

BOOK REVIEWS

[Biblical Hebrew Grammar Visualized](#) by Francis I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes. *Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic* 6. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012. xvii + 394 pp., \$64.50, hardcover.

Francis Andersen holds an honorary teaching position at the University of Melbourne, where he teaches in the historical and philosophical studies department. He has published hundreds of articles over the past 60 years on computational linguistics, biblical Hebrew, biblical studies, and theology. A. Dean Forbes has co-authored many articles with Andersen, primarily in the field of computational linguistics.

Biblical Hebrew Grammar Visualized is the sixth title in the “Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic” series. The book, made up of twenty-one chapters, is divided into five parts and includes with seven appendixes.

The first four chapters are primarily introductory material. Chapter one explains the texts the authors used, how they reduced the text, resolved lexical ambiguity, dealt with traditional reference grammars, worked with modern linguistics and discourse analysis, and built the tree diagrams. Chapter two deals with how they broke the text into segments and clauses. Chapter three deals with parts of speech, and chapter four explains phrase markers.

Chapters five and six deal with basic and complex phrases in biblical Hebrew. Chapters seven and eight expand to deal with clauses and clause-like structures.

Chapters nine through seventeen focus on clause immediate constituents (CICs), which are the major parts of a clause. Chapter nine explains classifying CICs, Chapter ten explains the semantic role of CICs, and chapter eleven discusses composition, incidence, and ordering of CICs. Chapters twelve through fifteen discuss specific verb corpora and how they are used throughout the Hebrew Bible, including: אָמַר, הָיָה, עָשָׂה, and נָתַן. Chapter sixteen deals with CIC subtypes, and chapter seventeen explains how the authors computed the distance between verb corpora.

Chapters eighteen through twenty-one form something of a conclusion; they “wrap up loose ends” (p. xiv). Eighteen deals with the five quasi-verbals, nineteen explains verbless clauses, twenty discusses non-tree phrase markers (everything to this point has been drawn in a

“tree” diagram), and chapter twenty-one discusses discourse analysis and supra-clausal structures.

The seven appendixes are intended for the specialist; the non-specialist is advised to “skip over material that seems to technical for them” (p. xiv). Ultimately, these appendixes deal with issues the authors did not have space to treat in the chapters of the book. The authors also include an excellent bibliography and an extensive glossary and scripture index that make this a very tempting reference work.

While the book draws no distinct conclusion, the major goal behind the work is to summarize multiple decades of computational linguistic analysis performed by the two authors. The end results are highly complex tree diagrams (with the exception of a few non-tree diagrams; see ch. 20), combined with a great deal of numbers and percentages. Each chapter does not explain grammar; it is expected that the reader is already familiar with Hebrew grammar. Instead, the authors seek to explain their findings in the frequency of word occurrences and word uses. Only rarely will grammar be discussed, and then only if the authors are diverging from the understanding found in standard reference grammars. For a student of biblical Hebrew familiar with other titles in the *Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic* series, this might come as a disappointment. The majority of the information covered is specific to computational analysis and has little application to beginning or intermediate Hebrew. It does, however, put forth a great deal of significant information that would be of significant value to specialists. Thus, the volume should be understood as a specialized reference work, and therefore its most suitable audience would be specialists, not beginning or intermediate students. At times the authors challenge the status quo and argue against the standard reference grammars, and the analysis behind their work makes it difficult to argue with their results. This is a text to be taken seriously, and could potentially change the way certain aspects of the Hebrew language are viewed.

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[*Blood Expiation in Hittite and Biblical Ritual: Origins, Context, and Meaning*](#) by Yitzhaq Feder. Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2011. xii + 309 pp., US \$38.95, softcover.

Yitzhaq Feder is lecturer in Bible and Semitic Languages at University of Haifa. This volume is an extensively revised version of his

doctoral dissertation submitted to Bar-Ilan University in 2009. As its title indicates, this book is about the origins and meaning of the blood ritual. Our author examines the use of blood as a purification ritual to purge the effects of sin and impurity in biblical ritual texts in comparison to their Hittite parallel texts, argues for a historical connection between these two cultures in the Late Bronze Age, and traces the development of relationship between signs of blood rituals and their significances that were transformed in a socio-historical context.

Feder's book consists of two major parts. In the first part (chs. 1–3) Feder discusses the relationship between Hittite and biblical sources regarding blood rites. Chapter 1 analyses several Hittite *zurki* ("blood" in Hittite) and *uzi* ("flesh" in Hittite) ritual texts and differentiates them according to their purposes: to purge the woman's sin (the birth ritual of Panpanikri of Kummanni); to remove evil or a curse from a royal family and a temple by sending off a cow, a female sheep, and a goat (the *Šamuha* ritual); to purify the defilement caused by involuntary contact with impure substances (the ritual of *Walkui*); to purify a defiled temple (the ritual of *Ammihatna*); and to establish a foundation for a new cultic structure (the ritual of foundation); and a cult expansion ritual (the cult expansion ritual) for consecratory purpose. Similar to the first chapter, in his second chapter Feder examines several biblical texts relating to the sin offering (Lev 4–5; Exod 29 and Lev 8; Ezek 43; 45; Lev 13–14; Lev 6; Lev 16) with synchronic and diachronic analysis. The former analysis is based on literary and textual discussions, while the latter analysis is based on source-critical methodology by dividing several source layers (P and H) of each biblical passage. For example, Feder suggests that Lev 16 presents "a complex synthesis of rites" (p. 77) by providing three different source layers (P₁, P₂, and H) each of which represents a distinct phase of the blood ritual development. According to him, P precedes H; the characteristic of P primarily focuses on personal level expiation as the earliest literary strata, while that of H on purification of sancta from impurity. For our author, therefore, this diachronic analysis is the most essential analytic tool because all the discussions in his book's second part are based on this analysis. In chapter 3, by adopting Malul's methodology, Feder attempts to prove a historical connection between the Hittite and biblical blood rituals in light of two criteria: "the test for coincidence versus uniqueness, and corroboration to prove the flow of ideas between the two cultures" (p. 115). His attempt is quite persuasive and successful in presenting many of the close parallels between the Hittite and biblical blood rituals in terms of uniqueness and corroboration.

The second part (chs. 4–7) discusses how the expiatory use of blood rites was originated and transmitted together with transformation. In

chapter 4, adopting L. S. Vyogotsky's evolutionary acquisition theory of word meaning in children, Feder suggests that the meaning of signs is gradually motivated from concrete to abstract by a socio-historical context and further offers that as abstractness or arbitrariness between a sign and its meaning grows, a new interpretation process is to be introduced into the growing abstractness to clarify the original meaning of the sign. He comments, "As the arbitrariness of the connection between sign and meaning rises, so does the sign's flexibility, allowing multiple uses and interpretations" (p. 164). Feder applies this evolutionary assumption to the biblical and Hittite blood rituals in chapters 5 and 6, respectively. In chapter 5, our author proposes that the concept of the Hebrew word כָּפַר developed from propitiation (from "appeasing a superior in a moment of anger or judgment" to "compensating bloodguilt") to expiation (from "expiatory offering" in a cultic setting to "expiation for sin" later in prophetic, wisdom, and psalmic literature; p. 195). Similar to chapter 5, in chapter 6 Feder offers that the concept of blood in the Hittite *zurki* rituals developed from propitiation (a gift to chthonic deities & a means of compensation) to expiation (an agent of purification/consecration; pp. 229–30). In the final chapter, our author discusses the origins, transmission, and transition of the biblical blood ritual. Feder asserts that the blood ritual in the Bible originated from Syrian ritual tradition in the Late Bronze Age, was transmitted through the codification process of P and the reinterpretation process of H, and was later preserved for its legal exegesis in Judaism, while for its allegorical exegesis in Christianity.

Feder's current study on the biblical and Hittite blood ritual is thoroughly detailed, thought-provoking, and convincing. In particular, his argument on the historical connection between the biblical blood ritual and the Hittite *zurki* ritual is superb. Several critical comments, nevertheless, are necessarily in order. First, Feder supports that the concept of blood in the Hittite ritual texts had been changed from propitiation via expiation to consecration, just as that of blood in the biblical rituals. However, all the Hittite ritual texts Feder uses are contemporary, ranging from the fourteenth to thirteenth centuries B.C.E. in the Late Bronze Age. It is hard to believe that the concept and function of blood in the Hittite ritual changed so much in the period of one hundred years. This suggests the possibility that various meanings of blood found in the Hittite ritual texts might coexist. Second, Feder tends to conclude some minor issues without proper explanation. For example, he asserts that purification by means of two birds in the Hittite ritual texts (KUB 9:22+) shows striking similarities with two birds in Lev 14 (p. 132). The biblical text describes that one bird was for slaughter and another bird was for free release after being dipped in the blood of the

slaughtered bird. The Hittite ritual texts, however, requires that two birds were for slaughter: one as a sacrifice for the blood rite, and another as an offering to chthonic deities. There is no textual evidence supporting that the second bird for release in Lev 14 was an offering to a chthonic deity. Moreover, the part of KUB 9:22 Ha II 18 which refers to “one large bird to the path” is fragmentary. As another example, regarding the use of blood in Christianity, Feder comments, “Christian allegorical exegesis reflected the Christian view that this ritual was ultimately to be superseded in a non-sacrificial spiritual form” (p. 259). This allegorical exegesis on the blood ritual, however, was not considered a dominant view in Christianity, but only by a few church fathers, like Origen. Finally, there are quite a few typographical errors, such as incorrect English and Hebrew spellings (e.g., p. 40; p. 262; p. 270) and misuses of capitalization (e.g., p. 56; p. 270). It is a little surprising to observe that the headings of this book do not follow *The SBL Handbook of Style* even though SBL publishes it.

