

Nadia Zeldes, *Reading Jewish History in the Renaissance: Christians, Jews, and the Hebrew Sefer Yosippon*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-4985-7341-2. Pp. ix + 201. Hardcover; \$100.00 (£77.00)

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This book is a history. Thus, it will appear to the literary historian or philologist relatively cursory in detail, and sprawling in scope, given its subject. But for the historian, for the scholar who needs a manageable overview of what *Sefer Yosippon* (henceforth *SY*) is and what it meant in the pre-modern period, this study represents a valuable tool. Its structure, with endnotes-by-chapter, corresponds to its contents: readability replaces textual detail (which, after all, takes up a great deal of space and thus constitutes an intentional preference). If some of the content found herein has already been put forward in previous work (by scholars like Saskia Dönitz and Daniel Stein Kokin), the end result of this study is still an original, accessible, and occasionally novel approach to *SY* as an object of transmission and debate among Renaissance humanists in Western Europe.

The introduction begins by framing the context of inquiry: Renaissance Hebraism, which, Zeldes states, focused on 1) “the quest for ... the primordial monotheistic religion” and 2) “the theory that certain Hebrew sources, especially Jewish esoteric literature, contained the hidden key to the origins of Christianity” (1). The book sets out to frame *SY* within that milieu. The brief introduction to *SY* itself (2–5) is laconic, undetailed, and scarcely adequate for a robust understanding of the work, comprising instead a highly truncated version of what Saskia Dönitz and others have already published (in German and English).¹ The critical introductory discussion is made more difficult to follow by the fact that most of the critical information is relegated to endnotes. Returning to renaissance humanism, Zeldes suggests that *SY*’s reception therein is made special by the non-sacred character of Jewish historiography, as opposed to Scripture, Talmud, esoteric literature, etc. (What exactly this dichotomy might mean could have used a fuller discussion here, as could its justification.) *SY*’s popularity within renaissance humanism owed much to its being mistakenly apprehended as Flavius Josephus’ own ‘original’ work. Both Jews and Christians read and leveraged the work. Zeldes frames her study

¹ See Saskia Dönitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption des Sefer Yosippon* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1–34 *et passim*, or Saskia Dönitz, “Sefer Yosippon (Josippon),” in *A Companion to Josephus*, ed. Zuleika Rodgers and Honora Howell Chapman (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 382–89, or Saskia Dönitz, “Historiography Among Byzantine Jews: The Case of Sefer Yosippon,” in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialects of Minority and Majority Cultures*, ed. Robert Bonfil, Oded Irshai, Guy G. Stroumsa, and Rina Talgam (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 951–68.

as an “integrated approach,” assessing both Christian and Jewish “intellectual dialogue around *Josippon*” in Renaissance Italy and Spain (6).

Chapter 1 begins with a serviceable introduction to medieval Jewish historiography, a cultural reality famously disavowed by Yosef Yerushalmi’s 1986 book *Zahkor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. Zeldes rightly if obliquely signals the methodological problem of defining ‘historiography’ as contemporary history in line with modern norms, and overviews what can be considered Jewish historiography in the Middle Ages when a broader collection of literature and genres is allowed to qualify. She then focuses on two of the major streams of SY’s influence and reception: the *Dorot ‘Olam* (*Generations of the Ages*) of Abraham ibn Daud (1110–1180) and the *Sefer ha-Zikhorot* (*Book of Memories*) produced in 1325 by Eleazar ben Asher ha-Levi (fl. early-14th century) and based on the earlier chronicle of the 12th-century Southern-Italian Jewish historian and poet Yerahme’el ben Solomon. Before delving into this more specific study, Zeldes suggests, in part following Steven Bowman, that SY was read and valued by medieval Jews because it antedated rabbinic sources, provided eyewitness testimony, and answered “the most harrowing questions that troubled medieval Jews,” such as why the Temple had been destroyed and why the Jews now lived in exile (14).² Such statements, not supported with evidence here, seem to be somewhat speculative and reductionistic, and perhaps anachronistic—at best, a partial and only probable explanation of SY’s medieval popularity among Jews.

