

The Folio

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ABMC, THE HEXAPLA PROJECT, AND THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

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It may be at a slower pace than technological or medical projects, but in time even biblical research requires updating. In the mid 1990's a group of scholars formulated a plan to do just that with the work of Frederick Field. In 1875, Dr. Field provided the scholarly world with the completed *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt*. This work showed, verse by verse, the known fragments of Origen's Hexapla. Hexapla (Greek for "sixfold") is the term for an edition of the Bible in six versions. Origen of Alexandria compiled six columns of the Old Testament, placing the following versions side by side: Hebrew, Hebrew transliterated into Greek characters, Aquila of Sinope, Symmachus the Ebionite, Septuagint, and Theodotion. Field collected data from then available collections and added findings from the Syro-Hexapla (the Syriac translation of Origen's main Septuagint text which included notations about Hexaplaric readings in the margins). Of major interest in the Hexapla tradition were the revisions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. Work on the Septuagint editions continued, resulting in new and updated sources of the manuscripts; additionally, new patristic sources became available. These contained thus far unknown materials and better readings from Origen's Hexapla. Today, 133 years later, the project to update Field's work is well under way, led by the Hexapla Institute. The Hexapla Institute is a co-

operative venture of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Leiden University, University of Oxford, and the Hexapla Project under the auspices of The International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies.

The goal of the Institute's Hexapla Project is to provide scholars with "A Field for the 21st Century." The primary goal of collecting materials that were included in Origen's work remains the same. However, since Field's time, some of the views on the nature of texts in question have changed. Also, some of Field's published fragments need to be revised and supplemented. Another major project on the Septuagint, the Göttingen edition, is coming to a completion. The volumes published in this series include—in the two apparatuses—the fragments of the Hexapla available at the time of each publication. Much of the work done by scholars for the Göttingen edition will be utilized in the Hexapla Project. Elements marking the dawn of the 21st century will be especially noted in the manner of presentation. The new edition will include indexes to the hexaplaric texts. The texts will be available in electronic form, which will make them "searchable." When available, the different fragments of each reading will be presented in one place and a discussion regarding the authenticity of the readings will be included. Where Field provided a suggestion of the Greek wording behind the Syriac translation of the Syro-Hexapla, the new version will include the original language (Syriac, Armenian, and other languages) along with a proposed retroversion into Greek. The version will also include the Masoretic text to aid the comparison of translation techniques of the revisors. Instead of one, a number of scholars will participate in the project. To date, twenty-two scholars have volunteered to take responsibility for a book or section of books of the Septuagint. Four slots are yet unassigned.

The Hexapla Project is led by an Executive Committee: Bas ter Haar Romeny (Leiden), Peter Gentry (Louisville), and Alison Salvesen (Oxford). The project is sponsored by, and carried out under

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The Newsletter of
The Ancient Biblical
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shedding light

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WHAT DID ISAIAH SEE?

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Isaiah's vision of G-d as presented in Isaiah 6 has proved to be both stimulating and enigmatic for centuries. The prophet's vision portrays G-d enthroned in the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple, with the divine robes or train filling the Temple, the thresholds of the Temple quaking, and the Seraphim flying about crying, "Holy, holy, holy is YHWH of Hosts; the whole earth is filled with (G-d's) glory!" The scene is well-known in both Jewish liturgy, where it serves as the Kedushah (Sanctification) segment of the Jewish worship service, and in Christian liturgy, where it serves as the Trisagion (Thrice Holy).

Interpreters have pondered the various dimensions of the representation of G-d's divine presence from antiquity through the present. An ancient Jewish mystical text dating back to the Talmudic period known as the *Shiur Qomah* (the Measure of the Body), took Isaiah 6 and other texts as a basis for attempting to describe and calculate the dimensions of the body of G-d as part of its efforts to probe the presence of G-d in the world. Others have attempted to identify the Seraphim, a term which means "flaming ones," with the snakes known in Hebrew as *sirâpîm* that afflicted Israel in the wilderness according to Numbers 21:6-9; Deuteronomy 8:15. Interpreters such as Joseph Blenkinsopp note that King Hezekiah, who ruled Judah during the latter years of Isaiah's career, removed a serpent-like idol known as *Nehushtan* from the Temple during his religious reforms (2 Kings 18:4). Others, such as Hans Wildberger, have looked to Egyptian representations of divine and human thrones, speculating that the portrayal of the Seraphim was based on representations of supernatural creatures that guarded the thrones of Egyptian gods and kings. In all cases, however, such attempts to explain the vision raise questions about the issue of divine representation, viz., is it possible to represent G-d with such tangible or finite images in ancient Judean or Jewish tradition? The many polemics against idolatry in the Bible indicate

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Image taken from Parc Abbey Bible; produced in Belgium, 1148.



that such representation is not possible.

