

Allen, James P. *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 524 pp. Paper, \$30.00.

James Allen, Curator of Egyptian Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, has also been a Research Associate and Lecturer in Egyptology at Yale University since 1986. He is the author of *The Inflection of the Verb in the Pyramid Texts* (1984) and *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts* (1989). In addition, he has published several articles on the Egyptian language, religion, and history and has been a consultant for programs about Ancient Egypt for the BBC, the Discovery Channel, the Learning Channel, and A&E.

*Middle Egyptian* is an introductory textbook aimed at the beginning student of ancient Egyptian, as well as the interested amateur. The book provides the foundation needed to understand texts on monuments and to read the great works of ancient Egyptian literature in the original form. It is ostensibly written for nonspecialists and designed to be usable for readers who are not familiar with foreign languages or grammatical terms. Because Egyptian is inherently difficult to learn, Allen attempts to offer a solid foundation in Middle Egyptian through 26 lessons and exercises covering grammatical structures and syntax as well as 25 short essays on various aspects of Egyptian life and thought. This combination of grammar lessons and cultural essays allows users not only to read hieroglyphic texts, but understand the contexts in which they were written.

Allen focuses on the mechanics of syntax in order to help students understand grammatical terms and how syntactic constructions influence the meaning of sentences. The book is divided into two major parts: Lessons 1-12 include background information, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, and nonverbal clauses. Lessons 13-25 include the verb and its various forms. Lesson 26 outlines the exceptions to all of the rules of Egyptian grammar and discusses the various theories related to the function of the verbal forms. Most chapters begin with definitions, a systematic outline of the grammar associated with the definitions, an essay discussing aspects of ancient Egyptian culture, and exercises ranging anywhere from 15-40 sentences. Allen has also included references, located at the end of the book, for the examples used in grammatical discussions, historical essays, and exercises. A detailed index, sign list, and dictionary are provided, and more importantly an answer key to the exercises, thereby overcoming one of the limitations of Alan Gardiner's *Egyptian Grammar: Being An Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphs*, 3d ed. [Oxford: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, 1994].

Allen does not claim to have any particular bias nor subscribe to any particular school of grammatical theory. He rejects the traditional theory found in Gardiner's *Egyptian Grammar* because it failed to recognize the subjunctive and the passive and active forms of the prospective *smḏ.f* identified in more recent literature. Allen also rejects Polotsky's "adverbial verb forms" (*Collected Works* [Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Magnes, 1971]) which Hoch adopted as the standard theory in *Middle Egyptian Grammar* (Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities, 15 [Mississauga, Canada: Benben, 1997]). Though Allen recognizes that Polotsky's verbal system works in some sentences with emphasized adverbs, he does not believe it works in

every case: "Middle Egyptian texts contain numerous examples of the stative, perfect, and *smḏ.f* without introductory words in clauses that cannot be analyzed as adverb clauses or emphatic sentences" (407). Allen, like other Egyptologists, has reconsidered the "nominal" and "circumstantial" forms in favor of the current theory that sees verb forms as expressing primary differences in meaning rather than syntactic function. This method can also be found in Collier and Manley's *How to Read Egyptian Hieroglyphs: A Step-By-Step Guide to Teach Yourself* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1998).

Allen makes several contributions toward his goal of simplifying the learning of hieroglyphs and providing a more accessible Egyptian grammar to interested nonspecialists as well as students beginning their course work in Egyptology. The chapter formats are well-organized and relatively short. The essays that accompany most of the chapters help the student understand the connection between the language and the culture in which it was written. The seamless blend of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs and English text makes the content very easy to follow. Achieving this is largely made possible by the software and font package of the Centre for Computer-aided Egyptological Research.

Though Allen attempts to make Egyptian grammar more user-friendly, he unnecessarily complicates the process by choosing the European method of transliteration over the traditional method. As the book points out, transliteration is the "set of alphabetic symbols that represent each of the uniliterals of hieroglyphics (13)." The European method used throughout the book in every example, exercise, and dictionary entry was chosen by Allen because "it requires fewer special signs" (13). Yet the only special sign that differentiates the European from the traditional is the "˙" placed over an "s" (š), which was simplified by Gardiner to simply "s." Special signs should no longer be an issue since Egyptian transliteration fonts are widely available as free downloads from the Internet or come prepackaged with Egyptian fonts, including the one in which the book is published.

