

decorative purposes, was used to seal porous fabrics to better retain fuel oil.

Early on, Sussman informs us that “no petrographic analyses were conducted” on the lamps in the collection (p. 5). Fair enough. The large quantity of lamps examined may preclude such an analysis. Although a summary of petrographic findings on similar lamps and any trade implications would have been helpful, few such analyses of early pottery have in fact included clay lamps (see, for example, the lamp fabrics examined in Goldberg, Singer-Avitz, and Horowitz 1989: 265, no. 11, fig. 9.11.8; Goren 1995: 206–7). To her credit, Sussman does cite several petrographic studies, a “must” in any scholarly treatment of clay lamps (pp. 20, n. 4; 25, n. 37; 31, n. 68).

The paucity of detailed fabric descriptions in the catalog is problematic. Specifically, no mention is made about the occurrence of inclusions (or “grits”) in the respective fabrics, including the inclusions’ colors, types, and sizes using a standard for classification of particle sizes (preferably the Wentworth scale; Rice 1987: 38, fig. 2.2). Because lamp fabrics dating to the earlier periods tend to contain high concentrations and a variety of coarse sand-size inclusions (see, for example, the lamps illustrated in plate nos. 291, 602, 876, and 1229), their description would have been useful to gain some insight into clay variation among the lamps. Also, color measurements using an international standard, such as the Munsell Soil Color Charts, would have been preferable to the general colors attributed to the respective wares (see discussion in Rice 1987: 339–43). Sussman is not alone in this regard, however, as the Munsell has fallen increasingly out of favor among members of the archaeological community.

No less than a year after Sussman’s first lamp publication (Sussman 1963), Robert H. Smith wrote in his seminal article on lighting vessels: “Today, having at our disposal a large amount of carefully excavated material, we can recover in considerable detail the history of Palestinian lamps throughout the biblical period” (Smith 1964: 2). This, nearly half a century later, Sussman has achieved in great measure with this volume. Hers is a vigilantly crafted contribution upon which future lamp typologies, chronologies, and petrographic findings will be built and refined. It offers a broader perspective on humankind’s efforts to control and manipulate light through lamp use. Therein, Sussman reminds us that, although clay lamps are pottery, they also stand apart from common wares such as cooking pots and storage jars: by functioning as vessels for the harnessing of light, lamps were in effect the guardians of light imbued with symbolic meaning, so thoughtfully conveyed in the ancient passage “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalms 119:105).

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***Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period*, by Shmuel Aḥituv. Translated and edited by Anson F. Rainey, from Hebrew. Jerusalem: Carta, 2008. xiv + 512 pp., numerous drawings and photographs. Cloth. \$98.00. [Distributed in North America by Eisenbrauns]**

The student of ancient Hebrew inscriptions (and those of neighboring dialects) has been indebted to Shmuel Aḥituv for almost two decades now. The first two editions of his book, with the respective titles *‘Asufat Ketubbot ‘Ivriyyot* (1992) and *Ha-ketav we-ha-Mikhtav* (2005), quickly became the standard in the field. Unfortunately, it remains the case that many students of the Bible and ancient Israel are not able to read modern Hebrew (a situation which this reviewer, for one, continues to decry), and thus this new English edition, produced with the assistance of Anson Rainey, will receive a warm welcome by the worldwide scholarly community.

This new English version closely parallels the second Hebrew edition, and thus once more we encounter chapters

on Judah, Israel, Philistia, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and the Deir ‘Alla Balaam inscription. The inclusion of the Deir ‘Alla inscription in this volume is justified by Aḥituv’s adherence to the opinion of Joseph Naveh and Jonas Greenfield that the language of this text falls within the Canaanite umbrella, contra those scholars who believe that the text is written in Aramaic.

While the Hebrew edition includes only a single appendix, a glossary of proper names attested in the inscriptions, the new volume includes both this and a second appendix devoted to the Tel Dan inscription. This important text falls outside the linguistic area covered in *Echoes from the Past*, though clearly Aḥituv has made the right decision in incorporating this Aramaic epigraph into the volume, given its mention of בית־דָּוִד ‘house of David’ and the intense interest sparked by this inscription ever since its discovery in 1993–1994.

