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utgiven av Göran Eidevall

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"narrative." The concept would seem to include almost anything, and I miss a chapter that would problematize not only the different contexts and uses of narratives, but the very concept itself. How can the book of Jonah, Genesis–2 Kings, and Leviticus all at the same time be termed narratives? Tellingly, literary scholars such as Käte Hamburger, Lars-Åke Skalin, and Richard Walsh, who have argued that "narrative" covers several and not one phenomena, are not included. Even so, this handbook is a must read for anyone interested in the study of biblical narrative, and should form the starting point for many a groundbreaking narrative analysis.

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Robert P. Gordon and Hans M. Barstad (eds.)
"Thus speaks Ishtar of Arbela": Prophecy in Israel, Assyria and Egypt in the Neo-Assyrian Period
Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013, Cloth, xiv + 322, $49.50,
ISBN: 978-1-57506-282-2.

This volume collects fourteen articles presented at the 2009 symposium of the Edinburgh Prophecy Network (founded in 2006), the principal aim of which was to study prophecy within the limited time-frame of the Neo-Assyrian period, during which "classical" Israelite prophecy is thought to originate. The biblical texts discussed include the major prophetic texts associated with the pre-exilic period: Hosea, Amos, Micah and Proto-Isaiah.

Apart from the well-known texts of the Hebrew Bible, two corpora of prophetic texts from the Ancient Near East exist: the Mari texts (18th cent. BCE) and the Neo-Assyrian texts of the seventh century BCE, which date from the troubled reigns of Esarhaddon (681-669 BCE) and Ashurbanipal (669-627 BCE). This relatively small corpus of cuneiform tablets in Akkadian was retrieved from the royal archives of the ruins of Nineveh. The volume's title quotes the introductory formula referring to the goddess Ishtar that regularly occurs in these oracles: Ishtar was the deity who pronounced the decisions of the divine assembly. As M. Nissinen – who drew attention to the relevance of the Neo-Assyrian

prophetic for comparative purposes as long ago as in the 1993 Festschrift to Kurt Bergerhof – reminds us in his keynote essay on prophecy as a social construct, these extra biblical texts (a term which he wisely shuns to the preferment of "ancient Near Eastern" or even "ancient Eastern Mediterranean") "have been the object of active study for only a short period and their ideology is probably not internalized by many researchers." This is an understatement that reminds us how saturated the study of "prophecy" sometimes is in biblical (and Christianized) conceptions of prophecy as genre.

While a few of the contributions focus solely on biblical prophetic books, thought to originate in the Neo-Assyrian period – for example, co-editor H. M. Barstad's article "Hosea and the Assyrians" – most articles attempt to treat the several prophetic traditions of the Ancient Near East from a comparative perspective, and cautiously seek to elucidate points of contact, possible interrelatedness and contrast, the underlying assumption being the relevance of the Ancient Near East (or in some cases even the Mediterranean) material texts to contextualize biblical prophetic texts and the religious phenomenon of prophecy. The contributors generally emphasize the distinctiveness and cultural embeddedness of each tradition and a methodological awareness permeates the collection - any bold assertions about Ancient Near Eastern prophecy/prophets as the progenitors or the prophecy of the Hebrew Bible is absent. As co-editor R. P. Gordon reminds his readers, the evidence for prophecy in the Ancient Near East (even by a broad definition) is surprisingly meagre, and prophecy as a phenomenon seems to have been "unevenly experienced and variously regarded in Mesopotamia and adjacent regions." Whether we can speak confidently of a "Near Eastern prophetic continuum" or not (Gordon believes we can), and what this proposition entails, remains disputed. The paucity of the Assyrian material is noteworthy, even compared to the Mari texts, which make up about two-thirds of the total of 130 independent texts known from these two cultures, separated by a millennium. The deafening silence elsewhere in the region is striking, as Gordon notes.

