

## BOOK REVIEWS

**David M. Goldenberg, *Black and Slave: The Origins and History of the Curse of Ham*, Studies of the Bible and its Reception (SBR) 10 (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2017). Viii + 360 pp., hardbound. ISBN 978-3-11-052166-5. 100 Euro.**

In this thorough monograph, North American scholar David M. Goldenberg examines the history of the so-called “Curse of Ham”, which is an “origins myth (‘etiology’) explaining the existence of black slavery”. In the biblical book of Genesis, a drunken Noah accidentally exposed himself, his son Ham sinfully looked at him, and as punishment Noah cursed Ham’s son with servitude (‘A servant of servants he shall be to his brothers’). Over time, this story was understood to say that black skin was part of the curse” (1). This curse means the conviction that the Bible consigned black people to everlasting servitude. Goldenberg offers the following detailed definition:

The Curse of Ham as used here refers to the belief that was based on the story of Noah’s cursing in Genesis 9, blacks have been afflicted with eternal servitude; in other words, the divinely sanctioned combination of black skin and slavery. This belief comes in various forms. It may assume that although the Bible restricts the curse of slavery to Canaan, his father Ham was included in the curse; that Ham is the ancestor of blacks or that Canaan is; that all dark-skinned peoples were affected or just black Africans were; that blackness began with the curse or that the one cursed was already black; that Noah issued two curses, one of slavery and one of black skin, or that black skin was a consequence of the curse of slavery. The one constant is that based on the biblical story, blacks have been cursed with servitude for all time (5).

However wrong this conviction was and is, it was readily used to validate the enslavement of black Africans from antiquity until modern times. Goldenberg identifies and pursues the various exegetical and interpretive elements of this belief from its beginnings in the Ancient Near East to its manifold receptions in Europe, North America and in Africa.

Goldenberg argues that the Curse of Ham came into being to justify the enslavement of black people. However, historical forces and exegetical manipulation were not the only causes. Goldenberg shows that this etiology of black slavery had its origin in an earlier explanation of the existence of black people.

In the *first part* of this study, Goldenberg presents a close reading of the primary sources in which he unravels the separate exegetical and interpretive strands of the Noah story. He uncovers their beginnings in the Near East and their reception and dispersion in Europe and America. Goldenberg explains “when,

where, why, and how an original mythic tale of black origins morphed into a story of the origins of black slavery, and how, in turn, the second then supplanted the first as an explanation for black skin” (2). He describes how formulations and applications of the curse changed over time, depending on the historical and social contexts, reflecting and refashioning the way blackness and blacks were perceived. Two significant developments are discernible: “First, a curse of slavery, which was originally said to affect various dark-skinned peoples, was eventually applied most commonly to black Africans. Second, blackness, which was originally incidental to the curse, in time became part of the curse itself” (3).

The introductory chapter (1–13) discusses various definitions and clarifications, provides an outline of the study, offers clarification regarding terminology (Kushite, Ethiopian, Sudan, Negro, Moor, black, black African, 7–11) and describes the nature and challenges of the sources involved in this quest.

Chapter one “Black and/or Slave: Confusion, Conflation, Chaos” (14–27) describes how two independent etiologies of dark skin and slavery and their later conflation led to the myth of the Curse of Ham:

To see how the Curse came into being, it will be necessary to disentangle the blackness and servitude interpretations of the Noah story and to trace the transmission of the two traditions; to see where, when, how, and why they became entangled over the centuries. We must separate those exegetical and interpretive elements that led to a curse joining slavery and dark skin, the so-called Curse of Ham. What were the sources of these elements? Who transmitted what? How, when and why did the various components become combined to form the Curse of Ham?

Separating the Curse into its constituent elements of blackness and slavery will also enable us to follow the various transformations of the etiology of blackness, as it moves from one historical and social context to another until its eventual incorporation into Noah’s curse. We will also see how the etiology is changed in the Curse narrative just as it changes the Curse itself. It is to be hoped that this kind of nuanced reading of the ancient sources will prevent the kind of misunderstandings we have seen, which continue to plague studies by otherwise reputable scholars (26).

Chapter two examines skin-colour etiologies, that is, observations on the universality of skin-colour etiologies and the biblically-based skin-colour etiologies in particular (33–42). Goldenberg argues that in Bible-oriented societies such etiologies were commonly understood as originating in the misdeeds of a biblical personality. Chapter three describes explanations of the origin of black skin because of sexual failure in Noah’s ark according to Eastern and Western sources (43–67). Chapter four presents accounts which locate the origin of black skin in failure in Noah’s tent, that is, inappropriate responses to Noah’s nakedness

(68–75). Goldenberg concludes that these genealogical and perceived etiological ties to Ham account for the choice of Genesis 9 as the context for a tale of the origins of dark-skinned people. “This would have been especially so, since in the Bible Ham received no punishment. The various etiologies rectify that situation” (75). It is noteworthy that in both black-skin stories, whether the Muslim etiologies based on failure in Noah’s tent or the Jewish etiologies based in failure in Noah’s ark, there is no mention of slavery. “In other words, we do not yet see the Curse of Ham combining blackness and slavery” (75).