For two decades I have told my students (with some exaggeration, naturally) that the best part of the Aḥituv volumes is the superb photographs and line drawings of the inscriptions. No other edition of ancient Hebrew and cognate inscriptions includes this material in such fine fashion. For example, to mention the two most comparable English editions of the same or similar corpus, not a single photograph or line drawing appears in Davies (1991–2004) or Dobbs-Allsopp et al. (2005). This point cannot be emphasized enough, for the Aḥituv volume reminds us that texts are not simply words reproduced on a page, but rather material remains with their own physical properties. That is to say, a student of the Bible and/or of ancient Israel should not only know what the text says, but how it looks, the specific writing material used (ink on clay, as in the case of ostraca; incisions into stone, as in the case of stelae—to mention the most common), additional markings in the vicinity of the actual letters, the state of preservation, and so on.

To cite the best illustration of this process, we have a single extant example of an inscribed papyrus from ancient Israel (found at Wadi Murabba‘at), which in fact is a palimpsest—the original text is a letter, and then the later text is a list of four names, each followed by a symbol (standing for an undetermined measurement) and a hieratic numeral. And while one can study these texts in Davies (1991: 111–12) and Dobbs-Allsopp et al. (2005: 381–84), only in the Aḥituv volume can one find a photograph of this unique inscription, along with line drawings of both texts (pp. 214–15), thereby allowing the student to see firsthand “the most common material used for writing alphabetic texts” during the biblical period (p. 213).

And while we are on the subject of comparison with the Davies and Dobbs-Allsopp et al. volumes, I also note that both present the inscriptions in transliteration only, while Aḥituv uses Hebrew script throughout.¹ This is not

to diminish the accomplishments of Davies and Dobbs-Allsopp et al., for much can be gained by perusing these editions as well, not to mention the fact that both provide a concordance of ancient Hebrew inscriptions. But in general, as the reader no doubt has realized by now, to my mind *Echoes from the Past* is the reference work of choice.

Let me not dwell on such comparisons, though, but rather provide the reader with a broad sense of the book, to be followed by comments on the individual inscriptions. In general, each inscription includes (a) a brief introduction, (b) a photograph, (c) a line drawing, (d) a transcription into block Hebrew letters, (e) the Hebrew text with Masoretic *niqqud* (provided only “as a means of interpretation as far as meaning goes” [p. 9], without suggesting, of course, that such was the pronunciation of the individual words during the Iron Age), (f) an English translation, (g) concise comments on particular words or phrases, and (h) a short bibliography. The result is a model of scholarship, with much information packed into a few pages for each inscription.

Any collection of ancient Hebrew inscriptions must deal with the question of forgeries and unprovenanced material. Aḥituv has judiciously removed from this new edition several texts that appeared in the earlier editions, including, most famously, the inscribed ivory pomegranate, now determined to be a forgery (see p. 10). Unprovenanced texts whose authenticity is virtually guaranteed are included in *Echoes from the Past*, but in each case the inscription is marked by an asterisk, such as the recently published *noqedim* ostrakon from Judah (p. 194) and the *marzeah* papyrus from Moab (p. 427).

An improvement over the Hebrew editions is the use of running heads to indicate not only the chapter—“Judah,” for example—but also the individual inscription or group of texts—“The Arad Ostraca” or “Ḥorvat ‘Uzza,” for example.

In all of this, to my mind, the most noteworthy aspect of this volume is the remarkably succinct and yet extraordinarily informative commentary section, where time and again one learns from Aḥituv’s control over a vast amount of philological material (more anon). My own specific comments follow.

p. 17 – In just a few sentences, Aḥituv manages to present and explain the irregular letter sequences in the Tel Zayit abecedary.

p. 36 – Correct “hieroglyphic” to “hieratic.”

pp. 44/48 – The headings to the [Šbān]yāhû and Zra[hyāhû] tomb inscriptions lack the ə symbol after the first letter to indicate *shewa*. Happily, this vowel is indicated in the translations, though regular ə would be preferable to superscript ʔ.

