

מגילת קהלת



“Kohelet: The Human Witness”

Torah In Motion

ל' אב, ר"ח אלול, Thursday, August 20,

Mood or Emotion	Halachic Status	Genre	Attribution of Authorship	Holiday	
Confusion / Anxiety	Community-based tradition	Wisdom Literature/ Autobiography	King Solomon (~950 BCE)	Sukkot	קהלת
Joy	Blessing/ scroll/ public	Novella Form	Esther and Mordechai (~480 BCE)	Purim	אסתר
Love	No blessing/ tradition	Love Poetry/ Allegory	King Solomon (~950 BCE)	Pesach	שיר השירים
Redemption/ Honor	No blessing/ tradition	Novella Form	Samuel (~1000 BCE)	Shavuot	רות
Grief/ Sorrow	No mention in Talmud/ tradition/ disagreement about blessing	Lyric Poetry/ Eulogy	Jeremiah (~586 BCE)	Ninth of Av	איכה

בראשית

שמות

ויקרא

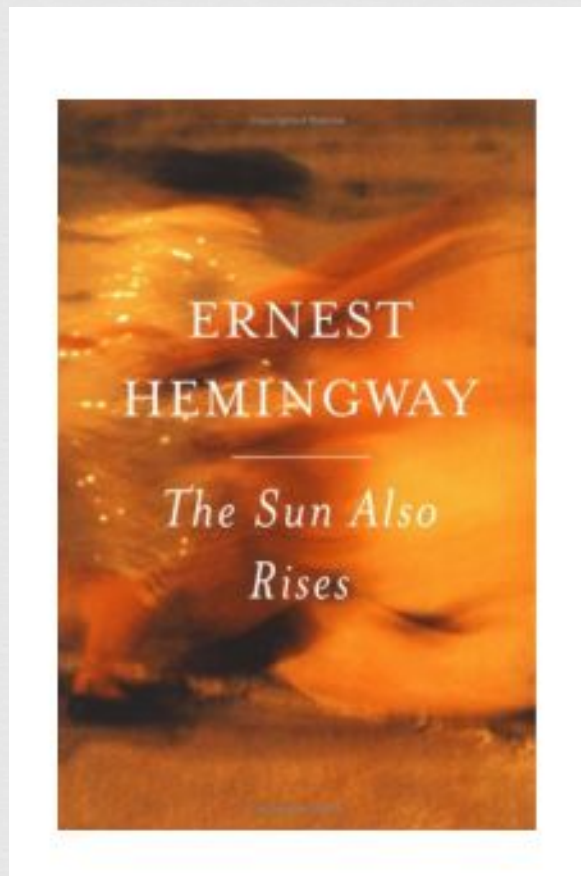
במדבר

דברים

Leningrad Codex - AD 1008

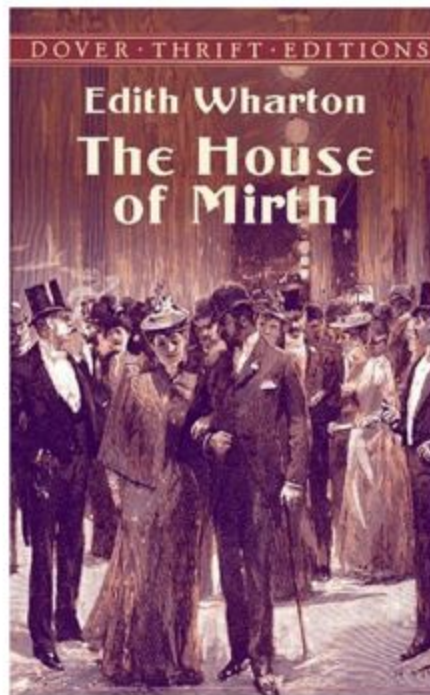
Oldest complete manuscript of Hebrew Bible (in Hebrew) using the masoretic text.





