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*Jacques Berlinerblau (The New School for Social Research, New York)*

**SOME SOCIOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS ON MOSHE GREENBERG'S BIBLICAL PROSE PRAYER AS A WINDOW TO THE POPULAR RELIGION OF ANCIENT ISRAEL**

**ABSTRACT**

Moshe Greenberg's *Biblical prose prayer as a window to the popular religion of ancient Israel* stands as one of the most important recent contributions to the nascent discourse on "Israelite popular religion". In this article, the author attempts to evaluate this work with an eye towards establishing some sociological guidelines for the study of biblical popular religiosity. The capacity of biblical texts to illuminate aspects of "popular religion" is discussed. As is Greenberg's proposed methodology for the investigation of this issue. It is suggested that such a programme may be more applicable to the study of elite Yahwistic strata than to "popular religious groups".

*Izak Cornelius (University of Stellenbosch)*

**THE ICONOGRAPHY OF DIVINE WAR IN THE PREISLAMIC NEAR EAST: A SURVEY**

**ABSTRACT**

*The idea of divine war (i.e. the deities active in time of war) is not only described in texts. It is also found in ancient Near Eastern art. The deities prepare the king for battle by teaching him to fight and giving him symbols of victory (i.e. a bow and the sickle-sword). They do not only protect him in battle or influence the outcome, they sometimes also take part actively in the battle. Because the deities determined the outcome of the battle, tribute and captives are brought to them or the king receives captives from the deity. Iconography not only provides additional information to the written sources, it also indicates that the idea of the deity controlling nature **and** intervening in war is found as a combination. There is a difference in the way in which the idea of divine war is depicted in Egypt and Mesopotamia, reflecting different world views, especially with regard to the concept of kingship.*

*Ferdinand E Deist (University of Stellenbosch)*

## **ON 'SYNCHRONIC' AND 'DIACHRONIC': WIE ES EIGENTLICH GEWESEN**

### **ABSTRACT**

*De Saussure's distinction between synchronic and diachronic study of linguistic phenomena is often misconstrued in literary studies in the field of ancient Near Eastern, particularly biblical, studies. This article seeks to clarify the methodological distinction and some of the implications of syn- and diachronic interpretation. It pays attention to the historical background of De Saussure's approach and what it entails. The author argues that, apart from the fact that ancient Near Eastern literary documents are unlikely candidates for a synchronic analysis, synchronic interpretation in the strict sense of the word is a methodologically problematic undertaking. In a somewhat looser sense it forces interpreters to consider the multiplicity of historical intertexts of the time and culture in which the author(s) of a text conceived and wrote it down.*

*Richard L Goerwitz (University of Chicago)*

## **NON-JUDAHITE DIALECTS AND THE DIACRITICS OF THE MASORETIC TEXT**

### **ABSTRACT**

*Although some ancient non-Judahite dialectal features might persist in older, consonantal portions of the Masoretic Text, the reading traditions reflected in the medieval diacritics preserve no independent evidence of them. Rendsburg's "flat" thesis of a Masoretic Text punctuated by non-Judahite survivals must therefore give way to one that reckons more fully with the differences between its consonantal, vocalic, and accentual strata.*

*Gerald A Klingbeil (University of Stellenbosch)*

## **RITUAL SPACE IN THE ORDINATION RITUAL OF LEVITICUS 8:1**

### *ABSTRACT*

*Ritual space plays a key role in determining the overall meaning of the ordination ritual of Aaron and his sons since specific ritual action is only valid and meaningful when performed in specific ritual space. In connection with ritual actions there is some sort of ritual geography encompassing a sequence from the profane to the most holy at work. Furthermore, there is an intricate relationship between status and space. Since most of the acts take place in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting this location emphasises the transitional status that both Aaron and his sons (and to a certain degree also Moses in his temporal priestly function) experience. The portability of the Tabernacle and its utensils furthermore emphasise specific ritual actions rather than a specific geographical location.*

