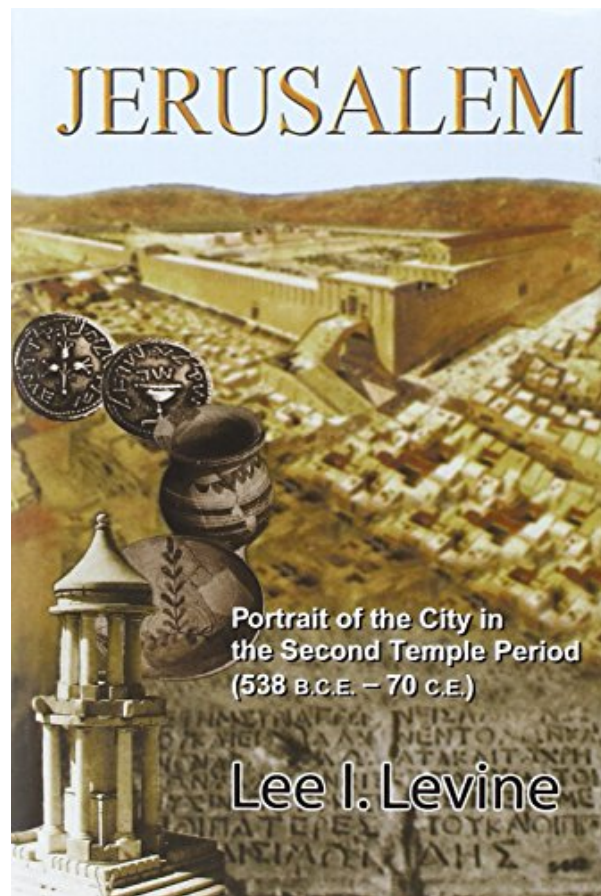
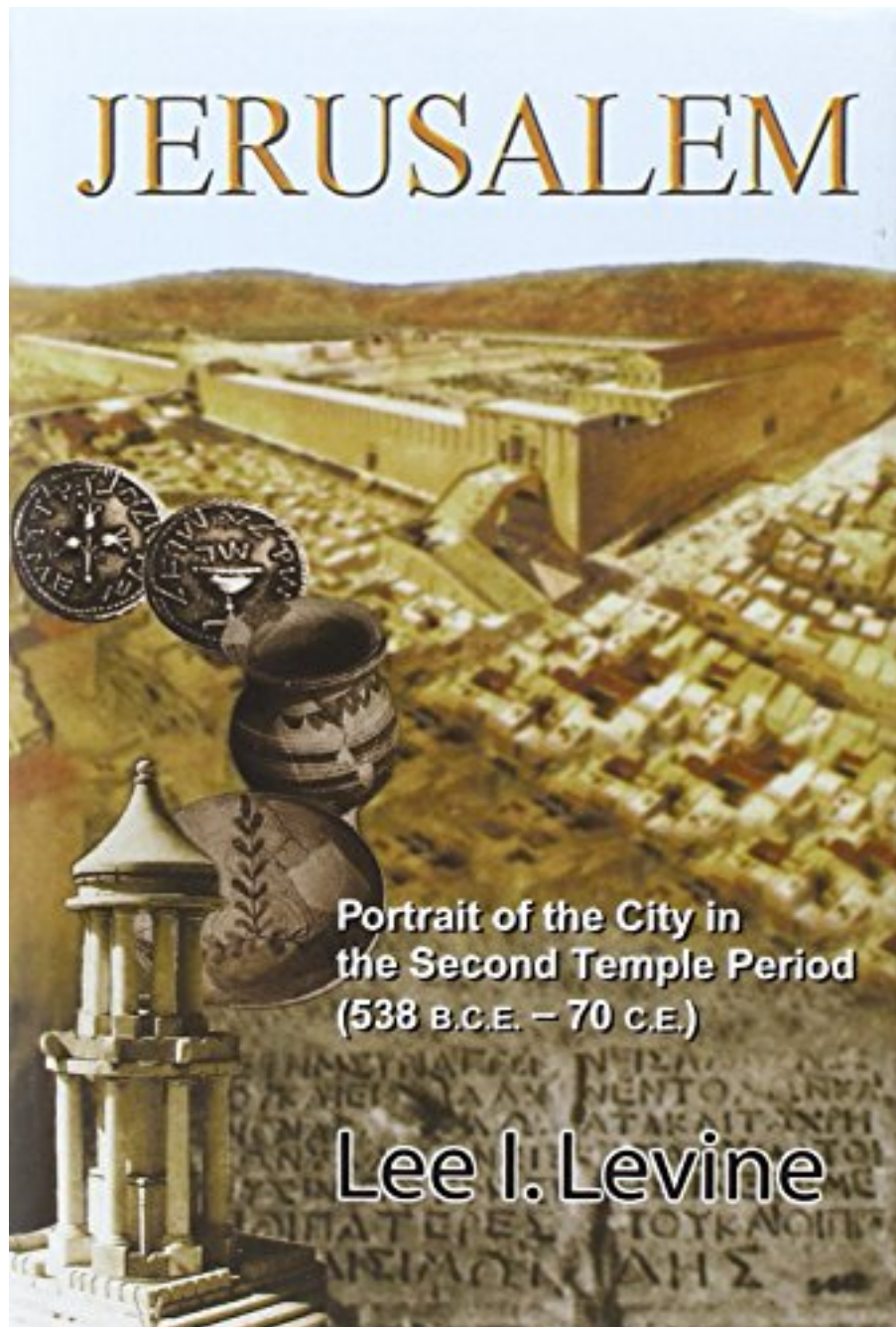


