REVIEW OF THE SUPERVISOR

FOR THE FINAL QUALIFICATION WORK

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“The Jewish Passover and the Zukru Ritual from the City of Emar: A Comparative Analysis of Texts and Religious Ideas”

The work of E.A. Fedorova is devoted to the comparison of the cuneiform texts of the zukru ritual from the city of Emar and the Old Testament texts with the mention of the Pesach festival. The relevance of the work is caused by the ideas that have taken root in the scholarly literature that zukru is supposedly a prototype of Pesach. The author of the work was tasked to test this hypothesis. For verification, it was necessary to translate all the cuneiform zukru tablets from the peripheral Akkadian language into Russian, collect and translate from the Hebrew language all biblical fragments relating to Pesach, and conduct a comparative analysis of both the texts themselves and the religious ideas characteristic of both festivals. The work consists of an Introduction, five chapters, a Conclusion, a List of References and an Appendix. The first chapter discusses options for reconstructing the Emar calendar. The second chapter is devoted to the analysis of texts describing the zukru ritual. The third chapter examines the ideas of modern scholarship concerning the Jewish calendar. The fourth chapter is a collection of information about Passover. The final fifth chapter provides a thorough comparative analysis of the texts and religious beliefs associated with zukru and Passover. Each motif and ritual is analyzed from the point of view of the composition of the text, its function and its structure. The Appendix contains the first translations of Akkadian texts from Emar into Russian.

The results obtained by the author of the work are much more accurate than the hypotheses of modern biblical scholars on the topic of the origin of Pesach. It follows from the work that the direct influence of the zukru ritual on Pesach is unlikely. The fact that the evidence for zukru is older than the Passover evidence is not proof of causation. A certain similarity of the two festivals may be due to belonging to a common West Semitic tradition. In my opinion, these are correct conclusions, especially considering the large distance between the cuneiform texts from Emar (XIII century BC) and the Old Testament texts about Passover (not earlier than the VIIIth century BC), as well as the fact that the ancient Jews could neither participate in Emar rites (in the era of Emar there were no Jews as an ethnic group), nor read its description in cuneiform (because of the strict prohibition on showing religious texts to strangers).

 It should be noted that a meaningful analysis of the texts was preceded by painstaking work on their translation from the peripheral Akkadian and Hebrew languages. Such a translation required from the author of the work a good knowledge of cuneiform and grammar, as well as modern scientific literature on Assyriology and biblical studies. Each text translated from the Akkadian language is preceded by a transliteration, the biblical texts are given in translation, indicating the most important terms and formulas in Hebrew. If all researchers studied the texts as carefully as the author of this work, then modern scholarship would be spared from many false sensations.

The graduation qualification work of E.A. Fedorova was performed at a high professional level. The author of the work is a competent reader of cuneiform and Hebrew texts. The work deserves a high positive evaluation.

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