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Book Review: The Grammar of Messianism: An Ancient Jewish Political Idiom and Its Users

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The grammar of messianism : an ancient Jewish political idiom and its users (/review/10.5860/CHOICE.205314)

Novenson, Matthew V. (/search?exactauthor=Novenson, Matthew V) Oxford, 2017

361p bibl indexes, 9780190255022 \$74.00, 9780190255039

LC Call Number: BL (/search?lcstart=BL)475

Scholarly, substantive, well written, and footnoted, this book asks what talking about "messiah(s)" meant in the ancient world, before the idea of the messiah exploded into the history of ideas as part of a *Geistesgeschichte*. The chronological scope of the book is ambitious: it extends from biblical times to the redaction of the *Talmudim*. A strength of the book is its incorporation of sacred texts (Tanakh, Septuagint, Vulgate, Targumim); Second Temple history from Ezra and Nehemiah through the Maccabees, Hasmoneans, Roman occupation, Josephus, and Philo; and the period from the Dead Sea Scrolls to the period of the Mishnah up to the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds. Novenson (Univ. of Edinburgh, Scotland) marshals relevant primary and secondary texts revealing the "grammar" of ancient messianism. He examines anointing oil and power in ancient Israel, models of the born and made messiah, the quest for the first messiah, the Jewish and Christian messiah distinction, the fate of the Christological messiah, and many other interesting topics. Novenson shows that the history and literature of ancient Judaism and early Christianity are deeply interrelated.

Summing Up: Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty.

Reviewer: D. B. Levy (/search?reviewer=D. B. Levy), Touro College, Lander College for Women

Recommendation: Recommended

Readership Level: Upper-division Undergraduates, Graduate Students, Researchers/Faculty

Interdisciplinary Subjects:

Subject: Humanities - Religion (/search?q=&sbj[]=rel)

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