

# JOURNAL OF NORTHWEST SEMITIC LANGUAGES

VOLUME 25/2

1999

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*at the University of Stellenbosch  
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Published by the Department of Ancient Studies  
University of Stellenbosch

The *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*  
(ISSN 0259-0131) is published half-yearly

JNSL is an accredited South African journal listed in the *International Bibliography of Social Sciences*. It publishes peer reviewed research articles on the Ancient Near East. As part of the *peer review policy* all contributions are refereed before publication by scholars who are recognised as experts in the particular field of study.

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*Wilfred G E Watson (Newcastle upon Tyne)*

**"MESSAGE" IN MYTH AND MISSIVE:  
UGARITIC *ṭḥm***

**ABSTRACT**

*All the occurrences of the Ugaritic term *ṭḥm*, 'message', (which is used only in the mythological texts and in letters) are discussed, some comparison is provided with ancient Near Eastern texts, particularly with respect to parallel word pairs, a table for letters using *ṭḥm* is provided and conclusions as to usage and relative dating are proposed.*

*Piet B Dirksen (University of Leiden)*

**1 CHRONICLES 5:1-2**

**ABSTRACT**

*The parenthetical remark in 1 Chron 5:1-2 was meant to explain how the tribe of Reuben became so insignificant in spite of Reuben being Jacob/Israel's firstborn. Reuben's birthright was passed to Joseph. The writer emphasizes that Judah's prominence and especially his bringing forth the "nagid" had nothing to do with it. This is motivated by his conviction that Judah's bringing forth the "nagid" was part of the process which ended in the building of the temple, and therefore was dependent upon God's free choice only.*

*M O'Connor (Catholic University of America)*

**BIBLICAL HEBREW LEXICOGRAPHY: ִט  
'CHILDREN, DEPENDENTS' IN BIBLICAL AND  
QUMRANIC HEBREW**

**ABSTRACT**

*Biblical Hebrew ִט is polysemous between the superordinate term 'dependents' and its hyponym 'children'. The argument for the former sense was first advanced by Ludwig Koehler and recently extended and clarified by Clemens Locher. Recent lexica have relied too much on the translation equivalents 'children' and the like and have ignored the complexity of passages such as Numbers 31 and 32, examined in detail. The term in Qumranic Hebrew may also evidence such polysemy.*

*Joseph Fleishman (Bar-Ilan University)*

**WHY DID AHASUERUS CONSENT TO ANNIHILATE  
THE JEWS?**

**ABSTRACT**

*Haman prevailed upon the king to consent to his plan to annihilate the Jews of Persia because of his successful portrayal of the Jews as a peculiar and dangerous element. We may discern five stages in Haman's imputation, each highlighting their peculiarity and the inherent threat they pose on account of their unique and strange ways. Haman's words fell on an ear primed by the widespread antimony toward the Jews, which was, seemingly, a result of their singular and anomalous lifestyle.*

*William H U Anderson (St. Stephens College)*

# THE SEMANTIC IMPLICATIONS OF רעות רוח AND הבל IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND FOR QOHELETH

## ABSTRACT

*This article not only reviews the linguistic analysis of הבל and רעות רוח in the Hebrew Bible and for Qoheleth but also provides a critique of the various understandings of them. The article ultimately adopts a one-word transliteration of הבל (hevel) in Qoheleth – thus insuring the author’s single term approach – while not denying the many loaded implications of the term as a running play of words with the specific topoi he discussed. This provides a context specific approach within the book but avoids the pitfalls of the plethora of schemas in current Qoheleth studies which attempt to box the term in or obscure its nature as a single technical term – the key to understand the book.*

