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Hans Debel (K.U. Leuven)

**MORE TRANSFORMATIONS IN BIBLICAL STUDIES:
CHANGING TENDENCIES IN READING THE BOOK
OF QOHELET**

ABSTRACT

As recent research into the Book of Qohelet has developed in a multiplicity of directions, this contribution attempts to identify some significant common trends in scholarship. In particular, it outlines four trends which greatly differ from past research on the book and may thus be called ‘transformations’ of our hermeneutical framework: (1) viewing Qohelet as a literary persona rather than a real person; (2) regarding the book’s language as representing a transitional stage in the development of the Hebrew language rather than as an awkward translation; (3) searching for expressions of authentic Jewish thinking rather than for borrowings from Greek philosophy; and (4) interpreting Qohelet’s contradictions as a deliberate literary strategy rather than the traces of different hands that expanded the text.

In Gratitude to Bénédicte Lemmelijn

Jan Kroeze (North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus), Manie van den Heever (University of Stellenbosch), Bertus van Rooy (North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus)

JUST HOW LITERAL IS THE KING JAMES VERSION?

ABSTRACT

Many scholars have the perception that the King James Version (KJV) is a literal translation. However, it is not so easy to define the concept of “literal translation.” The simplest definition may be to regard it as word-for-word translation. However, when one compares the KJV carefully with the original Hebrew Bible, there are numerous instances where lexical items are changed to adapt the idiom to that of the target language. In this article, a measuring instrument is proposed and used to analyse some passages, with Ezek 15 as principal example. The same instrument is

used to evaluate other translations. Comparing the results gives a more precise indication of just how literal the KJV is.

Meir Malul (University of Haifa)

**JEWISH NECROMANCY BY MEANS OF HUMAN
SKULLS AND BONES AND THE BIBLICAL (אובות),
*תרפים AND ידעוני(ם)**

ABSTRACT

This article examines an interesting rite of necromancy by means of a human skull, head or bones, attested in no few rabbinical and Jewish, as well as Muslim, sources of the 10th and 14th c. CE. Similar evidence from the cuneiform sources of the ancient Near East attesting to the same rite is presented, and the possible Mesopotamian origin of the rabbinical, Jewish and Muslim evidence is broached. Since the rabbinical and Jewish sources take their point of departure from the biblical verses mentioning the mysterious phenomena of the (אובות), (ידעוני(ם), and תרפים, the latter are examined; and following the current scholarly view, which believes them to have been representations of the family dead ancestors, the hypothesis is entertained that they may have been effigies of dead ancestors, composed of their bones and/or skull.

John Elwolde (United Bible Societies)

**MAL 2:16A, HEBREW כִּי, AND THE PROPER
CONDEMNATION OF DIVORCE**

ABSTRACT

The opening clause of Mal 2:16, כִּי־שָׁנָא שְׁלַח, has given rise to two distinct lines of interpretation, one, probably influenced by an early non-Masoretic form of the text with כִּי־אָנָּה, which sees in the words an instruction to divorce, and another, which sees here a statement of divine condemnation of divorce. After examining the non-Masoretic variant and the problems raised by the existing interpretations, the paper offers a new, grammatically and rhetorically coherent, interpretation, based on an analysis of the literary structure of vv. 15 and 16 and of the relationship of the opening כִּי in v. 16 with the words that precede it in v. 15.

Bob Becking and Meindert Dijkstra (Utrecht)

**‘A MESSAGE FROM THE KING ...’ SOME REMARKS
ON AN EDMITE OSTRACON FROM ḤORVAT ‘UZA**

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a fresh interpretation of an Edomite ostrakon from Ḥorvat ‘Uza (Khirbet Ghazzeḥ). The text turns out to be a message from the king ordering the speeding up of the delivery of a quantity of food that had already been promised, most probably to a military outpost.

BOOK REVIEWS

Kalmon, J & du Toit, J S 2010. *Canada's Big Biblical Bargain. How McGill University Bought the DEAD SEA SCROLLS*. Montreal & Kingston-London-Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press. pp. XXIV + 424. ISBN: 978-0-7735-3688-3.

This book is a decade-long joint effort by the authors, one from Canada, the other from South Africa. It is the second recent major publication about the stories behind the Dead Sea Scrolls, the other being Weston Field's *The Dead Sea Scrolls. A Full History*, also reviewed in this volume of JNSL.

The publication has two parts, the first consisting of four chapters: "Introduction," "McGill Buys the Dead Sea Scrolls," "The Efforts to Bring the Dead Sea Scrolls to Montreal," and "The Real Question." Part 2 contains the "Annotated Correspondence between parties;" an appendix including a "Transcription of Scott's Handlist of Qumran Cave Four Fragments purchased by McGill University as of May 1955;" "Notes;" a "Bibliography;" and an "Index."

