

befäßt bzw. an diesen Problemen interessiert ist, sind die in *NATN* veröffentlichten Texte ein willkommener Materialzuwachs. Auf weitere interessante Texteditionen und auswertende Studien aus der Feder des Autors darf man gespannt sein.

HANS NEUMANN
AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN DER DDR, BERLIN

Biblical Prose Prayer as a Window to the Popular Religion of Ancient Israel. By MOSHE GREENBERG. Pp. viii + 70. [Taubman Lectures in Jewish Studies, 6th Series.] Berkeley, California: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS. 1983. \$14.95 cloth; \$3.95 paper.

A recurrent problem in the study of the ancient Near East is the difficulty of finding evidence about the populace at large in texts written by a literate minority, especially in literary texts which tend to concentrate on the actions of kings and other leaders. In this brief, splendid study, Moshe Greenberg argues that evidence about popular religion in ancient Israel can be found in the prose prayers embedded in narrative texts throughout the Hebrew Bible. These prayers differ from those in Psalms, which are polished poetic products of professional schools of liturgists and which functioned as a pre-packaged liturgy to be drawn upon as occasion demanded. Because the poetic prayers were composed (or selected) for wide applicability to standard types of situations, they lacked individual specificity. The prose prayers, on the other hand, appear to have been composed *ad hoc* to meet specific situations, to which they refer quite explicitly.

Some ninety-seven prose prayers are quoted in the Bible, nearly two-thirds as many as the prayers in Psalms. Despite their quantity these prose prayers have not been studied carefully in their own right nor utilized in the study of Biblical religion. Greenberg attributes this neglect in part to the fact that this material is embedded in narratives and could theoretically be part of the narrators' art and not a faithful reflex of actual prayers. While the form and content of the prose prayers do help narrators delineate their characters, Greenberg argues that the prayers are verisimilar even if not necessarily veridical. Their basic patterns remain constant throughout the Bible regardless of date or literary source, suggesting that they reflect the actual character of spontaneous prayer, not authors' conceits.

Another impediment to appreciation of the embedded prayers has been scholars' tendency to think only in terms of a dichotomy between spontaneous and prescribed prayers and to prefer one form or the other in accordance with changing scholarly notions of which better reflects a culture's values. Greenberg shows that the prose prayers occupy a

middle ground between these extremes. Modeled on forms of inter-human speech such as petitions, confessions, and expressions of gratitude, the prose prayers share with these forms basic and simple patterns or outlines. Like all social behavior, such speeches and prayers are mixtures of spontaneity and prescription: "the components are supplied by the conventions attached to the situation; it falls to the individual to infuse the specific content into them according to circumstances" (pp. 44-45). Since even non-specialists, as modern experience shows, can master such simple outlines and fill them in, it is no surprise that the Biblical prose prayers are uttered not by priests or levites but by kings, prophets, and (in thirty-eight cases) by lay people (including pagans, as in Jonah), at any time and in any place. This, coupled with the evidence for their verisimilitude, indicates that the prose prayers reflect the piety of commoners, not only specialists.

What the prose prayers show about popular religion includes its conception of God as redresser of wrongs, constant, reliable, trustworthy and fair, and interested in protecting his reputation for such qualities. The assumption of the ready accessibility of the sole, high, and essentially just God contrasts with the normal Babylonian recourse in times of need to personal (usually minor) deities who are not necessarily just and whose assistance is not necessarily contingent on their clients' moral state. The artless, extemporaneous character of Israelite popular prayer implies an emphasis on content rather than formulation, unlike certain Babylonian and Roman prayers which could be invalidated by deviation from the prescribed wording.

Greenberg sees in certain aspects of popular prayer a key to several of the most important features of Biblical religion. The apparent frequency of prayer must have sustained a constant sense of God's presence. The unmediated accessibility of God to Everyman would have strengthened the egalitarian tendency of Israelite religion, a tendency which led to the application to commoners of priestly standards of conduct and ultimately led to the establishment of the synagogue. The fact that prayer was conceived to be analogous to a social transaction between persons brought to prayer the same emphasis on sincerity and content, rather than formulation, that is required in successful social interactions. The same social analogy, Greenberg suggests, may lie at the root of the classical-prophetic evaluation of worship as a gesture the acceptance of which is contingent on the worshipper's adherence to the values of God. Greenberg argues that the centuries-long persistence of classical prophecy without institutional support bespeaks a certain degree of public receptivity (however latent) to the prophets' doctrines, a receptivity which he credits to the popular life of prayer.

The argument throughout this study is characterized by the author's well-known sensitivity to religious issues, attention to detail, and clarity and economy of expression. Not

the least appealing feature of the book is Greenberg's enthusiasm for the subject matter, which he explains at the end: "to a student of the Hebrew Scriptures, what can match the excitement of following a clue that promises to shed new light on the cause of ancient Israel's spiritual distinction and the vitality of its Scriptures down to our time?"

