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BERLEJUNG, A., und B. JANOWKI (Hrsg.) – Tod und Jenseits im Alten Israel und in seiner Umwelt. (Forschungen zum Alten Testament, 64). Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2009. (23,5 cm, XII, 723). ISBN 978-3-16-149776-6. ISSN 0940-4155. € 129,-.

This collection of papers read at the 2007 conference in Leipzig on the theme of death and afterlife is a real 'Fundgrube'. Nearly all German specialists on this field were brought together. Many of them have published important monographs on related topics and used the opportunity to summarize and update their work. Much attention is paid to matters of method and definition. It resulted in a very good survey of this field of research, its primary texts, the archaeological and iconographical evidence, and the relevant secondary literature.

As with all books of this kind, with contributions from so many different authors, there is the problem of coherence. The editors and their assistants did a great job in bringing the text to a formal unity, although there are some inconsistencies in the use of Hebrew characters or transliteration and in the fact that some contributions have a detailed subdivision and others none at all. When it comes to the contents it is not surprising that some articles have a more general approach whereas others enter deep into specific matters. Within this collection there is a nice balance in this regard. More problematic is the fact that there is not much interaction between the different contributors. As a reader one would like to get informed about the discussions there may have been during the conference in Leipzig. On some points the authors have come to different and sometimes contradictory conclusions, for instance, concerning the origin in ancient Israel of more concrete positive views on the afterlife or concerning the place of the cult of the dead within Yahwism. It would also have been worthwhile to have more discussion about the relation between ancient Israel and its surrounding cultures. In contrast and perhaps also as a reaction to scholarly discussions in the past the authors appear to be rather reluctant in these matters. They mostly restrict their presentation of the material to their own specific field of expertise. In the preface the editors refer to the unique situation of all these specialists being brought together on this conference: 'Dadurch war gewährleistet, dass Quellen und Arbeitsformen zusammengeführt wurden, die in der Regel weitgehend nebeneinander existieren und unabhängig voneinander arbeiten' (p. VI). It cannot be concluded from the contributions in this book, however, that the authors really cooperated and that they learned from each other. This book certainly offers the opportunity to do so, but also asks for next steps to be made, for instance, by more studies on the basis of real teamwork.

The division of the book into six sections helps to get a clear view on the different aspects of the theme: (1) a general section on man and death; (2) on the appraisal of death as good or bad; (3) on funerary customs and mourning; (4) on conceptions of the afterlife; (5) on the relation between the living and the dead; (6) on death and afterlife in the ancient Near East. It could not be avoided, however, that there is some overlap and that some of the articles would also or at least partly have fitted in other sections. For instance, the article by Niehr on the royal burial in Ugarit, now placed in section 3, would also have fitted in section 6. The contribution by Zangenberg on Jewish views in the Hellenistic period, which now concludes the book, offers an excellent survey of the relevant data in both the Old and the New Testament. It could very well have functioned as a kind of introduction to the book describing the status questionis.

As could be expected in a volume of the series *Forschungen zum Alten Testament*, there is more attention given to ancient Israel than to the surrounding cultures, but in some respects one could also speak of unwelcome imbalance. On the one hand a discussion of the relevant material from the Hittites and from Phoenicia and Syria in the first millennium B.C.E. is missed, whereas on the other hand there is some serious overlap in the contributions about the Old Testament.

All contributions are of a high scholarly standard with references to recent secondary literature. Each article is concluded by a bibliography. Some readers may miss a general bibliography and an index of authors.

Johannes Schnocks's article on transience and being godforsaken (pp. 5-23) discusses mainly Psalms 88, 89, 90, and 103. The answer given in Ps. 103 to the problem as formulated in Ps. 88 is in his opinion the climax of the Psalter.

Christian Frevel discusses Job's wish to die (pp. 5-41), putting it within the broader framework of the rhetoric of complaining within the Old Testament.

Rüdiger Lux writes about death and justice in the book of Qohelet (pp. 43-65). He comes to the surprising conclusion that in 3:20f and 12:7 Qohelet has a positive attitude towards death.

Stefanie U. Gulde's article on death as figure (pp. 67-85) is a summary of her dissertation *Der Tod als Herrscher in Ugarit und Israel* (2007). She discusses Jer. 9:20; Isa. 28:15, 18; Ps. 49:15 and compares these texts with what we learn from Ugaritic texts about the god Mot.

Irmtraud Fischer has studied the theme from a gender perspective (pp. 87-108) and comes to the conclusion that not only in life, but also in death it makes a difference whether you are male or female.

The section on the appraisal of death starts with Ute Neumann-Gorsolke listing texts about an acceptable death ('old and full of years'; pp. 111-136). Compared to the other contributions the bibliography here is very incomplete. One misses, for instance, the book of P.S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol* (2002), in which much attention is paid to this subject. I cannot blame her for overseeing my article 'Good Death and Bad Death in Ancient Israel According to Biblical Lore', *Social Science and Medicine* 58 (2004), 987-995, as it was published outside the religious sector. Nevertheless, it would have been worthwhile to incorporate this and even more the studies on comparable phenomena in other cultures in that issue of the journal.

Annette Krüger discusses the expression 'to be gathered to his people' (pp. 137-150) and points to a very interesting Egyptian parallel.

Martin Leuenberger describes the problem of premature death (pp. 151-176) and concludes with a rather bold theory about the development of the belief in JHWH rescuing from death. One can not only question his precise dating of a number of Psalms but also the underlying presupposition that different views on JHWH and the afterlife would point to different dates of these views. The often mentioned difference of opinion regarding the resurrection between the Sadducees and the Pharisees is a good example that different views could exist next to each other.

