

Antonine Caesars “changed greatly with the advent of the Severan Caesars” (p. 177) is not only overly reductionist, but relies entirely on the conclusions of Alon, whose general method she has spent much of the book attacking (cf. pp. 5–6)!

Although the writing and argument could hardly be clearer, this is not an easy book. It will mainly interest scholars in the field and advanced graduate students, although others who work directly with the sources that Hayes discusses will want to consult it. Christine Hayes has done the field a service, but there is still much work left.

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**MISHNAH AND TOSEFTA: A SYNOPTIC COMPARISON OF THE TRACTATES BERAKHOT AND SHEBIIT.** By Alberdina Houtman. *Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum* 59. Pp. xi + 255. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996. Cloth.

**MISHNAH AND TOSEFTA: A SYNOPTIC COMPARISON OF THE TRACTATES BERAKHOT AND SHEBIIT. Appendix Volume.** By Alberdina Houtman. *Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum* 59. Pp. iv + 92. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996. Paper.

Although the Tosefta has attracted much attention in academic Talmudic research, many of the literary questions that were posed by pioneering scholars in the nineteenth century remain unanswered today. Foremost among these is the elusive issue of the relationship between the Mishnah and the Tosefta, a matter that is intricately connected to such issues as the structure of the Tosefta; the relationship between the work that currently bears that name and the term that is mentioned in Talmudic works; as well as several other topics relating to the time and purpose of the Tosefta’s redaction (for example, the Talmud’s cryptic identification of Tosefta with the teachings of the Tanna Rabbi Nehemiah).

As Houtman demonstrates in her exhaustive review of previous scholarship, theories about the Tosefta’s origins abound, particularly among the older practitioners of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. The prevailing tendency has been to treat the Tosefta as a supplement to the Mishnah, as would appear to be implied by the name itself and by the standard Talmudic usage.

An obstacle to this approach lies in the discrepancies between the orders of the two works. In consequence of this and other difficulties, alternative explanations have been proposed, some of which might strike us as naive and best forgotten.

Although Houtman is sensitive to all the interrelated literary and historical methodological issues, she focuses on one particular question as the key to her investigation: Is it possible to challenge the conventional wisdom that sees the Tosefta as ancillary to the Mishnah and hence having no independent structure of its own? Towards this end, she presents a new synopsis of two representative tractates of the Mishnah and Tosefta (*Berakhot* and *Shebiit*), leaving open the question of whether one work is a commentary on the other—or, for that matter, whether we have before us two autonomous, parallel works.

In the end, this methodical exercise is of scientific relevance only if we choose to give serious credence to M. Zuckerman's assertion that our Tosefta is made up of portions of the *original* Mishnah that were subsequently removed from the Babylonian recension that later became standard. Although such a theory could merit attention in a more primitive era of rabbinic scholarship, subsequent advances in the textual history of the Mishnah and the Yerushalmi, assisted by the availability of reliable Palestinian Mishnah manuscripts, would seem to remove that theory from any serious consideration. (In her investigation she frequently simplifies Zuckerman's thesis as if he were arguing that the Mishnah was based on the Tosefta, which is somewhat misleading.)

At one time such an open-ended synoptic comparison would have placed onerous obstacles in the way of the researcher who wished to experiment with alternative possibilities of arranging the texts. Houtman has exploited the power of computers in order to minimize the mechanical labor, allowing for a flexible manipulation of the respective texts that reflects the complexity of their literary interconnections. However the question becomes more tangled if we take into account the problematic status of the "*pisqa'ot*," the brief citations from the Mishnah whose significance in the Tosefta has been a major topic of controversy among scholars; for example, whether they are truncated remains of full Mishnah quotes or later scribal insertions designed to facilitate navigation, (Houtman does not always seem to be fully aware of the research on this point).

In the end, she does not find strong internal evidence that would favor a particular direction with respect to the question of "text" versus "supplement," and leans towards the conventional view that the Tosefta is following the Mishnah rather than *vice versa*. Within this framework she finds herself returning to the familiar historical questions, seeking a theory

that would account for the Tosefta's relationship to the Mishnah and, presumably, to an understanding of why it was composed. Wisely, she is sensitive to the nuances of the evidence and avoids proposing a blanket theory that would explain away all the difficulties. She ends up favoring a model according to which the Tosefta was compiled by a conservative faction that objected to Rabbi Judah the Prince's production of a unified synthesis of the variegated oral tradition. As a way of undermining the Mishnah's exclusive authority, the Tosefta's editors collected the original sources out of which the Mishnah had been epitomized, allowing future students to reach their own interpretations and conclusions.

Although Houtman is apparently uncomfortable with some scholars' characterization of the Tosefta as a "talmud," it is arguable that the above description captures precisely several of the principal functions of the Talmuds, in their concern for tracing the literary or conceptual sources that underlie the Mishnah and for reconstructing the full range of Tannaitic opinion on the respective issues. In view of the unlikelihood that Talmudic interpretation arose out of a hostility to the Mishnah, it would appear that no such hypothesis is necessary to account for the motive behind the Tosefta. By rabbinic standards, subjecting a text to that kind of critical examination fell naturally within the bounds of "commentary."

Notwithstanding all above qualifications regarding Houtman's broader agendas and theories, we must keep in mind that in literary and philological scholarship, particularly in the area of rabbinic law, there is an intrinsic value to the study of the details. It is in that domain that this work particularly shines. The individual pericopes of the Mishnah and Tosefta are probed thoroughly from a variety of methodological perspectives, and the alternative interpretations are weighed with admirable judgment and intelligence. Houtman's familiarity with the traditional and modern scholarly literature is phenomenal. In a study as technical as this we are also appreciative of the lucid and elegant English and the careful editing that went into the publication. To be sure, there are some occasional factual errors (e.g., her apparent unfamiliarity with the controversies surrounding the authorship of the "Introduction to the Talmud" ascribed to Samuel Hannagid or in her blanket identification of genizah manuscripts of the Mishnah with the Palestinian textual tradition). On the whole, however, this work represents a valuable and challenging contribution to rabbinic studies.

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