



Telling Contexts

Archaeological and Textual Studies in Honor of
Elizabeth Bloch-Smith and Mark S. Smith

edited by

Julie B. Deluty

Heath D. Dewrell

F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp

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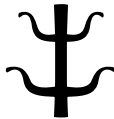
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PREFACE

The academic *Festschrift* is a genre traditionally reserved for recognizing and celebrating outstanding scholarly achievement over the course of a career. This volume's honorees, Elizabeth Bloch-Smith and Mark S. Smith, are most deserving of such recognition. "Each in their own way made important contributions to the field of Ancient Near Eastern studies"—Liz, in her "archaeological fieldwork and incisive analysis of ancient Near Eastern religion," and Mark, in his "extensive and ground-breaking work in the fields of Israelite religion, Hebrew Bible, and Ugaritic studies" (Gitin). In this central way, then, this volume finds its place in a revered scholarly tradition. And yet another of the impulses animating the volume is decidedly less traditional. The honorees are plural—two—and married to one another, and thus Mark and Liz's personal and professional lives for over forty years have been a deeply entangled affair—one enmeshed with the other, both with their children and extended families, with friends and colleagues. So another end in view for this volume is to luxuriate in these happily entangled lives. To do so we feel is entirely appropriate for Liz and Mark, who they are and how they have chosen to live their lives and pursue their careers. But such an angle of approach is not without its own intellectual claims to make. An awareness of how thoroughly our scholarship is shaped and informed by the persons we are is foundational to many post-Enlightenment modalities of knowledge. The essays gathered here, individually and collectively, testify to the satisfying and incisive nature of such a way of knowing.

Mark and Liz have known about and participated in this project from the beginning. Together they drew up the initial list of potential contributors. They decided to limit the invitations to colleagues who know them both equally well, personally and professionally. Of course, not everyone who was invited ended up contributing. The wisdom of Liz and Mark's selection criteria is borne out by the fact that the acuity of insight achieved in these essays is matched by the genuine affection that motivated them. No general theme was articulated for the volume as a whole. Instead, contributors were asked to write on a topic of their own choosing, something of scholarly interest to them. The thinking here is that the best way to honor excellence in scholarly achievement is with achieved scholarship itself. If the topics also happen to intersect with aspects of Mark and/or Liz's interests—as they often do—then so much the better.

In lieu of a proper introduction we open the volume with a contribution by the Smith children—Ben, Rachel, and Shula. In many ways, this essay epitomizes this volume, especially the angle of admiration at which it is pitched—"Mom and Dad, we love you and we are so proud of you." It offers witty and perceptive glimpses of moments in Liz and Mark's careers viewed from the vantage point of their children. The essay is notable as well for being one of two in the volume to take up the topic of the *waw*-consecutive (who knew this thinnest of Mark's stand-alone monographs would continue to be so generative after more than thirty years), and according to the essay's subtitle, "Or, Putting the WAW in WAW Consecutive," the authors appear to agree with Dobbs-Allsopp that the conjunctive *waw* in these formations remains productive (at least as late as Lamentations, see below).

The editors have organized the submitted contributions into four sections. This has been done mostly as a convenience for readers. Many of the essays could be fitted into multiple sections. The first section, *Dimensions of Textuality*, offers an eclectic mix of textual studies

ranging from the Dead Seas Scrolls (Crawford) to lexical and grammatical inquiries (Dewrell, Dobbs-Allsopp, Schart) to readings of two psalms (McCreesh, Spieckermann). The inspiration for the section comes from Sara Milstein’s reminiscence about Mark in the classroom and his “delighting in every grammatical conundrum” and “proclivity for lingering however-long-it-takes on a single word”—all “fueled by the largest cup of coffee I had ever seen someone ingest in one sitting.” The “delight” in lingering over various textual “conundrums” (large and small) is what binds this group of studies together.

