



Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism

David Goodblatt

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Contrary to the widespread view that nationalism is a modern phenomenon, Goodblatt argues that it can be found in the ancient world. 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 BCE. 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, retention of the Hebrew language, and through the priestly caste. The author also discusses each of the names used to express Jewish national identity: Israel, Judah and Zion.

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