

vant and striking examples of individual books and scribes from different periods and parts of the Medieval world.

A more controversial part of the book is undoubtedly the section concerning the texts. It surveys all main branches of Jewish literature in a way that is, by necessity, sometimes superficial and based on secondary sources, and, in a few cases (namely in the section on philology), not entirely devoid of some minor inaccuracies. Despite this, however, this section on textual history is highly relevant: it deals with the important issue of the relationship between texts and the physical form in which they are produced and transmitted. Colette Sirat makes her point very clearly: there is a link between the book as a physical object and the texts it carries. Put otherwise, the choice of the shape, script, page layout etc. for a particular text is not random. All those who study Hebrew texts would benefit greatly if they did it in the close context of the books through which these texts have been transmitted.

*Hebrew Manuscripts of the Middle Ages* is an important, full and fascinating introduction to the study of Hebrew book-making in the Middle Ages, and it can be recommended to students, scholars and all those interested in Hebrew manuscripts, as well as in Jewish literature and intellectual history in general.

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EPHRAIM KANARFOGEL, *'Peering Through the Lattices': Mystical Magical and Pietistic Dimensions in the Tosafist Period*. Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2000. 274 pp. £13.56. ISBN 0-8143-2531-9.

This fascinating survey reveals new dimensions in the thought of the tosafists. The tosafists flourished mainly in northern France and Germany during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and, according to the dominant view in modern scholarship, they concentrated on the Talmud and the legal and rabbinic literature surrounding it and were not concerned either with pietism or with broader theological questions. In contrast to the accepted view, Kanarfogel presents a wealth of evidence drawn from manuscripts and published material to demonstrate that many of the tosafists enjoyed a wider range of interests that included mystical and magic teachings.

The first two chapters of this book are devoted to a survey of the ascetic practices of the tosafists. One of the premises on which this study is based is the link between asceticism and mysticism. Kanarfogel notes the significant role played by ascetic practices in the *Heichalot* literature and in cabalistic circles in Provence, Gerona and Safed (p. 125), as well as among the German Pietists themselves. He also draws support from the view expressed by Ivan Marcus<sup>1</sup> that the ultimate aim of personal pietism is the preparation of the individual for mystical experience. On this basis Kanarfogel pursues the correlation between the tosafists who practised pietism and those who were interested in magic and mysticism, adducing manuscript and published evidence to show how far interest arises in the same circles. From his description of their ascetic practices and legal rulings, we glimpse a finely drawn mini-portrait of these personalities and their religious outlook. While Kanarfogel does establish a large measure of convergence, however, it would be surprising to find that the radical religious experience that expresses, by renunciation and fasting, a sense of separateness based on closeness to the divine was restricted to those figures that were influenced by the German Pietists.

<sup>1</sup> Ivan Marcus, *Piety and Society: The Jewish Pietists of Medieval Germany* (Brill, Leiden, 1981).

In chronological order, the narrative begins in the eleventh century in the period before the crusades, with a description of the pietistic and ascetic tendencies associated with the academy at Mainz, including examples drawn from the pietist practices of some of Rashi's teachers. Interest in esoteric studies amongst rabbinic scholars during this period is also found almost exclusively at the academy in Mainz, and in Mainz among members of the Abun and Kalonymus families. At the beginning of the tosafist period, interest in esoteric studies waned and the mystical, magical and pietistic teachings prevalent in Mainz before the crusades were largely ignored. The methodology of the academy at Worms at the end of the eleventh century that helped stimulate the development of tosafist dialectic was dominant at this time: leading figures of the tosafist movement like Rabbenu Tam and the Rashbam concentrated their efforts in the dialectical method of talmudic interpretation and displayed no interest in mystical doctrines. At the beginning of the twelfth century the influence of the academy at Mainz was barely felt, although it did return later. However, despite the dominance of the academy at Worms, Kanarfogel argues that the approach centred almost exclusively on the Talmud, that the lack of interest in magical and esoteric lore displayed by prominent tosafists like Rabbenu Tam was the exception rather than the rule, and that the involvement of the tosafists with mysticism and magic continues the trend established in Mainz before the crusades. In this connection, he notes that several of Rabbenu Tam's leading students display familiarity with esoteric teachings.

As interest in esoteric lore and pietist practices in northern France and Germany became more widespread, Kanarfogel attempts to determine whether the interest in mystical and magical material was due to the influence of the German Pietists or reflected a broader interest in these trends in rabbinic culture. Kanarfogel does not consider the religious ferment that gripped France in the twelfth century as a source of influence, claiming that the tosafists were uninterested in contemporary Christian developments; although when discussing the rationalist tendencies at the beginning of the twelfth century he does note an analogous move away from the supernatural in Christian Europe. Some of the materials suggest, he feels, that in the second half of the twelfth and in the thirteenth century interest in magic and mysticism may be independent of the German Pietists. He suggests that the interest in divine names for magical purposes may not be due to the German Pietists who expressed reservations about their use. Interest in esoteric studies could have been due to the influence of wider rabbinic culture or to the *Heichalot* literature itself: although the German Pietists have been assigned a major role in editing and redacting this literature it was also known outside these circles.