The most significant difference between the two methods of transliteration is that the European method uses the "j" to represent  $\text{𓆎}$  rather than the "i" of the traditional method. In the European method the transliteration "j" looks unnatural to an English speaker. The letter  $\text{𓆎}$  is one of the most frequently used hieroglyphs. When vowels are added to the European Egyptian transliteration to create an approximate English pronunciation, words with the letter  $\text{𓆎}$  seem awkward. Thus, the phonetic pronunciation of  $\text{𓆎} \text{𓆏} \text{wjn}$  appears to be *wejen* because the transliterated "j" looks like an English consonant "j". Unfortunately Allen's use of the European transliteration compels students to remember to pronounce the  $\text{𓆎}$  transliterated as "j" with a sound like *ee* in *meet*. In his example  $\text{𓆎} \text{bit}$ , which looks like it would be pronounced *bejet*, but the word should be pronounced *beet* (18). The traditional method would render the same examples as  $\text{𓆎} \text{win}$  and  $\text{𓆎} \text{bit}$ , leading to a less ambiguous pronunciation of *ween* and *beet*, respectively. The confusion is further compounded because  $\text{𓆎} \text{d}$  has the same phonetic value as the English consonant "j". For the beginning student and the interested amateur, pronunciation is important for memorizing new words. The fewer mental gymnastics required to recognize that pronunciation, the

better. This awkward use of transliteration only hinders Allen's goal of making Middle Egyptian accessible to nonspecialists.

In addition to its detailed index, *Middle Egyptian* could use a glossary of the grammatical terms used in the textbook. This would help students locate terms without searching through the chapters for their meaning. The table on pp. 24-25 introduces a good overview of biliterals, but a list of biliterals and trilaterals should be included with the sign list near the dictionary to make searching for words easier. Although Allen's examples and exercises mostly come from actual Egyptian texts, there are few vertical texts or diagrams (244) and no photographs of monumental or other inscriptions. Some actual inscriptions in diagrammatic or photographic form like those used in Collier and Manley, *How to Read Egyptian Hieroglyphs* (1998), should be included toward the end of the book. Such examples or exercises could place special emphasis on monumental offertory and funerary texts that frequently appear in museums and would give students practice with actual inscriptions. The summary pronoun chart on p. 50 and the *smd*f forms in the table on p. 295 should be expanded, enlarged, and include hieroglyphic examples for each. These would make great reference tools like the pronoun and verbal charts that appear at the back of most Near-Eastern grammars. A bibliography with complete references, particularly for Lesson 26, would be helpful. A reference to Polotsky's (1971) *Collected Works* should be included.

Allen's book is a good Middle Egyptian grammar for those who are leaning away from the traditional and standard grammatical theories of Gardiner and Polotsky. This book has the potential for becoming the new standard for Middle Egyptian textbooks based upon the current Egyptological theory, but its use of the European transliteration, but its lack of diagrammatic or photographic reproductions of actual monuments limits its appeal to beginning students and interested nonspecialists.

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Carson, D. A., Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds. *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 1, *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. 2 Reihe. 140. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001. xii + 619 pp. Paper, \$44.99.

This collection of sixteen essays (including Carson's introduction and conclusion) is the first of two volumes seeking to clarify the discussion of Paul's perspective on the law and justification. The specific purposes of this volume are to reexamine the idea of "covenantal nomism" as presented in E. P. Sander's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) and to call "for a new understanding of the complexities of the Judaism of Jesus' (and Paul's) day" (back cover).

The main strength of this book is that it tries to build a bridge between two disciplines that have engaged each other only superficially, namely, study of the Second Temple period and Pauline studies. In most cases, the contributors are top-notch intertestamental-period scholars, and their mastery of the primary and secondary literature is extensive, up to date, and impressive. Moreover, the book is