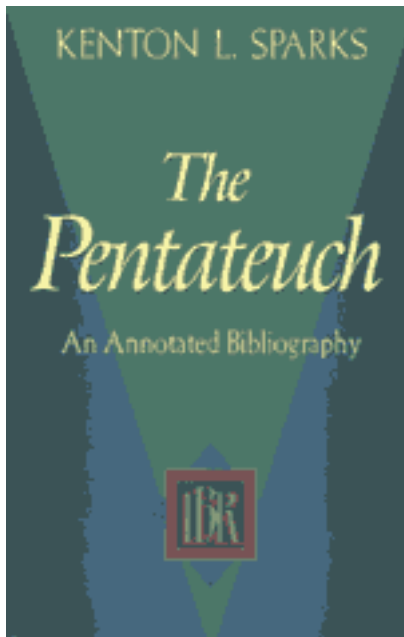


RBL 11/2003



**Sparks, Kenton L.**

***The Pentateuch: An Annotated Bibliography***

IBR Bibliographies 1

Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002. Pp. 160. Paper. \$16.99.  
ISBN 080102398X.

Amos Frisch  
Bar-Ilan University  
Ramat-Gan 52900 Israel

Assembled in this useful and pleasant-looking booklet are more than seven hundred titles (of both books and articles, intermixed) whose main subject is the Torah in general, one of its five books, or part of one of them. Each title (with the exception of nos. 1 and 415) is accompanied by an abstract of about four lines on the average. The great majority of titles are studies in English, but there are also a few in German. In such cases considerable effort has been made to cite an English translation, if at all available (e.g., G. von Rad, no. 25; M. Noth, no. 26; R. Rendtorff, no. 33). There are also a few articles in French and one (no. 206) in Hebrew, an article by Z. Weisman in *Zion*; however, the fact that the article is in Hebrew is nowhere mentioned.

What should be included in a bibliography of this kind? Given the multitude of publications in the field, selection is of course a serious problem. Sparks explains his considerations as follows: “First and foremost I have included ‘classic’ works that have profoundly shaped present readings of the Pentateuch. . . . Second . . . recent works that are likely to give readers the most up-to-date picture of the debate. Third, I have attempted to provide breadth of subject matter” (12). A perusal of the bibliography indeed finds “classical” works, published many decades ago, alongside more modern scholarship, some even from the first two years of the twenty-first century.

The meticulously arranged material is divided into chapters and sections. The ten chapter headings are as follows: “Texts and Versions”; “Introductory Works”; “Composition, Authorship, and Context”; “Genesis”; “Prolegomena to Exodus–Deuteronomy”; “Exodus”; “Leviticus”; “Numbers”; “Deuteronomy”; “Other Studies.” Each of these chapters (except the first and last) is divided into sections, and in some cases there is a further subdivision. The reader is thus led to more specialized subjects and may easily find what one is looking for.

The author has put considerable effort into providing the reader with useful information. Each chapter or section is preceded by a brief introduction to its subject, giving the reader a preliminary account and also directing him or her to further relevant sections for further information. This attention to the *general* features of the subject is combined with further treatment of *details* in the abstracts of the various items: terminological clarifications, examples, references to other studies. The bibliography is undoubtedly user-friendly.

A few comments are in order with regard to some details. At the end of the introduction the author declares that he has not included commentaries (to my mind, a fully justified decision). However, Greenberg’s *Understanding Exodus* (no. 443) is actually a commentary on the book of Exodus.

The proper location for an article is sometimes dubious. For example, T. D. Alexander’s article “The Composition of the Sinai Narrative in Exodus xix 1–xxiv 11” (no. 486) is listed in the subsection “The Book of the Covenant” but to my mind should more appropriately be placed in the previous subsection, “Composition and Interpretation,” of the section “The Sinai Pericope: Exodus 19–24.”

Another problem is the proper order of items in each chapter/section. While they are ostensibly listed in chronological order, there sometimes seem to be discrepancies, for unclear reasons. (1) The first six items in chapter 1 (“Texts and Versions”) are in chronological order, beginning in 1923 and ending with a series of books published in 1990–1998. The seventh and last item, however, was published in 1985 (so that it should have been listed between nos. 3 and 4). (2) Section 5.4 (“The History and Development of Israel’s Priesthood”) includes M. A. Cohen’s article “The Shilonite Priesthood,” published in 1965, as no. 415, but the previous item was published in 1973, and the next in 1977.

One article appears twice: N. Zohar’s article in *JBL* 107 (1988) is listed as both no. 370 and no. 530, with two different abstracts!

Cross-references create important links between different titles. Here, too, some improvement is possible. For example, no. 57 lists two articles by G. I. Davies that evaluate some of Erhard Blum's German publications. At this point (in the abstract to no. 57) we find references to two of Blum's studies, nos. 38 and 47. However, the reader encounters these items in reverse order; that is, first reading the abstracts of Blum's works, one finds no indication of the relevance of no. 57: the abstract to no. 38 makes no mention at all of Davis's papers, while no. 47 refers only to the first, and this too without providing its serial number in the present bibliography (as if it had not been included).

In the case of different articles in the same collection, the full details of the collection are repeated each time in full. This is particularly prominent on page 105 with regard to the consecutive items nos. 459 and 460, where there are four repeated lines. Similarly, nos. 518 and 545 are articles from *Reading Leviticus*, edited by J. F. A. Sawyer; both provided the full details of that volume, which was already listed itself as no. 515. I would have preferred to provide the full details of the collection only once, referring in other items (individual articles) to the collection by its serial number in the bibliography. Nevertheless, the author's intention—to enable readers to consult each item on its own, without having to turn to other pages—is understandable.

In sum, despite a few minor reservations, the author has surely provided a useful and easy-to-use bibliography, designed to provide the reader—whether professional scholar or intelligent layperson—with basic orientation in regard to the main topics dealt with in connection with the Torah, with attention paid to new research as well. The author has undoubtedly accomplished the task he set himself.