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De Troyer reaches the following conclusions: 1) the author of MT Esther 8 is the same as the author of the rest of the book (p. 172); in other words, MT Esther is a literary unity. 2) The Septuagint translator has “clearly maintained the Hebrew narrative itself” (p. 270), while introducing the major changes which make LXX Esther a new edition rather than a simple translation. 3) “We conclude that the *Vorlage* of the AT was the LXX as it now stands” (p. 397).

Unfortunately, while I agree with de Troyer’s first two conclusions, I find myself unconvinced by her third and most important conclusion. No one among Esther scholars today, I believe, would dispute that the AT was at some point revised in the light of the LXX. Thus, de Troyer’s examples of where the AT shows its relationship to the LXX do not prove her hypothesis. Rather, it is in those places where the AT radically differs from the LXX that I find it difficult to accept the notion that the AT was simply a “very free reworking” of the LXX (p. 346). For example, one of the thematic differences between the MT/LXX and the AT is the theme of the irrevocability of Persian law. In the MT/LXX, the decree of Haman, as a royal decree, is irrevocable and cannot be rescinded; thus a second decree is necessary, enabling the Jews to defend themselves and leading to two days of fighting. In the AT that theme is simply not present. Rather, Mordecai asks the king to rescind Haman’s decree, and it is done (AT 7:16). The two days of fighting, therefore, are awkward in the AT, where they are not necessary. If the AT did not originally contain this material (found mainly in MT chap. 9) but added it in its revision toward the LXX, the awkwardness is explained. De Troyer does not give a convincing alternative explanation of this problem; it is not enough to imply that the AT has done away with the theme (“the ‘irrevocable laws of the Medes and the Persians’—have now disappeared” [p. 297]), but a plausible reason for it must be given.

Although I disagree with de Troyer’s final conclusion, I find her work to be a commendable effort and her theory well worth investigating. The debate about the origin of the three versions of Esther is not yet ended, but de Troyer’s book will occupy a prominent place in that debate from now on.

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The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture, vol. 1.
 Edited by PETER SCHÄFER. *Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum*, vol. 71. Tübingen: MOHR SIEBECK, 1998. Pp. viii + 690. DM 178.

The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture, vol. 2.
 Edited by PETER SCHÄFER and CATHERINE HEZSER. *Texte*

und Studien zum Antiken Judentum, vol. 79. Tübingen: MOHR SIEBECK, 2000. Pp. vii + 291. DM 178.

The Talmud Yerushalmi—often referred to in English as the Palestinian Talmud (henceforth PT)—is a wide-ranging composition that includes a considerable portion of the literary output of the *amoraim*, the Jewish sages in Palestine during the third and fourth centuries C.E. The precise date of its final formation cannot be fixed with certainty, but it occurred sometime between the late fourth and the end of the fifth centuries. It was modeled after the *mishnah*, another Jewish work with a legal orientation, which had been edited and assembled into its definitive version early in the third century. However, one’s first impression that PT is a sort of ramified commentary on the *mishnah*, although partially correct, is actually misleading. The amoraic editors also funneled a large quantity of material into PT that was not related to any concrete interpretation of the *mishnah*.

In addition to legal hermeneutics pertaining to both the Bible and the *mishnah*, PT includes an abundant collection of writings that fall under numerous literary genres. Wise sayings and philosophical dicta rub elbows with passages of prayer, magical excerpts and folk adages. Some parts of PT are replete with reports and observations of daily life, folkloristic legends, and fantastic anecdotes that, in a sense, take the reader on a tour throughout Late Roman Palestine. Although much of the journey is spent in *Beit ha-Midrash*—the sages’ academy—as well as in the synagogues, readers also stroll the streets of cities and villages, where in addition to encountering the colorful blend of common people they come across various celebrities, judges, soldiers, and other dignitaries. They are brought into the bathhouse and taken to the theater; they can admire (or abominate) the statues in the city’s square, or roam into the back alleys, where prostitutes, witches, and other layabouts are found. Such scenes provide vivid snapshots of almost every aspect of daily life in Roman Palestine.

