

A KEY TO THE RABBINIC BIBLE: A REVIEW OF TORAH HA-KETHUBAH VEHA-MESSURAH

by JOSEPH TABORY

אהרן הימן, תורה הכתובה והמסורה, מהד' ב, תל-אביב, תשל"ט.

A. Hyman, *Torah ha-Kethubah vaha-Messurah*. A Reference Book of the Scriptural Passages Quoted in Talmudic, Midrashic and Early Rabbinic Literature. 2nd edition, Tel-Aviv, 1979.

The centrality of the Bible to the Jewish experience is a well known truth. This is especially true of the Second Temple period as evidenced by the Biblical commentaries and pseudo-Biblical compositions found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The status of Jesus was ultimately dependent on the extent to which the details of his life fulfilled Biblical prophecies or were pre-figured in the lives of Biblical figures. It is thus remarkable that there is no comprehensive work on the Bible which contains the Rabbinic exegesis of that period or of the early Christian centuries. The Tannaitic midrashim are mostly limited to the legal portions of the Pentateuch. The Amoraic midrashim, most of which have been redacted in the post-Talmudic era, cover the whole of the Pentateuch but very few of the other books. However, since the Rabbis saw the whole Bible as one book whose various parts helped to explain each other, we find in these midrashim a wealth of comment also on the other books of the Bible. A large body of commentary on all the Biblical books is also to be found in Rabbinical legal literature: Mishna, Tosefta, the two Talmuds and related works. The vast range of these works has effectively locked their Biblical commentary out of sight of the Biblical student. From ancient times, students have desired a key, such as the work here under review, which would open the doors to the realms of Rabbinic exegesis — both for an understanding of the Bible as well as for an understanding of the Rabbis.

Dr. Joseph Tabory is a Senior Lecturer in Talmud at Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan.

Since the writing of this review, a critical review of this work by Y. Maori (in Hebrew) has appeared in *Kiryat Sefer* 55 (1980), pp. 584–590 while a more general appraisal by A. Greenbaum (in Hebrew) has appeared in *Sinai* 44 (1980), pp. 75–85.

Modern scholars have found that a study of the Rabbinic tradition is also important for the history of the Biblical text itself. Biblical mss. prior to the ninth century are almost non-existent. In lieu of them, it has been noted that Rabbinic works, many of which are ultimately derived from earlier traditions, quote the Biblical text with variants from its Massoretic version. A large number of such variants on the books Joshua, Judges, and Samuel I and II have been collected by A. Aptowitzer (*Das Schriftwort in der rabbinischen Literatur*, reprint with Prolegomena by S. Loewinger, New York 1970) but they have been neglected by Biblical scholars. While many of these variants are simple scribal errors, many others have textual significance. The work of a scholar who studies the history of the Biblical text is incomplete without a check of its quotations in Rabbinic literature.

Two types of attempts at making the Rabbinic literature available have been made. The first type strived to guide the reader through the chambers of this world by anthologizing Rabbinic exegesis, in full quotations, in the order of the Bible. The earliest comprehensive work of this type, although of a selective nature, is the *Yalkut Shim'oni*, compiled during the 13th century. This work, still important due to its utilization of sources no longer extant, is currently being issued in a critical edition (see the review by M. Krupp, *Immanuel* 9 (1979), 63–81). A modern anthology which seeks for completeness, *Torah Shelemah* (the Complete Torah), shows the magnitude of the Rabbinical commentary. The 31st volume of this work has recently appeared but it has not yet completed the third book of the Pentateuch! (It is true that its lengthiness is due in great part to its extensive commentary and excurses.)

The second type of attempt, represented in the work before us, has a more modest goal — to serve as a key to the door so that the student may search the rooms of the Rabbinic world by himself. This is achieved by providing each sentence of the Bible with references to those passages in the Rabbinic literature in which it is quoted. The earliest work of this type, compiled in the thirteenth century, has never been fully published. The most prevalent one, *Toldot Aharon*, published frequently in Bibles equipped with the commentary of Rashi, is nearly useless due to the large number of misprints. Thus, the work before us, which is both comprehensive and extremely accurate, is an important tool which has almost no predecessor. The author of the first edition, Rabbi Aaron Hyman, an astute compiler of reference works in the field of Rabbinic literature, saw in print only the first volume of his work in 1936. His son, following in his footsteps, completed the first edition, published in 1940, and undertook its revision for the second edition. It is certain that his father would have been pleased with his work and we should also be grateful to him. The use of this book in Biblical and kindred studies will generally be only implied by a vast citation of Rabbinic sources. It is only meet that, at least this once, we stress our great debt and gratitude to the authors.

In a work of this type there are several theoretical considerations which must be made before beginning upon it. The first consideration is the list of works to be indexed. This should obviously include all the literature composed by the Tannaim and the Amoraim or containing traditions which emanate from them. In this respect, the second edition is distinctly richer than the first as a number of works which had not yet been published at the time of the first edition were incorporated into the second.

The inclusion of medieval works in this framework is somewhat problematical. We find here the works of Maimonides, including his introductions to the Mishna, but not his commentary to the Mishna itself. Included also is the *Kuzari* of Judah Halevi although *Hovot ha-Levavot* by Bahya Ibn Pekudah, included in the first edition, was eliminated in the second. It is not clear why the Zohar was retained in the second edition while the Tikkunei Zohar was eliminated. Although the Biblical interpretations found in these works are of interest they do not really add anything of significance to our knowledge of the traditional Biblical interpretations of the Rabbis. There is certainly no work of significance which is missing here.

