

(preserved in Greek) of the second century BCE, *Test. Judah*. 15:2–3: “...For even someone who is king, if he is promiscuous, is divested of his kingship, since he has been enslaved by sexual impulses, just as I experienced. For I gave my staff (that is, the stability of my tribe), my girdle (that is, my power), and my crown (that is, the glory of my kingdom).” Also of interest for the study of Hellenism are the Hellenistic Jews and Samaritans of the different diasporas, who are not given a proper place in the relevant chapters. Davies’ remark on p. 263 is basically true; he says that “Most historiography, ancient and modern, has accordingly concentrated on the Greek component in the interaction of cultural influences in the period and area. That attitude is made all the easier since non-Greek literary productions — demotic Egyptian texts and inscriptions, Phoenician inscriptions, neo-Babylonian cuneiform texts, Hebrew and Aramaic texts outside the Bible such as the Talmud and the Mishna — are much less accessible than the Greek.” If so, why were these sources not investigated more thoroughly for this volume? (In fact the Mishna and Talmud are not really sources for the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, and there are many other sources in the *Pseudepigrapha* and *Apocrypha* which Davies fails to mention).

The chapters on science (Lloyd), siegecraft (Garlan), agriculture (Thompson) and building (Winter) are very useful for the general historian. Those on politics and international relations both in Greece and elsewhere (Walbank and Will), as well as Heinen’s chapter (11) on the “Syrian-Egyptian Wars and the New Kingdoms of Asia Minor” are up-to date and excellent.

The editors who have completed this volume, namely F.W. Walbank and A.E. Astin, should be congratulated for their joint effort; it is a major contribution to the understanding of the Hellenistic period, from the point of view represented in this volume.

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Doron Mendels

Doron Mendels, *The Land of Israel as a Political Concept in Hasmonean Literature*, Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1987, pp. X+ 181.

In the concluding sentence of the Epilogue to this excellent study, Mendels notes that in contradistinction to the meager references in diaspora literature to the Land of Israel during the Hasmonean period, “when this state disappears as a sovereign Jewish entity, the literature from the diaspora shows a tremendous interest in the lost land” (p. 129). The irony of such a development is self-evident, and this reviewer has indeed pointed to a similar heightened awareness of ‘the Land’ emerging from subsequent

political catastrophes, most specifically in the wake of the Bar Kokhva rebellion.<sup>1</sup> The compelling argument of this work, however, is that Jews who *did* live in the Land could not indulge in the luxuries of their dispersed brethren, whether by ignoring the centrality of the Land in Jewish history or by conjuring up nostalgic memories of distant, past glories totally removed from contemporary realities.

For the Jews of Eretz Israel in the 2nd century BCE, 'the Land' was not simply perceived as one of the divine promises made to Abraham and his seed, nor was its significance linked primarily to sections of Mosaic Law that could only be carried out within its physical boundaries. The political developments of the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE and the emergence of a Jewish state effected new formulas and perceptions regarding the role of the Land in Jewish life. While these ideas would frequently be superimposed by 2nd century authors on the great heroes and events of Israel's past, Mendels convincingly proves that time and again they in truth evolved out of, or related to, contemporary political realities. With this expository criterion in hand, Mendels sets out to show that almost no major work produced in Eretz Israel during the second century BCE could ignore the political vicissitudes of the age. The Biblical settings notwithstanding, almost all were preoccupied with the ramifications of the events of their day on issues such as non-Jewish communities in the Land, the place of Israel within the context of Near Eastern geopolitical realities, and the relationship between a 'greater Israel' following biblical demarcations and the realities involved in the conquest of territory and establishment of viable borders. Thus, while Mendels recognizes that the Divine promise and land-oriented commandments were a constant factor (albeit enjoying varying degrees of intensity) in Jewish consciousness, they were frequently accompanied by practical considerations, and it is the allusions to *these* factors that serve as the core of Mendels' study.

After defining his agenda in chapter 1 (prologue), Mendels devotes the next six chapters — the bulk of his work — to a close examination of the major Jewish literary works produced in Eretz Israel. Each chapter is devoted to one or two works, arranged and analyzed chronologically. Thus: chapter 2 — The Nineties: Ben Sira; chapter 3 — The Sixties: I *Enoch* 85–90; *Daniel* 7–12; chapter 4 — The Fifties: Eupolemos; chapter 5 — The Forties and Thirties: I *Maccabees* and *Judith*; chapter 6 — The Twenties: *Jubilees*; chapter 7 — The Tens: *The Testaments of the Twelve Tribes*. An eighth chapter deals with Theodotus (who, M. maintains, was a Samaritan) and Pseudo-Eupolemos.

