I. INTRODUCTION/RETROSPECTIVE
The twenty-three studies that follow may be seen, initially at least, as extensions of my previous book, *From Tradition to Commentary*, in that they continue to pursue much of the agenda set out in that book’s introduction, which I shall not here reiterate. In most of these studies the focus is again on the close reading of ancient Hebrew (as well as Aramaic and Greek) texts, with particular attention to the early (“Tannaitic”) collections of rabbinic literature (traditions of the first two centuries C.E., redacted in the third), both midrashic and mishnaic, my first and abiding rabbinic loves. Here too the biblical book of Deuteronomy and its interpretive reception in Hellenistic, Roman, and late-antique varieties of Judaism continue to be of central interest. This reflects both my own continuing fascination with this early exemplar of innovation in the hermeneutical transmission of received tradition, and the paramount role that the book of Deuteronomy played in the development of Judaism in very many and very different ancient quarters. Many of the studies herein, and the ordering structure of the collection as a whole, extend the comparative framing of the earlier introduction, setting early rabbinic texts and traditions alongside those of their Second Temple period antecedents, as well as of their contemporaneous Roman and early Christian neighbors. My fascination with matters of scriptural interpretation, in effect, how received authoritative texts are hermeneutically renewed and extended through dialogue with other authoritative texts, new readers, and historical contexts, continues to infect all of my work as I seek to raise this aspect of all ancient Jewish texts, notwithstanding their diverse interpretive strategies and structures, to the cultural and historical surface.

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1 *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (Jewish Hermeneutics, Mysticism, and Religion Series; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 1–23 (“Introduction: The Turn to Commentary”). I will try in this introduction not to repeat what I said there, nor to repeat bibliographical references included in the following chapters.