Research into mystical and visionary experience has begun to make some advances in interpreting such visions. Stephen Katz, in his introduction to an influential volume of essays on mysticism in the world's religions, notes that mystics from throughout the world's religions tend to see what they already know from their own cultures and religious traditions. Cryer's study of the Mesopotamian *baru* priests, who served as a well-trained class of professional diviners in antiquity, indicates that the *baru* were known for reading smoke patterns from incense altars, the entrails of sacrificial animals, and the movements of stars and other heavenly bodies as part of their efforts to envision the presence and intentions of the gods and to communicate that knowledge to the broader human world. We may note Balaam ben Beor, a figure known from Numbers 22-24 and from an eighth-century inscription at Deir Alla across the Jordan River from Israel, fits the model of the typical *baru* priest insofar as he delivers oracles concerning Israel based on his reading of the smoke patterns of his seven sacrificial altars as well as his view of Israel below. His vision of Israel's fair tents, which he describes as "palm groves that stretch out like gardens beside a river,

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MANUSCRIPTS 101: NASH PAPYRUS

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Before the discovery in 1947 of the first Hebrew scrolls that would later comprise the Dead Sea Scrolls collection, the earliest known Hebrew biblical text was the Nash Papyrus, dated to the second or first century BCE. In fact, when Dr. John Trever, the first scholar to view and photograph the initial scrolls from Qumran, saw the handwriting of those scrolls, he based his assessment of its antiquity on a comparison with the Nash Papyrus. Yet, ironically, the Nash Papyrus has been overlooked by the sixty years of scholarly discussion about the scrolls from the Judean desert.

The papyrus was obtained by W. L. Nash in Egypt around the turn of the last century and presented to Cambridge University Library, its current home. Its scholarly debut occurred in 1903 in an article by S. A. Cooke in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*. He dated the four fragments of the papyrus conservatively to the second century CE. However, in 1937, William F. Albright published an article on the papyrus dating it to the Maccabean period (second century BCE), based on paleography and epigraphy.

The papyrus contains twenty-four lines of text; letters are missing at both the beginning and end of each line. The content of the papyrus is one of the most famous passages in the Hebrew Bible—the Ten Commandments. Yet, the intriguing version in the papyrus sometimes matches the wording of the commandments as found in Exodus 20 and sometimes the wording as found in Deuteronomy 5. It also omits reference to Egypt as a “house of bondage”—found in both biblical versions, which is noteworthy given the papyrus’s location in Egypt.

In addition, a biblical prayer called the *Shema*, which begins in Deuteronomy 6:4, follows the commandments on the papyrus. This has led some scholars to posit that it is part of a liturgical document used for corporate worship. Whether a biblical text or a liturgical one, the text provides

evidence that a slightly different version of the Ten Commandments circulated in Egypt during the centuries before the Common Era. This should not be too strange a concept, since even the final biblical text contains two differing versions of these important injunctions.

For more information: William F. Albright, “A Biblical Fragment from the Maccabean Age: The Nash Papyrus,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 56 (1937): 145-176.



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This is the third installment in an on-going series entitled “Manuscripts 101.” Each edition of The Folio will provide an in-depth look at a particular biblical manuscript, covering such topics as content, dating, and relevance to the field of biblical scholarship.

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the auspices of, the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies.

In order to complete their respective assignments, participating scholars will need to consult original manuscripts. There are a number of ways to obtain microfilm of such manuscripts. The Board of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center has agreed to work in partnership with the Hexapla Project and help with the provision of needed manuscript information for any of the contributors of the Hexapla Project. I have been assigned as the liaison to help facilitate this process. Tyler Mayfield has been very helpful in acquiring film in support of the Hexapla Project.