Zeldes next briefly summarizes how SY provided the basis for the narratives of the siege of Jerusalem and the 70 CE destruction of the Temple in medieval Jewish chronicles, e.g. Ibn Daud’s *Dorot ‘Olam* and *Divre Malkhe Yisrae’el* (*History of the Kings of Israel*), something which has long been known.³ Next is a discussion of SY’s place among the sources for early Roman history in the historical works of Ibn Daud. Ibn Daud used a manuscript of SY that apparently later came into the possession of Judah Leon ben Moses Mosconi, who produced and edited an expanded version of SY in 1328, providing the basis for the 1510 Constantinople printed edition. But Ibn Daud also apparently drew on Latin sources like Livy or the *Histories* of Orosius to relate stories like the founding myth of Romulus and Remus (such Latin texts were among SY’s sources as well). Zeldes illustrates how Ibn Daud combined information from SY and such Latin texts in his chronicles, and how his knowledge of Latin, geography, and history (e.g.) supplemented and constrained his use of SY—that is, Ibn Daud “did not use this source

² Similarly, the suggestion on pp. 11 and 14 that SY gave medieval Jews access to historical information to which they were otherwise not privy because of their lack of access to Josephus’ *Jewish War* and 1–2 Maccabees requires nuance. Historically, Jewish authors and writers and readers had (apparently) *chosen* not to integrate these Hellenistic texts into their own literary milieus, nor is it certain that Jews would not have had access to either or both of the Josephan and Maccabean corpora: certain Jews would have had access to the Latin Josephus and Vulgate traditions before the penning of SY, and Hebrew documents regarding the Maccabees likely antedated SY as well.

³ See, e.g., the summary and footnotes in Katja Vehlow, *Abraham Ibn Daud’s Dorot ‘Olam (Generations of the Ages): A Critical Edition and Translation of Zikhoron Divrey Romi, Divrey Malkhey Yisrae’l, and the Midrash on Zechariah* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 29–30 *et alibi*.

indiscriminately” (19). Moving to the Ashkenazi chronicles, Zeldes gives an example of how *SY* supplied similar data for Roman history in the *Chronicle* of Jerahmiel/*Sefer ha-Zikhronot*, which combines information from *SY* with that from other sources (like *Midrash Shoher Tov*) in its recounting of Romulus, Remus, and the origins of the Roman calendar.

Zeldes next engages the scholarly assumption of differences between Shephardic and Ashkenazi Jews in their approach to martyrdom, noble death, and/or suicide in a post-Crusade world. She surmises from a passing reference to the Maccabean mother-martyr (Hannah) and her seven sons in Ibn Daud’s *Divre Malkhe Yisra’el* that Ibn Daud is relying upon (a version of) *SY*, but notes by way of comparison that Ben Asher’s *Sefer ha-Zikhronot* contains a much longer version of this tale, also based on *SY*, that is more open to noble martyrdom in the face of persecution. She concludes that Ashkenzi Judaism treated *SY* as an ‘exemplum,’ apparently affording it a particular kind of prescriptive authority, whereas Ibn Daud’s use thereof “represents the Shephardic attitude of strict adherence to halakhic norms that frown on suicide, especially the killing of children” (27). Zeldes’ point is that *SY* was used widely among medieval Jews facing persecution, as Avraham Grossman and Robert Chazan and others had argued previously,⁴ and she points out that *SY* “was reserved for internal use” (29), unlike among the few medieval Christians familiar with the Hebrew text.

Chapter 2, on the Christian reception of *SY*, argues that *SY*’s popularity among Christians owes to the ancient evidence it gave of Christian origins and the meaning of Jerusalem’s destruction—the same reasons Christians had always sourced Josephus, by the way, and by now a truism within scholarship—combined with the longstanding take on the Jews as “librarians” and ‘guardians of wisdom.’ This chapter may have bitten off more than it could chew in terms of evidence: no clear links between the ideas and assumptions of different centuries, or even millennia, are proffered, and skepticism of the Jews’ trustworthiness as librarians along with the notion that their “refusal to acknowledge the truth and logic of Christianity” are attributed to the twelfth-century Renaissance (39)—but was this not a centuries-old legacy? *SY*’s major Christian Latin source itself, i.e. the late-fourth century *On the Destruction of Jerusalem* (e.g. Pseudo-Hegesippus), is an example of the widespread Christian assumptions already in late antiquity of Jewish stubbornness and scribal/archival untrustworthiness (see Prol 1–3; 2.12.1). (It may be no coincidence that this text was very widely read and copied in the High Middle Ages.) Moreover, Zeldes’ discussion of the “worsening status of the Jews in Western Christendom” is diffuse, apparently applied as a blanket description to Western Europe, and unillustrated, though she does point out the helpful phenomenon of the twelfth-century “re-conceptualization of Jewish disbelief” wherein Christian thinkers accounted for the place of post-biblical (i.e. rabbinic) traditions within actual Jewish

⁴ See, among their other works, Avraham Grossman, “The Cultural and Social Background of Jewish Martyrdom in Germany in 1096,” in *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge*, ed. A. Haverkamp (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1999), 73–86; Robert Chazan, *God, Humanity, and History: The Hebrew First Crusade Narratives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 175–90.

dogma and practice.⁵ All of this fueled, Zeldes summarizes, Christian apologetic, polemic, and missions, bolstered in part by the rise of the Mendicant orders in the thirteenth century, within which some Christians were incentivized to learn and use Hebrew (and Arabic) in their efforts.