Traditional Jewish studies over the centuries (and even at present) have not paid PT considerable attention, but have rather focused primarily on a parallel literary enterprise that was produced during approximately the same period and edited somewhat later in the centers of Judaism in Persia—namely, the Babylonian Talmud. Unlike this tendency, the scholarly community, from the beginning of the academic study of Judaism in the nineteenth century, has recognized the importance of the Palestinian Talmud and devoted much effort to its examination. From the outset, PT research was divided into two branches. One group of scholars concentrated on what might be called “philology,” examining and clarifying the wording of the text and studying its assorted versions and their transmission through the ages. The other group was more interested in what might be called “history,” both Jewish and Graeco-Roman, either pieces of information that may be extracted from between the lines of the document, or those

events that shaped it as a whole. In the last few decades, the search for history in PT has been reformulated to include social history, religion, ideology, and folklore.

To risk a generalization, it seems that the "ideal" combination of philology and history in the study of ancient texts, as conceived by German scholars of the nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft* school, has practically never been achieved in the research of PT; aside from isolated attempts, philologists and historians have gone their separate ways in the investigation of this text. Moreover, as often occurs in scholarship, the two groups have often vilified each other's work. This understanding of the situation is supported when we compare the two historically (in the broad sense of the word) oriented volumes under discussion here with two parallel volumes published in Hebrew at about the same time (1990 and 1993) under the title "*Mehqerei Talmud* (Talmudic Studies)." Even though the two collections of essays deal with the same sources (while the Hebrew volumes are not specifically focused on PT, the volumes edited by Schäfer and Hezser, despite their title, also cover a broad spectrum of rabbinic literature) and employ the same academic standards and parameters, there is not even one scholar whose work appears in both collections, and that is no coincidence.

In contrast to PT's popularity among students of Judaism, this text has remained largely inaccessible to classicists who study Greek and Roman civilization. Apparently its literary complexity, combined with the necessity of mastering both Hebrew and Aramaic, have deterred these scholars from plumbing the depths of PT, and thus they have been unable to use it in their research. This is an incalculable loss. It is to be hoped that the collection under review here will make PT more approachable to neighboring disciplines.

The essence of the two present volumes, edited by Peter Schäfer (with the participation of Catherine Hezser in the second volume), is declared unambiguously in the work's very title—to study the variety of connections between PT and Graeco-Roman culture. Volume 1 gathers together seventeen studies, divided by the editor into four parts. Part I, called "Literature," includes three papers. The first, by Martin Jaffee, places the phenomenon of traditions that had been handed down orally before being incorporated into PT in its wider Graeco-Roman context, especially with regard to the practices of the Second Sophistic. In the second paper Günter Stemberger examines PT narratives dealing with the early history of the Second Temple period, which have parallels in the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius. The third paper, by Leib Moscovitz, the only scholar in this collection who is also affiliated with the "philological" group of PT scholarship, discusses parallel passages within the text itself—that is, instances of more or less the same literary unit appearing in more than one place in PT.

Part II, named "History," also contains three papers. Whereas the papers in part I discuss many and varied sources that are

scattered throughout PT, each paper in part II centers on isolated passages dealing with a specific event to which that particular study is devoted. Peter Schäfer analyzes several versions of a tradition mentioned in rabbinic literature about a letter that was sent by the Jewish community in Jerusalem to a similar community in Alexandria during the Second Temple period, requesting the return of a certain sage to Jerusalem. Shaye Cohen considers the legends concerning the conversion to Judaism of the Roman emperor "Antoninus." David Goodblatt writes about the accounts relating to a gathering of seven rabbinic sages in Galilee, which many scholars have linked with the history of the Bar-Kokhba revolt.