Jan Dietrich gives a very instructive overview of texts about suicide and the different motives behind it (pp. 177-198). An important conclusion is that there is no real difference between ancient Israel and the rest of the ancient Near East in this regard. Unfortunately, one has to consult another book for the first part of his study.

In the longest contribution to the volume one of the editors Angelika Berlejung describes images of dead people (pp. 199-253). She pays much attention to preliminary issues regarding the use of iconographic material. It is demonstrated that the emphasis in iconography is on the negative side of dying, for instance, as victim of the powerful king. The quality of the pictures reproduced in this and other articles of the book is good, be it that they are relatively small.

The section on funerary and mourning customs start with a very good survey by Jens Kamlah of the archaeological data on burial practices in ancient Israel (pp. 257-297). He concludes that there are no indications of a cult of the dead. He notices a big contrast with the practices in Egypt and Phoenicia. It would have been more interesting, however, to make a comparison with places like Ugarit and Qatna, as they are described in the same volume by Niehr and Bretschneider.

Silvia Schroer describes the rites of mourning, with special emphasis on the role of women (pp. 299-321). She makes good remarks on the definition of the different elements and also on the comparison with related phenomena in the ancient Near East and in ancient Greece.

In his article on the royal funerary in Ugarit Herbert Niehr offers on the basis of the literary and archaeological evidence a clear reconstruction of what happened when a king died and of the ideas behind the rituals (pp. 323-346).

Reinhard Achenbach discusses the texts concerning contamination by touching corpses (pp. 347-369) and notices interesting parallels with ancient Greece.

In the fourth section, on conceptions of the afterlife, Gönke D. Eberhardt describes the changes in the relation of JHWH to the netherworld (pp. 373-395), summarizing her dissertation published in 2007: *JHWH und die Unterwelt. Spuren einer Kompetenzausweitung JHWHs im Alten Testament*. Next to a development, she signals the possibility that different opinions may have existed side by side. In this regard her reconstruction is more convincing than the one by Leuenberger referred to above. Having read earlier articles in this volume, especially the ones by Gulde and Niehr, it is astonishing that Eberhardt pays no attention at all to the comparison with related ideas in surrounding religions. She should at least have discussed the opinion, which is also defended in this volume, that the ancient Israelite ideas about JHWH and the afterlife were influenced by the presence of a cult of the dead.

Kathrin Liss discusses the texts about the localization of the world of the dead (pp. 397-422). With the use of iconographic material she demonstrates that the ideas in this regard were manifold.

Klaus Bieberstein reconstructs the development of a belief in resurrection of the dead (pp. 423-446). Compared to the views of Eberhardt one may note that Bieberstein assumes a more linear development. It would have been interesting when both authors would have taken the opportunity to react to each other.

Bern Janowski's article on 'the history of death in ancient Israel' (pp. 447-477) is, again, more in line with Eberhardt's views. He speaks of 'einer faktischen Polyphonie verschiedener Frömmigkeitstypen und ihren mannigfachen Interferenzen' (p. 471).

The section on the relation between the living and the dead opens with Dagmar Kühn's contribution on the memory of the dead (pp. 481-499). She published a monograph on this subject in 2005: *Totengedenken bei den Nabatäern und im Alten Testament*. She notes the importance of distinguishing between memory of the dead and venerating the dead as divine beings.

Rüdiger Schmitt's contribution (pp. 501-524) also covers the area of care of the dead, but he includes necromancy. Especially his treatment of the archaeological evidence is worthwhile.

Raik Heckl's study on the role of the ancestors in the original form of the Hexateuch (pp. 525-546) combines redaction criticism with the study of the history of religion. On the basis of his study of Exodus 15:22-27 he assumes that the originally prominent role of the ancestors was downplayed in a later phase.

Jan Christian Gerz writes about the cutting of the ties between the living and the dead in the deuteronomistic literature (pp. 547-563). In his opinion this should not be simply explained as defense against a cult of the dead. It has more in general to do with changing ideas about the relation between JHWH and mankind.

The final section starts with a survey by Annette Zgoll about the dead as judges (pp. 567-581) with a discussion of the relevant texts from Mesopotamia.

Daniel Schwemer writes about Babylonian ritual texts against the powers of death (pp. 583-596). The idea behind this magic is not that man would be able to avoid death. Death must be accepted as every man's fate. The rituals are intended as a defense against witchcraft, trying to return it to the sender.

Joachim Friedrich Quack describes ancient Egyptian tombs (pp. 597-629) and sees, contrary to what is often maintained in Egyptology, a development in the fact that the god Osiris takes a more important place in the course of time.

Joachim Bretschneider describes the royal cult in Syria in the third and second millennium B.C.E. (pp. 631-654) with a good survey of the archaeological evidence from Tell Beydar, and – less comprehensive – from Ebla, Mari, Tell Bi'a, Qatna, and Ugarit. The clear relations between the royal palace and the royal tombs point to a prominent place of the cult of the dead in this area.

Finally, Jürgen Zangenberg, describes the development of the conceptions of afterlife until the early roman period (pp. 655-689). As remarked above, it could very well have functioned as an introduction, but it also nicely illustrates the remark made by Janowski (on p. 472) that the texts in the New Testament about resurrection cannot be understood without knowledge about the ideas in ancient Israel with regard to death and afterlife.

The book is concluded by indices on texts and subjects.

Kampen, December 2010

Klaas Spronk