This chapter's treatment of *SY*'s use by Christians is very short (seven pages) and builds upon shaky foundations *ab initio*. Zeldes' statement that early pagan and Christian "interest in Jewish writings had little do with the pursuit of history" (40) is highly debatable, and the implication that early Christians were interested "particularly [in] the *Jewish Antiquities*" among Josephus' writings is demonstrably false: second- and third-century Christian writers made just as much use of the *Jewish War*, and the fact that the latter was translated into Latin (and, partially, into Syriac) already by the fourth century (in addition to Pseudo-Hegesippus' work-length paraphrase), whereas the *Antiquities* were not translated until the career of Cassiodorus in the mid-sixth century, suggests that Josephus' *Jewish War*, and the fodder he provided for *Christian historiography*, were what made him popular early on in Christian circles. Finally, Zeldes glosses over Pseudo-Hegesippus, *SY*'s most extensive and most important Latin source, with a bibliographical note that is about forty years out-of-date: "Flusser concluded that the author of *Josippon* knew the work of Pseudo-Hegesippus and adapted chosen parts of it in his compilation" (40). In fact, *SY* used Pseudo-Hegesippus as the primary source for the full second half of its content, as current scholarship is demonstrating in increasing detail.⁶ However, this questionable treatment of late antique texts, a scholarly infelicity not unheard-of among medievalists, is less significant than it might have been were this book not about the *renaissance* reception of *SY* and not Josephus' *Nachleben* in late antiquity.

Zeldes correctly identifies Josephus' apparent brief reference to Jesus Christ, the so-called 'Testimonium Flavianum' (*Jewish Antiquities* 18.64–65), as a passage of key interest to medieval Christians. However, to impute to "the intellectual revival of the High Middle Ages" (41) the Christian habit of looking for extra-biblical references to Jesus in authors like Josephus seems, again, a bit anachronistic (see already, e.g., Origen *Commentary on Matthew* 10.17; *Against Celsus* 1.16, 47; 2.13; 4.11; and many Christians thereafter). No doubt Christians of the time were interested in just these things, but so had their predecessors been for generations. But their predecessors had *not* been privy to a Semitic version of Josephus' writing, and Zeldes (laconically) explains that, as Josephus claimed to have written (something like) his *Jewish War* originally in his 'barbarian vernacular' (Aramaic, scholars assume; see *War* 1.3),⁷ medieval Jews and Christians assumed that he thereby referred to a Hebrew work, which came to

⁵ Zeldes (p. 41) borrows this term from Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 147–66.

⁶ This fact is stated explicitly in Flusser's critical edition and commentary of *SY* and in many of his articles, in many of Saskia Dönitz's articles, and in her 2013 book (see *Überlieferung und Rezeption*, 6–7 *et passim*).

⁷ Zeldes cites this as *War* 1.1.3 (49n17), confusing the older three-numeral citation system for Josephus' works established by William Whiston, an early modern translator of Josephus' works (in 1737), with the standard two-numeral citation system based upon the critical editions of the Greek edited by Benedict Niese and published between 1885 and 1895.

be identified with *SY* (even though the latter routinely refers to Josephus in the third person as an author and authority). Thus does Gerald of Wales' *De principis instructione liber* 65–66 refer to Robert of Cricklade's (d. 1180) search through Hebrew manuscripts of *SY* at Oxford for a non-erased version of the 'Testimonium Flavianum' among the Jews—he claims to have found two. Such references to the early Jesus movement are “easily explained by the existence of numerous versions” of *SY* (42), long known to have been treated as an “open text” and thus expanded and altered often and considerably in the course of its emergent reception and development.⁸ Zeldes' argument that this portrayal by Gerald of Wales still presents the Jews as “librarians” or “custodians” of knowledge is well-taken, and her discussion of Prior Robert's probably-limited facility in Hebrew adds texture to the discussion.

