Fighting Over the Bible

Jewish Interpretation, Sectarianism and Polemic from Temple to Talmud and Beyond

Ву

Isaac Kalimi



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Contents

List of Abbreviations	ΙX
-----------------------	----

w .	-			
Intr	กสม	ctio	m	1

- 1 The Name of the Volume
- 2 The Purpose of the Volume 1
- 3 A Brief Survey of the Classical Jewish Exegetical Works 3
- 4 Structure and Overview 11

PART 1

The Hebrew Bible and Its Jewish Interpretive Presuppositions and Polemics

- 1 The Place of the Bible in Jewish Religion and Culture: Written and Oral Torah 17
 - The Centrality and Neglect of the Hebrew Bible in Judaism:
 An Enigmatic Constellation 17
 - 2 The Rabbinic Presuppositions and Principles of Scripture 26
 - 3 Written Torah and Oral Torah 27
 - 4 Some Principles of the Classical Jewish Biblical Interpretation 37
 - 5 Defense of the Religious and Cultural Heritage 38
 - 6 Conclusion 44
- 2 Rabbinic Exegesis in Contradiction to the Simple Meaning of Biblical
 Texts 46
 - 1 Introduction 46
 - 2 The Biblical Lex Talionis and Its Disputed Later Reinterpretations 47
 - 3 Civil and Religious (Mis)Interpretation of Biblical Laws and Narratives 54
 - 4 Theological and Ethical (Mis)Interpretation of Biblical Narratives and Laws 59
 - 5 Excursus: The Rabbinic Attitude to Converts 65
 - 6 Conclusion 68

VI CONTENTS

3 Theologies and Methodologies in Classical Jewish Interpretation:

	A St	udy of Midrash Psalms and Its View of God 72
	1	Introduction 72
	2	Theological and Methodological Features of Midrash Psalms 74
	3	The View of God in Midrash Psalms 79
		3.1 The Characterization and Centrality of God 79
		3.2 "Negative Theology" 81
		3.3 The Oneness of God 81
		3.4 Forgiveness 85
		3.5 God Suffers with Israel 86
	4	Conclusion 87
4	Enco	ounters and Polemics between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in
	Med	ieval Jewish Exegesis 90
	1	Introduction 90
	2	The Struggle against Opposition within Judaism 91
		2.1 Karaite Bible Exegetes and Their Critics 91
		2.2 Criticism by Mainstream Scholars 94
	3	The Dispute with External Opponents: Christianity and Islam 97
	4	Controversies between Jews and Christians 99
	5	. Controversies between Jews and Muslims 110
		5.1 Background and Overview 110
		5.2 Karaite Jews and Muslims 114
		5.3 Rabbanite Jews and Muslims 116
	6	Conclusion 122
5	A Br	idge or a Barrier? Jews, Christians and the Hebrew Bible/Old
	Test	ament: The Roots of Jewish-Christian Controversy 125
	1	Introduction 125
	2	Are Jews and Christians Bound by their Common Scriptures? 126
	3 ·	Is the "Hebrew Bible" Truly Equivalent to the "Old Testament"? 127
	4	Do Jews and Christians Share the Interpretation and Theology of
		Their Common Texts? 132
	5	Jewish-Christian Disputes regarding Common Biblical Themes 135
	6	The Common Biblical Texts and Themes: A Bridge or a Barrier? 136
	7	Conclusion 141

Appendix: And What Now? 142

CONTENTS

PART 2

Interpretation, Sectarianism, and Disputes: Case Studies from Late Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism

6	The Binding of Isaac: Biblical Na	rrative in Late Second Temple and
	Rabbinic Exegesis and Thought	149

- 1 Introduction 149
- 2 The Rabbis and the Theological-Ethical Merits of the Aqedah 151
 - 2.1 God Tests Abraham 152
 - 2.2 Abraham the "Knight of Faith" 162
 - 2.3 The Agedah and Afterwards 170
- 3 Did God Test Isaac? 170
- 4 What Really Happened upon the Mount? 173
 - 4.1 Isaac Was Not Hurt 173
 - 4.2 Isaac was Injured and Bled 175
 - 4.3 Isaac Died and Was Resurrected 178
- 5 Where was Sarah? 181
- 6 Conclusion 182

7 The Day of Atonement in the Late Second Temple Period: Disputes between Sadducees, Pharisees, and Qumranites 184

- 1 Introduction 184
- 2 The Centrality and Uniqueness of Yom Kippur 184
- 3 The High Priesthood in the Late Second Temple Period 187
- 4 Leviticus 16 and the Presuppositions of the Sadducees and Pharisees 189
- 5 The Dispute between the Sadducees and the Pharisees regarding How to Enter the Holy of Holies 192
- 6 Reading of Scripture to the High Priest on Yom Kippur 197
- 7 The Attack on the Qumranites' Leader by the Jerusalem High Priest on Yom Kippur 202
- 8 Conclusion 206

8 The Hiding of the Temple Vessels in Jewish and Samaritan Literature 208

- 1 The Jewish Literature 208
- 2 The Samaritan Literature 211
- 3 Conclusion 215

VIII CONTENTS

9	he Relations between Jews and Arabs-Syrians in Pre-Islamic Jewis
	ources 217

- The Relations between Jews and Arabs and the Identification of Ishmaelites with Arabs 218
- The Identification of the Biblical Ammonites and Moabites with Arabs in Late Second Temple and Rabbinic Sources 222
- 3 Jewish-Syrian Relations and the Attitude towards Syrians in Targum Jonathan 227
- 4 Conclusion 229

Saadia Gaon and Abraham Ibn Ezra and Their Defense of the Written and Oral Torah 231

- ı Rab Saadia Gaon 232
 - 1.1 Exegete, Biblical Theologian and Philosopher 232
 - 1.2 Hebrew Philologist 233
 - 1.3 Bible Translator and Exegete 234
 - 1.4 Confrontations with the Karaites 236
 - 1.5 Estimation of Saadia Gaon and His Work 237
- 2 Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra 238
 - 2.1 A Life of Wandering and Misery 238
 - 2.2 Works and Methods 241
 - 2.3 Evaluation of the Man and His Work 246
- 3 Conclusion: Between Saadia Gaon and Abraham Ibn Ezra 247

Conclusion 250

Bibliography 261

Index of Sources 287

- 1 Hebrew Bible 287
- 2 Ancient Biblical Versions 295
- 3 Apocrypha and Pseudepigraphica 297
- 4 Dead Sea Scrolls 298
- 5 Rabbinic Sources 299
- 6 Jewish Medieval Sources 304
- 7 Samaritan Sources 310
- 8 New Testament and Christian Sources 310
- 9 Islamic Sources 312
- 10 Ancient Near Eastern and Archaeological Sources 312
- 11 Greek, Jewish-Hellenistic, and Roman Sources 312

Index of Authors 314

Index of Subjects 321

Index of Key Hebrew Terms and Expressions 342