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**"Review of *Mesopotamian Ritual-prayers of Hand-lifting*"
(Akkadian *Šuillas*): An Investigation in Light of the Idiomatic
Meaning of the Rubric"**

Dale Launderville OSB

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, dlaunderville@csbsju.edu

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The epilogue moves from the higher-critical examination in the body of the book to theological reflection. As a Jew living in the modern state of Israel, F. argues that the variety of perspectives on Israel's relationship to the land in the Hebrew Bible can be of use in developing what he calls "a contemporary Jewish theology that promotes humanistic values within a framework of faith" (p. 384). The rabbis developed ways of mitigating the power of morally troubling texts, and such an active approach to the interpretive task can help in developing a more inclusive theology of people and land today. In addition, he hopes that the idea of Israel's moral greatness evident in Deut 4:6-9 can be a model for the vocation of the modern state of Israel.

For those familiar with higher-critical approaches to the Bible, F.'s method will not provide any surprises. They will find a well-written and broad-ranging work that offers a number of compelling textual reconstructions and a sensitivity to sociohistorical contexts from which the texts come. My main criticism—which is relatively minor—is that F., though aware of problems with the terms "Israel," "Israelite," and "Judean," does not make a concerted effort to carry these through the book. He opts instead for "Israel" and "Israelite" throughout, even though the postexilic origin of many of the texts suggests a Judean provenance. The distinction is important for theological reflection because it qualifies the move from ancient Israel to ethical and moral relevance for Jews. Beyond this, F. should be congratulated for his book, which brings a wealth of knowledge—including much interaction with Hebrew-language scholarship—to bear on the pressing matters of national and religious tolerance.

Craig W. Tyson, D'Youville College, Buffalo, NY 14201

CHRISTOPHER G. FRECHETTE, *Mesopotamian Ritual-Prayers of "Hand-Lifting" (Akkadian Šuilla): An Investigation of Function in Light of the Idiomatic Meaning of the Rubric (AOAT 379; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012)*. Pp. xxii + 316. €78.

This book is a substantial revision of the author's dissertation (Th.D., Harvard Divinity School) completed in 2005 under the direction of Gary Anderson and Paul-Alain Beaulieu. Frechette notes that the primary audience for this work is Assyriologists and those with a working knowledge of Akkadian. But students of the Bible will find F.'s investigation of communicative gesture within a reconstructed liturgical ritual informative for analogous aspects of the biblical psalms and their implications for biblical theology.

Šuilla (ŠU.ĪL.LA₂), "hand-lifting," has been interpreted as both a gesture and a prayer. F. argues on the basis of a careful reading of the texts and iconographical data that šuilla refers to a gesture of lifting one hand—as in a modern military salute—by which a subordinate greets a high-ranking deity in order to be reconciled with the divine world. The relationship is asymmetrical in terms of status but reciprocal in terms of the obligation of both parties to act. In agreement with Werner R. Mayer (*Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen Gebetsbeschwörungen* [Studia Pohl, Series maior 5; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1976]), F. argues against Walter Kunstmann (*Die babylonische Gebetsbeschwörung* [Leipziger semitische Studien n.F. 2; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1932]), who extends the

meaning of *šulla* beyond a ritual gesture to that of a general term for an incantation prayer. According to F., such an extended meaning dilutes the specific difference of the *šulla* rubric as signaling a ritual action preceding the actual voicing of the incantational prayer.

The *šulla* rubric is a subscript to a prayer text. The prayer texts carrying the *šulla* rubric have been grouped by Assyriologists into three families: (1) Emesal *šullas* of the cult singer (*kalū*) in public processional rituals, (2) the *mīspīšullas* of the exorcist (*āšipu*) in the ritual of inducting cult statues, and (3) the “Akkadian” *šullas* of the exorcist (*āšipu*) for various apotropaic rituals for individuals. The third category, consisting of 110 Akkadian prayers in more than three hundred exemplars, is the primary corpus for F.’s study.

In his first three chapters, F. criticizes previous interpretations of the *šulla* rubric and notes how, prior to the 1970s, inadequate form-critical understandings of the relationship of literary form and ritual function precluded sufficient attention to the particularities of the structure and function of the *šulla* rubric. The challenge before F. is to recreate a system of rubrics on the basis of clues in the *šulla* texts within which to contextualize the *šulla* rubric. F. builds on the principle guiding Claus Ambos’s *Der König im Gefängnis und das Neujahrsfest im Herbst: Mechanismen der Legitimation des babylonischen Herrschers im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr. und ihre Geschichte* [Habilitationsschrift, Heidelberg, 2009]) reconstruction of the ritual procedure of the *būsalā? mē* (“house of sprinkling”) in which the sprinkling of the king with water to purify him for the new year is the central moment of the ritual: a part defines the whole. Analogously with *šullas*, the central moment of the ritual is the lifting of the hand by a subordinate to a high-ranking deity—a ritual gesture that defines the subsequent words of prayer as above all aiming at reconciliation with the divine world.

