

JUDAÏCA

HOFFMAN, Y (ed.) — Studies in Judaica (TE'UDA, XVI-XVII). Tel Aviv University, Faculty of Humanities, Tel Aviv, 2001. (22cm, XLV, 722).

This double issue of the The Chaim Rosenberg School of Jewish Studies Research Series consists of five sections. The volume presents 22 articles that cover a wide range of topics in Jewish literature, history and thought, and the Hebrew language, covering a time-span of 3500 years. All in all, the articles offer a wealth of new findings, but unfortunately the present overview cannot do justice to the richness of the volume. The first section 'Biblical Studies' (pp. 1-102) contains three papers. In 'The Ugaritic Epic of Kirta in a Wisdom Perspective' Edward L. Greenstein studies the epos of King Kirta, pointing to elements of wisdom literature and to parallels with the story of Job, on the basis of an analysis of wisdom texts from Ugarit written in Akkadian that apparently were written by Syrian scribes.

Aaron Mondschein sheds new light on the problem of the relationship between the Pentateuch Commentaries of Abraham Ibn Ezra and Rashbam in his 'Concerning the Inter-relationship of the commentaries of R. Abraham Ibn Ezra and R. Samuel b. Meir to the Pentateuch: A New Appraisal'. Studying a newly found text, an alternative recension of Abraham Ibn Ezra's commentary on parashat *wa-Yishlahk*, published by the author elsewhere, Mondschein concludes that Abraham ibn Ezra became familiar with the Commentary of Rashbam upon his emigration to England in 1158, that is, after he wrote the short and the long recension of his Pentateuch Commentaries.

Frank H. Polak's sociolinguistic study 'The Style of the Dialogue in Biblical Narrative' (a short rendering of the Hebrew title 'The language of the narrator and the dialogue in Biblical narratives: An attempt at linguistic characterization') examines a number of early pre-exilic narratives about Abraham, Jacob, Samson and other Biblical figures. The author presents tables that compare the percentages allotted to 'character speech' in the prose narrative to the percentages allotted to what pertains to the narrator's domain. Moreover, he discusses the various registers and discourse styles (formal and casual language etc.) displayed by the narratives.

The next section 'Talmud, Halacha & Midrash' (pp. 105-273) comprises six studies. Nahem Ilan's *Mizvot Zemannot* (or, according to the fuller Hebrew title: "Whoever has this book in his hands, will no longer need any other book": A study of *Sefer Mizvot Zemannot* of R. Israel Israeli of Toledo) draws our attention to an unpublished and little studied halakhic text by Rabbi Israel Israeli of Toledo who worked in Toledo at the time that Asher ben Yehiel was appointed as chief Rabbi. The paper is a continuation of N. Ilan's study of R. Israeli's commentary on Avot in his PhD (Jerusalem 1999). Discussing the manuscripts of *Mizvot Zemannot*, its structure, contents, sources and dissemination, the author suggests that this text is an important source for the history of *halakhah* in Spain.

In 'An additional source for the *Sitz im Leben* of Midrash and Aggadah' Uri Ehrlich, considers the creation of a specific Midrashic pattern, the *afarah*, that is, departure homilies, showing that the *Sitz im Leben* of these texts were departure ceremonies in Palestine. They were used in two particular contexts: a rabbi's departure of the community that had hosted him, and the ceremony of 'dismissing the assembly' after a funeral.

'The Priestly Benediction in The Abba Sabra Version' by Itzhak Grinfeld is concerned with the priestly benediction of the Ethiopian Jews that was composed during the fifteenth century in Ge'ez, Agau and Amharic. The paper contains an edition of the original prayer in the handwriting of the Ethiopian scholar J. Faitlovitch; a translation into Amharic, and a translation into Hebrew.

David Henschke challenges the common view that the law to sell *hametz* to a non-Jew was widespread already in tannaitic literature. In his 'Leavened Bread (*Hametz*) belonging to a gentile: A chapter in the history of the Halakha' he concludes that, instead, the law has its origins in the anonymous strata of the Babylonian Talmud, while the tannaitic sources deal with *hametz* that was retained in the domain of a Gentile that belonged to the territory of a Jew.