Evidently, even the notion of "biblical" vs. "extra-biblical" prophecy betrays a prejudiced stance and needs to be questioned, as it implies a biased view of "classical" Israelite prophecy as the pinnacle of ancient prophetic tradition. Most of the contributors are affiliated with departments of Biblical Studies, and (as is to be expected) approach the subject from the biblical perspective. Their emphasis on the need to assess and contextualize the "Old Testament" testimony within a much broader cultural context is therefore to be welcomed. Some contributors touch on the need to contextualize prophecy itself within the broader category of Ancient Near Eastern divination, to which it properly belongs. As the title implies, this anthology predominantly focuses on the Neo-Assyrian corpus of prophetic texts of the period. The Egyptian material receives short thrift and only receives scant treatment by J. W. Hilber, who probes common themes in selected texts of royal cultic prophecy in Assyria, Judah and Egypt, among them Egyptian royal hymns.

The texts from the Nineveh archives were published piecemeal as early as the 1870s (and some translations duly appeared in Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* as "Assyrian oracles"), yet they merited little attention from Old Testament scholars throughout the twentieth century, especially when compared to the much older Mari texts, which antedate the Assyrian texts by a millennium. In his article "Prophecy in the Mari and Nineveh archives," co-editor R. P. Gordon suggests that this was due to the Assyrian texts offering "no promise of fresh insight into the origins or cultural matrix of Israelite prophecy," whereas the Mari texts "included circumstantial detail ... not paralleled in the Nineveh oracles" (the Mari and Nineveh corpora were compared by K. van der Toorn in *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context* [SBL, 2000]). The lack of interest may also be ascribed to the fact that Mari was seen as culturally closely affiliated with Israelite prophecy by reason of their Northwest-Semitic cultural proximity (and perhaps receiving additional support through the so-called "Western hypothesis," which dictated that prophecy reached Mesopotamia from its westernmost fringes), while the Assyrian texts were perceived as culturally (Eastern, "Babylonian") and

linguistically (Akkadian) more alien. The re-editing and translation into English of the entire corpus of Nineveh texts related to prophecy under the aegis of the Finnish *State Archives of Assyria Project* (as volumes 7 and 9 of the SAA series, eds. S. Parpola and M. Nissinen), has, however, made the Akkadian texts accessible and invigorated the comparative study of Ancient Near Eastern prophecy.

In his keynote essay, M. Nissinen (Helsinki) discusses prophecy from the perspective of social constructionism as a "socially and historically contingent phenomenon." Prophetic activity and scholarly perceptions of prophecy are seen as products of culturally contingent processes. Nissinen proceeds to analyse the symbolic universe within which the oracular responses of Ishtar acquired their meaning in the Neo-Assyrian empire. The Assyrian oracles are "ideological representations, in and through which the Assyrian state ideology exists." The royal ideology, then, is the cultural matrix within which the constructs of prophecy materialize, and prophecy is but one form of divination on which this ideology rests. As mouthpieces of the divine council (their "word" often identified with the goddess Ishtar's pronouncements), oracles proclaim the world dominion of the Assyrian kingship, whose theology revolves around "the king's crucial position in the divine world order." In times of crisis, prophecy legitimates the royal succession, contested at the time of ascension of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. The divine oracular responses, then, are representations not only of "Neo-Assyrian prophecy," but also of Assyrian state ideology, the cultural matrix of the prophecies. Nonetheless, this ideology (or world view) is not in itself false – the image or construct we are left with, is both "constructed and real." Not simply rehearsing the ideology of the ancient texts ("mimetic reading"), then, becomes a major challenge to scholarship, Nissinen argues, quietly nodding at the excesses of Old Testament scholarship. Yet, "[h]owever critically we attempt to read our sources," Nissinen concludes, we must accept that their very existence depends on this vast construct.

