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The Rescue of Jerusalem: The Alliance Between Hebrews and Africans in 701 BC (review)

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Book Reviews



Bruce Vandervort, editor
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The Rescue of Jerusalem: The Alliance Between Hebrews and Africans in 701 BC. By Henry T. Aubin. New York: Soho Press, 2002. ISBN 1-56947-275-0. Maps. Notes. Index. Pp. xxiii, 421. \$30.00.

This book tackles a somewhat obscure topic in a very scholarly manner. The author proposes that the siege of Jerusalem in 701 BCE ended with the Assyrian forces withdrawing under pressure from an army of Kushites under the direction of the Pharaoh of Egypt. He further proposes that this is a seminal event in the history of mankind, leading directly to the completion of the development of Judaism, further resulting in Christianity and Islam. The first portion of the hypothesis is contrary to the prevailing opinions of most scholars in the field, making it worth consideration as a dissenting view. The later portion of this theory is not new, having been put forth by a number of current scholars.

The topic is extremely well researched and the book well documented, perhaps overly documented. The book contains 283 pages of text and 112 pages of endnotes. There is a lot of information in the endnotes, much of which could have been in the body of the text. This would have reduced confusion and the need to flip back and forth between the text and the notes. Additionally, the author provides an index of well over one hundred other writers whose works are cited but there is no actual bibliography. This does make following up on the research a little more difficult. Finally, the author uses eight different translations of the Bible, apparently choosing the translation that best fits the point he is trying to make at any given time.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I is an extensive discussion of background material and the current opinions of the mainstream scholars. It clearly sets forth how and why the mainstream believes what it does. Part II contains the evidence used to support the author's hypothesis. Organized by specific points, it develops a solid argument. Finally, Part III is a discussion of how the current mainstream theories came to be and how earlier scholars who espoused the author's theory were relegated to a dusty shelf.

The primary focus of the work, that the Kushites saved Jerusalem from the Assyrians, is presented in an interesting and often thought-provoking manner. It is easy to see how the hypothesis developed and it makes sense. Unfortunately, the supporting evidence is mostly a reinterpretation of existing material. The author asks readers to accept his interpretation of the limited source material rather than previous interpretations, while offering no compelling reasons to make the switch. Can his interpretation be correct? Certainly, but more evidence is required if it is to supplant previous interpretations. Still, the book is worth reading and debating.

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Cavalry Operations in the Ancient Greek World. By Robert E. Gaebel. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002. ISBN 0-8061-3365-1. Maps. Figures. Glossary. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xiv, 345. \$34.95.

Robert E. Gaebel has provided a complete history of the use of cavalry in ancient warfare from the first appearance of the horse in the Ancient Near East and Greece until the Second Punic War. The most valuable aspects of the book are its author's experience as a classical historian and an equestrian. His sources include literary accounts of battles and such archaeological evidence as vase painting and sculpture. Although he provides maps and battle plans, the selection of the latter includes only two battles of the fifty-five discussed. Neither include any of the victories of Alexander the Great.

Gaebel fuses his knowledge of the horse with its capacities and limitations in actual use. Here he makes his most valuable contribution to any understanding of the horse in the military history of antiquity. He successfully argues that the lack of stirrups did not impede the effectiveness of horsemen. Even if they could not use lances as did the mediaeval knights, they could still wield hand-held spears to strike at the enemy. This conclusion amounts almost to heresy, but the author amply proves his case by discussing the capability of Greek horses and the nature of their equipment.

In the narrative proper Gaebel conservatively and carefully follows the findings of previous scholars, while drawing his own conclusions. He concentrates on giving a general account of various battles, laying particular emphasis on the functioning of cavalry. For the most part, before the days of Alexander it found its primary function in protecting the flanks of the phalanx and pursuing the defeated enemy. Three fourth-century battles, however, illustrated the offensive capability of well-trained horses and men. At Tegyra in 375 BC, Leuktra in 371, and Mantinea in 362 Theban generals employed cavalry to penetrate enemy lines. Philip II of Macedonia and his son Alexander proved the most ardent students of these developments. They first systematically concentrated on turning cavalry from a supporting arm into an offensive force. Philip used his Thessalian cavalry at the Crocus Plain