*Keith A J Massey & Kevin Massey-Gillespie (Wisconsin Dells & Drayton)*

## **SEMITIC QUADRILITERAL ANIMAL TERMS: AN EXPLANATION**

### *ABSTRACT*

*The regular trilateral system of the Semitic languages is broken by a few irregularities. Among these irregularities is a long list of quadrilateral animal terms. The authors suggest that these quadrilateral animal terms are in fact contractions from original kinship-based constructs. Observing the original forms of these words and the underlying reasons for the formation of these constructions sheds some light on the role these animals played in the culture of these ancient peoples.*

*Scott B Noegel (Cornell University)*

## **A JANUS PARALLELISM IN THE BAAL AND ANAT STORY**

### **ABSTRACT**

*Janus parallelism is a literary device in which a middle stich of poetry parallels in a polysemous manner both the line that precedes it and the line that follows it. Though numerous examples have been discovered in the Hebrew Bible, hitherto, only one example has been proposed in Ugaritic. Though there is reason to reject the previously proposed example, there is sufficient evidence for the device elsewhere in Ugaritic.*

*Martin T Pröbstle (University of Stellenbosch)*

## **THE ADVANTAGES OF W. RICHTER'S APPROACH FOR A LEXICAL DESCRIPTION OF BIBLICAL HEBREW**

### **ABSTRACT**

*The article presents Richter's approach to a grammatical description of the Old Hebrew language as an adequate linguistic framework for a lexical description of Biblical Hebrew words. On the different levels of language description — especially on syntax and semantics — Richter's approach provides comprehensively verifiable data. The advantages of Richter's approach for a lexical description are listed and required refinements are recommended.*

*Wilfred G E Watson (Newcastle upon Tyne)*

## **VERSE PATTERNS IN THE SONG OF SONGS**

### **ABSTRACT**

*Here, all the verse patterns of the Hebrew 'Song of Songs' are catalogued as monocola, couplets, tricolo and quatrains. Other classifications used are the catalogue poem and staircase parallelism. In addition, a new verse form is identified — the 'echelon'*

*pattern — and all its occurrences are listed. In the closing section, problems of pattern identification, types of parallelism and clustering of similar verse patterns are discussed briefly*

## BOOK REVIEWS

Aartun, K 1991. *Studien zur ugaritischen Lexikographie. Mit kultur- und religionsgeschichtlichen Parallelen. Teil I: Bäume, Tiere, Gerüche, Götterepitheta, Götternamen, Verbalbegriffe*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, pp. 218. ISBN 3 447 03164 6.

Kjell Aartun has already made an important contribution to Ugaritic lexicography. In this publication, which promises to be the first of several volumes, his approach is the same as in his earlier studies in this field (*WdO* 4/2, 2, 1968, *UF* 16, 1984, 1-52 and *UF* 17, 1985, 1-47). In the *Einleitung* to the present publication, which should be studied carefully, Aartun demarcates the scope of the book and discusses the challenges, problems, task, text variety, dialect differences and the resulting lexical problems the Ugaritic lexicographer has to face, and what Aartun considers to be the only sound method.

Aartun limits himself to language references, words and expressions which require special examination, words of which the lexical value is not clear, or have simply been cited without explanation. In the present study word constructions are considered, firstly, in the context in which they appear and, secondly, in the framework of the linguistic system to which they belong. Only in the third place is linguistic comparison with related idioms considered, i.e. the question of etymology.

Aartun then sets out the challenges and problems faced in connection with Ugaritic lexicography. Ugaritic, known since 1929, exhibits a very rich and varied vocabulary. In fact, the texts refer to nearly all facets of social life, and touch on all aspects of social relations and spiritual activities of that time. However, an important part of these texts still remains unexplained. Furthermore, many of the present interpretations are either incomplete or provisional, due to the fact that scholars are often working in isolation and arguing on a purely hypothetical basis.

