less reliable. Elisha works harder at performing miracles, causes the death of harmless youths (2 Kgs 2:23–24), and can deceive or mislead with his prophecies (2 Kgs 8:10).

This survey of four biblical characters is a useful and interesting discussion that examines some major exegetical issues found in Deuteronomy and 1 and 2 Kings. Along the way one learns about the strengths and weaknesses that may be found in Israel’s leaders and prophets. Insofar as Kissling focuses our attention on these matters, his study is to be commended.

However, there are questions that surface repeatedly in this study. They concern the decision to examine the broad sweep of four characters within a space of barely 200 pages and to identify serious exegetical issues without giving some consideration to the possible explanations that other approaches provide. Surely the reliability of a character must be measured by a thorough exegetical analysis of all relevant texts, not by a cursory review of them. Is the difference between the two recitations of the Decalogue a statement about the reliability of Moses, or is it the reflection of two different literary contexts? If it is the latter, then conclusions about the reliability of the speaker are not warranted on the basis of these alterations. Do the different explanations for Moses’ not entering the Promised Land have something to do with the different audiences to whom they are given—that is, is it Israel in Deuteronomy 1 and to Moses in Deuteronomy 32? If so, then again conclusions about the reliability of Moses cannot be drawn from these contexts.

Elijah, like Elisha, appears as a prophetic figure with a certain element of unpredictability in his actions and words. Therefore, Kissling is correct to question the full reliability of each of these figures. However, the brief narratives leave a great deal unanswered about motives and purposes. We do not know that Elijah never received divine instruction to call a contest on Mt. Carmel or that he disobeyed the commands to anoint Elisha and the leaders of Israel and Aram. It may have been entirely within the divine will, as far as the author was concerned, to leave these tasks for a disciple and successor, just as Moses left the conquest of the land of Canaan for Joshua.

The study raises unanswered questions that only a closer reading and a careful exegesis of the text can address.

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Grabbe’s method rejects traditional literary-critical approaches in favor of a synchronic analysis of biblical texts. At the same time he retains a very strong skepticism toward the authenticity of the Hebrew Bible. Despite the title, the first religious specialist that Grabbe studies is the king. Due to the absence of evidence for them, Grabbe refuses to be allured by theories of an Israelite king’s participation in an annual festival. Instead, he catalogs the various prayers and sacrifices that kings make on behalf of the people. Like the title “son of God” in Psalm 2, the ascription of divinity to ancient Near Eastern kings must be nuanced. Absent from this discussion is the role of
Emar's king in cultic activities. Emar's king is not present in important ritual texts, just as the king of Israel is not present in the priestly texts of the Bible. Nor is it correct, in the light of Emar, to state that only early Israel preserved recollection of a time without a king.

As with each section, the section on priests begins with a survey of the OT texts on priests and then proceeds to review comparative ancient Near Eastern and other studies before concluding with consideration of some specific issues and a brief summary. Grabbe's hermeneutic is in evidence in his seeming acceptance of Wellhausen's analysis of Zadok as a Jebusite priest before questioning the tradition as a whole and concluding that nothing can be known of the figure. Grabbe's downplaying of the evidence of both Wilhelm and Lambert in favor of ritual and cultic prostitution is overdone.

The study of the prophets occupies the largest and one of the most provocative chapters in the book. Grabbe goes to great lengths and generally succeeds in destroying traditional scholarly (and popular) distinctions that have been made between various groups of prophets: for example, preclassical and classical (or nonwriting and literary); Mari, Neo-Assyrian, native American, and biblical; male and female; and true and false. Distinctions in modes of revelation, addressees, and general content and form disappear. The biblical prophets are found to be part of a wider phenomenon found in many times and places. Clearly, there are difficulties with some interpretations. The point of 1 Kings 22 is not the surprising reaction of the kings. There is no reason to convince one that the prophetess who bears children for Isaiah could not have been his wife. The text does not say. Nevertheless, the challenge remains to discover the relevance of the prophetic message within its common cultural context.

Grabbe's chapter on divination acknowledges its widespread use in the ancient Near East and, via the ephod and the Urim and Thummim, in Israel. Practices of consulting the dead were not endorsed. Nor is it correct to suppose that oblique references to Joseph's divining cup and David's teraphim demonstrate the acceptance of other forms of divination. Further, the cups and saucers found in Palestinian Iron Age tombs do not tell us much about attitudes toward the dead. However, Grabbe is correct to note the close association between dream reports and prophecy both within the Hebrew Bible and beyond it.

According to Grabbe, the wise were not a professional class by themselves but skilled people of all professions, though especially among the literate priests and scribes. There were probably no scribal schools in Israel and few people could read and write. Grabbe argues these conclusions with little or no evidence (p. 172). In particular, he ignores the increasingly large amount of inscriptive evidence from Palestine in the Iron Age, especially Israelite seals. They are unique in the ancient Near East in terms of consistently containing the name (and patronym) of the owner, often written in such a way that it could include half of the alphabet. Grabbe's single mention of the seal of Baruch son of Neriah and scribe of Jeremiah is dismissed because it "tells us little" (p. 154). To the contrary, it and the other names from Jeremiah attested on seals and impressions demonstrate that where it can be checked with the extrabiblical evidence, the book of Jeremiah bears an authentic witness. Data from seals should also be included in the section on female sages.
The final chapters draw together various observations and comments on what can and cannot be known of the functions of the religious specialists studied. In one part Grabbe argues against a Hellenistic date and in favor of a Persian one for the main formation of the Hebrew Bible. This again reflects the extensive influence on the author and this book of arguments that deny any recoverable preexilic tradition in the biblical text.

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Hoffman's title derives from and represents his conclusions regarding the book of Job: it is a paradox. His study is not exegetical but looks at key literary, theological, and linguistic aspects of the book. In the process, he bypasses many of the more troublesome questions such as the author and date. He does not ignore these, but views them as nongermane to the matter at hand. For example, while he accepts a date of composition in the “late biblical period,” he sets the question of date aside for several reasons, the most important of which is “our knowledge of the biblical period does not allow for a precise chronological mapping” (p. 19). Hoffman's goal is to evaluate the book in terms of esthetics. Specifically his thesis is to evaluate “what is the aesthetic problem which the artist wished to solve?” (p. 29). His conclusion is that the book is a collection of writings concerning the problem of theodicy, and the structure gives the author maximum freedom (p. 302). Consequently, as he lays his groundwork (“theoretical considerations”), Hoffman begins with the rule: “preference will be given to literal interpretation over homiletics” (p. 15).

While he is open to arguments that the book is stylistically defective (for example, Zophar does not give a third speech rounding off that cycle of speeches), he works with the current structure of the book of Job and argues that the present structure was designed. While this design may be the result of later copiers or redactors, Hoffman argues that such changes were deliberate for esthetic reasons. This leaves open the possibility that the original writer produced the same structure for the same reason, since any argument of changes is subjective. Hoffman asserts,

anyone who argues that the present composition of the book is not original must do so on the basis of aesthetic judgment: he or she initially states that there are faults in the present text, and in the wake of this assumes that these stem from unreliable transmission of the original text. (p. 35)

However, Hoffman then puts the issue aside until the last chapter of the book, where he argues for a structural integrity to the book as we have it.

In between he addresses several other issues, beginning with genre. There are two ways of evaluating the genre of a book such as Job. The more usual way is to contrast it with other works whose genre is generally ac-