# JOURNAL OF NORTHWEST SEMITIC LANGUAGES

**Contributions and books for review should be sent to**
The Editor: *JNSL*
Department of Ancient Studies
Stellenbosch University
Private Bag X1, Matieland, ZA-7602
SOUTH AFRICA
e-mail: ancient7@sun.ac.za

**Subscriptions should be sent to the same address but marked as**
Subscription: *JNSL*

**House rules**
Articles submitted for publication must be according to the house rules
on the homepage

*JNSL* **homepage (house rules, contents, subscription)**
http://academic.sun.ac.za/jnsl/

# CONTENTS

*Jean-Marie Dederen (University of Venda, retired) and*
*Jennifer Mokakabye (Chris Hani House Museum)*

# FRIEND OR FOE? DANGEROUS ANIMALS IN THE SYMBOLIC UNIVERSE OF THE NEOLITHIC ART OF ANATOLIA AND THE LEVANT

## ABSTRACT

*This study revolves around the enigmatic, wide-spread production and use of wild animal imagery in the early sedentary communities of the Neolithic Near East. Earlier interpreters have tried to make sense of the portrayals of these "animals of violence" (Hodder 2006) in terms of assumed prehistoric religious beliefs and activities in which male and female divinities and the concept of fertility played a central role (Mellaart 1967; Cauvin 2000). More recent researchers have argued, in contrast, that they should be read as visual representations of the new forms of social hierarchy and leadership that have emerged along the road towards complex society (Hodder 2006, 2010; Meskell 2008; Hodder and Meskell 2011:260). It is contended here that an explanation based on the metaphysical concepts of "animal power" and "cosmic unity" between hunter and prey – key features of the ideology of hunters across the globe – probably much closer resembles the mindset of the artists who have created the art.*

*David J Fuller (Canadian Baptist Theological Seminary and College)*

# COHESION AS A CRITERION FOR THE PRAGMATICS OF BIBLICAL HEBREW WORD ORDER: A NEW PROPOSAL WITH APPLICATION TO HABAKKUK 1:5-2:6A

## ABSTRACT

*This study utilizes the methodology of cohesion analysis within the framework of functional grammar to develop a starting point for a textually grounded set of criteria for determining the function of marked word-order constructions in a discourse. The provisional findings from some soundings in Habakkuk 1-2 reveal that most of the fronted constructions in this pericope serve to indicate boundaries. Whether or not the fronted element has cohesive ties elsewhere in the pericope is not necessarily of immediate use in understanding the purpose of the given instance of fronting. Another discovery is that a fronted construction often co-occurs with a change of grammatical subject (relative to the previous clause), but this new subject itself is not fronted.*

*Ethan C Jones (New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary)*
# A KINGDOM TORN: ON THE AGENCY OF 2 KGS 17:21

*ABSTRACT*

*2 Kings 17 is considered a crux chapter in the book of Kings. Within the chapter, v. 21 has received significant scholarly attention. Scholars have read קָרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל as active "he [YHWH] tore Israel" as well as medial "Israel tore itself away". The difference speaks to the agency of the verb as well as the reason for exile. In either reading, however, there has been a lack of linguistic analysis and argumentation. In response, this article reads the text anew with cross-linguistic research on predication. This paper presents a more judicious study of the subject and semantics of קָרַע. It demonstrates that the best reading of 2 Kgs 17:21 is "YHWH tore Israel from the house of David". The contribution of this article is not a new, but rather a more reasoned, reading of v. 21.*

*Uri Mor (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)*

# FINAL *M/N* INTERCHANGES IN ANCIENT HEBREW AND ARAMAIC[1]

*ABSTRACT*

*Interchanges between* mem *and* nun *in final position are well-known in rabbinic literature and adjacent corpora. This feature and its implications have been discussed extensively in scholarly literature. According to the prevailing view, the data betray two distinguishable phenomena: (a) final vowel nasalization; (b) scribal differentiation between nominal and verbal forms, reflected in the plural suffix. The paper offers a reexamination of the data, including new evidence, from a cross-dialectal perspective. It concludes that (a) nasalization was prevalent in Palestine not only in various dialects of Hebrew and Aramaic but also in Punic and Koine Greek; (b) scribal differentiation developed in Babylonia as early as the Amoraic period, wherefore its manifestations in rabbinic manuscripts should not be attributed to lateness but rather to Babylonian tradition.*