A second consideration is the choice of editions of each work which is to be cited. It would seem apparent that, in each case, a critical edition of the text should be selected in order to insure accuracy. Unfortunately, much of this literature is available only in traditionally printed editions. In addition, a consideration of the authors seems to have been the availability of a particular edition in the private home. The second edition has certainly improved on the first in quoting the critical editions of the Tannaitic midrashim rather than those included in the Bible commentary of the Malbim, but traces of compromise still exist. The *Mekhilta*, for instance, is quoted according to the edition of Meir Ish Shalom although this edition has been superseded by the edition of Horowitz — whose edition of Sifre was used rather than that of Ish Shalom. The reasons for this are not clear.

An effort to overcome the limitations of the standard editions is made by their supplementation with critical editions in those cases where the mss. used in the critical editions cite passages not quoted in the regular edition. Thus the standard edition of the Tosefta is supplemented by Zuckerman's; the standard edition of Midrash Rabbah is supplemented by the edition of Genesis Rabbah of Theodor-Albeck and Leviticus Rabbah by that of Margulies; etc. However, one may doubt whether this has been done thoroughly. A cursory check of a few passages in the Tosefta shows that Genesis 7:4 lacks a reference to Tosefta Sota 3:8 (ed. Zuckerman, p. 296, line 13–13) and Exodus 13:21 lacks one to Tosefta Sota 4:6 (ed. Zuckerman, p. 299, line 13). The Lieberman edition of the Tosefta is a better text than that of Zuckerman although the fact that it is not yet complete may be used to justify the selection of Zuckerman. This would not seem to be as

serious an omission as not using the Mirsky edition of the *She'iltot*. The last volume, published in 1977, was too late to have been included but the first volumes include material from mss. which had not yet been published as part of this work.

A glaring anomaly in the selection of editions is the case of the Mishna. This Tannaitic work served as the basis for the development of the Talmuds. In the case of tractates of the Mishna which have Talmudic commentary, the authors saw fit to give a reference to the page in the Talmud on which the Mishna is quoted rather than one to the Mishna itself. This usually necessitates a double reference: one to the Babylonian Talmud and one to the Palestinian Talmud which, in turn, misleads the reader doubly. He thinks that this passage has not been quoted by the Tannaim but has been quoted twice by the Amoraim and neither statement is true.

A problem faced by the author is the accuracy of the Biblical references given in the standard editions. To his credit we may point out that he did not rely on them nor on lists of passages which are given as indexes in critical editions. Each one was checked and corrected as necessary. We find here a high degree of accuracy which is so important in a work of this type. However, it is not sufficient to find the passage discussed in the Bible but one must also check the context. This is fairly obvious in the case where the discussion revolves on one word which may appear a number of times in the Bible. It is less obvious, and perhaps less important, in the case of parallel passages. If one finds a comment on the song of David one may be at a loss to tell whether it refers to II Chronicles 15 or to Psalms 105. Even when the comment refers to one of the textual differences between the two chapters one will not be absolutely sure which chapter is being referred to. For example, the construction of Solomon's throne is repeated in almost identical terms in I Kings, chapter 10 and in II Chronicles, Chapter 9. In Esther Rabbah (1:12) there is a comment on the throne which is taken as referring to Chronicles and is accordingly indexed by Hyman. Further on in the same passage there is another comment on the round head of the throne which is reported only in Kings. One would therefore tend to assume that the first reference should also be to Kings rather than to Chronicles although Esther Rabbah may have collated two separate sources. We can not expect Hyman to clarify this problem in every case but the reader should be aware of it and check the references in parallel sources also.

The above mentioned problem points out an interesting subject which may be studied by the use of this work. Were all the books of the Bible equally known and used by the Rabbis? It is not surprising that a count of the pages of the index shows that the five books of the Pentateuch, which comprise about a quarter of the Biblical text, take up a little more than a third of the index. The Five Books of

Moses were obviously the main Biblical text for the Rabbis. What is surprising is that while the Prophets, which were part of the prescribed reading in the Synagogue, constitute close to a half of the Biblical text, their place in the index is only about a third. The place of the Hagiographa in the index is only slightly less than its representation in the Bible. A more thorough analysis book by book, including an historical breakdown by time and place, would be of great interest.

An important point to be considered is the method of arrangement of the Rabbinical references. In this work we find, after each Biblical sentence, a list of the sources in which it is quoted arranged according to a pre-selected order of quotations. The author has wisely foregone any attempt to arrange the references according to the particular word which is commented on. He has also foregone another difficult task — assembling together those references which include the same Rabbinic comment. Midrashim frequently copy one another and the reader may check five or six references and find that he has only one comment. Assembling these together, as an aid to the reader, would also have shown that some references are missing. The *Yalkut Shim'oni* is composed mostly of material which is to be found in extant Rabbinic sources. Nevertheless, one finds that the Yalkut is referred to while the source from which the Yalkut took is lacking. This is all the more remarkable since the sources of the Yalkut are so ably pointed out by this same author in his work *The Sources of the Yalkut Simoni*, Jerusalem 1965–1974. I shall point out but two examples. In Esther 1:1 we find a reference to Yalkut, Part One, number 22 — but the source, Genesis Rabbah 16:4 is missing; in Esther 2:7 we find a reference to Yalkut, Part Two, number 569 — but its source, BT Sanhedrin 93a, is missing. Nevertheless, judicious use of the sources and their references seems to assure us that we will be able to find all the relevant material.

Finally, we must commend the publisher for a very pleasing format and typographical arrangement. He has managed to compose the second edition, containing more matter than the first edition, in fewer pages while making it yet clearer and easy to use than the first edition. The author's wish that this new edition may ease our task in finding the sources will certainly be fulfilled.

Immanuel 13 (Fall 1981)