Lange, Nicholas de

Japheth in the Tents of Shem

Greek Bible Translations in Byzantine Judaism

Much scholarly attention has been paid to the Greek Bible translations employed in the Byzantine Church, whereas those used in the Byzantine synagogue have so far been largely ignored. Nicholas de Lange attempts to remedy this lack by collecting together all the available evidence for such translations from the Cairo Genizah fragments and other manuscript sources, setting it within its context in Byzantine Judaism. He traces the history of the translations over a period of a thousand years and demonstrates the persistence of a certain approach to translation which ultimately goes back to ancient Judaism and has left its mark on the Septuagint and in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as in the Rabbinic literature and the Targums.

Much attention focuses on the lost translation of Akylas (also known as Aquila) which played a key role in the dissemination of Rabbinic Judaism in the Greek-speaking communities of the Near East and Europe. There are traces also of the Septuagint, something which raises intriguing questions about a continuing Kulturkampf in Byzantium between Hellenism and Rabbinism; might this have implications for the understanding of Byzantine Karaism and Jewish-Christian relations? Byzantine Judaism played a key role in the transmission of Jewish religious culture from the Near East to Western Europe, meaning that this study has wide ramifications. The book is intended as a contribution to Greek Bible studies, Byzantine studies and Jewish studies. Most of the source materials were discovered and published by the author, with this being the first time they have been brought together and studied in book form.

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Dönitz, Saskia

Überlieferung und Rezeption des Sefer Yosippon

Flavius Josephus was the most important Jewish historiographer in antiquity. In the first centuries his works were read only by Christians, but in the tenth century his most famous book, the Jewish War, was translated into Hebrew in Byzantine Southern Italy (Sefer Yosippon). Saskia Dönitz analyzes the transmission and reception of this book, which became a bestseller among medieval Jews. Sefer Yosippon played a significant role in the development of medieval Jewish identity. Its martyr stories influenced the emergence of Jewish martyrology after the First Crusade. The reception of Josephus in Judaism reflects the Jewish-Christian rivalry in interpreting the history of the Second Temple in the Middle Ages.
Mikva, Rachel S.

**Midrash vaYosha**

A Medieval Midrash on the Song at the Sea

Rachel S. Mikva undertakes a close examination of *Midrash vaYosha*, a medieval rabbinic text which explicates the Song at the Sea (Ex 15:1–18) and the events of the exodus from Egypt leading up to that climactic moment. Relatively short midrashim focusing on a brief biblical narrative or theme were composed in large numbers during the medieval period, and their extant manuscripts are sufficient in number to demonstrate the great popularity of the genre. Based on early manuscripts, two different recensions are transcribed and translated with significant annotation exploring variants, parallels, exegetical significance and literary style. A thorough historical analysis suggests that the midrash was performed as explication of the Torah reading at a certain point in its development – part of the gradual attenuation of live Targum. As *Midrash vaYosha* leaves the synagogue, its narrative dimension grows tremendously, yielding significant insight into the development of medieval Jewish exegesis.

Schreiner, Stefan

**Die jüdische Bibel in islamischer Auslegung**

Hrsg. v. Friedmann Eißler u. Matthias Morgenstern

This volume presents essays by Stefan Schreiner referring to texts and themes of the Jewish Bible as they are retold and interpreted in the Qur´an and in Islamic tradition, e.g. the motif of man being created in the image of God, the Sabbath commandment, the narrative of the »binding« of Isaac, the Jonah and Job narratives and the Qur´anic rendering of the Decalogue. Additionally, this volume brings essays that are of particular interest for Jewish-Muslim and also Christian-Muslim relations: the relevance of the land of Israel (Palestine) and of the city of Jerusalem (al-Quds) in the Qur´an and in Islamic tradition, the interpretation of the death of Jesus according to Muslim texts and the Islamic rendering of Jesus´ sermon on the Mount. It becomes clear that the basic texts of Islam can be understood only if the context of the pre-Islamic Jewish-Christian tradition is reckoned with.

Morlok, Elke

**Rabbi Joseph Gikatilla's Hermeneutics**

Elke Morlok deals with the hermeneutics of R. Joseph Gikatilla, one of the most outstanding and influential kabbalists of medieval Jewish mysticism. His literary creativity falls onto the last decades of the 13th century, when very innovative ideas on kabbalah and its hermeneutics were developed and formulated for the first time. The author analyzes several key concepts throughout his writings such as his ideas on letter combination, symbol, memory, imagination and ritual and their varying functions within the hermeneutical and theosophic structures that underlie Gikatilla’s approach. With the application of methods derived from modern theories on language and literature, she tries to create the basis for a fruitful encounter between medieval mystical hermeneutics and postmodern hermeneutical approaches. As Gikatilla incorporates two main trends of kabbalistic thinking during the medieval period, he was one of the most valuable sources for Christian thinkers interested in medieval kabbalistic thought.
Goldstein, Miriam