The second section, simply entitled *Judges*, unsurprisingly is very much the heart of the volume. There may be no more tangible sign of Mark and Liz’s “formidable partnership” (Gitin) than their *Judges* commentary for the *Hermeneia* series. The first volume has been published (2021), coming in at 744 pages (plus front matter). And they are now at work on the second volume, which no doubt will be just as monumental as the first and, as the Smith children shrewdly observe, may well take them “the rest of their lives.” As befitting any good commentary, the essays here are wide-ranging in focus, from text criticism (Milstein), a misunderstood metaphor (Ornan), and history (Master, Monroe) to ethics (Niditch), including an essay on “Three Blind Men” (Ackerman). These studies do not so much seek to compete with Liz and Mark as to collaborate with them, to participate in a small way in this masterwork of their later lives. Something of this sensibility is captured well by Susan Ackerman in the closing paragraph of her contribution:

I ask this question, along with the others I have posed, at a time when the honorees of this collection of essays ... are jointly engaged in writing the second volume of a commentary on *Judges*. I don’t necessarily expect them to take up my questions about *Judges* 16, and even if they do, I don’t necessarily expect they will provide me (and all of us) with answers. But I know if anyone can take this discussion further, it is Mark and Liz, who throughout their careers have done so much to advance our understanding of the Bible and the greater biblical world.

Text may be read to many different ends. In the third section, *Texts and Ideas*, the ends in view in the essays gathered here are largely ideational in nature—personal piety (Barmash), creativity (James), emotion (Keime), hope (Olson), second order thinking (Schmid), and the Aliyah from Egypt (van der Toorn). That is, these essays, to larger and lesser degrees, query aspects of “Israel’s intellectuality” (Schmid).

The final section consists of three archaeological studies—Faust and Baruch on “Judah’s Burial Practices”; Gitin on “Trade”; and Münger, Ortiz and Wolff on a “Seal Impression on a Mud Stopper” from Gezer. Archaeology and material culture figure in other essays in the volume, but here they are the heart of the matter. If the volume’s initial section finds its inspiration in Mark’s delight in lingering over every textual conundrum, this one is rooted in the dirt and Liz’s love of fieldwork. This is epitomized by a fragment of a memory lodged in the mind of one of the editors. In the summer of 1988, Chip Dobbs-Allsopp, taking a break from jackhammering through Byzantine layers in 38 upper at Ashkelon, wandered over to look down on the Iron Age layers of 38 lower where he longed to work. And it was Liz who looked up at him. She was squatting down, with a big, brimmed hat on her head, a trowel or fine brush in her hand, and a blissful smile that engulfed the whole of her face—this was a woman in her element. The opening and closing sections, like the figures of their incitement—Mark with his coffee lingering over words and Liz with her trowel working happily in the dirt, form a diptych that encloses the volume and fashions it into a whole.

Telling Contexts is a title that signifies in layers, not unlike an ancient Levantine tell or an old Hebrew poem. At base the title focalizes the two primary disciplines of our honorees, archaeology (*tell*) and textual studies (*texts*). The use of italics permits each to mean on their own and in their own way. And yet as *tell* and *texts* become mashed up together phrasally, there is equally an insistence on their meaningful entanglement. Archaeology and the material culture it uncovers provides the extra-textual *context* that is critical to any surpassing and maximally enflashed reading of an ancient text. And *texts*, as they preserve bits of human language mediated through writing, importantly are articulate and *telling* in ways that are uniquely legible, and thus are equally critical to the interpretive work of archaeology in an effort to know more fully the people and events that produced the material remains archaeology recovers. *Texts* and *contexts* are mutually *telling*. And then there is the personal and professional mash-up of Liz with Mark and Mark with Liz that forms the larger *contexts* of their lives, lives lived with space for the one and the other and the two together, blended, entangled, happy, *telling*. Such lives as these we join to honor and celebrate. Liz and Mark, *lehayim!*

* * *

Julie Deluty and Heath Dewrell—with an assist from Matt Green—have borne the brunt of the editorial work for this volume. Chip Dobbs-Allsopp’s participation has been more circumscribed than originally anticipated, given the decline in his eyesight in recent years. The editors thank the contributors for their fine contributions to the volume and for their patience as we have worked to pull the volume together. We also thank Billie Jean Collins for her willingness to publish the volume—Billie Jean has her own longstanding relationship with our honorees, and thus publishing the volume with Lockwood Press seems most fitting.