From here Zeldes moves to a look at the use of *SY* in Martini's *Pugio fidei adversus Mauros et Iudaeos* (c. 1270), whose use therein has not received the attention that Martini's use of other sources has. Zeldes notes that Martini dubs *SY*'s author as *Josephon abbreviator Josephi* (44), but is apprehensive of accepting that Martini actually understood a real distinction (which is puzzling, because anyone who actually read *SY* would have to conclude that Joseph ben Gurion, whom the text often cites, is not the work's author by implication). In fact, Zeldes posits that “Martini clearly attributes the Hebrew text to Joseph ben Gorion who lived in the time of Vespasian” (44), basing her argument on this line from MS 1405 of the Sainte Geneviève Library in Paris (fol. 51): “And so said Yosefon, so said Yosef ben Gorion at that time, and Vespasian came.” Does this line imply apposition between Yosefon and Yosef ben Gurion, or rather that “Yosefon” said *that* “Yosef ben Gurion said *X* at that time?” The latter seems just as easy to infer, and in fact aligns with the longstanding practice of rabbinic literature to use strings of “So-and-so said that so-and-so said and-so-on.” It is not clear that Zeldes succeeds here in arguing that Martini thought *SY*'s author a first-century figure. But she is almost certainly correct in suggesting that “even those Christian scholars who had no direct access to what they considered the Hebrew Josephus could have known about its existence from *Pugio fidei*” (46), a demonstrably influential text, and this is an important point.

Chapter 3 treats the importance of *SY* for creating, perpetuating, and leveraging myths within the ostensibly-critical thought-world the Renaissance. To illustrate the willingness of authors in this period to deploy mythical concoctions for various self-serving ends, Zeldes mentions how Johannes Annius de Viterbo (ca. 1432–1502), aka Lorenzo Valla (!), claimed in his *Antiquitates* to have discovered a text on “one of the oldest cities in the world, founded by Janus-Noah” (54) in order to enhance the prestige of his native city, Viterbo, Italy. Zeldes then rightly notes that Jews also had incentives

⁸ See Steven Bowman, “‘Yosippon’ and Jewish Nationalism,” *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 61 (1995): 23–51, at 25, 31; Dönitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption*, 19, 36 *et alibi*; and I. M. Ta-Shma, “The ‘Open Book’ in Medieval Hebrew Literature: The Problem of Authorized Editions,” in *Artefact and Text: The Re-Creation of Jewish Literature in Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts*, ed. P. S. Alexander and A. Samely (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 17–24.

to proffer various ‘antiquities’ especially in the fifteenth century, when their presence in different parts of Europe could exacerbate “the growing insecurity of Mediterranean lands” (55). Enter *SY*: with its often-biblical basis and the respect it commanded also among Christians, this text became a cornerstone of apologetic Jewish antiquating narratives within the Renaissance period.

To show this, Zeldes uses the example of Zepho ben Eliphaz, one of the few portions of *SY* that has received significant scholarly attention post-Flusser. Zepho, grandson of Esau (Gen 36:4–10; 1 Chr 1:36), appears in *SY* 2 (ב) as an important player in fighting that erupts between the sons of Jacob and Esau over Jacob’s burial (a theme with certain midrashic parallels) and then becomes the effective founder of Rome (and the Roman deity Janus). Zeldes rightly and helpfully states that this tradition appears nowhere in the pre-ninth century literature. Drawing also upon Vergil’s *Aeneid*, and possibly some other Arabic or Byzantine traditions, “there is little doubt that the *Book of Josippon* served as a conduit for the dissemination of this particular story among medieval Jews and later among Christians” (56). Zeldes also makes the key point that, while this legend engages the rabbinic equation of Esau/Edom with Rome and/or Christendom, its doing so with broader, non-Jewish traditions is distinctive. She then glosses quickly over the transfer of this legend from *SY* to *Sefer ha-Yashar* (aka *Sefer Toledot Adam*), a narrative of Creation to the time of the Judges that taps both Midrash and *SY* and which may have been written as late as the early-seventeenth century, or perhaps much earlier, in Spain.

Zeldes next illustrates how the Zepho legend was attached by medieval/Renaissance Jews “to various European cities” (57). Residents of mid-fifteenth century Palermo in Italy used the legend to prove the antiquity of their town. For example, the Dominican friar Pietro Ranzano (1428–1492) claimed to have found a “Chaldean” inscription on an old tower in town that certain Palermitan Jews told him referred to “Sepha son of Eliphaz, who was the son of Esau brother of Jacob” (59). Ranzano’s account appears to have been a forgery based upon later research, but his apparent drawing upon *SY*’s legend shows the power of *SY* in fifteenth-century discourse. (Ranzano also claims to have visited a Jew in his home who read to him from something that sounds like *SY*, whose reading confirmed his ‘finding’ on the tower.) *SY* had another Palermo connection in the biblical commentaries of Don Isaac Abarbanel (1437–1508), who identified Zepho as the ancient founder of the city. This detail causes Zeldes to wonder whether Abarbanel knew a presently-unknown version of *SY*, or had another source, for this information, as it does not appear in any known version of *SY*.

