

context of early Iberian Hebrew grammar is mapped out, again in the form of a lapidary 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 *protagonistas* Menachem ben Saruq, Dunash ben Labrat and their respective disciples. In a series of treatises, critiques and counter-critiques (which neatly reflect the dynamics 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 observations, which he systematises and describes in great detail.

In five appendices (pp. 373–590) the author then offers, in his own Spanish translation, 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 introductory 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 linguistics. 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.

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JEFFREY HOWARD CHAJES, *Between Worlds: Dybbuks, Exorcists, and Early Modern Judaism*. University of Penn Press, Philadelphia, 2003. 278 pp. £26.00. ISBN 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

combination of several different factors, including the arrival in Safed of many Jews of Spanish extraction, who brought with them Iberian beliefs and traditions conducive to the rise of such incidents, the flourishing of Kabbalistic ideas (*gilgul*) and techniques (*'ibbur*; the obtaining of a *maggid*) having to do with the transformations and exploits of human ghosts, the proximity of Safed to numerous graves and their aetherial denizens, the close contacts of its Jewish dwellers with some non-Jewish, and especially Muslim, experts in demonology and magic, and perhaps even the growing presumption in this center of Kabbalistic studies of its centrality within the Jewish world, and of the need to maintain the highest possible standards of purity and sanctity (as Chajes notes, in Christian contexts similar presumptions often went hand-in-hand with a heightened fear of demons and their devious manners of leading the pious astray; the same may already have been true at Qumran). In these two chapters, Chajes also explores the relations between the possessors and the possessed, with special emphasis on the sexual overtones of the ghost's penetration into their (mostly female) victims' bodies and of their expulsion thence by the (male) exorcists, and the didactic value of the exorcism stories themselves, and especially of the demons' intriguing revelations to their exorcists and the audience who watched the 'show'.

In the third chapter, the focus is on the exorcist and on the techniques he employs, and Chajes's analysis moves in two distinct stages. First, he examines several medieval and Renaissance Jewish magical texts, and studies their varied instructions on how to conduct an exorcism. Next, he analyses in light of these instructions the exorcisms described, recommended and employed by the Safed kabbalists, concluding that there was much similarity, but also some major differences. A first difference, and the clear by-product of the doctrine of *gilgul*, was the Kabbalists' recurrent stress on the need not only to exorcise the ghost, but also to perform a *yikhud* on its behalf, so as to prevent it from further transmigrations, which would bring pain not only to its victims but also to itself. A second difference, and one needlessly described by Chajes as unique to the ARI (Rabbi Isaac Luria) alone, is the supplanting (or, in many cases, supplementing) of older techniques with such kabbalistic innovations as the use within the exorcistic ritual not only of biblical verses and their permutations, but also of their more discreet, and far more elaborate, *kavannot*.

The fourth, and perhaps most insightful, chapter deals with the ways in which Vital's descriptions of his frequent contacts with female magicians and visionaries might help us reconstruct a hitherto neglected chapter in the history of Jewish women. While these female mystics left no written records of their beliefs or activities, Chajes shows that what can be gleaned from the writings of male Kabbalists should suffice to debunk the facile assumption that Kabbalah and its corollaries were a no-woman's-land. At the very least, we should learn to admit that some women (of specific social statuses?) could gain some authority as mystics and visionaries in some Jewish communities in the early modern period, and thus devote more attention to other aspects and ramifications of this intriguing phenomenon.

Finally, in the fifth chapter the author turns to a close analysis of Manasseh ben Israel's *Nishmat Khayim*, which includes a comprehensive collection of possession and exorcism stories, and thus serves as a major source for the academic study of these phenomena. Analyzing the personal and communal background of this seventeenth-century Amsterdam Rabbi, Chajes suggests that like some of his Christian contemporaries, Manasseh felt that the best response to rising religious skepticism, and especially the denial of the immortality of the soul, was the incontrovertible experience of possession and of exorcisms, a sure proof of the existence of demons and ghosts, and therefore also of the soul's survival after the body's death. This, Chajes suggests, is one more didactic lesson to be learned from exorcism stories (provided one listens to them with the ears of an early Modern thinker), and one more reason for their great

popularity at the time—and therefore also for our own ability to study various aspects of Jewish demonology, spirit possession and exorcisms from a wide array of sources.

In judging this book's merits, three points are especially worthy of notice. First is the author's insistence on studying the Jewish sources not only from a narrow Jewish Studies perspective (including the 'thick' description which is so much in vogue nowadays—a technique which is perfectly legitimate in itself, but which often masks some very thin, parochial scholarship), but also within a broader Early Modern context. Having little direct access to sources in Latin and Arabic, Chajes read a great deal of secondary literature on Early Modern magic, demonology and exorcisms, and used this wide knowledge to ask the right questions of the Jewish sources themselves, and to look at the available textual evidence for similar Jewish phenomena in ways which have not been utilised before. Second is the author's healthy sense of humility, apparent not only in his reference to 'the great Chajes rabbis in our family's past' (p. 278), and his inclusion of Z. H. Chajes in the bibliography and some footnotes, but also from his recurrent preference for multifaceted explanations of historical developments. Readers used to the incisive 'Let me tell you how it was' style of some Kabbalah scholars (influenced by Gershom Scholem, but lacking his genius), will be relieved to find a fair number of ifs, perhapses and maybes interspersed throughout this book's historical reconstructions. Third is the author's lively style, and his ability to explain what exactly it is that he wishes to ask, and which answers the sources are willing to provide him with. Readers fearful of the confused and tedious style of some Kabbalah scholars, who often cannot tell the difference between the sources they adduce and the interpretations they attach to them, will find here a rare example of a book written in a clear and lively manner, by a scholar who knows how to enjoy reading Vital and Luria, but can learn something even from Eric Clapton. (The bulgy footnotes, on the other hand, would have benefited from a more economical system of references.)

Together with a recent collection of studies on the same theme (Matt Goldish, ed., *Spirit Possession in Judaism: Cases and Contexts from the Middle Ages to the Present*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2003, to which Chajes too contributed, but of which he had preprint access only to one more paper), this book is likely to become the basis for the study of demon possessions and exorcisms in Early Modern Jewish society for many years to come.

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TUDOR PARFITT, *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2002. ix, 277 pp. £18.99. ISBN 0297819348.

When the Ten Tribes were exiled from Israel, apparently there was not a scribe among them to record for posterity at least some of the events that would befall them, and if such a scribe or scribes did exist, their writings, unfortunately, have not survived. This is not to say, however, that they got lost immediately. Jeremiah, 130–140 years after their dispersal, appears to have known where at least some of them were, and he hoped for the ultimate restoration of both Judah and Israel (Jeremiah 30–31). Talmudic tradition even cites a view that Jeremiah returned these tribes and they were ruled over by Josaiah (BT Arakhin 33a and BT Megillah 14b).¹

¹ While Parfitt is basically aware of the Jewish background and research material, this is clearly not one of his major concerns. Additional information can be found in the eclectic presentation of Ben-Zion Luria, 'The Fate of the Exiles from Samaria [sic!]', *Bet Mikra* 25 (69 [2]), (1977), pp. 159–76 (in Hebrew).