The Editors

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ABBREVIATIONS

1cs	first-person common singular
2ms	second-person masculine singular
3fs	third-person feminine singular
3mp	third-person masculine plural
3ms	third-person masculine singular
ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament
AB	Anchor (Yale) Bible
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABRL	Anchor (Yale) Bible Reference Library
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
ADAJ	<i>Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan</i>
ADPV	Adhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
AeL	<i>Ägypten und Levante</i>
AHw	Von Soden, Wolfram von. <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> . 3 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965–1981.
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AKM	Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
ANEM	Ancient Near Eastern Monographs
ANESSup	Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement Series
ANET	Pritchard, James B., ed. <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOS	American Oriental Series
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBRSup	Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford: Clarendon, 1907.
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BH	Biblical Hebrew
BHK	Kittel, Rudolf, ed. <i>Biblia Hebraica</i> . Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905–1906.
BHS	Elliger, Karl, and Wilhelm Rudolph, eds. <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983.
BHQ	Biblia Hebraica Quinta
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BibInt	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia

BibSem	The Biblical Seminar
BJSUCSD	Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BRL2	Galling, Kurt, ed. <i>Biblisches Reallexikon</i> . 2nd ed. HAT 1/1. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1977.
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	Gelb, Ignace J., et al., eds. <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . 21 vols. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2010.
CAT	Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CC	Continental Commentaries
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
ChS	Corpus der hurritischen Sprachdenkmäler
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
ConBOT	Coniectania Biblica: Old Testament Series
COS	Hallo, William W., and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds. <i>The Context of Scripture</i> . 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2016.
CTAT	Barthélemy, Dominique. <i>Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament</i> . 5 vols. Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982–2015.
DCH	Clines, David J. A., ed. <i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> . 9 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 1993–2016.
DDD	Toorn, Karel van der, Bob Becking, and Pieter van der Horst, eds. <i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> . 2nd ed. Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DMOA	Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui
DNWSI	Hoftijzer, Jacob, and Karen Jongeling. <i>Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions</i> . 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
DULAT ³	Olmo Lete, Gregorio del, and Joaquín Sanmartín. <i>A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition</i> . Translated and edited by W. G. E. Watson. 3rd ed. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
EBR	Klauck, Hans-Josef, et al., eds. <i>Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception</i> . Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009–.
EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature
EncJud	Skolnik, Fred, and Michael Berenbaum, eds. <i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i> . 2nd ed. 22 vols. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.
ErIsr	<i>Eretz Israel</i>
ET	English translation
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature

FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GKC	Gesenius, Wilhelm. <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Edited by Emil Kautzsch. Translated by Arthur E. Cowley. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910.
HALOT	Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HeBAI	<i>Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel</i>
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
HeBAI	<i>Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel</i>
HS	<i>Hebrew Studies</i>
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IBHS	Waltke, Bruce K., and Michael Patrick O'Connor. <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> . Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
IAAR	Israel Antiquities Authority Reports
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	Buttrick, George A. <i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . 4 vols. New York: Abingdon, 1962.
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
impf.	imperfect
ISBL	Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature
JANER	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions</i>
JANES	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JEOL	<i>Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatische-Egyptisch Genootschap, Ex Oriente Lux</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JHNES	Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies
JHS	<i>Journal of Hebrew Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JNSL	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JOT	<i>Journal of Old Testament Studies</i>
JOTSup	Journal of Old Testament Studies Supplement Series
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
KAI	Donner, Herbert, and Wolfgang Röllig. <i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i> . 2nd ed. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966–1969.
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament

KTU	Dietrich, Manfred, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín. <i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit, Ras: Hani und anderen Orten</i> . 3rd ed. AOAT 360. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013.
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
LAPO	Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient
LASBF	<i>Liber Annus Studii Biblici Franciscani</i>
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSAWS	Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic
MGWJ	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
Nat.	Pliny, <i>Naturalis historia</i>
NEA	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
NEchtB	Neue Echter Bibel
NS	new series
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBOSA	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis Series Archaeologica
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OJA	<i>Oxford Journal of Archaeology</i>
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
Or	<i>Orientalia</i> NS
ORA	Orientalische Religionen in der Antike
OTE	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTR	Old Testament Readings
OTS	Old Testament Studies
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
pers.	person
pf.	perfect
pl(s).	plate(s)
PTSDSSP	Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project
Qad	<i>Qadmoniot</i>
QD	Quaestiones Disputatae
RA	<i>Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumrân</i>
RHA	<i>Revue hittite et asianique</i>
RHPR	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
SAHL	Studies in the Archaeology and History of the Levant
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
SBH	Standard Biblical Hebrew
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLStBL	Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature

SCS	Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SEL	<i>Studi epigrafici e linguistici sul Vicino Oriente antico</i>
Sem	<i>Semitica</i>
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
sg.	singular
SHAJ	<i>Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan</i>
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
SMA	Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology
SMNIA	Tel Aviv University Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology Monograph Series
STDJ	Studies in the Texts of the Desert of Judah
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SWBA	Social World of Biblical Antiquity
TA	<i>Tel Aviv</i>
TAPS	Transactions of the American Philosophical Society
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TDOT	Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Translated by John T. Willis et al. 17 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2021.
THAT	Jenni, Ernst, with assistance from Claus Westermann, eds. <i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> . 2 vols. Munich: Kaiser; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1971–1976.
ThWAT	Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds. <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> . 10 vols. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970–2000.
tg.	targum
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TRu	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i> NS
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
TUAT	Kaiser, Otto, et al, eds. <i>Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments</i> . Gütersloh: Mohn; Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1984–.
ThW	Theologische Wissenschaft
UF	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
v(v).	verse(s)
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WAWSup	Writings from the Ancient World Supplement Series
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WO	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
WS	West Semitic
ZAH	<i>Zeitschrift für Althebräistik</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

“THE GLORY OF CHILDREN IS THEIR PARENTS”: OR, PUTTING THE WAW IN WAW CONSECUTIVE

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With the publication of this exciting *Festschrift*, we feel that the best way to honor our parents, Mark and Liz, is with the gift of our collective scholarship.¹ As their three favorite children, we share between us a vast and unparalleled body of early and late documentation of life with Drs. Bloch-Smith and Smith, and feel that our newly released, groundbreaking academic work charts new directions in the field. Our research is structured by a periodization of three main historical ages: early life (Stone Age), our time at New York University (Bronze Age), and our adult lives (Iron Age).

During the Stone Age, we spent many of our formative childhood summers in Israel. Our parents would take us around on riveting tours of different archaeological sites, while dad cosplayed as the monster in Hezekiah's water tunnels in Hazor. But we spent most of our time on the archaeological dig in Ashkelon. Mom always wanted to share her passion for archaeology with us. In the afternoon, after digging, she would take us to clean pottery with all of the volunteers. She would explain to us, one by one, how to identify each piece (“See that it's round? That means it's a handle,” or “If there's a raised edge on the pottery it means that it's likely the lip of a vessel”). While none of us became archaeologists, and many of her lessons might have been lost on us at the time, mom was a consistent role model of a strong, trailblazing woman—not only for women in the field of archaeology as she helped set a standard in the 1980s for digging while pregnant and bringing kids along, but also for us.²

The stuff of our nightly dinner discussions was just your average conversational topics of two scholars of the ancient Near East. We considered pressing issues of the Dead Sea Squirrels (Where did they live exactly? Who was feeding them?) and employment opportunities in the book of Job. One of our school teachers was a bit surprised when a first-grade homework assignment to bring in foreign words yielded Ugaritic, or when dad taught an entire second-grade class the word *boustrophedon* during career week. As we got older, mom and dad made

1. For our earlier work, see Smith, Smith, and Smith, “*Tohu Va'vo-Who Let the Dogs Out? An Exploration of Childhood in the Post-late Late Modern Iron Age*,” *Journal of Really Cool Archaeology* 21.5 (2022): 48–49.

2. Kristine Henriksen Garroay, “Digging Up the Past: The History of Women Archaeologists in the Society of Biblical Literature,” *lectio difficilior* 7, <https://www.lectio.unibe.ch/en/archive/kristine-henriksen-garroay-digging-up-the-past-the-history-of-women-archaeologists-in-the-society-of-biblical-literature.html>.

a point of instilling in us valuable skills that would prepare us for the workforce. We gained experience teaching in the Hebrew School and as research assistants, cataloging the home library, proofreading manuscripts, or creating indexes. They taught us other highly useful skills as well. We learned to wield a BDB and to trace etymologies, whether through Latin or Aramaic. We picked up conversational skills in foreign languages.³ We came to appreciate the significance and joy of a *shabbes shluf*. And potentially most importantly of all for our future careers, we learned how to identify *terra sigillata*.

