

God's own possible discomfort with the "ban," and the necessity of punishing people when they have passed the "point of no return" (see Jer 7). It would not be difficult to multiply the examples of important discussions and insights to be found in this volume.

For those concerned with the question of the relevance of OT law for contemporary believers, Gane's *Old Testament Law for Christians* is a "must have." Although it is an academic study, it brings the discussion of OT law down from the ivory tower and makes it accessible and relevant for contemporary readers. Old Testament scholars, students, and even pastors will want to add this volume to their collections.

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Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts. Edited by Jonathan S. Greer, John W. Hilber, and John H. Walton. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. xix + 615 pages. \$49.99 hardcover.

Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament is a massive undertaking that should command respect both for the publisher and the editors alone, before even proceeding to the work of the individual authors. This multiauthor volume consisting of a staggering 66 papers easily qualifies as one of the most well-rounded background resources to OT studies ever attempted.

Space here does not allow for the title of every paper, let alone the treatment of all the contributions. However, after the introduction by the editors, the volume divides into three logical and convenient parts: Elements of the Drama, Acts and Scenes of the Drama, and Themes of the Drama. Part 1 consists of four topics: historical geography, archaeology, ancient Near Eastern literature, and iconography. These four subdisciplines of ancient Near Eastern history arguably constitute the essential components within the field, so the papers within these topics are vital to orienting oneself to the background of the Israelite people and their holy writ.

Part 2 consists of two topics: integrated approaches to (1) broad historical contexts and (2) event-based historical contexts. The first topic provides the reader with a chronological survey of the OT period from the ancestral (or patriarchal) period to the Hasmonean period, being a worthy up-

to-date complement to any valuable book on OT survey. The second topic drills down within selected OT periods by analyzing specific issues of relevance, such as the Late Bronze Age collapse, the Tel Dan Inscription, and the Battle of Carchemish, to name a few.

Part 3 consists of four topics: Israelite religion, family networks, economic matters, and social organization. Part 3 follows the second half of part 2 by focusing on specific issues related to the daily experiences of Israelite people, such as the service of the priests, the role (or lives) of women, trade in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, and the legal systems in ancient Israel. Thus, part 3 delves into cultural matters that are relevant to daily life and illuminates the events that the average Israelite would have experienced.

This volume includes contributions from many accomplished scholars, as well as those from several rising stars of the future. There are many positive elements within the book that are worthy of commendation, only a few of which can be mentioned here. For one, the Israeli archaeologist, Seymour Gitin, stated that "biblical archaeology is a valuable and useful discipline in writing the history of ancient Israel" (46). This refreshing statement strongly runs counter to the mantra of many ancient Near Eastern archaeologists and scholars who decry the unvirtuous nature of the notion of biblical archaeology, even calling it dead and claiming to have written its obituary.

For another, Brent Strawn provided an excellent discussion on how the ancient Israelites did not practice aniconism (i.e., the lack of physical/artistic representation of the natural and supernatural realms), which makes them innocent of the charge that they violated the second commandment of the Decalogue, prohibiting the making of images (172). Strawn pointed out that the pictures described in the Bible, such as the decorative elements of the Temple, are not at odds with this commandment because they do not prohibit *all* representation, only *divine* representation.

For a third, Eric Welch carefully described the prosperity of Judah at the time of the neo-Assyrian invasion under Sennacherib, enlightening the OT reader's understanding of incredible reversal in lifestyle experienced by the Judahites whose cities and homes were decimated when the Assyrian king wreaked havoc on the countryside (226–27). Welch also noted how the archaeological record demonstrates a consistent and widespread pattern of destruction, confirming the veracity of both the biblical and neo-Assyrian accounts of the invasion.

Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament also contains an array of dubious statements and conclusions, which

should cause professors to point out these flaws if the book is assigned as required reading. For example, Aren Maier stated that for all intents and purposes, recent research has negated the conquest view (for the Israelite capture of Canaan) (55). This conclusion simply is untrue, as persuasive evidence for a conquest at the end of the Late Bronze Age I at Jericho, Hazor, and possibly Ai (if it can be equated with Khirbet el-Maqtar) has been presented cogently in the literature. None of the other sites in Canaan are described as having been destroyed by Joshua's forces. Perhaps the true problem is that Maier presuppositionally stands against the conquest view so firmly that no amount of evidence will prove sufficient for him.

