

HEROLD WEISS, *A Day of Gladness: The Sabbath among Jews and Christians in Antiquity*. University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, South Carolina, 2003. x, 262 pp. \$39.95. ISBN 1-57003-468-0.

During the course of the 1990s, a steady stream of articles by Herold Weiss on the treatment of the Sabbath by Jewish and Christian writers entered the public domain. First to appear was a discussion of the Sabbath in the Synoptic Gospels (*JSNT* 38 (1990), pp. 13–27). A year later came ‘The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel’ (*JBL* 110 (1991), pp. 311–21), and ‘Philo on the Sabbath’ (*Studia Philonica Annual* 3, pp. 83–105). Subsequently, Weiss continued his Jewish strand with ‘The Sabbath among the Samaritans’ (*JSJ* 25 (1994), pp. 252–73) and ‘The Sabbath in the Writings of Josephus’ (*JSJ* 29 (1998), pp. 363–90). Meanwhile, on the Christian front, he also produced papers entitled ‘*Sabbatismos* in the Epistle to the Hebrews’ (*Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58 (1996), pp. 674–89), and ‘The Sabbath in the Pauline Corpus’ (*Studia Philonica Annual* 9 (1997), pp. 287–315). These studies, arranged more or less in chronological order, form the basis of the book under review, the only significant addition being the introductory chapter on the Sabbath in early Judaism. In this, Weiss gives brief consideration to material such as the documentary evidence from Elephantine and Qumran and early rabbinical pronouncements on the ‘day of gladness’.

What emerges with great clarity from this study is how varied Sabbath practice and Sabbath beliefs were among both Jews and Christians. For some Jews, for instance, the biblical injunction to abstain from labour on the seventh day meant staying at home doing absolutely nothing. Others, while ceasing from their workaday activities, saw no objection to limited walking and considerable intellectual exercise—hence the widespread practice of attending the synagogue and spending the Sabbath day in intensive Torah study. Attitudes towards what could be eaten on the day also varied considerably. While many felt that the Sabbath, as a festal day, should be celebrated with special foods, there were those who believed that the biblical injunction to sanctify the Sabbath would best be achieved through fasting. As for the communal psalm-singing that marked observance of the Sabbath at Qumran, that is unattested elsewhere.

Jewish beliefs about the Sabbath were equally diverse. For literalists, it was purely a day of rest and sanctification (Exodus 20:8), and the only issue—no small one given the paucity of prescription in the Pentateuch—was how to give practical definition to those matters. Allegorists, by contrast, such as those criticised by Philo at *Migr.* 91, saw no need for practical observance at all; for them, the significance of the Sabbath lay entirely in its symbolism. Then there were those many Jews who viewed the Sabbath primarily in an eschatological light: through it they believed they were getting a glimpse of the perfect world to come.

Early Christian practice and beliefs in respect of the Sabbath were no less varied. At one end of the spectrum you find those who, because they were Jewish, continued to observe the Sabbath in a traditionally Jewish way. Hence the postponement of the anointment of the body of Jesus until the day after the Sabbath in all the Synoptic Gospel accounts. At the other end of the spectrum you have those who advocated abandoning Sabbath observance altogether on the grounds that it was impossible for sinful mortals to sanctify the day.

These differences and others are brought out extremely clearly in this well organised and lucidly written book. Inevitably, in a work that makes no claim to be exhaustive, there are areas where Weiss’s treatment seems rather skimpy. The discussion of rabbinical material in chapter 1 is very limited, and the pagan evidence which throws considerable light upon Sabbath praxis among Diaspora Jews, especially those settled at Rome, gets no more than a passing mention. Nor is there any discussion of the process by which the Sabbath gave way in importance to the Lord’s Day. Readers will

find much to absorb and interest them, however, in Weiss's scrupulous analysis of the material upon which he has decided to focus. Those who have neither the time nor the inclination to read the book in its entirety are recommended to consult the lengthy synopsis of the Sabbath among Jews and Christians, which forms the subject matter of Weiss's concluding chapter.

Edinburgh

MARGARET H. WILLIAMS

MICHAEL SOKOLOFF, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods*. Bar Ilan University Press, Ramat-Gan, Israel and The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore / London, 2002. 1582 pp. \$144.70. ISBN 965-226-260-9.

MICHAEL SOKOLOFF, *A Dictionary of Judean Aramaic*. Bar Ilan University Press, Ramat-Gan, Israel, 2003. 88 pp. \$25.00. ISBN 965-226-261-7.

These two dictionaries differ greatly in size but they share the same basic approach, and should be considered together with the first one produced by Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic* (1990; 2nd edn 2002).

The *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* is aimed at readers of the Babylonian Talmud and Geonic literature, and also at the comparative philologist investigating the Eastern Aramaic dialects of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (JBA), Syriac and Mandaic. Sokoloff convincingly defends his decision to hive off JBA from the Rabbinic Hebrew with which it is entwined in the Talmud by pointing out that the Hebrew of the Talmud should first receive its own separate lexical treatment before being considered together with JBA. From the reader's perspective, this alone makes Sokoloff's volume far easier to consult than earlier ones, including Levy's *Neuhebräisches und Chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim* (1876), Dalman's *Aramäisch-Neuhebräisches Wörterbuch zu Targum, Talmud und Midrasch* (1901), and Jastrow's *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (1926), in which Rabbinic Hebrew and several types of Aramaic are effectively jumbled together.

The corpus covered also differs from these earlier dictionaries. It covers not just the Babylonian Talmud and the Geonic literature of the sixth to eleventh centuries, but also the writings of Anan ben David, the founder of a pre-Karaite sect of the eighth century, the Babylonian Masora, and the very different Jewish magical texts found on bowls from Iraq and Iran and in the work called 'The Sword of Moses'. By incorporating all these texts Sokoloff can present users with a thorough overview of the whole of the surviving lexicon of JBA, along with its links to other Aramaic dialects of Babylonia.

The focus of the *Dictionary of Judean Aramaic* is much narrower, since it relates only to the written Aramaic of non-literary texts from c. 165 BCE until 200 CE. These include inscriptions from the Jerusalem area, legal texts and letters from the Dead Sea region, short Aramaic citations embedded in Tannaitic Hebrew texts, and *Megillat Ta'anith*. Sokoloff provides a useful list of epigraphic texts and their place of publication.

Like their predecessor, these two dictionaries are models of typographical clarity. The Aramaic lemmata and their basic definitions in modern English stand out, there are clear and well-chosen examples of each meaning, comparable words in other Aramaic dialects are briefly cited, and at the end of each entry in the *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* one can find equivalent words in the Palestinian Talmud, Geonic or Arabic explanations, and references to any relevant scholarly literature. The layout makes the dictionaries a real pleasure to use, in addition to the confidence that