

la persistencia de la corona de la existencia del templo, de modo que el nuevo templo podría existir y tener valor aun si la monarquía no había sido restituida. De ese modo se haría lugar a una teología que se despega de la existencia de la monarquía y que permite dar sustento a la organización social de Israel en ausencia de la corona. Como eso es lo que en verdad sucedió a partir de la restauración en el año 539, es muy atractivo explorar esa posibilidad, y este libro lo hace con calidad y profundidad.

Hay como en toda disertación, ciertas obviedades. Esto es producto de que es preciso hacer saber a un tribunal que el disertante sabe, pero podrían omitirse en una adaptación para la publicación. Así es como se afirma que en los libros de Samuel y Reyes hay una continuidad y coherencia entre sus narraciones, que hay cierta “unidad literaria”, y que aun así hay en ellos diferencias respecto a las respectivas historias de la transmisión del texto. También se los recuerda que más allá de detalles, el texto de Samuel-Reyes es un exaltador de David y su dinastía. Es claro que no es incorrecto ni está de más decirlo, pero lo es tanto como quizás para el lector de este tipo de obras no sea necesario que se lo recuerden.

Este trabajo se suma a los que deberán ser tenidos en cuenta cuando a partir de su publicación un nuevo investigador decida volver a explorar estos caminos textuales. Y con esto deseamos señalar la seriedad, el cuidado académico y la equilibrada perspectiva que el autor supo dar a su investigación.

PABLO R. ANDIÑACH  
*Universidad Católica Argentina*

JACK M. SASSON. *From the Mari Archives: An Anthology of Old Babylonian Letters*. Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 2015. xx + 454. ISBN 1-57506-830-3.  
\$ 59.50.

Professor Jack M. Sasson has recently retired from teaching at Vanderbilt University’s Divinity School. In this volume, he offers a well-crafted product of decades of engagement with the archives of Mari. *From the Mari Archives* is a very well-edited collection of hundreds of diverse documents, letters and fragments pertaining to the Old Babylonian (OB) period. Prof. Sasson links each text or fragment to a specific topic in a list that includes religion, warfare, diplomacy, culture, administration, and other topics. The collection contains a short introduction and a brief series of final remarks in the end, follow-

wed by appendixes indexing the documents by source, topic and biblical cross-references. These appendixes should become part of every OB scholar's research toolbox.

The introduction contains some background information on Mari and an overview of the archives. There is an insightful section on the narrative quality of some of the material found in the letters, which, according to the author, "suggests that the gift of story-telling is innate" and, by implication, "that Hebrew narratives need not come from learned circles or achieve their artful forms long after the events that they report" (p. 6). This is an interesting point which could be better explored in a book dealing with narrative technique in ancient Near Eastern texts. It seems a bit out of place here. Also noteworthy is the sketch of Zimri-Lim's personal features and disposition. The author makes this sketch based on a compilation of traits taken from several documents (pp. 6–7) as an example of the sort of synthesis that one could propose in monographs. Prof. Sasson warns us of the need to read the sources "through critical lenses," as not only us, but also those who wrote the documents have some degree of "ignorance of real events." Besides, government officials "naturally inflect their reports to suit personal goals" (pp. 7–8). The introduction includes a list of people mentioned in the documents, with a brief description of their roles. Place names are also listed (pp. 9–15). This tool provides the reader with a map of individuals and locations that facilitates comprehension. The rest of the introduction is particularly helpful to the reader who is not familiar with the source publications and secondary studies about Mari with a very brief discussion of how source documents are labeled in the literature, and where one can find additional studies on several Mari-related topics (pp. 16–19).

The author writes in the introduction that he hopes that the book "will reach non-specialists" (p. 18). The present reviewer is one such non-specialist who has used International Relations theories to study foreign relations in the ancient Near East and who essentially agrees with Prof. Sasson's conclusion that "combat was endemic" but, at the same time, "kings were not lawless and certainly not without adherence to conventions." The author goes on to say that "if there is anything that the Mari archives have foregrounded, it is how much diplomacy and its outcome...were central to its other institutions" (p. 344). The well-documented case of OB Mari is a rich source of evidence for those interested in theorizing foreign relations based on politically realist presuppositions, but who also do not discard the impact of rules, norms and

institutions in shaping and shoving political behavior. For this contribution alone, this book is highly recommended to social theorists and political scientists interested in a historical approach to their disciplines.

However, as stated before, this collection of sources deals with a wider range of topics. Chapter 1, a very long chapter, deals with kingship. Chapter 2 goes through a number of aspects of Mari's administration. Chapter 3 covers warfare. Chapter 4 discusses material dealing with many facets of social life. The subject of Chapter 5 is religion, and that of Chapter 6 is culture.

The ways in which the material is treated is very similar across the chapters. There is often a brief explanation of how exactly each document is an instance of a synthetic statement that the author has derived from a thorough examination of the Mari archives, with reference to relevant secondary literature. For example, under the broader topic of kingship (pp. 21–118), which is treated extensively, a sub-topic of “becoming a king” (pp. 21–31) is inserted, with “loyalty protocols” (pp. 29–31) being part of the process. The synthetic statement is: “Once on the throne, kings demanded loyalty by the imposition of oaths on diverse segments of the population, among them top administrators...diviners...and harem officials...Durand 1991 is the best major study of the subject...” (p. 29). Under “loyalty protocols: administrators” we find a list of excerpts (e.g. ARMT 23 238, 23 495, etc.) listing people who brought sheep to be inspected for the loyalty oaths. Prof. Sasson explains how this series of excerpts illustrates the topic: “Early in his reign, Zimri-Lim had administrators, some likely held-over from the previous ruler, take oaths...Specific diviners inspected the sheep to be offered as sacrifice by administrators. A favorable omen established the timing for the oath-taking. These texts would list the names of individuals before defining the specific review they underwent” (p. 29).

A well-known Hebrew Bible scholar, Prof. Sasson also makes abundant reference to biblical texts throughout the book, but cautions that “the translated texts in these pages are illustrative rather than directly comparable to what is found in received Scripture,” mentioning some areas where drawing parallels would be useful (pp. 19–20).

The translations offered in this book flow naturally. There is often some adaptation to contemporary ideas with a broader audience in mind. Since Yasmah-Addu refers to his father as *adda*, the translation of the well-known ARM 1 113+ reads: “About matters that Daddy wrote to me, ‘Now

you—how long must we keep on guiding you? Are you still a kid and not a grown up? Is there no hair on your cheek? How much longer will you not take charge of your house?" This is certainly what Daddy wrote me on a couple of occasions" (p. 23). Since the most widely cited Mari documents are already available in French, English and other modern languages, there is no reason to reject Prof. Sasson's attempt at a higher degree of freshness in conveying the meaning to a contemporary audience.

The author is aware of some of the possible criticisms against the choices he made in presenting the material as he did. The way in which it was organized, for example, could potentially attract some criticism. There is no effort here to contextualize each document within a general chronological sequence, partly because this has already been done by Wolfgang Heimpel's collection of Mari letters<sup>1</sup> that overlaps with Sasson's to a certain extent. It is not the historian looking for a sequence of events, but those who search for theoretical synthesis, who will benefit the most from this book. With a research topic in mind, one will be able to find, with some speed, related documents in Prof. Sasson's extensive and detailed indexes in the end of this volume. The book as a whole, and the appendixes more specifically, offer a truly helpful catalogue of Mari texts "tagged" or "coded" by content. This volume is a welcome addition to the library of specialists and non-specialists alike.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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LUCAS G. FREIRE  
North-West University  
South Africa

<sup>1</sup> Heimpel 2003.