JOURNAL OF NORTHWEST SEMITIC LANGUAGES

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Bob Becking (Utrecht University)

THE POWER OF AN INSCRIPTION:
SOME REMARKS ON THE CANAANITE INSCRIPTION ON A LICE-COMB FROM LACHISH

ABSTRACT

Recent excavations at ancient Lachish have brought to light a lice comb from the Middle Bronze Age. The comb is made out of ivory and should be classified as a luxury item belonging to someone in or around the court. Remains of lice between the remnants of the teeth indicate the use of the comb. A very old Canaanite inscription was incised on one of the sides. The editors were able to decipher the text and offered a translation. I dare to disagree with them on one point, namely the interpretation of the word ḥṭ translated by them as "tusk". In my view, this word should be interpreted as "inscription" leading to a translation: "May this inscription root out the lice of the hai[r and the] beard". The text then would magically underscore the use of the comb.

Ophir Carmel Fofliger (University of Haifa)

OBLIQUE PRONOUN REMNANTS ON COMPARATIVE PREPOSITIONS IN WEST SEMITIC[1]

ABSTRACT

This paper shows evidence of various comparative prepositions in West Semitic languages, which are affixed by at least one of the morphemes h, w, y or t. It is suggested that these morphemes are remnants of the independent oblique pronoun paradigm. These pronouns followed comparative prepositions, and later on they showed phonetic and functional erosion, leaving remnants. The premise is that (pro)nominal phrases following comparative prepositions are generally more individuated, meaning they function prototypically as a subject. Since, in this position, those (pro)nominal phrases are never the subject, they were marked with the oblique pronoun as non-nominative.

Kathryn McConaughy Medill (University of Washington)

BRING TO THE ALTAR FOR BURNING OR BURN ON THE ALTAR? INTERPRETING *HIQTÎR HAMMIZBĒḤÂ**

ABSTRACT

Several scholars (e.g., Joüon and Muraoka 2006:§93e) have proposed that the directive he *appears with a static location-marking function in expressions dealing with sacrifice "on the altar"* (הַמִּזְבֵּחָה; *e.g., Exod 29:13) although this suffix is usually terminative (e.g., Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze 2017:§28.1), since the most commonly associated verb,* הִקְטִיר *("turn into smoke"), has not been understood to include motion in its semantics. However, analysis shows that in expressions dealing with sacrificing on the altar, the altar is overwhelmingly treated as the semantic Goal of motion, and that in these and other expressions* הִקְטִיר *is a motion verb. This has consequences for the interpretation of the spatial conceptualization of sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible.*

Josiah D Peeler (Mid-Atlantic Christian University)

"TERROR ON EVERY SIDE": METATHESIS AS SIEGEWORKS IN EZEK 7:15

ABSTRACT

Kalimi does not include רָעָב in the intentional metathesis between חֶרֶב and דֶּבֶר in Ezek 7:15 because of his methodology. This verse, however, skilfully uses several rhetorical and literary devices to illustrate YHWH's judgments against Judah which supersede his methodology – metathesis is present across the lexemes חֶרֶב, דֶּבֶר, and רָעָב, the consonants ר and ב reposition across these three lexemes, the anagrammatic paronomasia in the phrase בָּעִיר רָעָב creates a visual pun, the arrangement of the lexemes רָעָב and דֶּבֶר in the MT of Ezek 7:15 creates a chiasmus, and the left dislocation of the phrase וַאֲשֶׁר בָּעִיר as well as the lexical choice of עִיר and רָעָב instead of other options facilitate anagrammatic paronomasia which graphematically mimics a siege.

Benjamin D Suchard (KU Leuven/Leiden University)

PROTO-SEMITIC EXISTENTIALS: *YΘAW* AND *LAΘΘAW*[1]

ABSTRACT

A historical relationship has long been suspected between the Northwest Semitic existential particles like Biblical Hebrew יֵשׁ and Biblical Aramaic אִיתַי, negative existentials like Syriac layt *and Akkadian* laššu, *the Arabic negative copula* laysa, *and the East Semitic verbs* i-ša-wu *"to exist" (Eblaite) and* išû *"to have" (Akkadian). But due to various formal and semantic problems, no Proto-Semitic reconstruction from which all these words can regularly be derived has yet been put forward. This article argues that the Akkadian sense of "to have" is typologically the oldest and reconstructs a Proto-Semitic grammaticalization of* *yiyθaw *"it has" to* *yθaw *"there is/are". Also in Proto-Semitic, a negative counterpart was formed through contraction with the negative adverb "not", yielding* *layθaw *and* *laθθaw.

Ian B Turner (Independent scholar)

"I SPOKE TO THE PROPHETS": DESCRIBING COHESION AND COHERENCE IN HOSEA 12-13 WITH SFL-BASED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates how Halliday's SFL and Hasan's work on literary theme can describe cohesive patterns relevant for literary-thematic coherence in Hosea 12-13. I first conduct cohesive harmony analysis. This describes how participants, processes, and circumstances in the text are connected by cohesive devices (co-reference, substitution/ellipsis, lexical cohesion, and conjunction), and how cohesive chains interact semantically to create textual unity. Second, I analyze patterns of clause combining, where the text uses varying clause types to signify logico-semantic relationships between clauses and clause complexes. Synthesis of these results suggests that statements of YHWH's identity (12:6; 10; 13:4) are thematically prominent and shape the literary structure of divine indictment of Ephraim/Israel's sin.

