



# Revolutionary Hebrew, Empire and Crisis: Four Peaks in Hebrew Literature and Jewish Survival

*David Aberbach*

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## **Revolutionary Hebrew, Empire and Crisis: Four Peaks in Hebrew Literature and Jewish Survival**

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Hebrew has survived as a continuously written literature for nearly 3,000 years. It is the oldest, and in some ways most successful, minority literature. While Hebrew is central to the social history of the Jews, its history also offers a panoramic window into the relationships of other minority literatures to their majority cultures.

Until 1948, written Hebrew was created primarily under the rule of empires, notably those of ancient Mesopotamia, Rome, medieval Islam, and Tsarist Russia. In this controversial volume, David Aberbach analyzes Hebrew's development, arguing that several of the most original periods in its history coincided with--and resulted partially from--imperial crisis. During these periods, social and political instability set off violence against the Jews. In each case a revolutionary body of Hebrew literature emerged, influenced decisively by the dominant culture, but asserting Jewish separatism and, to varying degrees, nationalism.

**Revolutionary Hebrew** offers a historical account of Judaism from biblical times to 1948, as exemplified through the growth or decline of Hebrew writing. Examining patterns in the social development of Hebrew, Aberbach explicates the role of Hebrew in the survival of Judaism and sheds light on the significance of literary creativity in ethnic survival.

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