Karaite Exegesis in Medieval Jerusalem

The Judeo-Arabic Pentateuch Commentary of Yusuf ibn Nuh and Abu al-Faraj Harun

Miriam Goldstein's book is an ambitious study of a significant work composed by two leaders of the community of Karaite scholars living in Jerusalem (10th/11th c. C.E.). Yusuf ibn Nuh, a grammarian and revered teacher of this scholarly community, authored a lengthy commentary on the Pentateuch, which was revised and updated by his student Abu al-Faraj Harun. Goldstein examines the historical background of the composition and its reception, as well as major principles of its exegetical method, an amalgamation of traditional Jewish techniques with methods and concepts inspired by or absorbed from the Arabic-Islamic environment. The book includes extensive citation from the commentary in English translation and an appendix of all cited texts in the original Judeo-Arabic. Yet this book is more than a study of one specific composition. Goldstein's analysis provides a basis for the recognition and understanding of the exegetical methods employed extensively, consistently and conservatively during two centuries of Karaite exegesis in Jerusalem. Furthermore, it serves as an introduction to a school of exegesis that was one of the crucial links between traditional rabbinic literature and the Jewish Bible commentaries composed in Europe. This book is intended for students of the Bible and biblical exegesis and of medieval Jewish and Middle Eastern history, as well as those simply curious to learn more about this vibrant period of creative composition in Judeo-Arabic.

Katsumata, Naoya

Seder Avodah for the Day of Atonement by Shelomoh Suleiman Al-Sinjari

This book contains a critical edition, an English translation, and a detailed commentary of two lengthy Hebrew liturgical poems for the Day of Atonement (called Seder Avodah) that were composed by a ninth- or tenth-century Jewish poet who apparently lived in Palestine or its environs, Shelomoh Suleiman Al-Sinjari. The first part of the Seder Avodah narrates the creation of the world and the history of the people of Israel from the perspective of the sins that they have committed, while its second part describes, in detail, the ritual service of a high priest (Aaron and his sons) in the temple on the Day of Atonement.

Jewish Reception of Greek Bible Versions

Studies in Their Use in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages
Ed. by Nicholas de Lange, Julia G. Krivoruchko and Cameron Boyd-Taylor

The authors of the essays collected in this volume are all concerned with the Jewish transmission and use of Greek translations of the biblical books from Late Antiquity to the early modern period. It is only in recent years that the idea of such a Jewish transmission has gained acceptance, and the present volume represents the first attempt to bring together contributions from specialists in a number of areas, including not only biblical and Jewish studies but also such disciplines as epigraphy and Byzantine history and literature, to investigate a wide range of aspects of the subject. The authors not only explore some of the ways in which Greek-speaking Jews kept alive a tradition of Greek biblical scholarship going back to ancient times, but also how this tradition impinged on Christian Bible study. They open a window on a forgotten chapter in biblical scholarship, and at the same time shed important light on aspects of Jewish life in the Middle Ages.
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Ben-Naeh, Yaron

Jews in the Realm of the Sultans

Ottoman Jewish Society in the Seventeenth Century

Jewish society in the Ottoman Empire has not been the subject of systematic research. The seventeenth century is the main object of this study, since it was a formative era. For Ottoman Jews, the ‘Ottoman century’ constituted an era of gradual acculturation to changing reality, parallel to the changing character of the Ottoman state. Continuous changes and developments shaped anew the character of this Jewry, the core of what would later become known as ‘Sephardi Jewry’.

Yaron Ben-Naeh draws from primary and secondary Hebrew, Ottoman, and European sources, the image of Jewish society in the Ottoman Empire. In the chapters he leads the reader from the overall urban framework to individual aspects. Beginning with the physical environment, he moves on to discuss their relationships with the majority society, followed by a description and analysis of the congregation, its organization and structure, and from there to the character of Ottoman Jewish society and its nuclear cell – the family. Special emphasis is placed throughout the work on the interaction with Muslim society and the resulting acculturation that affected all aspects and all levels of Jewish life in the Empire. In this, the author challenges the widespread view that sees this community as being stagnant and self-segregated, as well as the accepted concept of a traditional Jewish society under Islam.

Robinson, James T.

Samuel Ibn Tibbon’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes

The Book of the Soul of Man

Samuel Ibn Tibbon (c. 1165–1232) – the eminent translator, philosopher, and exegete – is most famous for his Hebrew translation of Maimonides’ Guide of the Perplexed. However, he wrote original works as well, and laid the foundations for a distinctive philosophical-exegetical movement, what is today called ‘Maimonideanism’. James T. Robinson’s book includes a first English translation of Ibn Tibbon’s commentary on Ecclesiastes, which was the foundational work of the Maimonidean tradition. The translation, with full annotation, is accompanied by an introduction, which provides relevant historical, philosophical and exegetical background, explains difficult passages, and identifies Ibn Tibbon’s important contributions to the emergence of Maimonideanism. The author analyzes Ibn Tibbon’s sources and influences (in Jewish philosophy and exegesis and in Graeco-Arabic philosophy, especially al-Farabi and
Averroes), discusses his theory and method of exegesis, and explains the main arguments and allegories of the work which relate to the problem of human perfection. Responding to and developing the various positions of his time – especially the infamous view of al-Farabi that immortality of the soul «is nothing but an old wife's tale» – Ibn Tibbon argues that conjunction with the active intellect is possible but rare: only «one man in a thousand» can attain it. Thus, while the elite few should pursue it – through a life of study and contemplation – the many should focus on perfection in this world: they should «eat, drink, and show the soul good».