Chapter five traces the beginnings of the Curse of Ham (76–86). The first occurrence is found in a Syriac Christian work known as the *Cave of Treasures*, dating in its present form from the 6th to 7th centuries at the latest, but originally going back to the 3rd or 4th centuries (76). The inclusion of Kushites, Egyptians, Indians and other blacks among those enslaved derives from the Near Eastern genealogy of Canaan as the ancestor of various dark-skinned people (85). “This, together with the identification of black Africans (with or without other dark-skinned people) as slaves in the world in which the author lived, led to the conclusion that ‘Canaan was cursed because he had dared to do this, and his descendants were reduced to slavery, and they are ... all those whose skin colour is black’. This is the first time ... that we see an explicit joining of dark skin and slavery in an interpretation of the Noah story” (86).

Chapter six examines the origin of the dual curse of slavery and black skin (87–104). Goldenberg indicates that the new dual-curse interpretation of the Noah story probably evolved out of the earlier Muslim dark-skin etiologies. With the Arab conquests in Africa and the increase in black slavery, those etiologies were combined with the story of Noah’s curse of slavery. “The close connection between the two etiologies is shown by the shared idea of a curse of blackness and by the common character of Ham, who received the curse” (104). Regarding the nature of his dual curse Goldenberg notes:

As opposed to seeing blacks as the descendants of the one cursed with slavery ..., a dual curse more profoundly and more insidiously ties blackness to servitude, for dark skin is now either a result of the curse of slavery or occurs with it as part of the curse. Dark skin is no longer merely associated with slavery. It has now become an intentional marker of servitude. The divine approval for the social order of black slavery is no longer implicit; it has become explicit in a most visibly forceful way. ... This change in the nature of the Curse is a result of the conquest of Africa, the increasing enslavement of blacks, and the consequent disparagement of dark skin (104).

Chapter seven delineates how the curse of Ham came to the West (105–120). Goldenberg shows that a major inroad to Christian Europe was through the cultural and commercial influences of Islam, particularly through the black slave trade and the sets of symbols and myths associated with it. “It is thus

understandable that the earliest reference to the Curse in the West is found in the Iberian Peninsula (Ibn Ezra in the 12th century), and that it is thereafter found there ..., where Muslim traditions had been part of the cultural landscape for centuries” (120).

Chapter eight follows the spread of the notion of the dual curse in other parts of Europe and even into black Africa (121–145). Goldenberg demonstrates that during the 16th to 17th centuries,

as a consequence of the African slave trade in the West, use of the Curse increased, appearing throughout Western Europe. It is at this time, beginning in 1575, that we find a new development, the dual form of the Curse, in which blackness is joined with servitude. The preponderance of this form of the Curse continued throughout the 18th-20th centuries in Europe, and even in Africa via Christian missionaries. Not surprisingly this usage coincided with and reflected the development of black slavery and the consequent disparagement of the black African. Denigration of the black is reflected in and strengthened by the dual curse, in which black skin was seen as the intentional marker of servitude (145).

Chapter nine traces the coming and development of the Curse of Ham in North America (146–159). Chapter ten examines how the belief in Noah’s dual curse eventually replaced the rabbinic ark story as the cause of blackness. This led to the confusion and conflation of the rabbinic ark story and the biblical curse of Noah.

Chapter eleven examines which people were cursed with black skin (168–187). Goldenberg argues that once the dual Curse of slavery and dark skin became widely known in Europe it was relied on as an etiology of dark skin irrespective of slavery. “The slavery feature of the Curse could be disregarded or overlooked when slavery was not an issue. This does not mean that this aspect in some form was necessarily absent in the minds of those employing the Curse” (186).

Chapter twelve addresses the meaning of blackness and the Curse of Ham (188–198). Goldenberg reminds the readers that “neither in Christian Europe nor the Muslim Near East did black skin as a curse originate out of thin air. The phenomenon of black slavery in both places provided the immediate impetus for the development of this myth, but in both worlds negative views of the black were already in place. The Curse of Ham, a justification for black slavery and the black slave trade, was an outgrowth of pre-existing attitudes toward the black African, in the one case (Europe) nurtured by Christian exegesis based on colour symbolism, and in the other (the Near East) derived from centuries-long pre-Islamic enslavement of blacks” (198).

Chapter thirteen presents the conclusions of this *tour de force* through the reception history of Genesis 9 (199–204).

The volume closes with three appendices (“The Curse of Ham in Europe, 18th-19th Centuries”, 207–217, “The Curse of Ham in America, 18th-20th Centuries”, 218–237, and “The Curse of Cain: 17th-19th Centuries Europe and America, 238–249) and four excursus: “Did Ham have Sex with a dog?”, “A passage in Tabari's History”, “Was Canaan Black?” (West African sources, European and American sources, Jewish sources, iconographic sources, an Egyptian-Canaanite-Black African connection), “‘Kushite’ Meaning Egyptian or Arab in Jewish Sources” and “A Curse of Ham in Origen?”. Bibliography and indices of subjects and names, of modern authors and of Scripture references round off this volume.

In his closing reflection, Goldenberg writes with regard to the situation in our times that the Curse of Ham no longer has currency, at least in most contexts. However, the association between slavery and dark skin, which gave birth to the Curse, is still alive.