I. PART ONE

The authors' intention is to tell the full story concerning the Dead Sea Scrolls with a special focus on the Canadian contribution. The aim of the book in their own words is to "tell the story of the McGill purchase and at the same time ... to provide access to the hitherto unpublished papers of the late Professor R B Y Scott through whose prolific correspondence we were able to assemble the intricate strands of this tale" (p. 3). In the process they address the intrigues around the Scrolls, such as the myth about the negative role of the Vatican and the situation regarding the initial international editorial committee.

The introduction, as is the case with all the chapters in the book, opens with a catchphrase in the title "I should perhaps recall to you" Material examined in the introduction are Cave 4, a paragraph on fact and myth as far as the details of the DSS are concerned, the sources, McGill after the war, and finally identity, ownership of objects and the issue of postcolonialism. In this opening chapter the authors claim that a volume still needs to be written on questions such as: Who found the scrolls? Who bought them? How were the arrangements made? How were the scrolls cared for and who cared for them? To whom did they or do they belong?

Chapter 2 recounts the intriguing story of McGill buying the DSS. It is told in 57 pages, backed up by appropriate photographs of Scott, the caves, press releases and some scroll fragments. Chapter 3 deals with attempts to bring the DSS to Montreal, while Chapter 4 addresses "The Nation, the Object, and Owning the Past." Part One ends with a short postscript.

II. PART TWO

This part of the book contains the most valuable contribution. It includes Annotated Correspondence and an Appendix including Transcriptions of R B Y Scott's Handlist of Qumran Cave Four fragments purchased by McGill University in May 1955. The data were meticulously gathered by the authors and published in their original format.

III. CONCLUSION

The relevance of this comprehensive project is ably spelled out by Eileen Schuller in the Foreword: "Jason Kalman and Jaqueline du Toit have now uncovered the full extent and significance of the story of how McGill University came to be involved and was the first foreign institution to react so quickly and incisively at a critical moment." This is a concise and commendable point to make. The scholarly world is indebted to the authors for providing information on a research area that has been riddled with controversy in the past and not fully available until now.

Johann Cook
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Fields, W W 2009. *The Dead Sea Scrolls. A Full History. Volume One, 1947-1960.* Leiden-Boston: Brill. pp. 592. ISBN 9789004175815.

After a short history of the Dead Sea Scrolls by the same author appeared in 2006, the current volume, *A Full History*, was published in 2009. Both are beautifully printed, but whereas the short history is 128 pages long, the full history covers just under 600 pages. In order to tell the "full" story behind the DSS, Weston and his wife travelled all over the world to interview people. That it was a *Riesenarbeit* is clear from the following statement: "I have vacillated between two poles: to tell the story in my own words, based on whatever information I have been able to gather, or to let the scholars and others tell it themselves. Wherever possible I have left interviews and letters as they were. Where editing and summarising were necessary I did that, but always with a light hand" (p. 13).

This attractive monograph comprises 13 chapters, plus a prologue, an introduction, a postscript and a timeline. Chapter 1 deals with the first discoveries at Qumran between 1946 and 1948. Reference is made to the role of the Bedouins, with photos of the entrance to cave 1. Relevant descriptions of events are provided in chronological order. A photo of the Thanksgiving Scroll is included, as well as one with William Brownlee holding the Manual of Discipline.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the mystery of cave 1 (1949-1950). The role of Roland de Vaux from the École biblique receives special attention. Again photos are included of prominent scrolls/fragments. Chapter 3 discusses the discoveries at Wadi Murabba`at (1951), with striking details about the illegal excavators active in that cave. Chapter 4 is entitled “The Bountiful Year.” According to Fields, during 1952 DSS discoveries and rate of publication quickened. Four new caves were discovered as well as additional material at Wadi Murabba`at. Appropriate photos of the caves and the Dead Sea are included. Chapter 5 covers 1953, with more acquisitions and decipherments. This pertains to the excavations led by De Vaux and the role of Oxford University Press. Chapter 6 is devoted to the cave 4 team. The role of prominent figures such as Frank Moore Cross, Milik, Wernberg-Møller and others is discussed. The author provides an insightful historical background for each collaborator. This background is especially relevant for controversial scholars such as Strugnell and Allegro. Chapter 7 addresses the return of St. Mark’s Scrolls. Reference is even made to an advertisement for four Dead Sea Scrolls in the Wall Street Journal. Chapter 8 is entitled “The Most Productive Year” (1955), with significant information on the unrolling of the Copper Scroll. Many of Allegro’s letters are quoted in this chapter. The negative impact of the Suez crisis in 1956 is the topic of Chapter 9. The Allegro controversy is continued in this chapter. The next chapter deals with the regrouping after the Suez crisis and is filled with letters that were sent between Allegro and other members of the editorial team. Chapter 11 addresses the last cave 4 scrolls found during 1958. Chapter 12 is entitled “The Museum is on the Brink” and refers to activities in 1959. The generosity of John D Rockefeller Jr. is discussed, among other things. The book ends on a hopeful note in Chapter 13 “A Ray of Hope for the Museum” (1960). The Postscript is functional, giving the reasons for the demarcation of Volume 1 and the motivation for Volume 2, which will bring the history of the scrolls up to the present. The timeline of events at the end of the book is extremely informative and helpful.

