

as Christ's announcement that the kingdom has now come, could fall into his "counterfeit" category. Essentially, however, Ervin presents a balanced approach, for while he puts much emphasis on healing as the prime messianic sign for unbelievers, he makes clear that a genuine faith response must be to the good news of the kingdom, not to the spectacular nature of healing.

Ervin spends considerable time distinguishing between the healing by Jesus and his disciples as a *sign* of the in-breaking of the messianic kingdom and more contemporary healing as a *gift* of the Spirit for the contemporary Christian church. He supports this *gift* aspect of contemporary healing by an exegesis of a few verses in 1 Cor 12. His exegesis is weakened by his assertion that the gift of healing is to be differentiated from all the other *pneumatika* ("spirituals"). The point he wants to make is that the term *charismata* ("gifts") applies quite uniquely to healing and is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit. Thus it is "not bestowed upon 'gifted' individuals to be exercised at their discretion." (29). But this statement makes unclear the role of humans in the process and how they serve as agents through whom the Spirit often works.

The book is comprised of fourteen chapters, not all of which bear directly on healing. For example, chapter 12 is an excursus on the importance of the tongues phenomenon in Luke-Acts. One is hard-pressed to see just how it is related to the larger issue of healing. Also, chapter 13 deals with the nature of Jesus' baptism by the Spirit and seems to have only the most tenuous connection to the issue of healing. In his final chapter, Ervin makes clear his burden for contemporary healing. He asserts that, at Pentecost, the disciples were baptized/anoined to preach the gospel and to heal the sick. Healing was the sign that authenticated the message they preached. He then adds that the preaching and the healing "were and still are an indivisible unity" (105). Overall, *Healing* is a helpful book that emphasizes a gift of the Spirit that, in recent times, has received little attention.

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Friedmann, Daniel. *To Kill and Take Possession: Law, Morality, and Society in Biblical Stories*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002. 342 pp. Hardcover, \$29.95.

Originally published in Hebrew as *To Kill and Inherit* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 2000), this volume was on the bestseller list of the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, for ten weeks. Author Daniel Friedmann, a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, is Danielle Rubinstein Professor of Comparative Private Law and former Dean of the Law School of Tel-Aviv University. He has been Visiting Professor at Harvard University Law School, the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Queen Mary College, and the University of London. In addition to extensive publications in the legal field in Israel, England, and the United States, he has received a number of prizes in law, including the prestigious Israel Prize.

The purpose of this book is to explore the legal, moral, and political aspects of the best-known stories of Scripture, particularly those of the Hebrew

Bible. The author does not discuss the philological aspects of the text or its various literary genres. Instead, he draws analogies between biblical chronicles and later historical events or legal cases, comparing these stories with illustrations from mythology and literature.

The book is divided into three major sections. Part 1 deals with concepts of legal and moral responsibility. The author analyzes stories such as Adam and Eve, David and Goliath, and Samson, in order to observe the methods of investigation utilized and the judgments meted out to wrong-doers. Friedmann concludes that there has been a progressive movement from primitive concepts of "(in)justice" in biblical times to the more just principles of modern jurisprudence.

Part 2 deals primarily with the legitimacy of David's kingship. In discussing the legal rule of succession, Friedmann proposes that Saul was appointed king by God, while David was actually a usurper of the kingdom.

The third section deals with family and matrimonial concerns, including polygamy, surrogacy, incest, adultery, rape, divorce, and interfaith marriages. Again, the author argues that the biblical concepts of morality were less than ideal, while subsequent postbiblical views moved toward an enlightened and improved morality.

Throughout the volume, Friedmann compares and contrasts his understanding of biblical narratives with ancient Jewish interpretations (as in the Babylonian Talmud and the Mishnah), Herodotus, Josephus, Philo, Tacitus, and perspectives from ancient and modern literature (such as Sophocles and Shakespeare), as well as English and American law. These comparisons are clearly footnoted and are helpful to the reader desiring to do further research in this area.

To Kill and Take Possession is an easy-to-read volume that provides fascinating and unique perspectives on many well-known Bible chronicles. The numerous reference and explanatory footnotes make for interesting further reading, as they supply the reader with the context for some of the author's conclusions.

Friedmann demonstrates a sweeping knowledge of biblical stories, observing similarities and differences and demonstrating an ability to astutely integrate various pericopes.

At times, the author does admit that there are other ways to understand the Bible stories, taking into account several modern works related to the issues he addresses. Unfortunately, he has not considered the doctoral dissertation by O. Horn Prouser, "The Phenomenology of the Lie in Biblical Narrative" (Ph.D. dissertation, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1991), which challenges certain critical conclusions of his study in relation to truth-telling. Likewise, while he does reference many sources, he fails to take into account significant studies related to biblical marital concerns, such as Raphael Patai, *Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), and Donald M. Leggett, *The Levirate and Goel Institutions in the Old Testament* (Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack, 1974).

