

**Scott C. Jones, Christine Roy Yoder (eds), *‘When the Morning Stars Sang’*. *Essays in Honor of Choon Leong Seow on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 500; De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston 2018, pp. ix +389, ISBN 978-3-11-042814-8; ISSN 0934-2575; e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-042814-8; e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-042822-3.**

This well-deserved Festschrift for Choon Leong Seow has four main sections: I – on Job; II – on Proverbs and Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth); III – on Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon and IV – on Echoes of Wisdom in the Hebrew Bible and Semitic inscriptions. Before these comes a biography of the scholar being honoured, followed by a list of his publications, lectures and academic achievements (by Christopher Hooker) and an appreciation (by William H.C. Propp). The book closes with an index of the ancient texts discussed and a topic index. It is beautifully and clearly printed and there are three plates, two in colour and one in black and white, as well as a sketch of the Gezer Tablet (p. 368), on which see below.

I: *Job* – Michael V. Fox, ‘The Speaker in Job 28’ (pp. 21–38), first discusses the identity of the speaker in chapter 27, which is relevant for the chapter under discussion. Then, accepting an overlooked proposal made by Heinrich Graetz in 1872 and by Johann G.E. Hoffmann nineteen years later, he concludes that the person speaking is Zophar. Edward L. Greenstein, ‘Metaphors of Illness and Wellness in Job’ (pp. 39–50), explores two metaphors. One, which has echoes in Babylonian wisdom literature, is to see disease ‘as a malady that is inflicted by an outside agent’ (p. 40). Examples are Job 1:14–15, 17; 2:7; 19:21. The other metaphor (the focus of this contribution), also with Babylonian echoes, is to see illness as a fragmentation of the body, which is illustrated by texts from Job. J. Gerald Janzen, ‘Blessing and Justice in Job: In/commensurable?’ (pp. 51–70), discusses Alan Cooper’s article ‘Reading and Misreading the Prologue to Job’, *JSOT* 46 (1990) 67–90. He argues that God’s blessing and justice can certainly be measured by the same standard. Both scholars agree that the Hebrew term *hinnām*, ‘for no obvious reason, for his own reasons’, is crucial to understanding the Book of Job and therefore divine blessing and justice. Thomas Krüger, ‘Job Spoke the Truth about God (Job 42:7–8)’ (pp. 71–80), discusses these two enigmatic verses, which incidentally are in prose, that seem to contradict Job’s final speech (vv. 1–6) and show God to be ambivalent. For Manfred Oeming, ‘The Kerygma of the Book of Job’ (pp. 81–98), ‘the book does have a final intention’ which is to provide comfort, not a theoretical treatise. A useful table of current views

on the purpose of Job is set out (pp. 96–97). Carol A. Newsom, ‘The Reception of Job in the Dead Sea Scrolls’ (pp. 99–114), provides evidence to show that the Book of Job was much more important at Qumran than previously thought. To illustrate this, the allusions to *Job* in the *Hodayoth* are listed (pp. 109–110). Katharine J. Dell, ‘The Book of Job and Two Twentieth-Century British Oratorios’ (pp. 115–128): The oratorios in question, both based on the Book of Job, are by David Jenkins (1903) and by Peter Maxwell Davies (1997). She comments: ‘With the emphasis of both these oratorios falling on the sentiments of the Job character himself, music is a very appropriate medium for conveying emotion and hence adding to the power of the written words’ (p. 126). Curiously, the one by Alun Hoddinott (1962) was not considered here, as it is in Welsh and generally obscure, although it was actually performed once (p. 117).