פרק א: ה) וְזָרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וּבָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְאֵל מְקוֹמוֹ שׁוֹאֵף זֹרַח הוּא שָׁם:

5. The sun rises and the sun also sets, and to its place it yearns and rises there.

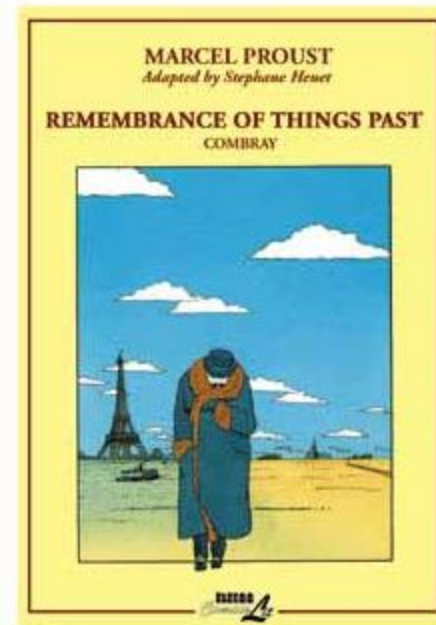


קהלת פרק ז'

ד) לֵב חֲכָמִים בְּבַיִת אֲכָל וְלֵב פְּסִילִים בְּבַיִת שְׂמֵחָה:

4. The heart of the wise is in a house of mourning, whereas the heart of the fools is in a house of mirth.

קהלת פרק א'
יא: אֵין זְכוֹרוֹן לְרֵאשִׁימִים וְגַם לְאַחֲרֵימִים שְׂיֵהִיו לֹא יִהְיֶה לָהֶם זְכוֹרוֹן עִם שְׂיֵהִיו לְאַחֲרֵימֵהוּ:



11. [But] there is no remembrance of former things past, neither will the later ones that will be have any remembrance among those that will be afterwards.

פרק א



א) דְּבַרֵי קֹהֵלֶת בֶּן־דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

The words of Koheleth son of David, king in Jerusalem.

ב) הִבֵּל הַבָּלִים אָמַר קֹהֵלֶת הִבֵּל הַבָּלִים הַכֹּל הִבֵּל:

Utter futility!—said Koheleth— Utter futility! All is futile!

יב) אֲנִי קֹהֵלֶת הָיִיתִי מֶלֶךְ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

I, Koheleth, was king in Jerusalem over Israel.

יג) וְנִתְּתִי אֶת לְבִי לְדְרוֹשׁ וְלִתְּוֹר בַּחֲכָמָה עַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם הוּא

עֵנִין רַע נִתֵּן אֱלֹהִים לְבָנֵי הָאָדָם לְעִנּוֹת בּוֹ

13. And I applied my heart to inquire and to search with wisdom all that was done under the heaven. It is a sore task that God has given to the sons of men with which to occupy themselves.

Aristotles Appeals:

#1

Pathos (Emotional) means persuading by appealing to the reader's emotions. These texts range from classic essays to contemporary advertisements and show how pathos, emotional appeals, are used to persuade. Language choice affects the audience's emotional response, and emotional appeal can effectively be used to enhance an argument.

"Better men than us have fought and died to preserve this great nation. Now is our turn to return the favor. For God and country, gentlemen!"

#2

Logos (Logical) means persuading by the use of reasoning. This technique is Aristotle's favorite and includes deductive and inductive reasoning. Logos (Greek for 'word') refers to the internal consistency of the message--the clarity of the claim, the logic of its reasons, and the effectiveness of its supporting evidence. The impact of logos on an audience is sometimes called the argument's logical appeal.

"The data is perfectly clear: this investment has consistently turned a profit year-over-year, even in spite of market declines in other areas."

Aristotles Appeals:

#3

Ethos (Credibility), or ethical appeal, means convincing by the character of the author. We tend to believe people whom we respect. One of the central problems of argumentation is to project an impression to the reader that you are someone worth listening to, in other words making yourself as author into an authority on the subject of the paper, as well as someone who is likable and worthy of respect.

“Our expertise in roofing contracting is evidenced not only by our 100 years in the business and our staff of qualified technicians, but in the decades of satisfied customers who have come to expect nothing but the best.”

“If his years as a soldier taught him anything, it’s that caution is the best policy in this sort of situation.”

