

potential to provide significant insight into the religious beliefs and practices of the common people” (p. 10). This tension may have been alleviated if Chalmers would have offered a rationale for separating religious and theological beliefs from “social-world” questions; or, perhaps if he would have defined religious beliefs and/or theological issues. Second, a discussion on the role of the interpreter or historian in the process of socio-historical reconstruction would improve this book. Beginning students need to be made aware of the impact a historian’s epistemology and/or worldview can have on the outcome of historical reconstruction (see Jens Bruun Kofoed, “Epistemology, Historiographical Method, and the ‘Copenhagen School’” in *Windows into Old Testament History: Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of “Biblical Israel”* [ed. V. Philips Long, David W. Baker, and Gordon J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002]).

Despite these criticisms, Chalmers accomplishes his goal to provide an accessible introductory text to the religion of ancient Israel for the beginning student or non-specialist. *Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel* is well balanced and researched. Chalmers navigates well between various extremes and the difficult land between biblical studies and archaeology. I would recommend this as a supplemental text to a book on the history of “biblical Israel” because Chalmers effectively brings out the nitty-gritty of “real life” in ancient Israel. Not all will agree with Chalmers’s middle-of-the-road stance between minimalist and maximalist historians. Yet, his balanced approach models for students a way to weigh the evidence without necessarily inculcating him or her in an interpretative tradition.

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*The Raging Torrent: Historical Inscriptions from Assyria and Babylonia Relating to Ancient Israel* translated and annotated by Mordechai Cogan. Jerusalem: Carta, 2008. xiii + 250 pp., US \$64.00, hardcover.

*Bound for Exile: Israelites and Judeans Under Imperial Yoke, Documents from Assyria and Babylonia* translated and annotated by Mordechai Cogan. Jerusalem: Carta, 2013. xiii + 177 pp., US \$64.00, hardcover.

Mordechai Cogan is professor emeritus of biblical history at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Having written several books, including

commentaries on books of the Hebrew Bible, in Hebrew and English, Cogan displays a scholarly prowess that few can mirror. This review will treat *Raging Torrent* and *Bound for Exile* as a pair, both of which further display his scholarly capabilities. *Raging Torrent* easily stands alone, but *Bound for Exile* often refers readers to passages in the earlier volume to provide needed context. Consequently, publishing these as a single volume would have helped.

*Raging Torrent* and *Bound for Exile* are printed on semi-glossy paper and are about the size of an electronic tablet, though about twice as thick each. These titles are selective anthologies primarily of ancient Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian texts related to the ancient Hebrew kingdoms. Both volumes contain black and white photographs of ancient reliefs, monuments, and other artifacts printed occasionally alongside associated texts. *Raging Torrent* contains 25 images and *Bound for Exile* contains 37. Both titles provide helpful black and white maps illustrating military campaigns or locations associated with the ancient excerpts with which they are associated. Although the maps are black and white, they are well done and are an especially valuable part of these volumes. The regional shading, different kinds of arrows, and selection of toponyms on each map offers helpful clarification and broad orientation. *Raging Torrent* contains eight maps and *Bound for Exile* contains six. Both titles conclude with brief glossary, chronological tables, and indices of biblical references, divine names, persons, and geographical and ethnic names. Each chapter is self-contained, with each section of the chapter concluding with its own bibliography.

Cogan's explanations are consistently brief. The introduction to each volume is 10 pages, including bibliography. Each new section within chapters typically begins with an introduction of one to four short paragraphs. Cogan's economic style keeps the focus on the ancient texts themselves. After the presentation of the translation, Cogan offers brief commentary of key passages or explains difficult or idiomatic expressions. The passage-by-passage comments may provide historical details or may make comparisons to terms or expressions in Akkadian, Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, and so on. This is typically done by non-technical transliteration in the respective font as needed to illustrate a given point. The commentary often cites relevant biblical passages and provides cross references to relevant passages in Cogan's pair of anthologies. Each text provides a list of the published texts and other available English translations of the texts, as well as secondary literature cited in Cogan's introductions and explanatory notes.

The layout and the elements offered make these well suited for academic use. Students and courses will benefit by the sustained serious yet accessible introduction and commentary, as well as the judicious

commitment to brevity. These same virtues could make these handbooks useful to preachers and other ministers of the Scriptures as well. These volumes are readable, and both comprehensive and concise, and offer all-in-one guidance for study.