¹ This also is true of other standard reference works, such as Aufrecht (1989). And even though this volume includes photographs, they are all gathered at the back (somewhat inconveniently)

and to my eye lack the quality of the ones included in *Echoes from the Past*.

Akkadian *ḥarrānam epēšu*. As for the form of the first word, Aḥituv writes, “עש is most probably not a defective spelling of עשה but jussive.”

p. 211 – The fine attention to detail in this book is seen by the reproduction of hieratic numerals throughout, evident most of all on this page, with the line drawing and transcription of Kadesh-Barnea Ostrakon 3.

p. 221 – No doubt the reader will want to know Aḥituv’s take on the much discussed word ולאשרתה, attested several times at both Makkedah (Khirbet el-Qom) and Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. The author accepts the simplest understanding (to which the reviewer also accedes), rendering the phrase ‘and of his Asherah’. In Aḥituv’s words, “comparative material from Mesopotamia, Ebla, and Ugarit mustered by Xella makes it obvious that divine personal names can take a possessive suffix” (p. 233). Unfortunately, Xella is not included in the bibliography for this section on Makkedah, though his article (1995) is presented on p. 329 in the section on Kuntillet ‘Ajrud.

p. 235 – The graffiti in the burial cave at Khirbet Bet Lei are so difficult to read that Aḥituv astutely presents the readings of the three master epigraphers who have tackled these inscriptions—J. Naveh, F. M. Cross, and A. Lemaire—without prejudice.

pp. 239–48 – These pages include an extremely lucid description of the complex system of weights and measures from ancient Israel, in addition to what otherwise could have been a simple and dry presentation of the individual inscribed items.

p. 248 – Correct “A. Powell” to “M. A. Powell,” as the author of the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) entry on “Weights and Measures.”

p. 255 – Above I noted Aḥituv’s attention to a Talmudic passage. As part of the discussion re עצד פשת ‘cutting flax’ in Gezer Calendar line 3, he goes one step further by adducing manuscript evidence of rabbinic literature. We first learn of the Semitic cognates: Akkadian *eṣēdu* ‘reap’, Aramaic חצד ‘reap’, Palestinian Arabic *ḥaṣīdā* ‘harvest time’. Aḥituv then notes that while the printed editions of the Sifra read קרטרף מניין ‘whence to picking?’ (Qedošim 1:7), the most reliable manuscript reads חוצד מניין (with the Bavli parallel reading עוקר מניין [Ḥullin 137a]).³ All of this to arrive at a sense of the ancient Hebrew verb עצד, unknown from the Bible (though the noun מעצד ‘axe, adze’ appears twice).

p. 322 – Aḥituv interprets יתנו in the Blessing plaster fragment from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud as derived from the root תנן (תנה) ‘recount’, which appears in Judg 5:11, 11:40. The appearance of this verb here solidifies the claim that this root is an Israelian Hebrew feature (see Rendsburg 2003: 123–24).

³ In my summary of Aḥituv’s discussion, I have clarified the difference between the printed editions and the most reliable manuscript, namely, MS Assemani 66. In addition, I have corrected his “*Sifra, Qiddušin 1:7*” to Qedošim 1:7. My thanks to my colleague Azzan Yadin for his assistance in this matter.

p. 337 – On the grammatical phenomenon reflected in בת בן אכיש ‘the house which Akayus built’ (Ekron Dedicatory Inscription, line 1), קרית הנה נוד ‘the city where David encamped’ (Isa 29:1), and other biblical examples adduced by Aḥituv, see Grossberg (1977; 1979–1980). The technical name for this construction is nominalization (not noted by Aḥituv).

pp. 367, 369, 379 – I have not been able to determine why in a few places Aḥituv places the first line of the translation before the original text (in these cases, Ammonite, for example, Tell el-Mazar Ostrakon 3), with the rest of the translation following.

p. 405 – Re the ongoing debate on the reading of a key word in Mesha line 12, Aḥituv accepts Lemaire’s reading הית (though without comment) and not Schade’s (and the venerable) reading רית. For the debate, see Lemaire (1987: 205–7; 2007) and Schade (2005).

p. 405 – For more on ואשב ‘and I captured’ (not ‘and I brought back’) in Mesha line 12, see now Rendsburg (2007).

p. 417 – Aḥituv also accepts Lemaire’s (1987) reading of בת[ד]ור ‘house of David’ in Mesha line 31.

p. 460 – Correct Job 20:32 to 21:32.

p. 465 – While the bibliographies in this volume are selective and not comprehensive, I humbly would add Rendsburg (1993) here.