This monograph is a massive and meticulous undertaking. It is, moreover, a timely publication, reflecting the advantage of hindsight from a scholar involved in the inner circles of the Qumran story. What struck me most is the objective way in which Fields has retold the intricate story of the Dead Sea Scrolls. He deliberately steered away from sensationalistic propaganda and speculation. He allowed the primary sources, be they original interviews, letters or other documents, to speak for themselves. I can only agree with the laudatory comments by Emanuel Tov, the editor in chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project: “I am in awe of the content and your style ... You have done a beautiful job!”

Johann Cook
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Petter, D L 2011. *The Book of Ezekiel and Mesopotamian City Laments* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 246) Fribourg/Göttingen: Academic Press Fribourg/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. pp xvi + 208. ISBN: 978-3-7278-1690-1.

In this study Donna Lee Petter demonstrates that the standard features of the Mesopotamian city laments can be found in the book of Ezekiel. Her book consists of an introduction, seven chapters, five appendices, an extensive bibliography and a helpful index of the passages from the biblical and extra-biblical literature that Petter cites in her study. In the introduction Petter mentions studies that have shown that the book of Ezekiel exhibits parallels with elements in Mesopotamian literature. The work of Margaret Odell is seen as groundbreaking in this regard, since she offered a novel solution to the problem of classifying the genre of Ezekiel. Odell suggests that the book of Ezekiel was modelled on the Babylonian inscriptions of Esarhaddon. Like Odell, Petter also re-examines the issue of Ezekiel's genre by analysing the book as a whole, but she proposes a different theory. She argues that the Mesopotamian city lament genre influenced the composition of Ezekiel and that this better accounts for the diverse contents of the book.

In the first chapter Petter discusses the city laments of Mesopotamia, which include the historical city laments (*The Lamentation over Sumer and Ur*, *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur*, *The Eridu Lament*, *The Uruk Lament* and *The Nippur Lament*), as well as the *eršemmas* and *balags*. She briefly considers their dates of composition, language, content, structure, authorship and cultic use and then devotes the majority of the chapter to the standard features shared by the laments. As far as these features are concerned, Petter follows the classification put forward by F W Dobbs-Allsopp. According to Dobbs-Allsopp, the Mesopotamian city laments have nine features in common: (1) subject and mood, (2) structure and poetic technique, (3) divine abandonment, (4) assignment of responsibility, (5) divine agents of destruction, (6) description of destruction, (7) the weeping goddess, (8) lamentation, and (9) the restoration of the city and the return of the gods. Petter illustrates each of these features from the primary sources.

In Chapter 2 of the study Petter goes on to discuss the material in the Hebrew Bible that supposedly exhibits the features of the Mesopotamian city laments. This material includes the book of Lamentations, the oracles against the nations in the prophetic writings, seven communal laments from the book of Psalms, and some prophetic literature (especially the book of Micah). The outline of the standard features of the Mesopotamian city laments and the summary of scholars' views on the appearance of these features in Israelite literature act as a springboard for Petter's argument that all nine features can be found in the book of Ezekiel. In the main part of her book

(Chapters 3-6) Petter demonstrates how Ezekiel reflects and adapts eight of these features. She does not include a separate treatment of the second feature, structure and poetic technique.

The third chapter of Petter's study deals with the incident at the beginning of the book of Ezekiel, where the prophet is given a scroll to eat. The scroll contains lamentation, mourning and woe. Petter argues that Ezekiel becomes a mourner by eating the scroll. She puts forward evidence from Ezekiel's response to his consumption of the scroll, as well as elements in the book beyond this incident to substantiate her argument. Furthermore, Petter notes how Ezekiel, in his role as mourner, adopts characteristics similar to those of the weeping goddess in the Mesopotamian city laments. In Petter's opinion, the scroll also sets the tone for the book of Ezekiel. Although the book itself is not a lament, the scroll introduces a lament sub-genre into it. The scroll therefore provides the subject and mood of the book. In this way Petter shows how Ezekiel reflects and adapts three of the nine features of the Mesopotamian city laments (subject and mood, the weeping goddess and lamentation). She also points out that the scroll provides an important piece of external evidence that accounts for the presence of city lament features in the book. Ezekiel's geographical location near Nippur, the location of one of the city laments (*The Nippur Lament*), and the fact that the book displays influences from other Mesopotamian literature are external evidence that support the idea that the person responsible for the book was acquainted with the city lament genre. Nevertheless, Petter suggests that the scroll incident best accounts for the lament features in Ezekiel.

