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P R E F A C E

Each of the articles collected in this volume illustrates some stage of the development of the types of Hebrew narrative prose in its different periods, from biblical literature through the talmudic-midrashic and medieval eras till modern times. A collection of essays and papers of this kind, by authors who specialize in a variety of fields and employ widely different methods of research, cannot reflect all the relevant aspects of the subject completely and in equal measure; undoubtedly, some important works and authors, possibly even entire stages in the history of Hebrew narrative art, are not adequately represented. Even so, the twelve articles collected here — the great majority of which were written by members, senior or junior, of the faculty of the Department of Hebrew Literature of The University — present a multi-colored picture of narrative art in Hebrew literature throughout the ages.

The individual papers are not uniform either in length or in their methodological approach. Some concentrate on a problem of limited scope in poetics; others outline the development of some genre; some deal with one author, or one work, only. They offer a wide range of subjects: the problem of presentation of synchronous sets of events in biblical stories is examined; narrative elements in homilies are analyzed as regards their function, style and form. The Middle Ages are represented by a comparison of the story of Moses in Ethiopia in its late, fully developed form to its rudimentary versions in antiquity, and by an analysis of the genre of the Maqama in its various forms. Motifs derived from midrashic literature are presented as they appear in a late medieval tale. One paper investigates aesthetic and structural problem of the folk-tale, which still continues to exist as a living tradition among oriental Jews to this day. The nineteenth century is represented both by the pious-anecdotal story and by the novel of enlightenment literature. From among twentieth century authors Berdyczewski, Brenner and Jacob Steinberg are discussed. Hebrew narrative prose, which continues from earliest antiquity to modern times, is seen to change its forms and style in accordance with the changing spiritual climate of each period in Hebrew culture and with the degree and type of its poetic consciousness.