Frchette tests his definition of the *šulla* rubric on the texts of the third category, the family of ritual procedures described in the Akkadian prayers bearing the *šulla* rubric. He contends that some of these prayers do not explicitly have the *šulla* rubric but most likely belonged in this family of *šulla* ritual procedures. That is, they do not state the *šulla* rubric because it was self-evident. As liturgically persuasive as F.’s rationale here is, this point about an implied *šulla* rubric points to the slipperiness of the terrain of re-creating a system of ritual from texts presupposing the reader’s acquaintance with the *šulla* ritual. F. notes that his approach has been “to gather evidence of tendencies and patterns of various sorts and to synthesize this data into a profile of this family of ritual procedures” (p. 227). As F. tests and gathers his evidence, he verbally sorts through options and regularly provides internal summaries. Yet F.’s careful testing of the available data give the reader the impression that he is playing variations on a common theme (viz., the gesture of the salute) with the result that the linear development of his argument is blurred at times by his back-and-forth elaboration of what he presents as converging tendencies in the data.

In his conclusion, F. draws out significant theological implications of his narrower definition of the *šulla* rubric. The evil threatening an individual Mesopotamian was not so much demonic forces as the ruptured relationship of the individual with high-ranking deities. F. notes that this fundamental relationship with the divine sphere was addressed directly by the hand-lifting gesture in which the subordinate saluted the superior in an act of obedient submission.

This carefully argued work will alert scholars to the ways in which a system of rubrics can be recovered from a corpus of texts so that the structure and function of a rubric can be more closely defined, which in turn has important implications for understanding how

prayer was expected to influence the divine-human relationship. The volume concludes with three appendixes, a bibliography, and indexes of topics, texts, and authors.

*Dale Lauderville, O.S.B., St. John's University School of Theology/Seminary,
Collegeville, MN 56321*

VOLKMAR FRITZ, *The Emergence of Israel in the Twelfth and Eleventh Centuries B.C.E.* (trans. James W. Barker; SBL Biblical Encyclopedia 2; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011). Pp. xviii + 268. Paper \$32.95.

The admission of ignorance is the beginning of knowledge, a professor instilled in me long ago. If that be true, Fritz has accumulated a mass of knowledge, for he constantly points to areas where scholars remain ignorant. Where the Bible or tradition history or archaeology appears to provide strong evidence about life in the land acquisition or settlement period, F. quickly uses his adeptness at literary criticism, form criticism, tradition history, or archaeological research to eliminate the apparent evidence from consideration.

Fritz describes current theories and then sets out his own assumptions: (1) Extra-biblical sources outside the Amarna letters are sparse. (2) The Bible is ruled out as a historical source, Joshua representing a theological construction of the Deuteronomist. A critical version of the Song of Deborah shows ten tribes as the foundation of Israel. (3) Recent archaeological finds give real data that must be carefully assimilated into our store of knowledge and ignorance. (4) Sociology and ethnology open the way to new understandings of social relationships, especially nomadism, but application of the new theories to Israel remains arbitrary.

Fritz's work leaves him with an "original" version of the Song of Deborah (for him, Judg 5:12-17, 18b, 19-22, 24-30), a very productive monarchical period with few authentic traditions from earlier periods, a pre-priestly narrative of which we know very little, and the exilic Deuteronomistic History supplemented later and then joined to an even later Priestly work.

Fritz's central theme is the "land acquisition," that is, taking possession of the land with no other valid claim to it. Here the biblical picture is untenable. As a whole, the Deuteronomistic History outlined and shaped more than five centuries of history, creating the picture of "all Israel." F. finds eighteen sections where the Deuteronomistic Historian reformulated older traditions into a narrative about land. The Deuteronomist also created a chronology with no contradiction.

Fritz determines that Israel is not found in biblical texts prior to the monarchy and in outside texts only in the Merneptah Stele of 1208. By the early Iron Age, Canaan was covered with small settlements but had no large government or cultic buildings. The inhabitants farmed and raised livestock. Such residents were not immigrants because they basically carried on the Canaanite culture and had lived in the area previously with previous contact with the cities. The term *hapiru* discloses Egyptian adversaries living outside the towns until about 1200. The biblical term for "Hebrew" is not related here, for it stands for the Israelites or Hebrews as identified by foreigners, not by fellow Israelites.

The shortened Song of Deborah is located in the eleventh century, placing the battle between new settlers and the urban Canaanites. The tribes lived independent lives except

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