

ATLA Index. Since ATLA is a "veritable gold mine of information" (12) for the student of religion, I would have liked to see this section more fully elaborated, perhaps even with examples from ATLA's new Windows-based interface. The book has a few typographical errors, of which the most serious is the abbreviation "Zac" instead of "Zech" for Zechariah (67). The main chapter on formatting correctly describes a block quotation as "usually two sentences of eight lines or more" (105), but Appendix D, "Tips for the Typist," given an older rule ("one sentence and four lines") that should be updated (220). Of more minor significance are the typos "exudes" for "exodus" (46), "hear" instead of "heart," and "basies" instead of "biases" (95).

These minor points, however, should not detract from the fact that *Quality Research Papers* fills a void, providing a much-needed research and writing resource for both undergraduate and graduate students of religion and theology. Therefore, I would recommend that it become a required text for any seminary or religion department research/writing course. The clear information on the research process in the first twelve chapters also makes *Quality Research Papers* a valuable resource for students in other fields. The vast majority of my students planned to retain it for use with other classes. *Quality Research Papers* has become an indispensable text that I plan to continue using for my composition course in the future.

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Williams, Michael James. *Deception in Genesis: An Investigation into the Morality of a Unique Biblical Phenomenon*, Studies in Biblical Literature, vol. 32. New York: Peter Lang, 2001. xviii + 252 pp. Hardcover, \$60.95.

This insightful study deals with a controversial topic that has not formerly been thoroughly analyzed. It is a comprehensive treatment of the phenomenon of deception in the book of Genesis, where this factor occurs surprisingly often. The writer handles with profound skill and erudition the unusual feature that in this Hebrew book deception is sometimes treated positively.

Williams's book is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter presents an exhaustive catalogue of deception events in Genesis, where this phenomenon occurs in fifteen passages. In chapter 2, each incident is carefully analyzed and characterized, and three of these events are positively evaluated (Gen 38:1-26; 42:7-28; and 44:1-34). Chapter 3 introduces comparative biblical data (Prophetic Literature and Writings) into the picture. William's brings biblical material about deception into dialogue with later Jewish tradition (chap. 4), ancient Near Eastern parallels (chap. 5), and world folklore literature (chap. 6). The author stresses that all extrabiblical stories about deception are always negative (173), and admits that the folklore material in particular is not specific enough to make mature comparative evaluations (212). In chapter 7, Williams draws his final conclusions. The book ends with an 18-page bibliography and a subject index.

Crucial for the present study is a definition of deception. Williams offers the following description, which governs his treatment of the topic: "Deception takes place when an agent intentionally distorts, withholds, or otherwise manipulates information reaching some person(s) in order to stimulate in the person(s) a belief

that the agent does not believe in order to serve the agent's purpose" (3). Intentionality is essential, which is why the author deals only with biblical passages where this factor is present. He seeks to discover the rationale behind the positive view of some deception in Genesis.

Williams concludes that Genesis positively describes only those events of deception in which the perpetrator was previously wronged and uses deception "against the one who has done the wrong in order to restore shalom" (55). In such cases, deception functions "to restore their own situation to what they would have been had they not been disrupted" (221). Thus deception is justified when it functions to restore the well-being of the person, family, or faith community. When deception distorts shalom, it is viewed negatively.

The book of Genesis, with its particular view of deception, is set apart from the rest of the biblical narratives where deception is present because the social structure is different, e.g., the nation of Israel was not yet formed (75). While the biblical material clearly condemns deception, in some instances even God deceives (62-66). It is interesting that in the later Jewish literature, a deception event is viewed positively when it includes divine involvement, a positive motivation on the part of the deceiver, and a negative evaluation of the character of the deceived party (136).

Interestingly, an Egyptian proverb from *The Instruction of Ankhsheshong* states that "there is none who deceives who is not deceived." This fits the pattern that Williams has discovered in Genesis. It is comforting that prophets speak about the splendid future where there will be no deceit (66).

Not all scholars will agree with assessments of deception passages, but the author should be commended for his diligent categorization and thorough analysis. Nevertheless, one wonders why he omitted the Dan 6 narrative about Daniel and his deceitful enemies in his discussion of deception in the book of Daniel (70).

In theological ethics, one has difficulty accepting the view that the end justifies the means because such a "principle" can excuse or justify almost any kind of behavior. It is true that our author is careful in his description of the deception process, but I wish that he would provide more penetrating insight into the question of whether the end justifies the means. Williams correctly warns not to judge Genesis deception phenomena from our modern cultural standpoint (223). Nevertheless, we could raise the following questions, which go beyond the scope of the present study: What is the border and safeguard for accomplishing lasting shalom? Social norms change, therefore, what are the implications for modern ethics? Perhaps, he is planning to do this in a future publication. In any case, Williams's research deserves to be taken seriously by those interested in ethics and new directions in biblical studies.

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Zevit, Ziony. *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches*. New York: Continuum, 2001. xx+821 pp. Hardcover, \$150.00.

Zevit's *magnum opus* is the most comprehensive discussion of Israelite religion to date, involving systematic integration of textual, epigraphic, iconographic, and archaeological data, and seeking to apply a balanced methodological approach to