The chapters of *Raging Torrent* are arranged chronologically from the mid-ninth century to the late sixth century B.C.E., most named for emperors: (1) Shalmaneser III, (2) Adad-nerari III, (3) Shalmaneser IV, (4) Tiglath-pileser III, (5) Sargon II, (6) Sennacherib, (7) Esarhaddon, (8) Ashurbanipal, (9) Assyrian Eponym Chronicle, (10) Neo-Babylonian Chronicles, (11) Nebuchadnezzar II, (12) Cyrus II, King of Persia. Cogan typically provides a single witness to an emperor's annals (presumably selected for its virtues). For example, Cogan selected the earliest version of Sennacherib's campaign against Judah (from the Rassam Cylinder) along with three other passages that relate to biblical events (pp. 111–29) versus Cogan's translation of these same texts along with texts commemorating Sennacherib's campaigns against Merodach-baladan and Babylon in COS (2:300–305) versus eight different versions of Sennacherib's annals in Luckenbill (ARAB, 2:115–159) versus the final edition from the Taylor Prism in ANET (pp. 287–88).

Below is a selection that exemplifies Cogan's commentary. It comes from a portion of the Taylor Prism that speaks about the Assyrian response to Hezekiah's refusal to submit and pay tribute in 701 B.C.E. As shown, translation of selected annalistic records in full is followed by specific passages repeated in boldface font along with commentary:

**I took out 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, cattle, and sheep, without number, and counted them as spoil**—The number of captives deported is extremely large and is at odds with the population estimates of the kingdom of Judah suggested by archaeologists, who set it at approximately 120,000; see Shiloh 1981; Broshi and Finkelstein 1992. The Assyrian scribes sought to enhance the king's victory by inflating the numbers; on this practice, see De Odorico 1995:172–174; for a different opinion, see Millard 1991. (p. 120; the full references are included at the end of the section).

**He himself [Hezekiah], I locked up within Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with armed posts, and made it unthinkable (literally, 'taboo') for him to exit by city gate**—The topography of Jerusalem did not easily permit the use of siege-wall technique, and so instead, fortified

positions were erected to cut the city off from the outside world.  
(p. 120)

The brief commentary is typical of what Cogan provides for all the selections in the pair of anthologies under review. By way of comparison, ANET and ARAB provide translation but no notes on these selections, and COS offers a few minor text oriented notes but no commentary. The informative commentary sets Cogan's reader apart from typical biblical background readers.

Cogan's second volume offers a much-needed collection of the disparate and fragmentary evidence of exilic life of Israel and Judah. Over the past couple of decades numerous articles and short studies have appeared explaining the significance of recovered evidence like the celebrated "city of Judah" (āl Yaḥudu) as one of the refugee communities in the outskirts of Babylon in the sixth century B.C.E.

The chapters of *Bound for Exile* are arranged topically/chronologically around the exiles of Israel and Judah respectively: (1) Assyrian Provinces of Magiddu and Samerina, (2) Israelites in Assyrian Exile, (3) Treatises and Oaths in the Assyrian Empire, (4) Kingdom of Judah as an Assyrian Vassal, (5) Judeans in Assyrian Exile, (6) Judeans in Babylonian Exile. Cogan finds the biblical texts historically reliable, to a large extent, and sees the various kinds of ancient texts and text fragments corroborating and illuminating the biblical text. In a few places, Cogan expresses skepticism concerning the historical accuracy of selected biblical texts.

While *Raging Torrent* presents official empire texts, the collection of texts in *Bound for Exile* is of a different order. Cogan explains in the introduction:

Though the royal inscriptions provide a basic picture of the course of political and military events, they are ideological compositions that fail the investigator who asks: Under what conditions did the captives live in their new homes? Were they settled in groups according to place of origin or as individuals, dispersed randomly? Can their social status—slaves, state dependents, homesteaders—be determined? Partial answer can be found in the texts that were generated in the routine operation of the imperial bureaucracies; in addition, there are the everyday, common texts that accompanied the course of the daily lives of the people who lived under their thumb. (p. 1)

Since "[t]hese documents were not subject to ideological constraints" they need to be interpreted with a different set of concerns (p. 1). The

sectional introductions in this volume frequently draw explicit attention to passages in the Hebrew Bible which the texts illuminate.

