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Abstracts

‘Two are Better than One’: Gilgamesh Tablet 5: 75-80 of the Standard Version and Qohelet 4:9-12

Yoram Cohen

Abstract

The article reconstructs lines 75–80 of Tablet V of the Standard Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgameš. It offers a re-edition of all the extant sources and uses as a recourse Qohelet (Ecclesiastes) 4: 9–12. It then demonstrates how close the passage in the Epic of Gilgameš and the verses of the Book of Qohelet are. The article concludes with a brief discussion about the relationship between the Epic of Gilgameš and the Book of Qohelet.

Keywords: The Epic of Gilgameš; the Book of Qohelet (Ecclesiastes); the Cedar Forest Tablet; the Hebrew Bible and cuneiform literature; wisdom literature; transmission and reception of cuneiform literature; male friendship in ancient literature; homosexuality in ancient cultures.

Structure and Meaning in Haggai 1:1–11

Hillel Mali

The first prophecy in the Book of Haggai (1:1–11) deals with the conflict between the prophet and the people concerning the rebuilding of the Temple. This prophecy has rough edges, redundancies and an unusual rhetorical structure: it contains two units with an identical opening and identical content – the discrepancy between the hope of agricultural prosperity and the actual poor reap. It opens with a description of the state of the economy, shifts to its solution (building the Temple) and ends with a curse.

I argue that these difficulties result from a common but mistaken interpretation of the words *וְהַבְּיָאֲתֶם הַבַּיִת וְנִסְחָתִי בּוֹ* in v. 9, as a depiction of the curse of poor reap stored in the houses. I first argue why it is preferable, in terms of grammar, realia, and literary style, to understand this as a description of a rejected offering in the absence of a temple; I then show how this explanation solves the literary difficulties in the prophecy, revealing Haggai's message: the relationship between cult and agricultural prosperity.

[Key words: Haggai 1; The Returnees' Temple; Prophecy and Cult; Prosperity and Cult]

“The Scepter Shall Not Depart from Judah” (Genesis 49:10): Prophetic Promise or Command? Analysis of Nachmanides' Writings

Joseph Markus

Abstract

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet until *Shilo* come” (Genesis 49:10). During the Middle Ages, this verse was central in the Jewish-Christian polemic. Christians considered it as presaging the messianism of

Jesus. In their interpretation, it determined that there would not be a king in Israel after the coming of the messiah (“Shiloh”), which indeed happened, seemingly when the kingdom of Israel ceased to exist at the end of the second Temple period. In his polemical works against Christianity, Nachmanides also dealt with this verse, both in his *Sefer Hageulah* and *Sefer Havekhuah*. Moreover, he expanded his analysis of the verse in his *Commentary on the Torah*. Several researchers have commented on Nachmanides’ treatment of the matter in various places, but they neglected to discuss one central point: the differences that exist between various sources with regard to the precise way that Nachmanides interpreted this verse. I contend that it is possible to identify four stages in Nachmanides’ understanding of this verse: in *Sefer Hageulah*, *Commentary on the Torah*, *Sefer Havekhuah*, and in the supplement to his commentary on the Torah that he penned in Israel; at every stage Nachmanides added an additional meaning to the interpretation of the verse. This article is devoted to demonstrating this thesis and to examining its significance.

Keywords: Medieval Jewish-Christian Polemic; Anti-Christian Polemic; Nachmanides’ Commentary; Nachmanides: The Book of Redemption; Nachmanides: The Disputation at Barcelona; “The scepter will not depart from Judah”

The Temple as a Parable for the World to Come in Maimonides’ Commentaries on the Book of Psalms

Maimonides interpreted various phrases in the book of Psalms that refer to the temple in their simplest terms, as metaphors for the world to come. In these psalms, the entrance to the house of God, its courts, and gates were interpreted as a metaphor for the entrance to the world to come, where the human soul is granted its eternal existence. The article offers an almost continuous interpretation of the four psalms in which these expressions appear, using a compilation of Maimonides' commentaries from his various writings. This interpretation illuminates multiple aspects of Maimonides' thought regarding the world to come and points to a surprising correspondence between his commentaries in the *Mishnah Torah* and his commentaries in *The Guide for the Perplexed*.

[Key words: Maimonides; Psalms; Temple; 'World to Come'; Divine Providence]