This comparative study traces Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scriptural interpretation from antiquity to modernity, with special emphasis on the pivotal medieval period. It focuses on three areas: responses in the different faith traditions to tensions created by the need to transplant scriptures into new cultural and linguistic contexts; changing conceptions of the literal sense and its importance vis-à-vis non-literal senses, such as the figurative, spiritual, and midrashic; and ways in which classical rhetoric and poetics informed—or were resisted in—interpretation. Concentrating on points of intersection, the authors bring to light previously hidden aspects of methods and approaches in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This volume opens new avenues for interdisciplinary analysis and will benefit scholars and students of biblical studies, religious studies, medieval studies, Islamic studies, Jewish studies, comparative religions, and theory of interpretation.

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INTERPRETING SCRIPTURES
IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY
AND ISLAM

Overlapping Inquiries

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_Mordechai Z. Cohen_

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This volume is the result of the collaborative research of a fourteen-member team of scholars – each represented within its pages – in a project entitled “Encountering Scripture in Overlapping Cultures: Early Jewish, Christian and Muslim Strategies of Reading and Their Contemporary Implications.” First conceived in 2007, the project was designed initially by Mordechai Cohen and Jon Whitman, soon joined by Adele Berlin and Meir Bar-Asher. Eventually, the full team crystallized and convened as a research group directed by Mordechai Cohen and Meir Bar-Asher at the Israel Institute for Advanced Studies (IIAS) in Jerusalem from September 2010 until February 2011. We wish to acknowledge the IIAS, its then director Eliezer Rabinovici, associate director Lea Prawer, and the entire IIAS staff for supporting the research group, providing the uniquely suited setting for its collaborative inter-disciplinary scholarly activity. Special thanks to Netta Hazan, our dedicated research assistant, who ably and cheerfully facilitated the work of our group members during their stay in Jerusalem.

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A special follow-up conference hosted by the IIAS in Jerusalem in July 2012, attended by a large part of the group, enabled us to integrate the chapters of this volume into a cohesive study that demonstrates the importance of investigating the interpretation of scriptures in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam comparatively. We are particularly grateful to Rita Copeland for the central role she played in planning and shaping the sessions of the conference, which contributed to its success.
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Mordechai Cohen and Adele Berlin
Jerusalem, August 2014
Abbreviations

1–2 Chr = 1–2 Chronicles
1–2 Cor = 1–2 Corinthians
1–2 Kgs = 1–2 Kings
1–2 Sam = 1–2 Samuel
Aen. = Aeneid
Ar. = Arabic
b. = Babylonian Talmud
c. = circa
Dan = Daniel
Deut = Deuteronomy
DSD = Dead Sea Discoveries
Exod = Exodus
Gal = Galatians
Gen = Genesis
Heb. = Hebrew
Hos = Hosea
Isa = Isaiah

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List of abbreviations

j. = Jerusalem Talmud
JAOS = Journal of the American Oriental Society
Jer = Jeremiah
JQR = Jewish Quarterly Review
Jub. = Jubilees
Judg = Judges
Lev = Leviticus
m. = Mishnah
Matt = Matthew
MT = Masoretic Text
Num = Numbers
Prov = Proverbs
Ps = Psalms
Q. = Qur’an
Rom = Romans
Song = Song of Songs
s.v. = sub verbo
t. = Tosefta
Zech = Zechariah