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Schweid, Eliezer. *The Philosophy of the Bible as Foundation of Jewish Culture: Philosophy of Biblical Narrative*. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2008. 213 p. \$70.00 (978-1-93484-3-00-0). Schweid, Eliezer. *The Philosophy of the Bible as Foundation of Jewish Culture: Philosophy of Biblical Law*. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2008. 216 p. \$70.00 (978-1-93484-301-7).

Eliezer Schweid is one of the premier Jewish thinkers of our time. This two-volume work begins with a consideration of the role of the Bible in Jewish culture and then offers a sophisticated and intricate analysis of the Pentateuch (and certain other parts of the Bible as well). Schweid does not try to separate legend and history or tease out original intent. This, of course, is not due to naiveté but to a wish to analyze the Bible as it has come down to us, that is, as a cultural source for the Hebrew nation. Perhaps for this reason, the author at times draws upon the oral Torah to inform his commentary on the text. The analysis itself reflects the author's preoccupations, e.g., democracy and the relationship of the sexes. It does not, alas, always avoid tendentiousness. In discussing the binding of Isaac, Schweid (claiming insight into the "meaning of the story") argues that Abraham believed from the first he was commanded to perform a symbolic ceremony and not an actual slaying of his son. If so why, when Abraham takes up the knife, does the angel command him not to "stretch out your hand against the lad?" Schweid ignores this, mentioning only what happens directly afterward: Abraham's seeing the ram and sacrificing it. The author is a learned and acute thinker and his ruminations are always worthy of consideration, but it should not prevent us from recognizing this interesting book as a somewhat idiosyncratic piece of exegesis and more than a little subjective. For larger scholarly collections.

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