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Review

"This is a book that scholar, student, and interested layperson can read with both profit and enjoyment."—Hershel Shanks, Editor, Biblical Archaeology Review (Hershel Shanks)

About the Author

Lee I. Levine is on the faculty of Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and served as head of the Dinur Research center for the Study of Jewish History from 1997 through 2001. He is the author of numerous books on Jewish history and has published more than 100 articles and book reviews. Dr. Levine is the recipient of over a dozen awards and has taught at both Yale and Harvard.

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2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Well Researched, Well Written, Well Worth Reading

By Russ White

The development of Jerusalem as a cultural and political center is a fascinating subject for anyone who really wants to understand the Biblical record. How did the city move from being rebuilt in the writings of Nehemiah to being under Roman rule in the time of Christ? Who is Herod, and why was there more than one High Priest? Lee Levine provides an account of the political and religious developments in Jerusalem from Cyrus to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD from a strictly Jewish perspective.

Beyond the strong Jewish influence, however, the reader will notice the author also assumes, throughout, that most of the documents we call the Scriptures were written much later in history than they claim, and they show the handiwork of religious communities intent on shaping it's past to guide it's future. This is common enough in modern scholarly circles, but Christians who take a literal inspiration view of the Scriptures should note this underlying assumption when considering Dr. Levine's line of thinking.

The book itself is arranged in a strictly historical way; the first part deals with Jerusalem falling into Persian hands under Cyrus, and ends with Herod taking the city for Rome. Along the way the author deals with the rise of the High Priest as the primary point of political and religious contact in the City, and with the increasing Hellenization of City's culture and institutions. He also deals with the Hasmonean revolt, begun by an attempt on the part of the Selucids to effectively eliminate Judaism as a religion.

The second part considers the conquest by Rome, and the rule of Herod the Great, the king who was on the throne at the time of Christ's birth. Here the author provides an overview of the various building projects Herod undertook in the City, including a number of towers, an additional wall, his palace, baths, places of entertainment, water works, and the Temple and it's surrounding area. The scope of these construction projects is truly massive --we probably still don't know the total size and of the various projects Herod undertook. For Christian scholars, one interesting point in this section will be author's discussion on languages in use in Jerusalem during this time period. The use of Greek and Hebrew is much more widely attested than many modern readers assume; Jesus and his Disciples probably spoke at least three languages to one degree or another in everyday life.

Another fascinating study throughout this section is the outlining and study of the various religious sects common in and around Jerusalem during this period. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes are brought to life through various Biblical and extra-Biblical writings. The picture that emerges softens the Pharisees, hardens the Sadducees, and provides us with vital clues to understanding how Jesus played these two groups off one another to minister throughout Israel for three years.

The final part discusses the decline and fall of Jerusalem, ending with the destruction of the Temple and the City in 70AD. The author argues that Titus destroyed the Temple with intent, rather than by mistake, as is often asserted. The author attributes at least some degree of the Roman actions in putting down this revolt so completely to resolving the infighting as much as putting down a "garden variety" revolt.

Overall, this is an excellent resource for those who want to gain another perspective on the life of Jerusalem as a city during the times that Christ actually lived. The political and religious background is invaluable in understanding many incidents in the Gospel accounts, providing color and depth to what the original writers probably assumed their readers would know.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

A gem

By F. Martin

Levine does an excellent job in portraying Jerusalem during the Second Temple Period. More than that, he gives the reader a feel for what life was like in the city during that time.

The book is well-written and packed with information. While it is not an exciting read, the 416 pages of text move along at a good pace. The author discusses issues over which scholars disagree, but he never allows his summary of the debates to become bogged down in needless detail.

As a Christian, I found his description of Jerusalem in the first century A.D. to be particularly valuable. The book provided small but valuable insights into the life of the first Christians in Jerusalem.

For background information about the Old Testament post-exilic period and the New Testament era, this book is a gem.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Fantastically written and well organized

By Emily Jamison

I can't recommend this highly enough to readers interested in the in-depth results of scholarly work on Jerusalem that the average person can understand. Rarely am I so impressed with a book. It is logical, easy to follow and isn't wordy.

It is organized first by date -

Part I is 536 BC to 63 BC (Chapters The Persian Era, the Hellenistic Era, the Hasmonean Era,)

Part II is the Herodian era (to 6 AD, Chapters The Historical Dimension, The Urban Landscape, the Temple and Temple Mount, Jerusalem in the Greco-Roman Orbit: The Extent and Limitations of Cultural Fusion)

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