Authorship

תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא בתרא דף טו/א

**ירמיה כתב ספרו וספר מלכים וקינות ... חזקיה וסיעתו כתבו (ימש"ק
סימן) ישעיה משלי שיר השירים וקהלת אנשי כנסת הגדולה כתבו
(קנז"ג סימן) יחזקאל ושנים עשר דניאל ומגילת אסתר עזרא כתב ספרו
ויחס של דברי הימים**

משלי פרק כה

א גם-אלה, משלי שלמה-- אשר העתיקו, אנשי חזקיה מלך-יהודה.

Ecclesiastes

Problem stated
1:1-3

All is vanity

Experiments made
1:4-12:12

Study of Science
1:4-11

Wisdom & philosophy
1:12-18

Pleasure
2:1-11

Materialism
2:12-26

Fatalism
3:1-15

Egoism
3:16-4:16

Religion
5:1-8

Wealth
5:9-6:12

Morality
7:1-12:12

Results of experiments
12:13-14

All things
under the sun are vanity

A right relationship with God,
through the way He has made,
brings abiding satisfaction

**Panoramic
View**

Canonicity

מסכת מגילה ז.

רבי מאיר אומר קהלת אינו מטמא את הידים ומחלוקת
בשיר השירים רבי יוסי אומר שיר השירים מטמא את
הידים ומחלוקת בקהלת רבי שמעון אומר קהלת מקולי
בית שמאי ומחומרי בית הלל אבל רות ושיר השירים
ואסתר מטמאין את הידים ...

מסכת שבת ל:

בקשו חכמים לגנוז ספר קהלת מפני שדבריו סותרין זה
את זה, ומפני מה לא גנזוהו - מפני שתחילתו דברי
תורה וסופו דברי תורה, תחילתו דברי תורה - דכתיב...
סופו דברי תורה - דכתיב...

THEOLOGICAL CONTRADICTIONS

1. WISDOM (1:18) and STUDY (12:12)

יח. פי ברב חכמה, רב-פעס; ויוסיף דעת, יוסיף מכאוב.

18 For in much wisdom is much vexation; and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow.

יב ויתר

מה

בשר. 12 מה, בני הזהר: עשות ספרים הרבה אין קץ, ולהג הרבה יגע

And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

2. CONNECTION BETWEEN HUMAN CONDUCT AND HUMAN FORTUNE (9:11,6:10)

יא

לא לקלים המרוץ ולא לגבורים המלחמה וגם לא לחכמים לחם וגם לאש

לגבנים עשר, וגם לא לידעים, חן: פי-עת ופגע, יקרה את-כלם.

11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

י מה-

10 ש Whatever comes into being, the name was given long ago, and it is foreknown what man is; he cannot

contend with what is mightier than he.

3. POTENTIAL OF A DIALOGUE WITH GOD (5:1)

א אל-

להים: פי האלהים בשמים ואתה על-הארץ, על-פן יהיו דבריך מעטים.

be hasty to utter a word before God; for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few.

4. MEMORY AND CONTINUITY, RESURRECTION (9:4,5)

ה

מו; והמתים אינם יודעים מאומה, ואין-עוד להם שכר--פי נשכח, זכרם.

know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

ו

אשר-נעשה תחת השמש בי קבר אבדה; וחלק אין-להם עוד לעולם, בכל אשר-נעשה תחת השמש

long ago perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.

5. DEATH (4:2)

ב ושכח אני את-המתים, שכבר מתו--מן-החיים, אשר המה חיים

2 Hence I praised the dead that are already

dead more than the living that are yet alive;

INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS IN MEGILLAT KOHELET

A. Wisdom:

קהלת פרק א פסוק יח: כִּי בְרַב הַחִמָּה רַב כְּעַס וְיִוְסִיף דַּעַת יוְסִיף מִכְאוֹב:
For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who .18
.increases knowledge, increases pain

קהלת פרק ב פסוק יג: וְרָאִיתִי אֲנִי
שִׁישׁ יִתְרוֹן לְחִמָּה מִן הַסְּכָלוֹת כִּי־תְרוֹן הָאוֹר מִן הַחֹשֶׁךְ:
And I saw that wisdom has an advantage over folly, as .13
the advantage of light over darkness

INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS IN MEGILLAT KOHELET

B. Wealth

קהלת פרק י פסוק יט: לשחוק עשׂים לָחֵם וַיֵּין יִשְׂמַח חַיִּים וְהַכֶּסֶף יַעֲנֶה אֶת הַכֹּל:

On joyous occasions, a feast is made, and wine gladdens the living, and money .19
.answers everything

קהלת פרק ב פסוק ז - פסוק יא: (ז) קָנִיתִי עֲבָדִים

ו

שִׁפְחוֹת וּבָנִי בַּיִת הָיָה לִי גַם מְקַנָּה בָּקָר וְצֹאן הַרְבֵּה הָיָה לִי מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר־לִי לְפָנַי בִּירוּשָׁלַם: (ח) כָּנִסְתִּי לִי גַם כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב וְ

I acquired male and female slaves, and I had household members; also I had .7
.possession of cattle and flocks, more than all who were before me in Jerusalem

I accumulated for myself also silver and gold, and the treasures of the kings and .8
the provinces; I acquired for myself various types of musical instruments, the delight
.of the sons of men, wagons and coaches

Then I turned at all my deeds of my hands and on the toil that I had toiled, and .11
.behold everything is vanity and frustration, and there is no profit under the sun

INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS IN MEGILLAT KOHELET

C. Life and Death:

קהלת פרק ד פסוק ב:

וְשִׁבַח אֲנִי אֶת הַמֵּתִים שְׂכָרָר מִתּוֹ מִן הַחַיִּים אֲשֶׁר הִמָּה חַיִּים עֲדָנָה:

And I praise the dead who have already died, more than the living
.2
.who are still alive

קהלת פרק ט פסוק ד:

כִּי מִי אֲשֶׁר יִחְבֵּר אֶל כָּל הַחַיִּים יֵשׁ בְּטָחוֹן כִּי לְכָלֵב חַי הוּא טוֹב מִן הָאֲרִיָּה הַמֵּת:

For whoever is joined to all the living has hope, for concerning a
.4
live dog [it is said that] he is better than a dead lion

INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS IN MEGILLAT KOHELET

D. Joy:

מהוֹלֵל וְלִשְׂמֹחָה מַה זֶה עֲשֵׂה: לְשִׁחוּק אֶמְרָתִי קִהַלְתִּי פֶרֶק ב פסוק ב:
Of laughter, I said, "[It is] mingled"; and concerning joy, "What does this .2
“?accomplish

קִהַלְתִּי פֶרֶק ח פסוק טו:

י

שִׁבַּחְתִּי אֲנִי אֶת הַשְּׂמֹחָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין טוֹב לְאָדָם תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַשׁ כִּי אִם לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׂתוֹת וְלִשְׂמוֹחַ וְהוּא יִלְוֶנוּ בְּעִמְלֹו יְמֵי חַיֵּינוּ
And I praised joy, for there is nothing better for man under the sun than to eat .15
and to drink and to be merry, and that will accompany him in his toil the days of
.his life that God gave him under the sun

Approach #1: Voice of the Heretic

- **R' Samuel David Luzzatto (Italy 1800-1865)**
- **Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno (Italy, 1475 - 1550)**

Approach #2: Limited Applicability

A.

2:13 is a GENERAL RULE

יג וְרָאִיתִי אָנֹכִי, שְׂיֵשׁ יִתְרוֹן לְחֻכְמָה מִן-הַסְּכָלוֹת--בִּיתְרוֹן הָאוֹר, מִן-הַחֲשָׁךְ

VERSUS:

יח כִּי בָרַב חֻכְמָה, רַב-כְּעֵס; וְיֹסִיף דַּעַת, יוֹסִיף מִכְאוֹב

1: 18 which occurs at RARE INTERVALS

B. "The genius of Ecclesiastes Rabbah lies in the way in which it skillfully reinterprets Ecclesiastes, changing it from a document of despair to one of hope."

1. Money = Torah
2. References to eating, drinking and wine = land of Israel
3. "Under the sun" - means only in our world, but could be different, if we made changes to "our world"
4. Nuanced Differentiation - "עמלו" vs "עמל" -
(What profit has man of all HIS labor wherein he labors under the sun?)
ג מה-יִתְרוֹן, לְאָדָם: בְּכָל-עֲמָלוֹ--שְׂיַעֲמַל, תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ. (3)

Approach #3: Preserve the Contradictions

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO BE HUMAN IN THE FACE OF THE DIVINE??

KOHELET'S APPROACH

Hayyim Angel, "Revealed Texts, Hidden Meanings", Ktav Publishing House, 2009.

"In contrast, prophecy is committed to changing society so that it ultimately matches the ideal messianic vision. Prophecy insists that all of human history is a line (and not a cycle) from the Garden of Eden to the messianic era, and we should be doing everything in our power to move that process along. While a human perspective sees only repetitions of error in history; prophecy persistently reminds us that current reality need not mimic past history...ultimately, Tanakh needed Kohelet to represent the human perspective; and it needed prophecy so that we could transcend ourselves and our limited perspective, so that we may grow in our Fear of Heaven to observe God's mitzvot in truth." (p198 and 201)

“We are listening to a man talking to himself. We are listening to the way a mind skids and loops when it has the privilege and leisure to do so. We are watching the little electric charges travel the neural traintracks in their compulsive little circles. This is what Buddhists call the monkey mind. What we hear it doing when we are trying to be tranquil.”

- Alicia Ostriker, "Ecclesiastes as Witness, A Personal Essay", *American Poetry Review* 34:1 (2005).



**CS Lewis :
(Clives Staples Lewis, 1898-1963)**

- **novelist, poet, academic, medievalist, literary critic, essayist, lay theologian**
- **Oxford University, Cambridge University**
- **memoir: Surprised by Joy**
- **In 1956 he married the American writer Joy Davidman, who died 4 years later at the age of 45**

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO BE HUMAN IN THE FACE OF THE DIVINE??

CS LEWIS' APPROACH

C.S. Lewis, "Till We Have Faces", 1956.

“They (the gods) set the riddle and then allow a seeming that can’t be tested and can only quicken and thicken the tormenting whirlpool of your guess-work. If they had an honest intention to guide us, why is their guidance not plain? ...I say the gods deal very unrightly with us...for they hint and hover, to draw near us in dreams and oracles, or in a waking vision that vanishes as soon as seen, to be dead silent when we question them and then glide back and whisper (words we cannot understand) in our ears when we most wish to be free of them, and to show to one what they hide from another; what is all this but cat-and-mouse play, blindman’s buff, and mere jugglery? **Why must holy places be dark places?**”

CS LEWIS, “A Grief Observed”

“Heaven will solve our problems, but not, I think, by showing us subtle reconciliations between all our apparently contradictory notions. The notions will all be knocked from under our feet. We shall see that there never was any problem...my idea of God has to be shattered time after time. He shatters it Himself. He is the great iconoclast. Could we not say that this shattering is one of the marks of His presence?”

“Can a mortal ask questions which God finds unanswerable? Quite easily, I should think. All nonsense questions are unanswerable. How many hours are in a mile? Is yellow square or round? Probably half the questions we ask - half our great theological and metaphysical problems - are like that.”

“in so far as this record was a defense against total collapse, a safety valve, it has done some good”

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO BE HUMAN IN THE FACE OF THE DIVINE??

RUDOLF OTTO'S APPROACH

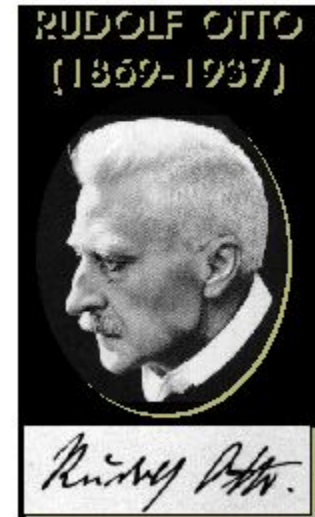
Rudolf Otto “The Idea of the Holy”, 1917.