In spite of some concerns, Feder’s book can be considered a tour de force in that it deals with such a complicated but important issue of the biblical blood ritual in comparison to its Hittite parallels with a great deal of scrutiny and precision. Those who are interested in the meaning and the origins of the biblical blood rituals will benefit the most.

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[Human Consciousness of God in the Book of Job: A Theological and Psychological Commentary](#) by Jeffrey Boss. New York: T & T Clark, 2010. xii + 289 pp., US \$70.00, hardcover.

Jeffrey Boss retired from the post of Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Bristol University. His training and early research was in physiology, cell biology, and the history of medicine and science. Beginning in the 1980s his personal research focused on a psychological interpretation of the book of Job. This book is the culmination of his personal research.

A traditional interpretation of the book of Job focuses on the nature of suffering and on offering an answer on why *all* humans suffer. Boss affirms the question of suffering as playing a role in the development of the book. However, his primary focus is on the developing psychological relationship between Job and God, a unique approach among previous works on the book of Job. Boss bases his commentary and textual work on the Masoretic Text of Job. A highlight

of the book is the interaction with the history of interpretation—especially that of rabbinic sources—often overlooked by Evangelicals.

Boss maintains that the book of Job, in its current form, should be read as a single narrative (p. xi). Thus, in the narrative a reader can follow a change in Job's psychological understanding of God. In the process, Job's introduction to the *character* of wisdom leads to this change, at least in part. Boss also suggests that a reader may also see "oneself as traveling Job's journey with him" which allows "the reader to be changed or enriched by the experience" (p. xi). Boss has a three-fold intention in each part of the textual commentary: to highlight narrative, psychology, and theology.

After an introduction the remainder of the book is divided into eight parts, "A" through "G" specifically deal with the text of Job with a final part offering Boss's conclusion. Each of the text-focused parts ends with a three-part conclusion. These three conclusions are the place where Boss presents his three-fold focus. In the narrative section he maintains the connection with the bigger picture of the book. In the psychology section Boss comments on how the character of Job develops psychologically. In the theology section he highlights how God is presented in that particular section of Job. In the final part, Boss offers six conclusions. In these conclusions he highlights the narrative aspect of the book, Job's consciousness of God, two aspects of wisdom, the supernatural world, the genre of hero stories, and the modern relevance of Job.

Boss's approach raises the question of potential problems one may face by reading Job as a unified narrative. Reading Job as a unified narrative is beneficial; however, one must be careful not to take the narrator's comments on statements (character?) of Job in the beginning of the book (Job 1:22; 2:10) and project that assessment on the rest of the book. Likewise one must be careful not to retroject God's final comment (Job 42:7) onto everything Job said in the book. Old Testament narratives do not necessarily work this way. A brief look at how Boss understands these statements will help in making an assessment of the unified narrative of the book and the psychological development of Job.

Boss suggests that the narrator's comments in both 1:22 and 2:10 are a reflection of Job's "moral development, in spirit as well as deeds" (p. 32). In his comments on Job 1:22, Boss notes that "Job is steadfast in fearing God" and "in his integrity he holds fast to his faith" (p. 28). One would not doubt that this is the purpose of the narrator's comments. The question is: does Job maintain this integrity and fear of God in all of his subsequent speeches? I am of the opinion that Job *risks* calling the trustworthiness and integrity of God into account in many of his speeches in the following chapters, thus questioning his own faith. Job's

moral development remains steadfast but his deeds, represented in his speeches, are a different matter.

Turning to Job 42:7, Boss is somewhat unclear as to how he understands this verse in relation to a narrative reading. In his comments on 42:7 he seems to be only referring to Job's statement in 42:2–6 considering he states that Job said "little about God, but much about himself in relation to God . . ." (p. 219). Is God referring to all of Job's speeches or only to the final statements? In the end it seems that Boss would agree that in 42:7 God is only referring to Job's final statements. From a psychological perspective God's affirmation of Job's reflection indicates an encounter with wisdom. Thus, in the end Job "gains a new and fuller understanding of God and of himself" (p. 222). Boss could have made his argument of a psychological development of the character of Job stronger had he focused on the relationship of the narrator's and God's comments at the beginning and end of the book.

Boss does well, as opposed to many modern commentaries, to emphasize the role of the character of wisdom in the book. I prefer to translate Job 42:6 as "I recant [my words] and am comforted concerning dust and ashes." That is, Job recants for past life (possibly his words/deeds) and is comforted that he is a human and God is God. Boss suggests that the verse is "neither groveling nor repentance for a particular error, but turning away from a past life for something new" (p. 214). In his psychological conclusion he notes, "Job is inducted into the mystery of the divine wisdom in nature" (p. 214). Thus, it is Job's gaining of wisdom through the entire story that leads God to make his assessment in 42:7.

Boss's work has some flaws, but the strengths outweigh the flaws. Reading Job as a narrative unity allows the reader to be drawn into the drama of the story and feel the anguish and real life questions as the main character raises them. Boss does a fine job in helping the reader be drawn into the mind of Job as he struggles through his *journey*. Thus, he accomplishes his goal of having the reader travel the *journey* with Job. All too often readers of the Bible think they are familiar with any particular story. Boss's commentary is unique in many ways. I suggest this commentary for any who have become overly familiar with the struggles of Job. The work is well written, easy to read, and will without a doubt cause the reader to slow down and experience the book as a participant and not merely a reader.

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Isaiah 40–55 by R. Reed Lessing. Concordia Commentary. Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 2011. lii + 737 pp., US \$49.99, hardcover.

Reed Lessing, professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Seminary, has written an “intentionally Christological” commentary on Isa 40–55. He states in the introduction that “this commentary joyfully sees the prophet’s promises fulfilled and consummated in Jesus Christ” (p. 5). The commentary succeeds in this goal, drawing on rich exegetical observations to demonstrate that the ultimate suffering servant anticipated by Isaiah is Jesus.

Lessing deals with introductory matters in a one-hundred-page introduction. With respect to the authorship of these chapters, he accepts the traditional view that prophet Isaiah is the author of the whole book that bears his name. He points out that Isa 41:21–24 states that the litmus test for a true God is a true prediction of the future (p. 17). Isaiah then proceeds to name Cyrus as the one who will allow Judah to leave Babylon, an accurate prediction only if it is made in the eighth century B.C.E. If this was written after Cyrus had already allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem, then the writer’s claim is moot. He also treats chapters 40–55 as a unit rather than a collection of speeches from various sources, calling the arguments against the unity of Isaiah “rubbish” (p. 16).

Lessing attempts to fit Isa 40–55 into the context of Hezekiah’s reign. He traces several connections between Hezekiah’s prayer in Isa 37:15–20 and Isa 40–55, primarily the contrast between idols as merely wood and stone and the true God of Israel. In addition, Hezekiah’s prayer concludes with the hope that the whole world would know that Yahweh is God alone, another primary theme of Isa 40–55. Lessing traces a number of close connections between chapters 39 and 40, indicating that a break at this point disrupts the original flow of the book.

The introduction summarizes the theology of Isaiah 40–55 as focusing on the nature of Yahweh. The Lord is unlike any other god: invisible, yet he is described in human terms throughout the book of Isaiah. For Lessing, it is important that God is both transcendent and immanent because it is Yahweh himself suffers in Isa 40–55. This suffering is ultimately embodied in the Servant: “To save people in pain and facing death, God comes in the person of his servant to suffer, die, and to rise again” (p. 58). With this incarnational view in mind, it is clear for Lessing that the servant is Jesus. His exegesis of the suffering servant pericope (Isa 52:13–53:12) is a prime example of this explicitly Christian reading of the Hebrew prophet.

