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Review: Zion, City of Our God by Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham

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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Zion, City of Our God* by Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham

Review by: Joel S. Kaminsky

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omen texts, commentaries, lexical and mathematical exercises as well as economic documents. The latter (nos. 283–315) span the time from the eleventh year of Nebuchadnezzar II through the tenth year of Seleucus I. Although this volume is clearly a mopping-up operation of left-over materials, there are many tantalizing fragments here that will tax the ingenuity of scholars for years to come. Among these one should note, for example, no. 231, a welcome new version of the well-known exorcist's manual *KAR 44*, hitherto known only from one exemplar from Aššur. The author has classified most of the tablets with the help of other experts on late literary texts, but some items have resisted identification.

No. 224, listed here as an "epic" text, is a fragmentary composition mentioning a number of individuals who seem to have conspired together against an Assyrian or Babylonian king. In col. ii we learn that: "Along with him came Hatran, who had fled from Urartu [. . .], from Kar-bal-matati also (came) KUR-a, son of Kunnat-qibissu, with him also (came) Hatran, the Humbanite." No. 229 is a small fragment of the ershemma edin-na ú-sag-gá-ke₄ that provides a few new unplaced lines from the beginning of the text. No. 248 is a new text of rituals and incantations to help a woman experiencing difficult childbirth (*šinništu la mušēšertu*) that deserves further study. (The author notes the new form *mušēšertu* and suggests that it means "barren").

Professor von Weier has been generous with his knowledge as well as with his texts, which he has shared freely with other scholars. One must thank him for making so many texts available to others, and congratulate him on completion of this excellent five-volume series.

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Zion, City of Our God. Edited by RICHARD S. HESS and GORDON J. WENHAM. Grand Rapids, Mich.: WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY, 1999. Pp. x + 206. \$22 (paper).

This recent anthology, which "grew out of a special meeting of the Tyndale Fellowship Old Testament Study group held in Cambridge in 1996" (p. ix), is a collection of eight loosely connected essays reflecting on the city of Jerusalem in the historical and religious imagination of ancient Israel. It includes a study by Richard Hess on the textual and historical problems surrounding Sennacherib's invasion, an examination by John Monson of the ways archaeological evidence sheds light on the religious and political centrality of the Jerusalem temple, several contributions dealing with images of Zion or Jerusalem in various biblical books—including one on the "Psalms of Ascent" by Philip Satterthwaite, an article by Knut Heim on Lamentations, one on Ezekiel by Thomas Renz, two contribu-

tions on Chronicles—one by Martin Selman and one by Gary Knoppers, and concludes with a piece by Rebecca Doyle on Jerusalem's Molek cult.

While all of the essays make serious contributions to the field of biblical scholarship, they do vary in quality. Some, like Gary Knoppers' "Jerusalem at War in Chronicles," truly break new ground. Knoppers calls into question the continued endorsement by many scholars of von Rad's view that the battle accounts throughout Chronicles are strongly spiritualized, and puts forward a highly nuanced reading of the various types of war imagery in Chronicles. Others, such as Richard Hess' "Hezekiah and Sennacherib in 2 Kings 18–20" and Rebecca Doyle's "Molek of Jerusalem?" are less innovative, but do a fine job of bringing the reader up to date on the current state of scholarly debate in the areas they examine.

While one is thankful that the editors have gathered together a series of essays related to such a central theme in the Hebrew Bible and that the publishers have made this book available for a very reasonable price, this anthology does have certain weaknesses. Even though the essays all deal with Jerusalem or Zion in some sense, it is not immediately evident to the reader what really binds them together as a whole. Perhaps the editors could have provided more connective tissue than the page-and-a-half introduction and the publisher's blurb on the back cover. Furthermore, while each article is introduced by a very brief abstract, one does not see any real effort by either the authors or the editors to integrate their work or explain its interconnections. The sense of this volume's overall diffuseness is exacerbated by the lack of any bibliography or indexes, which also diminishes its usefulness to those conducting research. In spite of these drawbacks, which could certainly be remedied in future publications by this working group or by other groups working with this publisher, this book will surely be of value in certain classroom situations and most especially to anyone conducting research on almost any aspect of the Zion tradition or the city of Jerusalem in the ancient Israelite period.

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Chinese. By OLIVER MOORE. Reading the Past. London: BRITISH MUSEUM PRESS, 2000. Pp. 80, illus., figs. £8.99 (paper).

After issuing small volumes on cuneiform, Egyptian hieroglyphs, Linear B, Greek inscriptions, Etruscan, runes, Maya glyphs, and even mathematics and measurement, the British Museum's "Reading the Past" series has now looked east to bring out a book on Chinese. The series is aimed at the interested general reader, not the specialist nor necessarily the student. Such readers will be well served by the volume at hand. For it is pleasant to report that, within the limitations of space