Seth Sanders

This year's research by **Seth Sanders** for the West Semitic Political Lexicon project produced two conference presentations, two articles accepted for publication, and plans for a conference to be published in the *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions.*

The project's investigation of the historical development of ways of talking and thinking about politics in West Semitic languages such as Amorite, Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Hebrew led to "Naming the Dead: State Formation and Ancestor Formation in the Iron Age Levant" and "How Did Biblical Literature Begin? Epigraphy, Theory and Anachronism," both given at the Chicago Society of Biblical Literature meeting in November. Written versions were accepted as "Naming the Dead: Monumental Writing and Mortuary Politics in Late Iron Age Anatolia and Judah" in *Maarav* and "What Epigraphy Tells Us about Reading Biblical Narrative: The Audience and Politics of Absalom's Stand" in *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Israel*, edited by Brian Schmidt.

A colloquium, planned for the American Oriental Society and a special issue of the *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religion*, on "Myths of Justice in the Ancient Mediterranean World" will examine some historical foundations and developments of myth in politics. A West Semitic myth in the second-millennium BC connects the king's role as victorious cosmic warrior to his role as just judge. This myth shaped political concepts of the Hebrew Bible, where God wins sovereignty by defeating Leviathan only to have his own justice questioned, leaving a powerful political legacy for the West. Related topics covered will include Hammurapi's endowment by Shamash: the myth and politics of debt-relief; incantations, divination and judgment by the divine court in Mesopotamian ritual and scholarship; Herodotus' parody of the foundations of the Median empire; and the divine witnesses and sanctions in the plague-prayer of Mursili.

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