In the final section of his introduction Lessing covers intertextuality in Isaiah (pp. 90–99). He points out that the way that

earlier texts saturate Isa 40–55 is unique in the Hebrew Bible. Yet this is not slavish quotation since Isaiah reapplies “previous ideas in stunning and creative ways” (p. 94). As is often observed, the chief example of this creative use of texts is Isaiah’s “new exodus” theme. Since Lessing is committed to an early date for this prophecy, the return under Cyrus does not wholly fulfill the prediction of a new exodus. The ultimate fulfillment of this pervasive theme in Isa 40–55 is the work of Christ in his incarnation and vicarious suffering (p. 98). What is missing in his discussion is the possibility of intertextual echoes between Isa 1–34 and 40–55, but this is the result of his view that the whole book was written by the prophet Isaiah.

Each section of the commentary begins with a fresh translation of the text of Isaiah followed by a section titled “Textual Notes.” This exegetical section includes detailed lexical and syntactical observations on the Hebrew text of Isaiah. Even though this section is quite detailed, it is not overly technical. Lessing is committed to the Masoretic text, never suggesting repointing or emending the text. He does not make use of the Dead Sea Scrolls as much as might have been expected, although there is some interaction in his treatment of Isa 52:13–53:12.

Following the Textual Notes, Lessing offers a commentary on the text that draws on the insights from his exegesis. He proceeds through the sub-sections of each unit, commenting briefly on each verse. His comments are concerned with Isaiah’s overarching themes in not only in chapters 40–55, but also for the whole book. Lessing concludes each section with a brief theological reflection connecting the text of Isaiah with the rest of the Bible. These reflections are often Christological, especially when treating the Servant Songs. Given the theological commitments of the Concordia series, it is not surprising that Luther appears often in these reflections.

Marginalia—cross-references placed in the margins and indicated by a raised letter in the text—are an additional feature of the Concordia Commentary series, although these conventions are not always clear or helpful. The commentary series uses a system of icons to indicate some theme in Christian theology. Some of these themes are general (worship, hope), but others are very specific and not particularly prominent in Isaiah (Baptism, Lord’s Supper). These icons are not labeled and there is no index provided, making it impossible to trace a theme throughout the commentary.

Because of the detailed exegetical comments on the Hebrew Bible, this commentary will appeal to the scholar, but will be most useful for the pastor preparing to preach on these important chapters of the

Hebrew Bible. Lessing achieves his goal “to equip God’s servants for the great task of preaching and teaching Isaiah 40–55” (p. 11).

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[*Key Questions about Christian Faith: Old Testament Answers*](#) by John Goldingay. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010. ix + 368 pp., US \$24.99, softcover.

Key Questions about Christian Faith: Old Testament Answers was written by Dr. John Goldingay, David Allan Hubbard Professor of Old Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California and an ordained minister in the Episcopal Church. While many of the articles collected in *Questions about Christian Faith* have appeared earlier, they have been revised and furnished with an index of modern authors and an index of ancient sources. In this volume, Goldingay addresses twenty five questions stemming from a theological interpretation of the First Testament (a unique title by which the author designates the Hebrew Bible or Tanak). In Goldingay’s words, “Sometimes I write because there is a question that nags at me, sometimes because there is a question that nags at other people. This book is a collection of answers to questions of both kinds about the Old Testament and the way it interacts with Christian faith and life” (preface, page number not indicated).

Let me first start off with a critical remark concerning the structure of this volume. The questions on a wide range of issues lack a thematic division that would help the reader to navigate more easily through this book. In order to facilitate their reading, the questions could be divided into two possible categories: (1) the God of Israel and his universal providence; (2) miscellaneous theological issues of interest to Christians today. The following questions fall under the first category: Who is God? How do God’s love and God’s wrath relate to each other? Does God have surprises? Was the Holy Spirit active in First Testament times? Is God in the city? Does God care about animals? Accordingly, the remainder of the questions pertain to the second category: What does it mean to be human? Can we make sense of death and suffering? What is sin? What is the people of God? What is a covenant? What is the meaning of sacrifice? Why circumcision? Should I tithe net or gross? How does prayer work? What is Israel’s place in God’s purpose? Is election fair? What is the relationship between creation and salvation? How does the First Testament look at other religions? Is leadership

biblical? What is a family? What does the Bible say about women and men? What might the Song of Songs do for people? How should we think about same-sex relationships?

The reader will find the majority of these articles interesting and illuminating. In this review, I will feature two articles which offer some new perspectives on old questions. In an article titled “Why Circumcision?” (pp. 150–160), Goldingay suggests that the circumcision stories in the First Testament “point to the disciplining of procreation, of sexual activity itself, and of masculinity” (p. 153). Particularly, Goldingay considers this sign of the covenant with Abraham and his offspring as a disciplining procreation mechanism (Gen 17:9–14). In addition, he argues that the circumcision story of Exod 4:24–26 aims to discipline machismo or manliness. Goldingay offers a new perspective on this enigmatic story: “As Yahweh had once taken on the ‘old’ Jacob, so now Yahweh takes on the ‘old’ Moses, yet again in such a way as not to overwhelm him by divine firepower. ‘Yahweh tried to kill him’: what does that say about Moses’ will to live, Moses’ machismo? But the old Moses must die and a Moses under Yahweh’s control be born. If he will not agree to that, his vicarious circumcision by Zipporah will symbolize it” (p. 157). The same plausible interpretation is applied to the circumcision event recorded in Josh 5:2–9. Goldingay provides not just a fresh study of this rite in the Genesis–Joshua, but supplements it with a study on the metaphoric circumcision of the heart in Hebrew prophecy. This rather symbolic approach to the rite of circumcision in the remainder of the First Testament owes to the interpretation “that it is the males who embody spiritual and mental unfitness to belong to the people of promise” (p. 159).

The second essay reviewed here is “What is Israel’s Place in God’s Purpose?” (pp. 190–210). In this article, a combination of four previously published articles, Goldingay focuses on Israel’s place as God’s people from an evangelical position. This biblical discussion is divided into four interwoven parts: (1) the present state of Jewish people and their future conversion to Christ; (2) the Jewish claim to Israel as their national homeland; (3) the level of Christian support of the State of Israel; and (4) the tension between the present and future of Israel. Overall, this paper aims to offer a balanced perspective on Israel as the chosen people throughout the history of salvation and the Jewish-Zionist claim to the land of Israel. It is not surprising that the current geopolitical events in the Middle East loom over the subject. Nevertheless, Goldingay rejects replacement/supersession theology as an erroneous doctrine. At the same time, he does not side with “two-covenant” theology. Goldingay’s exegetical treatment of Rom 9–11 and of other biblical texts provides solid grounds for supporting Israel and praying for the peace of

Jerusalem. However, his interpretation of Isa 2:1–5 is unconvincing. Goldingay says that “if the New Testament has a concept of a new Israel, while not using that expression, the New Israel is that body that comprises the Jewish people as a whole plus Gentiles who in Christ become adopted children of Abraham, a vision that corresponds to the one in Isa 2” (p. 193). It is not so obvious that this Isaianic oracle corresponds to a universal vision of peace between Israel and the Church. Rather than pointing to the unity of Israel and the Church, this is an eschatological vision of the Gentile nations worshipping the God of Israel in the future Jerusalemite temple (cf. Zech 8:23).

To sum up, *Key Questions about Christian Faith: Old Testament Answers* is a valuable contribution to the field of evangelical Hebrew Bible hermeneutics. Pastors and lay persons alike will find this book helpful for their Christian formation and ministry. I warmly recommend this handy companion as a perfect guidebook for biblical studies and an effective teaching aid to be widely implemented in seminaries and schools of theology.

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[*The Message of Kings: God Is Present*](#) by John W. Olley. BSTOTS. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011. 378 pp., US \$20.00, softcover.

John Olley lectured and served in a number of academic positions at Vose Seminary in Australia until he retired in 2009. He has also written a monograph on Isaiah and a commentary on the Greek version of Ezekiel, as well as many scholarly articles on the Old Testament and other theological subjects. He brings all this knowledge to bear in this volume whose editors seek a book that is readable and related to contemporary life. It is not meant to be a commentary.

While *The Message of Kings* is not meant to be a commentary, it does share some similarities with one as it moves methodically through 1 and 2 Kings. Olley has written a book that is quite philological and may send some pastors scrambling to their lexicon. There is no thesis *per se*, but he does stress the part played by God throughout Kings. He elucidates the various pericopes of 1 and 2 Kings with great attention to biblical narrative and other literary features such as chiasm. He also highlights how literary patterns revolve around the succession of kings and the fulfillment of the Word of God through the prophets. He

organizes much of his material around kings and prophets. He artfully breaks the book into six major sections and twenty-two minor sections, which helps to give the reader a better sense of the flow of the narrative as opposed to relying on chapter breaks. He ably meets his goal of being “sensitive to how the various passages address the exilic situation” (p. 19).