Another tradition that shows clear traces of *SY* but also significant departures therefrom appears in the *Sefer Yuhasin* of rabbi Abraham ben Samuel Zacuto (1452–1514). The reworking of Zacuto is such that unraveling it requires close textual comparison, and his labeling Zepho the founder of Milan (!) “represents a significant departure from the original narrative of *Josippon*” (67), illustrating again this legend’s tendency to become attached to different locales, and *SY*’s textual openness. Further afield still, Zeldes recalls how Gedaliah ibn Yahya (1515–1587) in his *Shalshet ha-Kabbalah* cast Zepho as an ancient king in *France*. Zeldes is right to stress the Zepho legend as a highly moveable, and

apparently attractive and relevant, *SY* legend within the literary world of Renaissance Judaism.

Turning to the afterlives of *SY* among Christian Hebraists, who revered literature that was Hebrew and/or Jewish and put it to various ideologized uses, Zeldes focuses on Gianozzo Manetti (1396–1459), Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), Hebrew-readers all. Concerning Manetti, Zeldes champions the highly speculative thesis that Manetti did not cite *SY* in his *Adversus Judeos et gentes*, written between 1456 and 1459, because he did not find what he hoped to in that work: namely, a positive passage about Jesus Christ. Manetti had commissioned a copy of *SY* from Elijah ha-Melamed of Fano (a Jew) in 1444, and it still survives. This version of *SY*'s few references to Jesus and his followers are pejorative, which leads Zeldes to imagine that Manetti did not cite it for that reason, having hoped for “a far more favorable passage” (80). This argument throws a guess at previous dilemmas voiced by Daniel Stein Kokin⁹ and, hardly respecting Manetti's ingenuity and authorial abilities, presents a unidimensional and in any case unprovable argument.

Next Zeldes turns to a letter sent by Pico to an unnamed addressee on November 10, 1486. Zeldes dwells briefly on a reference to *SY* in the latter, which Umberto Cassuto pointed out previously and which Stein Kokin has also treated.¹⁰ In said letter Pico avers that “the Jews do not have the right Josephus (*iustum Iosephum*),” noting the apocryphal nature of some of *SY*'s contents before moving to a discussion of the Testimonium Flavianum between the Greek and Latin Josephus traditions. But Pico references a legend about the 10 tribes of Israel that did not return from Babylon as part of *SY*'s narrative, though no known *SY* version contains any such story. This leads Zeldes to imagine some possibilities: perhaps Pico was shown a codex containing *SY* plus the stories on the Ten Tribes by the ninth-century traveler Eldad the Danite, or one with *SY* and the Midrash *Eser Galuyot*. Or perhaps the Italian Jewish humanist convert-to-Christianity Flavius Mithridates, employed by Pico, confused one of these with *SY* and thus showed it to Pico. Or perhaps a redaction of *SY* was bound together with the *Itinerary of Benjamin Tudela*, as suggested by Pietro Ranzano's account in *Delle origini e vicende di Palermo* (1470)—the *Itinerary* has a reference to the fate of the Ten Tribes—and perhaps *this* collection of writings made its way to Pico via Mithridates. None of these ideas is impossible, and it must be admitted that their being rendered plausible here commends Zeldes' historiographical ingenuity. Even if none of these hypotheses can be established at present, they should be retained as possibilities by scholars working in this area.

As for Ficino, Zeldes follows Giacomo Corazzol in supposing that he was the correspondent of Pico in the above-mentioned letter. We know that Ficino annotated a blank page of a Latin New Testament manuscript with the statement: *Ebrei affirmat [insuper] testu Iosiphi ebraico esse superiores Christi laudes praeter resurrectionem*. This leads

⁹ See Daniel Stein-Kokin, “The Josephan Renaissance: Flavius Josephus and his Writings in Italian Humanist Discourse,” *Viator* 47 (2016): 205–48, at 220–21.

¹⁰ See Umberto Cassuto, *Gli ebrei a Firenze nell'età del Rinascimento* (Florence: Olschki, 1918), 317–19.

Zeldes to hypothesize that Ficino heard about a version of the *Testimonium Flavianum* in *SY* from a Jewish informant or a convert (maybe Mithridates again?), and for this reason asked Pico a question about a Hebrew/Jewish version of the *Testimonium*, as reflected in the language of Pico's letter. Zeldes concludes the chapter by saying that Manetti, Pico, and Ficino were all interested in *SY* for reasons of interreligious polemic within the larger "humanistic attempt to revolutionize religious thinking and transform Christian theology" (87). Yet *SY* never played a real role in this enterprise for these men because they only knew the book second hand, and because it did not contain the right kind of information for their purposes. Still, Zeldes concludes that *SY* was not just a tool for anti-Jewish polemic, but also for broader innovations toward religious reform within the humanist enterprise itself (hence the search for positive Jesus-statements in *SY*).