From the perspective of ethical theory, it is clear that Friedmann reads Bible stories prescriptively rather than descriptively. He, thus, proposes

perspectives on morality that stand in sharp contrast with those whose moral beliefs are based on propositional scriptural commands. He also misapplies the natural results of certain actions as being supposedly divinely authorized activities. Furthermore, adopting an evolutionary perspective on biblical morality, his work promotes a somewhat relativistic view of morality.

Moreover, a failure to carefully consider the context, language, and grammar of the Hebrew text has resulted in certain unwarranted assumptions with concomitant deductions. For example, Friedmann alleges that Jephthah vowed that "he would sacrifice the first person to emerge from his house" (135), and thus claims that human sacrifice was an acceptable practice in ancient Israel. However, the substantival masculine singular participle *hayyôšê* is used elsewhere of inanimate objects (e.g., desert [Num 21:13], tower [Neh 3:25], word [Num 32:24]), or of living objects such as seed [Deut 14:22] or son [2 Chron 6:9]). In every case, the context must determine the meaning. The great majority of English Bible translations (e.g., ASV, ESV, KJV, NASB, NCV, NEB, NIV, as well as Jewish versions such as CJB, JPS, TNK) render this participle as essentially "whatever comes out," and thus do not support Friedmann's conclusion that "the language of the vow already indicated readiness to commit human sacrifice" (135). Then, too, in his discussion on the penalty for adultery, the author alleges that the levirate law "requires a man to marry his deceased brother's widow, if he died childless" (214). A careful reading of the entire stipulation in Deut 25:5-10 reveals that while the first part of the law does call upon the brother-in-law to marry the widow, the last part explains the formal steps to be taken in case he declines to marry his deceased brother's wife. Interestingly, after categorically declaring that, "if a man died childless, his brother had to marry the widow" (253), Friedmann reluctantly acknowledges that "the law, as it appears in the Torah, is not absolute" (253). Such wobbling between possible interpretations further weakens the appeal of this book for the serious student of Scripture.

In addition, there are times when Friedmann's interpretation of the Bible stands in direct tension with the specifically stated facts of the narratives themselves, as for example his referring to the prophets of Baal as "prophets of the true God" (42), that in Eden "the serpent did not lie" (122), and that "punishment was meted out not only to Korah but to all his household" (130).

Besides directly challenging the veracity of the biblical accounts (e.g., 151, 154, 160, 260), perhaps one of the strongest deficiencies of this work is the author's extensive dependence upon unwarranted assumptions and unfounded speculations, from which he then draws conclusions critical to the central thrust of his basic arguments (e.g., 77-79, 131-132, 149-156, 201-206). The author's method leads him to deduce that there are "contrary instructions in the Bible" (132).

This volume, while filled with many novel interpretations of traditional biblical narratives, provides interesting insights on controversial contemporary issues. Using a plethora of resources—both ancient and modern—from various

parts of the world, Friedmann's study reveals intriguing parallels and contrasts regarding several biblical stories.

However, due to the lack of careful linguistic and grammatical research, a somewhat biased selection of Bible stories, a repeated negating of the actual scriptural narratives, interpretations directly contrary to clearly stated pericopes, a rather speculative application of the moral lessons to be learned from biblical chronicles, and an inordinate amount of unsupported assumptions, this book will be found somewhat deficient by the serious biblical scholar who believes in the divine inspiration of these Scriptures.

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Green, Gene L. *The Letters to the Thessalonians*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. xl + 400 pp. Hardcover, \$42.00.

The Pillar commentary series aspires to bring together "rigorous exegesis and exposition, with an eye alert both to biblical theology and the contemporary relevance of the Bible" (xi). Gene L. Green's exegetical and theological analysis of the Thessalonian correspondence admirably succeeds in living up to such an aim. The author is particularly concerned with the Greco-Roman background of the city of Thessalonica, desiring to read 1 and 2 Thessalonians "in light of relevant materials from the city and world of that era in order to help us better understand the impact of the gospel of Christ on its first readers" (xiii). There is, thus, a lengthy introductory section, which gives excellent sketches of the physical and social world of Thessalonica. These "background" sections are followed by the more traditional sections of commentaries: the manner in which the gospel was received by the Thessalonians, the authorship, order, and structure of the letters.

Green begins by noting the importance of the geographic location of the city of Thessalonica. Having the best Aegean port along the great military road "via Egnatia," Thessalonica was a strategically important city. Its great success "was due in grand part to the union of land and sea, road and port, which facilitated commerce between Macedonia and the entire Roman Empire" (6). Paul's decision to evangelize Thessalonica was doubtless influenced by its strategic advantages. A historical outline of Macedonian history—from the Macedonian kingdom of Alexander the Great to the province's incorporation into the Roman Empire in the first century A.D.—gives one a picture of how Macedonia's history left a deep imprint upon the political, economic, and religious life of the Thessalonica of the early church.

Thessalonica was governed by a college of five or six "city authorities" (politarchs), who were "the chief executive and administrative officials of the city, and as such they had the power to convoke the assembly of citizens and to put their seal on decrees and assure that they were executed" (22). As a result of Thessalonica's loyalty to the interests of the Roman people, the city