It is my privilege to be assigned the Book of the Twelve (also known as “Minor Prophets”) for the Hexapla Project. There are several reasons for this decision. I wrote my dissertation about the Peshitta and Syro-Hexapla translations of two chapters of the book of Amos. I do have a special interest in the Syro-Hexapla’s main text as well as the notations in the margin pertaining to the Hexapla.

It is my good fortune that Joseph Ziegler produced a volume for the Göttingen project (*Duodecim prophetic, Septuagint Vetus Testamentum Graecum*, volume 13, published in Göttingen, 1984). Ziegler has provided the known Hexapla readings in the indexes along with a list of manuscripts from which they were derived. This catalog includes specific Hexaplaric manuscripts (the Syro-Hexapla and Codex Marchalianus) and commentaries by Greek Church Fathers (such as Cyril, Basilus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, etc.). In the course of my work, I will also consult indirect evidence that may be found in Origen and Eusebius. The Latin translations of Jerome may contain Hexaplaric materials. Thanks to Tyler’s effort in obtaining a copy of the manuscript for the ABMC, I will also carefully search Codex Barberini gr. 548 for any Hexaplaric notations.

Like all those who have studied Field’s work, I am duly impressed with the retroversions from Syriac to Greek with which he broadened the field of Hexapla studies. However, with Weitzman (“Reliability of the Retroversion of the Three from the Syro-Hexapla: A Pilot Study in Hosea” in A. Salvesen, ed., *Origen’s Hexapla and Fragments*, Tübingen, 1998) I believe that a review of Field’s retroversion work is in order. An index of the Syriac words used in the main text of the Syro-Hexapla along with the underlying Greek

originals from which they were translated will provide a useful tool. It will help to evaluate the feasibility of Field’s retroversions and to create new ones based on updated Hexaplaric information. In an era of computer-aided research it should be possible to accomplish such a task. I myself have started to compile data into a concordance, building on Weitzman’s work in Hosea, but expanding it to include the remainder of the Book of Twelve. The need for an electronic critical edition of the Syro-Hexapla, its main text and marginal notes, would be of tremendous help. I hope that such a project will at some point be incorporated as part of the Hexapla Project. Hopefully, a benefactor with special interest in the thus far minimally studied Syro-Hexapla will come forward.

A collaborative project in which scholars can benefit from each other’s work in the various parts of the Septuagint, along with the electronic format of the work, truly make the Hexapla Project a 21st century endeavor. I consider myself privileged to be part of it.



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PUBLICATIONS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Marvin A. Sweeney
Chief Executive Officer,
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Publications

Books:

Reading the Hebrew Bible after the Shoah: Engaging Holocaust Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), pp. xiii + 287.

Articles:

“Form Criticism,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Wisdom Poetry, and Writings* (ed., T. Longman III and Peter Enns; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 227-241.

“Lamentation,” in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (ed., K. D. Sakenfeld et al; Nashville: Abingdon, 2008).

“Legend,” in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (ed., K. D. Sakenfeld et al; Nashville: Abingdon, 2008).

Lectures and Activities

“The Portrayal of Assyria in the Books of Kings,” Society of Biblical Literature Pacific Coast Meeting, Pasadena, CA, March, 2008.

“Moses’ Conflict with G-d in the Wilderness,” Taus Lecture Series, Congregation Beth El, San Pedro, CA, 2008.

“The Book of Qoheleth,” 3 part mini-course, Congregation Har El, Palm Desert, CA, April 2008.

Academy for Jewish Religion, Los Angeles, CA
“Visionaries and Mystics,” Spring 2008.

“Samuel: Priest or Prophet?” Taus Lecture Series, Congregation Beth El, San Pedro, CA, September 8, 2008.

Panelist. Professor Helene Slessarev-Jamir Inaugural Lecture, Claremont School of Theology, September 18, 2008.

Panelist. Neuroscience and Religious Practice Conference, Claremont School of Theology, October 13, 2008.

“Samuel’s Institutional Identity in the Deuteronomistic History,” Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Boston, MA, November 22-25, 2008.

Respondent, Jeremiah Group, Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Boston, MA, November 22-25, 2008.

Academy for Jewish Religion, Los Angeles, CA
“The David Narratives,” Fall 2008.

