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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Syriac Primer: Reading, Writing, Vocabulary & Grammar with Exercises and Cassette Activities* by G. A. Kiraz

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Source: *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 41, Fasc. 2 (Apr., 1991), pp. 252-253

Published by: Brill

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1518914>

Accessed: 26-05-2020 17:46 UTC

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Cocheba. As Kasher points out, although attention has been given to Nabataea (notably in G. W. Bowerstock, *Roman Arabia*), there has been no book specifically on Idumaeae and Ituraean relations with the Jews. He accordingly gives a fresh treatment of much primary evidence. A striking example is his interpretation of the Judaization of Idumaea by Hyrcanus I, and of (parts of) Ituraea by Aristobulus I, as more voluntary than enforced. He builds on Strabo, *Geog.* xvi 2, 34 (the Idumaeans joined the Jews and shared their customs), against Josephus's statement (*Ant.* XIII §§ 257-8; cf. XV § 254) that Hyrcanus would allow them to remain in their country only if they accepted circumcision and Jewish customs. In reality, Kasher argues, Hyrcanus would have stipulated with leading Idumaeae families, including that of Herod, that the people should Judaize, and the emphasis on coercion in Josephus reflects the anti-Hasmonaeae propaganda of Nicolas and the anti-Zealot views of Josephus himself. An element of compulsion by the victor (which recurs in Josephus's account of the treatment of Pella by Alexander Jannaeus, *Ant.* XIII § 397) nevertheless seems natural, as M. Hengel has emphasized, against a background of belief in an extensive Promised Land. Kasher's suggestion will doubtless continue to be discussed, and his general emphasis on the Jewishness of the Idumaeans is borne out, as he notes, by the Jewish aspects of the house of Herod and the importance of Idumaeans on the Jewish side in the revolt against Rome. Ronen follows those who find that support for Bar Cocheba in southern Judaea indicates the continuance of Zealot views in areas which had been part of Idumaea. Detailed consideration of primary sources, and reflection of discussion among Israeli scholars, ensure that this book will be highly valued. [W. HORBURY]

O. KEEL, *Das Hohelied*. Zürcher Bibelkommentare 18. 270 pp. Theologischer Verlag, Zürich, 1986. The introduction (pp. 9-46) discusses the milieu to which the Song of Songs belongs and its date, typological and allegorical interpretation, *Sitz im Leben*, composition and form, figures of speech, and relation to faith in Yahweh. Keel believes that it is a collection of poems belonging to the period between the 8th and 6th centuries B.C., but that later additions have been made to it (p. 14). The commentary is, as one would expect in a book by Keel, enriched, not only by references to ancient Near Eastern literature, but also by 145 figures from ancient reliefs, seals, etc. that help the reader to understand the biblical text. This is Keel's most valuable contribution to the interpretation of the Song of Songs. His discussion of the text has much that is interesting. For example, he suggests that in *tôkô rāšûp 'ahābā* (iii 10) the last word is a corruption of *'āhābīm*, and that the phrase should be translated "ihr Inneres ist ausgeschmückt mit Liebe(sszenen)". He sets out evidence for the decorating of ancient Near Eastern beds with depictions of erotic scenes (pp. 122-4). Another interesting point—which illustrates a different aspect of his expertise—is his defence on p. 82 of the view that *taḫḫūh* means "apple", and he refers to the discovery of ancient apples at Kadesh-barnea. Rarely can fault be found with his comments such as in his failure to defend his questionable acceptance of the translation of *k'ōf'yyā* in i 7 as "wie eine Umhüllende" (which probably involves emendation to *k'ōf'yyā*). Apart from minor criticisms, this commentary deserves the highest praise, particularly for its extensive use of illustrations. [J.A.E.]