Olley singles out three kings as unparalleled: Solomon for his wisdom and wealth, Hezekiah for his trust, and Josiah for his reforms. A strength of this book is Olley’s refusal to oversimplify this material. While these kings all have heroic aspects to them, there is also reason to have doubts about them. He argues that by placing Pharaoh’s daughter at the chiasmic center of the Solomon story (1 Kgs 1:1–11:40), “Solomon falls short of being the ideal king of Deuteronomy 17:14–20” (p. 62). The Hezekiah narrative is a “burst of light” (p. 317) with a cluster of verbs synonymous with “trusting,” but the Hezekiah narrative ends “with his turning to alliance with Babylon ([2 Kgs] 20:12–13)” (p. 336). His reading of Josiah is particularly sensitive, not following the many commentators who find no faults in Josiah. He notes the parallels between Josiah and the earlier reformer Joash whose “reign also ended in untimely death” (2 Kgs 11:21–12:21) (p. 274). Although Josiah’s reforms were unparalleled, Olley notes that “Jeremiah provides evidence that that the reforms may well have been only superficial, as often with reforms imposed from above” (p. 355).

1 and 2 Kings offers us a rogues’ gallery of evil kings, but Olley stresses the evils of three in particular: Ahab, Ahaz, and Manasseh. He considers Ahab to be the worst (p. 339), but we are not told why. Ahaz is criticized due to his bribe of the Assyrian king (p. 301) and construction of an altar for the temple like an altar in Damascus (2 Kgs 16:8–10). Manasseh follows the ways of his grandfather Ahaz by bringing foreign influences into the temple and sanctions worship of Asherah. While Manasseh (like Omri) has considerable peace and stability, these accomplishments are of no interest to the biblical writer. Ahaz and Manasseh would elicit a strong reaction from an exilic audience because of their struggles with syncretism. Intriguingly, Olley seems to view Jeroboam a little different from them, framing his rebellion as more of a tragedy and concession to pragmatism than outright evil.

Olley picks up the many layers of Kings with some pericopes having more in common with Judges (2 Kgs 13:1–9) and others that are steeped in the hope of the Davidic covenant rather than the judgment of the Sinai covenant (p. 117). Kings cannot be viewed simplistically; there is room for holy men who serve in the palace administration of evil kings as well as unambiguous prophets. “Obadiah and Elijah illustrate two models for ‘serving the Lord’ in difficult situations, *both* commended by

God” (p. 171). God can shock us in Kings by his use of a deceiving spirit, but Olley is quick to counter those who might oversimplify by pointing out how God acts in a similar way in the New Testament (2 Thess 2:10–12; 1 John 4:1–3) (pp. 203–4). Elisha is singled out as a prophet of unique compassion, “of no other prophet are we told of miracles that are acts of compassion, responding to specific needs” (p. 227). Yet, he is clear that God brings deliverance and continues to do it.

This book is a very strong monograph; I would only see three matters that could have been addressed more sensitively. 1) Olley consults a wide variety of English commentaries, but he does not seem to consider any German or French commentaries. For example, although he helpfully tries to view the pericopes through the lens of exiles, contemporary German scholarship would also suggest that we might go beyond the Exile in order to better understand Elijah and particularly Elisha. There are Hellenistic parallels to these prophets that are very important. 2) The series is explicitly directed to Christians, and at times he seems too quick to use the New Testament to resolve difficult passages. It is certainly within the parameters of this series to use the New Testament, but one wonders if other ancient texts could also be of guidance. 3) Objective history is not ignored in this volume, but his emphasis on the importance of narrative (p. 9) begs the question of whether there could have been a fuller discussion of the historical background of Kings and when it was written.

I believe this book can be a great help both to pastors and to any Christian who wants to come to a deeper knowledge of Kings. Olley clearly understands this material at a profound level, yet he makes many provocative connections with concerns and controversies surrounding Western Christians, especially in his own Australia. He refuses to oversimplify Kings or avoid complex matters. He clearly accomplishes the goals of the series to expound accurately on the biblical text, relate it to the contemporary world, and make it readable.

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[*Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction*](#) by Craig G. Bartholomew and Ryan P. O’Dowd. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011. ix + 336 pp. US \$30.00, hardcover.

Craig G. Bartholomew is H. Evan Runner Professor of Philosophy and Professor of Religion and Theology at Redeemer University College and

is on the faculty of the Paideia Center for Public Theology. Ryan P. O'Dowd is Senior Visiting Lecturer in Aerospace Studies at Cornell University, although he previously taught at Redeemer University College and was likewise on the faculty of the Paideia Center. Both authors are accomplished scholars in the field of wisdom literature. In the present work they aim to offer a general theological introduction to the Wisdom literature (WL) of the Old Testament (OT). They approach the subject from an evangelical vantage point with the ultimate goal of opening the dialogue for seminarians and pastors on the meaning of a theology of WL today (p. 16). In this way, the book serves secondarily as a textbook with the hope that it might prompt further questions on the subject matter.

The format of the book is clear. The authors discuss various aspects of the biblical WL in broad categories, drawing upon solid exegesis and leading to theological conclusions. Although Bartholomew and O'Dowd do not engage in prolonged discussions about controversial topics, they do not neglect in treating some of the principle difficulties one faces when investigating this particular genre.

Old Testament Wisdom Literature (OTWL) begins with a general introduction to biblical wisdom and its various components, along with major interpretations and approaches offered by scholars. Following the work of van Leeuwen, the authors craft a definition of wisdom based on a "totalizing concept": it begins with the fear of Yahweh, is concerned with patterns of order and patterns of living in God's creation, provides discernment for the particular order and circumstances of our lives, and is grounded in tradition. In other words, genuine wisdom is found in the recovery of God's designs for his created order (p. 16).

Discussion in the second chapter centers on the ancient world of wisdom and its influence on Israelite writings. The authors make the point that "while Israel's poetic and wisdom writings look very much like those of her neighbors, the places where they differ are most important" (p. 44). Thus, parallels are solely an invitation to look for critical differences. While maintaining that the relationship between Mesopotamian/Egyptian and Israelite wisdom is indisputable, the authors highlight Israel's distinctiveness in terms of her theology, religion, worldview, politics, and ethics.

In the third chapter the authors address the significance of the poetic character of biblical wisdom. Indeed, they note—rightly in my view—that one will not hear God's address through OT wisdom if one fails to attend closely to its poetic character (p. 58). The discussion here is minimal at best, but adequate enough to get an overall picture.

The middle section *OTWL* is the centerpiece of the work and treats each wisdom book separately. The authors do not treat the wisdom

material in other biblical books (e.g. Psalms, Song of Songs, Daniel). Each chapter summarizes the thematic content of that particular book and concludes with a theological overview. This is also accompanied by a chapter covering a specific issue or theme relating to each particular book. Chapter 5, for instance, is dedicated to discussing the details and theology of Prov 31, chapter 7 to probing the intricacies of Job 28 and its relationship to the whole book, and chapter 9 to discussing a “theology of time” as articulated in Eccl 3.

All of this serves to give the reader not just a theological overview of the wisdom corpus but also clearer picture of the instances where scholars are prone to disagree or where there are key hermeneutical differences.

Since some New Testament (NT) writers often portray Jesus as wisdom personified (not unlike Lady Wisdom in Proverbs), Bartholomew and O’Dowd presume that “no examination of Old Testament wisdom is complete without exploring its fulfillment and embodiment in Jesus” (p. 231; see Col 2:2–3). Thus, the authors include a chapter about Jesus, the “wisdom of God.” Indeed, the final three chapters of *OTWL* explore the concept of wisdom in the NT, concluding with a proposal for how the WL can be incorporated in Christian theology today.

Chapter 10 treats wisdom thematically in the Gospels, in three selected Pauline texts (1 Cor 1–4; Col 1:15–20; and Eph 1:3–14), and in the book of James. Chapter 11 is an attempt at a coherent theology of wisdom in the OT, with a focus on how a comprehensive view of the wisdom of creation informs and supports the entire wisdom corpus.

By its very nature WL has a strong applicational element, and so the final chapter is a “Theology of Wisdom Today.” According to Bartholomew and O’Dowd, the key hermeneutical guide for life is an acknowledgement that Yahweh is both the royal redeemer (emphasizing God’s kingly rule) and creator. In this way, “a new and richer way of understanding wisdom becomes possible” (p. 291). The present work is intended to be a manifestation of that principle.

The authors have produced a fine book on biblical wisdom from a decidedly evangelical perspective. They rightly point out that the wisdom corpus of the OT gives a consistent message about the life of God’s world—but only when read as a whole (p. 82). They are also helpful in delineating the Proverbs between local, practical knowledge and universal truths. In picking up on the already/not-yet character of NT writings, the authors are correct in maintaining that Jesus takes the place of the fear of the Lord (especially in the book of James), thus giving wisdom a more eschatological flavor (p. 256). In the end, the authors argue that although wisdom is not *the* key to interpreting the NT, “one

cannot understand Jesus, his kingdom or his redemption without it” (p. 259). In confluence with the OT and the NT, Jesus, then, is Lady Wisdom incarnate.

