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Papyri, 204-11, however out-of-date it may be by now, suggests the sort of brief introduction that might have been more useful to a student approaching the text without previous acquaintance with Aḥiqr.

Aside from the literary interest of this lengthy and influential text (and of the “Bar Punesh” and Bisitun inscription of Darius), there are many other things for the biblical scholar here, also in the accounts and lists: data bearing on the vocabulary of Biblical Aramaic and Biblical Hebrew, a rich trove for the student of onomastics, and much information on the economic and social realities of life in the Elephantine military colony and in the Egyptian milieu in which the colony was set.

The authors’ generous spirit of cooperation with others in the field of Aramaic studies is evidenced in the glossary, which carries the notice (similar to the note heading the glossary of vol. 2) “Computer-generated in collaboration with the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project” (the CAL project). Even before the TAD textual materials were published, they were put at the disposal of the CAL project and its director, Professor Stephen A. Kaufman; the happy result is that the printed edition has thus been enhanced, and that the lexical project has had the advantage of early use of the best readings. (Here and there in the work Kaufman is “Steve”—a pleasing and significant informality.) Note that the Newsletter of the CAL, beginning with no. 11, Spring 1994, publishes supplements to the recent work of Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Stephen A. Kaufman, An Aramaic Bibliography (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992). These supplements include additions to the bibliography for the Elephantine texts in general, and specifically for some of those published by P. and Y. It is Kaufman’s intention to continue to issue these supplements, periodically; in this way users of P. and Y’s fundamental series should be able to keep it up-to-date bibliographically with relative ease.

The English translations of the texts are the work of P., who states his intention in this way: “All translations are literal, and the Aramaic word order is frequently preserved to convey the full sense of the original” (p. vi). Such a statement arouses misgivings at the outset, since it would seem to contain a number of controversial or even contradictory assumptions, and indeed there are cases where the rendering given makes a reader wish that the function and nature of the translation had been thought out more carefully. The English is at times unidiomatic, as at Aḥiqr 1.107: “The [bramb]le despatched to [the] pomegranate, saying . . . ,” and in extreme cases it gets the sense exactly backward, where Aramaic syntax calls for an order the reverse of the English order: “For a bird is a word” (Aḥiqr 82). On the whole, however, this is more than outweighed by the many cases where P. has done splendidly in this aspect of the work also, especially when one bears in mind the formidable difficulty of the material involved.

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This book proceeds from the question, Is the status of women reflected in deuteronomistic family law higher than in other biblical legal codes, as is maintained by various scholars (notably Weinfeld, Steinberg, Remy, and Phillips)? The four clusters
of laws examined are concerned with the captive bride, primogeniture, and the rebellious son (Deut 21:10-21), sexual offenses (22:13-29), prohibition of the restoration of marriage (24:1-4), and levirate marriage and breach of modesty (25:5-12).

The introduction sets out the scope of the study and the internal links between the deuteronomistic family laws; it also provides a short review of recent literature. Part 1 (chaps. 1-4) contains detailed exegeses of each of the four groups listed. Part 2 (chaps. 5-6) constitutes an analysis of the textual materials for the view of women found in them. In chap. 5 the laws are viewed as cultural artifacts, that is, within the framework of a culture organized into patriarchal households. In chap. 6 the general purpose of the laws is defined. They seem to have been designed to support hierarchical, patrilineal family structure. Within that structure, the authority of the male head is both reaffirmed and circumscribed by the deuteronomistic family laws. Dependent members, women included, are protected; however, their status is not promoted to independence.

