



Samuel Hildebrandt, Kurtis R. Peters, and Eric N. Ortlund, eds., *From Words to Meaning: Studies on Old Testament Language and Theology for David J. Reimer* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2021), pp. xix + 184, ISBN: 978-1914490064. £60

This work forms a Festschrift in honour of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament scholar David Reimer, with twelve contributors providing essays on topics that cluster around his academic work. Because Reimer's interests are somewhat diverse, the topics covered reflect that diversity. Contributions were provided from Reimer's colleagues and past students with a variety of backgrounds, interests, and methodological perspectives. As such, this book contains essays that may appeal to a broad range of people with diverse intellectual interests. That being said, this book will likely be most at home in a university library.

The volume contains some essays that are more reflective, some that mostly re-cover previous discussions in the field (with small additions to those topics), and some that seek to tread new ground. In this review I will focus on some of the essays which appear to be in the latter category. These essays are Nicolas Wyatt's "An Echo of the Ugaritic Baal Cycle in the Song of the Sea?", Maryann Amor's "Weeping as a Persuasive Tool", Eric Ortlund's "'Stand on the Earth' or 'Rise above the Dust'?", Marilyn Burton's "Glory in the Heights and in the Deep", and Kurtis Peters's "Theology in Knead of Language".

In his essay (Chapter Two), Nicolas Wyatt presents evidence for a literary relationship between the Ugaritic Baal Cycle (c. 1210 BCE) and the Song of the Sea (Exod 15). Initially he presents evidence for a literary relationship with Isaiah 27:1 and Psalm 74:13–15 in the references to various serpents and words for sea. Wyatt argues that, while not 'straight-forward borrowing', the Song of the Sea 'has transformed the basic plot [of the Baal Cycle] into something very different' (p. 24). Rather than reflecting on national disaster it becomes a story of a nation's origin. The key link Wyatt points to is divine inheritance which 'is a very distinctive idiom as it appears in the present passage [Exod 15:13, 17], also found in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, and as far as I know only in these two places' (p. 25). Whether it hints at direct linguistic borrowing or simply a somewhat shared cultural milieu, it is intriguing to see the evidence for the 'echo' which Wyatt highlights. Although there were points where the essay felt quite conjectural, it was very interesting overall and well worth the read.



Reviews

In Chapter Four, Maryann Amor analyses the actions of David at the death of Absalom from the perspective of weeping being used as a persuasive tool. Amor, referring to the work of Hugh Pyper, points out that, in 2 Samuel 19, ‘the narrator states only that David is “moved” upon hearing of Absalom’s death – the *emotion* associated with David’s tears is never provided by the trustworthy narrator or by David himself’ (p. 53), and the idea that he is going through the pain of loss is an assumption we make. In contrast to this assumption, Amor argues that ‘David is not crying because of emotional grief, but he is using his tears to distance himself from his involvement in Absalom’s death’ (p. 55). Amor, building on the work of George Nicol, suggests that David actually wanted Absalom dead to secure his throne. In such a scenario, David’s weeping would be used as a persuasive tool. Amor’s essay provides some important challenges to contemporary assumptions with the discussion of the use of tears to persuade. However, it does feel like there needs to be a certain amount of distrust in the biblical narrator to accept the full argument, which may put off some readers. Nevertheless, it is worth wrestling with the use of tears to persuade, and consider how public weeping likely represents something different in the biblical context to what we would naturally assume with our different worldview.

In Chapter Six, Eric Ortlund presents an argument for seeing resurrection in Job 19:25. In his essay, he first demonstrates the validity of the traditional interpretation: ‘stand on the earth’. He shows how this functions well from a semantic point of view as well as in the literary context. However, he then moves on to offer a complementary interpretation of ‘rise above the dust’. Ortlund provides significant evidence to show how this interpretation could be present in Job 19:25 such that it is persuasive when he writes ‘The exact expression of Job’s hope in 19.25 fits so well, semantically and contextually, with both a hope for legal vindication and a cosmic victory over the powers of chaos and death that it is impossible to decide between them. One strongly suspects a double entendre is intended, and the reader should keep both senses in mind’ (p. 88). This leads Ortlund to discuss the plausibility of Job 19:25–27 as displaying a resurrection hope. This essay presents an interpretation of Job 19:25 which moves away from the usual perspective found among commentators, particularly in its presentation of resurrection hope. It deserves careful consideration.



Reviews

Marilyn Burton, in Chapter Seven, aims to make some of her work on the semantics of 'glory' more accessible to those who are not linguists. In this essay, Burton has taken her semantic work, and looking at the *concept* of glory, examines two main metaphors of glory for their theological importance: GLORY IS HEIGHT and GLORY IS A LIQUID. These metaphors are approached through the frame of conceptual metaphor theory, and it proves quite an effective model to draw out the importance of her semantic work for exegesis and theology. One of the main points Burton highlights is that the GLORY IS HEIGHT metaphor 'emphasizes glory's connotations of military power' (p. 98). One development of this finding is that 'When humans are lifted to glory, they are instead drawn into participation, in a small way, in God's own glorious height' (p. 98). This is an excellent essay which can bring a more nuanced understanding to many uses of 'glory' in the OT and has informed and coloured my own thinking significantly.

Kurtis Peters, in Chapter Eight (also focused on semantics), draws out the relevance of his work on cooking in Hebrew for interpreting difficult passages in Hosea 7. Through reference to his previous work, Peters demonstrates that attempts at interpreting the cooking metaphors of Hosea 7 that lead to an emended text are unnecessary. Rather, 'the text is readable as it is' (p. 113), and the difficulty has been with our lack of knowledge of cooking and the terminology. This essay is well argued and makes a convincing case for an interpretation of the cooking metaphors of Hosea 7 that avoids emendation. Peters is then able to show how this interpretation allows for a more coherent understanding of the theological moves in the passage. It is a good demonstration of the importance of world-knowledge in understanding language and interpreting the Bible.

This book consists of a collection of essays from varying perspectives on varying topics. I have just described and commented on some I felt were more thought provoking and significant. The book overall contains important work, and the volume would be a worthy addition for university libraries.

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