The subtitle of this book indicates that Aartun discusses terms in connection with trees, animals, smells, divine epithets, divine names, and verbal concepts (in total 98). Throughout the study it is clear that Aartun has broadened the lexicographer's horizon. Much background is given, often based on *iconography* (for references see the index, p. 210). As can be expected from a treatment of texts with the ancient Near Eastern fertility cult as its background, we find in the book quite explicit references to human genitals and human sexual relations. Aartun



demonstrates an admirable command of all the texts, discussed against their probable background and in their probable context, and of the various related languages. It is clear, however, that in most of the instances he depends on Arabic as the long list of Arabic words in the index shows.

The book ends with three very useful indexes: text references, words and subjects discussed. The book can be regarded as a major contribution to Ugaritic lexicography. Aartun not only offers sound principles for research that in many cases still remains very problematic, but he also demonstrates how these principles should be applied.

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Dearman, J Andrew 1992. *Religion and culture in ancient Israel*. Peabody, Ma: Hendrickson, pp. 281. US \$ 19.95. ISBN 0 943575 90 7.

The study of religion is always a problematic endeavour. The main reason is possibly the fact that any religion has a variety of appearances. It is not possible to point to any single factor, feature or tradition as representative of a complete religion. Variety is to be found on practically every level of religious practice and thought.

Even though this is well-known, it does not prevent scholars from generalising when they write about religion. Studies abound which present material concerning *the* religion of Israel, as if a single picture can be drawn.

Dearman did not fall into the trap of oversimplification in his study of religion and culture in ancient Israel. To the contrary. He states in the introduction: "In ancient Israel the practice of religion took a variety of forms of social expression" (p. 3). From the title he chose to the formal presentation of the contents, he indicated his view, namely that religion is something which is influenced by external factors like culture. Especially in the first part of the book Dearman continuously correlates textual data with archaeological data, which constitute the material remains of past cultures. Even though these cultures cannot be revived, he illustrates the way in which a clearer picture of the living world of Old Testament religion can contribute to a better understanding of the texts and their history and meaning.

The influential definitions of religion and culture as formulated by the cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, form the point of departure of Dearman's study. Dearman explicitly does not try to present a comprehensive analysis of Israelite religion in its cultural context, but formulates his more modest and specific goal as a treatment of "aspects of the relationship between religion and culture in ancient Israel, using the working definitions of Geertz and adapting a typology of

relationships first proposed by H. Richard Niebuhr" (p. 4). His approach to historical matters is cautiously conservative. Dearman states: "The present writer does not share the skepticism of those who reject the historical analysis of the biblical text in favor of a strictly anthropological approach to Israel's religion or the approach of those whose literary theory requires a strictly non-historical reading of the Old Testament narratives" (p. 7). He specifically deals with concepts like "official" and "popular religion" and remarks that "the term popular religion presupposes a variety of cultic practices and beliefs", whereas "both text and culture reflect substantial diversity in understanding" (of YHWH, the God of Israel) (p.8).

The book consists of two sections. Part One (pp. 11-122) is "a sketch of Israelite religion according to the biblical storyline and in the light of extrabiblical sources" and in Part Two (pp. 123-263) the theme "religion and culture according to some Old Testament traditions" is discussed. It is in the second part that the socio-historical typology of Niebuhr is adapted for the purpose of an analysis of the Old Testament.

Dearman's interest in and thorough knowledge of the results of Syro-Palestinian archaeology become especially apparent in Part One. The section is not based on a comprehensive anthropological theory, but the basic definitions of Geertz are assumed (p. 5). It follows the biblical storyline in three chapters, viz.

- (i) Premonarchic Israel,
- (ii) Israel as a state with monarchy,
- (iii) Israel as a religious community in the exilic and post-exilic periods.

Part Two of the book concerns four important Old Testament traditions: Deuteronomy (chapter 4), the pre-exilic prophets (chapter 5), the wisdom tradition (chapter 6) and the book of Daniel as part of the apocalyptic tradition (chapter 7).

With this book, Dearman produced an excellent text book for the introduction to many aspects of Old Testament and ancient Near Eastern study. Almost every statement is well documented in extensive footnotes. For beginners there is a select bibliography of seventy two titles at the end of the book under the headings of "Israelite religion", "The material culture and history of ancient Israel", and "Religion in the ancient Near East". In the text page references to other relevant sections in the book abound. The book concludes with two indices: an index of modern authors, and a select index of ancient texts.