The Bronze Age of our lives unfolded at New York University. While Rachel and Ben enjoyed weekly lunches at Grey Dog or Mamoun’s, Shula had the extra added benefit of actually enrolling in the course *Ancient Israel* with Professor Smith.⁴ After Shula pranked dad by calling him repeatedly during class because he could not figure out how to silence his phone, dad proclaimed a full out prank war, complete with displaying embarrassing photographs of Shula in some of his powerpoints. The pranks culminated in Shula sneaking into another one of Dad’s large lecture classes and singing him happy birthday with all of the students. Somehow, the other students still did not understand that she was his daughter, until she correctly divined the final exam questions. It was during the Bronze Age period that we also embarked on our own first attempts at knowledge production. Having created a Wikipedia page for Dr. Smith, adding new biographical information, such as his undying love of Lucky Charms, the Wikipedia censors immediately called for verification of sources, demonstrating the contested politics of knowledge production. As we came of age intellectually during these undergraduate years, we came to see how our own intellectual curiosity and critical engagement had grown out of their own engagement with the world and with others.

The Iron Age yielded a new set of historiographic insights. We have had the pleasure of seeing all the ways we end up becoming like our parents. Shula has developed the ability, taking after her father, to eat an entire pint of Ben and Jerry’s in one sitting. Dr. Rachel Smith has joined the ranks of academia and while this comes as no surprise to anyone, both she and Drs. Smith and Bloch-Smith maintain that her research in modern Jewish history is in a completely different field given that, as Dr. Mark Smith claims, “Everything after Jesus is modern.” Ben, for his part, has elected to no longer take pictures standing immediately next to his dad, as every person then inevitably makes the same joke that they “see the resemblance.” It also does not help that Dr. Smith fervently maintains his childhood tradition of taking all pictures on his “tippy toes” to try to make up the one inch height difference.

In the Late Iron Age, and with the introduction of two granddaughters to the family, the Drs. Bloch-Smith and Smith expanded their pursuits even further beyond the academic realm. Mom found a second calling as an architect. Whether designing Mardi Gras ladders draped in purple, green, and gold, or constructing elaborate forts for both children and stuffed animal friends alike, she honed her skills to produce works rivaling the Ishtar Gate in its majesty. Dad, for his part, became an ardent student of the state of Texas, donning a cowboy hat as he roamed the Houston rodeo while also practicing day and night to become a champion taco vs. burrito competitor. Together, they have also both explored more artistic interests, each making their debuts as fashion show runway models, ghost charades performers, and Disney-

3. Examples include the common and important Ugaritic phrase, “*Miya kalbatu bi merkabtiyah?*,” roughly translating to “Who’s the bitch in my chariot?”

4. Let the record show that the class fulfilled a college requirement and Professor Smith was not responsible for grading Shula’s wonderful assignments. She is still peeved that she got an A-.

song karaoke crooners, though in the words of even their most ardent supporters “That’s okay, watch me, I’ll show you how to do it.”

This historiographical survey from early roots in the Stone Age to the apex of the Iron Age brings to the fore the many contributions of Drs. Bloch-Smith and Smith. Over the decades, they have persevered through obstacles great and small in the pursuit of knowledge, expanding ever wider the scholarship of the ancient Near East. Their monumental Judges commentary alone, which they have decided to work on for the rest of their lives, challenges only the authors of the Bible for the title of “longest book taken to write.” Their commentary, as much of their other work, pales in comparison to the greatest accomplishment of our parents: us. But we want to officially acknowledge in the publication of this *Festschrift* that they are an immense gift to the academic world, and even more so, to us.

Mom and dad, we love you and we are so proud of you.

עֲטֹרַת זְקִנִים, בְּנֵי בָנִים; וְתַפְאֶרֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם
Proverbs 17:6

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