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William Bivin (SIL International & Stellenbosch University)

BUILDING SPACES:
REEVALUATING THE PARTICLE אם

ABSTRACT

This investigation examines the Biblical Hebrew lexeme אם in conditional and non-conditional constructions. The goal is to demonstrate that Mental Space Theory, a sub-theory of Cognitive Semantics provides a principled understanding of the function and semantics of the particle. The study will first present the variegated contexts in which אם is used. Then follows a brief explanation of Mental Space Theory, which is applied to the data. In conclusion I will suggest that אם primarily functions as a mental space builder, prototypically of hypothetical spaces in conditional constructions. Schematic semantic components of the particle, grounded in its role in conditionals, are employed in non-conditional constructions in order to build alternative and background-scenario spaces utilized in contextual meaning-construction.

Phil J Botha (University of Pretoria)

PSALM 4 AND THE POOR IN THE POST-EXILIC PROVINCE OF JUDAH: A TEXTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL READING

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the interpretation of Ps 4 as a psalm which addresses the plight of poor people in post-exilic Judah as it was proposed by Erich Zenger and recently confirmed by Johannes Bremer. Psalms 1-3 are taken seriously as literary context and, in view of its connections with the preceding psalms, Ps 4 is explained as reflecting a divided post-exilic society in which irreverent Jews probably questioned and ridiculed the dedication to Torah by a minority of faithful of whom some probably also suffered deprivation. It is argued that the editors of the Psalms sought to exhort members of the in-group to hold on to their faith in Yahweh, their only source of true safety and blessing.

Rodrigo Cabrera (University of Buenos Aires / IMHICIHU, CONICET)

THE THREE FACES OF INANNA:
AN APPROACH TO HER POLYSEMIC FIGURE IN HER DESCENT TO THE NETHERWORLD[1]

ABSTRACT

This paper will analyse the polysemous figure and liminal role of the Sumerian goddess of war and love, Inanna, which is traced in diverse mythical compositions. In particular, Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld will be studied, since in this text from the Old Babylonian period (second millennium BCE) the three aspects that make up the divine personality of the deity can be recognised, i.e. as dea dolens*, 'betrayer', and* mater dolorosa*. An approach to the story is proposed which considers the roles performed by the other characters and the semantic (or content) and syntactic (or structural) dimensions that organise the narrative.*

«Und siehe! Apollo konnte nicht ohne Dionysus leben!»
(F. Nietszche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, 40)

Yoel Elitzur (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

DIACHRONY IN STANDARD BIBLICAL HEBREW: THE PENTATEUCH VIS-À-VIS THE PROPHETS/WRITINGS[1]

ABSTRACT

At present, the distinction between the Standard Biblical Hebrew of the preexilic period and the Late Biblical Hebrew of the postexilic period is part of a wide scholarly consensus. I argue that linguistic changes should be expected in SBH as well, as every spoken language experiences linguistic development at every stage. This article presents nine linguistic or lexical features in which the language of the Pentateuch differs from that of the rest of the Hebrew Bible. All these features are scattered in texts that differ in style, genre, and content; thus the most plausible explanation for their distribution is the diachronic one. These data must be taken into account by scholars who address the dating of the books of the Hebrew Bible.

Christopher B Hays (Fuller Theological Seminary)

SWALLOWING DEATH AT TEL ʿETON[1]

ABSTRACT

A stone carving in an Iron Age tomb at Tel ʿEton appears to portray the well-known ancient Near Eastern motif of Death the Swallower, but turned upside down. The article presents cognate iconographic and textual data, and reflects on the significance of the image's inversion: Was it a form of disempowerment, or simply as a way in which underworld deities were thought to be oriented? Various biblical passages suggest that ancient Israelites and Judahites knew of these motifs.

BOOK REVIEWS

Dolce, R 2018. *"Losing One's Head" in the Ancient Near East: Interpretation and Meaning of Decapitation* (Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East). London / New York: Routledge. 92 pages. ISBN 978-1-138-06748-6 (Hardback), ISBN 978-1-315-15861-7 (eBook). £115.00 (Hardback), £20.00 (eBook).

This book forms part of a larger research project of the author's in which she examines "the tortures and the physical and psychological injuries inflicted on enemies in times of war in some pre-classical cultures of the Near East" (1). It expands on a paper (Dolce 2016) presented at an international conference held in 2012, *Iconographie de la guerre dans le monde syro-mésopotamien, IIIe-Ie mill av. J.-C.*, the main papers of which were later published together (Battini 2016).

The study focuses on decapitation as it is represented in the visual sources, although some textual evidence is also discussed, and further references to which are quite extensively supplied in footnotes. The various forms of decapitation and the conventions and meanings ascribed to and associated with these are examined. The sources are primarily from Mesopotamia and Syria during the third to the first millennia BCE. This includes evidence from Early Dynastic and Akkadian Mesopotamia, and from Ebla of the third millennium BCE. The largest data set though is from the Neo-Assyrian empire. Examples from further afield, such as Tell Tayinat, are also included, and possible examples from sites such as Carchemish and Zincirli are mentioned, although these are badly damaged and their exact appearance is therefore uncertain. While the third to first millennia BCE is the primary focus of the study, examples are also included from prehistoric Çatalhöyük and proto-historic Uruk. The book is well illustrated with one map and 28 different figures, many of which also have details included, extending the number of individual images to 47.

"Losing one's head", the term used in the title of the book, reflects "a psychological or physical state entailing the annihilation of self-control" (1). The manners in which this is expressed in the ancient Near Eastern visual repertoire are explored over six chapters.

The Introduction (1-2) functions more like a prologue than an introduction, delineating the research and giving its background. The first chapter (3-11) therefore functions similarly to an introduction. The topic is introduced with a sixteenth century CE Iberian tapestry depicting the tale

of Judith and Holofernes. How the narrative of decapitation in the scenes depicted on this tapestry and the conditions under which they occur appear to mirror ancient Near Eastern examples of depictions of decapitations and severed heads in contexts related to war or conflict. Three main elements appear, namely, the severed head of the defeated being held aloft by the victor, the transportation of the head from one place to another, and the display of the head in the city of the victor. In relation to this, Dolce argues that decapitation is a unique act of violence with complex meanings that cannot be likened to other forms of physical punishment inflicted on defeated enemies. Not only does decapitation reflect the annihilation of the enemy, but it also reduces the enemy to an inanimate object. However, the head also becomes what Dolce terms a "coveted object" (7 *et passim*), something not only desired by the victor, but also at the mercy of those responsible for the decapitation and for the treatment of the head thereafter. Furthermore, the identity of an individual is recognizable in that person's head, while the headless body lacks this identity and becomes anonymous. These factors all play a role in the treatment of both the head and body of the decapitated individual, as well as in the meaning thereof. These complex situations and aspects are dealt with in greater detail in the succeeding chapters.

In chapter 2 (12-21) the question is asked if decapitation was a selective practice – was decapitation reserved for specific enemies, or a specific type of enemy, and to what extent this occurred. Dolce suggests that the size of the severed head depicted is indicative of the status of an individual, and that heads of different sizes were treated differently in their respective iconographic contexts. In this manner, smaller heads could represent defeated enemies of lower status, and larger heads could represent kings, princes, officials and generals.

This is followed in chapter 3 (22-34) by a discussion on what happened to the head as a "coveted object" after decapitation, and the possible meanings and motivations behind this. After decapitation, the head could be exhibited, either by holding it aloft or by displaying it in the city. This can be contrasted with the images and the texts reporting heaps of severed heads which were left on the battle field or near conquered cities as a display not only of the power of the victor, but also of the losses suffered by the enemy.

Chapter 4 (35-55) discusses the relationships between decapitated heads and birds of prey, particularly vultures. The argument begins with the Prehistoric examples at Çatalhöyük, where murals depict birds of prey and

headless corpses. Dolce suggests that these murals represent "the celebration of a victory over enemies" and that the treated skulls deposited in the same rooms may be those of the defeated enemies, rather than ancestors (35). This takes the Çatalhöyük material out of its Neolithic context. Examples of treated skulls are known from a variety of sites across Anatolia, such as Hacilar and Köşk Höyük, and from further afield at sites such as Jericho in the Palestinian Territories and Yiftahel in northern Israel. In these examples the skulls do not appear to be related to war or conflict, but to so-called ancestor cults, as argued recently, for example, by Nigro (2017) with regard to the Jericho examples. Indeed, the skulls from Çatalhöyük were placed on top of mortuary platforms where other dead were buried, thereby sharing a close spatial relationship which, according to Talalay (2004:142-143) "would have reinforced links with death, burial and the possible powers of the deceased". Although an interesting suggestion, the Çatalhöyük examples therefore seem at odds with the other examples of decapitation discussed in this book.

Other examples included in this chapter are a seal impression with lion-headed eagles attacking bound captives from Uruk, Eannatum's Stele of the Vultures, the seal impressions of Ishqi-Mari from Mari, the Sargon Stele, the Stele of Dadusha from Eshnunna, and various Neo-Assyrian examples. While Dolce (52 n.17) contends that the Sargon Stele is "the only certain work of this sovereign given the inscription bearing his name", Nigro (1998) convincingly identifies a stele in the Louvre Sb 2 as also being from the reign of Sargon, a view also held by Amiet (1976:125 Nr 6).

Chapter 5 (56-63) discusses how the head, as a "coveted object", moves from the place of its removal from the body to its eventual destination, or place of display. The manners in which the head is transported include by birds of prey, as discussed in the previous chapter, as well as by soldiers and in chariots, illustrated in the transportation of Teumann's head from the battle scene to Ashurbanipal's banquet. The head can even be transported in a procession accompanied by soldiers, musicians and singers and which includes rituals. The argument is that the transportation of the severed head is in itself an act of display, highlighting the annihilation of the enemy, and the power and glory of the victor.

In Chapter 6 (64-78) "other" decapitations during times or war are discussed. These include the "decapitation" or the removal of the heads of statues of deities and of humans of power, particularly kings. Dolce argues that the decapitation and later treatment of these statues and their heads mirrors the treatment of high-ranking humans who were decapitated during

conflicts. Archaeological examples discussed are the statue of Lupad, the high official of Umma whose head and body were discovered a distance from each other at Girsu, the headless statue of Enmetena of Lagash which was excavated at Ur, and the two Akkadian heads discovered at Ashur and at Nineveh. Dolce uses textual evidence such as the treatment of the statue of Ninigara at Ur in the *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* to bolster her argument. An interesting observation of Dolce's is the difference in the treatment of these statues by Mesopotamian (particularly Neo-Assyrian) rulers and by Elamite rulers.

On the whole, the book is well presented. Although a definite thread runs through the entire book, the six chapters at times feel like separate, individual papers. A separate summary and conclusion explicitly tying all the threads together would have helped in this regard. Be that as it may, Dolce has produced a substantial and thorough analysis of the complexities of decapitation from a relatively small and diverse corpus, and this work will deservedly become the standard reference work on the subject.

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