This publication is a welcome addition to a growing number of books on the history and world of Old Testament religion. The publishers did a fine job and only a few minor printing errors slipped through.

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Levinson, B M (ed.) 1994. *Theory and method in biblical and cuneiform law. Revision, interpolation and development* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 181). Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, pp. 207. US \$ 41. ISBN 18 50 75498 5.

The title of the book says it all. Eight scholars from various parts of the world react to Raymond Westbrook's ideas on the origin and function of the Covenant Code. Westbrook's well-known views on the non-applicability of historical criticism to the interpretation of biblical and cuneiform law is critiqued from various points of view. Westbrook (pp. 15-36) holds that there was no substantial revision of (ancient Near Eastern) law codes prior to the seventh century BCE in Greece, because there had been a lack of intellectual development in the entire region. Consequently, a diachronic approach to the interpretation of these (static) laws forces on them a "model far removed from it intellectually ... the only correct method for the interpretation of is the synchronic approach".

Levinson's argument (pp. 37-59) centres around the sound insight that "synchronic" analysis — Westbrook's approach, which he claims to be based on "empirical facts" — is, like diachronic analysis, an external theoretical construct that may bend and blur the evidence (see also my article elsewhere in this issue). He then demonstrates the measure to which Westbrook's harmonistic reading rewrites the text of the Covenant Code to fit his theory that the Code was an "academic treatise" and as such part of a common static ancient Near Eastern law tradition, and shows that "interpolation" was standard practice in biblical law.

How Greengus (pp. 60-87) can claim that his criticism does not derive from an opposing philosophical position from that of Westbrook (p. 62) is not clear, because his views certainly spring from a position methodologically opposed to Westbrook's. Contrary to Westbrook's presupposed static society Greengus focuses on "dynamic forces operating in ... ancient societies that did stimulate significant reforms and changes" (pp. 64-71) and argues that the extant legal collections represent but a small proportion of the legal tradition of the ancient Near East, which had by and large been transmitted orally and adapted ad hoc as different cases, circumstances, and particular world view might have necessitated.

Buss (pp. 88-90) thinks that distinguishing between natural and positive law (as a descriptive or normative discipline) would clarify the terms of the debate: While natural law remains relatively stable positive law, based upon political power, may change at any time, and positive law in the sense of normative law is not a description of the whole body of law, but simply examples of a proper formulation of law.

Sophie Lafont (pp. 88-118) first critiques Westbrook's global view of ancient history. The impression of an unchanging law on which Westbrook bases his case

is created by the *lieux communs* underlying all human societies. A close look at particular laws, such as the laws on miscarriage, reveals the pluralism, diversity and development in ancient Near Eastern law. She then emphasizes the institutional character of law codes and points out that that legal provisions are not only to be found in codes, but also in royal advice and edicts, which show clear signs of adaptation to new circumstances. Next she ably critiques Westbrook's idea (borrowed from Muffs) that the casuistically formulated Mesopotamian laws derived from the centre of Mesopotamian rule, while codes with a mixed style derived from provincial/peripheral areas, and proposes a useful distinction between interpolations (which Westbrook would not accept) and plagiarism. The interpolator hides behind the identity of an earlier "author", while the technique of plagiarism allows the "author" to ascribe to himself the thinking of predecessors (which was the case with the compiler of the Covenant Code). If a code creates the impression of a carefully constructed entity without interpolations, this is no convincing argument against historical development, since there is always the possibility of plagiarism. Finally she points out differences in the conditions of laws on miscarriage in the various law codes, which, despite an underlying common respect for the unborn life, derived from cultural evolution, change and alterations to which the laws had been adapted. "The diversity of the enforceable laws," she concludes, "is an essential feature of these laws ... It might then be hazardous to build up global and systematic judicial constructions" (p. 118).

