

Talmuds. Then, in a series of thematic chapters, Porton summarizes the diversity of rabbinic opinion on virtually all questions regarding rituals for bringing converts into the Israelite community, marriage between native Jews and converts, the relation of the converts to their birth-families, and their obligations to commandments incumbent upon native Jews. A concluding chapter correlates the rabbinic discussions with the contemporary social scientific literature regarding religious conversion and ethnic identity. Porton's readings of the sources are plausible, his restraint in permitting the diversity of rabbinic opinion to stand unresolved is admirable, and his use of social scientific theory is illuminating. An important resource for students of the social and intellectual history of rabbinic Judaism in Late Antiquity.

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MAGIC AND FOLKLORE IN RABBINIC LITERATURE. By Daniel Sperber. Bar-Ilan Studies in Near Eastern Languages and Culture. Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1994. Pp. 256. N.p.

Twenty-five disparate essays on the following general themes: folklore, magic, historical allusions, dating of Midrashic texts and passages, and Palestinian texts and commentaries. Nearly all focus on the use of philological criticism to illumine the manifold cultural intersections of Palestinian rabbinic texts with the larger Greco-Roman world. Sperber is a master at reconstructing the meanings of obscure passages or terms which have resisted the hermeneutic labors of both the rabbinic and philological traditions. Missing, unfortunately, is any effort to explain more broadly the implications of all the details. For research libraries with collections in Judaica or Classics.

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THE RHETORIC OF THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD: ITS SOCIAL MEANING AND CONTEXT. By Jack N. Lightstone. Studies in Christianity and Judaism, 6. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1994. Pp. xiv + 317. \$28.50.

Pursues three interrelated enterprises: 1) an analytical catalogue of the formulaic language employed in a small but representative sampling of texts from the Babylonian Talmud (BT); 2) a comparison of such rhetorical usage with that of earlier texts, i.e., the Mishnah, Tosefta, Sifre on Numbers, and the Palestinian Talmud; 3) an explanation of the marked rhetorical differences between the BT and its antecedents in terms of its role in the emergence of more centralized institutions of rabbinic learning and leadership in Saboraic and Geonic Babylonia. The first two literary enterprises reinforce the conclusions of scholars who view the stylized rhetorical lan-

guage and the editorial units they construct as products of the final stages of the BT's formation. The third, drawing on sociolinguistics and cultural anthropology, seeks to recover the kind of rabbinic society reflected in/constructed by the text, and to explain changes in rabbinic rhetoric and virtuosity as a response to changing political circumstances and their rabbinic institutional consequences in fifth-seventh century Babylonia and beyond. This last enterprise is the book's most original, albeit speculative contribution. Of particular interest to specialists in rabbinic literature and the history of late antique Judaism.

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DIASPORAS IN ANTIQUITY. Edited by Shaye J. D. Cohen and Ernest R. Frerichs. Brown Judaic Studies, 288. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993. Pp. iii + 130. \$40.95.

The results of a 1992 conference of the same name. The conference's creative move was to broaden the exclusively Jewish character of this definition and to understand "Diaspora" as "a mass migration or movement or flight from one location to another location or locations," that is, as an experience in the history of many peoples and groups. The redefined term opens up a wider range of questions about what constituted group identity and difference in the Roman world, with an emphasis on the ambiguities and demonstrations of identity, sameness, and Jewishness.

The selections that consider these and other questions are: S. J. D. Cohen, "Those Who Say They are Jews and Are Not': How Do You Know a Jew When You See One?"; R. MacMullen, "The Unromanized in Rome"; J. Meleze-Modrzejewski, "How To Be a Greek and Yet a Jew in Hellenistic Alexandria"; and S. Honigman, "The Birth of a Diaspora: The Emergence of a Jewish Self-Definition in Ptolemaic Egypt in the Light of Onomastics." A must-read for scholars of Roman social history, Roman period and rabbinic Judaism, New Testament, early Christianity, and Roman religion.

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THE EVIL EYE IN THE BIBLE AND RABBINIC LITERATURE. By Rivka Ulmer. Hoboken: KTAV, 1994. Pp. x + 213. \$29.50.

Surveys a great variety of Jewish texts and practices relating to the eyes which reveal a wide range of Jewish eye-imagery and have much interest as folklore. But the presentation is greatly weakened by the author's failure to distinguish general references to "evil" or "narrow" eyes—where the phrase simply connotes lack of generosity or good will—from mention of the "evil eye" as a specific magical or supernatural source of malignity and harm. The importance of this distinction is recognized but confusion on this score pervades the book.

In general, the author's interpretations must be examined with great care as many are highly dubious. In particular, just as the author homogenizes distinct themes so too she combines materials from antiquity with late medieval texts without concern for the dangers in this procedure; indeed, these dangers are explicitly dismissed on the very first page of the Introduction. Readers can be grateful that the contents of this book have been brought together, but those contents still await adequate study.

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THE MONARCHIC PRINCIPLE: STUDIES IN JEWISH SELF-GOVERNMENT IN ANTIQUITY. By David Goodblatt. Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum, 38. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1994. Pp. xii + 336. N.p.

A meticulously researched, densely argued study of institutions of Jewish national self-governance from the Persian restoration (ca. 539 BCE) till the Islamic invasions of the seventh century CE. Most of the volume focuses upon institutions of the Land of Israel—the Jerusalem High Priesthood, intermittent royal regimes (Hasmonean and Herodian), the Sanhedrin and the Patriarchate. A final chapter is devoted to the Exilarchate of the Sassanian Empire.

Goodblatt argues that the dominant form of Jewish national self-government throughout this period was monarchical, with political power centrally vested in a single office. For most of the Second Temple period (the Herodian dynasts excepted) this figure was the High Priest. From roughly 90-425, all legitimate political power in Jewish Palestine resided in the Patriarchate, dominated by the House of Gamaliel. In Babylonia, from roughly the third century on, the Exilarchate functioned in ways comparable to the Palestinian Patriarch. He gathers, scrutinizes, and—almost universally—dismisses diverse Jewish and Christian testimonies to the existence, at any point in the Second Temple and post-Temple periods, of a *gerousia*, *boule*, or *sunedrion/sanhedrin* that might have shared national power with priestly or royal monarchs. Goodblatt makes his case in dialogue with every major historian who has written on these subjects since the mid-nineteenth century. This is a magisterial performance that should be in the hands of anyone whose work touches upon the social and political history of ancient Judaism.

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RESPONSES TO SUFFERING IN CLASSICAL RABBINIC LITERATURE. By David Kraemer. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. Pp. xiii + 261. \$49.95.

Discusses approaches to the problem of suffering found in ancient Jewish literature, devoting separate chapters to Bible, pre-rabbinic literature, Mishnah and Avot, Tosefta, halakhic