

SOCIETY, THE SACRED, AND SCRIPTURE IN ANCIENT JUDAISM: A SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE. By Jack N. Lightstone. Studies in Christianity and Judaism, 3. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988. Pp. xiii + 126. \$17.50.

Employing methods derived from the sociology of knowledge and social anthropology, Lightstone challenges and replaces the assumptions about an unbroken line of tradition from Moses (via the oral law) through Ezra and the rabbis, with final documentation in the Mishnah and Talmud.

His alternative discerns four stages of development: (1) the "Restoration Community" under Ezra and his successors that produced the "Torah of Moses" and adopted it as the norm by which boundaries were marked off for God's people; (2) the Jewish Diaspora, characterized by holy men, magicians, and apocalyptists who maintained direct contact with the divine (This period was also marked by the emergence of the synagogue, the use of Greek, and significant interchange with Greco-Roman culture.); (3) "early rabbinism" (after the fall of the temple and the two revolts) that manifested itself in an introverted epoch with a closed canon of scripture (Rabbinic texts consisting of tractates—self-contained units on such subjects as temple, cult, and Torah—came to have equal authority with scripture.); and (4) an accommodation to the Roman world (after 200 CE) with a shift to Aramaic and to the academy, which produced Talmud and Midrash as commentary on the Mishnah and scripture, and claimed esoteric knowledge through holy men.

The method is admirable, and the results are largely persuasive; but the case could be strengthened if the pervasive use of hellenistic philosophy and literary modes, as well as the Greek inscriptions and iconography of the earliest Galilean synagogues, had been taken into account.

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WÖRTERVERZEICHNIS DER APOKRYPHEN-DEUTEROKANONISCHEN SCHRIFTEN DES ALTEN TESTAMENTS IN DER PESHITTA. Edited by W. Strothmann. Göttinger Orientforschungen, I. Reihe: Syriaca, 27. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988. Pp. xii + 492. DM 86.

This word-register of the Syriac "Apocrypha" (books found in the Peshitta Codex Ambr. B 21 Inf. not found in the Hebrew canon) gives every word (except pronouns, conjunctions, propositions, numbers, *l'*, *lyt* and *cl*) as they are cited in Brockelmann's *Lexicon Syriacum*. The works included are: Wisdom of Solomon, Epistle of Jeremiah, two epistles of Baruch, Bel and the Dragon, Susanna, Judith, Ecclesiasticus, 2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch, 4 Ezra, 1-4 Mac-cabees, 1 Esdras, Tobit, Prayer of Manasseh, Psalms of Solomon, Five Apocryphal Syriac Psalms, and Canticles or Odes (excerpted from

canonical works such as Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Job). As expected each entry gives a Latin definition and the occurrence of the word in each apocryphal book. If the Syriac is a loanword from the Greek, the Greek is also given. The book's only drawback is that the occurrences of each word are not given in context. A very useful book for all who are interested in the Syriac tradition of biblical translation as well as in the Jewish Pseudepigrapha. Recommended for research libraries.

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JEWISH LAW FROM JESUS TO THE MISHNAH. FIVE STUDIES. By E. P. Sanders. London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990. Pp. xii + 404. \$29.95.

Five previously unpublished essays address the following topics: Jesus' legal teachings within the context of Pharisaism; the cogency of applying the term "oral law" to pharisaic tradition; the nature of pharisaic concern with the purity of common food; the penetration of pharisaic legal concerns into the Greek-speaking Jewish diaspora; J. Neusner's conception of mishnaic law as expressed in the latter's *Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah* (1981).

While Neusner's work is explicitly criticized in only the third and fifth essays, the book as a whole occupies an important place in the post-Neusner discussion of early rabbinic law. Dependent in great measure on Neusner's literary-historical methods and accepting substantial elements of his conclusions, Sanders nevertheless mounts the first sustained critique of Neusner that offers a constructive counter-reading of the rabbinic literary evidence. The essays on purity and *Judaism* may draw the most attention for some intemperate estimates of Neusner's scholarly care and literary skill. Nevertheless, the work succeeds in re-opening questions that many at the fringes of contemporary rabbinic studies—especially New Testament scholars—have deemed closed. See Neusner's response in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44 (1991).

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GOYIM: GENTILES AND ISRAELITES IN MISHNAH-TOSEFTA. By Gary G. Porton. Brown Judaic Studies, 155. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988. Pp. xii + 356. \$59.95.

A study of the conception of gentiles held by the rabbinic authors of the Mishnah and the Tosefta. The first half of the book examines how and where the subject of gentiles appears in the topical and literary agenda of those documents. Porton demonstrates that references to gentiles arise from the themes of Israelite legal self-definition at hand, rather than from any sustained interest in gentiles per se. Their distribution across the texts' range of topics, chronology of named sages, and variety of literary forms is unexceptional, their place ancillary.

Porton develops the positive interpretive possibilities of these negative literary results in the second half of the book, employing as his interpretive key ideas of "ethnicity" drawn from recent social-scientific literature. Gentiles serve as foils in the central rabbinic program of defining Israel by structuring its behavior in relation to the symbolic constructs of sacred place and time. Porton's exclusive attention to the Mishnah and the Tosefta enable him to bring an important part of an interesting picture into sharp focus. The book is well indexed, an accessible resource for students of early rabbinic Judaism and its literature.

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THE ECONOMICS OF THE MISHNAH. By Jacob Neusner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. Pp. xvi + 183. N.p.

In the Mishnah, Neusner maintains, we can find a particular, systematic, model for an ideal economy in Judaism. In constructing this model, Neusner argues that the Mishnah attempts to reconcile two different economic theories. One is the "market economy" that the Mishnah knows from the Greco-Roman world. The other, that of "distributive economics," assumes a central authority that dictates how resources and scarcities are to be allocated. This second model is the legacy of the Priestly Code in scripture with its demands for offerings, tithes, etc. The task facing the Mishnah's editors was to devise rulings that would govern the economic activity of the simple householder in a way that would satisfy the demands of both theories. Neusner shows us how that synthesis was accomplished in the Mishnah and places its results in the context of the economic thinking of the Greco-Roman world. Of interest to economic historians, this book also serves as a provocative discussion of the ideas and principles that shaped Mishnah thought.

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THEY ALSO TAUGHT IN PARABLES: RABBINIC PARABLES FROM THE FIRST CENTURIES OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA.

By Harvey K. McArthur & Robert M. Johnston. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990. Pp. 221. N.p.

A very helpful introduction to its subject, this book contains, in its first half, translations to English of 125 rabbinic parables that are either attributed to tannaim or found in tannaitic literature. In its second half, ten brief essays describe the formal and formulaic aspects of the rabbinic parables, the problems that arise in interpreting their meaning, the parables' exegetical dimension, and their relationship to the parables attributed to Jesus. Although the authors offer no radically new insights or discoveries, their admirably lucid presentation of the "facts" is a valuable corrective to some past scholarship on this