

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*

(1985 & 1986), Pedersén fails to make a clear distinction between archive and library. He distinguishes between the two mainly on the grounds of textual content, which results in a number of collections in the following chapters being described as either “archive with library” or “library with archive.” This ambiguous use of terms makes one wonder why he thinks it necessary to distinguish between the two. Scholars such as Veenhof, Weitemeyer, and Posner have left little doubt as to the existence of both libraries and archives in the Ancient Near East. But a clear set of guidelines is necessary to assist scholars in gaining an understanding of how to differentiate between the two.

The valuable contribution of this work lies in the accumulation and subsequent detailed descriptions provided of Ancient Near Eastern collections from 1500–300 BCE. Chapters 2 and 3, with archaeological descriptions of ancient collections of texts, form the bulk of the book. These two chapters break new ground. For the first time we are confronted with the extraordinary extent of the Ancient Near Eastern textual heritage. It also points to the obstacles in the establishment of a true reflection of the libraries and archives of this period. Pedersén speculates in his final analysis (chap. 4) that the number of archives and libraries listed represents but a fraction of the total number of ancient collections that probably existed during this time. The proper documentation of find-spots, especially in dealing with older archaeological finds, has been a major problem hampering the establishment of a more accurate estimation of the numbers. Texts written on wood, papyrus, parchment, and other fragile writing materials did not survive the ravages of time as effectively as those on clay. This leads to an expected imbalance in the archaeological evidence. Since Akkadian was the *lingua franca* of the region for the larger part of the time frame under discussion, it is acceptable to assume that in most cases clay would have been the writing material of choice. Thus an overwhelming percentage (94%) of libraries and archives on clay is not completely unexpected.

Given the representative nature of collections on clay, it is also not surprising that the author limited the study to a time frame when cuneiform would be the script of choice. Consequently 300 BCE, with the rise of Alexander the Great, is also the natural cutoff point for the period known as the *Ancient Near East*. For this reason, Pedersén does not include a discussion of the rise and establishment of the library of Alexandria. This library is still regarded as the best known example of an ancient library. Given the close geographical and cultural ties with Egypt, one is left to wonder at the influence of the Ancient Near Eastern textual collections on the development of the library of Alexandria. It is also not clear why the author chose to initiate his study in 1500 BCE. By doing so, he excluded the major discoveries at Mari and Ebla. As Ebla was discovered and excavated in the latter half of the twentieth century, it would have provided Pedersén with the ideal opportunity for a comparative analysis of archaeological method and results. An earlier chronological limit would have offered greater continuation of the textual heritage of older cities like Sippar (the Old Babylonian collections are left completely unaccounted for), Ur, and Uruk.

Chapter 4 contains a detailed analysis and a graphic representation of the evidence provided in chapters 2 and 3. It also includes a discussion of the distribution of archives and libraries and a description of their owners. An index of personal names, professions, modern equivalents of professions, ancient city names, and modern site names has been provided. There is no bibliography, but extensive footnotes throughout the work provide all necessary bibliographical references.

Despite the problems, Pedersén's work represents an invaluable response to the need for the consolidation of archaeological evidence for textual collections in the Ancient Near East. Moreover, this work will prove a vital tool of reference for any research on the development of Ancient Near Eastern writing, education, literacy, and intellectual life. But most of all, Pedersén provides future researchers with the impetus for much needed comparative work between different textual collections within the Ancient Near East.

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***Past Imperatives: Studies in the History and Theory of Jewish Ethics.* By Louis E. Newman. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998. ISBN 0-7914-3867-8. Pp. 238.**

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As Louis E. Newman himself remarks in his study *Past Imperatives: Studies in the History and Theory of Jewish Ethics*, the burgeoning interest in and proliferation of constructive works of Jewish ethics and morality has created a bewildering diversity of material whose "implications have generally not been fully appreciated" (3). Newman offers his own guide to this sea of data, suggesting that he is not writing a Jewish ethic himself, but is writing *about* it. This critical and analytic stance supports the often insightful and usually informative contributions that he makes to this subject. Newman's distinction between applied ethics (which looks at specific moral decisions) and metaethical questions (which focus on such issues as the relationship of Jewish law or Jewish theology to Jewish ethics) is a helpful one. While Jewish law, *halakha*, is central in any Jewish ethical system, differences between any two thinkers may have two very different sources: on the one hand, two moralists may agree on the function of a Jewish legal principle but disagree on its application; on the other hand, they may agree, perhaps, on a particular moral choice, but do so because of very different evaluations of Jewish law.

Newman focuses on both types of concerns. He points to differences in specific choices in connection with questions of euthanasia (161–83) and in bioethics (185–203). In these cases he looks at how major Jewish thinkers from Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform positions come to their moral decisions. He recognizes that general principles such as "respect for life" and "non-interference" in the natural world tend to be vague and uneasily open to diverse