Matthews (pp. 119-135) looks at "The anthropology of slavery in the Covenant Code" and compares the various provisions (in the Covenant Code, Deuteronomy and Leviticus) regulating slavery in Israel and points out the changes necessitated by a changing society in which these codes served their purpose. This contribution touches on a very important perspective lacking in Westbrook's approach. Within the limited scope of an article the full anthropological function of laws and law codes could, of course, not be treated. Matthews focuses mostly on economic factors influencing slave laws. Naturally there are quite a few other factors in society necessitating a change in legislation, e.g. political development, changing values, changing religious views, etc.

Morrow (pp. 136-151) addresses the issue of the varying style exhibited by the Covenant Code and focuses on the third- and second person formulations of certain legal provisions. After an investigation into the typical style of various genres in various ancient Near Eastern languages he concludes that a mixing of third and second-person formulations (occurring in the Covenant Code) does not occur in instructional contexts. Neither do law codes employ second-person prescriptive language in protases or apodoses. Westbrook will thus have to explain the occurrence of both these phenomena in the Covenant Code. Morrow suggests

that a cultic revision of the Covenant Code was responsible for the stylistic discrepancies in the Code.

Dale Patrick (pp. 152-159) asks the question, "Who is the evolutionist?" and points out that Westbrook's idea of the static nature of ancient Near Eastern cultural history up to the seventh century BCE was derived from the evolutionist idea of "cultural arrest" — an idea that reduces the text "to grist for the conceptual mill". If one does not subscribe to Westbrook's evolutionist model one would rather look at political, economic and religious changes behind conceptual departures in the Covenant code from "common" ancient Near Eastern law.

Otto (pp. 160-196) discusses "Aspects of legal reforms and reformulations" in various ancient Near Eastern law systems. Legal sentences, he says, were not the sources of court decisions but reflected them and were collected in legal collections to train judges. Since these laws reflected everyday life there was no static "common" law but rather intensive developments reflecting legal history (p. 163). He then demonstrates the purpose of various emendations to different codes, e.g. the Middle Assyrian, Old Babylonian (Eshnunna and Hammurabi), Hittite and Israelite laws. Some of these purposes were limiting the legal powers of the *pater familias*, principle-setting, reflection of social differentiation and administrative changes, development of new values, etc. "These examples show that the legal sentences did not form a static "common law" but had a history of continuous reformulations. These scholarly refinements reflect the continuous reforming of law in society"(p. 182). He then proceeds to discuss the redactional ordering of various First Testament legal collections (pp. 186-196) and links these redactions with specific moments of crisis in the history of Israel.

I do not think Westbrook's theory of a static ancient Near Eastern "global society" with a matching "static" law tradition will survive the intensive criticism presented in this book. As will be clear from the summary above the authors attacked the theory on methodological, cultural-historical, stylistic, redaction-historical, terminological and anthropological levels. The articles present much more than mere criticisms of Westbrook's position, though. They make independent contributions to our knowledge of ancient Near Eastern law and provide the academic community with an important source of information.

Even though Matthews dealt specifically with the anthropology of Israelite law and various authors referred in passing to cultural institutions and cultural functions of legal provisions the purpose of the book would have been well served with a contribution on the anthropological/sociological function of customs, norms, rules, laws and jurisprudence in different kinds of societies and the effect of cultural change (e.g. the influence of changes in the fields of ecology, economy, societal organization, trade, technology, world view, science, and religion) on values,

norms and law. From this perspective the fallacy of presupposing a "static" ancient Near Eastern society would perhaps have become even more conspicuous.

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Hoftijzer J & Van der Kooij, G (eds.) 1991. *The Balaam text from Deir 'Alla re-evaluated* (Proceedings of the International Symposium held at Leiden 21-24 August 1989). Leiden: E J Brill, pp. 324. ISBN 90-04-09317-6.