Chapter 5 returns to Jewish scholars of the Renaissance, who used *SY* along with other Jewish and Classical sources to do historiography and chronography within a framework of interreligious polemic. In this Zeldes isolates Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol (1451–1525), Isaac Abarbanel (1437–1508), Abraham Zacuto (1452–1515), Gedaliah ibn Yahya (1515–1587), and Samuel Usque (1500–1555). Zeldes first shows how Farissol's *Magen Avraham* ("Shield of Abraham"), or *Vikuaḥ ha-Dat* ("Dispute of Faith"), from between 1500 and 1514, referenced both Josephus' *Against Apion* (via a Byzantine Latin translation of Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*) and *SY*. (The discussion of this work's context of writing, and its use of Josephus, seems rather peripheral.) Farissol's use of *SY* taps the Zepho ben Eliphaz/genealogy of Rome motif to refute the argument that (medieval) Jews ought not to lend money at interest to Christians, as the two peoples were brothers descending from Jacob and Esau respectively. Thus, Zeldes shows that *SY*, "an old, venerable source" became a "polemical weapon" for counter-Christian claims (99). Don Isaac Abarbanel, another Jewish author ensconced in Latin literature (Christian and classical) and humanistic thought, likewise used *SY* for establishing a Jewish chronology of Roman (and Jewish) antiquity. He too draws upon *SY* 2 (ב), and elsewhere taps *SY* to demonstrate the correct chronological reading of Danielic prophecy. Interestingly, Abarbanel cites both *SY* and Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, sometimes conflating them, but drawing a qualitative distinction between "our book of Ben Gurion" (i.e. *SY*) and the works of Josephus written for the gentiles (100–101).

Next Zeldes dispatches a vague overview of Zacuto's use of *SY* in his *Sefer Yuḥashin* within several pages, relying upon previous work by Abraham Neuman and Ram Ben-Shalom.¹¹ Citing a quotation voicing Zacuto's explicit mistrust in *SY*, whose author "says things with a tongue that speaks arrogance" according to Zacuto (104) and providing a very broad overview of Zacuto's use of *SY*, Zeldes summarizes ambivalently that Zacuto used *SY* and other Jewish literature "to introduce a variety of topics he deemed important"

¹¹ Abraham A. Neuman, "Abraham Zacuto: Historiographer," in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Saul Lieberman (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965), 2.597–629; Ram Ben-Shalom, "Anti-Christian Historiographical Polemic in *Sefer Yuḥashin*," *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 13 (2017): 1–42.

(105)—what is interesting in Zacuto’s case is a lack of preference for Jewish versus non-Jewish historiography. Not so Gedaliah ibn Yahya, whose *Shalshet ha-Kabbalah* uses *SY* and Josephus’ *Antiquities* and *Against Apion* without drawing distinctions. For ibn Yahya, *SY* (“probably” the Manuta print edition) provided valuable data on the origins of nations, though ibn Yahya’s quotations depart occasionally from the text of known *SY* versions. Yet his iteration of the Alexander Romance correlates with the 1480 Mantua edition of *SY*. In the end, Zeldes shows that ibn Yahya, like the other authors discussed here, used *SY* to do comparative chronology of certain periods. Finally, Zeldes turns to Samuel Usque, about whom little is known—it may be that he attended university as a Christian in Portugal,¹² where he grew up as a *conversos*, perhaps even studying Hebrew and Bible in preparation for priesthood, before moving abroad and eventually publishing his *Consolação ás Tribulações de Israel* (*Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel*) in 1553.¹³ However, it was Latin versions of *SY* that Usque used, both produced by Sebastian Münster: one was published in 1529 on the basis of an abridged version of Abraham ibn Daud’s *Divre Malkhe Yisra’el*, the other based on the 1541 Vasel edition of *SY*.¹⁴ At least, this is what Zeldes says at first. Later she posits that Usque relied on a version of *SY* “such as the Manuta printed edition, 1480,” that did not contain the Maccabean mother’s name (Hannah) in *SY*’s martyrdom account from 2 Maccabees (III). In any case, Zeldes surveys briefly how Usque used *SY* throughout the *Consolation*’s Second Dialogue to review Hellenistic Jewish History, recording the story of the Septuagint’s creation and the martyrdom tales under Antiochus, e.g. These latter stories were particularly significant, Zeldes remarks, for Jews living under Christian guise as *conversos*, because they dealt with Sabbath observance and the non-eating of pork in the face of gentile pressure. Zeldes sums up the chapter by saying that *SY* “remained the pivotal proof for the superiority of the Jewish tenets of faith and rabbinic chronology” for Jewish humanists who had access to myriad sources and were engaged in religiously loaded debates, discussions, and polemics (112–13). This good point, while hardly ground-breaking, finds solid support in the often-brief analyses of this chapter.

