etymologies and the historical or theological interpretation of scriptural passages.

These twenty-one essays constitute a most useful and significant compendium of contemporary Josephus scholarship produced on three continents.

Oriental Institute, Oxford


The second part of Shmuel Safrai's major handbook of Talmudic literature, to contain Midrash, Aggada, Targum and prayer, has not yet appeared, and it will be in order to consider them fully together. It will also be necessary to assess the overall contribution made by the enormous Compendia project as a whole. In the meantime, the particular character of this volume should not go unrecorded.

It should be said first that it is, like the rest of the series, something of a hybrid—in part introduction and guide, in part an in-depth study raising fundamental conceptual and literary issues and presenting individual viewpoints. It is rich in information, but this is not always systematically distributed and is not necessarily comprehensive. It is often interesting and stimulating, but rarely leaves one fully satisfied that all sides of a question have been explored.

The editor has himself written two major sections: a very long, somewhat theoretical discussion of the character and principles of 'Oral Tora', and a survey of the origins of Halakha. Abraham Goldberg contributes chapters on Mishna, Tosefta (disappointingly short) and both Talmudim. M. B. Lerner writes on Avot and on the 'External Tractates'. An opening chapter by I. Gafni sets the historical stage, skilfully surveying the whole period from the point of view of the role and activities of the sages. He too could have written at greater length. We are told that there are 'marked differences' of opinion within the different contributions and that the editor has not sought to unify them. One is struck most, however, by the underlying common assumptions. Though insistently 'scientific' in their approach to text (an approach heavily influenced by the methods of German Classical philology), the