*Jacobus A Naudé (University of the Free State)*

## SYNTACTIC ASPECTS OF CO-ORDINATE SUBJECTS WITH INDEPENDENT PERSONAL PRONOUNS

## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to develop the main lines pertaining to a syntactic account of the so-called co-ordinate subjects with independent personal pronouns in Biblical Hebrew within the framework of the Minimalist Program. It is suggested that the co-ordinate structures are adjuncts rather than sentence subjects. The subject of a sentence containing such an adjunct assumes the nature of a covert nominative-case pronoun, co-indexed with the independent personal pronoun (the first element) of the adjunct or with the adjunct as a whole, whereas the adjunct (the co-ordinate structure) functions as a quantification phrase. The structural position thereof seems to coincide with that of a dislocated constituent in a left/right dislocation, namely a base generation in an adjunct position.*

*Eep Talstra (Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam)*

## **READING BIBLICAL HEBREW POETRY - LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE OR RHETORICAL DEVICE?**

### *ABSTRACT*

*The issue addressed in this paper is how to find a proper balance between linguistic 'structure' and rhetorical 'strategy' in the analysis of biblical Hebrew poetry. The question is: what kind of position could the study of syntax have in the area of stylistic studies? What are the options of a syntactically based discourse analysis of poetic texts? Research practice often seems to suggest that linguists must leave the reading of poetic texts to the rhetorically well-equipped, to the exegete with artistic expertise. This paper proposes the following line of argumentation: poetic devices make use of the same grammar as do prose texts, though they exhibit a different selection, making repeated and preferred choices from the available possibilities. One should differentiate between the linguistic system in general and special markers which together create a specific poetic composition. This will help in the description of a poetic text as a discourse, i.e. as a process rather than as a 'thing of beauty', a more or less static picture, as is often done in proposals on rhetorical analysis. The task, therefore, is to begin the analysis of pieces of literary art in terms of a linguistic system: clause patterns, verbal system, pronominal reference, topicalisation, etc., before entering the world of lexical repetition, chiasms and inclusions. The discussion of the composition of Isaiah 41 is taken as an example of the procedures of the discourse analysis proposed.*

*Arie van der Kooij (Leiden University)*

## **THE USE OF THE GREEK BIBLE IN II MACCABEES**

### *ABSTRACT*

*The Second Book of Maccabees contains quotations from several books of the Greek Bible (the Septuagint). In this contribution, examples of three types of passages are discussed: explicit quotations, implicit quotations and allusions. Interestingly, the explicit quotations are all from the Law of Moses. It is argued that passages from Exod 15; 19 and Deut 32 have been understood as prophecies and have been applied to the time and person of Judas the Maccabee as perceived by the author of 2 Maccabees. The issue of leadership turns out to be an important element (2:17 and 15:12-16).*

*Johann Cook (University of Stellenbosch)*

## **CONTEXTUAL EXEGETICAL INTERPRETATIONS IN THE SEPTUAGINT OF PROVERBS**

### *ABSTRACT*

*The LXX version of Proverbs is a unique translated unit. It contains, inter alia, references to external data; a number of traditions from classical sources, for example, are utilised. Moreover, the law of Moses plays a much more prominent role in the Greek than in the Hebrew parent text. These textual phenomena are directly related to the historical context in which this unit came to be. The person(s) responsible for this unit also considered smaller and larger contexts in his interpretation of this parent text. He made use of additions when he deemed this necessary and in some instances presents unique contextual exegetical interpretations.*

*Helen Efthimiadis-Keith (University of the North)*

## **THE DREAM OF JUDITH: A JUNGIAN PERSPECTIVE**

### *ABSTRACT*

*The paper employs Jungian psychoanalytic categories to interpret the book of Judith as mirror of the Jewish soul. Following Jung, it proposes that myths reflect the psychological exigencies of the nation from which they stem, and interprets the book as a dream or myth in which all the characters represent the psychological complexities of the dreaming subject. The paper thus treats the dynamics that occur between the (main) characters in Judith as reflective of the (often) discordant dynamics within the soul of the Jewish nation at the time of the book's main events.*

*C H J van der Merwe (University of Stellenbosch)*

# EXPLAINING FRONTING IN BIBLICAL HEBREW

## ABSTRACT

*In this paper it is argued that an adequate explanation of the fronting should entail more than the listing of possible functional values this linguistic construction may express. A theoretical frame of reference in terms of the notion "information structure" is proposed as providing a coherent explanation of fronting in BH. The value of this framework is illustrated by means of a pilot study of cases of fronting in Deut 31 and 32 that includes prose and poetry.*

*Arthur J Seltzer (University of Stellenbosch)*

## **JONAH IN THE BELLY OF THE GREAT FISH:**

### **THE BIRTH OF MESSIAH BEN JOSEPH**

"The son of the widow of Zarepath was [the prophet] Jonah, and he was Messiah ben Joseph" (ילקות חדש, משיח, כב, קנב).