Chapter 6 sets out to contextualize the at least two pre-print translations of *SY* into Old Castilian that appeared in the fifteenth century. As factors of context Zeldes mentions the distinction between Italian and Spanish renaissance humanism, the latter of which valued accurate transmission of content over style and eloquence;¹⁵ debates about the value of study Hebrew, which were current in Renaissance Italy¹⁶ but apparently

¹² So speculates Martin A. Cohen, trans., *Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1965).

¹³ Usque switched identities several times. He resumed a Jewish identity before coming to Italy at one point, but was caught and imprisoned in Venice in 1548 for having falsely assumed a Christian identity.

¹⁴ Usque also used a Castilian translation of Josephus’ *Jewish War* printed in 1532. All of this is according to Carsten L. Wilke, who annotated and updated Samuel Usque, *Consolation aux tribulations d’Israël*, trans. Lúcia Liba Mucznik et al., intro. Yosef Hayim Yerushalemi (Paris: Chandeigne, 2014).

¹⁵ Witness the criticism of the Castilian converso bishop Alonso de Cartagena (1384–1456), who criticized content errors in Leonardo Bruni’s (1370–1444) translation of Aristotle’s *Ethics* between 1436 and 1439.

¹⁶ In Florence, Leonardo Burni thought the study of Hebrew useless, whereas Gianozzo Manetti defended it.

less-contested in Spain; and increasing prejudice toward Jews in Spain toward the latter end of the fifteenth century. Within this cultural milieu Zeldes approaches “an untitled manuscript housed in the Biblioteca Menéndez Pelayo in Santander (Spain),” once “thought to be a Romance translation of Josephus’ *Antiquities*” but now identified as “a translation of the one of the versions of the *Book of Josippon*” (123). The manuscript lacks the beginning chapters of *SY*, and thus Zeldes suggests the “‘short-cut,’ or key” of finding a passage that only exists in *SY* and not in Josephus’ *Antiquities* for establishing to which version of *SY* this manuscript corresponds. (Here one wonders, however, about the fact that *SY*’s afterlife, like *SY* itself, constitutes a text tradition in which pericopes and chunks of text of various sizes are removed from and inserted into various works, making this ‘short-cut’ inadequate in and of itself.) Zeldes’ “key” is the Maccabean martyrs passage, which is—perhaps problematically—well-known and oft-cited. And indeed, Zeldes notes affinities between the story in this manuscript and in *SY*, but also in Abraham ibn Daud. She eventually concludes that the manuscript could have been based on “an unknown abbreviated version of *Josippon* that circulated in medieval Spain,” sharing features with Mosconi’s edition and the old manuscript (Redaction C) owned by Ibn Daud (126). One wonders.

In any case, Zeldes imputes the production of said manuscript to the rare-book bibliophilia that seized early- and mid-fifteenth century Spanish courtiers, encouraged by figures like King Juan II (1405–1454) and exacerbated by Iberian world’s “warlike society” that “sought out edifying tales of war and heroism” (127). The other *SY* translation that Zeldes discusses appeared in fifteenth-century Sicily, a locale with plenty of Iberian immigrants. Or, at least, it seems to have appeared. No Castilian manuscript exists, but rather a contract from November 7, 1475 between Master Petrus of Toledo and Busacca Spagnolu. The contract, which Zeldes translates in an appendix to the chapter, specified price, timeline, and mode of translation (“into Latin characters”) from this “book named *Jusifus* written on paper in the Hebrew [language]” (131). The location and nature of this exchange is exceptional, Zeldes avers, as in Italy such translations were usually made by Renaissance scholars themselves, having learned Hebrew.

Chapter 7 discusses how *SY*’s Josephan authorship came to be dismantled in line with the appearance of print editions of the work. One important figure here was Sebastian Münster (1488–1552), who first translated *SY* into Latin in 1541. Münster recognized the differences between *SY* and Josephus’ other works, very well-known throughout all post-ancient centuries, yet maintained that Josephus authored *SY*, accounting for the many objections to that stance in his work. Azariah dei Rossi (1511–1577), and his fellow Jewish scholars from Ferrara, based in part on Münster’s work, also recognize problems in *portions of SY*, which were critiqued using non-Jewish sources. Dei Rossi knew and preferred other versions of Josephus’ works in his *Me’or Enayim*, issues which have been discussed by Joanna Weinberg (and Anthony Grafton) and Daniel Stein Kokin.¹⁷ This section largely summarizes that work. Eventually, Zeldes turns to Joseph

