

*Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament. 2 Bde.* Chr. Kaiser / Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Gütersloh 2004, ca. 1100 pp.

The Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament is a well-known, useful and indispensable work of reference since its first edition 1971. Now it is available in its sixth edition, in which there are no substantial changes in comparison to the first edition. It shows the quality of this lexicon that there was not any reason for the editors (Ernst Jenni with the aid of Claus Westermann, both renowned scholars) to change its conception.

Even after more than thirty years the disposition of this lexicon has not become obsolete. The editors wanted to offer a help not only for the scholarly work on the Old Testament but also for the ecclesiastical teaching and preaching. At the time of its first edition it was a new kind of lexicon because it does not list different possibilities of translating a word like a traditional lexicon but present the results of the scholarly work of the Old Testament with a stress on the theological relevance. It is the merit of this lexicon that it collects the information of manifold but dispersed monographs, articles, commentaries etc. The lexicon thus combines scholarly reliability with compact information.

The articles are written by numerous renowned scholars on a broad methodical basis, which is not limited to grammatical, philological, historical or etymological aspects but also includes form- and tradition-critical insights. In addition to a Hebrew Lexicon this lexicon discusses clearly arranged the linguistic usage of especially the theological important words. In this way it wanted to reflect the current state of Old Testament knowledge and of philology or linguistics. Is this true of the first edition, it is not fully true of the sixth edition because of the progress of research of more than thirty years since the first edition. But this does not strongly affect negatively the functionality and the value of this lexicon.

This lexicon is directed to theologians and pastors with a minimum knowledge of Hebrew language and biblical scholarship, but because of the transcription of the Hebrew script, the translation of Hebrew words and texts and extensive indexes it is also very helpful for readers who are not scholars in Old Hebrew.

The words were chosen not because of an underlying concept of Old Testament theology but because of their significance within the Hebrew Bible. The more than 320 entries are ordered according to roots, therefore their derivatives are all included in one entry.

Each article consists of five parts. The first part informs about the root, its equivalents in other Semitic languages, its derivatives, which are treated in the next parts and their meanings. The second, statistical part lists the frequency of the occurrence of the word and its main important derivatives in the Hebrew Bible. The next two parts are the main and therefore longest parts of each article. The third one explains the common use of the word or word group limited to the Hebrew canon. In the fourth part the author should describe the specific theological usage of the word. Whereas a strict differentiation between a 'profane' and 'theological' use is seldom possible, a certain graduation in theological more important and less important contexts cannot be denied. In this part like in the third part the author could arrange the diverse informations freely, e.g. out of semasiological, grammatical-syntactical or historical approaches. Controversies between certain scholars are mentioned with a reference to the most important literature. The fifth part deals very shortly with the following history, it shows if and where the history of the theological use extends into late Judaism, New Testament or early Christianity. In this way the articles inform concise but comprehensive about the words, their meanings, use and theological relevance. They contain an extensive bibliography which reflects the state of discussion at the time of its first edition, therefore it is possible that some of the mentioned controversial discussions are clarified in the meantime or other points are now discussed controversially.

Even if this lexicon is because of its age not in all aspects up to date, it is a reliable and important aid for the exegesis and study of biblical texts. It illuminates the various aspects of the discussed words and can be recommended to all interested students, theologians and pastors, also for these without knowledge of Hebrew.

(Thomas Fornet-Ponse)