*Nadav Na'aman (Tel Aviv University)*

# THE LATE IRON AGE "ASSESSMENT OSTRACON" IN CONTEXT

## ABSTRACT

*The article suggests a new rendering and interpretation of the final part of the non-provenanced "assessment ostracon". It claims that whereas lines 5-7 present the payments that ʿAzzûr delivered to the royal officials, lines 8-9 relate the payment he should pay in the future. Lines 8-9 should be translated, "to your assessment (לְעֶרְכְּךָ: 2 shekel and 12 (gerahs) and again (וְשֵׁנָת) 1 [shekel] and 6 (gerahs)". The ostracon opens a narrow window to the question of how the king and his officials calculated the payments they collected from their subjects.*

*Hugo A T Ross (University College London)*

# RE-EVALUATING THE AMORITE VERB: EXPRESSIONS OF TENSE, MOOD AND ASPECT IN THE PREFIX CONJUGATION

## ABSTRACT

*Until recently, the study of Amorite has been limited to onomastic material and loanwords, primarily in Akkadian texts. The formulaic nature of personal names has restricted the range of attested verbal forms, shrouding the true nature of the Amorite verbal system. However, recently published texts containing full sentences provide invaluable examples of numerous verbal forms. This article analyses attestations of the Prefix Conjugation therein, with reference to comparative Semitic evidence, in order to assess their functions with respect to the expression of tense, mood, and aspect. The findings show that the Amorite tense-mood-aspect system is of Northwest Semitic derivation, assuaging long-standing doubts regarding the language's classification.*

# BOOK REVIEW

Phillips's volume is an annotated translation of the Syriac Peshitta, edited on behalf of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament (IOSOT) by the Peshitta Institute (PI) of Amsterdam. In the 1990s, the PI was requested to consider publishing an English translation of the Peshitta (the Syriac translation of the Hebrew Bible). It thus represents the enigmatic genre of "a translation of a translation" (like the translations made of the Septuagint text). At the Oslo congress of the IOSOT in 1998 it was formally decided that a project with the working title "The New English Annotated Translation of the Syriac Bible (NEATSB)" would be started. The PI situated at the University of Leiden, and later at the Free University of Amsterdam, was tasked to lead this project. After two preparatory conferences in 1990 and 2004, the project was kicked off formally in 2005 with the aim of producing "The Bible of Edessa", the name that was chosen for the end product of the project. This name was chosen because it was the Aramaic dialect of the Upper-Mesopotamian city Edessa (called Syriac) that was used in the Peshitta, and it is also the most-likely location where this ancient translation of the Hebrew Bible (HB) had its origin.

In the General Preface to the Chronicles volume, Phillips provides more information about the translation technique that was followed in the Chronicles volume (and in the project as a whole). As indicated above, to do "a translation of a translation" remains a challenging task. Phillips reflects informatively on the role that the parent text – in this case, the Hebrew of the HB – should play in translating the Peshitta text into English. If the Hebrew text would be involved on a primary basis, it would "entail the risk of assimilating the Peshitta to the Hebrew or even to an existing English translation of the Hebrew" (p. 3). Therefore, in the translation of Peshitta Chronicles Phillips involved the Hebrew text at most on a secondary level: "it is called in as arbiter if the context does not clarify which meaning within the usual semantic range of the Syriac word should be chosen" (p.3). In doing so, the aim is "to convey the impression that the Peshitta text created on Syriac readers or listeners not knowing Hebrew,

and to translate it as they would have understood it" (p. 2). In this regard, the *Bible of Edessa* project follows approximately the same translation technique as that followed in the Septuagint translation *La Bible d'Alexandrie*. The produced English translation is therefore "idiomatic, flowing, smooth, and comprehensible English that is an adequate representation of the Syriac" (p. 4).