Certainly in some areas of the world, where Islam is dominant, the phenomenon of black-slavery is still found. Over the past fifty years there have been continuing reports of the existence of black slavery in Saharan Africa .... These reports all point out how skin colour and family history determine the difference between slave and free. The point of importance for our purpose is not the numbers but the skin-colour differential between master and slave (202–203).

Goldenberg emphasises that modern black slavery does not take place in an ideological vacuum. Recent acts of enslavement (and other grievous abuses) can ultimately be traced to underlying ideologies of human difference. After discussion of the situation of darker-skinned Dalits in India, Goldenberg asks whether there is a causal relationship between black skin colour and the continuation of worldwide modern slavery. In answer to his own question whether there is something in the culture of lighter-skinned people that encourages looking with contempt on those of darker skin, Goldenberg suggests that the negative value of the colour black is apparently universal. Referring to his earlier research on the relationship between colour symbolism and colour prejudice, Goldenberg argues that colour symbolism played a key role in the development of anti-black racism. He concludes that underlying the Curse and pervading it at every level is precisely the relationship between skin colour and slavery:

Who is enslaved, when, and to whom is a complex issue, no doubt differing from place to place and time to time. Nevertheless, when looking at the existence of modern slavery, whether it be chattel slavery in Saharan Africa and Sudan or debt bondage in India, or other forms of enslavement in our times, one cannot help but be struck by the convergence of dark skin and enslavement, which leads one to question the role played by colour symbolism in this continuing human tragedy (204).

On some of these issues see J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Goldenberg’s volume offers an erudite survey of the reception history of Genesis 9 among Jews, Muslims and Christians. With tremendous diligence and competence, Goldenberg provides an excellent case study of how interpretive traditions come into being, how they spread and travel, and how different traditions eventually become so cemented that they are taken for granted and are no longer questioned. Before we come to the lessons to be learnt from this study, it has to be emphasised that for all the fascination which Goldenberg’s study provides, it is a deeply worrying book.

The volume is a strong reminder of the extent to which exegesis can be used and abused to justify what is unjustifiable and contrary to Scripture and a reminder of the dangers of simply following traditions of interpretation without engaging the sources.

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**Stephan Anthony Cummins & Jens Zimmermann (editors), *Acts of Interpretation: Scripture, Theology and Culture*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2018, paperback, xii + 252 pages, \$35.00. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7500-6.**

The Roman-numbered pages cover a table of contents, acknowledgments, a list of 11 contributors (1 of whom is a woman) with their professional positions and academic affiliations - all in North America, and a list of abbreviations. This is followed by 10 chapters divided into an Introduction and then 3 parts on, firstly, interpretative frameworks, secondly, interpreting in accord with doctrine, canon and literary form, and, thirdly, interpreting by reading in faithful company (meaning the church). Chapters 4 to 9 deal with specific biblical books, 3 from the Old and 3 from the New Testament. Chapter 10 is about the Old Testament from Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s perspective. The book concludes with 32 pages consisting of a Bibliography (for all the chapters), an Author Index, a Subject Index and a Scripture and Other Ancient Literature Index. From the latter it is clear that 16 out of the 39 Old Testament and 22 out of the 27 New Testament books have been referred to. This shows that the book tends to be a Christian gravitation to the New Testament, despite the chapters being equally balanced between the two testaments.

Some chapters end up as rather vague and difficult reading, such as that by Robert W. Hall on the “Catholic” Epistles, partially due to the often long sentences and long footnotes which include further text, rather than just references, giving the impression of tangential thinking. Similar is the chapter by Edith M Humphrey on the Apocalypse, leaving a somewhat messy impression.

Three questions arise from the title of the book: to which scripture, theology and culture are actually referred? From the biblical books dealt with in the chapters and from those listed in the index, suggesting the canon which is underlying this theology, it is clear that a Protestant, and from indications in the chapters, more specifically an evangelical (cf. pp. 66-70), theology is meant, despite a few references to some apocryphal and pseudepigraphical sources and the final chapter on an important Lutheran leader. One can therefore assume that the cultural context is also that of the evangelical part of Christianity.

That theology should be the norm for a correct understanding of a text results in the inference that doctrines and the tradition of which they are part are read into the text, a problem never dealt with. That means that biblical books are read with church fathers or famous theologians as guides, in order to stay within the “church” and “tradition”, two concepts with obviously meaning restricted to certain denominations. That these two concepts can have contradictory meanings never seem to occur in this kind of hermeneutics. One even wonders whether the chapter by Charles Raith II on Romans is really an exegetical rather a systematic-theological chapter. Amongst these guiding leaders from church history there is a further hidden competition in the comparisons made, as Craig G. Bartholomew’s chapter on Genesis 1:2 shows.

Despite an acknowledgement that historical-critical exegesis has been an important contributor to understanding the Bible, there is a subtle denigration of it in the hierarchy where theological exegesis is superior and the ultimate goal of exegesis. This is put in a modern context where evolution is accepted for instance, to prove that evangelical theology is not conservative and fundamental in Chapter 3, forming a comfortable bridge to the next chapter about the doctrine of creation in Genesis 1:2.