The diverse texts collected, introduced, and briefly explained by Cogan provide readers glimpses of the fate of the exiles. Some exiles of Israel served among the chariot troops. Many served as a part of building projects, bricklaying, and canal digging (see ch. 2). The sparse evidence of Judean exiles in Assyria reveals some as laborers in building projects while others served as soldiers or musicians. In addition, traces of evidence point to aspects of refugee life like records of the sale of lands and persons, as well as the sleuthing required to get at the ethnicity of personal names (see ch. 5). Cogan also gathers together disparate clues to Judean life in Neo-Babylonian exile. These include the well-known records of rations for Jehoiachin as well as place names, personal names, and various mundane records like inheritances and forbidden marriages (see ch. 6). Readers can see for themselves the severe limitations in terms of the scarcity of historical testimony to the exilic existence of the Hebrews. At the same time, the gathered and explained evidence will help dissolve some longstanding ideas regarding the “long lost ten tribes of Israel.”

Sensationalistic and partisan interpretation of the exile of the ancient Hebrews has been commonplace in the past couple of decades. Students may run across parts of the large mass of “myth of the exile” studies, some extremely skeptical of the scriptural accounts. (For one work which gave rise to much allusion and consideration, see Hans Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the “Exilic” Period* [Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996]). Others have questioned the biases of some of these postmodern and minimalist scholars as being anti-Semitic (See Adele Berlin, “The Exile: Biblical Ideology and Its Postmodern Ideological Interpretation,” in *Literary Construction of Identity in the Ancient World* [ed. Hanna Liss and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010], 341–56). While determining possible relationships between anti-Semitic sentiment and scholarly ideology keeps the presses running and students talking, it does not necessarily translate into exegetical competency. *Bound for Exile* provides students a clear and accessible collection of primary sources to help negotiate historical judgments in the face of wildly disparate and often sparkly scholarly claims. Cogan is clear, careful, and reserved in his judgments. Cogan’s readers could provide useful complement to Gary N. Knoppers’s recent interpretation of the biblical and historical accounts of the exiles of the Israelites and Judeans, as he cuts through the heated debate about them (two chapters offer sustained interpretation of the much-contested exiles of the people of the ancient Hebrew kingdoms; see Gary N. Knoppers,

*Jews and Samaritans: The Origins and History of Their Early Relations* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2013], ch. 2, 5). While there is great value and necessity in secondary interpretations, there is also need for a collection of primary texts such as Cogan has put together. Students need a chance to read and study the very small cache of written evidence for themselves.

The value of Cogan's pair of anthologies is apparent for students and teachers of the Hebrew Bible. These readers could well serve courses devoted to 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, and the Prophets, as well as historical background of the Old Testament. In addition, the brevity, clarity, and richness of these readers also makes them viable for use by the busy preacher or minister of the Scriptures. But the genre of biblical background anthologies raises philosophical issues.

Whenever I look through anthologies of materials designed for students of the Scriptures, I remember Jack Sasson's important scathing criticism of an ancient-texts reader some years ago ("On Relating 'Religious' Texts to the Old Testament," *MAARAV* 3 [1982]: 217–25). One of his criticisms is the tendency to "bibilicize" ancient texts that did not function analogously to the emerging authority of the Hebrew Scriptures. Another problem is fragmenting ancient sources to isolate the passages supposedly relevant to biblical interpretation. It is hard to disagree with Sasson's emphasis on considering ancient Near Eastern texts in their own rights and contexts. As a teacher, I worry about the mercenary spirit of taking historical artifacts and texts out of context to serve as ingredients in inadequate interpretation of the Scriptures. But the opposite problem of ignoring historical context is omnipresent among many parts of evangelical study and ministry. The choice does not need to be everything or nothing.

Mercenary agenda cannot replace serious study of ancient Near Eastern historical and religious texts in their own right as one part of the academic preparations to serve Christ and teach and preach the gospel. Students should study full texts in translation as part of academic training for exegesis. Yet, many of the textual witnesses to the ancient Near Eastern empires come in the form of monumental propaganda and text fragments of all sorts that are well suited to a collection of texts. The right kind of anthologies used well can help meet the need for sound biblical exegesis. Responsible Christian exegesis needs rich and yet brief collections of historical texts like those provided by Cogan.

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