“... and becomes this ultimately non-rational essence, that eludes all philosophical treatment...expresses in masterly fashion the downright stupendousness, the wellnigh daemonic and wholly incomprehensible character of the eternal creative power; how, “incalculable” and ‘wholly other’, it mocks at all conceiving but can yet stir the minds to its depths, fascinate and overbrim the heart. What is meant is the mysterium not as mysterious simply, but at the same time also as ‘fascinating’ and ‘august’...
(p83)

Rudolf Otto's Idea of the Holy

1. Mysterium = The Essence of God cannot be given by 'rational' attributions, though a bias in rationalization prevails in theology and the science of comparative religion. Any attempt to reconstruct the 'bases' or 'sources' of religion, is victim to this bias. (KOHELET??)
2. Numinous = completely eludes apprehension in terms of concepts. The same thing is true of the category of the beautiful.
 1. The idea of the 'holy' does not necessarily include a moral factor or a rational aspect.
 2. The 'creature-consciousness' cannot really be described as "dependence".
3. Tremendum = Natural man is unable to feel fear or dread of God in this way - it is more than natural, ordinary fear or dread.
4. Fascinans:
 1. self-depreciation, I am something that is not perfectly or essentially real
 2. Identification of myself with the transcendent Reality
5. Urgency/Energy of the numinous object = burning strength
6. "Wholly Other" - you can only analyze the experience, you can't understand it. More like an "insolveable problem" than a "mystery".

Rudolf Otto's Concept of the "Numinous"



"Mysterium tremendum et fascinans" (fearful and fascinating mystery):

"Mysterium": Wholly Other, experienced with blank wonder, stupor

"tremendum":

awefulness, terror, demonic dread, awe, absolute

unapproachability, "wrath" of God

overpoweringness, majesty, might, sense of one's own

nothingness in contrast to its power

creature-feeling, sense of objective presence, dependence

energy, urgency, will, vitality

"fascinans": potent charm, attractiveness in spite of fear, terror, etc.

“Kohelet invents the autobiographical “I” of Western literature, glamorizes it, and ridicules it, all at the same time....he is the first empiricist. He is the first pragmatist. He is the first existentialist. Like Einstien, he likes to point out how little we know of the laws of the universe. He is the first postmodernist writer.”

(Ostriker)

Joshua Berman, “Created Equal”, Oxford University Press, 2008.

“It was a canon of earlier Renaissance writing that plots had to hew to traditional storylines and formulas. Nature was believed to be whole, eternal, and unchanging. Thus the works of Shakespeare, Milton and the like reflect on legends, Scripture and history, because all of these represent the classic, unchanging array of universal human experiences and predicaments. In Shakespeare, the figures and settings of disparate periods such as Troy, Rome, or the House of Tudor are all essentially undifferentiated... **The novel bucks this trend by eschewing conformity and claiming the individual experience as truth.** ... Classical and Renaissance genres exhibit a preference for historical names or type-names that establish that the character is to be understood within the context of a canon or tradition rather than of his or her own age. **But the eighteenth century novel, following thinkers like Descartes, placed a premium on the thought processes within individual consciousness. So the novelist gave unprecedented attention to the personal identities of characters...**the novel narrated events that unfolded over lengthy spans of time... Individuals were conceived for the first time as living out a historical and developmental process. This change reflected a newer understanding that with fewer fixed universals, a person’s character could indeed change over time.” (p137)

“In Akkadian verse narrative for example, humans existed solely to supply the material needs of the gods.. There was no need, therefore, to dwell on the evolution of the collective history of the people, or the moral and spiritual complexities of the human condition. In the biblical conception of things, the empiric and natural universe is not taken to be a throbbing and dynamic playing field for divine personages. There are no conflicting powers to be propitiated, no harmonizing forces, no interaction at all between divine figures... Nature and history are determined by human behavior. **Within this conception, humans move from the position of cheerleaders on the sidelines of the cosmic playing field to center stage. What happens to humans within covenant theology is entirely in their own hands...** The behavior of the whole of Israel is only as good as each of its members. Each Israelite will need to excel, morally and spiritually. Each person becomes endowed with a sense of responsibility unparalleled in the literatures of the ancient Near East.” (p143)