In fact, theological exegesis jumps onto the *post*-modern bandwagon, where there is suddenly space again for alternatives to the restrictive rational mind of modernism. Where the postmodern mind, however, opens up potentially infinite possible interpretations, theological exegesis would narrow it down to specific interest-groups defending their own doctrines, if not dogmas.

In general, this book showcases theological exegesis over against the historical-critical “tradition” and leaves the reader with the realisation that no interpretation is value-free. This is particularly well illustrated in the chapter by Hans Boersma on Exodus read with two church fathers. Yet, underlying this approach is the competitive battle for supremacy and ownership of the Bible.

Theological exegesis as it is presented in this book does not really resolve the predicament of the historical-critical method due to its lack of unanimous results. The same problem confronts readers from different doctrinal and canonical traditions, complicating precisely what the historical-critical approach originally set out to solve. It may be significant that no call to non-denominational or ecumenical theology is heard in this book. In this way this kind of theological exegesis has the potential to be a regression to a pre-scientific stage, even when there is lip-service to the inclusion of the preceding historical, literary “post-modern” approaches. The book is valuable as it is informative about what theological exegesis is, but not convincing.

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**Hendrik J. Koorevaar, Mart-Jan Paul (eds.). *The Earth and the Land: Studies about the Value of the Land of Israel in the Old Testament and Afterwards*. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018 (in: *Edition Israeologie*, vol. 11). 403 pages, hard cover. € 44,95. ISBN 978-3-631-75062-9.**

This book contains articles related to papers read at several study days organized by the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit in Leuven, Belgium. In their preface, the editors state that the “land of Canaan ... is more than a piece of ground. It is a theological symbol, because it was an essential part of Israel’s practice of its relationship with God” (11). The reason for the study days, and also this volume, was therefore “to map the entire Old Testament in regards [sic!] to this subject” (11). By also including articles on the New Testament, Islamic sources and the Zionist view, the editors even exceed the immediate range of the Old Testament.

Common to the different articles is the chosen approach, which the editors label “historic-canonical” (12). This means that they structure the entire approach along “the order of Bible books from the Hebrew canon” (12), and that every article follows a synchronic way of reading the different books of the Old Testament. The articles in this volume naturally show great diversity in terms of structure, approach and quality of argumentation.

In the first chapter (15-21), which is the only chapter in “Part I: Introduction to the land”, Hendrik Koorevaar presents an “Objective and overview of the study of the earth and the land” in the Old Testament. He starts by explaining his “historical-canonical approach” (15-16). When it comes to the canon, Koorevaar follows the Mishna-tract Baba Bathra 14b-15a, but does not give reasons for this. The same is true for his decision to structure the Old Testament not according to the traditional categories of Torah, Nebiim and Ketubim, but into three parts – “Genesis-Kings, Jeremiah-Malachi, Ruth-

Chronicles” (16) – a deviation which also goes unexplained. It is therefore difficult to follow his argumentation when he labels the books Joshua, Jonah and Song of Songs as “the central book in each of the three canon parts” and declares that the center of each book is “the house of God” (16).

Chapters 2 to 10 constitute the main part of the book, “Part II: The Land in the Old Testament”. In chapter 2 (25-64), Koorevaar discusses “The land in the book of Genesis”. He argues that the Garden of Eden “serves as a model to execute the command of 1:28”, namely to fill the earth and rule over it. “The garden is *pars pro toto* for all the earth” (28). This remained the task of human beings after the fall of man, although man’s existence on earth was now a temporary one (30). Koorevaar identifies a similar concept in the calling of Abraham and God’s promise to give him the land of Canaan: “The nation of Canaan *pars pro toto* represents the whole earth, because God sees all nations, all families of the earth. Canaan is paralleled with the garden of Eden” (37). “The creation of the earth and man by God” and the “calling of Abraham and the promise of the land of Canaan” (59) are the two lines along which questions around the land unfold in the book of Genesis.

In chapter 3 (65-95), Raymond R. Hausoul explores “The land in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers”. Hausoul argues that the people of Egypt “automatically chose[ ] to ruin their own land” by refusing “to let Israel leave for the promised land” (70). Through the plagues – and especially the last one with the death of all first-born sons – “Egypt experiences that the earth is YHWH’s” (70). Hausoul then follows the biblical account in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, to show the importance of “land” as a topic in these books. Regarding the land of Israel (Canaan), “YHWH reveals himself as: (1) Owner of the land Israel receives; (2) Deliverer of Israel, enabling them to go to the land; (3) and the One who desires to live in the land” (86).

In chapter 4 (97-119), Mart-Jan Paul looks at “The land in the book of Deuteronomy”. Paul uses a large part of his article to discuss the date of composition of Deuteronomy (97-101). He then points out that Deuteronomy understands the land of Canaan “as Yhwh’s gift to Israel” (105). This notion extends to everything that is in the land. It is God’s gift to Israel, but ultimately it remains His – Israel therefore only possesses the land as a loan. This is also the idea behind the blessing and the curse in Deut. 27-28. Only when Israel follows God, the owner of the land, are they allowed to stay in it. If not, the land will be taken away from them (111). It is not clear why the editors decided to have a chapter on the books of Exodus to Numbers, and a separate one on Deuteronomy. Given their own canonical view, this division seems somehow illogical.