However, the bulk of the material analysed by Kanarfogel, seems to point, in his view, to the influence of the German Pietists. In medieval Germany the tosafists and rabbinic figures subscribed to the German Pietists' exoteric biblical interpretations and techniques and accepted their readings of liturgical texts. Their influence may also be seen in details of ritual and observance, such as fasting, for instance: whereas the medieval Sefardic orbit followed the position of the Babylonian Geonim, some individuals in Germany did fast on feast days as an additional measure of repentance. There is also some degree of influence of esoteric material. The twelfth-century tosafist Rabiah (1140–1225), contemporary with R. Jehuda the Pious (d. 1217), was familiar with some of the teachings of R. Jehuda the Pious and with the early mystical text *Heichalot Rabati*, which he cites to justify liturgical practices. *Sefer Hamannig*, written by the wandering scholar Abraham b. Nathan Hayarchi, records esoteric teachings of the German Pietists on the intentions accompanying prayer.

In the thirteenth century the influence of the German Pietists appears to grow in magic and esoteric studies as it did with regard to asceticism. Although Kanarfogel's

assumptions are well founded and his views extremely well documented, the determination of the influence of the German Pietists on wider rabbinic culture remains tentative and conjectural. The extent of the influence of mystics on the wider community is difficult to determine, as customs are accepted by tradition by those who have no knowledge or interest in their origins or significance. Kanarfogel clearly distinguishes between the tosafists' acceptance of pietist customs and their complete lack of interest in the German Pietists' theosophical and Neoplatonic doctrines. Although similarities of outlook are evinced in areas such as ascetic practices and legal rulings, he in no way wishes to suggest that the tosafists had any mystical leanings.

Nevertheless, both specific teachings and more general goals of the German Pietists seem, Kanarfogel feels, to have had an impact on the tosafists in northern France in the thirteenth century. Their influence is illustrated by examples drawn from the academy at Evreux and, amongst others, R. Moses of Coucy and R. Isaac of Corbeil. The more general religious intentions of the German Pietists, such as concentration on the law rather than dialectic in talmudic studies, seem to have influenced the tosafists of the academy at Evreux, although these doctrines appear to have reached them through literary channels as we have no evidence for personal contact. R. Isaac of Corbeil, for example, who also studied at Evreux, shared the harsh penitential programme of the German Pietists, reflecting according to Kanarfogel a significant measure of influence. R. Isaac cites both R. Elazar of Worms and R. Jehuda the Pious, and he is aware of the invocation of divine names to avoid danger and the Pietists' reservations concerning their use in practice. His affinities to the Pietists, although they stopped short of any interest in mysticism, are unlikely, Kanarfogel surmises, to have developed completely in isolation from the German Pietists.

Two of the most important German tosafists, R. Isaac Or Zarua (d. 1250) and his student Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg (d. 1293), studied with French scholars and can be seen as the heirs of the tosafist scholars in northern France. These German tosafists exhibit affinities with the German Pietists in ritual practices, legal rulings, biblical and prayer interpretations and procedures for repentance. They also expressed interest in mysticism and magic, possibly under pietist influence. R. Isaac Or Zarua, whom Kanarfogel considers to have been a member of pietist circles, preserved esoteric material from the German Pietists in *Or Zarua*. R. Meir of Rothenberg, several of whose teachers were students of the German Pietists, conformed to pietist customs in liturgical practice and procedures for repentance. While Kanarfogel cannot demonstrate unequivocally that his rulings necessarily reflect the thinking of the Pietists, R. Meir appears to follow the methods and principles that reflect both the influence of the German Pietists and the *Heichalot* literature. R. Meir's interest in esoteric studies is also confirmed by manuscript evidence from the writings of several of his students, and with these students the tosafist period draws to an end.

This eminently readable book displays a lot of learning lightly worn. A major re-evaluation of medieval Jewish culture, this survey also sheds new light on the relation of the mystics to the religion from which they sprang. The German Pietists themselves, for instance, were deeply rooted in popular beliefs, and as this study shows were not as unique in medieval Germany as previously thought. Much research on cabalistic circles, particularly on the early Cabala, has concentrated on the development of cabalistic conceptions from existing religious doctrines and their transformation in the hands of the mystics; this work also shows the response that these ideas evoke in the wider community.

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