



Reviews of the Enoch Seminar 2013.08.13

Philip R. Davies, *On the Origins of Judaism*. BibleWorld. London: Equinox, 2011. \$29.95. ISBN: 9781845533267.

**Anthony R. Meyer
McMaster University, Canada**

On the Origins of Judaism, by Philip R. Davies, professor emeritus at University of Sheffield, addresses key challenges facing scholars of early Judaism. This book enters several discussions that have arisen from the publications of the Scrolls in the early 1990's. One example pertains to the incredible, although much rehearsed, diversity of first century B.C.E./C.E. Judaism.

Concerning the book's format, the reader will find a candid and modest preface, a succinct introduction, and an updated collection of nine previously published essays. These essays explore (within the context of the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods) "Israel/Judaism," "Law," Deuteronomy, Cyrus, apocalyptic, Enoch, Genesis, and commensality in both Qumran texts and Diaspora Judaism(s). There is, however, no conclusion and only chapters 2 and 9 contain an italicized summary heading. Although this book was published in 2011, the documentation of secondary scholarship is not carried beyond 2007. Thus the reader will not find the most recent debate on any of the above topics. Furthermore, Davies notes that he has not changed his mind since the essays were first published.

The reader should not expect to find closely documented argumentation (e.g., no footnotes), rigorous use of method or theory, or substantiated conclusions. On the other hand, Davies does ask several good questions. He writes, "I hope that putting questions together is the best way of finding the answers, or perhaps, of finding better questions" (p. 5). The essays are valuable for the questions asked and the thoughts provoked. But the reason for collecting these essays into one volume is not clear. Davies hints at his purpose by referring to our huge gaps in "evidence and knowledge" of ancient Judaism, and then commenting, "It may be better for present to offer partial narratives of aspects that we can perhaps discern and hope that the spaces between them will become clearer, if still remaining largely empty" (p. 5). This is Davies' partial defense for the present collection.

Beyond this, a thematic supposition might be identified: the canonized account of Israel's origin is "itself part of the process of formation of Judaism and not an independent testimony to its real history" (p. 1). By positing that some forms of Judaism produced "Israel," the reader is invited to

reflect not only on modern conceptualizing of ancient Judaism but also on the ancient conceptualizing that took place during the 5th to 3rd centuries B.C.E., which sought to organize the practices of the province of Yehud into what are called today –ism(s).

In chapter 2, “Early Judaism(s),” Davies compares the important work of Boccaccini (1991) and Schiffman (1991). He states that their descriptions do not share a common prototype. In other words, they do not share an antecedent “Judaism.” Davies asks: “What can any antecedent “Judaism” be, then, other than ‘whatever was thought and done in Judah’” (p. 12)? Here, Davies discusses the terms Jews/Judean, *ioudaismos*, *hellenismos*, and *allophylismos* (pp. 12–13). This leads to his discernment of three stages that account for the emergence of Judaism: “first, Judean culture that is not homogenous and has not yet been conceptualized (and therefore is not a “Judaism”; [second] “Juda-ism,” the culture of Judea conceptualized, an object of various kinds of definition; and finally “Judaism,” the definition of “Juda-ism” as a religion or a cult or a philosophy—a *system* of belief and practice rather than custom” (p. 13). Even though Davies wrote this essay in the currents of early-mid 1990’s (e.g., Boccaccini 1991, Schiffman 1991, and Sanders 1992) his insights are still relevant.

In chapter 3, “Scripture and Early Judaism,” Davies continues on a similar path and asks, “[D]id Judaism arise from its scriptures or vice-versa” (p. 35)? He identifies three scriptural definitions of Israel, which correspond to three geographical topoi (Sinai, Wilderness, and Moab), in three books (Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).

In chapter 4 “Law and Early Judaism,” Davies discusses the relationship between legal *theory* and legal *practice*. He explores various models for interpreting administrative biblical law, ranging from prescription/practice to a type of social philosophy or theocratic theory (p. 56). Concerning the development and function of literary law codes, he suggests that one can discern a trajectory—from theory to practice. Intriguingly, in consideration of the relationship between theory and practice of literary “ritual/sacrificial” texts, G. Anderson has suggested an opposite trajectory. For example, in the early stages of Israelite religion, sacrifice was material, concrete, tangible. Later, without a temple, sacrificial law was exegetically and theoretically developed. Anderson refers to this as the “scripturalization” of the cult (Anderson, “Sacrifice,” *ABD*). If Davies (referring to *administrative* law) and Anderson (referring to *sacrificial* law) are both accurate in their descriptions, it is remarkable that the previously separate streams of tradition (i.e., administrative and sacrificial) have become integrated in the Pentateuch, both of which can be categorized as *law*, but both of which have inverse developmental origins.

In Chapter 5, “Deuteronomy and the Origin of Judaism,” Davies intends to re-examine the date and purpose of Deuteronomy. In search for a historical and social context for Deuteronomy, Davies mentions Weinfeld (1972) in passing, but dismisses the traditional 7th century date, finding the context unconvincing. Davies argues that it is difficult to imagine how a law forbidding the rule of a foreign king (Deut 17:14) makes any sense in the context of monarchic Judah (although he notes that a time after 722 in Israel or 586 in Judah would make sense). Another argument for a post-exilic date for Deuteronomy comes from the title given to the audience addressed in Deuteronomy—“Israel.” Davies admits that this favors the view that Deuteronomy was originally a northern document, “but not why this name would be adopted in Judah and retained as the title of addresses” (p. 82). While his alternative suggestion for a post-

exilic date of Deuteronomy is imaginable, he offers little more than questions as argumentation, which are good critiques, but do not establish a convincing alternative.

