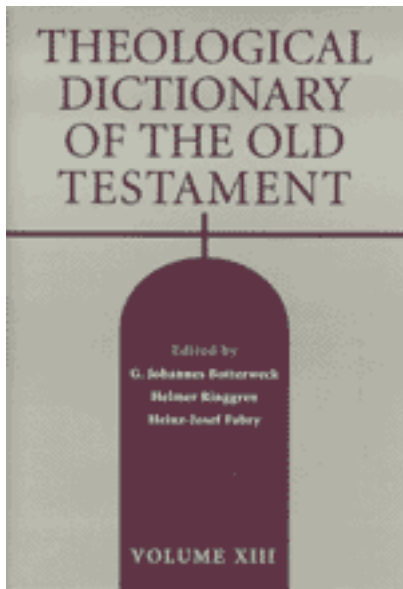


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Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds.

***Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 13:
רקיע-קוץ**

Translated by David E. Green

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. Pp. xxiii + 653. Cloth.
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This volume is the thirteenth in a well-known and much-used reference work that has had an established place in libraries and on scholars' own shelves since the early 1970s. The preceding twelve volumes have regularly been reviewed. This volume translates vol. 7, parts 1–6 of the German *TWAT* (*Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1990–92]).

So what can one say? It is an established reference work; the authors are well chosen and drawn from universities in various (predominantly European) countries. The majority, however, about half the total, are from Germany. A dozen are drawn from Bonn alone, which suggests the influence of Heinz-Josef Fabry in the editing of these later volumes of the series. The entries usually discuss the etymology of the term, ancient Near Eastern parallels and cognates, lexical and semantic equivalents, the occurrence and distribution of the term in the Hebrew Bible, its meanings, and changes in usage in both biblical and postbiblical material as well as provide a bibliography.

Volume 13 appears thirty years after the first English edition of volume 1 (that volume was revised, and the corrected 1979 edition is now found in most libraries) and treats the later words beginning with ק and a large part of those whose first letter is ר. This gives

an indication of both the Germanic thoroughness and the detailed scholarship included in the work.

At first the English translations were made within a couple of years of the publication of the German originals. However, by volume 5 the lag was six years from the publication of the last fascicle of the German edition. For volume 8 this delay had increased to thirteen years. However, over recent years the lag has been cut back, though for the volume under review it is again twelve years. However, volume 14 has recently appeared, and the series (for the Hebrew language, at least) is nearly complete. The material that will make up the last volume of the English edition has yet to appear in German, and the Aramaic material has not yet begun to appear.

The lists of editors and contributors are interesting: of the seventy scholars who contributed in some way to volume 13, eleven were also involved in the very first. The passing of time is marked by the names that no longer appear, as four of the names of those eleven have been marked by the editors as having died after completing their entries for volume 13.

The difference between 1974 and 2004 is also seen in many articles through the impact of the greater accessibility of Qumran texts. One can compare, for example, Talmon's discussion of the postbiblical use of קָרָא (78–85) with the sparse references in the early volumes.

The publishers identify the following articles from volume 13 as being of “primary theological importance . . . *qārā'* (‘call, name’), *rā'ā* (‘see’), *rō's* [*sic*] (‘head’), *rab* (‘many, great’), *rūah* (‘breath, spirit’), *rhm* (‘compassion’), and *r''* (‘evil’).” (The erroneous transcription is from the publisher's website [http://www.eerdmans.com/shop/product.asp?p_key=0802823378] and, thankfully, not from the book itself!) Such major articles are more likely to have benefited from input from more than one author, and their length, varying from fourteen pages (רִאשׁוֹן “head”) to thirty-seven pages (רוּחַ “breath, spirit”), indicates substantial presentations of ongoing discussion.

The format of the articles has retained a useful combination of flexibility for each author to provide headings that “work” for the lexical item(s) under consideration, with an overall pattern moving from etymology through usage to meaning and theological discussion (see, e.g., רוּחַ , 365–402).

Once again a considerable value of this work is the collection of information that is not otherwise readily available. In some cases developments in information technology and library science raise questions about the continuing value of a work that is inevitably out

of date when printed. Thus the advent of desktop biblical software makes examination of usage much quicker to generate for oneself than was the case in 1974. In the information age, the advantage to a scholar of the listing in *TDOT* of occurrences and usage in the biblical text is diminished. Bibleworks with its neat and evocative frequency bar charts and its ability to seek out particular constructions has largely replaced *TDOT* for this function. Consequently, the printed reference work is no longer one's natural port of call when seeking to "get a feel" for the usage patterns of a lexical item.

The impact of information technology on the bibliographies that accompany each article is, surprisingly, less marked. Consider the difference between searching for קרא on an electronic database with looking up the entry in *TDOT*. The database is quick and thorough but for languages other than English still surprisingly limited. I used EBSCO's ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, and when I entered the Hebrew קרא the search produced no results (EBSCO is either not Unicode compliant or its data entry cannot cope with the Hebrew language). Searching for אקרא also produced only a handful of useful results. By contrast, the article in *TDOT* lists over a dozen items (though all from before 1985). That the most recent items are two decades old points up one of the problems with this work. The double time lag—from author to print and from German to English—means that this bibliographic aspect of the work is less useful than it could be.

Thinking of the disadvantage such a large-scale classic reference work faces in offering bibliographic data suggests consideration of a hybrid approach. Using Internet technology one could imagine an easy-to-update bibliographic database, organized around the same heads as the *TDOT*. When scholars, for their own study or research, seek more recent bibliography to supplement that in *TDOT*, they could add this to the online database. Entries would become contemporary; admittedly the most studied words would be updated first, but gradually the full stock would be treated. This more complete, and up-to-date, bibliography would complement what is likely to remain a standard work for some time to come. Wikis offer a simple web-based way for anyone to edit text on a website, so a wiki would be one simple and available approach that could permit us easily to share with each other the bibliography of more recent articles uncovered in our studies. While a wiki can be set to allow anyone to author content, it would be possible to restrict data entry to members of a select group (e.g., SBL members). Indeed, perhaps if Eerdmans is not interested the SBL itself could provide this resource, though one can imagine that such material could greatly enhance the value and lifespan of an eventual electronic edition of *TDOT* itself, and thus the publisher as well as the guild could benefit from such collaborative scholarship.

In summary, reviewing this volume is like stepping back in time to an older and more leisurely world. The scholarship is impressively thorough and balanced, yet the

usefulness of the series is compromised in several ways by the passage of time and the advance of technology. However, that same technology might offer a solution to the most serious problem that time imposes on such a work.