Other topics addressed by Satlow, such as the metaphorical use of marriage, can only be mentioned briefly here. Satlow argues that post-biblical Jews were uncomfortable with the biblical metaphor of a marriage between God and Israel because it did not fit their view of marriage as the basis for forming an oikos, and that the Biblical covenant with its mutual obligations may have been ‘too egalitarian’ for Jewish men in Hellenistic and Roman times (cf. p. 47). But should biblical society have been less patriarchal and more egalitarian than later Jewish society? Other arguments brought forth in this connection are the intimate bond between God and Israel envisioned in the marriage metaphor and the possible discomfort with applying the metaphor to contexts other than the relationship between two individuals, in contrast to early Christians who saw the church as Christ’s bride. The metaphor rarely appears in rabbinic texts except in a number of parables.

At the end of the study, the question of what made ancient Jewish marriage Jewish is taken up again. Satlow suggests that ancient Jews marked their practices as Jewish ‘through a complex process of reading their own traditional texts and practices through the lens of their host cultures. Traditional texts, customs, and rituals served as a kind of “toolbox” . . . Through the use and adaptation of these tools, Jewish communities made marriage Jewish’ (p. 268).

Despite the methodological and argumentative shortcomings mentioned above, the book is a very good introduction to the various issues connected with Jewish marriage in antiquity, especially for the non-specialist reader, and will certainly engender comparisons with marriage in modern society.

Catherine Hezser


In undertaking to write a Historia de la gramática hebrea en España, Carlos del Valle Rodríguez has taken upon him, as he himself acknowledges (p. 11), ‘una ardua labor’, an arduous task. In the intended History del Valle aims to give an exhaustive description-cum-analysis of what he deems to be the most prominent Jewish contribution to Western culture: medieval Hebrew grammar. Over the past few decades, the author has devoted numerous books, editions and articles to this chapter in the history of linguistics, including a monograph on the early Hebrew School in Umayyad Cordoba. It is with a description of this tenth-century corpus, in which the basis for a scientific grammar of Hebrew was laid, that he opens his Historia.

Though ultimately concentrating on the School of Cordoba in the period between 940 and the early 990s, del Valle takes ample time to contextualise this movement, which of course did not originate out of the blue. In order to better highlight its particularities and dependencies, he offers background information on foreign (i.e. the classical, Syriac and Arabic) grammatical traditions, as well as on internal Jewish developments elsewhere in the Diaspora (i.e. the writings of the Masoretes, Saadia Gaon in Baghdad and the tenth-century North African Hebrew linguists). These chapters (1–6, pp. 29–210) take the form of more or less independent literary histories, which do not always appear to have explicit relevance for our understanding of the Cordoban School. The same can be said of chapter 7 (pp. 211–47), where the immediate cultural
context of early Iberian Hebrew grammar is mapped out, again in the form of a lap-
idary survey of important Andalusian ‘personajes’ (with much attention given to the
famous wazir and patron of the arts Chasdai ibn Shaprut) and their literary output.

The heart of the book (pp. 249–370) consists of a systematic presentation of the
small but coherent corpus brought forth by the earliest Cordoban grammarians. First
we encounter an exhaustive introduction (chapter 8) on the life and work of the pro-
tagonistas Menachem ben Saruq, Dunash ben Labrat and their respective disciples. In
a series of treatises, critiques and counter-critiques (which neatly reflect the dynam-
ics of this new field of study), they formulated the first rudiments of Iberian Hebrew
linguistics. Both in Menachem’s Machberet and in the series of Teshuvot (‘Answers’)
that was triggered by it, lexicography had been the main structuring principle. In the
actual entries, the morphological and lexical analyses of the ‘holy tongue’ were still
largely undifferentiated. In chapters 9–12, del Valle presents the results of his having
scanned all those separate entries for phonological, morphological and syntactical ob-
servations, which he systematises and describes in great detail.

In five appendices (pp. 373–590) the author then offers, in his own Spanish trans-
lation, the most significant parts of the five Hebrew works that are the subject of
his monograph (i.e. the Machberet, the Teshuvot by Dunash, the Talmide Menachem,
and Dunash’s disciple Yehudi ben Sheshet’s, and Dunash’s own polemics against his
teacher Saadia). A bibliography and no less than six indexes (pp. 601–65) complete the
work.

Judging by this first volume, del Valle’s Historia de la gramática hebrea en España
is an ambitious project. This becomes especially clear from the various ‘proportions’
in volume one. First of all we cannot help but notice that the size of this volume is
inversely proportional to that of the—relatively modest—medieval corpus that lies
at its root. This is further reflected by the structure of the book. While it takes the
author some 120 pages to actually analyse the contents of his corpus, the introdutory
chapters and various scholarly apparatuses take up another 540.

In his Historia de la gramática hebrea, Carlos del Valle Rodríguez has not so much
written a systematic exposition of, as built a monument for, early ‘Spanish’ Hebrew lin-
guistics. In its execution this monument is encyclopaedic in a CD-ROM-like fashion.
As the individual sources have each been edited, translated and analysed by previous
scholarship (notably by the Wissenschaft des Judentums and by historians of linguistics
in Israel and Spain, among whom del Valle occupies a prominent position), the chief
merit of this ‘paper CD-ROM’ lies in its making accessible, via multiple entrances, the
earliest cluster of Iberian-Jewish linguistic polemics as a whole.

Universiteit van Amsterdam

IRENE E. ZWIEP

JEFFREY HOWARD CHAJES, Between Worlds: Dybbuks, Exorcists, and Early Mod-
0812237242.

This revised PhD dissertation (Yale, 1999, under David Ruderman) is an important
contribution to the study of spirit possessions and exorcisms in Jewish society of the
sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Its aim is, in the author’s words (p. 9), ‘to provide
thick description as well as sustained comparative-historical analysis’ of a wide range
of sources which shed light on this important topic. This is done through detailed
analyses of specific aspects of the problem.

In the first two chapters, Chajes seeks to learn why there was such an explosion
of spirit possessions and exorcisms in sixteenth-century Safed. His conclusion is a