G. A. KIRAZ, *The Syriac Primer: Reading, Writing, Vocabulary & Grammar with Exercises and Cassette Activities*. JSOT Manuals 5. 2nd edition. xii + 274 pp. JSOT Press, Sheffield, 1989. £8.95, \$14.50. This book, consisting of 13 chapters, aims to present Syriac as a living language to two categories of reader: Syriac-Aramean-born Americans, and students commencing their studies. No claim is made to compete with the many grammars that are available; rather, the oral aspect of the language is emphasized, and particularly the Western dialect. Ch.

1 introduces the alphabet with comprehensive cassette recordings and written exercises. It is regrettable that the elementary readings of ch. 2 were not also taped, since this would have bridged the transition to chs 4 and 6, where intermediate material is handled. The cassette recordings and the written exercises of these two chapters are supplemented by chs 3 and 5, "Grammar I" and "Grammar II" respectively. In these attempts to explain Syriac grammar simply, references to another basic primer would have been useful. Ch. 8, "Grammar: Conjugation", supplements ch. 9, where the advanced readings are selected from the Peshiṭta and the liturgy of the Syrian Orthodox Church. The worth of this material is largely lost since no translations or cassette recordings are supplied. It would also have been instructive to demonstrate on tape the metres of Syriac poetry, which are elucidated in ch. 10. Chs 11 and 12 are devoted to the palaeography of the Estrangela and East Syriac scripts, but again it would have been valuable to demonstrate the differences in the Nestorian/Chaldean vocalization. Ch. 13 discusses the use and application of Quššaya and Rukkaka, but it might have been better to place this section at the beginning of the book to assist the reader in the fundamentals of pronunciation. Ch. 7 comprises useful lists of vocabulary, but otherwise there is no glossary to the Syriac material. Indeed, the oral potential of the book could have been developed more, especially since half of Side B of the tape remains blank. Similarly, the production of the book could have been improved. The Syriac fonts are well executed, but the English text is marred by poor prose (e.g. "Gaye knows his lessons very good" on p. 103) and innumerable orthographic errors, some of which are misleading (e.g. p. ix where several characters are written with Rukkaka and may lead the beginner to think that these points are integral; and p. 30 where the Hebrew letter *shin* is pointed as *sin*). A corrected and revised edition of this primer should be contemplated.

[Erica HUNTER]

D. KNAPP, *Deuteronomium 4. Literarische Analyse und theologische Interpretation*. Göttinger Theologische Arbeiten 35. viii + 226 pp. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1987. DM 48. The publication of this 1986 Göttingen dissertation is to be welcomed. It begins with a statement of the problem, a review of previous work and some sensible remarks on the approach to be adopted in literary-critical analysis of the chapter. Drawing attention to intrinsic historical probabilities, to the characteristic features of the *Gattung* of parenesis, and to the origin of the chapter at a late stage of the dt./dtr. movement, Knapp resists the tendency (represented, for example, by S. Mittmann) to see source-critical significance in every "unevenness" in the text, including the variations between second-person singular and plural forms. He holds that the latter may often be due to citations from older texts or allusions to them, as already suggested by C. T. Begg. Literary analysis of the chapter should pay more attention to the themes of its various "blocks" than to linguistic criteria. This leads Knapp, in the first main section of the book, to distinguish three main stages in the composition of the chapter, which correspond to the concern of the respective authors with the law (*vv.* 1-4, 9-14), the second commandment (*vv.* 15-16a, 19-28), and repentance (*vv.* 29-35). Each of these sub-sections was subsequently added to by later writers. After a brief discussion of the problems of *iv* 41-9, Knapp continues by arguing that the similar chs *xxix* and *xxx* share the same three-stage composition as *iv* 1-40 (*xxix* 1-14\* [law], *xxix* 15-27\* [the first commandment], *xxx* 1-10 [repentance]), so that it is necessary to speak of "three late Deuteronomistic frames for the Deuteronomic law". The work concludes with some useful tables and a bibliography. The exilic recasting of the law-book as the basis for an understanding of the catastrophe of 586/7 and for a future restoration of Israel is a process of great theological importance, and this study highlights several interesting features of it. But is it perhaps