

CLARIFYING

BAFFLING

BIBLICAL

PASSAGES

BY

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PREFACE

Two of the most baffling biblical passages, a fragment from the “Book of the Wars of Yahweh” in Num 21:15 and the “Song of Deborah” in Jud 5:1–31, can now be read with clarity thanks to philological tools readily available to interpreters of the Hebrew text.¹ Nine of the sixteen words making up the “Book of the Wars of Yahweh” fragment were misunderstood by the later scribes and/or lexicographers. Similarly, of the three hundred eighty-four words in the original “Song of Deborah,” sixty-eight of them went unrecognized in exegetical tradition. Now all the words in these two poetic texts have been recognized. It is only a matter of time before the recovered words—a number of which were noted in the Hebrew lexicons of earlier centuries—will be included in the standard Hebrew lexicons of the twenty-first century.

The philological methodology employed in clarifying the enigmas of the “Song of Deborah” and the “Book of the Wars of Yahweh,” when used to interpret other enigmatic texts in Biblical Hebrew—or even Greek texts having had a Hebrew *Vorlage*—has proven to be very useful. The thirty-five chapters of this volume are a demonstration of its benefits.

See T. F. McDaniel, *The Song of Deborah. Poetry in Dialect A Philological Study of Judges 5 with Translation and Commentary*, available at <http://daniel.eastern.edu/seminary/tmc/daniel.Deborah.pdf>. The first edition, *Deborah Never Sang: A Philological Study of the Song of Deborah [Judges V]*, was published in 1983 (Jerusalem: Makor Publishing Ltd.).

Through a judicious use of Semitic cognates it is possible to reconstruct the *Vorlage* of the most baffling biblical texts and to enlarge the lexicon of Biblical Hebrew with words from non-Judean dialects, as well as rare words in the Judean dialect. Whereas it was once common for biblical scholars to emend freely any text which did not conform to the lexicons, it now seems wiser to modify the lexicons—informed by cognates—to accommodate the texts. The cautious emendation of the Hebrew text remains a necessary option, but restoring and expanding the entries in standard Hebrew lexicons is far more essential to clarify the meaning of most baffling biblical passages.

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Dr. Robert R. Wright of the Department of Religion of Temple University, Philadelphia, Dr. James T. McDonough, Jr., who was for years Professor of Classics at Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, and my friend, Mr. Gilad Gevaryahu, have been consulted on a number of issues and they have made suggestions which have enriched the content of these studies. Mr. Gevaryahu (son of the noted Israeli Biblical scholar Dr. Haim M. I. Gevaryahu) is a Biblical and Talmudic scholar in his own right. He assisted me with rabbinic sources and Jewish traditions, providing me with texts and translations for the rabbinic citations in Chapters VI, XIII, and XXXII, having earlier brought many of the issues addressed in these chapters to my attention.

My colleagues in Biblical Studies at the Palmer Theological Seminary, Dr. Manfred Brauch, Dr. Glenn Koch, and Dr. Craig Keener, are to be recognized for their support and encouragement over my thirty-seven years on the faculty and now as a Professor Emeritus..

Narberth, Pennsylvania
April, 2007

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| A-text | Codex Alexandrinus |
| AB | Anchor Bible, New York |
| <i>ABD</i> | <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> |
| <i>AJSL</i> | <i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i> , Chicago |
| AnBib | Analecta Biblica, Rome |
| AOS | American Oriental Society, New Haven |
| ATD | Das Alte Testament Deutsch, Göttingen |
| AV | Authorized Version of the Bible, 1611 (same as KJV, 1611) |
| B-text | Codex Vaticanus |
| <i>BASOR</i> | <i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i> , Philadelphia |
| <i>BCTP</i> | A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching |
| BDB | F. Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , New York |
| BH ³ | R. Kittel, <i>Biblica Hebraica</i> , third edition, Stuttgart, 1937 |
| BHS | <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> |
| BibOr | Biblica et Orientalia, Rome |
| <i>BR</i> | <i>Bible Review</i> |
| BSC | Bible Student's Commentary |
| <i>BibT</i> | <i>Bible Today</i> |
| BTal | <i>Bet Talmud</i> |
| <i>CAD</i> | I. Gelb, L. Oppenheim, et al., eds., <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> |
| <i>CBQ</i> | <i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> , Washington, D. C. |
| CTM | <i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i> |
| CV | <i>Communio Viatorum</i> |
| DR | <i>Downside Review</i> |
| EBC | The Expository Bible Commentary |
| <i>ET</i> | <i>Expository Times</i> |
| GKC | <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , ed. E. Kautzsch, tr. A. E. Cowley, Oxford |
| HAT | Handbuch zum Alten Testament, Tübingen |
| <i>HTR</i> | <i>Harvard Theological Review</i> , Cambridge, Massachusetts |
| IBCTP | Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching |
| ICC | International Critical Commentary, Edinburgh |
| <i>IDB</i> | <i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> |
| IVPNTC | IVP New Testament Commentary Series |
| <i>JAOS</i> | <i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> , New Haven, Boston |

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------------|--|
| <i>JBL</i> | <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> , Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Missoula, Montana |
| <i>JBS</i> | <i>Journal of Biblical Storytelling</i> |
| <i>JETS</i> | <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i> |
| <i>JPSTC</i> | Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary |
| <i>JQR</i> | <i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i> , Philadelphia |
| <i>JSNT</i> | <i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> |
| <i>JSOT</i> | <i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i> , Sheffield |
| <i>JTS</i> | <i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> , Oxford |
| <i>KJV</i> | King James Version of the Bible (same as the AV, 1611) |
| <i>LTSB</i> | <i>Lutheran Theological Seminary Bulletin</i> |
| <i>LXX</i> | Septuagint |
| <i>MBC</i> | Mellon Biblical Commentary |
| <i>MT</i> | Masoretic Text |
| <i>NCB</i> | New Century Bible |
| <i>NITGTC</i> | The New International Greek Testament Commentary |
| <i>NRSV</i> | New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, New York, 1992 |
| <i>NTL</i> | New Testament Library |
| <i>NTS</i> | <i>New Testament Studies</i> |
| <i>OTL</i> | Old Testament Library, Philadelphia and London |
| <i>PEFQS</i> | <i>Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement</i> |
| <i>PEQ</i> | <i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i> , London |
| <i>RSV</i> | Revised Standard Version of the Bible, London and New York, 1952 |
| <i>SC</i> | The Speakers Commentary |
| <i>TDNT</i> | <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> |
| <i>TDOT</i> | <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> |
| <i>USQR</i> | <i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i> |
| <i>UT</i> | C. H. Gordon, <i>Ugaritic Textbook</i> , Rome |
| <i>VT</i> | <i>Vetus Testamentum</i> , Leiden |
| <i>VTSup</i> | <i>Vetus Testamentum Supplements</i> , Leiden |
| <i>WTJ</i> | <i>Westminster Theological Journal</i> , Philadelphia |
| <i>ZAH</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für Althebraistik</i> |
| <i>ZAW</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> , Gießen and Berlin |
| <i>ZNT</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für neuen testamentliche Wissenschaft</i> |

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