Patrologia Graeca – J.-P. Migne, ed., <i>Patrologia Cursus completus: Series graeca</i>
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
REJ	<i>Revue des Études Juives</i>
RQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RStR	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SCI	<i>Scripta Classical Israelica</i>
SDB	<i>Supplements au dictionnaire de la bible</i>
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
SNT	Supplements to <i>Novum Testamentum</i>
SP	<i>Studia Philonica</i>
SR	<i>Studies in Religions/Sciences Religieuses</i>
SSEJC	Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity
STJD	Studies in the Texts from the Judaean Desert
STR	Studies in Theology and Religion
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
ThWAT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch des Alten Testament</i>
ThWNT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
TSJTSA	Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America
UF	<i>Ugaritische Forschung</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen Palästina Verein</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

Preface

The present book is the result of a decade's worth of research and reflection. Several sources inspired my interest in the topic of ancient Jewish nationalism. One was the work of Fergus Millar that culminated in his book *The Roman Near East 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1993). Another was (partial) exposure to the mass of social scientific research on collective identity, ethnicity, and nationalism. Once I began pursuing this interest, I benefited greatly from the work on the topic by Doron Mendels, Shaye Cohen, and Seth Schwartz. As the reader will see from the footnotes, numerous other scholars contributed through their publications to the advancement of my project.

My primary focus will be on the province of Judah (*Yehud*, *Ioudaia*) of the Achaemenid, Ptolemaic, and Seleucid empires, on (nominally) independent, Hasmonean–Herodian Judah, and on the Roman province of *Iudaea*. Occasionally I will also look at the situation among the Jews of the Diaspora, and occasionally I will take the discussion into the later Roman period. The later period will also come into play in the final chapter where I discuss theories of the “fall” of Jewish nationalism after 70 or 135 C.E. Given my focus on Judah and its residents, I considered using the phrase “Judean nationalism,” rather than “Jewish.” The ancient languages all had only one word to denote the human subjects of this study: (in the singular) Hebrew *yehudi*, Aramaic *yehudai*, Greek *Ioudaios*, and Latin *Iudaeus*. These languages did not have separate words to distinguish “Judean” from “Jew” as English and French, for example, do. The result, for the contemporary reader, is a certain ambiguity. Modern scholarship has devoted much effort to teasing out the various connotations of the above-mentioned terms in the ancient sources.¹

¹ Compare the similar problems raised in trying to understand the meaning of the terms “Syrian” and “Arab” in ancient literature and noted by Kevin Butcher, *Roman Syria and*

Some of the relevant literature is cited in Chapter 5, note 23, and Chapter 6, note 10. My practice has been to translate the ancient terms by “Judean” and thereby preserve the ambiguities of the original. This seems preferable to risking an incorrect and possibly anachronistic resolution of the ambiguity. In light of this practice, consistency seems to require that I speak here of “*Judean* nationalism.” The decision to use the phrase “*Jewish* nationalism” resulted from sensitivity to a different ambiguity. I refer to the overlapping of Judean and Israelite identities. As Chapter 5 discusses, the ancient Judeans also saw themselves as Israelites. So too did Jews in subsequent eras. Consequently the nationalism of ancient Judeans could and did invoke the name “Israel.”² To allow for this ambiguity I have retained “Jewish” because it can imply either “Judah” or “Israel” or both. The details can be followed in Chapters 5 and 6.

To the phrase “Ancient Jewish Nationalism” in the title of this book, I have prefixed the words “Elements of.” This is to make clear that the book has no pretensions to being a comprehensive treatment of the subject. And if I make no claims of exhausting the topic of ancient Jewish nationalism, all the more so is this true regarding other nationalisms in antiquity. Some readers and reviewers (if there are any) will undoubtedly criticize me for insufficient attention to comparative material. It is true that after Chapter 1 my focus narrows almost exclusively to the Jews. My explanation is that I found more than enough in Jewish history to keep me busy and fill these pages. Those with the relevant expertise will more fruitfully address analogous questions of the existence and nature of the collective identities of other peoples of the ancient world. A series of case studies or monographs on the collective identities of various ancient peoples will then permit a synthetic study of nationalism and ethnicity in antiquity. As Ted Kaizer put it in a broader context, “Local studies must remain the starting point for research on the Classical Levant, but the contributions they make have wider implications. Research into particular localities and regions is fundamental to supplementing our understanding of the Near East as a whole, and comparisons between these different perspectives enable us to improve continuously on the wider picture.”³ Finally, one of the many lessons I learned years ago from my mentor Jacob Neusner

the Near East (London: British Museum Press and Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2003), pp. 270–2.

² In part, the relation between the two terms is analogous to the relation between the terms “Persia” and “Iran,” discussed by Josef Wiesehöfer in the preface to his *Ancient Persia from 550 BC TO 650 AD* (trans. Azizeh Azodi; London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), pp. xi–xii.

³ Ted Kaizer, “The Near East in Hellenistic and Roman Periods between Local, Regional and Supra-Regional Approaches,” *SCI XXII* (2003), p. 295.

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is that scholarship is a cooperative venture. This narrow study, then, is my contribution to a larger effort involving others.

Portions of this book are revisions and updates of material previously published in various venues. Chapters 1 and 2 develop ideas first explored in “Judean Nationalism in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in D. Goodblatt, A. Pinnick, and D. R. Schwartz, eds., *Historical Perspectives: From the Hasmoneans to Bar Kokhba in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proceedings of the Fourth International Symposium of the Orion Center, 27–31 January 1999*, (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2001), pp. 3–27. Chapter 4 incorporates material from “Priestly Ideologies of the Judean Resistance,” *JSQ* 3 (1996), pp. 225–49. Chapters 5 and 6 build on research published in “From Judeans to Israel: Names of Jewish States in Antiquity,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 29 (1998), pp. 1–36. And Chapter 7 reprises “Ancient Zionism? The Zion Coins of the First Revolt and Their Background,” *International Rennert Guest Lecture Series* 8 (2001), and “The Temple Mount: The Afterlife of a Biblical Phrase,” in R. E. Friedman and W. H. C. Propp, eds., *Le-David Maskil. A Birthday Tribute for David Noel Freedman* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), pp. 91–101. I am grateful to the following for granting me permission to use these materials. For the first and third items listed I thank Brill Academic Publishers. For the third item I am grateful to Mohr Siebeck. I am indebted to the Board of Overseers of the Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies for allowing me to use the fourth publication listed. And finally, I thank Eisenbrauns, Inc., for permitting me to use the fifth item.

Over the several years of work on this project I have benefited from the help of many people and institutions. To the individuals, I cite the words of the inscription from the late antique synagogue in Jericho:

דידע שמהתון . . . יכתוב יתהון בספר חייה עם כל צדיקיה

As to the institutions, I wish to acknowledge the following. For allowing me to present my research in its earlier stages to a large body of specialists in Jewish studies from all over the world, I am indebted to the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, the Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies, the Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies at Bar-Ilan University, and the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I also wish to thank the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies for enabling me to spend several months of research and writing at Yarnnton Manor on a Skirball Fellowship. Above all I am grateful to my academic home, the Department of History at the University of California, San Diego, for its willingness to allow me to teach subjects not exactly at the forefront of mass student demand while granting abundant

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opportunities for research. The Judaic Studies Program at UCSD, through the Endowed Chair in Judaic Studies, provided generous financial support for all aspects of my work.

What I owe my wife, Sasona Kieval Goodblatt, goes beyond words. But one debt that can be mentioned here involves our three children, to whom this book is dedicated: Keren, Michael Moshe, and Grace Ayelet.