This collection of essays examines the rationales and methodologies applied to the biblical text. Most of the 16 essays were presented at a Yom Iyyon ("study day") coinciding with the Sixteenth Annual Midwest Jewish Studies Colloquium at Case Western Reserve University in 2004, honoring the publication of Isaac Kalimi’s Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy: Studies in Scriptures in the Shadow of Internal and External Controversies (2002). The contributors are scholars from diverse disciplines and institutions and hail from America, Canada and Israel. Kalimi himself provides an introductory essay.

The volume is divided into three parts. The first part includes seven essays on Jewish biblical interpretive methodologies of the Classical and Medieval periods. In “Targumic and Midrashic Exegesis in Contradiction to the Peshat of Biblical Text,” Isaac Kalimi cites nine examples from the Talmud, Midrash, and Aramaic translations of the Torah to demonstrate how the Talmudists and Rabbis changed the plain meaning of the biblical text (peshat) in order to sustain complex legal, moral, and ideological arguments (e.g. a softening of the lex talionis, and a critique of proselytes). He concludes that the Oral Torah had significant authority in daily life and behavior in spite of the reverence for the Jewish scriptures. In “The Palestinian Targums to Genesis 4:8—A New Approach to an Old Controversy,” Rimon Kasher suggests how an early Pelagian controversy might have provoked a kind of Jewish “credo” that was later interpolated into the Targum Onkelos (39). Bernard Grossfield—"Reuben’s Deed (Genesis 35:22) in Jewish Exegesis: What Happened There?"—examines four main ways that the rabbis grappled with a confusing verbal form (Did Reuben defile the “beds” of Jacob, as stated in Gen 49:4?). To rationalize the plural form, exegetes added to the story line, they changed the vocalization, they changed the referent story, or they spiritualized the story; in the end, none of these complicated explanations is very satisfactory. In “Visions of Egypt in Midrash: ‘Pharaoh’s Birthday’ and the ‘Nile Festival’ Text,” Rivka B. Kern Ulmer compares Egyptian and midrashic references to the Egyptian Hebsed and Opet festivals, and argues that the rabbis incorporated anachronistic details of Egyptian life in order to (1) make its “otherness” more familiar to those who studied midrashic texts, and (2) develop Jewish cultural identity and theology by emphasizing the differences. In “On the Typology of Jewish Psalms Interpretation,” Alan Cooper shows how a three-fold typology of David (as warrior, messianic figure, and “everyman”) influenced interpretation of the Psalms (historical/biographical [past], prophetic/eschatological [future], and personal [present]); during the late medieval and early modern periods, “personal” interpretation dominated. In “Kabbalistic Teaching in the Commentary of Job by Moses Naḥmanides (Rambam),” Herbert W. Basser demonstrates how Rambam’s kabbalistic interpretation of the Book of Job draws on the idea of reincarnation to explain Job’s suffering: in suffering, Job paid for the sins of a past life. This interpretation opened the door for other mystics to follow suit. In “The United Colors of the Menorah: Some Byzantine and Medieval

Perspectives on the Biblical Lampstand,” Steven Fine shows how interpreters clarified the vague biblical description of the menorah by appealing to cultural artifacts of their own day. All of these articles emphasize the centrality of the biblical text and the relative flexibility in interpretative methods in the Classical and Medieval periods: when there was doubt or confusion, interpreters changed, re-contextualized, and/or supplemented the biblical text, often quite radically.

The second section, called “Biblical Interpretation, Judaism and Christianity,” includes three disparate essays. In “Biblical Exegesis in the Passion Narratives and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” Laurence H. Schiffman argues that, according to the pesherim, the prophets encoded the events of the last days until they could be interpreted for the sectarians by the Teacher of Righteousness; in the Passion Narratives, however, the prophets speak plainly of—and are fulfilled in—Jesus. Although both prophetic interpretations contemporize, they do so in quite distinct ways. Along a similar vein, J. Harold Ellens’ “Exegesis of Second Temple Texts in a Fourth Gospel Son of Man Logion” claims that the “son of man” logion in John 1:51 reflects a creative pesher of Daniel 7:13: as the allegorical “ladder” that connects heaven and earth, Jesus makes heaven accessible. In the last essay in this section, “Christianity on Rabbinic Literature,” John T. Townsend argues that the rabbis in the first millennium countered Christian theological debates (e.g. the Trinity) with indirect and coded language in order to protect themselves against persecution. These essays continue to focus on Jewish interpretive methods, despite the section title—and the volume title—that suggests more engagement with Christian interpretative methods.

The third and final section, “Modern Biblical Study and Jewish Interpretation, Translation, and Theology,” includes six essays. In “The Rise of Modern Jewish Bible Studies: Preliminary Reflections,” Alan Levenson identifies four facets of the developing discourse of Jewish biblical studies: its polemic-apologetic nature, its recourse to traditional interpretation, its insistence on the pluriform nature of the biblical texts, and its commitment to the priority of the redacted text as a point of departure. In “Why Jews Translate the Bible,” Frederick E. Greenspahn notes that, even when they are not needed, translations accompany the Hebrew Bible in order to promote communal identity and assert ownership of the Hebrew Bible. In “A Review of Isaac Kalimi, Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy,” Tirzah Meacham (leBeit Yoreh) appreciates Kalimi’s careful scholarship and focuses on his treatment of Chapter 3, “[Joseph] was Born Circumcised,” offering suggestions to extend the study into gender issues and to the topic of original sin. With Kalimi, Meacham urges a more sensitive and informed discourse between Jewish and Christian biblical scholars. In the spirit of “creative controversies,” Kalimi responds to Meacham in the next article, drawing attention both to the multiple interpretative strategies used in his text and to its appeal to a wider audience. Two further responding essays deal with the Chronicler’s approach to earlier authoritative texts. In “The Temple in the AQEDAH (Genesis 22),” Francis Landy extends Kalimi’s argument that 2 Chronicles 3:1 aggrandizes the Temple Mount by linking it with “Mount Moriah” in an anti-Samaritan polemic. In a three-step exploration, Landy claims that Chronicles links the Temple