Raspe, Lucia

Jüdische Hagiographie im mittelalterlichen Aschkenas

Lucia Raspe explores the origins of the corpus of hagiographic tales about the great luminaries of medieval Ashkenaz that was first printed, in both Hebrew and Yiddish, towards the end of the sixteenth century. Tracing a number of these tales back into manuscript and oral tradition, the study shows how traditional narratives were linked to historical heroes in the course of what was an essentially literary dynamic. Once such a link had been established, however, some of these narratives seem to have taken on a life of their own. Thus, they may offer a glimpse of a sort of grassroots veneration of saints after all.

Leicht, Reimund

Astrologumena Judaica

Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der astrologischen Literatur der Juden

In these five studies, Reimund Leicht gives an introduction to central aspects of the history of Hebrew astrological literature in antiquity and the Middle Ages. He also provides the most comprehensive description which has been given up to now of the rich astrological literary tradition of Judaism, which had previously only been available mainly in handwritten manuscripts. He reconstructs the beginnings of Jewish astrological literature during Hellenism and presents a corpus of astrological texts in Hebrew and Aramaic which were previously completely unknown. The author studies the way this astrological legacy endured and developed in medieval Judaism in Europe and in the Orient and looks into the origins of the Jewish astro-magic of the Sefer Raziel. In conclusion, he discusses the Hebrew astromagical translation literature.

Jacobs, Martin

Islamische Geschichte in jüdischen Chroniken

Hebräische Historiographie des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts

Differing from early modern Christian historiography, contemporary Jewish authors painted an idealized picture of Muslim rulers, as Martin Jacobs shows in his analysis of 16th- and 17th-century Hebrew chronicles. At the same time, he discusses whether Jewish historical writing of that time continued in the medieval tradition or echoed Renaissance patterns.
Eißler, Friedmann

Konigspsalmen und karäische Messiaserwartung

Jefet ben Elis Auslegung von Ps 2.72.89.110.132 im Vergleich mit Saadja Gaons Deutung

In this work, Friedmann Eißler presents the first comprehensive text documentation, including a German translation and a detailed commentary, of fundamental excerpts from Jefet ben Eli's prolific commentary on Psalms according to the Paris manuscript. His interpretation of the Royal Psalms 2, 72, 89, 110, 132 sheds new light upon the anticipation of the Messiah by Karaite biblical scholars and he creates a distinctive image of the Karaite hermeneutics by dealing throughout the book with the great Gaon of Sura, whose tafsir is taken into account constantly.

Necker, Gerold

Das Buch des Lebens

Gerold Necker's study Das Buch des Lebens offers for the first time the complete edition of this work along with an introduction, a translation and a commentary. It also includes a detailed discussion of date, authorship and origin of the Book of Life: Gerold Necker argues that it was written in Northern France at the height of the tosafistic era. His analysis shows how the author of the Book of Life responds to the historical situation of French Jewry at the end of the 12th century and to certain current theological ideas in the Latin-Christian environment.

Dan, Joseph

The »Unique Cherub« Circle

A School of Mystics and Esoterics in Medieval Germany

The main point delivered by this book is that Jews living in Germany during the Middle Ages developed a dynamic and variegated culture which should be recognized as a constituent of European and German medieval religiosity. The esoterics, mystics and pietists who produced works like those analyzed in this volume derived their inspiration from the traditional Jewish texts, but were also part of the world they lived in, despite the seclusions enforced by the religious prejudices of the time. The esoterical-mystical phenomena described were to a very large extent an original development in central-European Jewry, and constitute one of their most important contributions to Jewish culture as a whole. In some cases, a spiritual atmosphere reminiscent of early Protestant sects, which were to appear in the same regions three centuries later, can be discerned. Some of these texts influenced the Christian kabbalists of the sixteenth century, like Johannes Reuchlin and others. This is a major spiritual phenomenon which has been completely neglected until now, and it is hoped that this volume will contribute to a new appreciation of this aspect of European creativity in the Middle Ages.
Studies in Jewish Manuscripts

Ed. by Joseph Dan and Klaus Herrmann, in Collaboration with Johanna Hoornweg and Manuela Petzoldt

Undoubtedly one of the most fascinating areas of Judaic research, Jewish manuscripts, has experienced a remarkable renaissance. What the field has largely lacked, however, is professional publications to bring together researchers who, albeit in different specialist areas (history, philosophy, Kabbalah, bibliography, art history, comparative manuscript studies, paleography and codicology), all deal variously with Hebrew manuscripts. This desideratum of Judaic scholarship appears all the more reasonable when we look at the situation of the classical philologies which have a long tradition of specialist publications devoted exclusively to the study of Latin and Greek manuscripts.

The authors of the collected eight articles show the perspectives and the possibilities of such a discourse based on Jewish manuscripts within Judaic Studies; moreover numerous tie-ins with disciplines relating to general Medieval and early modern history and culture can be developed.

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