JEFFREY H. TIGAY

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

La Escuela Hebrea de Córdoba. By C. DEL VALLE RODRIGUEZ. Pp. 637. Madrid: EDITORA NACIONAL. 1981. 500 Ptas.

A familiar characteristic of the medieval thinker is that he develops his concepts around an authoritative text and expresses them as commentaries. Since truth (or 'Truth') was already contained in some written word (or 'Word'), it could be discovered by means of correct interpretation. This general characteristic distinguishes Jewish intellectual history from early post-biblical antiquity. For with the loss of national integrity, political autonomy and the usual institutions considered necessary for self-determination, Jewish dependence on 'The Book' was mandatory. All of Rabbinic Judaism was founded on interpretation: the evolving religious, juridical and political institutions, the calendar, the value system, the world view, and the very commitment to Jewish survival were all functions of textual interpretation. And the inherent difficulties were compounded by the fact that the language of 'The Book' had long since ceased being the living, spoken language of the 'people of the Book'!

Arabic philology had been intensely flourishing in the Moslem world ever since the establishment of the two disciplines *naḥw* (grammar) and *luḡa* (lexicography), and the compilation of two extraordinarily influential compendia: *Kitāb fi l-Naḥw* of Sibawaihi (d. 794) and *Kitāb al-ʿain* of Al-Jalil (d. 786). Philological studies were introduced into Spain shortly thereafter, with a surge of Hebrew studies centering in Córdoba. This paralleled the resurgence of Hebrew studies in the countries under Moslem influence, particularly Palestine, Egypt, North Africa and the environs. And in measure it must be understood as a patently nationalistic reaction against the *ʿarabiyya* movement. The Moslem affirmation of the unique excellence of Arabic was countered by the Jewish exaltation of Hebrew as being of divine origin, pristine and unique.

In Moslem lands, and particularly in the Iberian Peninsula, the Jews quickly responded to the development of grammatical theory and philology within Arabic culture, applying

it to Hebrew, the language of their own sacred writ. In fact, the so-called "Golden Age" of Spanish Jewish culture was inaugurated not by philosophers but by philologists. The pioneering grammatical works of Menahem ibn Saruq and Dunash ibn Labraṭ in the 10th century laid the groundwork for Yehuda Ibn Daūd Ḥayyūḡ (c. 1,000), who developed the principle of the triliteral Hebrew root, and for the linguistic studies of such luminaries as Shmuel Ha-Nagid (d. 1055), Moshe ibn Chiquitilla (11th C.), Yehuda ibn Balaʿam (11th C.), Abraham ibn ʿEzra (1089–1164) and Yona ibn Jannaḥ (11th C.). Even Maimonides (1135–1204), the most illustrious of medieval Jewish thinkers, in his *Guide of the Perplexed* conceived his own work as philology and the interpretation of sacred text, with philosophy serving only as a "handmaid to Scripture."

C. Del Valle Rodriguez has written a comprehensive study of the development of scientific Hebrew grammar during the renaissance of Hebrew culture in the Iberian peninsula. The book properly focuses on Córdoba and the interaction and controversies between the grammatical-philological-exegetical schools of Menahem ibn Saruq and Dunash ibn Labraṭ. For this controversy both reflected and created two basic approaches to Hebrew grammar and to Jewish thought itself.

Manahem ibn Saruq was a native of Spain, and as author of a famous *mahberet*, its leading Hebrew grammarian. His posture was essentially chauvinistic, exclusive reliance upon Biblical Hebrew and tradition, both in terms of textual exegesis and the writing of Hebrew poetry (e.g., the *piyyut* style, which remained in vogue in Ashkenazi liturgical tradition.) Dunash ibn Labraṭ, a disciple of Saadiah Gaon, came to Spain as an iconoclast grammarian, representing the oriental scholarship of Babylon. He applied principles of Arabic metrics to Hebrew poetry, and introduced foreign concepts into the categories of long and short vowels, the *shewa*, the *waw*, the *hateph pataḥ*, etc. Dunash criticized over 200 items in his *mahberet* as being grammatically faulty, whereas Ibn Saruq dismissed the 'innovations' of his critic as being alien intrusions into the Hebrew language. Rodriguez shows how eventually the school of Ibn Saruq triumphed in the field of Hebrew grammar, whereas the school of Ibn Labraṭ triumphed in the field of Hebrew poetry. For virtually all subsequent Sephardi grammarians followed the former school, and all of the innumerable poets followed the latter.

Professor Rodriguez has created a most readable book by beginning with a historical survey of the intellectual and cultural life of Sephardi Jewry. Before dealing with the intricacies of grammatical concepts, he provides a well-planned frame of reference, so that even the reader not fully familiar with Hebrew linguistics can understand the concepts involved. Furthermore, in the second part of the book, Rodriguez