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Torah Through Time: Understanding Bible Commentary from the Rabbinic Period to Modern Times

Shai Cherry

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Thanks to these generous donors for making the publication of this book possible: Kinney Zalesne and Scott Siff.

Every commentator, from the classical rabbi to the modern-day scholar, has brought his or her own worldview, with all of its assumptions, to bear on the reading of holy text. This relationship between the text itself and the reader's interpretation is the subject of Torah Through Time.

Shai Cherry traces the development of Jewish Bible commentary through three pivotal periods in Jewish history: the rabbinic, medieval, and modern periods. The result is a fascinating and accessible guide to how some of the world's leading Jewish commentators read the Bible.

Torah Through Time focuses on specific narrative sections of the Torah: the creation of humanity, the rivalry between Cain and Abel, Korah’s rebellion, the claim of the daughters of Zelophechad, and legal matters concerning Hebrew slavery. Cherry closely examines several different commentaries for each of these source texts, and in so doing he analyzes how each commentator resolves questions raised by the texts and asks if and how the commentator’s own historical frame of reference—his own time and place—contributes to the resolution. A chart at the end of each chapter provides a visual summary that helps the reader understand the many different elements at play.

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