In the fourth chapter of the book Petter discusses how Ezekiel reflects and adapts the assignment of responsibility and divine abandonment features of the city laments. Like Enlil in the Mesopotamian laments, YHWH assumes responsibility for the destruction of the city in Ezekiel. YHWH does this through his unchangeable decree (the divine word motif in the biblical book) and his angry gaze. But unlike the city laments, the prophet does not portray the deity's anger as arbitrary and capricious. YHWH is angry with his people because of their sin and guilt. In this regard Petter discusses the use of עון ("guilt"), תועבת ("abominations") and the "repeated indictment/judgment sequence" יען ... לכן ("because ... therefore") in Ezekiel, as well as the historical retrospects in chapters 16, 20 and 23. YHWH therefore assigns responsibility to Israel for the destruction of Jerusalem. As far as the feature of divine abandonment is concerned, Petter focuses on Ezekiel 8-11. She notes that the Mesopotamian city laments help to interpret the departure of YHWH's כבוד from the temple and the city as it is portrayed in these chapters. Both the prophet and the laments use avian imagery in connection with the deities' departures from their cities.

The next chapter deals with divine agents of destruction and the description of the destruction. The former includes YHWH's storm, enemy invasion (or a merger of these two) and YHWH's fire. All of these forces that destroy Jerusalem have parallels

with the agents of destruction summoned by Enlil in the Mesopotamian city laments. Petter mentions a fourth agent of destruction in Ezekiel that does not have a counterpart in the laments. In addition to the storm, the enemy invasion and the fire, YHWH also uses a “package of destruction agents” (famine, pestilence and wild beasts) against the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Following the categories of Dobbs-Allsopp, Petter subsequently discusses Ezekiel’s description of the destruction visited on the city, environs and temple, the destruction of the people, the destruction of Israelite social, religious and political customs, and how these descriptions are similar to those in the Mesopotamian city laments.

Chapter 6 of the book moves on to the feature of restoration. According to Petter, the chapters in Ezekiel that deal with restoration exhibit elements that are comparable to those in *The Nippur Lament*. These elements include the change in the deity’s disposition, the appointment/election of a human agent in the restoration process (David in Ezekiel and Išme-Dagan in *The Nippur Lament*), the rebuilding of sanctuaries, the return of the deities and the people from exile, utopian days of peace and prosperity, and the exaltation of the deity. An interesting feature of Petter’s discussion on restoration in Ezekiel is her claim that the oracles against the nations (chapters 25-32) function as a first step in the restoration process. Petter argues that in the context of the book the punishment of the neighbouring nations offers comfort to Israel, marks the end of the mourning period and ushers in the time of restoration.

In the final chapter Petter summarises the conclusions of her study and reaffirms her theory that the features of the Mesopotamian city laments inform the structure and cohesion of the book of Ezekiel (and her view that the book was patterned after this lament genre). She also notes how the lament genre helps to elucidate aspects of the book that many readers have found puzzling.

The book includes five appendices. The first three contain samples from the Mesopotamian city laments: a *kirugu* from *The Nippur Lament* (Appendix 1), an *eršemma* (Appendix 2) and a *balag* (Appendix 3). Translations of *The Hymn Šulgi R*, which deals with the construction of Ninlil’s cult boat, and a hymn about the cult boat of Enki appear in Appendix 4. Petter notes that these texts can be compared in remarkable ways with the oracle about the ship of Tyre in Ezekiel 27:1-25. This text is provided in Appendix 5.

This is an interesting and valuable study that makes a significant contribution to a better understanding of why a particular form of the book of Ezekiel looks the way it does. In this regard it is noteworthy that Petter bases her study on what she refers to as the “final form” of the book. It might be objected that the concept of a “final form” is problematic. The fact that the extant textual representatives of the book of Ezekiel, notably the Old Greek translation and the Masoretic text, exhibit large-scale differences means that different versions (or “editions”) of the book were transmitted over an extended period of time. This raises the question why one version of Ezekiel,

its purported “final form,” is privileged over the other versions of the book. Petter acknowledges the presence of “redactional layers” and editorial activity in the formation of the book, but does not engage systematically with these issues. Nevertheless, in the conclusion to her study she claims that acknowledging the city lament features can make sense of the perceived editorial activity in the book. This claim merits further investigation. For example, it would be interesting to investigate how the details of Petter’s study compare with the findings of studies that focus on the book’s different “editions” and its literary growth from the perspective of a study of the major differences between its available textual representatives.

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