



**Review: [Untitled]**

Reviewed Work(s):

*Lamentations* by Delbert R. Hillers

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the pedantic imitation of Egyptian forms that has recently become fashionable among certain scholars.

Only the scholar who has wrestled with the innumerable difficulties involved in the interpretation of ancient Egyptian literature can appreciate the tremendous amount of work that has been devoted to the selection and translation of these texts. Miriam Lichtheim's masterful command of the English language, and the sheer beauty of her renderings, will be readily apparent to all. This is one of the rare books that provide both material for scholarly study and an immense sense of aesthetic satisfaction. One looks forward to the second volume with great expectations.

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*Lamentations.* By DELBERT R. HILLERS. Anchor Bible, vol. 7A. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972. Pp. xlvi + 116. \$6.00.

This is one of the best volumes of the Anchor Bible. It strikes a fine balance between sober philological notes and extensive, often suggestive, literary comments. The literary quality of the translation is not always satisfactory, but this is sometimes remedied in the comments.

The introduction takes up such basic issues<sup>1</sup> as authorship (not Jeremiah but a writer, or writers, "more closely identified with the common hopes and fears of the people," "possibly a layman . . . connected with the royal court," pp. xxii f.; cf. pp. 67 and 92), literary types ("we derive relatively little help from the form-criticism of the book," p. xxviii; classification "as a funeral song or the like tends to hinder rather than advance understanding of it," p. 18), and "Sumerian" influence ("How could an Israelite writer . . . in the sixth century B.C.

have had firsthand acquaintance with these Mesopotamian compositions," i.e., "the Sumerian laments . . . from the early second millennium . . ." [p. xxix]; this formulation of the question overlooks the continuation of the genre in Akkadian as well as Sumerian into Seleucid times,<sup>2</sup> and the demand for "firsthand acquaintance" is unnecessary in any case;<sup>3</sup> nevertheless Hillers has a point in stressing that genuine parallels to the book are not limited to laments either in the Bible or Mesopotamian literature, so that the proper context of the question is the relationship of the two literary traditions as a whole [pp. xxix f.];<sup>4</sup> whether a similar question should be taken on biblical parallels to ancient Near Eastern treaty curses [discussed on p. 22 and elsewhere] is considered by Hillers in his *Treaty Curses* [1964], pp. 86 f., and *Covenant* [1969], pp. 138 ff., but may deserve reassessment in light of his comments here).

Meter, parallelism, syntax, and strophic structure are discussed at length, and other pertinent issues are reviewed. In the section on the book's meaning and purpose, Hillers suggests that Lam. is a hopeful book that bases its hope not in Israel's history, which in view of the destruction could offer none, but in God's unending mercy (p. xvi). (One may note that Lamentations' withdrawal from historically based theology was not followed by the editors of Kings, Chronicles, Maccabees, and other historical works produced in subsequent centuries, but finds an analogy in the devaluation of historiography within rabbinic Judaism following the

<sup>2</sup> T. Pinches, *PSBA* 17 (1895): 64-74; 23 (1901): 192, 196-99 (cf. T. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* [1969], pp. 815-18); A. T. Clay, *BRM* 4, no. 9; see R. Borger, *Handbuch der Keilschriftliteratur*, vol. 1 (1967) for supplementary texts to all of these. These texts were apparently unknown to T. McDaniel, "The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations," *VT* 18 (1968): 198-209, who denies the existence of such a genre in Akkadian (p. 208). Cf. also A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago, 1964), p. 268.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. S. N. Kramer, *The Sumerians* (Chicago, 1963), pp. 291 f. Note the reservations of T. Jacobsen regarding Sumerian-biblical parallels, *JNES* 5 (1946): 147 f., n. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Contrast the methodological position of W. W. Hallo, *JAOs* 88 (1968): 72 f.

<sup>1</sup> For discussion of many of these questions see "Lamentations, Book of," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 10 (1972), pp. 1368-75; note corrigenda in vol. 1, p. 857.

destruction of the Second Temple.<sup>5</sup>) Also noteworthy is the observation that the book's "meaning is not fully statable apart from the form in which the author clothed it. It cannot be reduced to a set of propositions without serious loss" (p. xvii).

