

BOOK REVIEWS

Scribal Tools in Ancient Israel: A Study of Biblical Hebrew Terms for Writing Materials and Implements. By Philip Zhakevich. History, Archaeology, and Culture of the Levant 9. University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2020, xvi + 212 pp., \$99.95.

Philip Zhakevich's book *Scribal Tools in Ancient Israel* is a helpful and thorough investigation into the terms used to describe the writing materials and writing tools of ancient Israel. Readers will enjoy his analysis of these biblical terms since he not only accounts for the biblical evidence, but he also incorporates into his discussions the relevant archaeological and historical evidence. By surveying this material, the author provides a thorough discussion of these terms. Zhakevich's goal, however, extends beyond lexicography: he seeks to provide evidence for the origins of Israel's writing practices, which he concludes are Egyptian (pp. 2, 168).

Zhakevich divides his work into seven chapters. He begins with an introduction that clearly states his thesis, summarizes the previous research, and states his methodology. Zhakevich's methodology expands the field of study because his discussion of each term accounts for its etymology, the biblical and extrabiblical usage, the term's renderings in the early translations, and the relevant archaeological and art historical evidence (p. 7). Thus, the book's unique contribution to the field results from the author's fuller methodology.

Chapters 2–5 are the main part of the book. In these chapters, Zhakevich applies his methodology to the Hebrew terms, and his analysis of these terms is consistent throughout the book. Each chapter begins with an overview of the use of the scribal surface or tool in the ancient world. In this section, the author discusses any relevant art history. Next, the author analyzes the Hebrew term according to its etymology, biblical usage, and extrabiblical usage. He then surveys the evidence from early translations. The author concludes each of these chapters with a concise and helpful list of the relevant Hebrew terms and definitions just discussed.

In chapter 6, Zhakevich moves beyond lexicography to determine the origins of Israel's writing practices. Throughout chapters 2–5, Zhakevich makes connections between the Hebrew terms and their corresponding Egyptian terms. Then, to buttress his argument that Israel's writing practice originated in Egypt, he surveys the nature of Egypt's contact with Canaan and ancient Israel. For example, Zhakevich discusses the presence of Egyptian artifacts in ancient Israel (pp. 160–63) and the influence of Egyptian writing technology on Israel (pp. 163–68). He also discusses in this section how the Egyptian writing system inspired the Proto-Sinaitic alphabet and concludes that "Egypt's influence upon Israelite writing culture is foundational; without the Egyptian writing system, there would be no Hebrew alphabet" (p. 165).