Fifteen essays, all previously published between 1971 and 1999, are here collected. The disparate essays are held together by an overarching methodological approach: “it consists of an attempt at integrating the various facets of Biblical research with each other: textual criticism, Semitic philology, history of composition, form criticism and history of tradition, exegesis, history of legal institutions, and . . . history of religion” (xiii). Many of the essays appear here in English for the first time.

The specific contents of the volume are as follows: (1) “The Book of Deuteronomy: A Summary” (1–14); (2) “The Monotheistic Argumentation in Deuteronomy 4:32–40: Contents, Composition and Text” (15–24); (3) “Deuteronomy 5:28–6:1: Composition and Text in the Light of Deuteronomic Style and Three Tefillin from Qumran (4Q 128, 129, 137)” (35–37); (4) “Qumranic Paraphrases, the Greek Deuteronomy and the Late History of the Biblical שׁושַׁנִים” (37–46); (5) “The End of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:43)” (47–54); (6) “The Arrangement of the Laws in Deuteronomy” (55–78); (7) “The Tenth Commandment in the Light of Four Deuteronomic Laws” (79–96); (8) “The Strata of the Law about the Centralization of Worship in Deuteronomy and the History of the Deuteronomic Movement” (97–102); (9) “The Organization of the Judiciary in Deuteronomy” (103–20); (10) “The History of the Cities of Refuge in Biblical Law”
Rofé examines first Deut 19:1–13. He ascribes the text to the Deuteronomic school. “This major author of the Book of Deuteronomy is the one who introduces and, in great measure, also formulates the laws for murderers” (126). The cities that were established as places of refuge were so declared because centralized worship in Jerusalem made them necessary. Prior to this, the sacred places and altars in various locations sufficed for refuge. This knowledge assists us in dating the establishment of the cities of refuge after the time when the cult was centralized in Jerusalem. Further, this helps us understand the Deuteronomistic law as “novellae, that is, a composition of innovations which were intended to modify and complement the customary law” (128). Rofé continues by offering other biblical and extrabiblical evidence for viewing Jerusalem as the city of refuge par excellence. The fact that cities outside Jerusalem were needed rests on three words in Deut 19:6: בְּנִיַּיְהוָה. Closed temples in provincial towns make such a distinction necessary. Now the distance is far to the central cultic location, and other havens are made essential.

I would certainly agree with this line of thinking regarding “city of refuge” legislation. However, I would suggest that it is not the period of the “monarchy” that saw this development but the postexilic period itself. It was after the exile that Jerusalem was truly
the only center of worship. The well-known attempt of the Samaritans to build a temple and the opposition of the Jewish leadership to that enterprise are widely known. Before the exile there simply is not sufficient evidence that worship was actually centralized in Jerusalem alone, while after the exile there is archaeological and textual evidence that this was indeed the way things were. Indeed, if the cult was centralized (as the Deuteronomists would have us believe) during the reign of Josiah, why so much wrangling about idolatry by the prophets Jeremiah and even Ezekiel? For idolatry to exist, temples must exist. If temples aside from the Jerusalem temple exist, then it is something of a mistake to insist that worship was centralized.

The remaining sections of Rofé’s essay deal with what he sees as the interrelation between P and D so far as the cities of refuge are concerned. Here the focus is on “the number of the cities, the nature of the judicial processes, the terminology of the sources, and the purpose of the cities of refuge” (133). Comparing the data, Rofé maintains that “D’s three original cities of refuge grew out of the historical reality of seventh-century Judaea” (137). Taking these items in turn, Rofé describes P and D in terms of the number of the cities, the nature of the judicial processes, the terminology used, and the purpose of these cities.

The other essays in the volume are equally interesting and equally well written. Rofé takes his readers down a well-lit path and shows them curiosities that are often overlooked by other passersby. This collection is highly recommended, though its learnedness and meticulous treatment of the various issues involved will be a little more than the casual or general reader will be able to absorb. It is a collection intended for experts.