## ABSTRACT

*In the Rabbinic tradition, the notion that the Bible text contains numerous and ever deeper levels of meaning beyond that of the literal is central to the Commentary literature, the Midrash, and the Kabbalistic mystical tradition. The term "Pardes", the "mystical Orchard" is often used to describe this structure and content of meaning within the Biblical text, moving from the "P'shat", the literal understanding, to the "Remez" (allusion), to the "D'rash", the homiletic exposition, to the "Sod", the most interior, "secret" meaning of the text. Applying the process of understanding of "Pardes" to the book of Jonah, what at first glance might seem to be a simple narrative of a Hebrew prophet who sought to evade the divine command to prophecy to gentile Nineveh is transformed into an esoteric journey of immense depth into the relationship of the body to the soul, the process of reincarnation, the cosmic struggle of good against evil, both in this world and the next, and the development of the soul which was incarnated into the Prophet Jonah, and which, in its final incarnation, will fulfill its divinely intended life task as Messiah ben Joseph. Therefore, from this perspective, the events of the life of Jonah the prophet can only be fully understood when viewed as preparation for his reincarnated soul's ultimate task as Messiah ben Joseph.*

*Othmar Keel (University of Fribourg, Switzerland)*

# **POWERFUL SYMBOLS OF VICTORY**

## **THE PARTS STAY THE SAME, THE ACTORS CHANGE**

### *ABSTRACT*

*In the Near East and Egypt in ancient times war was not exclusively a secular matter. Many rites and symbols visualize the participation of divine powers in the legitimation, execution and success of war. This contribution does not deal with the numerous biblical, oriental and Egyptian texts that provide evidence. It refers only to a number of biblical texts relating to this subject which have possibly been inspired by Egyptian iconography or at least **also** provide evidence of this. It seems that the texts inspired by Egyptian iconography partly misunderstood the images that were the source of it.*

*Sakkie Cornelius (University of Stellenbosch)*

## **THE GODDESS QEDESHEH IN SYRO-PALESTINIAN ICONOGRAPHY**

### *ABSTRACT*

*Nineteenth dynasty Egyptian stelae depict a naked goddess standing on a lion holding serpents and flowers and flanked by male deities (or sometimes alone). She is identified by the inscriptions as Qedesh/et. This image is compared with similar ones on other artistic media from Syro-Palestine: golden pendants from Syria and clay plaques from Palestine/Israel. In the past these figurines were too easily identified as Asherah. The deity represented is rather Qedeshet, an independent goddess who was very popular in Egypt. On Syro-Palestinian examples she stands on a lion, but she is also shown on horseback. This is an indication that she is connected not only with sex but also with warfare, which was a common motif in this period. She mostly wears the Hathor wig and holds plants, but it is uncertain if she is holding serpents.*

## BOOK REVIEWS

Fox, Michael V 1999. *A TIME TO BUILD AND A TIME TO TEAR DOWN - A Rereading of Ecclesiastes*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge U.K.: WB Eerdmans. pp. 422. ISBN 0-8028-4292-5

Michael Fox is surely currently the Chief Sage amongst the modern interpreters of biblical wisdom literature. Not for nothing has he been invited to deliver keynote addresses on wisdom at the congress of the *IOSOT* (International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament) held in Cambridge (1995) and more recently at the *Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense* on Qohelet which took place in Leuven in July 1997. His latest monograph, under review, entails a re-reading of Ecclesiastes.

