

Yona Sabar, *The Book of Numbers in Neo-Aramaic in the Dialect of the Jewish Community of Zakho*. The Hebrew University Language Traditions Project XVI. The Hebrew University, Institute of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 1993, pp. xxii + 147 (Hebrew). ISBN: 965-350-004-0.

**GEOFFREY KHAN, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

- [1] This is the fourth in a series of volumes by Yona Sabar containing the edition and analysis of a Jewish neo-Aramaic version of the Pentateuch. Previously published volumes contain the books of Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus. The Jewish communities in Kurdistan (Northern Iraq and North-West Iran) spoke a variety of neo-Aramaic dialects, most of which have not been described. All these communities have now left their original places of residence and have settled elsewhere, mainly in Israel.
- [2] The version of the Pentateuch presented in these volumes is in the dialect of the Jews of Zakho (Northern Iraq), which is the native language of the editor, Yona Sabar. This has been transmitted orally for several centuries. The text that is published here is a transcription made from a recording of an oral recitation by a hakham of the Zakho community. The apparatus at the foot of each page contains comparisons with a neo-Aramaic version in the dialect of the town of Dahok, which is close to Zakho. In addition to the full text of the book of Numbers, Sabar also supplies an introduction that examines the structure and background of the Zakho neo-Aramaic version, appendices containing extracts from versions of Numbers in the neo-Aramaic dialects of the Jews and Christians of Urmia (Iranian Kurdistan) and finally a comparative and etymological glossary. The comparative glossary shows clearly that the Christian Urmia dialect has preserved a greater proportion of the early Aramaic lexicon than the Jewish dialects. As in many areas of Kurdistan, there are substantial differences between the Aramaic speech of the Jews and that of the Christians in Urmia.
- [3] The orally transmitted neo-Aramaic versions of the Pentateuch are not invariably literal renderings of the text. Additions are occasionally made to clarify the meaning of a word. In cases where the translator is uncertain of the meaning of a word, two translations are sometimes offered side by side. Most deviations from the literal rendering, however, are interpretative translations.

Many of these are dependent on the interpretations found in Targum Onqelos and the medieval commentators. Some, however, are independent traditions of interpretation which existed orally in the local Jewish community. Parallels to these local traditions of neo-Aramaic versions are sometimes found in the post-medieval Judaeo-Arabic Bible versions of the Iraqi Jewish communities. A number of Hebrew words, mainly technical religious terms, are left untranslated.

- [4] There is still no full grammatical description of the neo-Aramaic dialect of the Jews of Zakho, either of the language of the traditional oral literature or of the vernacular language spoken by survivors of the community today, which differs from the language of the oral Bible versions in some respects. This volume, together with the earlier ones in the same series, provide an important source for future scholarship in neo-Aramaic.