Nissinen then turns his attention to modern-era Biblical scholarship's constructs of Biblical prophecy, which from the nineteenth century onwards tended to see *the* prophet as a "brave and independent indi-

vidual" in the evolution of Israelite religion, representing moral standards and genuine spirituality, whose genuine words had been blurred by unworthy and decadent successors. In this process, prophecy becomes dissociated from all other forms of divination and prophecy is established as a distinct (and positive?) historical phenomenon. Nissinen describes the persistence of this legacy as "astonishing," and in some respects, this late-nineteenth century scholarly agenda "still provides the general matrix for scholarly constructs of prophecy." Nissinen finely demonstrates the relevance of the social constructionist perspective as entirely different constructs of prophecy result from widely different historical and social processes. Ancient and modern constructs of prophecy inhabit different symbolic universes.

In a comparative study of intercession in Neo-Assyrian and biblical texts, L-S. Tiemeyer initially asks whether the Neo-Assyrian prophets can be seen as intercessors. Whereas divine intercession dominates the Assyrian sources, Tiemeyer identifies three instances where humans (prophets, cultic functionaries) intercede on behalf of their fellow humans, although the divine assembly remains closed to them. Based on the verbal forms used, she concludes that "the Neo-Assyrians perceived human and divine intercession differently." However, this does not entail that human and divine intercession can be construed as two entirely distinct phenomena, according to Tiemeyer. She contrasts the Neo-Assyrian instances with intercession in the Hebrew Bible, where human intercession occurs regularly (Abraham, Moses, Job, Samuel, Hezekiah). The identity of the intercessor is what distinguishes the Neo-Assyrian from the biblical texts; Tiemeyer draws attention to the fact that neither in the extant Neo-Assyrian nor the biblical texts do human intercessors intercede explicitly in the divine council, whereas biblical prophets have access to it, and, as Tiemeyer sees it, can "take an active part in events" (Zech 3, Isa 6). Tiemeyer further suggests that a conceptual connection between the divine assembly and intercession can be traced in a few biblical texts (Amos 7, Exod 32–34), and that the Mesopotamian idea of divine intercession in the divine assembly has shaped the biblical account of Moses' intercession on behalf of Israel on Mt Sinai (Exod 32–

34) – the prophetic characters' intercessory role in the Hebrew Bible is described as "a monotheistic version of the Neo-Assyrian notion of divine intercession, known through the Neo-Assyrian prophets." The role of the biblical prophet fuses the Neo-Assyrian (and Mesopotamian) concepts of human and divine intercession, and the uniquely biblical notion that prophets had access to the divine council and took an active part in it served to enhance their intercessory role. Whereas Tiemeyer convincingly argues that the textual evidence support the notion of human intercession in the Assyrian sources (and her discussion of the Assyrian texts is thorough), her suggestions regarding the numerous biblical texts and the comparisons drawn point to the temptation to blur the distinction between prophecy as a socio-religious historical phenomenon and prophetic texts as literary (and ideological) constructs.

In his article "Prophecy in Israel and Assyria: are we comparing apples and pears?," J. Schaper (Aberdeen) cautions against wide-ranging comparisons of the prophetic traditions of the Neo-Assyrian and Israelite prophetic traditions on methodological grounds, especially since they display widely diverging and unique transitional processes from orally delivered oracles to subsequent stages of textualization. Schaper thus contrasts the transmission processes of the Israelite and Assyrian texts. In Schaper's view, recent scholarship attempts to level the differences between the two, which leads to "methodological muddle and falsified results." Schaper concentrates on "the material aspect of their transition from oral to written texts" and of aspects of material preservation (archives) and intended audience. He compares material aspects of the respective traditions, and unlike the Israelite and Judean tradition, the Neo-Assyrian oracles, stored in the royal archives, "never triggered a living literary tradition" – obviously, the formation of prophecies (or source texts) into literary texts is often seen as the hallmark of the 'prophetic' texts of the Hebrew Bible. With regard to the Neo-Assyrian prophecies, their textualization was never intended to create any sort of coherent narrative, and Schaper draws attention to the fact that "prophetic texts" only account for a very small percentage of divination reports preserved from Nineveh. Neo-Assyrian prophets, as he sees it, in