Michael Fox is a prolific writer, an original thinker, a creative and inventive but cautious academic. He believes in scrutinising the original sources against their historical backgrounds in order to gain understanding. He is critical even of his own works, hence his dialogue with "Fox 1987" in this monograph. Although he follows rigid theoretical presuppositions in his interpretations, he is not overtly theoretically minded. He has a sharp eye for the practical situations of everyday life. Consequently he is currently writing a commentary on Qohelet for use in the synagogue and for lay study. He is also a kind of philosopher taking issue with and at times agreeing with Camus via Ecclesiastes. He has the academic qualifications and experience to present a fresh interpretation of Qohelet.

This newest monograph by Professor Fox represents a thorough rereading of Qohelet. It began as a revision of his study *Qohelet and His Contradictions* (JSOT 1987). Anyone acquainted with this excellent work will soon realise that the latest book is to a large extent a novel endeavour, although he does stick to the basic theses of the previous monograph. Whereas the former study concentrated on Qohelet's contradictions, the present one places more emphasis on the constructive, the building up. The author has clearly matured over the past decade in his reflections on this highly problematic book in the Hebrew canon. He has endeavoured to understand the seeming contradictions in Ecclesiastes by delving beyond the superficial surface structures into the deep structures where the true consistency of this fascinating book is to be found. The innovative aspect of this endeavour seems to be obvious and (post)modern. Fox's basic tenet is: the contradictions in Qohelet are real and intended. They should therefore be interpreted and *not* eliminated! He naturally takes to task those colleagues who try to understand Qohelet by restructuring and deconstructing certain phrases as non-Ecclesiastian. Fox, however, takes the book as it stands (including the postscript) seriously without falling into the snare of being fundamentalistic. On the contrary, he presents an astonishing, nearly postmodernist reading of this ancient Hebrew book!

An extremely creative and rewarding approach followed by the author is the constant dialogue into which he enters with the (post)modernist, existentialist philosopher, Albert Camus. Many chapters are opened with a suggestive quotation from Camus. Fox discovers striking affinities between Qohelet and Camus. His interpretation of the Semitic concept *hebel* as absurd is central to his treatment of this book. An important insight is that to perceive reality as absurd does not *per se* mean that one is nihilistic. Fox also keeps the necessary distance between Qohelet and Camus, for whom the gods have disappeared into thin air. For Qohelet God is real but

incomprehensible and mysterious: "(God) is the determinant, but even he does not determine everything" (Fox p. xi).

The monograph by Fox represents an honest endeavour to understand a difficult, seemingly philosophically inclined ancient book by a highly competent academic. The interpretation is refreshingly novel; daring at times; provocative. The author does not shy away from confrontation and dialogue. He adopts a fair approach towards the views of opponents. He also makes use of modern narratological insights into what he calls the hierarchy of perspectives (p. 367). He actually applies a number of theoretical insights in order to understand the text against its historical background. The comparative approach is utilised "holistically". He moreover deals with the Hebrew Qohelet as a literary product. He is quite eclectic in his choice of methodology and approaches to understand the text. In addition to the (post)modernist perspectives mentioned above, he briefly refers to the logotherapeutic method preached by Victor Frankl. In one context he even refers to Zen-like endeavours to make sense of one's existence.

In my opinion he has indeed succeeded brilliantly in "building up" after masterfully "breaking down". His interpretation of the postscript (12:13f.) is essential in this regard. For "The book now says: Even if everything is absurd, *nevertheless* we must fear God and keep his commandments" (p. 144). This book is a masterpiece of (post)modern interpretation of an ancient literary work. It should be read by all who are interested in listening to voices from the distant past for even today the ancient Egyptian saying holds true: "I have seen the past, therefore I know the future".

Johann Cook

Dept. of Ancient Studies, University of Stellenbosch

Abma, R 1999. *Bonds of love: Methodic Studies of Prophetic Texts with Marriage Imagery (Isaiah 50:1-3 and 54:1-10, Hosea 1-3, Jeremiah 2-3)* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica 40). Assen: Van Gorcum. pp. 281. ISBN 90 232 3509 6.