Dozens more similar comments could be added to this review, but hopefully the above will suffice to give the reader a sense of the coverage of this volume, along with a few musings by this reviewer. The book closes with indices of vocables and proper names and of scriptural citations.

To state clearly what I implied at the outset, every student of ancient Israel and the Bible should read this volume from cover to cover. There are nuggets to be mined on every page.

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Field O: The “Synagogue” Site, by Marylinda Govaars, Marie Spiro, and L. Michael White. The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima Excavation Reports, Volume 9. Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2009. xviii + 287 pp., 135 figures, 6 tables. Cloth. \$84.95. [Distributed in North America by The David Brown Book Company]

In March 1932, an inspector called N. Makhoully, Inspector of the Department of Antiquities, Mandatory Government of Palestine, was viewing the ancient remains of the port city of Caesarea and found that heavy rains had exposed patches of mosaic along the windswept shore north of the Crusader city walls. This almost accidental discovery marks the beginning of exploration of what

came to be known as the “Synagogue” site, a project that Govaars, as in a detective story, has pursued as far as it can currently be carried. One of her chief accomplishments is erasure: she has shown that what has long been enrolled among the archaeologically documented synagogues of the Holy Land cannot be known as a coherent building, or necessarily a synagogue, after all.

The main excavation of the “Synagogue” site was done by a Hebrew University (HU) team led by Michael Avi-Yonah. He called it “area A” and dug there for two seasons, in 1956 and 1962. In 1982, the Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima (JECM, directed by Robert Bull) revisited the site, naming it “Field O,” and Govaars, as surveyor/architect for JECM, was allowed to clean, draw, and assign locus numbers to the visible remains. She wrote her master’s thesis on it (Govaars 1983), supervised a sondage adjacent to it in 1984, and has never let go of it since. She sought primary materials in government, academic, and private archives, ranging from curt reports of inscriptions saved from reuse as building stone in the 1920s, to notes and photos taken during the HU excavations, one set of which was compiled by her and published as a separate 32-page book (Vardaman 2008), and also appears in the publication under review here. She examines the photos from an almost forensic point of view, in order to establish the layout of the site’s features and the order of their appearance, and publishes a previously missing link, Immanuel Dunayevsky’s architectural phase drawing of Avi-Yonah’s excavations (frontispiece). She has compiled this disparate data into an impressive study that lays out what we can say, and much more that we currently cannot, about this dormant site.

Inscriptions on mosaics and stones, some now lost, provided what evidence there was for placing a synagogue in this area, and they are carefully examined not just in the main text, but in additional chapters by Marie Spiro (on mosaics) and L. Michael White (inscriptions). There were at least three distinct strata of mosaics, some with dedications, dated from the fourth to the seventh century C.E., but forming no coherent floor plan(s). White also discusses three late Corinthian column capitals marked with monograms or *menorot*, the only one now findable with a lower diameter of 0.4 m, cautiously attesting to “a consciously Jewish decorative program . . . from a suite of architectural members . . . that belong to a moderate-sized public building” of sixth-century date (p. 172). But as Govaars’s chapters show, not only can their findspots not be pinned down to the “Synagogue” site, other important materials frequently associated with the “Synagogue”—fragments of a Hebrew priestly courses inscription, parts of a chancel screen with *lulav* and *etrog*—were found in different excavation areas, a considerable distance away.

Govaars lays much of this confusion at the door of Avi-Yonah, who excavated and identified this site’s remains as a synagogue, but whose few reports on it were short, hazy, and difficult to align with what facts Govaars has found on the ground. His primary failings, though, are all too common