Seleucid Chronicle lies behind the official data shared by the two works. On the other hand, it may be argued that such hypotheses would be better used only as a last resort and that rather more could be explained by the activity of the final redactor of the text. Goldstein has an interesting discussion of the aims of Jason (55–70), whose motivation is seen as in part a desire to discredit I Maccabees, but he is inclined to accept at face value the abridger’s claim only to have abbreviated, and not significantly to have altered, Jason’s work (5), and does not give much space to one of the more obvious explanations of oddities in the text, i.e. the epitomator’s incompetence in the difficult task of achieving brevity with coherence.

It is not possible here to do justice to more than a very small fraction of the new ideas crammed into this commentary. Goldstein’s restless, rambling, questioning style is not easy to read, but it reflects a genuine willingness to enquire into everything known or asserted about the text. This intellectual honesty extends to his approach to his own previous work: perhaps the most unusual feature of this volume is that it repudiates most of part V of the introduction to the commentary on I Maccabees, where the author had previously argued for a hypothetical source De Mortibus Persecutorum.

At many steps in his complex discussion Goldstein himself points to the fragility of some of his ingenious arguments. Readers need to be warned that, despite this self-awareness, his total picture of II Maccabees, including such crucial issues as the late date proposed for its composition (72, 83), depends on full acceptance of all this mass of conjectures. Not all users of the commentary will find it possible to make such an act of faith, but all will nonetheless find much of great value in this repository of stimulating suggestions and scholarly insight.

MARTIN GOODMAN


The subtitle of this ingeniously constructed monograph gives an accurate indication of its argument. Though derived from the studies of W. D. Davies and other recent explorations of the connection between the people of Israel and the promise of the land of Israel, Mendels’s interest is not in theology or ideas but in the rewriting of biblical history for narrow political ends at particular moments in time. By ‘Hasmonean literature’ he means such apocryphal, pseudepigraphic or Hellenistic-Jewish writings as he would claim to be able to attribute to Palestine in the period between 160 and 100 B.C. The premise is that during this time ‘a greater awareness of a Jewish state on a Jewish land was emerging in Palestinian Judaism’. The quest is to find precise echoes of the changing Hasmonean position vis-à-vis the Land and its non-Jewish inhabitants in those portions of the key texts which show a radical departure from Scripture, and which deal, generally, not so much with geography or strategic matters (these would be few indeed, though I Maccabees and Judith do offer material) as with patriarchal and other biblical figures operating in apparently symbolic roles. The method is to propose a dating, often controversial, before discussing a text. It would seem that the linking-in of a text with the political
realia of a certain era then serves as further validation of the proposed dating; but
the author does not lean on this support and so avoids the worst hazards of circular
argumentation. The ingenuity lies in lining up a series of such texts to represent the
changing situation of the Hasmonean state: as its holdings increased and its wars
became more than merely defensive, so the conception of the promised land evolved
from the fantastic and vague (like Ben Sira's 'I had authority over Jerusalem, I took
root in the glorified people' (24)), to the realistically ambitious. Ben Sira represents
the nineties of the second century, as a marker for the time 'before the upheaval'.
The sixties are evoked by I Enoch 85–90 and Daniel 7–12; the fifties by the Greek
writer Eupolemus; the forties and thirties are presented as the time of composition of
I Maccabees and Judith; the twenties is the late date offered for Jubilees; and the
'tens' the bold one for the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. There is a chapter
on the Samaritans and the Land; and the epilogue, 'loss of political independence',
makes use of Genesis Apocryphon, Psalms of Solomon and a selection of Diaspora
literature very briefly reviewed.

