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Maier, Johann

Le Scritture prima della Bibbia

Translated by Felice Montagnini

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Johann Maier has written a number of works on Qumran, the Scrolls, and Second Temple Judaism.¹ It is thus not at all surprising that this book would find itself ably translated so

¹ Johann Maier, *Die Qumran-Essener, 3: Einführung, Zeitrechnung, Register und Bibliographie* (Munich: Reinhardt, 1996); "Early Jewish Biblical Interpretation in the Qumran literature," In *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament*, vol. 1: *From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (until 1300)*, part 1: *Antiquity* (ed. Magne Sæbø; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 108–29; "Messias oder Gesalbter? Zu einem Übersetzungs- und Deutungsproblem in den Qumrantexten," *RevQ* 17 (1996): 585–612; "La Torah di purità nel Levitico e sua trattazione nella letteratura giudaica del periodo del Secondo Tempio e nei primi secoli cristiani," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 13/1 (1996): 39–66; "The Judaic System of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, part 2: *Historical Syntheses* (ed. Jacob Neusner; HO 1/17; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 84–108; *Die Qumran-Essener: Die Texte vom Toten Meer*, vol. 1: *Die Texte der Höhlen 1–3 und 5–11* (Munich: Reinhardt, 1995); *Die Qumran-Essener: Die Texte vom Toten Meer*, vol. 2: *Die Texte der Höhle 4* (Munich: Reinhardt, 1995); "Zwischen zweitem und drittem Tempel: Jüdische Deutungen und Hoffnungen angesichts des zerstörten Tempels," in *Tempelkult und Tempelzerstörung (70 n. Chr.): Festschrift für Clemens Thoma* (ed. Simon Lauer and Hanspeter Ernst; Judaica et Christiana 15. Vienna: Lang, 1995), 247–65; *Die Kabbalah: Einführung—classische Texte—Erläuterungen* (Munich: Beck, 1995). "Aktuelle Probleme der Qumranforschung," *Bulletin der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Judaistische Forschung* 3 (1994): 14–33; "Amalek in the Writings of Josephus," in *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period: Essays in Memory of Morton Smith* (ed. Fausto Parente and Joseph Sievers; StPB 41; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 109–26. Examples could easily be multiplied, but the reader gets the point.

that a wider public can have access to the years of learning required to produce a volume such as the one before us. Indeed, it would be surprising had the book *not* been translated at some point.

The book contains the required introductory material, such as a preface and a list of abbreviations along with a general bibliography. Maier then launches directly into the body of the work, with chapters titled as follows: (1) “La Bibbia nell’età del secondo tempio” (24–58); (2) “I libri biblici nell’età del secondo tempio” (59–99); (3) “Le legge come rivelazione istituzionalizzata. Aspetti legislativi e giuridici” (100–53); (4) “Il Pentateuco” (154–88); (5) “Libri storici” (189–96); (6) “Isaia” (197–204); (7) “Geremia” (205–7); (8) “Ezechiele” (208–9); (9) “Daniele” (210–15); (10) “I dodici profeti minori” (216–20); (11) “Salmi di David e Salterio biblico” (221–6); (12) “Giobbe” (247–48); (13) “Proverbi” (249); (14) “Megillot” (250–55); (15) “Altri scritti” (256–59). Finally, the book concludes, quite fittingly, with a conclusion (of three pages). The final offering is an index of passages cited and, in typical Italian fashion, the index or table of contents for the volume.

The book is a straightforward attempt to discuss and describe the biblical texts in the light of the findings at Qumran. Thus, for the longest segment of the book, the fourth chapter, which covers the Pentateuch, Maier offers statistical analysis of Dead Sea texts for each of the books and a listing of manuscripts for each of the books; then, in the most interesting section (at least to me), he also discusses attestation for books such as *Jubilees*, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, the “Reworked” Pentateuch, and other “pseudepigraphical” materials.

The “historical” books, treated in chapter 5, do not receive as much attention as the Pentateuch, and the Prophets fare even less well. This no doubt due to the simple fact that Qumran contained more pentateuchal texts than historical or prophetic. The Writings fare a little better simply because of the Psalms. Job, too, receives a special nod in the direction of the Aramaic redaction found at Qumran. In all, Maier’s treatment reflects singularly well the finds themselves in the sense that he devotes more space to the Torah (just as did the writers of the Scrolls themselves) while not offering even a hint at Esther (which was not found among the Scrolls).

The text of Jeremiah has always been of interest to text critics of the Hebrew Bible. Maier briefly discusses the issues in chapter 7 (205–7). He summarizes the issue thusly: “La redazione ebraica del libro biblico non è quella della *Vorlage* della versione greca, la quale segue un ordine diverso e presenta un testo più breve. Fra le scoperte di Qumran figurano manoscritti che confermano entrambe le tradizioni; il manoscritto antico 4Q70 corrisponde alla redazione masoretica” (205). Then follows a listing of the contents of

2Q13, 4Q70, 4Q71, 4Q71B, and 4Q72A and B. This procedure is followed throughout the book; Jeremiah is simply an example of the way the text works.

The first part of the book is the most readable (chs. 1–3) while the individual chapters that follow are fairly well described as lists of manuscripts: useful for those doing research but not exactly a readable narrative. However, I must hasten to add that the purpose of the second part is indeed to list the manuscripts found at Qumran and relevant to particular biblical passages, so it nicely fulfills its reason for being.

In sum, this is a useful book. It was useful in its original manifestation and it is equally useful in its Italian garb.