II: *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes* – Richard J. Clifford, ‘Proverbs 1–9 as Instruction for a Young Man and for “Everyman”’ (pp. 129–142): Unlike similar ancient Near Eastern (Aramaic, Egyptian and Mesopotamian) collections, Prov. 1–9 has an extensive introduction in the form of ten instructions. In the author’s words: ‘I argue that the ten father-son instructions contain hints of a broad application even prior to the later editing that made them applicable to a wide audience.’ (p. 130). Bernd U. Schipper, ‘From Epistemology to Wisdom Theology: The Composition of Proverbs’ (pp. 143–156), concludes that Prov. 10 is an introduction to the Solomonic collection. Agustinus Gianto, ‘On  $\psi$  of Reflection in the Book of Proverbs’ (pp. 157–162). While Heb. *yēš* can mean (1) ‘property, wealth’ and (2) can be a particle of existence, it has a third meaning, discussed here, which occurs in eight passages. Stuart Weeks, ‘Why is it so Difficult to Read Ecclesiastes?’ (pp. 163–176): because of problems in textual transmission, obscure words and phrases, chronology, dialect and register. He concludes that ‘much of this book is likely to prove as elusive to future generations as it has to those that have gone before’ (p. 176). James L. Crenshaw, ‘A Rhetoric of Indecision: Reflections on God as Judge in Qoheleth’ (pp. 177–188), argues that like the very commentators on his work, Qoheleth himself was someone who vacillated. Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher, ‘Solomon’s Wise Words in Twentieth- and Twenty-First Century Literature’ (pp. 189–208): In spite of his ‘wise words’, found in various Proverbs, 1 Kings 3:5–14.16–18; 5:12–13; 10:1–12 (// 2 Chron. 9), Wisdom 7, Sirach 47 etc., Solomon failed to live up to his reputation. This is reflected in modern works such as S. Gronemann, *Der Weise und der Narr. König Salomo und der Schuster: Ein heiteres Vorspiel in sieben Bildern* (Tel Aviv 1942); F. Dürrenmatt, *Die Physiker: Eine Komödie in 2 Akten* (Zurich 1962); S. Heym, *The King David Report: A Novel* (London/New York 1973); I. Merkel, *Sie kam zu König Salomo* (Salzburg 2001) and S. Obermeier, *Salomo und die König in von Saba: Roman* (Munich 2004). William P. Brown, ‘When Wisdom Fails’ (pp. 209–223), argues that ‘sapiential failure, when acknowledged, becomes the catalyst for new insight, indeed new wisdom’ (p. 222).

III: *Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon* – Judith H. Newman, ‘The Formation of the Scribal Self in Ben Sira’ (pp. 227–238), looks at prayer in this book from the perspectives of neuroscience and anthropology. Benjamin G. Wright III, ‘Translation, Reception, and Historiography of Early Judaism: The Wisdom of Ben Sira and Old Greek Job as Case Studies’ (pp. 239–254), is a re-examination of the way that scholars (should) consider translations in the light of work by Lawrence Venuti. Markus Witte, ‘God and Evil in the Wisdom of Solomon’ (pp. 255–271), shows that in this book, evil is considered in terms of three frames of reference: Israelite Jewish tradition, Hellenistic Isis theology and Stoicism.

IV: *Echoes of Wisdom in the Hebrew Bible and in Semitic Inscriptions* – Konrad Schmid, ‘The Ambivalence of Human Wisdom: Genesis 2–3 as a Sapiential Text’ (pp. 275–286), is an explanation of the purpose of the ‘Paradise Story’ in terms of knowledge as acquired by man. Hermann Spieckermann, ‘What is the Place of Wisdom and Torah in the Psalter?’ (pp. 287–316), shows that there is no clearly defined relationship between torah and wisdom (p. 316). The thesis of Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, ‘Traces of an Original Allegorical Meaning of the Song of Songs’ (pp. 317–330) is ‘that the Song of Songs may be read allegorically in connection with intertexts in the Law, Prophets, and Writings’ (p. 321) and he illustrates this with an analysis of Song 1:2–8. While some of the songs may have originated in secular contexts, in Song they ‘were most likely intended as an expression of the loving relationship between God and God’s beloved spouse, God’s own people’ (p. 329). Peter Machinist, ‘Royal Inscriptions in the Hebrew Bible and Mesopotamia: Reflections on Presence, Function, and Self-Critique’ (pp. 331–364), answers three questions: Did the kings of Israel and Judah have royal inscriptions? Were they aware of such texts in neighbouring civilizations? And what role did such inscriptions have when the history of the Hebrews was written? He describes how the Cuthean Legend of Naram Sin, the Gilgamesh Epic and the Bel-eṭir Satire (all from Mesopotamia) were used as models in evaluating kingship. Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, ‘Agriculture and Wisdom: The Case of the “Gezer Calendar”’ (pp. 365–380), shows that this tablet, which he labels the ‘Gezer Farmer’s Ditty’, is a distillation of ‘a genre of agricultural wisdom down to its lapidary essence’ (p. 365). He appeals to Sumerian, Greek and Roman traditions on agricultural lore, echoes of which he finds in Isaiah 28:23–29 and Proverbs 27:23–27.

What is most encouraging in this wide-ranging collection of essays is how much constructive use is made of ancient Near Eastern texts and traditions, coupled with an open-mindedness and a willingness to re-examine previous scholarship. Besides its intrinsic merits, it could certainly be used as an introduction for students working on the wisdom texts of the Old Testament.

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