In chapter 5 (121-154), Siegbert Riecker discusses “The conquest and borders of the land in the books of Joshua and Judges”. Riecker starts by declaring: “The book of Joshua is the definitive book of the land in the Bible and

*land* is the definitive theme of the book of Joshua” (121). The book itself shows how God gave the land of Canaan to his people, Israel. Then, at the end of Joshua, the perspective changes. “In 21:43-45 it is stated that Yhwh has fulfilled all his promises. Now the responsibility shifts from Yhwh to Israel, from God to humans” (123). Next, Riecker discusses the question of whether the conquest of Canaan is shown as being complete or incomplete (128-136). According to him, there is a constant tension between these views which, on the one hand, serve as a literary device to show that it is God who gave the land to his people, Israel. On the other hand, ownership on the land is directly dependent on Israel’s obedience. Their disobedience therefore leads to an incomplete conquest of Canaan. For this reason, the “starting point is obedience and a return to God” (135). In the final part of his article, Riecker discusses the borders, which are described to Israel as the possible borders of their territory (136-147).

In chapter 6 (155-176), Herbert H. Klement writes about “The Land of Israel during Israel’s monarchy according to the books of Samuel and Kings”. After discussing the narrative and conceptual context (he understands Genesis to Kings as “Enneateuch”, which starts and ends in Mesopotamia – 156), Klement then addresses the concept of the land in the time of the early monarchy (157-161) and at the close of monarchy (161-172). He argues that the whole story shows that the “total forfeiture of the land is the consequence of covenant infidelity” (172).

In chapter 7 (177-197), Hetty Lalleman examines “The future of the Land and the earth in the books of the prophets”. Lalleman shows that, starting with Genesis, “God’s blessing and living in the promised land are dependent on people’s attitude towards God’s commandments” (178). This fact is reflected in the writing of the prophets before the Exile in the Northern Kingdom (179-183) and the Southern Kingdom (183-190), as well as during the Babylonian exile (190-193) and thereafter (193-194). The “message of warning of prophets like Hosea, Amos, and Jeremiah” was that Israel’s sin would cause its people to be exiled from the land (195). Exile therefore did not mean that the gods of Babylon had won and Yahwe had lost, but that it was Yahwe’s “judgement on his people’s sinful behavior that led to the exile” (195). By contrast, the return from exile and life on the land was seen as a new beginning which would finally lead to a blessing for all the nations. “The perspective that the whole world will enter into a relationship with God is Zion-centered. ... That is the ultimate perspective of the prophetic messages ...” (196).

In chapter 8 (199-222), Julius Steinberg turns to “The land in the book of Psalms”. Steinberg examines the structure of the book of Psalms and shows the basic function of the framing of the royal Psalms 2, 72 and 89 (201-203). Next, he looks at the different books of the Psalms (1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, 107-150), and discusses those individual Psalms which speak about the land. He identifies three main ideas in the book of Psalms: (1) a series of psalms discuss

the “crisis of the land of Canaan and new hope for the land” (218-219); (2) another group links the topic of the land to the kingdom and the promised Davidic dynasty, and to the “entire world” (219); and (3) a third group speaks about “the land, the blessing, and the presence of God” (219-220).

In chapter 9 (223-248), W. Creighton Marlowe discusses “The land in the four wisdom books: Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs”. Marlowe identifies seven kinds of “land” in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament: “(1) a governed territory, (2) an unspecified district, (3) the realm of death, (4) the realm of life, (5) personal property, (6) arable ground, and (7) an implied category is desert or desolate ground which can be made to have green growth” (225). He then looks at these diverse categories and explores the passages which speak about them. For Marlowe, the “OT Wisdom books place a priority on justice in a Land that seeks to be approved by God” (247).

In chapter 10 (249-273), Geert W. Lorein turns to “The land in a time of exile: Promises and duties”. Lorein points out that, on the one hand, the Israelites had lost their land due to their sin (250-251), but there was also the promise of restoration (e.g. Jer. 30:3; 252). This restoration even had a date: it was to come in 70 years’ time (Jer. 29:10; 253-254). On the other hand, Jeremiah admonishes the people of Israel to engage in the life of Babylon and seek peace for that city (Jer. 27:12; 29:7; 261). Lorein understands this as being similar to our present-day situation, in which Christians are waiting for the future kingdom of God. He warns, however, that this should “not prevent them from living before the eschaton” (266).

Chapters 11 to 13 form “Part III: The land after the Old Testament”. In chapter 11 (277-304), Boris Paschke analyses “The land in the New Testament”. He identifies “quite some texts that attribute only a limited meaning to the Jerusalem temple..., the city of Jerusalem..., and the land...” (288). There are, however, also “quite some texts that emphasize a considerable importance and holiness of the land *as land*” (288). Paschke does not offer an easy answer to this question. Instead, he concludes: “... as a New Testament scholar, one should not spiritualize the land of Israel and the city and temple of Jerusalem too hastily” (299).

