Professor Erich Gruen

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Seleukid Lecture Series III

Wednesday, February 16, at 11 am Eastern Standard Time (Toronto / New York)

**"The Treaty between Rome and the Jews: *Cui Bono?*"**

At the center of this presentation are the *philia* and *symmachia* entered into between Rome and the Jews in 161 BCE. Examined will be their background and consequences. On the face of it, such an agreement which specifies mutual military obligations seems quite surprising and puzzling, almost a bolt out of the blue. Rome showed no desire or readiness to mobilize military force on behalf of the tiny principality in the Levant. And the idea of the Jewish state bringing any meaningful aid to the great power in the west seems quite ludicrous. Yet the pact was concluded and then solemnly renewed at least three subsequent times over the next half century or more. For what purpose? The paper investigates the circumstances of the Jewish nation in its tensions with the Seleucid empire, as well as its internal conflicts, and the policy and attitudes of Rome with regard to its involvement in the east. It endeavors to illuminate the intentions and expectations of each party for an agreement that for all practical purposes appears to have had no tangible results. And I hope to give a deeper sense of how this reflects upon the interests of the Jews and the role of Rome in the larger Hellenistic context.