

The Jewish Study Bible, edited by Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler.
Oxford University Press, 2004. £30 (£17.99).

The Jewish Study Bible accompanies the translated biblical text with annotations that are clear and concise, forensic in their analysis of the text, augmented by copious textual cross-references and combining modern source criticism with traditional interpretations and commentaries. Each section of the Bible has a general introductory essay, and each book has one of its own. That on the book of Psalms is outstanding, as are the individual min-summaries of each Psalm.

In certain places there are maps, showing for example the route of the Exodus according to the Bible or the conquest of Canaan by Joshua. In addition to these maps there are 9 colour maps at the end of the book. The main body of the text also contains occasional special notes in boxes, detailing the structure of individual chapters or series of chapters as well as textual reconstructions.

All of this on its own would put the JSB in a class of its own, but there is more. The Jewish Study Bible contains 24 essays by leading scholars, some newly commissioned, others re-worked from previous publication in the New Oxford Annotated Bible. The essays are divided into three sections – Jewish Interpretation of the Bible, The Bible in Jewish Life and Thought and Backgrounds for Reading the Bible, the latter addressed to general readers of any or no faith wanting to know about important biblical concepts and how contemporary scholars study the Bible.

The final section contains tables and charts – including an excellent timeline of biblical history in Egypt, Israel and Mesopotamia, a chronological table of rulers in Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia and Israel and a further list for the Hellenistic period, material on the calendar, Torah readings and their accompanying Haftarat, a bibliography of translations of Primary Sources and an extensive and intelligent glossary.

Turn the Jewish Study Bible this way, and turn it that way, for everything is in it.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh