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"A Covenant with Death: Death in the Iron Age II and Its Rhetorical Uses in Proto-Isaiah."

John R. Spencer

John Carroll University, spencer@jcu.edu

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ment to call this book a contribution since the body of work on American children's Bibles is so small and D's book so comprehensive. Ruth B. Bottigheimer's seminal work *The Bible for Children: From the Age of Gutenberg to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) first examined the unexplored genre of children's Bibles from an international perspective, and D.'s study now provides a deeper look into the largely uncharted world of children's Bibles in America.

Angela Parchen Rasmussen, Silver Spring, MD 20904

CHRISTOPHER B. HAYS, *A Covenant with Death: Death in the Iron Age II and Its Rhetorical Uses in Proto-Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015). Pp. xx + 445. Paper \$50.

This volume is a reprint of a revised dissertation (Emory University, 2008) that was originally published by Mohr Siebeck in 2011 as *Death in the Iron Age II and in the First Isaiah* (FAT 79). This paperback edition is basically unchanged from the earlier publication except for an added foreword by Matthew J. Suriano.

The volume consists of seven sections, including the introduction, which for some reason is given the chapter number of 0. This introduction briefly lays out the focus and methodology of the volume. The focus of the volume is on the concepts associated with death in the ancient Near East and how the author(s) of Isaiah 1–39 incorporate and react to those concepts. The author's methodological approach involves trying to understand what the text meant for the original audience. To put this differently, he seeks what the text meant, not what it means. This reflects a traditional historical-critical approach to Scripture. Such methodology, however, displays a limited awareness of the role of the interpreter in any interpretation. Most scholarship has moved beyond a modernistic approach and realizes the impact that the interpreter has on the process of interpretation. Any interpretation should use a combination of historical-critical methods and newer methodologies, such as reader-response or ideological criticism, to construct an understanding of the text. Although the author employs "rhetorical" issues in his analysis, it is solely to create an understanding of the intent of the author and what was "heard" by the original audience. This lack of consideration of the role of the interpreter (in this case, the author H.) in creating the interpretation is a methodological weakness of the volume.

In chap. 1, H. explores the ideas about death and the dead in Mesopotamia in Iron Age II. For H. there is no question that the larger ancient Near Eastern world influenced the composition of the Hebrew Bible and the ideas it contains. To show this, he starts by summarizing the history of Mesopotamia, concentrating mostly on the Assyrian period, with Babylon a secondary concern. This reflects his desire to place Isaiah 1–39 in a larger historical context and to explore the time of Hezekiah. H. sees the ancient Near Eastern influence on ancient Israel and Judah as the result of imitation rather than imposition. Once the historical and archaeological context is explored, H. looks at the concept of death, practices associated with the dead, ideas about existence after death, and gods associated with death. The materials included post-death rituals, laments, journeys of the dead, views of underworld, substitute kingship, and concern about potential vengeance by the dead if they are not properly honored.

The same kinds of questions and issues addressed in the previous chapter are the concerns of chaps. 2–4. In chap. 2, H. turns to Egypt. A major point of this chapter is the claim that the primary influence on Isaiah for the concepts associated with death come from Egypt. In chap. 3, H. looks at the concepts of death and the dead in Syria-Palestine, excluding Israel and Judah. It is here that the author finally seeks to define the “cult of the dead.” Some of the discussion is problematic in that it concentrates on Ugaritic materials that clearly predate the Iron II period of Isaiah. Finally, in chap. 4, H. addresses death in the Hebrew Bible. His discussion includes a rehearsal and analysis of prior scholarship on this topic that demonstrates an awareness of issues of the “historicity” of the biblical materials and a heavy reliance on the Deuteronomistic Historian’s materials. At times, one wonders whether H.’s renderings of certain terms as “soul,” “resurrection,” and “heaven” are appropriate translations for the Hebrew words. Is there too much reading of later concepts into the biblical text? This takes one back to the concerns about interpretive methodology mentioned earlier.

In chap. 5, H. turns his attention to the contents of Isaiah 1–39. In this major chapter, he takes the previous materials and uses them in his discussion of Isaiah. He picks fourteen passages to explore in depth (14:4-23; 30:27-33; 22:15-19; 36:11-12; 5:11-17; 29:1-8; 8:16–9:6; 7:10-13; 19:1-15; 28:1-22; 25:6-8; 26:11-21; 38:9-20; and 37:4, 17), although it is not always clear why these fourteen were selected or what the rationale was for the sequence in which they are addressed. All of these passages are placed in the time of Hezekiah with the possibility of some editing in the time of Josiah and the exile. At several points the author argues for emendations in the MT (such as *mwt*), some of which are possible and some questionable. The basic thesis is that Isaiah is aware of concepts of death from other cultures, especially from Egypt, but that Isaiah presents a theology that turns or opposes those outside concepts in order to advocate for Yhwh as the God of Judah who is “victorious” over death, controls life after death, and opposes necromancy.

The final chapter is mainly a summary of the earlier chapters in the book with the author’s continued argument that Isaiah and his audience knew of the ideas from other cultures in the ancient Near East but that Isaiah reshaped or rejected those ideas in order to present a new perspective to his audience.

There are many positives with this volume. It is an interesting and thorough presentation of historical and archaeological materials on death in the ancient Near East. Whoever wants to work in this area will have to address this compilation of data. The volume has minimal mistakes, although *JOEL* does not appear in list of abbreviations. There is an excellent bibliography, and the footnotes, both in quantity and quality, help to support and explain H.’s thesis. The questions that will be of concern to readers will revolve around the suitability of the author’s conclusions and interpretations.

John Spencer, John Carroll University, Cleveland, OH 44118

JONATHAN G. KLINE, *Allusive Soundplay in the Hebrew Bible* (AIL 28; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016). Pp. xxi + 155. Paper \$27.95.

In this measured and concise volume (a revision of his Harvard University Ph.D. dissertation [2014]), Jonathan G. Kline argues a convincing case for a type of inner-biblical interpretation, “allusive paronomasia.”

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