Academy for Jewish Religion, Los Angeles, CA
“The World of the Bible,” Fall 2008.

“Song of Songs,” 3 part mini-course, Congregation Har El, Palm Desert, CA, January 2009.



James A. Sanders
Professor Emeritus,
Claremont School of
Theology/Claremont
Graduate University



Publications

“Foreword,” *Qumran Studies: New Approaches, New Questions*, edited by Michael Thomas Davis and Brent A. Strawn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) ix-xi.

Lectures and Activities

Baccalaureate Sermon. St. Francis Episcopal Church. Palos Verdes Estates. June 8, 2008.

Teaching First Testament introduction for the Episcopal Theological Seminary at Claremont.

Active with Shepherd University in downtown Los Angeles.



Petra Verwijs
Adjunct Professor,
Claremont Graduate
University
Research Fellow,
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Publications

The Peshitta and Syro-Hexapla Translations of Amos 1:3-2:16. Brill Publishers, Forthcoming 2009.

This book presents the result of a detailed study about the translation techniques used by two Syriac translations of Amos 1:3-2:16. The Peshitta is the translation from a Hebrew original and the Syro-Hexapla from a Greek version. The book evaluates the unique characteristics of both through a detailed study of vocabulary and grammar. In the process information about the

communities that first received these texts is uncovered. Previous scholarship has addressed issues of translation technique for the Peshitta of the Dodekapropheton, of which Amos 1:3-2:16 is a part. This is the first detailed study of any part of the Dodekapropheton of the Syro-Hexapla.



Tyler Mayfield
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Publications

“The Accounts of Deborah (Judges 4-5) in Recent Research” forthcoming in *Currents in Biblical Research*.

“Deborah,” “Jeremiah,” “Jeremiah, Book of,” “Samson” in *Dictionary of the Bible and Western Culture: A Handbook for Students* eds. Michael Gilmour and Mary Ann Beavis. Baylor University Press, forthcoming.

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like aloes planted by YHWH, like cedars beside a river, etc.," (Num 24:5-6) take up the vision of the Jordan River in antiquity with its bounteous tree and plant life growing beside the river as a metaphor for Jacob's dwellings. Anyone could have seen such a scene when looking down from the height on the Jordan River below, but a *baru* priest such as Balaam would view the scene as a vision from G-d.

When we return to Isaiah and recognize that the interior of the Jerusalem temple was the setting for his vision in Isaiah 6, the various elements of the vision become clear. Looking into the Temple from the vantage points of the columns Jachin and Boaz that stood at the entrance to the Temple (where the king would normally stand during the Temple liturgy; 2 Kgs 11:14; 23:3), one would see the ten incense burners and the ten Menorahs or Temple lamp stands, each with seven branches, in the Great Hall of the Temple before the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant stood. When the heavy doors of the Temple were opened at the outset of the liturgy, the threshold of the Temple would rumble and shake as the doorposts turned in the sockets of the threshold that housed them. Upon opening the doors, the heavy smoke from ten incense burners filling the Temple with their smoke would suggest the robes or train of YHWH filling the Temple. The ten Menorahs, each with seven branches and a burning lamp for each branch, would suggest the flickering images of the Seraphim flying back and forth before the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies of the Temple,

which is well-known in biblical texts as a representation of YHWH's throne (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; Isa 66:1). The voices of the Temple choir singing, "Holy, holy, holy is YHWH of Hosts; the whole earth is filled with (G-d's) glory," would serve as the voices of the Seraphim as Isaiah looked on. Had we been there, we would have seen the images just described; Isaiah the prophet, however, sees a vision of YHWH enthroned in the Temple with the Seraphim flying about.

Isaiah's vision of divine holiness in the Temple is well worth remembering when reading biblical vision accounts, such as Amos 7-9; Jeremiah 1; 24; Ezekiel 1-11; 40-48; Zechariah 1-6 and others, insofar as they point to the capacities of ancient prophets to see the sacred in the world, when the rest of us would only see the mundane.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39* (Anchor Bible 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000).

Frederick Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment* (JSOT Supplements 142; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

Steven T. Katz, editor, *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39, with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (FOTL 16; Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1996).

Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12* (Continental Commentaries; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

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