While this is certainly a positive review, I did find myself disagreeing with the authors on a few points. First, I wished that the authors would have given more attention to specific areas. They provide no discussion on the dependency/independency of OT wisdom with ANE wisdom, especially Egyptian wisdom. This in particular is a huge topic in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, yet outside of a few references for how OT wisdom is similar to ANE wisdom, the larger question is missing.

Second, the biblical theology of wisdom in the final chapters is lacking in my view. The authors rightly point to creation as the hermeneutical guide for interpreting wisdom in the OT (and the NT), but their discussion in chapter 11 on the relationship between Wisdom, Torah, and Prophets is insufficient. This is somewhat odd given O’Dowd’s dissertation on the epistemological relationship between Wisdom and Torah ([*The Wisdom of Torah: Epistemology in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom Literature*](#) [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009]), a notable work in its own right. For instance, nothing is said about wisdom in the context of a theocracy or a covenant people. Do the prescriptions in Proverbs apply to the covenant Israelites *and* later generations who are not part of that covenant? How does a covenantal, theocratic nation interpret the “character-consequence” sayings (a phrase I am glad the authors prefer over the traditional “act-consequence” description) as opposed to a non-covenantal one? Are there blessings *now* in the political and physical spheres of life? Perhaps my overarching question is whether or not it is possible to discern moral order in a system of rewards and punishments—rooted in creation—outside of the context of a covenant.

Further, is there a doctrine of the future in wisdom literature? Does wisdom look beyond itself to a future that outlasts death (see e.g. Prov 12:28; 14:32)? What about the “tree of life” in Prov 11:30; 13:12; and 15:4?

These are ultimately minor grievances, and a work confined to 300 pages cannot be completely comprehensive. While most scholars would not advocate wisdom as *the* center of the OT, given the massive amount of texts devoted to that topic—explicit or implicit—wisdom may rightly be called “a” center of the OT. So on the whole, *OTWL* is an outstanding resource for evangelicals who wish to understand the theological prominence of wisdom in the Bible, and the authors have served us well in this regard. The book is therefore an excellent guide for pastors and seminary students. Additionally, it is a model for how to draw theological conclusions from exegesis of the wisdom literature (a

difficult task in itself), and then supply applicational elements from those conclusions. For these reasons alone I am happy to recommend this work.

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Rethinking Rewritten Scripture: Composition and Exegesis in the 4QReworked Pentateuch Manuscripts by Molly M. Zahn. Leiden: Brill, 2011. 280 pp., US \$153.00, hardcover.

In *Rethinking Rewritten Scripture: Composition and Exegesis in the 4QReworked Pentateuch Manuscripts*—a revised dissertation from the University of Notre Dame (2009)—Molly M. Zahn offers a detailed discussion of early Jewish methods of scribal interpretation by exploring the compositional techniques used in the 4QRP MSS (4Q158, 4Q364–67). She sets the stage by placing 4QRP between two recent, though somewhat isolated, scholarly discussions. The first concerns the textual history of the Hebrew Bible, while the other focuses on the compositional nature of the “rewritten Bible,” namely *Jubilees*, *Temple Scroll* (TS), and the *Genesis Apocryphon* (GenAp). Zahn intends to bridge the two discussions by paying careful attention to “additions,” “omissions,” and “alterations,” as well as subcategories under these headings, which pertain specifically to the varying degrees and frequency of scribal intervention (p. 17).

Zahn structures her monograph sequentially so that each text is addressed in light of those preceding it. Her analysis begins with the 4QRP MSS, moving onto points of comparison with the Samaritan Pentateuch (and pre-SP groups), and TS. These “comparative chapters” demonstrate the broad network of exegetical strategies in similar, yet distinct, compositions. Her goal is “to begin working toward a more comprehensive understanding of the role such reworking plays in Second Temple texts” (p. 11). Appendix 1 includes a translation and transcription of 4Q158, a re-edition of John Allegro’s DJD 5. Appendix 2 contains a list of “Unique Variants in 4Q158,” (fruitfully read in conjunction with a recent article on 4QRP variants [A. Perrin, “[The Variants of 4Q \(Reworked\) Pentateuch: A Comprehensive List of the Textual Variants in 4Q158, 4Q364–7 in Biblical Sequence.](#)” *JJS* 63 (2012): 127–57]).

In chapter one Zahn engages several issues of terminology (p. 1, n. 2; p. 5, n. 17; p. 9, n. 30; p. 12; p. 21; et al.) and distinguishes between

exegesis, as the act of interpretation, and *exegetical technique*, which involves altering the text in order to reflect an interpretation. Also notable is her challenge to the idea of describing rewritten compositions along a *continuum* of textual reworking, which she argues has intuitive appeal and heuristic value but lacks empirical support (pp. 8, 241). In outlining her methodology, Zahn also discusses various dynamics in relation to major and minor variants (pp. 21–22), as well as assumptions about early and late variants. She states, “We must constantly keep in mind the possibility that the rewritten texts might preserve readings that are in fact earlier than those preserved in more well-known versions” (p. 21).

In chapter two Zahn describes an array of compositional techniques in 4Q158. She shows how a shorter version of the Decalogue contained in MT and G was rewritten by the pre-SP text of 4QpaleoExod^m that in turn was rewritten again by 4Q158 (p. 33). The impetus for such rewriting is debatable. The point of contention is that fragment 7 begins with commandments 5–10, while commandments 1–2 are not extant anywhere in 4Q158. Further, fragment 6 contains the appeal for a mediator between the people and YHWH before the people actually encounter YHWH *via* the Decalogue (note this request comes after the Decalogue in Exod 20:18–19). Zahn seems convinced by Segal’s argument that the rearranged progression from fragment 6 to 7 may reflect “a textualization of an interpretive tradition found in later rabbinic material according to which only the first two commandments were spoken directly by God . . . while the rest were mediated through Moses” (p. 66). Zahn states, “I believe it is most likely that the Decalogue was simply split apart, such that God speaks commandments 1 and 2 to the whole people prior to frag. 6 and speaks commandments 3–10 to Moses alone at the top of frag. 7” (p. 67 n. 83).

Zahn also addresses the “hermeneutical concerns” of 4Q158, exhibiting an expectation for the completeness of Torah (i.e., commands left unfulfilled in Torah are thus rewritten to represent command *and* fulfillment). Moreover, she suggests that the overriding concern of 4Q158 is “to strengthen or create connections between related texts” (p. 73) and that the strengthening of conceptual connection between disparate texts may provide points of comparison with “rabbinic aggadic midrash and the pentateuchal Targumim” (p. 56).

In chapter three Zahn seeks to “remedy” the question concerning whether or not each of the five 4QRP manuscripts approaches the text of the Pentateuch in the same way (p. 75). In a comparison of 4Q364 and 4Q158 she states “the connections [made by 4Q364] are general and function largely at the level of vocabulary, while in 4Q158 there is a more specific focus on coordinating command and fulfillment or an

event's prediction and its occurrence" (p. 86). She also suggests that the two omissions (4Q364 24 6 and 4Q364 19 5–8) may represent an earlier form of the text (pp. 86–87). Further, Zahn argues that 4Q365a belongs within the 4Q365 material as a whole and points to the importance of further analysis regarding the literary relationship between 4Q365 and TS (p. 100).

A table of comparison on p. 129 offers a helpful summary of the compositional techniques Zahn describes in the 4QRP MSS. From this, she argues that the nature of 4QRP as a single composition is unlikely. She demonstrates that 4Q158 and 4Q364 both preserve major changes also known from SP (97), while 4Q365 seems to reflect the consonantal frame of MT (p. 121). Zahn concludes that the five MSS are related compositions and not copies of the same work, and consequently proposes the label 4QRP A–E rather than 4QRP^{a–e} (p. 132).

In chapter four, Zahn sets the 4QRP material in the context of scriptural transmission with a primary focus on the trajectory of SP. She notes, "[t]he presence at Qumran of biblical MSS that contain nearly all the variants previously regarded as unique to SP demonstrates that this 'Samaritan' version of the Torah must in fact have circulated more widely in the Second Temple period" (pp. 26, 135). By analyzing SP and 4QRP in light of each other, Zahn shows that the SP tradition only became "Samaritan" at a later date when relatively minor variants were introduced to reflect a "distinctive Samaritan ideology" (p. 26). Zahn also ascribes a certain ambiguity to the pre-SP tradition itself, noting that "[o]n occasion, the pre-SP Qumran MSS correspond to MT and lack a significant SP variant. On other occasions, a pre-SP MSS preserves a unique reading not shared by SP" (p. 136). Further, she notes that all compositional techniques in 4QRP are also evident in SP, except for paraphrase (p. 172). She also demonstrates that SP contains very little "new" material in contrast to 4QRP.