The Symposium on the Deir 'Alla texts held in Leiden in August 1989 provided the opportunity for stocktaking of the significance and stance of the scientific work that has been done on these texts since their discovery in 1967 by Franken. This symposium and the subsequent publication on hand have satisfied a long-desired need and certainly will become an important source for renewed interest, especially in the light of recent excavations at Deir 'Alla. The following remarks cannot do justice to the substance of every contribution and an overview of the contents and a few comments pertaining to important issues will therefore have to suffice.

Contributions are organized thematically and each subdivision is concluded with a response to the papers in the particular division. As could be expected, the introduction provides a resumé of the excavations at Deir 'Alla by none other than H.J. Franken, M.M. Ibrahim and G. van der Kooij. Phase IX of Deir 'Alla to which the plaster texts are connected, is discussed by Ibrahim and Van der Kooij and they confirm a date between the ninth and eighth century B C. Franken seeks to explain the unusual structure of the sanctuary of Deir 'Alla on the basis of its role as a trade centre in the Late Bronze and Iron Age. Although Deir 'Alla cannot specifically be identified with Succoth, it was most probably a sanctuary in the Succoth valley.

Contributions by A. Lemaire, B.A. Levine and J.A. Hackett (respondent) constitute the second section under the heading: "General Interpretation". Lemaire still defends his idea of the plaster texts as being an Aramean document from Damascus. Levine is convinced of a form of El worship that can be deduced from the texts — even by making use of comparable Rabbinic material.

The third section concentrates on the major debate, namely the classification of the language of the plaster texts. This debate is not restricted to the two scholars (P.K. McCarter and D. Pardee) to whom the topic is allocated, but it pops up in almost all the contributions. The traditional distinction between Canaanite and Aramaic as the bases for classifying the language of the plaster texts as either a Canaanite dialect or an Aramaic one, is questioned critically by McCarter as well as Huehnergard. McCarter reckons that the language can best be described in

terms of a dialect geography. Huehnergard also is of the opinion that the diagnostic features of the language of the plaster texts cannot be explained from either Canaanite or Aramaic languages. He rather looks towards an independent branch of the larger North-West Semitic group. His view too rests strongly on a perception of Proto-Canaanite. Pardee and M. Weippert are representatives of those who still favour a form of Aramaic as classification of the language. J.C. Greenfield rejects all efforts to link the language with Aramaic. His own solution of seeing the language as a local dialect (Gileadite!), does nothing to rescue the case. The distinction that E. Puech makes, needs to be taken seriously. He distinguishes between the script and the language with the implication that the vernacular traditions must be investigated separately from relevant inscriptions.

The papers of J. Hoftijzer and M. Weippert shift the focus to the arrangement of the fragments and to concrete word restorations and problems of interpretation. Both these articles are thought-provoking and major contributions. The arrangement of the fragments of Combination I by Weippert, and his transliteration, will prove helpful for further research. His religious-historical perspective on the texts within a framework of a polytheistic religious practice in Palestine and Trans-Jordania up to the Persian period, challenges Old Testament scholars to take cognisance of these texts. H.P. Muller sees in the "list" of animals mentioned in the texts a perception of the unity of cosmos and order. Animals (birds) may represent chaotic forces to order and may therefore be employed by the author in oracles of doom and the preaching of "return". Whether the classification of the birds really forms a "list" or might semantically be explained from the poetic structure of the parallelism in which they occur, as M. Dijkstra suggests, needs further investigation. Dijkstra also shares the view of Weippert that the genre of Combination I is an *apothegmon*, a sub-genre of a report of a vision. The parallelistic and chiasmic structure of certain lines and their contribution to sensible reading suggestions, are also taken up by Wolters. J.M. Husser compares the literary style of the Oracles in Combination I with Biblical material and considers Ezekiel 24:15-21 to be the closest analogy.

The poor state of the Deir 'Alla texts, especially Combination II, is probably the main reason why scholars shy away from the problems of interpretation and reconstruction of the fragments. The careful admittance by G. van der Kooij of the few new readings since the publication of the *editio princeps*, is an indication of the long road that lies ahead in unravelling the enigma of the plaster texts of Deir 'Alla. The publication on hand will serve as an encouragement for this road ahead.

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