The project of bringing a continuing historical interpretation to bear on a line of
texts, rather than applying history in brief bursts of gunfire, is admirable. Perhaps it
was not possible altogether to avoid the besetting sins of such enterprises—
 misplaced confidence in a speculative chronology, and forced readings of texts where
simpler ones are available. Mendels's interpretations will require detailed and
separate discussions, but I must confess to being worried over a fair number of
points. It is disturbing that we are never told how insecure is the case for identifying
Eupolemus as Judas Maccabaeus' emissary of that name; yet for the argument a
good deal hangs upon his fragments embodying 'ideas shaped in Judas' circle'. For I
Enoch, we are never told the basis of the dating at all, merely referred to the
principal discussions. For Jubilees, a slight preference for the attribution to
Hyrkanus' reign, which used to be popular, may be perfectly reasonable, but
Mendels's polemic against VanderKam's early Maccabean dating conceals the fact
that there is still very little to choose between the two options. Mendels's interest is
in associating the curse of Canaan in Jubilees 10:30 with justifications of the Jewish
state's varied treatment of the native inhabitants of 'Greater Israel' in the late second
century. On the one hand, there is the Judaization of Edom (the war between Jacob
and Esau); on the other hand, the takeover of coastal cities in 134–2 B.C. (Isaac's
prophecy against the Philistines, which diverges from Genesis 26). But the parallels
have their difficulties, and Mendels is forced, for example, into omitting to mention
the awkward fact that Jubilees depicts Jacob killing rather than compromising with
Esau. The destruction of Shechem in 108/7 is seen behind the interest of Jubilees in
Dinah's rape, and the omission of the circumcision trick of the biblical narrative is
understood as designed to advance the identification of the two episodes; yet it is
easy to read the change as a typical omission of material that may be shameful or
distasteful.

If we continue with the case of Jubilees (which is in a way at the heart of the
monograph because of the importance of Hyrkanus' reign), we uncover another,
more general kind of difficulty. This lies in the concept 'Hasmonean literature'. It
was one thing to offer a reading of I Maccabees in terms of Hasmonean aspirations
around the 140 B.C. turning-point, for, little though we know about the provenance
of that work, it is patently a committed and eulogistic account of the Maccabean
wars. But with a work like Jubilees, or the Twelve Patriarchs, even were we to find in
favour of Mendels's chronology and to see force in his individual interpretations, it
would still be far from clear what we are to make of them in terms of the politics of
the period. We have no idea what circles they emanate from and whose views they might be expressing. There is no reason simply to assume that they represent the regime; indeed, there is much to be gained by seeking also for echoes of a society’s dissidents in its writings, as Morton Smith has so fruitfully done. It is a vast over-simplification to suppose that if a work can be assigned to the age of Hycanus, and shown to allude to his conquests, it must be some kind of apologia for the current state of affairs. True, Mendels follows the view that the Twelve Patriarchs in its treatment of Judah and Levi expresses current concern for the separation of priesthood and kingship, and thus, by implication, stands back from Hycanus. But for some reason, he regards the matter as being ‘as yet a theoretical issue in Hycanus’ days’ (p. 107). We remain in some sort of limbo between the political and the doctrinal. Perhaps, indeed, that is precisely where such writings are to be located. And he has pointed us towards a number of routes by which we might continue to seek the answers.

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Among the twenty-two contributions to this volume, five are of interest to readers of JJS: M. Harl, ‘Le nom de l’“Arche” de Noé dans la Septante. Lex choix lexicaux des traducteurs alexandrins, indices d’interprétations théologiques?’ (pp. 15–43); E. Starobinski-Safran, ‘La communauté juive d’Alexandrie à l’époque de Philon’ (pp. 45–75); M. Petit, ‘Exploitations non bibliques des thèmes de Tama et de Genèse 38. Philon d’Alexandrie: textes et traditions juives jusqu’aux Talmudim’ (pp. 77–115); M-J. Rondeau, ‘Pragmatologeini. Pour éclairer Philon, Fug. 54 et Somn. I, 230’ (pp. 117–50); B. and J. Kramer, ‘Les éléments linguistiques hébreux chez Didyme l’Aveugle’ (pp. 313–23, a discussion of a selection of interpretations which Didymus gives to Hebrew names in his recently found commentaries). Among these, that by Professor Harl might be singled out as especially stimulating.

S. P. Brock


The latest addition to this useful Cambridge series is a good selection of excerpts from the Qumran scrolls, translated and annotated by Professor Knibb. In addition to a basic introduction to the Qumran problem, and individual introductions and brief bibliographies to the various documents, the volume includes the Exhortation