

On p. 52, Stern states "No written documents outside the Bible tell us about the local cults introduced in the Samaritan province during the Assyrian period." This is inaccurate. Much is known outside the Bible about the cult of Nergal introduced by the deportees from Cutha (2 Kgs 17:28). In fact all that is known about this deity is known from sources outside the Hebrew Bible (see F. A. M. Wiggermann, "Nergal A & B," *RIA* 9 [1999]: 215-26). Much is also known about the goddess Banītu (certainly the identity of Hebrew *b'nōt* in 2 Kgs 17:28), introduced by the deportees from Babylon. More is now known about the deity Ashima (introduced by deportees from Hamath/Amatu) thanks to Papyrus Amherst 63 (an Aramaic papyrus written in Demotic script) and an Aramaic inscription from Teima.

Some of Stern's interpretations are premature. For example (pp. 107, 120), concerning the identification of the goddess to whom the Tel Miqne-Ekron inscription of Akhayus is dedicated, Stern accepts A. Demsky's argument that the reading is *ptnyh* which he equates with the Greek term *potnia*. First, Stern is wrong in stating that the word *potnia* "should be interpreted as the common Archaic Greek word for 'divine'" (p. 107). It means "lady," "mistress," "queen." Second, Demsky's interpretation creates a redundancy in the text: "for his lady/mistress, his lady" (*lptnyh . ʔdth*). Third, the reading is more likely *ptgyh*. Fourth, a number of scholars have proposed good possibilities for understanding this reading (i.e., *ptgyh*), though perhaps it is yet too early to say exactly what the word signifies. For the Ekron inscription of Akhayus, see *The Context of Scripture* 2:164.

Also from the site of Ekron comes another inscription which Stern does not mention. It is a short dedicatory text that reads: *lb<sup>c</sup>l wlpdy* "for Ba<sup>c</sup>al and for Padi" (for Ba<sup>c</sup>al at Ekron, cf. Ba<sup>c</sup>al-Zebub in 2 Kgs 1:2-3). See S. Gitin and M. Cogan, "A New Type of Dedicatory Inscription from Ekron," *IEJ* 49 (1999): 193-202.

In conclusion, there are simply too many mistakes in this volume to inflict upon beginning students. With corrections this could be an outstanding volume; without them the book should be avoided for classroom instruction.

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Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva. *Invitation to the Septuagint*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000. 351 pp. \$29.99.

While a number of introductions to the Septuagint (LXX) have been published in the last century (e.g., the classic works by Sweet and Jellicoe and most recently the edition by Fernández Marcos), none balance accessibility with learned thoroughness as well as this volume by Jobes and Silva. These scholars, both of whose research is known and respected by the readers of this journal, seek to provide an aid in transitioning students from having a general knowledge of the Greek versions to being able to competently use the LXX in biblical study and interpretation. This goal has been admirably reached. Comprehensive, well-informed, and pedagogically well-structured, this primer does justice to its name by providing an enticing presentation of the history, modern research, and usefulness of the Greek OT.

Following a helpful introduction that answers why one should study the ancient Greek versions of the OT, the body of the book is divided into three parts, each with a short introduction. Part 1 is titled "The History of the Septuagint" and contains four foundational chapters that cover the origin, transmission, canonical content, and translational nature of the LXX. Each chapter begins with a summary of its subject matter and ends with direction for further study. Technical terms are defined (both in the text and in the glossary), and all foreign language words presented in the body of the text are transliterated for easy access by the beginning student.

Part 2, "The Septuagint in Biblical Studies," contains six chapters that focus on the contemporary use and interpretation of the LXX. Helpful chapters on the character of "Septuagintal Greek" and the use of the LXX in NT study precede and follow respectively three important chapters that wrestle with the use of the LXX in textual criticism. While effort has been taken to make this material accessible to a wide variety of readers, the technicality of the topic, the numerous examples, and the untransliterated Greek and Hebrew make this section most profitable for those with at least an intermediate proficiency in the biblical languages. As in the previous section, each chapter is introduced with a summary and concludes with guidance for future research. The section ends by illustrating with three LXX passages (Gen 4:1-8; Isa 52:13-53:12; Esth 5:1-2 with addition D) how the forestated material can influence the interpretation of the biblical text.

"The Current State of Septuagint Studies" is the focus of Part 3. The four chapters included here are targeted at the advanced student in the hope that he/she will engage in future LXX studies. A discussion of the lives, historical setting, and contributions of the previous generation of LXX scholars leads to three chapters that review contemporary contributions to LXX studies in the areas of linguistics, historical reconstruction, and theological development. These chapters also open with a summary, but direction for future reference is relegated to the footnotes. The book ends with summaries of all the major LXX organizations, research projects, and reference works; a glossary of all difficult terms; a table delineating all the differences in versification between the English versions and LXX; and subject, author, and Scripture indexes.

As an OT scholar with intermediate proficiency in LXX studies and OT textual criticism, I found this volume most helpful and accessible. The first two sections could easily be used in a seminary or advanced undergraduate class, whereas the book as a whole is ideal for the doctoral student or interested scholar who desires to gain an overall grasp of the field and to begin engaging in the discussions.

The book begins where it needs to—namely, by defining terms and noting the challenges of speaking about *the* Septuagint. What is known and questionable about the origin and history of the LXX is clearly presented, including profitable discussions about the nature of the revisions/versions and the interpretive challenges regarding their transmission. Included with the various tables and diagrams are numerous photographs of the major codexes, manuscripts, and critical editions, all of which clarify and enhance the discussion of the Greek text's transmission history.