In chapter five, Zahn shows how the Temple Scroll's use of Pentateuch "is in many ways more intricate and complex than anything we have seen in the 4QRP MSS and texts in the SP group" (p. 182). She provides a strong analysis of the compositional techniques at work in TS, although it is somewhat disconnected from the previous chapters. At several points, she suggests that TS appears to be citing a text tradition other than MT, but does little to synthesize any corresponding implications. This is clearly understandable, however, in that the monograph is not focused on textual traditions but rather compositional technique. Zahn's strength in this regard is clearly demonstrated in her discussion on the exegetical nature of TS (note especially pp. 192–206). She concludes that while TS goes far beyond the reworking of the Pentateuch that is evident in 4QRP and SP, the compositional techniques

used to create TS are fundamentally the same (p. 226), although implemented with different goals and strategies.

In chapter six, Zahn concludes with consistent precision by weaving together all previous threads relating to both similar and different compositional techniques evident in the SP group, 4QRP, and TS. She convincingly shows how each of these compositions essentially utilizes the same techniques, yet still emerge with distinctive profiles. Through reflection on her data, she observes that “no manuscripts were alike in the proportions in which they used various compositional techniques or in the purposes to which they put these techniques” (p. 229). Perhaps the most valuable contribution of Zahn’s study concerns the viability of the connection between compositional technique in a given text, and what can be concluded about the status of that text as either a copy of an authoritative work or a new composition. She suggests that there is little clear evidence for this connection, which by itself is a crucial observation for the study of rewritten scripture (p. 327).

In sum, the *rethinking* evident in Zahn’s detailed monograph paves the way for *thinking* in more focused ways in several ancillary areas. Some of these include the implications of juxtapositions in 4QRP, the literary relation between 4QRP and TS, the scriptural status of 4QRP, and the textual traditions behind these compositions. Moreover, this monograph builds a solid foundation for speaking about the early scribal practice of rewriting scripture, and will likely function as a nexus for future studies on scribal practice before and after the Second Temple period.

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[*Right in Their Own Eyes: The Gospel According to Judges*](#) by George M. Schwab. *Gospel According to the Old Testament*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2011. xxi + 242 pp., US \$12.99, softcover.

George M. Schwab is associate professor of Old Testament at Erskine Seminary. *Right in Their Own Eyes*, a volume in *The Gospel According to the Old Testament* series, which aims to promote a Christ-centered reading of the Old Testament. This volume looks at the book of Judges from this perspective.

Schwab divides his presentation into three parts. The first part consists of matters of prolegomena, the second part discusses the introduction and body of the book of Judges, and the third part looks at

the epilogue of the book. The first part of the book consists of three chapters that discuss the issues of interpretation, chronology, stylization, and the author's agenda. Schwab posits an early date for the rule of the judges and reconciles the chronological difficulties of the reigns of the judges by seeing them as ruling concurrently. Since the ordering does not appear to be arranged purely by chronological concerns, Schwab favors a geographical arrangement of the book. Schwab also discusses the book's use of stylized language like the symbolic use of names and numbers within the book. Schwab then presents what he considers the theology of the book, which comes in two main facets. First, the book of Judges is a sermon on the book of Deuteronomy, especially in its concern for judgment and reward by means of covenant fidelity. Second, the book of Judges serves as an apologetic for the Davidic monarchy over against the monarchy of Saul.

The second part of the book discusses the cycles of the judges. Each of the major judges is given their own chapter, while the minor judges are discussed together in a single chapter. This framework is broken once with a chapter that discusses the issue of holy war and the hermeneutical significance of this difficult topic for the present. The final section of the book treats the dual epilogue of Judges. These two main narratives are discussed in light of their view of the tribe of Levi and their ideological support of a covenant keeping king, namely David.

There are several good qualities of this work. First, the "For Further Reflection" section found at the end of each chapter is very helpful, especially to the student. It largely summarizes, applies, and helps the reader think through the content of the chapter and serves to reinforce its content with critical thinking. A second admirable quality of the work is that it is written from a very academically informed perspective, but is also written in a style that is understandable to the layperson or novice student. Schwab interacts extensively with scholarly articles and monographs. With this, the reader is getting the best scholarship in an easy to understand format. This can be seen both in the works that are cited throughout the book and in the bibliography, which provide a great resource for further study and reflects the current trends in the study of the book of Judges. A third admirable quality of this work is that it is written with pastoral sensitivity. This can be seen in the structuring of each chapter and how it moves from exposition and exegesis of the text to application. This application is another good quality of the book. Most of the chapters have a "Toward the Eschaton" section that moves from being merely descriptive to a theological application. This section gives a larger biblical theological approach and frequently makes connections to the New Testament. One of the finest qualities is that he does not view the Judges with rose colored glasses as

some are prone to do. He sees them as they are presented: severely flawed people that God uses. This short sampling does not include every admirable quality present in the work, but shows the book's overall quality.

While this work has many admirable features there are also some deficiencies. First, many of the chapters and headings within the chapters use alliteration. Sometimes these titles are apt, "God Guides Gutless Gideon" (p. 99). At other times, however, these titles distract from the main point of the narrative: "Jephthah's Jaundice" (p. 139). While alliteration can serve as a helpful memory device, it often chooses words because they sound better. In the end it leaves the reader wanting to know if the main point of the Jephthah narrative is that he has a skin disease, which he does not.

A second deficiency in the work is that at times, though not often, Schwab engages in an odd, almost allegorical exegesis and application of the text. The best example of this is found in the opening pages, which serves to start the book off on an odd note. When discussing Samson's slaying of the lion he writes, "The word translated carcass in verse 8 is found in this form elsewhere only in Proverbs and in prophecy—speaking of the fall of nations or the wicked...and once (Ezek. 32), the fallen is called a *lion* of nations. The word *nations* in Ezekiel is *goyim*, which sounds like the rare word in verse 9, glossed the 'body' or 'carcass' of the lion" (p. xvi). His conclusion is that "the dead lion is described in language that evokes the wicked, the nations destined for judgment" (p. xvi). The wordplay seems forced and esoteric. It would seem that the reader would need to know Ezekiel to understand this passage. This is strange because Schwab appears to favor an early date for the writing of the book of Judges when he quotes the study of Davies (p. 23) who suggests a Davidic date for the composition. He also discusses the work as being a critique of Solomon (p. 28). It is therefore anachronistic to suggest that an understanding of the terms in Ezekiel holds the key to a book written centuries before.

Despite these minor drawbacks, *Right in Their Own Eyes* is a well written work that would benefit the student, layperson, or pastor in understanding both the theology of the book of Judges and its theological application. It complements other books in The Gospel in the Old Testament series and serves as the most readable theology of the book available today. It would serve as a great entry point into the study of Judges or as a textbook for a college or seminary level course.

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[*Soundings in the Theology of the Psalms: Perspectives and Methods in Contemporary Scholarship*](#) edited by Rolf A. Jacobson. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011. xiii + 197 pp., US \$32.00, softcover.

Rolf Jacobson, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary, has collected eight essays on the theology of the Psalter from some of the top scholars in the field. Four of the essays (chapters 3, 4, 7, and 8) originated as invited papers for the 2008 meeting of Society of Biblical Literature, Book of Psalms section. Chapters 2, 5, and 6 were essays written specifically for this volume. The first essay in the volume is a reprint of Walter Brueggemann's now classic article on Psalms interpretation, "The Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function," originally published in 1980. Brueggemann's categorization of psalms into groups of orientation, disorientation, and new orientation based on the work of Paul Ricoeur is well known and hardly needs to be reviewed here. It does serve as a fitting preface to this volume as Brueggemann's concern for the contemporary function of the psalms is carried forward in this collection.

In the second chapter, "God at Work in the Word: A Theology of Divine-Human Encounter in the Psalms," Harry Nasuti argues that the goal of a theology of the Psalter should not be merely descriptive, but rather should take account of the relational nature of the material. The psalms not only describe who God is, they also "make available a relationship between God and the believing individuals and communities that have used them" (p. 29). In this way, Nasuti agrees with Mowinckel that the psalms are "sacramental" (p. 34). He hones in on the metaphors of God as healer and teacher, demonstrating that the psalms not only portray God as such, but they also have a healing and teaching effect. Nasuti places a heavy emphasis on examining the ways in which the psalms have been used in believing communities as an important key to understanding them. In sum, through the use of psalms one not only learns about God, but one enters into a relationship with him and becomes shaped in his image (p. 44).

