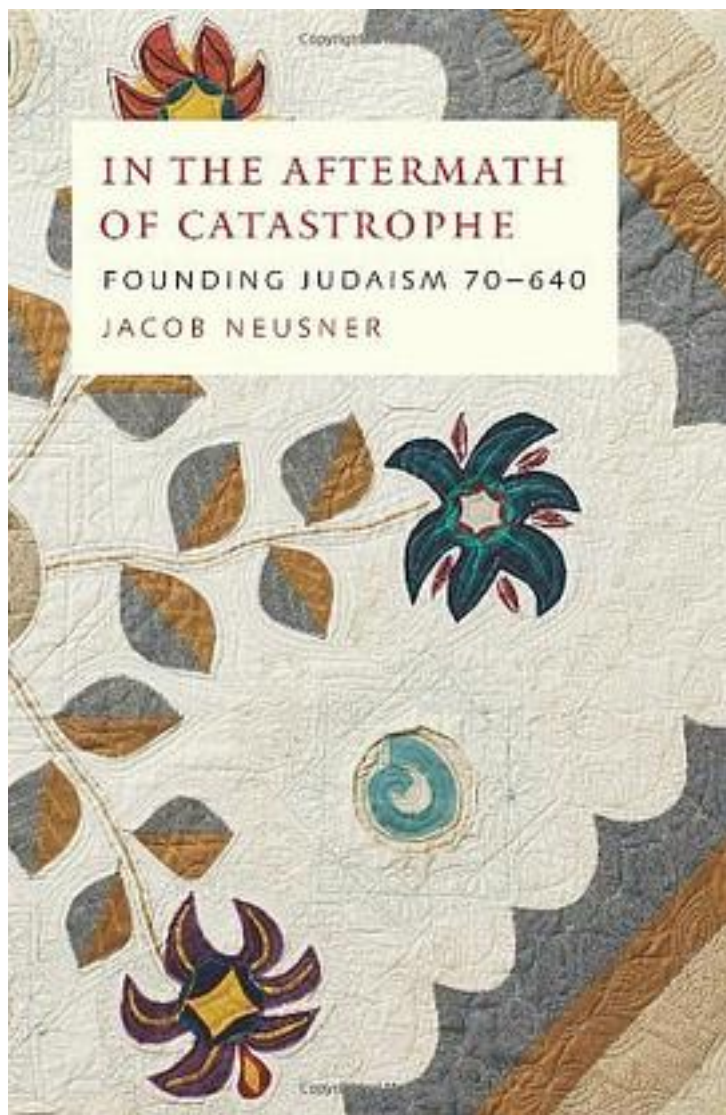


In the Aftermath of Catastrophe



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In "In the Aftermath of Catastrophe", Jacob Neusner continues his project of making clear the importance of the first six centuries of the Common Era in the history of Judaism. It is during this period, which began with the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem in 70 and concluded with formation of the Talmud of Babylonia and the advent of Islam after 600, the system of Judaism that would attain normative status took shape and the Judaic canon of law and theology came to definition. The normative or Rabbinic Judaism, carried forward by today's Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative Judaisms, also emerged at this time. Neusner argues that the Judaism that emerged in late antiquity experimented with solutions to a critical and enduring issue of culture that continues to engage humanity - the crisis provoked by calamity. Exemplified in our time by the German war against the Jews from 1933-1945, in antiquity calamity took the form of the destruction in 70 C.E. of the Temple of Jerusalem and the cessation of its sacrifices, putting an end to the cultic calendar by which people had measured the passage of time in the heavens and maintained their relationship with God on earth. Resolution of this crisis required a radical solution, the reversion to prophecy, which had as a consequence restoration of world order. Judaism as we know it responded then and continues to respond now to the paramount problem of that day and ours - the end of the old order and the advent of the new.

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