

Lopez is careful to maintain his position that he is neither lashing out at Tibet support groups nor at the “justness” of the Tibetan cause. To his credit, he does not allow this political sensitivity to prevent a thorough deconstruction of “Tibet.” Nor does it mitigate his academic rigour.

There are seven chapters to *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, each of which tackles the “problem” of Tibet from a different perspective. In the chapter entitled, “The Spell,” for example, Lopez examines the mantra *om mani padme hum*. He traces its encounter with the West from 1626, when the Portuguese Jesuit Andrade commented on it in a report of his mission to Tibet, to the present day, when even now scholars try to decipher its meaning. It has been interpreted to mean everything from, “God, thou knowest” (116) to an invocation to “the deity of the clitoris-vagina” (133). Explaining how it has come to be understood in so many different ways, and illuminating the strange process by which Tibetans at times internalize Western analyses of their own culture and present it as their own, the reader will be captivated by the history of these six syllables.

In other chapters, adorned with such titles as “The Book,” “The Eye,” and “The Art,” Lopez analyses the history and implications of terms, texts, ideas and characters who fill the record books of the West’s encounter with the Land of Snows.

In general, this work is dynamic, engaging and enlightening. Clearly written and meticulously documented, it reads at times like a story by Borges and at times like a philological study. For anyone who has ever felt the allure of Tibet—that means scholars as much as (if not more) than anyone else—*Prisoners of Shangri-La* is an important book because it illuminates the history of the concept of “Tibet” and introduces the reader to the less mythically satisfying but nonetheless existent “real” thing. It also forces readers to examine their own presuppositions; an exercise worth the effort for anyone who hopes to engage Tibet instead of Shangri-La.

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*The Bible As It Was.* By James L. Kugel. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997. ISBN 0-6740-6940-4. Pp. xvii+680.

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Ancient interpretation of the Hebrew Bible can be studied two ways. The first focuses on interpretative documents and their distinctive treatments of the part(s) of the Bible to which they relate. The second gathers the different interpretations around the Bible texts and scrutinizes their interpretative data to demonstrate how they treat the Bible. Kugel’s massive opus is a ground breaking effort of the second type, but the concept underlying the first is never far from his interest and demonstrates his full mastery of the literature.

In twenty-five chapters, he examines numerous fascinating passages from the Bible (not only those suggested by the chapter titles) and how they were

understood, paraphrased, reworked, and manipulated by dozens of ancient interpreters. Centred on the 300 years at the end of the first century CE, the book also presents other earlier and later attempts to interpret Biblical passages. It is a masterful treatment valuable to both scholars and students, and its exceptionally clear graphic presentation will be appreciated by all.

Kugel discusses the huge quantity of material he was forced to omit, but one must wonder if this factor has not left the title itself somewhat misleading. *The Bible As It Was* is about only the Torah, not the other three-fourths of the Bible, and while the Torah was the premier religious text in antiquity, the unwary reader may assume it was the sole text treated in the interpretative corpus under discussion. Also, the distribution of the chapters is significant. Fifteen are devoted to Genesis (itself about a quarter of the Torah); another six, to Exodus. One unfortunate result of this distribution is the downplaying of the ancient interpretation of the Torah's legal passages, which are treated far less than might be indicated by the fact that roughly half the Torah is legal in nature.

This creates the rather strange impression that in ancient times the Torah consisted primarily of narratives or that interest in it was directed primarily at its narratives. That is, one might think that at some point the Torah consisted of—or that Torah study was largely focused on—the sections known to contemporary criticism as J and E, while the legal material, associated more with P and D, was less important. This might further suggest that much of the interpretative material from 200 BCE to 100 CE actually originated before the Torah text took its final form or at least that it reflects an era when individual parts were handled through radically different channels of interpretation.

Such a conclusion—which is not at all Kugel's claim but is only possibly suggested by the choice of material—is seemingly supported, because the preservation of many of these interpretative documents is due to selective Christian interests that often avoided legal matters in favour of narrative ones, and because Kugel's cut-off date at roughly 100 CE effectively downplays the prominent role of law in later rabbinic texts. Though occasionally cited together with other late non-rabbinic texts and even artistic representations, rabbinic legal discussions receive far less attention than might have been appropriate, and they do not even appear in the index of sources. Indeed, the Mishnah, generally dated to the second century and often reflecting notions from earlier times, is almost totally legal in nature and devotes some 250 of its approximately 550 Bible-related discussions and citations to the third of the Torah contained in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. It bespeaks a very different attitude also attributable to ancient times but under-represented in the book.

*The Bible As It Was* is heartily recommended for anyone interested in the Bible, but how much more balanced would his presentation be had Kugel distributed his efforts to reflect this natural division of the Torah. This too would follow an ancient model, as seen, for example, in the complementary efforts of Jubilees and the Temple Scroll.