Mendels focuses primarily on those portions that he interprets as the author's reflections on the current state of 'the Land' and its relation not only to past glories but

1 Cf. I. Gafni, 'The Status of Eretz Israel in Reality and in Jewish Consciousness following the Bar-Kokhva Uprising,' in: A. Oppenheimer and U. Rappaport, eds., *The Bar-Kokhva Revolt* (Jerusalem 1984) 224–232 (Hebrew).

also to present issues and visions of the future. In most cases these exercises were carried out through a reshaping of Jewish history and embellishment of the biblical narrative — utilizing and building on a conceptual canon of biblical history (if not an outright literary canon) known to all at the time. Departures from that canon serve as the crux of Mendels' argument: "The historian should always ask why the author of *Jubilees* changed the canonical stories here and not elsewhere in his book. An historical meaning can be discerned behind many of the departures from the canonical stories" (p. 59). While this yardstick may be applied to most of the books examined, clearly the straightforward presentation of contemporary events in *I Maccabees*, as well as the novelistic nature of *Judith* required Mendels to apply a somewhat different approach. In the last case, for instance, Mendels notes the geographical semantics and demographic allusions and allegiances listed by the author, and finds in them a direct reflection of Palestine at the dawn of the emerging Hasmonean state.

Throughout his study Mendels retraces the shifting nuances in literary discussions of the Land. While Ben Sira could still present the 'fathers' of Jewish history (chps. 44-50) relating to the Land in a manner close to that suggested by the biblical canon, beginning with the literature of the sixties and fifties there emerge slight changes that seem to echo the events of the day. Although *I Enoch* and *Daniel* offer precious little even in Mendels' analysis, Eupolemos' book *On the Kings of Judaea* suggests the growing stress on the importance of the Temple and Jerusalem. While not ignoring the Land as part of the Divine promise, Eupolemos' contemporaries — the first Hasmoneans — were still fighting for the reconquest of Jerusalem and purification of the Temple, and thus Eupolemos' efforts at emphasizing the centrality of the Temple in ancient Israel (p.32). Mendels also sees this stress as opposition to the Temple of Onias at Leontopolis (and the pre-eminence granted Eli in the transition of the priesthood to Solomon's Temple — as an attempt to strike the renegade Zadokites from history — p. 41), and here he may be slightly reading events into his sources. Inasmuch as Eupolemos was writing in the sixties, one also wonders how far the issue of 'reconquest of the Land' and subjugation of the other nations in it to Jewish rule (p. 39) had already emerged as a practical political option. Indeed, Mendels later characterizes Eupolemos as expressing Jewish 'visions' for the Land (p. 48), still the result of "present frustration and... past grandeur," and this probably comes closer to the spirit of the time. From the period of transition — the 40s and 30s — where Mendels uncovers obvious allusions to the emerging and clearly stated goals of the Hasmoneans regarding the Land, we begin to encounter in the 20s the dramatic shift from a stress on Temple and Jerusalem to a focus on 'the Land' in general. Particularly suggestive is Mendels' interpretation of numerous statements in *Jubilees*, both in regard to the nature of secular rule as opposed to the priesthood (pp. 60-62), as well as the attitude of the author to the various biblical rivalries (e.g. Jacob — Esau) and their reinterpretation in the light of modern reality. The 'peace' between the sons of Jacob

and Edom, clearly non-biblical but nevertheless attributed by *Jubilees* (chap. 38) to the advice of Jacob, would thus reflect not only the conversion of the Idumeans under John Hyrcanus, but in general suggest a revolutionary attitude towards the other inhabitants of the Land, whose status required redefinition in light of the Hasmonean expansion.

Needless to say, Mendels' argument hinges, first and foremost, on the provenance he assigns for each of the sources analyzed. Conversely, the stronger the argument becomes, the more it may be taken into account as a determining factor for such dating. Thus, for example, if *Jubilees* is to be dated to the 20s of the 2nd century BCE rather than the early Maccabean period,<sup>2</sup> the author would indeed have been confronted with a real conquest of portions of the Land in his time, thereby explaining the demographic problems cited by Mendels, problems that would have been hypothetical at best in the 50s or 60s of the 2nd century.

Another issue would be the authenticity of statements attributed to contemporary heroes in books such as *I Maccabees*. Was it really Simon who declared in 140 BCE: "We have neither taken any other man's land, nor do we hold dominion over other people's territory, but only over the inheritance of our fathers. On the contrary, for a certain time it was unjustly held by our enemies, but we, seizing the opportunity, hold fast the inheritance of our fathers" (*I Macc* 15:33)? Or is this to be attributed to the author of *I Maccabees*, probably writing during the rule of John Hyrcanus? While only a brief period separates these two possibilities, the distinction is crucial. Were statements such as the above in fact slogans shaping and reflecting Hasmonean policy from its formative stage, which would still be the case in the early days of Simon, or are they ex post facto legitimizations of established reality, clearly meaningful under John Hyrcanus when most of central Palestine in fact fell into Jewish hands? This question might even be applied on a broader base to much of the literature of the period. Were the authors actively involved in formulating (or opposing) policy and political thought for their contemporaries, or were they trying to interpret the events of their day, events carried out by forces over which they had little control? The title of this book — *The Land of Israel as a Political Concept in Hasmonean Literature* — almost suggests a politically inspired literature. On second thought, 'Hasmonean' is probably a temporal designation (much like 'Victorian'); and yet the intriguing issues discussed in this learned study constantly suggest the political impact of the dramatic events taking place in 2nd century Eretz Israel on the literature of the period — however fragmentary — that has survived to this day.

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2 Cf. E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, vol. 3.1, rev. and edited by G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Goodman (Edinburgh 1986) 313.