Pressler concludes by rejecting the notion that a more humanistic view of women prevailed in deuteronomistic family law, or that an amelioration of women's legal, domestic, and social status can be found therein. The laws presuppose that women are dependent on males for their well-being. This does not mean that women's contributions to the household (especially motherhood) are not valued, and their dependency is nuanced. Within the family, females' status varies according to their position in relation to males (as mother, daughter, wife). Mothers have the greatest parity with their male counterparts, although the father has more authority in inter-family transactions. The position of daughters and sons within the family hierarchy is similar: both are subordinate to their parents. However, the son owes his parents obedience, while the daughter owes them (especially her father) sexual chastity. A daughter's sexuality is ideally or typically controlled by the father and preserved for the husband, so that she can bear the latter sons to continue his name. A wife is controlled by her husband in matters of household economics, her own sexuality, and the initiation of marriage and divorce. Thus, the purpose of the laws "is to ensure the stability of the family" (p. 113) as a stratified social and economic unit. In that respect they are hardly distinguishable from other biblical systems of legislation. There is concern that there be justice for all, including weaker members of the household, but no challenge to its traditional hierarchy. Hence, women do not fare better in this legal corpus.

This reviewer finds P.'s study (a revision of her Ph.D. thesis for Princeton Theological Seminary, 1991) balanced, as well as greatly refreshing, methodologically sound, substantial, and convincing. P. negotiates her first move—a detailed exegesis of every relevant law—with skill. Along the way (especially in the well-documented notes), she engages in detailed dialogue with other scholars. By the time the exegesis is done, the reader is ready for the next move, the analysis proper; the groundwork for it has already been done. It would have been easy at this point to declaim the attitude of the deuteronomistic family laws towards women summarily as no different from those found in the rest of the Hebrew Bible with its various legislative systems. Instead, P. chooses to trace subtly the nuances of women's domestic existence, as it is reflected in, and prescribed by, the laws. This has immense value for me and, I am sure, for
other readers. It is easy to brand biblical culture as “patriarchal” and, hence, limiting and injurious for women’s well-being; it is much more difficult to delineate the license, prerogatives, and privileges, as well as the limits, which both genders must have exercised within that “patriarchy.” P. discusses the texts and the issue of biblical patriarchy in a dispassionate manner, against the backdrop of other pertinent ancient Near Eastern legislative texts, with judgment and erudition—all the while maintaining compassion for the textual subject matter.

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Rashkow draws upon Sigmund Freud’s work, particularly as revised by Jacques Lacan and others, in order to give her own feminist reading of certain biblical texts. The highlighted texts are Gen 12:10-20 and Gen 20:1-18.

The author’s revised Freudian approach focuses on transference, dream theory, and seduction hysteria. Transference is the analysand’s or patient’s unconscious “transfer” of conflicts onto the analyst or doctor. These conflicts have basically to do with repressed sexuality. The model of dream interpretation emphasizes censorship, displacement, and condensation as the dream work moves from latent to manifest form. Freud’s seduction theory began with his early inference that hysterical symptoms stem from childhood sexual abuse. However, he soon rejected this position and articulated the hypothesis of the “Oedipus complex.” R. does not discuss the ongoing and sometimes inconsistent character of Freud’s reflections on the Oedipus complex, but after almost thirty years he arrived at the clear position that desire for the parent of the opposite sex is inherent, biogenetic, it would seem, and this innate desire precedes even identification with the model parent of the same sex. The Oedipus theory, already in its early form in the 1890s, was the theoretical basis for holding that hysteria was occasioned not by actual sexual abuse, but by the repressed sexual desire for the putative abusing parent. R., in keeping with many current studies, sees Freud’s shift as an expression of his own “phallocentrism,” a phallocentrism that is shared with the biblical texts.

One example of the way the author uses these elements of Freudian theory is her reader-response approach to the dream of Abimelech in Genesis 20. Abimelech rejects the idea of sexual intercourse with Sarah as if it never occurred to him at all. But this is only the manifest scenario whose latent core is his desire for Sarah and fear of Abraham (p. 62). An instance of implementation of the seduction theory is the discussion of Genesis 2-3. The prohibition of the fruit on the tree of knowledge of good and evil “forbids Eve, the daughter, from obtaining the father’s potency and privilege”