

### Moshe J. Bernstein

*Reading and Re-Reading Scripture at Qumran*. STDJ 107. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2013. Hardcover. Pp. xx + 744. €239/US\$307. ISBN 978-90-04-24414-6.

This collection contains thirty previously published articles by one of the most prolific scholars on biblical interpretation in Second Temple Judaism. One article has been translated from Hebrew for inclusion in this book. Bernstein has edited his articles only lightly, so that they reflect “the process of scholarly thought and production, and not merely its final results” (xiii).

The book comprises two volumes, each with a different theme. The first volume concerns the book of Genesis and its interpretation; the second deals with law, pesher, and the history of interpretation. In the first volume, the reader encounters detailed studies on individual Qumran works such as Commentary on Genesis A (4Q252), the Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen), and Exposition on the Patriarchs (4Q464) alongside broader essays on the figure of Noah, the Qumran interpretation of Genesis or the Pentateuch, and the exegetical motif of angels at the Aqedah. The second volume offers contributions on 4QOrdinances<sup>a</sup> (4Q159) and 4QReworked Pentateuch (4Q364–367); thematic essays on pseudepigraphy, women and children in legal and liturgical Qumran texts, and citation formulas in the pesharim; and broader surveys of the contribution of the Qumran scrolls to our knowledge of biblical interpretation in Second Temple Judaism. Taken together these articles are an eloquent testimony to the breadth of Bernstein’s knowledge.

Bernstein’s work breathes methodological conscientiousness. Besides discussions of their specific topics, many articles offer meta-reflections on how we may study biblical interpretation in Second Temple Judaism most fruitfully. To give just one example: in “Introductory Formulas for Citation and Re-Citation of Biblical Verses in the Qumran Pesharim,” Bernstein points out that the study of the pesharim has long been governed by the order of discovery of these commentaries. This observation is directly relevant to the entire field of Qumran studies and challenges us to reflect on the ways in which our approaches towards the scrolls may be preconditioned by the order of their recovery and publication.

Bernstein is particularly interested in matters of classification and genre. This interest informs his articles on the nature of 4Q252, originally published in the 1990s, as well as his more recent work on the Genesis Apocryphon and 4Q159. Especially in his later articles Bernstein stresses the complexity of ancient genre and the pluriformity of biblical interpretation in Second Temple Judaism. Genre, for Bernstein, is a largely presentist way of speaking about ancient writings: “The notion of genre . . . belongs largely to the students of ancient literature rather than to its authors” (217). As we develop classifications

that can help us to make sense of the literary heritage of Second Temple Judaism, Bernstein continues to argue, we should develop narrow rather than broad definitions, as only those can be truly illustrative.

This preference for narrow definitions underlies Bernstein's defense of the term "Rewritten Bible." As he writes: "The looser the definition, the less precisely it classifies those items under its rubric. . . . My own preference . . . is for a Vermes-like narrowness in the employment of the term" (61). My question here would be which other classifications of writings such as Jubilees, the Temple Scroll, and the Genesis Apocryphon may be helpful. Which aspects of these texts do we run the risk of overlooking when we read them together and classify them as "Rewritten Bible"? Depending on the research questions we pose, could we come up with new ways of classifying them, comparing them with works of ancient literature that are more distant in terms of exegetical strategies, language, form, or cultural and historical background? Bernstein leaves room for such exercises, pointing out that "nothing precludes a work being both Bible and 'rewritten Bible' simultaneously" (3). I am wondering, however, to what extent the continued use of "Rewritten Bible" in the sense Bernstein proposes might discourage the development of new research questions and new directions of comparison and classification.

The collection rounds off on a more programmatic note. In his "Biblical Interpretation: Looking Back and Looking Ahead," Bernstein provides valuable suggestions for further research, which include the preparation of commentaries on the Qumran scrolls (which has now begun with a number of commentary series in preparation) and a renewed consideration of issues of comparison, genre, and classification. Particularly crucial is Bernstein's observation that "[o]ur external future progress may lie in our gradual breaking down of the walls or the boundaries that artificially delineate Qumran studies as an independent field. . . . Qumran was not an isolated place at an isolated point in time, but was part of the larger world out of which both Christianity and rabbinic Judaism derived" (703–704). Tearing down the walls of our discipline will indeed be one of the major challenges that future work on the scrolls will have to face.

To sum up: this collection of articles is a treasure trove for the student of biblical interpretation in Second Temple Judaism. As the essays are presented in almost their original form, this book serves well as a history of this discipline and Bernstein's contributions to it. What is more, Bernstein's meticulous reading of a broad range of primary sources and his attention to methodology yield stimulating impetuses for further research and reflection.

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