This study examines a selection of prophetic texts in which the covenant relationship is presented as a marriage relationship. The study of marriage imagery in the Hebrew Bible is of great significance since it is one of the most important ways by which the bond between God and his people is portrayed. It is a rich metaphor which has the potential to depict many different facets of this relationship. The author is right in the assumption that "This picture may offer a correction to other perceptions of the God of Israel which consider Yhwh to be static and distant, absent and inactive" (p. 1). Abma describes the essence of the marriage metaphor in two key words: Yhwh lives "side by side" with his people and in "companionship" with them.

The study is executed in three phases. The first part deals with general matters such as the theories regarding metaphor as style form, others issues relating to the background of marriage imagery in its wider ancient Near Eastern context and the nature of prophetic literature. In the second part, the heart of the study (pp. 53-252), an analysis is offered of the selected texts in Isaiah, Hosea and Jeremiah. The third part examines the implications of this image for biblical theology. The method applied is described as: "... a model of interpretation that is synchronic and sensitive to features of composition and communication ..." (p. 2), yet the author also acknowledges that the historical perspective could not be totally ignored. It is said that "... a primarily synchronic approach offers the best possible entrée for diachronic considerations" (p. 36). This intricate relationship, however, between synchrony and diachrony, especially with regard to prophetic texts, is a complicated one and I am of

the opinion that some of the author's views may need some rethinking and refinement. Compare, for example, "In a synchronic approach, a text is looked upon as a world in itself and as a system of elements which are meaningful in relation to one another rather than in relation to extra-textual reality ... " (p. 33), and a little later the claim is made that "The historian needs counterevidence from an external source to *confirm* this information before she (sic) can accept it as historically *accurate*" (p. 37; my emphasis). I have sympathy with Abma's efforts to keep these two facets (synchrony versus diachrony) apart, but prophetic literature is by its very nature historical and that would be my primary point of departure in any study of the prophets. The choice to start from a synchronic (structural) base could sometimes lead to historical distortions. For example, Abma's option to advance from a thematic, synchronic (structural) reading of the relevant texts opens the possibility that passages from Isaiah can be selected as a point of departure and not texts from Hosea as one would logically have expected. I would rather have allowed myself to be guided by a diachronic perspective and started with Hosea as the originator of the marriage metaphor and from there pursue the traditio-historical unfolding of the metaphor through Jeremiah to Second Isaiah. The same critique applies to Abma's view that the covenant relationship forms the background of the marital imagery. How can one make such a (diachronic) connection if the history of the idea of a covenant relationship is not touched on at all?

While I am dealing with the methodology underpinning the study and the presentation of the results, I might add that statements such as the following sound too positivistic and need moderation: "This suggests that one should not blindly follow the lexicon to discover *the* meaning of words ... The interpreter needs to specify *the intention of the word* with help of the particular context in which the word occurs" (p. 48; my emphasis). See also assessments such as "correct", "accurate", etc., which occasionally also pop up.

I enjoyed the convincing and lucid manner in which the writer goes about studying and describing the literary details of the marriage metaphor in the chosen passages. At times, however, not all the significant metaphoric details are included in the investigation. Take, for example, the examination of the metaphor in Hosea 1-3. According to my understanding of the metaphor in that context (especially in Chapter 2), aspects such as the following are missing and should have been included in the description: (1) punishment for adultery (2:5), (2) harlotry (2:7-8), (3) sustenance for the wife according to ancient Near Eastern marriage laws (2:7), and (4) the positive answer of Israel after Yahweh's renewed marriage proposal (2:17). With regard to Isaiah, why are only two passages selected for investigation, since the marriage metaphor is pervasive in Second Isaiah (see the study of Krupp referred to in the bibliography)?

Notwithstanding these few points of criticism, Abma has presented a fine study of the nature of prophetic literature. It is a welcome addition to the growing corpus of biblical literature in which the focus is on literary and cultural issues. The third part, where the theological implications of the marriage metaphor are spelled out, will also certainly be of value to those interested in the current discussion on biblical theology.