

One of the most fruitful areas for the study of the Old Testament against its Ancient Near Eastern background is the prophecy concerning Tyre in Ezekiel 26-28. These chapters are particularly rich in trade terminology, the principle key to which is, of course, Akkadian, which had been the language of world trade down to the second half of the eighth century B.C.E. Mythological references in this prophecy have been greatly illuminated by reference to Phoenecian artifacts illustrative of the same motifs.¹ As important as Akkadian tribute lists or Sidonian sculptures may be for our understanding of Ezekiel 26-28, one must not ignore the fact that these chapters are first and foremost part of biblical Hebrew poetry. Properly to assess the peculiar influences on Ezekiel's life and thought, one must, therefore, examine his work using the methods that would be applied to any other biblical book.

It is perhaps in this sense that H. J. van Dijk's use of these methods, namely inner biblical material and cognate languages, seems to warrant the author's subtitle "A New Approach." This study makes use of Ugaritic, not to shed light on the mythological material, but to illuminate the clearly Israelite material. Van Dijk's recourse to Ugaritic is based on the assumption taken over from Dahood, "the language of Caanan became the language of the Hebrews."²

¹ See R. D. Barnett, "Ezekiel and Tyre," Eretz Israel 9 (1969), pp. 6-14.

² Mitchell Dahood, "Ugaritic Studies and the Bible," Gregorianum 43 (1962), p. 57.

Aside from the fact that many of van Dijk's proofs from Ugaritic are based on highly questionable interpretations of the Ugaritic evidence, one must point out that practically all of van Dijk's reinterpretations have been taken over from Dahood and cannot, therefore, purport to constitute "A New Approach."

One feels compelled to take issue with van Dijk's methodology for two additional reasons. Firstly, he includes in the body of the text much extraneous material, which has nothing to do with Ezekiel 26-28 or with its vocabulary and which should have been relegated to the footnotes. Secondly, despite the author's claim to the contrary in his preface, no logical principle can be discerned in van Dijk's choice of material in connection with Ezekiel 26-28. A concise presentation of all the latest and most probable findings concerning Ezekiel 26-28 is indeed a desideratum. Moreover, a survey of all the material of the Dahood school on these chapters is also not without value. Van Dijk's work is neither. It is instead a collection of thoughts on Ezekiel 26-28 combined with other issues of biblical and Ugaritic philology brought in by free association.

The most serious defects in van Dijk's work are his use of questionable interpretations of Ugaritic passages as the basis for the reinterpretation of biblical Hebrew and his use of arguments based on misquotation of other authorities. Space permits us to cite only one example of each of these.

Typical of van Dijk's use of uncertain interpretations of Ugaritic as a key to biblical exegesis is his rendering of the phrase דלתות העמים in Ezekiel 26:2. This expression, usually translated "the gates of the peoples," is interpreted by van Dijk "the gates of the city" (p. 1f.). Assuming that ע means "fortress, city," van Dijk seeks to reinterpret such passages as Isaiah 40:1-2, 52:9 on the basis of synonymous parallelism (p.8). Thus van Dijk renders Isaiah 40:1-2, "Comfort, comfort my city, says your God, speak tenderly to Jerusalem," and he translates 52:9b "for Yahweh has comforted his city, he has redeemed Jerusalem." Such a reinterpretation of the basis of strict synonymous parallelism ignores Deutero-Isaiah's constant juxtaposition of the liberation of the exiles and the rebuilding of Jerusalem as inseparable elements of the divine plan for the future. This is particularly evident in Isaiah 61 and in 62:10-12. The justification for van Dijk's thesis is based on the alleged occurrence of the word ע "fortress, city" in UT 2063:11-12 cbdk blwsnd /?/ bšr Cm mlk "Thy servant in Lawasanda fortified his positions with the king." This

translation, suggested by M. Astour, American Journal of Archaeology 69 (1965), p. 257, is rejected by van Dijk who renders for Ugaritic ybsr Cm "fortified the fortress" (p.10). Van Dijk's proof is the use of the parallel עם // מנזר in Hosea 10:14, which he translates "And the tumult of war will arise against your fortress, and all your towers will be destroyed" (p. 5). This verse, unfortunately, is not really an example of synonymous parallelism. If it were, we should have to understand קם "arise" as the A-word for יושר "destroyed" in the second hemistich. As this is clearly not the case, van Dijk's interpretation of UT 2063 lacks proof. Thus, we must question van Dijk's use of the Ugaritic to suggest a reinterpretation of Ezekiel 26:2.