A questionable statement is made in Part 1 regarding the history of the biblical canon. Jobs and Silva rightfully note how events like the adoption of the LXX by the early Christian church, the division of the church between the East and West in the Middle Ages, and the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century all left their mark on the content and structure of Bibles

used by various religious communities. But they also state that "at the end of the first century, the church's Bible consisted of all the books of the Hebrew Bible in Greek translation, some additional books, and the collection of writings that became the New Testament" (p. 83). By including certain "additional" materials into the earliest Christian community's Bible, the authors appear to attribute canonical status to a body of literature Protestants have traditionally viewed as apocryphal (Greek for "hidden, inauthentic"). The authors even define these books in the glossary under the title "deuterocanonical" rather than "apocryphal." Personal dialogue with the authors, however, has clarified that they each hold to the traditional Protestant position regarding the canon. That is, both Jobes and Silva affirm that, while the Jews and Christians of the early part of this era highly esteemed the apocryphal books, the NT evidence strongly suggests that, apart from the twenty-seven books that became the NT, the Greek texts considered Scripture by the early church were limited to the books found in the Jewish Hebrew canon (i.e., the OT). Although the apocryphal books may have been a part of the earliest Greek versions, the first century church did not attribute to them canonical status as did some church fathers of the second to fourth centuries and the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century.

The unique contributions of Jobes and Silva to a project of this type shine most brightly in Part 2 of the volume. Because the authors' past efforts in Greek lexicography and the use of the OT in the NT are perhaps more familiar to the readers of this journal than their work in OT textual criticism and the Greek versions, we will focus our evaluation on the balanced and judicious presentation of the latter. In three chapters Jobes and Silva cover the textual criticism of the LXX and Hebrew Bible and the role of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the process of evaluation. Very helpful is the inclusion of a copied page from each of three standard critical editions of the LXX along with a description of the major sections and of how to read the various markings. The overall discussion stresses the proper process for determining the original Greek and then Hebrew texts, and throughout the authors provide numerous examples that illustrate their points. Jobes and Silva believe the MT should serve as the point of departure in OT textual criticism, though they discourage any approach that gives uncritical preference to either the MT or LXX (p. 152). This does not mean, however, that each variant reading is always given equal status. One must first be confident that the variant LXX reading indeed points to a different Hebrew *Vorlage*, and then, because our present documents have not preserved equally good texts, the overall textual quality of the various witnesses needs to play a key part in determining which reading has priority (pp. 153-54). Such advice points to the wisdom of seasoned interpreters and is most welcomed by this reviewer.

The last section of the book is both delightful and distressing. It is delightful in that the reader is made aware how vast a field of possibilities lies before him/her for further study. It is distressing because the numerous descriptions and examples show too how much work still needs to be done and how challenging such work will be. But such a task is both necessary and rewarding, and Jobes and Silva do a good job raising the questions and showing the reader the benefits of making the effort to answer them.

Jobes and Silva have wrapped this invitation with clarity and thoroughness, and they are to be commended for the way their past efforts in Greek lexicography, OT textual criticism, the Greek versions, and the use of the OT in the NT help make this volume a true contribution to LXX

studies. Some of the most renowned scholars in LXX and text critical studies are praising this volume—e.g., Natalio Fernández Marcos, Bruce Metzger, Albert Pietersma, and Emanuel Tov—and we concur with its usefulness both for the beginning student and the advanced scholar.

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Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary*. The Bible in Its World. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. xxix + 522 pp. \$35.00.

With his commentary on the parables of Jesus, Arland J. Hultgren, professor of NT at Luther Seminary (St. Paul, Minnesota), provides the inaugural volume of a new series entitled "The Bible in Its World," edited by David Noel Freedman and Astrid B. Beck. The objective of the series is to offer "an in-depth view of significant aspects of the biblical world" (p. i). Hultgren notes that the purpose of his volume is to fill a void: "What seems to be missing within the spectrum [of available works] is a study of the parables that is comprehensive, drawing upon the wealth of parable research, and that is at the same time exegetical and theological" (p. xi).

*The Parables of Jesus* contains ten chapters, followed by three brief appendices, a general bibliography (pp. 477-85), and three indices (Scripture, other ancient sources, and modern authors). Chapter 1 provides an introduction to interpretive issues and methodology. Hultgren defines a parable as "a figure of speech in which a comparison is made between God's kingdom, actions, or expectations and something in this world, real or imagined" (p. 3; italics his). He further suggests that there are two types of parables: narrative parables (comparisons with narration) and similitudes (comparisons with "is like" or "is as if") (p. 3). While recognizing that there are other possible strategies, Hultgren's objective is to interpret the parables within the Christian church for purposes of proclamation in the church (p. 17). Hence, his "primary interest" is "exegesis and theological reflection on the parables of Jesus as transmitted within the Synoptic Gospels" (p. 19).

In chs. 2-8, the commentary proper, Hultgren examines thirty-eight parables. Parallels are treated together under the same sectional heading, with more complex parallels treated under their own subheadings. He groups these parables into seven broad thematic categories: (1) parables of the revelation of God, under two subheadings (five total; ch. 2); (2) parables of exemplary behavior (four total; ch. 3); (3) parables of wisdom (six total; ch. 4); (4) parables of life before God—"a parabolic miscellany" (p. 180; twelve total; ch. 5); (5) parables of final judgment (three total; ch. 6); (6) allegorical parables (three total; ch. 7); and (7) parables of the kingdom, grouped under two subcategories (five total; ch. 8). Hultgren works through each of the thirty-eight parables and their (sometimes complex) parallels in detail, providing his own translations, notes on the text and translation, general comments on the texts for complex parallels, exegetical commentary, exposition, and select bibliography. He also examines ten of the Gospel of Thomas parables that are paralleled in the synoptic accounts (logia 9, 20, 57, 63, 64, 65-66, 76, 96, 107, and 109), and at one point, too, the *Gospel of Truth* 31-32 (see pp. 48-52).



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