¹⁷ See Joanna Weinberg, “Early Modern Jewish Readers of Josephus,” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 23.3 (2016): 275–89, at 276; Anthony Grafton and Joanna Weinberg, *I Have Always Loved the*

Justus Scaliger (1540–1609), who is well-known to have highlighted errors in *SY* and thereby ‘exposed’ it as an anachronistic work of an ‘impostor.’ When Nicholas Serarius published his work on the three Jewish sects in 1604, Scaliger responded in his scathing *Elenchus trihaeresii Nicolai Serarii*, which attacked Serarius’ linguistic abilities and took aim at Münster’s edition of *SY*. Amidst his storm of criticisms, Scaliger labeled *SY* the “book of Pseudogorionides” and the product of a forger. Zeldes here rightly points out Scaliger’s failure to recognize “the possibility of a medieval Hebrew adaptation that was never meant to ‘pose’ as an authentic work,” and she highlights his recognition of “the intrinsic value of *Josippon* for disseminating important parts of Jewish history” (150). And all of this, Zeldes reminds us, was “accidental,” inasmuch as Scaliger came upon *SY* amidst arguments about Jewish sects and how they related to Catholic–Protestant conflicts. Interestingly, it was Scaliger’s contemporary and correspondent Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614), the Calvinist from Geneva, who recognized that *SY* was neither translation nor fake but “a book written by a different author” (151). Casaubon’s studies and impartial translation of the Hebrew were never published, but his work exists in the margins of his copy of Münster’s edition, now housed at the British Library. In this work he at times corrects Scaliger, but eventually reiterated the latter’s argument in his 1614 *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes*, earning himself virtual anonymity and Scaliger perpetual fame for ‘exposing’ *SY*’s author as a contemporary French Jew (a view espoused later by Jacques Basnage de Beauval [1653–1723]).

Concluding this final chapter, Zeldes disagrees with Flusser’s suggestion that the printed editions of *SY* hid the fact of the author’s non-equivalence with Josephus, a fact inherent in the manuscripts. Zeldes thinks it doubtful “that, by reading manuscripts Münster, Scaliger, Casaubon, or even De Rossi, would have been able to determine that *Josippon* was a medieval adaptation and translation of Josephus” (153). I think we can split the difference here. Surely Flusser is right that the print culture that framed *SY*’s humanist criticism rendered these “particularly unfortunate circumstances,” inasmuch as these editions proffered a very Josephan identity of *SY*’s author. And I think that Zeldes is right in suggesting that these critical scholars likely *would not* have rightly parsed *SY* from Josephus even had they seen manuscripts. But they certainly *could have* done with the manuscripts in a way they could hardly have with the many amended print editions. The problem, as so often, as even occurs today, is one of scholarly attention or inattention to the actual contents of *SY*’s long, and little-examined, text. One thing Zeldes’ study shows is that, for hundreds and hundreds of years, readers of *SY* have paid far, far more attention to the first handful of chapters than to the later bulk of the work.

In her conclusion to the book, Zeldes points out that “even twentieth-century scholarship failed to change the equation of Josephus = *Josippon* in traditional circles”

Holy Tongue: Isaac Casaubon, the Jews, and a Forgotten Chapter in Renaissance Scholarship (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2011); and Daniel Stein Kokin, “Pierfrancesco Giambullari and Azariah de Rossi: A Note on the Hebrew Discourse of *Me’or Enayim* Chapter 57,” *REJ* 170 (2011): 285–91. In addition, Anthony Grafton has a significant bibliography, represented in Zeldes’ footnotes, that is pertinent to the material treated across this chapter.

(162). Work by Yitzhak Baer, David Flusser, and Ariel Toaff in the 1960s did not prevent Hayim Hominer from publishing a new edition in 1978 that insisted upon SY's Josephan authorship. This leads Zeldes into an interesting personal anecdote and a very important point: popular and scholarly approaches to SY even today witness a "wide chasm" between them (163), and one thing this book shows is the evolution of that chasm within the Renaissance. Such broader points represent the value of this work, whose textual analyses are often done in passing in favor of a more historical approach that uses a smattering of data-points to proffer epochal claims. The reader of this book will find a valuable and usually up-to-date history of SY's Renaissance fortunes, of greater interest to the Renaissance specialist than to the scholar of SY itself. Nevertheless, Zeldes' work paves the way for many future studies, and must be consulted by scholars who are going to talk about SY as a text whose identity, contents, and valence was bandied about in humanist discourse by Jews and Christians alike.