all likelihood never addressed the populace, and even if texts were put on public display at temple gates, only a select few could read them. In sharp contrast, Schaper, argues, the "important question is how fixing the oral texts in writing changed the way oracles were preserved (and handed on) and determined the delivery of future prophetic oracles." Schaper contrasts the Neo-Assyrian practices with Israelite and Judean prophetic material, where, in Schaper's view, "wide ranging publicity … was the original objective of documenting the oracles," indeed they were read out "among the general populace." The ensuing process of literary embellishment distances them even further from their Neo-Assyrian counterparts. Schaper thus questions conclusions which fail to acknowledge this chasm between the materiality of communication of the Judean and Neo-Assyrian material as an integral part of the prophetic traditions themselves. It will be evident that Schaper's claims regarding the controversial subject of the transmission process (orality/literacy, etc.) of the biblical material in particular may be questioned, yet he draws attention to central aspects of the materiality of communication and how the failure to acknowledge these as methodologically relevant allows for comparisons between "apples and pears."

Only two essays deal exclusively with non-biblical texts of the period: C. L. Crouch explores how Assurbanipal "relies on Ishtar to legitimate his military activities." This historically-oriented study focuses on inscriptional evidence other than the prophetic texts of the period. J. Atkinson (Edinburgh) re-evaluates the divine speech episodes in the late Neo-Assyrian text "The dialogue between Assurbanipal and Nabu" and concludes that "the divine utterances attributed to Nabu are best understood as prophetic," based on criteria established by M. Nissinen in his 1997 study of references to prophecy in Neo-Assyrian sources. Atkinson thus adds to the meagre harvest of prophetic texts of the period.

The remainder of the essays adopt a comparative perspective, although clearly the biblical prophetic texts remain the focal point of attention throughout the volume. In fact, only a small handful of the essays discuss the Neo-Assyrian prophetic material in any real depth. While this may be due to the constraints of the admittedly limited

sources at hand, it is also a testament to the resilience of the view of the Hebrew Bible's "classical prophecy" as the original matrix of prophecy. In fairness, the brevity of the format (10–20 pages) does not allow for any extensive comparisons. No two contributors discuss the same biblical texts nor do they pursue identical themes or concepts within the texts discussed. This broad approach may be welcomed by some readers. In my view, it leaves us with a collection that seems more disparate than perhaps was necessary. Several authors note the need to contextualize prophecy within the broader category of divination. This is hopefully the next step in the comparative study of the texts discussed in this volume.

Magnus Halle, Lund University

Federico Giuntoli and Kondrad Schmid (eds.)
The Post-Priestly Pentateuch: New Perspectives on its Redactional Development and Theological Profiles
FAT 101, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015, Hardcover, viii + 351 pp., €114,
ISBN: 978-3-16-153121-7

One of the contributors to this volume (M. Köckert) mentions, not without a whiff of nostalgia "[jene glückliche Tage] als es in der Pentateuchforschung noch Gewissenheiten gab, die von den meisten geteilt wurden." Everyone familiar with the developments in the study of the Torah-book knows that since at least three decades those happy days are gone. The classic four-source hypothesis once so brilliantly presented by Julius Wellhausen has in the view of many crumbled with only ruins remaining.

The present volume, a collection of articles dedicated to Jean Louis Ska on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, deals with the aspect of dating, an issue which was put on the table once again by some of the iconoclasts in the seventies. The book contains 17 contributions, all by well-known names in the field. The introductory chapter by K. Schmid (1–18) gives a survey of the discussion about the "post-P" elements in the Pentateuch showing how the sections seen as additions or developments of the final P-layer tend to grow according to several scholars.