texts circulating in the Church but never hints for a moment at a corresponding variety of Hebrew texts. He included a Hebrew text in his Hexapla which seems to have been close to the MT. The story of the Hebrew Bible between the destruction of the temple and the Masoretic edition, a period of several centuries embracing the emergence of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity, and indeed of Karaism and Islam, has yet to be properly studied. It is perhaps premature to claim, as Alexander does, that it was the rabbis who definitively endorsed what was to become the MT. The choice may already have been made by people whose sacral authority the rabbis were powerless to challenge. So far as we know, the rabbis did not control the life of the synagogues during the early part of this period, yet it was here, surely, that the crucial decisions were being taken. During the second century, when knowledge of Hebrew is very poorly attested, the text of the Bible may have been in the custody of a very small number of specialists. Their choice of text will have determined what happened later, when Hebrew gradually became the universal language of Jewish prayer and Bible study among Jews. Meanwhile the revision of the Greek translations towards a Masoretic-type text and away from the tradition represented by the Old Greek versions will have tended to reinforce the status of the former, which was perhaps a major aim of these revisions. Also in this section, Brian L. Lancaster considers ‘The Psychology of Oppositional Thinking in Rabbinic Biblical Commentary’. Raphael Loewe, in a magisterial contribution, analyses ‘The Structure of Hymnic Insertions in the Statutory Jewish Liturgy’ with particular attention to a set of hymns for the seventh evening of Passover in the Worms rite; he offers some further insights about the relations between Jews and Christians in medieval Ashkenaz. Finally, Eva Frojmovic discusses ‘Jewish Ways of Reading the Illuminated Bible’ (particularly the frontispiece of the Schocken Bible and the representations of the implements of the sanctuary found in a group of Spanish Bibles).

In the third part, ‘Reading the Bible in the Modern Age’, Heather A. McKay compares two wives of King David, Abigail and Bathsheba, and Moshe Ish-Horowicz writes about theodicy with particular reference to the flood. Harry Lesser examines ways in which Jewish interpreters have dealt with apparently immoral passages in the Bible. Christine M. Pilkington reviews some contemporary Jewish sermons and the way they handle the Bible.

The keynote of this collection is variety. Not only do the contributions tackle very different kinds of subjects, they do so from very different perspectives and indeed within different disciplines. The authors come from very different backgrounds, and differ widely in age and experience. The volume as a whole testifies to the liveliness of the British Association for Jewish Studies at the present time.

NICHOLAS DE LANGE


As Leah Roth-Gerson remarks in the introduction to this substantial work of scholarship, little has been written about the Jews of Syria in late antiquity despite the fact that there are occasional hints in the extant literary evidence that the Jewish community there was very large. The reason, as she rightly points out, is the curious paucity of surviving testimonies to the lives of these Jews. Roth-Gerson has sought to go some way to correct this by writing an account based on intensive study of the slightly over a hundred Greek inscriptions that were produced by or refer to Syrian Jews.
The procedure followed is to present each inscription with its publication details and a commentary. The texts are divided into those from synagogues (8 synagogues, 34 texts) and funerary inscriptions (68); there are also five miscellaneous texts. Of these texts, all have been previously published and a good number refer to Syrian Jews but were set up elsewhere (in Beth Shearim or Rome). Roth-Gerson uses other material, including literary texts and the semitic inscriptions, as supporting evidence. Of the Syrian communities thus illuminated, most familiar are those from Dura-Europus and Palmyra.

The purpose behind this presentation is to combine the Greek epigraphic evidence with the other (sparse) sources to provide an analysis of Jewish life in Syria. Thus there is a chapter on synagogues in Syria and another on aspects of community life as illuminated by the inscriptions, such as communal leadership, Jewish occupations, spiritual life, symbols, settlement and onomastics.

The analysis is sober, thorough and cautious, and it is unlikely to be eclipsed by any future study along the same lines. It cannot be said to produce any particular surprises: so far as can be seen, Syrian Jewry shared the characteristics of other diaspora communities and was affected only minimally by its proximity to the homeland. If deeper insights are to be found in the future, the most likely source will be the discovery of new inscriptions. It is a matter for regret that Roth-Gerson's suspicion, voiced with some delicacy in the introduction to her book (p. 12), that the lack of new inscriptions identified as Jewish in the region over the past fifty years owes much to contemporary politics, is probably justified.

Martin Goodman


Because of their extensive parallels in structure, content and wording, rabbinic texts should be ‘seen together’. Parallels between the Mishna, Tosefta, the two Talmudim, Genesis Rabba etc. raise questions of textual priority, literary influence and methods of redaction, which are central to the understanding of early rabbinic literature as a whole. Although these questions are not new, in this short volume they receive a broader perspective than one is normally accustomed to. The contributors in this volume—all at the cutting edge of current research—succeed in combining detailed analysis with more general theoretical reflection.

All contributors appear to share the assumption that the synoptic approach and resolution of synoptic problems depend in large measure on source criticism—the study of the sources that were used in the redaction of rabbinic works, and of how these sources were used. Source criticism is presented in opposition—and almost in antithesis—to Neusner’s documentary hypothesis, whereby each rabbinic work must be considered as a completely canonized, self-sufficient whole, reflecting only the views of its redactors and obliterating any trace of its antecedent sources. Neusner is frequently criticized in this volume, his approach being portrayed as one-sided, extreme and even perhaps complacent and reductionist (Goldenberg, Hayes, Becker). Nevertheless the documentary approach itself is not entirely rejected: Hayes argues that source criticism and the documentary hypothesis should be used as mutually complementary methods (see below). It is at least refreshing to feel, with this volume, that as the twentieth century comes to an end American Judaic studies have finally entered a confident, post-Neusnerian era.