Jerome Creach utilizes a canonical methodology in his essay "The Destiny of the Righteous and the Theology of the Psalms." In the first half of the essay, he seeks to demonstrate that the future of the righteous is a central concern in the shaping of the Psalter. Creach pays particular attention to the psalms at the "seams" of the Psalter to make his case. The second half of the essay shows how the theme of the "destiny of the righteous" serves as an "organizing rubric" to better understand other themes in the book (e.g., the king, Zion, the temple, and Torah) (p. 58).

In an essay provocatively titled “The Single Most Important Text in the Entire Bible: Toward a Theology of the Psalms,” J. Clinton McCann argues for the central place of Ps 82 in the Psalter. In Ps 82, God judges and dethrones the “gods” because of their injustice, especially toward the orphan and widow (Ps 82:3). Thus, God has essentially given us the criteria by which he desires to be judged, whether or not justice is upheld (p. 65). McCann states, “according to Psalm 82, what it means to be God. . . is to protect and provide for the lives of the most threatened and vulnerable, not by offering charitable handouts but. . . [by a] comprehensive alternation in social and political conditions” (p. 66). McCann further argues for the centrality of this psalm by highlighting links between it and the beginning and end of the Psalter, as well as by connections between the psalm and other key themes in the book.

In the fifth essay, “The Theology of the Imprecatory Psalms,” Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford tackles a difficult theme in the Psalter. She argues that, as a part of the canon of Scripture, the imprecatory psalms need to be taken seriously by the church. These psalms are vital because of the nature of injustice and violence that often intrudes into our lives. Ultimately these psalms allow us to honestly articulate our suffering and emotions to God, which help to sate our “basic human desire for revenge” (p. 89). These psalms also recognize that “God alone can set the not good right” (p. 90). DeClaissé-Walford further offers five thoughts on how the community can more faithfully appropriate these psalms into their theology and worship (p. 90–92).

In a similar vein, Joel LeMon also wrestles with violence in the Psalter in his essay, “Saying Amen to Violent Psalms: Patterns of Prayer, Belief, and Action in the Psalter.” LeMon argues that the psalms are ethically formative. For example, as the worshipping community praises God for caring for the orphan and widow, the community itself becomes more compassionate toward the orphan and widow (p. 94). However, the same could be true with the violent imagery in Psalms. That is, as the Psalmist declares that he, or God, will mete out justice on the wicked using violence, so also the community could be formed to support and condone violence as well. After a careful and insightful discussion of this issue and how scholars have wrestled with it in the past, LeMon suggests that the best way of handling violent psalms is to allow the believing community to decide when this type of psalm is appropriate. He states, “the psalms of imprecation (and the psalms describing violence against the enemies more generally) demand a community's response—a community that regulates these psalms with its amens” (p. 107).

In “The Faithfulness of the Lord Endures Forever: The Theological Witness of the Psalter,” Rolf Jacobson asks the central

theological question, “What vision of God emerges when one submerges oneself in the prayers, songs, liturgies, and poems in the Psalter?” (p. 111). His answer is that the central theological affirmation of the Psalter can be summed up with the phrase: “[t]he Lord is faithful” (p. 111). The centrality of this theme is demonstrated by noticing how prevalent language about God's faithfulness is throughout the Psalter, inclusive of every genre of psalms. God's faithfulness is especially seen in creation and in the history of Israel (pp. 118, 121). Jacobson argues that God's faithfulness led the psalmists to believe that God would provide certain benefits (e.g. protection, deliverance, justice, etc.). This belief influences the lament psalms, where the psalmist articulates a dissonance between God's faithfulness and his own experience (p. 127). Jacobson deftly shows how this dissonance leads to a nuanced understanding of God's fidelity, which often has a larger picture in view than the individual, or one's own community (p. 135).

In the concluding chapter, “Rethinking the Enterprise,” Beth Tanner raises a number of issues that must be considered in formulating a theology of Psalms (p. 139). Arguing that most past scholarship has been overly concerned with objectively describing the theology and practice evidenced in Psalms, she instead urges interpreters to do theology that is “contextual and thus canonical, transitory, and pluralistic” (p. 142). Tanner highlights the poetic form of Psalms as a central theological datum itself, which resists systemization. Additionally, she argues that interpreters need to pay attention to the discordant voices within the Psalter and to understand this tension as part of the belief structure of the psalms themselves (p. 146). Ultimately, she argues, “to give justice to this psalmic poetry, we must speak of its power, not in the lives of ancient people or in the life of the nebulous psalmist, but in our own hearts and minds” (p. 147).

Rolf Jacobson is to be thanked for collecting these valuable and insightful essays on the theology of the Psalter. Pastors in particular may benefit from the cogent discussions of imprecatory psalms (chs. 6 and 7), which provide many suggestions for incorporating these psalms into the community of faith. A couple of additions to this book could have made it more useful. In a volume presenting “perspectives and methods in contemporary scholarship,” I was expecting to find a good, up-to-date bibliography. Unfortunately, this was not included. Also, an introductory essay surveying the recent scholarly literature on the theology of the Psalter would have been helpful. While the essays themselves were insightful and good examples of a contemporary theological study in the Psalter, a broader perspective was lacking. These concerns aside, this is a

valuable book that will be of interest to anyone studying the book of Psalms: students, pastors, and scholars alike.

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Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible by Emanuel Tov. 3rd edition, revised and expanded. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012. lviii + 481 pp., US \$90.00, hardcover.

Emanuel Tov is J. L. Magnes Professor of Bible Emeritus at Hebrew University, Jerusalem and former Editor-in-Chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project.

The first edition of this introduction to Old Testament textual criticism appeared in 1992. Its first revision ten years later was minor in scope and now this thorough rewriting and expansion has not only brought a much needed work up to date but also taken account of the evolving scholarship of the previous twenty years.

Extensive introductory material includes a “Brief Didactic Guide” for readers with less proficiency in Hebrew. The introduction proper (pp. 1–22) follows. It considers predictable topics such as the need for textual criticism and ends with a frank admission of the inherent subjectivity of text critical work more generally and specifically this book itself.

Textual witnesses are covered in great detail in the next extensive chapter (pp. 23–154). Tov divides his discussion between the Hebrew witnesses and the ancient translations. The former is further divided into the Proto-Masoretic Texts and Masoretic Text grouped together, the Pre-Samaritan Texts and the Samaritan Pentateuch, biblical Qumran manuscripts, and “additional witnesses.” The ancient translations section covers the Septuagint and its revisions, the Targumim, the Peshitta, the Vulgate and Saadia’s Arabic translation. This chapter’s scope and depth is impressive in every way. Its size alone serves to underline the complexity of extant textual witnesses, both in number and variety.

Chapter three (pp. 155–90) examines the history of the biblical text. The pivotal Qumran discoveries are used to divide the understanding of intertextual relationships into pre- and post-1947. Tov argues against a standardization of the whole biblical text, quoting van der Woude: “there was a basically uniform tradition *besides* a pluriform tradition in Palestine Judaism in the last centuries B.C.” (p. 179); that the

MT was the only text remaining after the destruction of the temple was historical accident. He believes that the coexistence of uniformity and pluriformity is the only explanation for the diversity of evidence and the probable development of the text. This development is divided into the more speculative period pre ca. 250 B.C., and that period from ca. 250 B.C. until the Bar Kochba revolt of A.D. 132–135. Tov suggests a slightly different nomenclature in both these chapters, namely a revised tripartite division into the MT-group, the SamPent-group and the LXX-group. The term “group” is sometimes interchanged with “family.” Although relatively brief, this chapter encapsulates Tov’s insistence that textual critics form a view on “the Original Text” (p. 161) in order to correctly evaluate variants and textual development.

The practicalities of copying and transmitting text are explained in chapter four (pp. 191–262). The section on copying briefly covers materials, writing practices, scripts, orthography, and scribal traditions. “Textual transmission” considers the minutiae of differences created in the copying process. These will be helpful for the less experienced reader as a detailed glossary replete with examples. The conclusion of the chapter examines intentional changes.

Chapters five (pp. 263–8) and six (pp. 269–82) begin the study of textual criticism itself, with basic theory followed by evaluations of external and internal criteria and preferable readings. The relationship between textual and literary criticism is introduced in chapter seven (pp. 283–326) with numerous examples of different literary strata and editions. For example, the book of Esther is mentioned twice: firstly, LXX* (Göttingen edition) is compared to MT+ (MT/Targ/Pesh/Vulg), and then LXX^{A-Text} (based on LXX but corrected towards a non MT+ Hebrew text) is compared to MT+. The Greek translations of Esther vary considerably and Tov uses this disparity to illustrate that literary comparisons can be multi-faceted.

Conjectural emendation is discussed in chapter eight (pp. 327–40), examining both contextual and linguistic emendations as well as those introduced for metrical reasons. Notes on scholarly and non-scholarly editions (chapter nine; pp. 341–76) and computer-assisted tools (chapter ten; pp. 377–82) bring the main body of the book to a close. Plates, a very useful glossary, and three indices conclude the volume, and bibliographies throughout the book point the way to further sources of information.