A clear example of van Dijk's arguments based on misquotation is his discussion of the Hebrew word על usually rendered "uncircumcised" but which van Dijk translates "castrated." Van Dijk bases his interpretation on the idea that "the word 'foreskin' as is known from Egyptian sources must be an euphemism for 'phallus'" (p. 113). Van Dijk's sources for the Egyptian material and its interpretation are The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, II, (Chicago, 1915), p. 1131b, and Henry Preserved Smith, The Books of Samuel ICC (Edinburgh, 1904), p. 174 (p. 113, n. 43). The latter reference, however, gives no hint whatsoever of the rendering "castrated." What the encyclopaedia entry in fact says is not that in Egyptian "foreskin" is a euphemism for "phallus" but that the expression "to bring back karnatha" found in certain Egyptian texts may be compared to the notion of bringing a booty consisting of foreskins in I Samuel 18:25. This karnatha, which is a loan from Aramaic "crowns" refers, perhaps, to "foreskins" as it is accompanied by the determinative sign for "phallus." This last fact vitiates van Dijk's contention that karnatha may have been a euphemism for phallus. The whole point of the encyclopedia article is that "the capture of foreskins" served as a metaphor for annihilation or victory in both I Samuel 18:25 and in Egyptian sources.

It does not follow from this, however, that על means "castrated" anywhere in the Hebrew Bible. In all cases where the meaning is clear from the context, the word denotes "uncircumcised" (e.g., Genesis 17:14; Joshua 5:7) and by extension "gentiles" (II Samuel 1:20). It is true, of course, that in Ezekiel 28:10 the meaning "uncircumcised" is, in van Dijk's words "puzzling," even as it seems to have been for Rashi and Kimchi (cf. ad. loc.). Thus van Dijk rightly remarks, "Conceivably the death of an uncircumcised was considered ignominious by the Tyrians, but if so they would prevent it by the practice of circumcision, and if not they would not care to die uncircumcised, and the

prospect of dying so would not impress them. But there is a good possibility that the Tyrians practiced circumcision as the Egyptians, Edomites, Ammonites and Moabites did according to Jer. 9:25" (p. 113).

The solution to this difficulty is not to be found by inventing a meaning of ערלים which is altogether unsupported nor to assume a semantic development nowhere paralleled. In view of the abundance of hapaxlegomena of undisputable Akkadian origin in the writings of Ezekiel, one is inclined to accept as far more reasonable the suggestion that the Akkadian arallû "netherworld" (e.g., Gilg. IX:115) lies behind Ezekiel 32:32 והושב בתוך ערלים אה חללי חרב which should, therefore, be rendered "and he shall be laid to rest in the netherworld with those slain by the sword."³ Unfortunately, this interpretation does not clear up all the usages of the expression in Ezekiel, and with it Ezekiel 28:10 remains a puzzle.

In any case, one must reject van Dijk's attempt to avoid emendation of the text by merely emending the Hebrew lexicon, sometimes by reference to Ugaritic, sometimes by references to Ugaritic meanings, which are themselves the product of eisegesis, and in the last case by pure imagination supported by misquotation. If pure fancy is to replace the study of Hebrew grammar in this "New Approach," we prefer almost any of the older approaches.

³ Cf. O. Eissfeldt in Studies in O.T. Prophecy (ed. H. H. Rowley; New York, 1950), p. 74, and the literature cited there.