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*Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era.* By James L. Kugel. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-6747-89151-7. Pp. 1055.

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*Traditions of the Bible* is the expanded version of Kugel's *The Bible As It Was* (1997). Like its predecessor, *Traditions of the Bible* presents excerpts of interpretive texts related to biblical motifs that were produced between 200 BCE and 150 CE. *Traditions of the Bible* contains the entirety of *The Bible As It Was*.

Each chapter of the new book is divided into two parts; a verbatim reformatted reproduction of a chapter from the earlier book and a section entitled "other readings" that includes additional excerpts, scholarly notes, and discussion of motifs that did not appear previously.

The introduction and conclusion together provide a comprehensive overview of the world of the ancient interpreters and the history of biblical interpretation. The glossary, which includes essential terms and presents information about each text (and the particular edition) cited, is worthy of close reading. The bibliography contains some fifteen-hundred titles including primary texts and translations, and many recently published secondary sources. A useful subject index and a comprehensive index of the cited texts are also included.

Kugel's presentation of ancient texts with biblical parallels demonstrates his basic premise that prior to the close of the biblical canon its texts had begun to be interpreted. With the close of the canon, a hermeneutical tradition was already being transmitted with the Bible, interpretation having become as much a part of the Bible as the written text. Kugel presents Bible stories along with excerpts from and commentary on the Apocrypha, New Testament, Pseudepigrapha, Greek, Latin and Aramaic Bible translations, Samaritan Pentateuch, Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo and Josephus, Gnostic texts, Patristic literature and Rabbinic texts. Included are some texts from outside the focal time period. Sometimes these texts attribute their contents to earlier sages, and earlier interpretive motifs are often referenced. Kugel's analysis is based on the assumption that the Ancient interpreters came to the Bible with four presuppositions: (1) that the Bible is cryptic; (2) that it is relevant to the reader; (3) that it is perfect and consistent throughout; and (4) that the Bible is directly related to the divine.

*Traditions of the Bible* focuses primarily on biblical narratives. Fourteen chapters are devoted to analyzing the interpretation of motifs in Genesis; six chapters, to Exodus; one chapter, to the entirety of Leviticus and the first ten chapters of Numbers; two, to the remainder of Numbers; and one, to Deuteronomy. In light of the fact that most ancient interpretive texts are concerned with the biblical narratives, this editorial decision is reasonable. More of the book might have been devoted to the later books of the Pentateuch, but as Kugel notes in his introduction, *Traditions of the Bible* "is not a presentation of the

whole of ancient biblical interpretation of the Pentateuch" (37). Instead, it tends to favor the oldest attested motifs that survived into later Judaism and Christianity.

This book is therefore not a systematic attempt to deal with the entirety of ancient Bible interpretation. However, more than enough material is presented to substantiate Kugel's claims and supply the reader with a fascinating tour of the various corpuses of ancient interpretive texts. A volume of comparable size could likely be produced for each of the individual books of the Pentateuch and, based on *Traditions of the Bible*, Kugel would be the appropriate candidate for the task. The only fault with the current book is that many excerpts are decontextualized and too short for the reader to judge critically Kugel's interpretation.

With this book, Kugel has made a remarkable contribution to the study of the Bible and its interpretation. While many of the texts cited have been translated and published in other collections, this is the first anthology that presents the texts according to biblical themes. In short, the non-technical reader, concerned only with seeing the basic principles that underlie ancient Bible interpretation, is better served with the older version of the book. But the scholar, desiring an extensive compendium on biblical interpretation in antiquity, will find *Traditions of the Bible* an essential volume.

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*Archives and Libraries in the Ancient Near East, 1500-300 BC.* By Olof Pedersén. Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1998. ISBN 1-8830-5339-0. Pp. xxii + 291.

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Olof Pedersén presents in this work an archaeological description of 253 archives and libraries excavated in 51 cities in the Ancient Near East between 1500 and 300 BCE. The purpose is valid and clear: "Despite an increasing interest in archival studies and the appearance during the last decades of several studies concerned with individual archives or libraries in the Ancient Near East, there has not been an overview presenting the main finds and reaching general conclusions about the occurrence and use of archives and libraries" (xix). Thus Pedersén attempts to fill a gap in Ancient Near Eastern intellectual history brought to the fore most prominently in recent years by Klaas Veenhof and the 30th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale (1983) in Leiden.

The study consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction and the appropriate background literature to the chronological period under examination. The most important aspect of this chapter is the attempt to define the terms "archive" and "library." Herein lies the major weakness of an otherwise excellent work. As in his previous two-volume study of Assur, *Archives and Libraries in the City of Assur: A Survey of the Material from the German Excavations*