

**“MY BROTHER ESAU IS A HAIRY MAN.”** By Susan Niditch. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Pp. 159. Cloth, \$45.00.

Niditch's book takes an object as frivolous as hair and demands that scholars no longer give it a mere passing glance. With a focus on Israelite folklore and culture, she examines the cultural and religious significance of hair. While examining the art of Mesopotamia and the text of the Hebrew Bible, she concludes that plentiful hair was the mark of the Israelite warrior. The absence of hair was a sign of weakness and resembles the Philistines and Egyptians, but it was also a metaphor for the weak nation's triumph over the strong. The text chooses Jacob (the hairless brother) to be the namesake of the country and not Esau (the hairy one). Niditch places the Nazir vow as a later adaptation of the "heroic" Samson model. Her Nazir examination resembles a Wellhausean interpretation of a hidden agenda by the "P source," which stems from her want of Samson to be the "hairy" hero of Judges. Her interpretation of the Judges as "Robin-Hood"-like heroes settling border disputes skews the purpose of a downward spiraling world presented by the text, which culminates in chaos created by Samson's "adventures" leading to all-out war between the tribes. However, her text is important in starting the conversation on cultural norms of Israelite women and men with regard to how they identify themselves according to hairstyle. Niditch's book is one that is not rife with complex concepts but is still full of insightful information that appeals to laity and scholar alike.

*Nicholaus Pumphrey*

*Claremont Graduate University*

**PERSPECTIVES ON PURITY AND PURIFICATION IN THE BIBLE.** Edited by Baruch J. Schwartz, David P. Wright, Jeffrey Stackert, and Naphtali S. Meshel. New York and London: T & T Clark, 2008. Pp. x + 118. \$110.

This slim volume contains just eight essays, which are unevenly divided between two themes related to purity. The first five essays discuss the possibility of a coherent system within the priestly legislation: "The Function of the Nazirite's Concluding Purification Offering," by R. E. Gane; "Sin and Impurity: Atoned or Purified? Yes!" by J. Sklar; "Pure, Impure, Permitted, Prohibited: A Study of Classification Systems in P," by N. S. Meshel; "Dirt and Disgust: Body and Morality in Biblical Purity Laws," by T. Kazen; and "Does the Priestly Purity Code Domesticate Women?" by D. Tabb Stewart. These detailed treatments relate to highly specific issues even within the subfield of priestly literature, so their potential audience is small. The last three essays deal more directly with broader, methodological questions: "Blood as Purification in Priestly Torah: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?" by W. K. Gilders; "Methodology and Ideology in the Study of Priestly Ritual," by J. Klawans; and "Pagans and Priests: Critical Reflections on Method," by F. H. Gorman. These methodological treatments ask pertinent and compelling questions, and strengthen the volume consider-

ably. Nevertheless, the list price for this volume, combined with its lean number of essays, relegates it to academic libraries only.

*Tyler Mayfield*

*Claremont School of Theology*

**OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND: CREATION THEOLOGY IN THE BOOK OF JOB.** By Kathryn Schifferdecker. Harvard Theological Studies, 61. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008. Pp. xii + 217. Paper, N.p.

In this book, directed toward Hebrew Bible scholars, Schifferdecker wrestles with the issue of how the divine speeches in the book of Job relate to the rest of the text. Whereas other scholars suggest an incongruent collection of speeches, Schifferdecker argues that Job can (and must) be understood as a whole. Schifferdecker argues that the position of the divine speeches (at the end of the book) and their length imply that their content contains answers to the questions raised earlier in the text. In examining the language and imagery of creation, Schifferdecker demonstrates a number of literary links between the divine and human speeches. She argues that the primary difficulty for Job and his associates is their androcentric understanding of creation. The divine speeches, instead, declare a radically different understanding, wherein humans are one creation among many. It is only through understanding the place of humanity in the larger scheme of creation that the problem of human suffering can be understood. Schifferdecker is in constant conversation with C. Newsom's analysis of Job and reflects Newsom's preoccupation with identifying genres. This emphasis on genre sometimes overshadows the significance of linguistic relations that are set forth and sometimes downplays these excellent observations. As a consolation for those desiring a more linguistic approach, Schifferdecker provides a sizeable appendix with her translation of and commentary on the divine speeches in Job, which serves to consolidate and organize most of her previous linguistic observations.

*Jacob Rennaker*

*Claremont Graduate University*

**OLD AND MIDDLE KINGDOM THEBAN TOMBS.** By Rasha Soliman. Egyptian Sites Series. London: Golden House Publications (distributed in the United States by David Brown Book Company), 2009. Pp. vii + 173; plates, illustrations. \$40.00.

While the New Kingdom tombs in the Theban necropolis are well known, the remains of earlier cemeteries are largely unfamiliar to all but serious scholars. The tombs are poorly preserved, often reused, and, in many cases, poorly published. This book makes the Old and Middle Kingdom tombs available in a single, easily accessible publication for the first time. The author begins with an overview of the topography and development of the necropolis before describing individual tombs chronologically, including some pre-Old Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period material in addi-