In chapter 12 (305-344), Heiko Wenzel discusses “Aspects of Islamic perspectives on the land of Palestine or land (*ʿard*) in Islamic Sources”. Wenzel shows that there are two divergent attitudes concerning the question of whether or not the Koran promises the land of Israel to the Jews. Some Islamic theologians view the promise of God – that the land belongs to the Children of Israel – as still being valid (306), while others bluntly declare that the land now belongs to the Muslims (307). Wenzel discusses different passages from the Koran, where the term *ʿard* (land) is used. He explains that there can only be one “logical conclusion: since Muhammad is the final prophet, Allah’s religion is

perfected and the Muslim community is the best that the world has ever seen (and will ever see), ultimately Allah entrusted the world in general and the land of Israel in particular to this *ʿumma*” (320).

In chapter 13 (345-373), Kees de Vreugd turns to “The land and the Zionist State of Israel”. De Vreugd discusses different positions towards the land of Israel, which he has identified in Jewish and Christian circles. He understands “the State of Israel ... [as] a modern expression of the right to be a people in its own land and of the Biblical connection of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel” (370).

“Part IV: Conclusions regarding the land”, the final chapter, again consists of only a single contribution. In chapter 14 (377-400), the editors Koorevaar and Paul attempt to formulate a “[s]ummary, conclusions and perspectives”. They do so by first looking at the findings of the articles dealing with the land in the Old Testament (377-382) and then at the findings of those concerned with Judaism, Christianity and Islam (382-385). In the subsequent sections the authors discuss “The Zionist state Israel and the revelation of God’s Kingdom” (385-398) and finally broach the question: “Who is entitled to the earth?” (398-400). Koorevaar and Paul argue that the coming Kingdom of Heaven will lead to a situation on earth where “we will also live then, in relation to the land of Canaan-Israel” (400).

As is always the case with anthologies, the articles contained in this volume differ in many respects. Some are of a high academic standard (e.g. the article on Islamic perspectives), while others have a more edifying character (e.g. the article on the time of the exile). There are also several inconsistencies: Hausoul, for example, spells the *tetragrammaton* YHWH with capital letters, while Riecker uses Yhwh instead. Another point of critique is that the articles sometimes show major repetitions. For instance, the notion that the possession of the land depends on the obedience of Israel, is formulated repeatedly.

From a general view, the book is of a high academic standard. It presents an evangelical view from a canonical perspective. Nevertheless, there is one major point of criticism: numerous articles are presented in a very bad English. There are not only minor mistakes (e.g. “... in regards to this subject”, 11) but also many passages where a German or Dutch phrase is translated incorrectly. Some examples to demonstrate this:

“Can he play those away?” (20); “On the surface these stories seem total different ...” (48); “These connections ... do not need to be reopened at this place” (199); “If we look around us, that would have meant that we all had gone – do we not all belong to the elite?” (249). These are only a few of many phrases in the book, where it would have been prudent to have a native speaker correcting the English. It is strange for a book with mistakes like these to emanate from a publishing house such as Peter Lang.

Nevertheless, from a content perspective this book makes a valuable contribution to discussions about the land in Old Testament theology.

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**Danna Nolan Fewell (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Xi + 644 pp., hardbound. ISBN 978-0-19-996772-8, 112,50 GBP; paperback (2018) ISBN 978-0-19-091576-6 33 GBP**

During the past decades much attention has been given to biblical narratives and responsible methods and approaches for their academic study. The original quest following the insights of the “new criticism” and applying them to the Bible is now subdivided into a number of complex clusters of quests. Therefore, an up-to-date survey of the current debate, issues and methodological approaches is most appreciated.

*Part one*, “Overtures”, introduces the methodological issues involved in appreciating biblical narrative and in relating it to other issues in the wider field of literary criticism and biblical criticism in particular. In her introductory essay, “The Work of Biblical Narrative” (3–26), Danna Nolan Fewell first addresses the relationships between knowledge and narrative, based on the insight that “narrative is integral to self-perception and social orientation, indeed, is essential to our very survival” (3). She observes that this often-labelled “narrative turn”

attempts to rethink the results of structuralist and formalist narrative analyses – namely, the taxonomies of narrative components, discursive mechanics, and rhetorical strategies – and to reinscribe these into a more comprehensive vision of the roles narratives play in cognition, sociality, and identity formation. The field of biblical studies has in recent years also given much attention to narrative and is beginning to expand its understanding of the relationships between the poetics of biblical narrative and the kinds of cognitive, social, and identity-constructing work that biblical narratives do (3).

She also notes a number of changes from the initial New Critical emphasis on the Bible’s narrative art and poetics:

Final-form studies eager to reveal the Bible’s narrative artistry, demonstrate its structural coherence, prove its ideological

consistency and reliability, and protect its literary (and theological) integrity are giving way to post-structural and postclassical acknowledgment of textual instability and undecidability, opening biblical poetics to the realms of the personal and the sociopolitical. Biblical narrative critics now commonly reach across unexpected disciplinary lines for new analytical concepts to illuminate textual detail. We witness biblical narratives shifting their points of gravity under the weight of different kinds of interpretive questions, exposing their innate historical, political, and social biases while simultaneously being strangely hospitable to other, often incongruent, political and social visions (3–4).

