

Friendship in the Hebrew Bible. By Saul M. Olyan. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017. xiii + 191 pages. \$50.00.

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Although friendship has enjoyed renewed attention in theology for more than thirty years, much less consideration has been given to the place of friendship in the Bible, particularly the Hebrew Bible. In this captivating, carefully crafted, and consistently insightful volume, Saul Olyan convincingly overcomes that deficiency by arguing that even though friendship may not be a principal theme in the Hebrew Bible, it is present more than typically assumed and portrayed in ways that reward patient scrutiny.

Olyan begins by noting that in the Hebrew Bible family is the paradigm in light of which every other intimate relationship (such as friends, allies, or covenant partners) is considered; thus, the bond between friends is generally weaker than the bond among family members. Nonetheless, friends and family members share important characteristics and assume similar responsibilities. Both are affective relationships founded on and characterized by love. Like family, friendships require honesty, trustworthiness, and continuing loyalty. Most crucially, friendships demand reciprocity (what Olyan describes as “behavioral parity”) and entail particular expectations, such as presence and support, especially in times of hardship, that are not true of lesser relationships. Consequently, love between friends is both an affection and a virtue, both a deep and abiding care for another person and a habitual willingness to work for her or his good. Finally, in the Hebrew Bible, as in life, friendships differ in intimacy, depth, and endurance. Some are more casual relationships, similar to Aristotle’s friendships of usefulness and pleasure, but others display a resilience and depth that at times surpass that which is enjoyed among family (e.g., Proverbs 18:24 and the friendship between Jonathan and David).

Perhaps the most poignant and compelling part of *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible* is Olyan’s detailed analysis of how easily, and sadly often, friends fail one another. This dimension of friendship is especially prominent in psalms of lament, but is also present in Proverbs, Jeremiah, Micah, and Job. Friendships weaken through inaction when friends neglect the obligations of friendship and through specific behaviors that violate and undermine the friendship (lying about a friend, rejoicing at their misfortune, actively plotting against them). One can consider these sins against friendship, which range from abandoning a friend when he or she is experiencing adversity to not only rejecting a friend, but also deviously and maliciously seeking ways to harm them. The extensive analysis Olyan devotes to failed friendships in the Hebrew Bible, probing the many instances when reference is made to

how easily friends forsake one another and can even become enemies, is both sobering and distressingly relevant. Few will contest his claim that precisely because of the inherent risk and vulnerability at the heart of any friendship, friendships that die bring a harvest of deep pain and enduring loss. But we might not realize, as the Hebrew Scriptures attest, that the alienation and estrangement that are the legacy of failed friendships also contribute to social decline because they destroy the very bonds on which a healthy and flourishing society depends.

Not surprisingly, Olyan examines the friendships between Ruth and Naomi and Jonathan and David as well as the three companions whose presence does little to lessen the misery of Job. He also scrutinizes friendship in Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus) to determine if, and to what extent, Greek philosophy might have informed the text. Most interesting, there is the easily overlooked distinction between genuine friends, who are willing to be truthful and straightforward, and flatterers, who are not.

Friendship in the Hebrew Bible is a highly original and unquestionably important contribution to the growing literature on friendship. Clearly written and eminently accessible, it would be an ideal text for graduate courses on friendship or for biblical seminars. Perhaps its most significant achievement is to demonstrate that friendship matters more in the Hebrew Bible than has customarily been acknowledged, and that if we want to know what the ancients can teach us about friendship, we may start with Aristotle, but we surely shouldn't stop there.

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Traces of the Trinity: Signs, Sacraments, and Sharing God's Life. By Andrew Robinson. Cambridge: James Clarke, 2014. xii + 178 pages. \$38.86 (paper). doi: 10.1017/hor.2017.108

Andrew Robinson, medical doctor and honorary fellow in theology at the University of Exeter, wrote this book convinced that "Trinitarian thought should be a framework that makes sense of the entirety of Christian life" (ix). For that purpose he had recourse to the philosophy of signs (semiotics) originally set forth by Charles Sanders Peirce. The book is divided into three parts. In the first part, Robinson sets forth Peirce's scheme of Quality, Otherness, and Mediation as "elemental grounds" for human understanding and interpretation of physical reality (21) and applies these terms to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: the Father is Quality or "in-itself-ness" (20), the Son is Otherness as the self-manifestation of the Father, and the Holy