

Editorial

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This issue comes out at a time when humanity is wrestling with the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), which is affecting most people across the globe. Currently, there are over three million COVID-19 cases reported, over two hundred thousand dead, and about one million who have recovered. This is a pandemic of biblical proportions. In response, governments have closed their borders and locked down their citizens in what they claim is an attempt to contain and limit the spread of the virus. For most of us, what we are going through is life unusual, to say the least; we are forced to find innovative ways of doing things. In academia, the residential institutions have had to resort to online teaching. Researchers and students are now relying more and more on electronic materials for their studies as libraries are closed, and bookstores are not considered essential businesses.

While our journal is readily available for access online, we have also been printing hard copies for our subscribers. However, any attempt to make print copies available at this point would be futile considering the restrictions that are currently in place. Our readership, however, will continue to have access to our journal online through our website and the other online platforms. The post-coronavirus world will likely not be the same as the old for journal publishing, and it is our intention to innovate as we navigate our changing landscape.

The current issue contains eight articles. While we publish them at the time of the coronavirus, they originated in the pre-coronavirus world. The first two articles deal with the issue of trauma. Claassens attends to the question of trauma from a feminist perspective, focusing mainly on the plight of women both in the Genesis 29–30 text and its reading in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* to highlight the resistance embedded in both texts. I guess that if Claassens were to also read the same biblical text in light of the trauma caused by COVID-19, other dimensions would emerge from the reading. Furman focuses on the communal effects of trauma in his reading of Ezekiel 3:22–27; 4:4–8; 16 and 12 in the light of the modern-day sociological and psychological research on issues such as emigration, exile and refugees. Considering how the world of coronavirus has halted migration, it would have been interesting to consider how the post-coronavirus world will deal with the issue of emigration and also to the gender issues.

Dockrat's article focuses on Adrianus van Selms' contribution, particularly on the way that he has brought together Muslim material culture and biblical

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studies. As Dockrat notes, van Selms’ interpretation of the biblical texts would also draw on Muslim culture and concepts to explain the biblical texts. Riecker and Koorevaar engage in a close reading of Genesis 2:4 with special reference to what *bəjôm* refers to in its literary context. Based on their close reading of the text, they argue that *bəjôm* should be viewed as pointing specifically to the first day of creation. Terblanche interrogates the question of ideological undertones in Jeremiah 32. He argues that underlying this biblical text are redactional layers with conflicting ideologies which modern-day readers have to take into consideration, especially if they appropriate this text to address modern-day land issues. Rugwiji’s article focuses on ancient Israel’s laws (torah) in their ancient Near Eastern context and goes on to interrogate how those laws are interpreted in the New Testament. Boloje examines how the prophet Malachi utilizes the concepts of *bWv* (“return”) to encourage the Yehudite community to manoeuvre by being faithful to the cult and torah as a means of guaranteeing a stable present and a prosperous future. Finally, Bar focuses on a detailed description of Samuel’s last moments, which is unlike that of the judges in the book of Judges. He concludes that Samson is a hero similar to heroes found in other ancient fables, and his actions at the end of his life simply brought Israel temporary relief from its national enemy: both the chaos within Israel and the oppression by the Philistines continued.

I wish all our readers good health. The coronavirus pandemic too we shall overcome. As the Vhavenda people say, *Tshi sa fhiri tshi a tula*: things do come to pass.

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