I found the translation frequently inelegant, with such renditions as "have it easy" (1:5), "what he said he would" (2:17), "got away . . . wiped out" (2:22), "been through trouble" (3:1), "the one who strikes him" (3:30), "Give them back . . . what they have coming" (3:64), "had it better" (4:9). Although the comments frequently note phraseological echoes within the book (e.g., 2:16), these are often not reflected in the translation, obscuring this aspect of the book's style for the non-Hebraist. Thus *zkr* . . . *ny wmrwdy(m)* is rendered differently at each occurrence (1:7; 3:19), as *gdr* (3:7, 9), *drky* (3:9, 11), and *sk(w)th* (3:43 f.) in adjacent verses. A similar obscuring results from the decision not to translate "daughter" and the like before Zion, etc., "since the main purpose . . . seems to be metrical" (p. xxxviii). Recent studies argue that *btwlh* should be translated "young woman,"<sup>6</sup> as we find here at 2:21, but elsewhere "virgin" is retained (1:4, etc.). The comment at 3:39 recognizes that *hṭ* there refers to the consequences of sin ("what his sins have brought on him"), but this is ignored in the translation; the translation of 4:22 recognizes a like meaning for *wn* ("punishment"), but in 4:6 *wn* and *hṭh* are rendered "wickedness" and "sin" despite the context's focus on punishment (cf. the note). Here and there the translation scores nicely: "cornered" (1:3), "had no regard" (2:1); the use of quotation marks around "spoke and it was done" (3:37) is a deft stroke (but the comment unaccountably identifies the source as Nu. 23:19 instead of Ps. 33:9).

Among the interesting suggestions in the philological notes are: *mḥmdyhm* = "their darlings" in 1:11 but not 10 (note the differ-

ing consonantal spellings; but there is no justification for taking *mḥmdy ʿyn* as "good-looking men" in 2:4—the reference to Ezek. 24:16 [Ezekiel's wife] actually supports the meaning "darlings," "dear ones"); *nšb* = "sword-hilt" (2:4); *ntn yd* = "make a pact" (5:6; cf. Ibn Janāḥ). At 1:1 the "tantalizing" similarity of the sequence *rbty* . . . *srty* to the Ugaritic pair *rbt/trrt* as epithets of cities is remarked, but [since an etymological relationship between *srty* and *trrt* is impossible] the relationship is at best "perhaps . . . a reinterpretation within the Hebrew poetic tradition of a pair of words that had become partly obscure over the centuries."<sup>7</sup>

Two notes call attention to evidence which would support attractive emendations, but refrain from endorsing them (*nḥgwt* or *mnhgwt* "groan," for *nugwt* in 1:4;<sup>8</sup> *šrw* "were confined," for *šdw* in 4:18). In 4:12 *yšby tbl* is rendered "rulers" ("literally 'enthroned ones'") because of the parallel "kings"; the logic is not compelling (cf. *gwym rbym/mlkym*, Isa. 52:15), and given the frequent occurrence of this phrase where it unquestionably means "inhabitants . . .," what Israelite reader would have understood it differently here? A few foreign usages are accepted, such as *gm* = "aloud" (1:8c, ignoring the possibility of "for her part" [see *BDB* 169 sub 4] in response to 8b), emphatic *lamed* (3:37, where another possibility is granted; 4:3, but cf. *nḥpk ṽkzr* in Job 30:21), *mdbṛ* = "pursuer" (5:9; the proposed etymology supports, at best, "expeller," which seems inapt); but the use

<sup>7</sup> On the Ugaritic *trrt*, see M. Astour, *JNES* 27 (1968): 22 f. That fixed pairs of parallel words held in common by both Ugaritic and Hebrew may have acquired different meanings in Hebrew is affirmed by J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (1968), p. 229, and challenged by M. Dahood, *Biblica* 50 (1969): 78. Coincidentally, the example of non-change which Dahood cites in this connection leads to reading *š* for *ś* in the Hebrew text on the basis of Ugaritic; Hillers resists such logic in our case. He suggests another example of change in *BASOR* no. 200 (1970): 18.

<sup>8</sup> Is Hillers's unexplained reluctance here based on the standing phrase *ygw n wnhh*? Perhaps the MT can be defended as presenting the breakup, in verbal form, of a stereotype nominal phrase (see E. Z. Melamed, *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 8 [1961]: 115–53).

<sup>5</sup> See S. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 1 (1952), pp. 26 and 199, and J. Neusner in *History and Theory* 5 (1966): 153–71.