In chapter 6, “The God of Cyrus and the God of Israel,” Davies suggests that Persian religion, as well as Cyrus’s role in restoration, plays a major role in Isa 40–55, and thus in shaping early Judaism. Towards the end of this chapter, he revisits the idea of Zoroastrian influence on Judaism, noting that mainstream scholarship finds little support for the view, “though the climate is changing” (p. 98). He mentions some areas of influence: “angelology, eschatology (including resurrection, judgment, heaven, and hell), dualism, creation, [etc.]... .” The problem, which Davies notes, is the late date of Persian sources (primarily the *Avestan* literature, compiled sometime around the 4th century C.E.).

In chapter 7, “Jewish Apocalyptic,” Davies reassesses the nature and function of the apocalypse as a genre. He considers the use of the term “apocalyptic” to be appropriate for the literary genre alone; every other use is nonsensical. He writes, “Anyone might write an apocalypse, just as anyone might write a biography, compose an oracle, write a letter or make a speech.... Why should we take that classification further, when we do not for any other genre?” (p. 101). Davies advocates removing “apocalyptic” from academic vocabulary. “Rather than continue to treat ‘apocalyptic’ as a cultural curiosity, we might rather accept it as normal and ask instead why early Judaism, in its writings at least, took aversion to the disclosure of such secrets except on the divine initiative, preferring ‘prophecy’ as the standard agency of intermediation” (p. 119).

In chapter 8, “Enoch and Genesis,” Davies posits a common origin for Gen 1–11 and *1 Enoch*. What Davies means by “common origin” is not clear. After discussing the fuller version of Gen 6:1–4 in *1 En.* 6–11, Davies seeks to answer: Why is the story about *nephilim* included in Genesis, and what is the connection between the stories in *1 Enoch* and in Genesis?

In order to explain the challenges posed by Gen 6:1–4, Davies inverts the traditional diachronic relationship between the Yahwistic (J) and Priestly (P) writers of the Primeval History. First, Davies rehearses the fact that P lacks an account of the origin of evil as the Pentateuch now stands. He argues that at one time P contained a version that was very close to the account of *1 Enoch*. It was only later that a supplemental J writer diminished P’s voice in favor of the present J version. Davies concludes that “the purpose of the J material in Genesis 1–11 is *precisely* to provide a different account of human origins that contradicted the view upheld in *1 Enoch* and in P, which celebrated a world created perfect, a glorious Adam bearing the divine image, and a corruption caused by angelic beings...” (p. 129). Thus, “J’s narrative in Gen. 6:1–4 is a revision of a story of a heavenly descent similar to that found in *Enoch*, *that was included in P*” (p. 129).

Davies suggests that this controversial redactional activity forms part of the background for the production of the Qumran scrolls themselves and that “this new myth [J’s account of original sin] failed to make any immediate impact on early Jewish or Christian mythology” (p. 129). While Enochic traditions exert a prominent influence on the early Jewish milieu, it seems that the tendency to elevate Enochic myth(s) to the exclusion of the Adamic myth(s) misconstrues some of the evidence. For example, how should we understand Enochic myth in light of the so-called *Niedrigkeitsdoxologie*, “Doxologies of Lowliness” (e.g., 1QH^a 12.30–13.6 or even 1QS 11.5–

15)? For a recent discussion with greater focus on the Scrolls, see M. Stone, *Ancient Judaism* (2011) and Orlov, Boccaccini (Eds.) *New Perspectives on 2 Enoch* (2012).

In chapter 9, “Eating and Drinking in the Qumran Texts,” Davies illustrates how food and drink are an integral part of creating and maintaining community boundaries. As a background for discussing the analogical connection between body and society, he relies on Mary Douglas (p. 135). In reference to 1QS, Davies focuses on the regulation of *tohorat* and *mashqeh* of the *rabbim*, specifically in relation to initiates and disciplinary action. In D, however, we find a different function of *tohorah*. Davies suggests that as a punishment the root לָבַד, “to separate,” does not mean exclusion from “pure food” but rather privation. For Davies, this reflects a higher level of symbolization of food and drink among the *yahad* as compared to the D covenanters.

In chapter 10, “Eating and Drinking in the Roman Empire,” Davies widens his scope to examine Diaspora Judaism’s attitude toward food and drink. He asks, “How far, in the Roman Empire, was diet shaped by ethnicity?” (p. 144). Davies presents his final essay against the backdrop of the Greco-Roman world, but it is uncertain why his exemplar literary paradigm is Daniel 1, which may perhaps be considered Hellenistic (especially Dan 7–12), but certainly not Roman. Davies uses the notion of Diaspora Jewry in Daniel to extrapolate on Jewish Diaspora dietary issues in Roman times (e.g., meat sacrificed to idols). Although he alludes to the complexities of describing early Judaism, he cautions that the final essay is “a very superficial review of the question” (p. 141). Near the end of this essay, Davies states, “Finally, it should be stressed that my determination to include individual Jews as well as members of a ‘community’ is deliberate....” Unless I misunderstand Davies, it is unclear what he means by inclusion of “individual Jews.” Is this Daniel? References to individuals appear nowhere in this chapter.

While a collection of essays is, perhaps, convenient, there is nothing here that makes a compelling case for collecting the present essays into one volume. These essays do not offer a substantive approach, method, or theory for studying the origins of Judaism. The elimination of footnotes makes Davies’ arguments even less tenable. In addition to the inconsistent formatting mentioned above, this volume would benefit from greater attention to detail (e.g., the chapter 9 heading appears where the chapter 10 heading should; pp. 143–53). Nevertheless, Davies offers many insightful questions for the discipline and if updated, this volume could provide a significant introduction. This would, however, require more on Davies’ part. He himself mentions that to do justice to recent important work would require a “completely new set of essays.” To justify the present volume would mean to move in that direction.