BOOK REVIEW

Gmirkin, R E 2022. *Plato's* Timaeus *and the Biblical Creation Accounts: Cosmic Monotheism and Terrestrial Polytheism in the Primordial History.* Abingdon / New York: Routledge. 360 pages. ISBN 9781032020822. £130.00.

Since 2006, the author has published three monographs all related to the relationship between the Greek and ancient Near Eastern thought worlds: *Berossus and Genesis, Manetho and Exodus* (2006); *Plato and the Creation of the Hebrew Bible* (2017) and *Plato's* Timaeus *and the Biblical Creation Accounts: Cosmic Monotheism and Terrestrial Polytheism in the Primordial History* (2022). In the last monograph, he argues that accounts of the creation of the world described in Genesis 1 and the story of the first humans in Genesis 2-3 draw directly on Plato's account of the origins of the universe, mortal life and evil, containing equal parts of science, theology and myth. In these books, Gmirkin contributes on various levels. Firstly, he operates with a novel methodological paradigm according to which Biblical Hebrew texts should be seen as Second Temple texts. This late dating, in his opinion, opens the possibility of identifying Platonic influence on the Hebrew Bible.

Secondly, he ascribes a special role to the Alexandrian library in this regard. In *Berossus and Genesis* he proposes a new theory concerning the date and circumstances of the composition of the Pentateuch. The central thesis of that book is that the Hebrew Pentateuch was composed in its entirety between 272 and 270 BCE by Jewish scholars in Alexandria by using textual material from the Alexandrian library (Gmirkin 2006:12). He, in fact, states that the 70/72 scholars that are mentioned in the Aristeas book are the same persons who were involved in composing the Hebrew as well as the Greek. According to the model first proposed in Gmirkin (2006:240-256), ruling class elites who created the Pentateuch in ca. 270 BCE drew on Greek historiographical, legal and literary writings found at the Great Library of Alexandria, including the writings of Plato (Gmirkin 2017). To be sure he has a complicated and speculative view of how this could have taken place. In his opinion, these educated Jewish and Samaritan educated elites both authored the Pentateuch in its Hebrew original and translated it into Greek (the Septuagint). Gmirkin (2017) extensively documented the use of Plato's *Laws* as a key source for the Laws of Moses. In the current text, Plato's *Timaeus* is argued as a key source for Genesis 1-11 as a whole

and for the cosmogony of Genesis 1 in particular. The proposed circumstances of authorship at the Museum and Great Library of Alexandria provide a context in which Jewish scholars knowledgeable in both Greek and Hebrew could reasonably have had access to Plato's *Timaeus* and other Greek scientific writings (Gmirkin 2022:61). Thus, in this model, Jewish and Samaritan scholars at Alexandria created the original Hebrew text, translated it into Greek, and brought back the Hebrew text to Judah and Samaria. This, according to Gmirkin, explains why the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint translation at Alexandria was the proto-LXX Hebrew text rather than the MT: the proto-LXX Hebrew text was the original text of the Pentateuch created ca. 270 BCE and the MT family of texts was a later textual phenomenon, first documented in Qumran fragments of ca. 200 BCE or later, and not standardized to conform to an authoritative temple version until the first-century CE, according to evidence assembled in Tov (2015:220 n. 37).

As far as the 2022 study is concerned, the author focuses on creation stories that occur in Genesis. He deals with a range of different aspects. Firstly, concerning his view on biblical creation myths, he infers that the creators of the Pentateuch used literary sources found at the Library of Alexandria. This he sees as "compelling evidence for some level of communication and collaboration between the authors of the Pentateuch and the Septuagint scholars at Alexandria's Museum" (Gmirkin 2006:14).

In Chapter 1 of *Plato's Timaeus*, Gmirkin endeavours to identify the Greek scientific, theological and philosophical elements in the cosmogony of Genesis 1. Chapter 2 discusses whether the Genesis 1 account can accurately be described as a creation myth, as it often has been in the past on the assumption that it represents an ancient Near Eastern tradition and that all such traditions fall into the category of myth rather than science.

The chapter on Greek cosmogonies begins with a survey of the scientific theories on cosmogony espoused by all the Greek natural philosophers from Thales to Aristotle and Zeno. Gmirkin then compares the cosmogony of Genesis 1 to see if it conforms to the Greek category of scientific cosmogony. He determines that it addresses the same basic questions as the scientific cosmogonies, proposes many of the same physical mechanisms featured in Greek cosmogonies, and is phrased in the similar parsimonious style that sets scientific cosmogonies apart from ancient Near Eastern and Greek creation myths. At the same time, it also incorporates narrative story elements with theological content in the same novel fashion as Plato's *Timaeus*. He concludes that the Genesis 1 cosmogony, like the cosmogony

in the first half of Plato's *Timaeus*, is of a hybrid scientific-theological variety previously known otherwise only from Plato.

He also deals with Genesis 1 as Science in Chapter 5. Here he undertakes a verse-by-verse exposition of the first creation account of Genesis against the background of Greek natural science and Plato's *Timaeus*. He identifies the scientific substratum of this cosmogony and shows its compatibility with the scientific explanations of the Greek natural philosophers (especially Zeno) as well as with the first half of Plato's *Timaeus*. He also determines the theological super-stratum in which the biblical authors emphasized the divine guidance or steering of the physical ordering of the universe, and God's divine purpose at every stage of this ordering process, in line with the tenets of Plato's theology, sometimes directly drawing on Plato's *Timeaus*.

Russell Gmirkin has broken new ground with his new publication. It is clear to me that the translator(s) of Genesis had contact with Plato's *Timeaus*. However, he does indulge in pure speculation in some instances. I find no primary evidence that the LXX was used in the Alexandrian library.

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