<sup>6</sup> G. J. Wenham, *VT* 22 (1972): 326–48; S. Paul, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 16, pp. 160 f.

of this material is limited and generally cautious (see the notes at 1:16; 2:2; 3:3, 63; 4:18; n. 7 above). A double-duty suffix is identified at 3:66, following Driver, who is credited with first pointing out the phenomenon (it was actually known to medieval grammarians;<sup>9</sup> cf. also the Targum and Greek here). Enclitic *mem* is found at 3:17 and put to good use at 2:2 (with McDaniel) to avoid the importation of a Phoenician usage. Asseverative *kis*, recognized at 3:22,<sup>10</sup> are missed at 1:10 and 4:18. McDaniel's *rbty bgwym* "Mistress (among the nations)," deserves more favorable consideration, at least in 1:1b, in light of the synonymous *gbrt mmlkwyt* in the similar context of Isa. 47:5-9. Talmudic Aramaic is cited once, in a note (on the vexatious 1:14a) which illustrates the pitfalls of that source: the alleged usage of *yštrg* with the foot seems to occur only once, and variant readings leave the word's presence questionable.<sup>11</sup> To the lengthy discussion of the Masoretic tradition on 3:20 may be added the view of the *Minḥat Šay* that the *Tiqqun* was from *lyw* (referring to God) to *ly*.

Extrabiblical literature is frequently cited,<sup>12</sup> and at times put to exegetical use (e.g., 1:11, 20; 4:7; 5:6). More can be suggested along these lines. Hillers does not address the theological problem seen by some in the widow metaphor of 1:1 (who is the dead husband?), taking it simply as an expression of defenselessness; his view may be supported by extrabiblical applications of the metaphor to cities and countries (Merneptah Stela, near the end; Akkadian

*almanūtam alāku*). One case of the pertinent Akkadian idiom occurs in a series of omens where it is followed by "that land's gods will abandon it (and) that land will be overthrown,"<sup>13</sup> recalling Rashi's explanation of the metaphor in Lam.: "like a woman whose husband has gone to a distant land" (cf. *TB Kethuboth* 63a; for related nuances cf. 2 Sam. 20:3 [estrangement], *TB Pesahim* 49a end [abandonment]). In a parallel from the "Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur," overlooked here, Enlil is implored to "return my city . . . to your side" (Gadd in *Studies* . . . Driver, 65:55 ff.) suggesting that "bring us back" in the biblical counterpart (Lam. 5:21; the same is really true of Jer. 31:18 [17H]) is not a prayer for help in repenting but for restoration (as the contrasting verbs in verses 20 and 22 also indicate).

The literary comments are the most extensive section of the volume. A serious effort is made to discover, when possible, the progression of thought within the chapters—psychological (chap. 1), logical (chap. 2), verbal or thematic association (chap. 3, very persuasively argued). The shaping of the book's imagery by inherited literary patterns is frequently stressed, illuminating "the way in which the author's mind worked . . . at some points . . . the traditional literary forms determined his perceptions and memories of the events" (p. 21). Thus the description of mourning for the political-military calamity of 587 is indebted to traditional descriptions of mourning in time of drought (pp. 20 f.). Hillers pushes back further to ceremonies mourning the dead fertility god, but finds the theme "modified almost beyond recognition" in Lamentations. In 1:10 Hillers finds an early example of exegesis<sup>14</sup> in which the Deuteronomic command (23:3[4H]) has been broadened, if only by poetic license, "to cover the heathen . . . in general," thus anticipating Neh. 13:1-3 (cf. Ez. 9). 3:1-9

<sup>9</sup> See M. Greenberg, *JAOS* 90 (1970): 539 f.

<sup>10</sup> The Targum's implied *tammū* in 3:22, favored by Hillers, is also reflected at the end of the *Modim* prayer in most editions of the Jewish prayer book (only *Mahzor Vitry* reflects MT's *tmnw*).

<sup>11</sup> See A. Kohut, *Aruch Completum* IV, 184, s.v. *tbl*. Note J. Greenfield's cautionary remarks on the use of rabbinic dialects, *JAOS* 89 (1969): 133 ff.

<sup>12</sup> For others note the role of the net (1:13; 4:20) in treaty curses (Hillers, *Treaty Curses*, pp. 69 f.; M. Tsevat, *JBL* 78 [1959]: 199 ff.); fulfillment of an ancient decree (2:17; see D. D. Luckenbill, *ARAB* § 938); light and darkness as images for freedom and imprisonment (3:2, 6; see S. Paul, *JAOS* 88 [1968]: 182). Is 4:3 really comparable to the curse of dry breasts?