The current emphasis is on the communicative strategies, which biblical narratives employ and on the social impulses and political agenda behind biblical storytelling. Scholars also seek to understand how biblical story worlds reflect the material realities and social constructions of the ancient world (4). Fewell also notes a growing interest in how contemporary readers relate to biblical narratives. The lasting impact of the Bible raises several questions, “What work do biblical narratives continue to do? How do readerly desires and concerns affect that work? What happens to these stories as they cross cultural and temporal boundaries? Do they serve the functions for which they were originally co-opted, or do they gravitate towards expressing other cultural realities? What are our responsibilities as historically and culturally distant readers, hearers, conveyors, and conversation partners to evaluate the ‘truths’ that the Bible seems to offer?” (4). Fewell also addresses issues of narrative identity, the sociality of narrative (narrated experience is inevitably social; narratives are inherently social and shared), the relationships between trauma, memory and narrative (how memory and its articulations in narrative form, convey and fail to convey traumatic events) and the nature and function of stories as intertextual performances.

Other essays in this section are Stephen D. Moore, “Biblical Narrative Analysis from the New Criticism to the New Narratology” (27–50; including sketches of postclassical narrative criticism); Robert S. Kawashima, “Biblical Narrative and the Birth of Prose Literature” (52–60); Austin Busch, “New Testament Narrative and Greco-Roman Literature” (61–72); Raymond F. Person, “Biblical Historiography as Traditional History” (73–83; “epic” and “history” as narrative genres in ancient literature, ancient historiography as performance, biblical historiography as traditional historiography, reading Samuel – Kings and Chronicles as faithful performances of traditional history) and Tod Linafelt on the relationship between “Poetry and Biblical Narrative” (84–92).

*Part two* offers surveys of the various biblical narratives, their characteristics and particular features. It contains the following essays on *Old Testament* narratives: David M. Gunn, “Telling and Retelling the Bible’s First Story” (95–108); Danna Nolan Fewell and R. Christopher Heard, “The Genesis of Identity in the Biblical World” (109–124); Kenneth Ngwa, “The Story of

Exodus and Its Literary Kinships” (125–136; kinship in and out of Egypt, kinships and memories in the wilderness, kinships at the mountain); Bryan D. Bibb, “Blood, Death, and the Holy in the Leviticus Narrative” (137–146); Adriane Leveen, “Becoming Israel in the Wilderness of Numbers” (147–156, the Book of Numbers, notable narrative-critical works on Num, becoming Israel in the wilderness of numbers); Brian M. Britt, “Remembering Narrative in Deuteronomy” (157–167; Deut and biblical narrative, biblical history and narrative, narrative studies and Deut, time and memory in Deut); Ovidiu Creanga, “The Conquest of Memory in the Book of Joshua” (168–179; the narratives of Josh, narrative readings in Josh, narrative and spatial theory: the land as “thirdspace” in Josh 1–12); Deryn Guest, “Judging YHWH in the Book of Judges” (180–191); Rachele Gilmour, “(Hi)story Telling in the Books of Samuel” (192–203); Keith Bodner, “The Rule of Death and Signs of Life in the Book of Kings” (204–214); Patricia K. Tull, “Narrative Among the Latter Prophets” (215–225; the narrative arc of the prophets, prophetic narratives, narratives shared with “Kings, narratives in various prophetic books; Jonah turns the conventions of prophetic stories upside down: “an uncompassionate prophet; a pliable king, a willing community, and a lesson turned not on the hearers but on Jonah himself, and upon all who hastily identify with the righteousness of Israel’s prophets”, 224); Chesung Justin Ryu, “Divine Rhetoric and Prophetic Silence in the Book of Jonah” (226–235; survey of literary critical readings of Jonah and a proposal for a postcolonial reading of Jonah); Carol A. Newsom, “Plural Versions and the Challenge of Narrative Coherence in the Story of Job” (236–244; Job in cultural memory, paradoxical coherence and narrative art of canonical Job); Stephanie Day Powell, Amy Beth Jones and Dung Sung Kim, “Reading Ruth, Reading Desire” (245–254); Anne-Mareike Wetter, “Bodies, Boundaries, and Belonging in the Book of Esther” (255–265; summary of narrative approaches to Esther, bringing margins to the centre, ritualising Esther, gender and the politics of representation); Terry Ann Smith, “Warring Words in the Book of Daniel” (266–275); Donna J. Laird, “Political Strategy in the Narrative of Ezra-Nehemiah” (276–285; the textured mosaic of Ezra-Nehemiah’s narrative, the rise of Jerusalem and the fall of Jericho as Nehemiah’s rhetorical strategy) and Julie Kelso on “The Patrilineal Narrative Machinery of Chronicles” (286–295). The other essays in this section are devoted to the various New Testament narratives (296–386).