Turning to Chronicles specifically, Phillips provides a very useful discussion in the Introduction (pp. 14-29) of the peculiarities of Peshitta Chronicles. This is very helpful, because one gets information on Chronicles that is normally not discussed in standard commentaries on the (Hebrew) biblical book. The Peshitta to Chronicles diverges from the Hebrew in several instances. Phillips indicates that this can be the result of one of several phenomena: "the copy (exemplar) which the translator was using was defective or difficult to read, the translator did not understand the text and guessed or left things out and, finally, the translator is interpreting the Hebrew text either to make it clearer or to make the text concur with his own religious or moral preoccupations" (p. 18). Phillips discussed some interesting examples of divergences and/or interpretative additions: (i) The frequent use of the Shekina concept (in the sense of 'the dwelling presence of God') in Chronicles compared to other Peshitta biblical books; (ii) The omission of or limitation of references to musical instruments in Peshitta Chronicles; and (iii) The insertion of the Kaddish prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:9-19.

One aspect that remains the same for the Hebrew and Syriac versions of Chronicles, however, is that both traditions reflect clearly the Chronicler's use of Deuteronomistic source texts (Samuel-Kings, in particular). Phillips is right that any translation of Chronicles, whether it is from Hebrew or Syriac, or from any other ancient language, should take this fact into account. He rightly argues: "The translator [of the Peshitta] was certainly a scholar who worked with as many sources as were available to him. Of these, one thing is quite sure: he worked with the books of Samuel and Kings open in front of him and applied the 'binocular' view offered to him by the very nature of the Hebrew text of Chronicles. In many cases the translation has either aligned the text of Chronicles on the text of Samuel-Kings or it has conflated the two texts …" (p. 19). This poses a challenge to the translator.

As mentioned above, a further challenge is that Peshitta Chronicles "contains a very large amount of very varying and diversified interpretative material. However precisely because of its diversity, it is frustratingly

difficult to pinpoint a precise socio-historical context, a *Sitz im Leben* [for the Peshitta translation]. Some elements are certainly Jewish in origin, like the addition of the Kaddish prayer in 1 Chron 29:19, others, like the mention of the 'canonical' hours of prayer in 1 Chron 15:21 are very probably Christian" (p. 18). Because of the high level of textual divergences and interpretative additions in Peshitta Chronicles (compared to Hebrew texts of the book), Phillips has decided to deviate from *The Bible of Edessa* policy by indicating these divergences and additions in the translation with italics. In other volumes of *The Bible of Edessa* these are simply discussed in the footnoted annotations. Phillips's is laudable decision, because it is indeed helping the reader "to be aware of when the Syriac is being original without however making the text illegible" (p. 28).

A very interesting part of the Introduction is Phillips's summary of the reception of Peshitta Chronicles in the Syriac churches. Phillips indicates that "[f]or a long time, scholars have observed that Chronicles had a chequered history as far as its canonicity was concerned. Its reception in the West Syriac and East Syriac Churches does not seem to have followed the same pattern and some authors have stated blankly that Chronicles was not accepted as canonical by the Church of the East" (p. 23). However, Phillips refutes the last-mentioned point by discussing the quotations of Chronicles in patristic authors, but also in the debates of the so-called "theoreticians" of canonicity. He concludes from these data "[w]e can thus note that the Church of the East did not purely and simply reject the book and that at some stage ... it was fully incorporated into the canon" (p. 28).

The volume's footnoted annotations (read together with the italicized words in the main text) provide valuable and accessible information about the technical background to the translation. Phillips performed his task with great diligence, focusing on many details. However, the extensive footnotes do not distract from the task at hand, namely, to provide an English translation of Peshitta Chronicles.

Technically, the volume is well-prepared. One confusing aspect is, however, that there are a few references in the Introduction to sections 2a or 2b. Only after reading sections 2.1 and 2.2 one realizes that "2a" and "2b" actually refer to "2.1" and "2.2" and that the differences are probably remnants of an earlier stage of the manuscript preparation that were not corrected in the final version. The book ends with a very useful index of the Syriac words that are discussed in the annotations. Through this index the reader of Phillips's book can establish where more general patterns occur in the Peshitta text.

This book can certainly be highly recommended. Not only Peshitta specialists will benefit from it, but it is also very useful for any scholar of Chronicles, whether in the HB or Peshitta.

Louis C Jonker
Stellenbosch University