But even though these papers are apparently dedicated to independent case studies, there is one question underlying them all. This is the issue of historicity, which encompasses some of the most difficult and complex dilemmas of PT research in particular and rabbinic literature in general. It runs as follows: can this material, which is not meant to be historiographic, nevertheless be used for historical inquiry, and, if so, what should be the nature of this research (intellectual, social, cultural, and to some scholars even political), and what are the methodological criteria that should guide it?

Part III, entitled "Everyday Life," includes five papers. Two of them, one by Seth Schwartz and the other by Martin Jacobs, probe sources that contain information about the Roman bathhouse and its components. Schwartz's paper focuses mainly on a passage about the encounter of a major sage, Rabban Gamaliel, with a statue of Aphrodite during his visit to a bathhouse in Acre, the author's goal being to re-examine the nature of the interaction between rabbinic sages and the Roman culture in which they lived and functioned. Jacobs, in his study, collects all PT excerpts on the Roman bathhouse, analyzes them meticulously, and discusses relevant archaeological evidence and parallels from Graeco-Roman literature, both in pagan and in Christian writings, clarifying various aspects of the reality and ideology reflected in the PT passages.

Two other papers in this section are devoted to leisure activities. The methods used in the first one, also by Martin Jacobs, are very similar to those of his previously described study, but this time the paper concentrates on the Roman theater. The second, by Joshua Schwartz, reflects on the ways sages in PT describe (or avoid describing) various popular games, suggesting that ideological concerns influenced their accounts. The last paper in part III shifts to the world of the dead: Tessa Rajak investigates the magnificent necropolis that was uncovered in the Galilean town of Beit Shearim and analyzes its relation to the rabbis.

The six papers that comprise part IV, "Philosophy and Law" (the last section in volume 1), shift their attention to more intangible subjects. The first paper, by Richard Kalmin, concentrates on the differences between the sages of Palestine and their counterparts in Babylonia. Kalmin compares the diverse, although not disparate, ways biblical heroes are presented in

the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, and offers various ideological paradigms that could have led to these variances. The bulk of part IV is devoted to a series of papers, two by Hans-Juergen Becker and two by Catherine Hezser, which discuss various legal and philosophical aspects reproduced in PT and associated with Roman culture. Becker highlights the various schools of thought as they are reflected in rabbinic literature—particularly Stoicism in his first paper and Epicureanism in the second. Hezser devotes one study to examining the statutory terms “private” and “public,” highlighting the ways they were employed in PT, and placing the information about them within the broader context of ancient Graeco-Roman law. Her second paper also compares PT to Roman law, but this time the topic is the literary process of codifying legal material. Volume 1 closes with a study by Christine Hayes that ties together the various subjects presented in part IV. Hayes clarifies the distinctions between Palestinian sages and their Babylonian colleagues with respect to enactments that rescind earlier laws, associating the Palestinian sages’ approach with the regulations of the Roman edict.

Volume 2 is not arranged thematically, but rather includes eight papers in no particular order. Of the three written by Catherine Hezser, one discusses Jerusalem’s cultural and religious status as reflected in PT; the second explores the connection between rabbinic literature and Graeco-Roman philosophy (supplementing Becker’s papers in volume 1); and the third investigates the concept of “friendship” in the worldview of PT sages. There is another paper by Martin Jacobs, which continues his series of studies from volume 1; this study is devoted to pagan temples in Roman Palestine, and it is complemented by Giuseppe Veltri’s paper on the manners by which PT sages portray the customs of Roman religion.

The rest of the papers in volume 2 lack a true common denominator. Martin Goodman ponders the reasons for PT’s lack of attention to the changes that took place in the Roman world with the rise of Christianity in the fourth century and suggests some possible explanations for it. Hayim Lapin places PT sages in the urban context of Roman Palestine. The last paper in the volume is by Aharon Oppenheimer, who compares the traditions in the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds concerning a sage in Palestine who deviated from “accepted” practice by proclaiming a leap year in Babylonia rather than in Palestine.