*Part three* addresses questions of body/bodies as they appear in biblical narrative: Jeremy Schipper, “Plotting Bodies in Biblical Narrative” (389–397); Judith E. McKinlay, “Reading Biblical Women Matters” (398–410); Eric Thurman, “Adam and the Making of Masculinity” (411–421); Kathleen Gallagher Elkins and Julie Faith Parker, “Children in Biblical Narrative and Childist Interpretation” (422–433); Robert D. Maldonado, “Reading Others as the Subject(s) of Biblical Narrative” (434–443); Ken Stone, “Animating the Bible’s Animals” (444–455); Dora Rudo Mbuwayesango, “Sex and Sexuality in

Biblical Narrative” (456–464) and Stuart Lasine, “Characterizing God in His/Our Own Image” (465–477).

The essays of *part four* examine the natural, social, and conceptual landscapes of biblical story worlds. Norman C. Habel, “Reading the Landscape in Biblical Narrative” (481–488; suggesting how biblical narrators have read the landscapes of Canaan, Egypt and the wilderness in relation to the land promised as the place for the people of God); Jennifer L. Koosed, “Sustenance and Survival in Biblical Narrative” (489–497); Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor, “Displacement and Diaspora in Biblical Narrative” (498–506, including the Book of Esther and fictional histories of diaspora and Joseph and the Israelites in a foreign land); Theodore W. Jennings and Tat-siong Benny Liew, “Narrativizing Empire in the Biblical World” (507–516; ambivalence toward Empire in the Hebrew Bible, Christianity and Empire, metaphorizing Empire, Empire and contemporary discourse); Linda A. Dietch, “The Social Worlds of Biblical Narrative” (517–528, a survey of the emergence and different waves of social-scientific criticism followed by proposals of judging Ehud’s role as judge with Durkheim and Bourdieu); Roland Boer, “The Economic Politics of Biblical Narrative” (529–539; the estate of Eden, textual mediation of socioeconomic contradictions in the struggle between Joseph and Moses in Gen 41–Exod 15, formal and ethical codes in Job and Proverbs; the ways in which texts respond, politically and ideologically, to socioeconomic tensions are as varied as the texts themselves, 536); Mark G. Brett, “Narrative Deliberation in Biblical Politics” (540–549) and Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, “Biblical Lamentations and Singing the Blues” (550–560; narrating trauma, biblical texts as “narrative repair” and posttraumatic literature, Lamentations as a narrative repair of the Hebrew assumptive world). Smith-Christopher aims at proposing

a new level of dialogue among social theorists interested in narratives (socially shared as well as individually constructed) as a means of understanding processes of recovery and resilience in the aftermath of trauma, historians of the blues, historians of the TRC processes, and scholars interested in a contemporary analysis of the creative social, political, and theological role of lament in the Bible. Lament leads to a repaired social narrative because it refuses to accept that the communal narrative no longer exists (rather, God is still there to be appealed to), but also because it refuses to accept an imposed imperial narrative. The book of Lamentations creatively contributes to a revised narrative of Hebrew identity that will not accept subordination, oppression, and violence as the final “story” (558–559).

*Part five* contains three essays on reading biblical narratives. Jione Havea and Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon address “Culture Tricks in Biblical Narrative” (563–572; biblical narratives and their readers are inherently cross-cultural, the case studies are on the Gibeonites of Josh 9). Gerald West draws attention to “Global Thefts of Biblical Narrative” (573–584). He describes the introduction

of the Bible to the African cultures in South Africa and African biblical scholarships and its characteristics. This is followed by a description of the contextual Bible study approach as developed by the Ujamaa Centre in which West is involved; see <http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Homepage.aspx>. West argues that

Long before postcolonial discourse was constructed by academics, ordinary Africans were interpreting the Bible from their various places in the postcolonial continuum. Central to their postcolonial appropriations was a contrapuntal movement between their own stories and biblical narrative. But unlike most academic appropriations of postcolonial discourse, ordinary Africans (and Asians, and Latin Americans, etc.) do not stop at contrapuntal proliferation. They connect their own “other” narratives with reconfigured biblical narratives for particular emancipatory projects. While African biblical scholarship can offer potential insight into this process, it should respect and not obstruct the ordinary African agenda of reading for social transformation. Indeed, ordinary African readers are calling upon African biblical scholars to work with them in placing local African narratives alongside biblical narratives ..., so that contrapuntal postcolonial readings might make a difference (582).

Gary A. Phillips writes on “The Commanding Faces of Biblical Stories” (585–597). He discusses the “ethical turn”, narrative turn and cultural crisis; virtue ethics, rhetoric, and Wayne Booth, and phenomenology, hermeneutics and Ricoeur, and Levinas and narrative ethics). Phillips argues that biblical ethical criticism as currently performed “in a host of interruptive ways recognises the intrinsic power of story and storytelling to fashion persons and world for the better but also for the worse” (593). The volume closes with an index of subjects and names (599–626) and an index of references.

The editor and fifty contributors, almost exclusively from the United States, offer helpful surveys of the current state of study of biblical narratives in all its variety, many instructive case studies and some fresh proposals worth pondering on. Some essays indicate that the move from classical narrative criticism to the present approaches surveyed here was not only to the advantage of the biblical narratives and their own intentions. While biblical narratives can be used as a playground for all kinds of agendas, this is hardly their purpose. In short, the volume is a helpful travel companion for all who engage with biblical narratives and want to note how they are read these days in the North American academic space.

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