Tov is transparent about how some of his views have changed since earlier editions. In a 2010 chapter he explains how he now considers that 4QReworked Pentateuch may in fact be a biblical text (p. 323). Many other perspectives remain unaltered, and indeed a number are reinforced with the benefit of an extra twenty years consideration.

The current reviewer was particularly struck by the implications of textual development and the tendency to attach perhaps greater credence to MT (by which we generally mean *BHS*) than is warranted; the utter complexity involved with multiple texts and text groups leads one away from an unconsidered reliance on MT as *the* biblical text. Whether Tov is fully persuasive remains to be seen. That his highly respected views will give cause for contemplation is a given.

Such a thorough introduction to the subject can only be of great assistance to those unfamiliar with the complexities of textual criticism. To what extent the volume would be accessible to the novice is unclear, as facility with Hebrew and Greek is clearly assumed. The intermediate/advanced student, and those wishing for an up to date refresher, will be amply rewarded by the discussion. The significant changes since the first edition make this book a very worthwhile purchase.

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[Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age](#) by Christopher A. Rollston. *Archaeology and Biblical Studies* 11. Atlanta: SBL, 2010. xix + 171 pp., US \$21.95, softcover.

In *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel*, Christopher Rollston offers a nontechnical work that focuses upon Iron Age epigraphy in the Levant to provide insight into ancient Israelite scribalism, writing, and literacy. It offers discussions on general issues such as the inception of writing, the alphabet, and the nature of the scribal institution, as well as topics specific to Israelite epigraphy. This work is excellent, and it is no surprise that it won the “Frank Moore Cross Award in Epigraphy” from the American Schools of Oriental Research. It would be worthy of use in courses addressing biblical Hebrew grammar, historical grammar, and/or Northwest Semitic inscriptions. Its content and concepts are accessible and Rollston's presentation is concise. It is a quick read but extremely informative—a rare combination in scholarly publications.

In his introduction, Rollston articulates his methodological conviction that epigraphic study cannot be accomplished properly devoid of archaeological considerations. Rollston's point is correct; the two are

inextricably linked. One cannot properly formulate theories about Israel's literary capabilities without consulting archaeological data on Israel's social dynamics. In these opening pages, Rollston also articulates basic terms and principles that fundamentally inform his presentation, including an explanation of script types, the difference between language and script, and the basic features of paleography. Most important are the following points (pp. 4–5).

- One must understand that translations are approximations.
- Determining a lexeme is difficult. Consequently, one must consider the context and realize that all conclusions are tentative.
- Context is important, but not always decisive.
- Certitude is elusive.
- Large-scale epigraphic reproductions are precarious.
- Attempts to identify biblical characters should be done with extreme caution.

From the introduction therefore, one realizes that Rollston is a cautious scholar. He would prefer to be criticized for not drawing out the full implications of a body of data rather than overextending the implications of that data. For example, in his discussion of “Literacy and the Broader Officialdom” (pp. 128–32), Rollston argues against theories that invoke the Yavneh Yam, Kuntillet Ajrud, Khirbet el-Qom, and the Gibeon Jar Handle texts as evidence for literacy among the lower social classes of Israelite society. Rollston propounds that such a position is tenuous, for it ultimately relies on speculation and cuts against other, less debatable evidence that suggests the literate were elite members of society. Indeed, Rollston's tendency of building conclusions based on evidence that has little room for debate is laudable, and scholars will do well to allow his tendencies to spur their own critical self-evaluation. However, some of Rollston's conclusions are minimalistic and/or based on minimalistic assumptions (see below). Such tendencies will undoubtedly be a source of criticism.

Chapters 1–3 constitute Part 1. The opening chapter summarizes the origins of the alphabet, from its inception to the brink of stabilization at the end of the second millennium. Chapter 2 discusses the usage of the Phoenician script throughout the Iron Age. Specific attention, albeit brief, is given to Old Hebrew, Moabite, and Aramaic scripts, as well as important texts from Byblos, Zenjirli, Israel, Moab, and Syria. Herein, Rollston discusses intricate paleographic and orthographic features of individual letters, and this discussion prepares the reader for Rollston's main thesis—ancient Israel was home to a highly trained scribal class. In chapter 3, Rollston categorizes select Northwest Semitic inscriptions,

giving adequate attention to the form and function of each. Rollston occasionally raises interesting and plausible ideas. For example, Rollston ponders a Jehu/Hazael alliance in light of the Tel Dan stele (p. 53). He also considers the implications of Khirbet el-Qom and Kuntillet Ajrud for understanding the development of Israelite religion and Yavneh Yam for insight into the abusive powers against which the biblical tradition speaks.

Part 2 begins with chapter 4's survey of the scribal institution. On analogy with Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures, and bolstered by circumstantial evidence in the Old Testament, Rollston argues that the scribe during Iron Age Israel enjoyed a privileged social position. Chapter 5 investigates the education process of a scribe in ancient Israel. Utilizing comparative evidence and modern linguistic studies as a framework, Rollston cogently argues that scribal education in Israel was taxing and that this "formal, standardized education" positioned Israelite scribes as a minority within society (p. 95). Chapter 5 also reveals one of Rollston's key points: "Comparative analysis of these Old Hebrew inscriptions . . . demonstrates that there are diagnostic features that distinguish the major various horizons . . . regardless of the site at which there were found and the distance between them, or the media" (p. 96). In a word, "The Old Hebrew script reflects diachronic development and synchronic consistency" (p. 96). Chapter 6 questions the position that the absence of any monumental building precludes the reality that Israelite scribes undertook a formalized education. Again, based on comparative analogies, Rollston argues that Israelite scribal education occurred in a domestic context, in the form of a student/master relationship. Chapter 7 divulges Rollston's views on the extent of literacy in Iron Age Israel. Defining literacy as "the possession of substantial facility in a writing system . . . using and understanding a standard script, a standard orthography, a standard numeric system, conventional formatting and terminology, and with minimal errors of composition and comprehension" (p. 127), it is not surprising that Rollston considers Iron Age Israel to have been largely illiterate. According to Rollston, Israelite scribes were predominately, but not exclusively, associated with the royal administration. Indeed, priests, kings, and other royal officials could have been literate. In every case however, all parties underwent formalized education. As for the composition of literature during the Iron Age, Rollston asserts that it is logical to assume that Israel was actively composing its authoritative literature. The work concludes with an intriguing chapter, which discusses issues of forgery and acquisitions on the black market. Rollston goes so far to propose a method for determining whether an epigraphic text is legitimate.

Overall, Rollston's argument is enticing. His analysis of the data is critical yet fair, and his arguments stem from the convergence of comparative, epigraphic, linguistic, and sociological considerations. However, it should be noted that Rollston's conviction that the Old Hebrew script displays both diachronic development and synchronic consistency is a critical element to his overall argument. Such a conviction is possible only upon a consideration of the entire corpus of Old Hebrew texts, each text in light of the others. Without this, Rollston would find it more difficult to assert the mantra that the literate of Iron Age Israel were the product of a formal, standardized education.

Nevertheless, one element of Rollston's presentation deserves further explanation. As just stated, Rollston accepts the likelihood that Iron Age Israel was capable of writing authoritative texts, which undoubtedly included the biblical traditions (pp. 134–5). Many evangelicals will be receptive to such a position. However, this enthusiasm will likely be tempered upon realizing the nuances of Rollston's position. When Rollston states that Iron IIA spanned approximately 900–800 B.C.E., it is apparent that he advocates Finkelstein's Low Chronology. This is problematic for at least two reasons. First, the Low Chronology framework is hotly debated. Second, Low Chronology is often associated with interpretive theories that characterize the David/Solomon era, as portrayed in Samuel and Kings, as fanciful and anachronistic. By implication, adherents to Low Chronology often question the veracity of the Old Testament's historical record. Without a proper explanation, therefore, Rollston leaves too many questions unanswered, particularly since theories of literacy in antiquity are intimately associated with theories of statehood and social development. Is one to assume that Rollston, like so many other adherents to Low Chronology, perceives Israel in the Davidic/Solomonic era as a rural settlement largely incapable of providing the resources necessary for the development of literacy and literature in antiquity? If that era was capable of such developments, what was the nature and extent of those endeavors and how did they compare to later endeavors? Does Rollston envision an acceleration in literacy and literature development after 900 B.C.E. in light of Israel's and Judah's unquestionable socio-political advances? The nuances of Iron Age chronology remain an important topic, particularly for Evangelicals, and Rollston's reluctance to tackle this issue by clearly explaining how the Low Chronology system interacts with his theory of literacy constitutes the only significant mark against an otherwise exceptional work.

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