

Cian Power

The Significance of Linguistic Diversity in the Hebrew Bible

Language and Boundaries of Self and Other

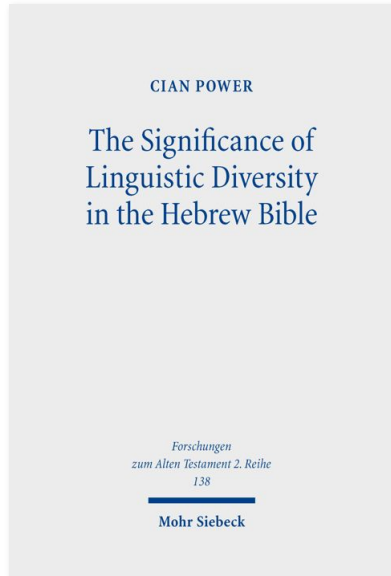
[The Significance of Linguistic Diversity in the Hebrew Bible]

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Cian J. Power explores how the biblical authors viewed and presented a fundamental human reality: the existence of the world's many languages. By examining explicit references to this diversity - such as the ambivalent account of its origins in the Tower of Babel episode - and implicit acknowledgements that included the use of strange-sounding speech to portray alien peoples, he illuminates ideas about Aramaic, Egyptian, Akkadian, and other ancient languages. Drawing on sociolinguistics, Power detects a consistent link between language and - ethnic, political, religious, and divine/human boundaries, and argues that changing historical circumstances are key to the Bible's varying attitudes. Furthermore, the study's findings regarding the biblical authors' ideas about their own language and its importance challenge our very notion of Hebrew.

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