<sup>13</sup> F. Nötscher, *Orientalia* 51-54 (1930): 110.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. N. M. Sarna in A. Altmann, ed., *Biblical and Other Studies* (1963), p. 35, n. 27; Y. Kaufmann, *Mikkilšōnā šel hayyēširā hammiqrāit* (1966), pp. 161-68, finds Josianic exegesis of Deut. in II Ki. 23.

are a reversal of Ps. 23.<sup>15</sup> In 3:29 "perhaps" expresses piety, not doubt.

Certain points on which I found the commentary unconvincing might profit from the application of views expressed elsewhere in the volume. Hillers correctly connects the abandonment by friends (1:2, 19) to that motif in individual laments, and takes the theme as figurative for the behavior of Judah's allies. But he then goes further, agreeing with those who take (*m*)<sup>h</sup>*bym* to mean "lovers" and find here the prophetic metaphor of adultery for idolatry and foreign alliances. But once prophetic authorship has been denied (introduction and elsewhere), why should the presence of a prophetic metaphor be assumed? Lamentations is nowhere else concerned with idolatry, and it views foreign alliances as a frustrated hope, shared by the author, not a sin (4:17; the connection of 5:6 to 5:7 is too tenuous to prove otherwise). Meter and length are generally affirmed as text-critical criteria, supporting deletions of dittographies (1:16; 4:15) and conflation<sup>16</sup> (list at 5:5, plus 1:21b; 2:3, 15), including anomalous fourth cola (1:7; 2:19). Yet a more empirical logic operates at 2:14 where emendation *metri causa* is resisted because "it seems better to retain MT and alter one's metrical theory to fit."

The commentary deserves careful study. It is up to date, but not faddish. It displays literary sensitivity and combines imagination with good sense. Specific proposals will inevitably be debated, but even where one disagrees he will find Hillers's proposals heuristic, his formulations illuminating.

#### ADDENDA

On paragraph 5, *ntn yd* = "make a pact": cf. M. Weinfeld, *Leshonenu* 36 (1972: 89 f. For postbiblical examples see 1 Mach. 6:58; 11:50, 62, 66; 13:45, 50; Josephus, *Antiquities* 11. 8:5.

On paragraph 7, the widow metaphor: the

<sup>15</sup> Cf. the *NJV*'s note (following Ehrlich) at 3:1.

<sup>16</sup> See S. Talmon, *Textus* 1 (1960): 144-84; *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 8 (1961): 335-83.

passage from Merneptah Stela is translated in *ANET*, p. 378b. For the Akkadian idiom, which means literally "go into widowhood," see *CAD* A/1, p. 362b. In A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, 1923), no. 30:20, mourning of three years' duration for a destroyed temple is described thus: "we have been wearing sackcloth and fasting, making our wives as widows, not anointing ourselves with oil or drinking wine" (*ANET*, p. 492b). There the widow metaphor, applied to individuals, not political entities, cannot refer to defenselessness or to the death of husbands, but signifies acts of mourning. If sexual abstinence is meant (B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine* [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968], p. 186), compare Isa. 54:1b. But is three years' sexual abstinence plausible? Perhaps the wives simply eschewed finery (cf. Exod. 33:4 6; Gen. 38:14; Ezek. 12:16; *ANET*, p. 561a). See also *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. On all these issues see the discussion in *T. B. Baba Bathra* 60 f.

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*Baal: A Study of Texts in Connexion with Baal in the Ugaritic Epics.* By PETER J. VAN ZIJL. *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, vol. 10. Kevelaer: Butzon and Bercker GmbH, 1972. Pp. 416. DM 92.

Originating as a Litt.D. dissertation under the direction of F. C. Fensham, this study was submitted to the University of Stellenbosch in 1968 and has been brought up to date only by an appendix in which the first three Ugaritic texts in *Ugaritica* 5 are briefly treated (pp. 352-62).

The introduction (especially pp. 1-2) leads one to expect an independent investigation of the texts that will take us beyond the conflicting views of previous scholars. Unfortunately such high expectations are not met, and the reader is quickly sent back to his own independent investigation of the texts and to more worthwhile previous commentators. The concluding section of the introduction