For another example, Margaret Cohen represented an antiquated position when she stated that the Northwest Semitic script generally is attributed to the Phoenicians (127). This position is known among most epigraphers to be impossible, if for no other reason than that Phoenician inscriptions date no earlier than 1000 BC, whereas alphabetic Ugaritic inscriptions, which utilized a completely different script, date to the 13th century BC. Beyond that, the non-Phoenician inscriptions from Egypt and Sinai, dating as early as 1840 BC, have been deciphered successfully and demonstrated to be full-fledged Hebrew.

For a third example, David Falk opined that the lack of physical remains under the Ramesside foundations at Tell Qantir presents a problem for any dating of the exodus to the 15th century BC (198). This claim is purely untrue. In fact, scribal updating of the Hebrew text, proven to be a valid and undeniable practice, refutes this argument, given that (1) Qantir had two names before Per-Ramesses (i.e., Avaris, then Peru-nefer, meaning "Pleasant journey!"); (2) since the latter was the name of the site only for a portion of the 18th Dynasty, later readers of the Hebrew Bible would have been at a loss to read *Peru-nefer*; and (3) a *wab*-priest of Dynasty 19 who was standing at the Ramesside harbor at Qantir claimed that he was at the harbor of (abandoned!) Avaris, meaning that the ancient Egyptians, themselves, viewed the two sites as one. The obvious implication is that if the Egyptians viewed Qantir as part of Avaris, so would Hebrew scribes of the end of the first millennium BC, providing full credence for a textual update from *Peru-nefer* to *Ramses*.

While the mistakes and faulty conclusions in this volume are numerous, they should not deter the student of the Bible from purchasing and using it as an important resource for the study of the ancient Near Eastern world that was the vibrant ecosystem of the ancient Israelite. This volume even may become the singularly most important background tool

for the study of the OT, and OT professors who are not specialists in ancient Near Eastern studies are encouraged to use it cautiously as a textbook for their students.

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Basics of Biblical Hebrew: Grammar. By Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. xxii + 491 pages. \$41.99 hardcover. *Workbook.* xiii + 198 pages. \$17.49 softcover. *Video Lectures.* By Miles V. Van Pelt. \$87.49 DVD.

This year marks the 18th year since students got their first formal exposure to Pratico and Van Pelt's perspective on instructing beginning students in the language of the Old Testament. Since that time in 2001, many of the Hebrew resources offered by these two scholars have gone through two revisions (2007 and 2019). The packet that I am evaluating includes a grammar, a workbook, a video lecture series coordinated with the grammar, and a set of Hebrew vocabulary flashcards. In this review, I will not attempt to explain every detail about the resources offered in this set; rather, I hope to evaluate how the third edition differs from the second edition. Furthermore, I will not assess the vocabulary flashcards other than to note that they follow the new ordering of the vocabulary in the third-edition grammar. Apart from this notation, I will evaluate the other three parts of the package in turn.

Most of the major changes to the content of the grammar of this third edition are highlighted in the introduction on pages xi–xiii. The grammar itself has increased in page count from 475 pages to 491 pages with the introductory material increasing from 13 pages to 22 pages. This increase in pages, along with what appears to be a change in paper thickness, makes an-already-large grammar even bigger and more cumbersome. The grammar is still laid out in thirty-six chapters, which are divided into five major sections. The significant changes in the first three sections, which comprise chapters 1–23, includes the rewriting of chapters 10, 18, and 23, other less consequential modifications, and a few minor changes in the wording of some chapter titles. On the other hand, there are major changes in the order of chapters in section 4. Chapters 26–29, which originally handled the *piel* and *pual* strong and weak stems have been switched with chapters 30–33 dealing with the *hiphil* and *hophal*