Simcha Emanuel's article 'The Halakhic Works of R. Elaezar of Worms' expands on his Ph D *Lost Halakhic works of the Tosafists* (Jerusalem 1993). It examines hitherto unpublished halakhic material from R. Elaezar's *Máaseh Roqeah* and *Hilkhot Terefot*, as well as a Passover homily containing much halakhic material by this author, which was completely unknown until now.

In the last paper of this section, 'The Trifold (sic) Structure of *Sugyot* in Tractate *Eruvin* of the Babylonian Talmud', Uri Tzur takes as his starting-point the observation that many Talmudic *sugyot* contain a threefold structure, that is, expressions or sentences that are repeated three times, or names that occur thrice etc. On the basis of a study of five *sugyot* in *Eruvin* he argues that an examination of style and structure of these passages helps to solve problems concerning variant readings or explain differences between the printed text and the manuscripts that a purely halakhic approach has failed to clarify.

The third section is devoted to Jewish History (277-473) and consists of five contributions. The first, 'The Beginnings of Christianity and Apocalypticism' by Joshua Efron, is a preliminary study that calls for a new approach in the field of early Christianity and Apocalyptic literature. It presents the outlines of the issues and the central theses to be investigated, as well as the methodology to be followed. Meanwhile, the author has published the results of his research in *Reshit ha-natzrut we ha-Apocaliptica be-toledot Yisra'el* (Tel Aviv, 2004).

'The Altar of the Covenant at Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:4-5)' by Yoram Erder compares Rabbinic exegesis with Karaite exegesis of Exodus 24:4-5 (when was the altar built; which altar was it and of what kind were the offerings?) in relation to Ex 18:12-13 (the sacrifices offered by Jethro). The Karaite authors dealt with are Yefet ben Eli, YOSHUA ben Juda, Aharaon ben Josef and Aaron ben Eliah. The article shows that Abraham Ibn Ezra adopted several points of Karaite exegesis in his own explanation of these verses.

In '“Thou shalt surely open thy hand unto thy poor and needy brother”': Letters requesting financial aid from the Geniza' Elinoar Bareket publishes nine (fragments of) letters from the Geniza, which contain requests for help to the needy, providing each letter with relevant explanatory notes. Of letters that are written in Judaeo-Arabic she provides a Hebrew translation. Interestingly, most of the applicants do not ask for money, but for food and clothing, and often implore the addressee to help their hungry children.

The next two papers have to do with early Christianity. Edna Israeli proposes a new solution for the problematic identification of Salathiel with Ezra in the opening passage of the apocalypse that goes by the name Ezra 4 in her paper

“*Ego Salathiel qui et Ezras*”. After reviewing previous and unsatisfactory solutions she argues that the problem of identification as well as other inconsistencies in the text can be resolved by assuming that Fourth Ezra is not a Jewish, but a Christian text. On this hypothesis, the identification of Salathiel with Ezra unites kingship with priesthood, two aspects that were united in the personage of Jesus.

In 'Christian Sacraments in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch' Rivka Nir examines the symbolic typological language used in the three visions contained in the pseudepigraphic Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch that deal with the coming of the Messiah and the redemption that he will bring. She suggests that the symbolism of these visions (the vine, the spring, the Messianic feast and bright water) were intended to arouse associations with the two sacraments of the Eucharist and baptism. In this respect it bears a striking similarity to the Gospel of St. John, which has a distinct sacramental character.

The fourth section 'Hebrew Language (475-526)' contains three studies, the first of which is Ali Watad, 'Who was the Compiler of the *Ha-Melitz*? Samaritan Hebrew-Arabic Dictionary'. In this paper, based on his PhD (Tel Aviv 1999) the author adduces several, mainly linguistic arguments to show that *Ha-Melitz* should be attributed to Pinkhas V, that is, Pinkhas ha-Kohen ha Rabban who flourished during the fourteenth century. In contradistinction to earlier studies, the author takes into consideration all the manuscript material. His conclusion affirms the view of Z. Ben Hayyim, while refuting that of L.V. Vilsker who attributed the work to Pinkhas IV (9th century).

