The burgeoning interest in Hellenistic Judaism has tended to concentrate in two areas: the degree of and mechanics of the social integration of Diaspora communities within their urban contexts, and the patterns of intellectual influence and the creative reformulation of traditional ideas. Although the concern of the present volume, the outcome of an International Colloquium in 2003, is still with how Greek-speaking Jews were influenced by and interpreted the political, social, and intellectual cultures of their Hellenistic worlds (Preface, ix), its approach, both overall and as adopted in the various essays, offers much that is new. The Colloquium itself was sponsored by a research project, funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council, into how the Greek Bible exhibits responses to the social and political structures of its age, itself part of a broader interdisciplinary investigation of ‘Jewish / Non-Jewish Relations’.

Two introductory essays, by Oswyn Murray and Jane Rowlandson, set the scene by exploring the contemporary philosophical debates about ‘monarchy’ and the actualities of Ptolemaic administration; the remaining fourteen essays target particular texts and/or themes, commendably remaining within the remit of the volume but with as many questions and methods as there are contributors. Some adopt more of a narrative approach, looking at the representation of rulers, particularly foreign ones: E. Gruen on Persia and Rajak on the ruler as angry and as tyrant use a range of texts; while P. and L. Alexander on 3 Maccabees, S. Honigmann on Aristeas, and R. Fowler on Josephus’ account of Aniiaeus and Asinaeus (Ant. 18)—the only significant departure from ‘the Greek Bible’—focus on a single narrative. For the most part, these suggest the confident application of contemporary models of the ideal of control of others and of self, and, in Gruen’s terms, a readiness for ‘disparagement rather than deference’ (p. 71). The final section of the book looks at the other side of the coin, at ideologies of Jewish kingship in the Hasmonean period: A. van der Kooij brings together evidence for the idea of a royal priest in the LXX Pentateuch, Isaiah and Ben Sira; J. W. van Henten sets the representation of royal power in 1 and 2 Maccabees in a Ptolemaic context, while D. Edwards takes ideology beyond a literary strategy when he brings archaeological evidence into dialogue with 1 Maccabees. Although included in the earlier section, B. Wright’s emphasis on Ben Sira’s primary indebtedness to scriptural rather than to Greek traditions of Kingship also belongs here.

The second main group of essays pays close attention to the particular translation choices in books with a Hebrew or Aramaic original. The looseness of the subdivisions is underlined by J. Aitken’s study of the theme of kingship in Proverbs, which he does find to be perhaps consciously following Greek contemporaries, in marked contrast to Wright’s conclusions for Ben Sira. Elsewhere in this section thorough analysis can lead to cautionary results: S. Pearce shows that a long-held view that some Septuagintal choices—including the term for ‘hare’—were motivated by political loyalty to the Ptolemies is untenable; J. Dines argues that although translators, particularly when faced with anonymous and prophetic figures, did reflect on political convictions and contemporary power conflicts, these can only be traced tentatively, while L. Grabbe is even more doubtful that terms used for administrative offices show any influence from the Ptolemaic context. On the other hand, T. Evans’s reconstruction of how readers would have understood the ‘interpreter’ in Gen. 42:23 relies on the assumptions that the translation was contemporary with the third century Zenon Papyri and that the ‘Pentateuchal translators characteristically construct their traditional narratives in contemporary terms’ (pp. 239–40).

The articles are all thorough in their argument and careful in their attention to the texts. Just as there is no single template for approach, so there is no single set of conclu-
sions. Tessa Rajak comments in her Introduction, largely a review of the contributions, ‘The suspicion may arise that, in the end, we learn more about the Jews themselves from these explorations than about Hellenistic kingship’ (p. 7). This is hardly surprising, and is often presupposed by the approach adopted, but it would be interesting to have that ‘more’ spelt out in greater detail. It would also be helpful to have ‘overheard’ some dialogue between the contributors—as suggested above for Wright and Aitken: how are such different conclusions regarding two wisdom texts to be understood? The combination of texts written in Greek and of translations, particularly when the latter are read against the ‘originals’, invites further analysis both in terms of the questions to be asked and of the conclusions reached. As already observed, some of the authors sound a due note of caution; loudest among these Lester Grabbe draws attention to the methodological difficulties arising from our ignorance of the number of different translators involved, of the text-form which they used, and of the range of terminological options available in the Egypt of the period. It would be valuable to know how the research team have addressed these difficulties, or, indeed, whether they have found them to be over- or under-emphasised. Yet this volume does not claim to be a comprehensive treatment of its broader remit, and we can hope for further discussion of the issues raised in further publications from the research team.

The book concludes with a useful cumulative bibliography and indexes of subjects, ancient sources (with some oddities), and authors. The editing and production have been done well, making this an attractive as well as stimulating volume to read.

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In this revision of his 2006 dissertation (New York University), Jassen sets out to investigate whether and how prophecy remained active in Second Temple Judaism. In his introduction Jassen follows Nissinen in defining prophecy as the ‘transmission of allegedly divine messages by a human intermediary to a third party’ (Martti Nissinen, ‘Preface’, in Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives, ed. M. Nissinen; SBLSymS 13; Atlanta: SBL, 2000). By adopting a wide definition he is able to argue that prophecy persisted into the Second Temple period, but in a changed form. He considers a large number of Dead Sea Scrolls, both sectarian and non-sectarian, including also late biblical and apocryphal texts evidenced at Qumran. As well as his own analysis, Jassen brings together the threads of recent research along with an extensive bibliography and copious footnotes. Thus this volume provides a comprehensive treatment of the topic.

The volume is divided into three parts. The first and longest part (chapters 2 to 9) is concerned with the reconceptualisation of the role of the classical prophets and of the ‘prophet at the end of days’ in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the second part (chapters 10 to 13) Jassen considers the conceptualisation of the means of revelation in descriptions of earlier prophetic figures. His key insight is that these conceptualisations probably reflect actual practice at Qumran. In the final part (chapters 14 to 18) Jassen looks for evidence that activity regarded as prophetic was taking place in the Second Temple period.

In part one, Jassen examines the use of the terms ‘prophet’, ‘visionary’, ‘anointed one’, ‘man of God’, and ‘servant’ in the Qumran corpus. He finds that in non-biblical texts these terms are not commonly applied to contemporary figures in a prophetic