has been revealed?" Was Mark aware of the nuances of the Old Testament scriptures that a modern scholar, poring over the various versions, is able to detect? And are such echoes intentional or accidental? If the former, might we not expect Mark to make the links clearer? Did he really expect his readers to recognize them? Marcus assumes that Mark's community were what he describes as "biblically literate" (p. 87). But they would need to be very familiar indeed with the Old Testament scriptures to detect many of these allusions! Again, if Mark did indeed have the wider context of a passage in view, how wide might that context be? Here, once again, we meet the old problem regarding the so-called "Servant" of Deutero-Isaiah: Marcus regards the "Servant Songs" as important for Mark, but we remain unconvinced that Mark would have recognized this modern categorization.

The author's exploration of Jewish exegesis (e.g. in looking at 9:11–13) and the attempt to see Mark's own interpretation in relation to the background Marcus proposes are often illuminating. The suggestion that Mark is deliberately contrasting his Gospel with the message of Jewish revolutionaries (e.g. in 12:35–37) is an intriguing one. But are the proposals regarding date and place and context correct? Perhaps, but we can only guess from hints in the text, which Marcus promises to examine more fully elsewhere. And is he right in his belief that "Mark can assume in his hearers a midrashic mind-set similar to that which the authors of the Mekil-ta and other rabbinic midrashim could assume in theirs" (p. 106)? We doubt it! And can he really sort out Marcan redaction from traditional material? If "conflation of Old Testament texts is familiar from postbiblical Judaism and is especially common in the Dead Sea Scrolls" (p. 12), how can we conclude that "the fusion of two or more scriptural passages into one conflated citation is a characteristic Markan method of biblical usage" (p. 15, italics mine)?

It will be clear that we would take issue with Marcus at many points. Nevertheless, this is a stimulating study, and one which will certainly need to be taken into consideration in future work on Mark.

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Jacob Neusner knows his audience and it shows. He is probably more successful and more prolific than all the other book-of-the-month-club authors combined. He is quite clear in his Preface who this book is for—
people who have no familiarity with the rabbinic writings which form the
Oral Torah. In his Series Foreword, Neusner calls forth his audience—
faithful Jews and Christians who bring to scripture “profundely religious
concerns in place of the presently prevailing program of historical and
philological research” (p. xvi).

Am I one of Neusner’s chosen? As one who is more interested in literary
questions than either historical or philological ones, I might well be.
Neusner understands biblical scholarship to offer “inert information”; I
assume all texts are inert. He sees faith as the catalyst that makes scripture
live; I believe that it is the reader who animates any text. I begin to drift
away from port when Neusner exhorts his reader: “So let us get our per-
spective in line with the facts of faith” (p. xvi), as I suspect reception theory
is not the faith to which he refers. But I’m not ready to break for the open
sea. I have found many of Neusner’s introductory writings and transla-
tions of talmudic texts invaluable sources for my students. Will this book
be more useful to them than the Soncino Ruth Rabbah, on which many
of these translations depend? Leaving aside the quirky business of analytic
versus critical translations that appears in much of the Neusner corpus, I
decide to read without my usual critical apparatus. How does The Mother
of the Messiah in Judaism differ from Neusner’s earlier analytic translations
of Ruth Rabbah (Scholars Press, 1989; 1990)? This Trinity Press volume
is not a complete analytic translation of Ruth Rabbah. Rather it is a collec-
tion of several petichtot, or introductory signposts that point “this way to
the meaning,” and selected midrashim that present Neusner’s picture of
what the sages thought about the royal messiah (descended from David and
his grandmother Ruth). The sages understand Ruth to be blessed because
she is able to convert, to become honored as the grandmother of David.
A male Moabite could never have been included in Israel, but Ruth
through her marriage to Boaz can be cleansed of the idolatry of being a
Moabite.

In his discussion of what makes this Jewish messiah different from the
Jewish—Christian one found in the Matthean midrash, Neusner presents
important insights for those committed to the exploration of modern
Jewish—Christian relations. He illustrates through selected midrashim his
contentions that the Jewish messiah is a wisdom figure and not an eschato-
logical savior. Instead of forgiveness of individual sins or possibly all
humanity’s sins, the function of the Jewish messiah, as presented by the
sages, is to assure the permanent chosenness of Israel. Who exactly is this
Israel and how does its messiah come to be chosen from the realm of out-
siders? This central question determines which midrashim are chosen to
represent Neusner’s viewpoint. Ruth Rabbah’s central message is that
only the extraordinary power of Torah can join two seemingly opposite
figures: the future messiah of Israel and the “utter outsider—into a single
figure and to accomplish this union of opposites through a woman”
(pp. 13–14).