The next study is Chaim E. Cohen, 'Nouns containing the prefix tau (ט) in Tannaitic Hebrew: The declensions *tif'elet*, *tif'olet* and *tefula*'. The author presents a detailed morphological and semantic analysis (based on the most reliable manuscripts) of the three declensions mentioned in the title, which are characterized by their novel dissemination in Tannaitic Hebrew, as opposed to that in Biblical Hebrew. The author presents special attention to the *tefulah*-declension, of which Tannaitic Hebrew contains ten items, and shows that, with one exception, these words are actually biblical words that have been transformed into technical words in Tannaitic Hebrew.

Lastly, Hava Repen studies the occurrences of the propositions *al-yede*, *min*, and *be* followed by a noun phrase in modern Hebrew. Her article, '“The Agent of an Action”, “The Stimulant of a State” and “the Instrument” realized by the Prepositional Phrases *al-yede*+NP, *min*+NP and *be*+NP', is based on newspaper-articles (from *Yedi'ot aharonot* 1987-88), a literary text A.B. Yoshua, *Molcho*) and a scientific text (A. Simon, *Aflaton we-ha-hinnukh bi-yemenu*, Tel Aviv 1985) the author argues that each of these propositions represents different semantic relations, depending on the kind of the function of the preceding verb, the governing constituent of the sentence. Verbs that indicate an action, are complemented by a clause beginning with *al-yede*, whereas verbs that indicate a state are followed by *min*. Complements beginning with *be* form a different category, *be* plus noun phrase denoting the instrument.

The last five studies of the volume concern very diverse topics that have been grouped together under the heading 'Hebrew Literature & Jewish Philosophy' (527-722). Menachem Ben-Shalom's 'The Entire Exile Transpired because of kosher meat' presents an in-depth analysis of two main characters in S.Y. Agnon's novel *Shira*, Tamara and Taglicht,

who represent two opposing cultural archetypes. While Tamara stands for the *sabra*, Taglicht represents the first pioneers with their broad humanistic worldview. Of central importance in picturing the differences between them is the discussion of the essence of restraint that transpires in the novel both overtly and implicitly.

'The Chariot of Ezekiel: An unknown Zoharic Commentary' by Ronit Meroz forms part of a more comprehensive study on the Zohar and its manuscripts. An investigation of the manuscript material has brought to light an unknown commentary, of which the author publishes some sections here. According to the author, this text, which shares ideas with early Zoharic texts such as *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* and *Sitre Torah* should be dated before the beginning of the 1280s.

Boaz Arpali examines the relation between Natan Alterman's tripartite poem *Tahanat Sadot* and three successive poems from Avraham Shlonsky's cycle *Mas'a* in 'From *Bet Netivot* to *Tahanat Sadot*: A comprehensive study of three poems by Avraham Shlonsky and a threefold poem by Natan Alterman', a paper that complements earlier studies by the author. In particular it studies the use of terms referring to the semantic field of 'train' and what is related to it. Comparing and contrasting the two poetic compositions, the author deals with the attitudes of these two poets vis-à-vis modernity and the modern world, and with their differences with respect to style and problems of interpretation.

Ziva Shamir, '“In front of the bookshelf” — between the sacred scrolls and the Shakespearean Quartos' first sketches the historical background and Bialiq's state of mind at the time of writing his famous poem *Lifne aron ha-sefarim* and then discusses its relation with his earlier and unfinished mock epic '*Omed u-mefaspes*'. She then shows how Bialiq employs Lady Macbeth's famous monologue "come thick night" to express the oscillation between great expectations and deep despair felt by the poet and many of his Jewish contemporaries who had not succeeded in finding an adequate alternative to replace the holy scrolls on the bookshelf.

The last article of the volume, 'Holistic systems in twentieth century Jewish Thought Buber and Gordon: Between parallelism and supposed influence' by Avraham Shapira, examines parallels between the thought of Buber and that of the less well-known Aaron David Gordon, a topic that hitherto has attracted little attention. In particular, it addresses their method of organic thinking that encompasses the relation of the individual with the human world, with the cosmos and his belief in the God of Israel, and their national views that have much in common.

English summaries of the articles are provided at the beginning of the book (pp. XL-CLV).