Within the limited setting of this review it would not be feasible to give each of the papers in these two volumes the careful attention it deserves, so I will restrict my comments to the collection as a whole. Even though the various studies exhibit common textual and topical underpinnings, after careful examination two rather distinct types of work can be clearly discerned. As the editor says explicitly in the introduction, some of the papers were written for a comprehensive, years-long research project conducted by him and carried out by his students at the Institut für Judaistik of the Freie Universität in

Berlin, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. The rest of the papers are based on lectures given at an international conference in Berlin in 1996. Combining the two groups of papers together in one collection weakens its balance.

On one hand this is a technical issue of suitability. For example, *five* papers of Hezser’s are included, totaling 354 pages, and these could easily have been published as a separate book. Her paper on the legal terms “private” and “public” alone, which is 158 pages long, could have been published as a respectable monograph like many others that crowd our bookshelves. But the issue extends further to the content and nature of the papers, and consequently to the potential research circumstances in which these volumes will be utilized. The papers written by Schäfer’s research group are in the form of exhaustive introductory essays on various topics. Each such study devotes itself to a broad topic that PT shares with Graeco-Roman civilization, whether in the realm of the physical world, both man-made (such as bathhouses, entertainment facilities, temples) and natural (earthquakes), or in the realm of culture and ideas (e.g., the philosophies of the Stoics and the Epicureans, legal codification). The authors of these essays have systematically collected all relevant sources on the topics of their research, discussed them thoroughly and meticulously, many times contributing stimulating new angles of interpretation and understanding, and finally placed them in the broad context of the Roman world. These are the first results of an impressive research project, and bringing them together creates the basis for an introductory textbook on Roman culture as seen from the perspective of rabbinic literature.

The remainder of the papers are typical “conference papers”—rather short, discussing one focal topic and sometimes even just one small point, and offering a particular hypothesis which has some novelty. Evaluating them is a rather subjective task, which depends a great deal on the reviewer’s assumptions and methodological principles. Some seem to this author to be exciting contributions to the field which will probably be referred to over and over again; others are quite peculiar, and chances are they will be forgotten shortly. But that is what conferences are all about.

The editor is aware of this anomaly and even explains it by saying that the funds for the research project had dried up and the members of the group had disbanded before the study’s objectives could be accomplished. As a result, the current two volumes were affected by the necessity to end the undertaking prematurely. Under such circumstances, it is undoubtedly preferable that the papers were published as they are. Even in their present form many of them will surely become the basis for future research. The detailed indexes in each of the volumes also contribute to their accessibility and will assist those who may want to make use of them.

It is, nevertheless, very unfortunate that the project was cut off too soon, and it is to be hoped that some way will be found

to complete this extensive enterprise. Perhaps the papers from the research group could then be extracted from the present collection and published with the necessary adjustments and supplements in a setting that would be worthy of them, as chapters in a comprehensive introduction to the interaction between Jews and Graeco-Roman civilization. Peter Schäfer has acquired an almost legendary reputation for his abilities to carry out large-scale and complex projects. Let us trust that he will find the means to conclude this long-awaited venture as well.

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Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible: Essays in Honour of John Van Seters. Edited by S. L. MCKENZIE, T. RÖMER, and H. H. SCHMID. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 294. Berlin: W. DE GRUYTER, 2000. Pp. xiii + 304. DM 178.

Rethinking the Foundation is a combination of three independent initiatives to create a *Festschrift* for the honoree, testifying to the immense influence John Van Seters has had on the field of biblical studies. The work consists of sixteen essays, three tributes to Van Seters—by H. H. Schmid, K. L. Sparks, and T. L. Thompson, and a four-and-one-half-page bibliography of Van Seters' contributions. The essays in this fine volume are by A. G. Auld, E. Blum, T. B. Dozeman, E. Eynikel, O. Kaiser, G. N. Knoppers, N. P. Lemche, N. Na^ʿaman, A. de Pury, D. B. Redford, R. Rendtorff, T. C. Römer, J. M. Sasson, H.-C. Schmitt, U. Schorn, and K. L. Sparks.

As expected in a work honoring Van Seters, most of the essays deal with the dating of the Yahwist, the Deuteronomist, the Priestly writers, and the deuteronomistic historian. Many testify to the sea-change in biblical studies that Van Seters' work helped to bring about. These place the biblical writers in the exilic period at the earliest—the Wellhausen assumptions that had supported us for the previous hundred years are gone. For those interested in the problems of dating the Pentateuchal sources and the deuteronomistic historian, this volume is important reading. The book is aptly named.

A case in point is the article by N. P. Lemche, who states that the entire history of Israel as known from the Bible has now been dissolved. There were no patriarchs, no exodus, no united monarchy. Although deportations certainly occurred under the Assyrians and Babylonians, the idea of a great Babylonian exile and the changes it ostensibly brought about

belongs among the biblical stereotypes that are vanishing. The biblical idea of the great return from exile is little more than a variant of the Bible's narratives about the Israelite conquest of Canaan. Like the book of Joshua, the tales of Ezra and Nehemiah are ideological constructs. According to Lemche, early Iron Age Palestinian society had very little or nothing to do with the image of ancient Israel created by the biblical historiographers. Lemche chides Van Seters for comparing the deuteronomistic historian to Herodotus. He should have considered later writers as well, even those as late as Livy. Van Seters limited himself to Herodotus because he placed the Deuteronomist in Herodotus' time. Lemche views Dtr as a Hellenized Oriental, writing in the Hellenic period.

In this same vein, T. C. Römer asks about the *Sitz im Leben* of "the ideology of centralization in the deuteronomistic historiography." Römer questions the link between the book of Deuteronomy and the deuteronomistic historian. Deuteronomy is not the opening of the deuteronomistic history, but the conclusion of the Pentateuch, written after the history and as an introduction to it. Römer finds three separate periods and three separate theologies in Deuteronomy 12. Verses 13–18, the kernel of Deuteronomy 12–26, belong to the time of Josiah; Deut. 12:20ff. ("when YHWH your God enlarges your borders") belong to the post-exilic period. The temple has been built, but the Jews of Babylon and Egypt have not been able to go to it to sacrifice. In both these cases, the context assumes a functioning temple. This is not the case with verses 8–12. These verses belong to the exilic deuteronomistic historian, who created the phrase "where YHWH will choose to place his name." Finally, Römer dates verses 2–7 to the period of Nehemiah, since they emphasize separation from the peoples of the land. The deuteronomistic theology is multi-faceted, changing to grapple with changing historical situations, but it had its origins in the reign of Josiah and his reorganization of the cult.

A counterpoint to the general trend in the volume is the study of "Hosea and the Wilderness Wandering Tradition" by T. B. Dozeman. Dozeman concludes that Hosea, writing in the eighth century, knows the tradition of the exodus from Egypt and the wandering in the desert. Hosea establishes a framework for the interpretation of the wilderness as a journey toward the promised land. The prophet introduces the motif of divine leading in the wilderness, which comes to dominate Pentateuchal traditions and the book of Jeremiah.

An interesting essay is N. Na^ʿaman's on "The Law of the Altar in Deuteronomy and the Cultic Site Near Shechem." Na^ʿaman addresses the problem of the covenant renewal ceremonies prescribed and described in Deut 11:26–30; 27; and Josh 8:30–35; 24. Scholars recognize that Josh 8:30–35 is a later interpolation, dependent on Deuteronomy 27 (which was also interpolated after the book's composition). This is surprising seen against the background of Deuteronomy's emphasis on a single place of worship—certainly Jerusalem, not