The volume under review is a collection of studies that were presented at a conference held at the University of Haifa in May of 2009, which dealt for the most part with various facets of the connections between Egypt and the Levant, primarily during the New Kingdom/Late Bronze Age, but also with some studies dealing the earlier Middle Bronze Age and the late Iron Age. Several papers that were only indirectly related to the general topic were included as well, which adds to the general interest of this volume. As with just about all conference proceedings volumes, the studies represent a mélange, both in their topics, methodology, and, ultimately, quality. That said, the organizers of the conference and the editors of the volume are to be congratulated and thanked for putting together a scholarly gathering and so quickly publishing the proceedings of an interesting collection of studies. It should be noted that this conference is but one of several very interesting conferences on topics relating to biblical studies, archaeology and other ancient Near Eastern topics that have been organized at the University of Haifa in recent years, and the vigorous and active players behind these meetings should be lauded in general.

There are fifteen papers in the volume, and I will not review them all in depth. Rather, I will summarize the various papers and provide some more detailed comments on a few of the issues raised in some of the papers.
In “Shishak’s Karnak Relief—More than Just Name-Rings” (11–22), S. Ben-Dor Evian argues that, based on a close study of the text of Shishak/Sheshonq’s Karnak relief, the famous campaign to the Levant should be placed within the early stages of his reign.

D. Ben-Tor’s “Egyptian-Canaanite Relations in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages as Reflected by Scarabs” (23–43) provides a brief overview and comparison of the corpus of scarabs found in Canaan during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. Building on her previous research, which has been extensively published, she demonstrates that, while Middle Bronze Age scarabs were almost all mass-produced local Canaanite copies of general Egyptian motifs, during the Late Bronze Age most of the scarabs are either imported from Egypt or, in some cases, made in Canaan but imitating specific Egyptian motifs. This can be seen as evidence of the very different relations that existed between Canaan and Egypt in these two periods.

S. Binder, in “Joseph’s Rewarding and Investiture [Genesis 41:41–43] and Gold of Honour in New Kingdom Egypt” (44–64), argues that the description of Joseph’s reward as depicted in Gen 41 is based on a knowledge of Egyptian New Kingdom traditions and may indicate that the traditions in this narrative are based on Late Bronze Age/New Kingdom memories, even if later motifs were added in to this story at later times.

M. G. Hasel contends in “The Battle of Kadesh: Identifying New Kingdom Polities, Places, and Peoples in Canaan and Syria” (65–86) that, despite a common assumption that Egyptian scribes were inconsistent in their use of names and determinatives in describing foreign names, in fact, as can be seen from a detailed analysis of the Kadesh texts, this is not the case, and clear pattern of consistency can be seen. This clearly has implications for the study of other Egyptian texts and what they describe, such as the Merneptah Stela.

J. K. Hoffmeier’s “David’s Triumph Over Goliath: 1 Samuel 17:54 and Ancient Near Eastern Analogues” (87–114) attempts to show that the many parallels from the ancient Near East to the biblical depiction that Goliath’s head was taken to Jerusalem (which according the biblical text at the time was in Jebusite hands) indicates that this was done by David and Saul to intimidate the Jebusites, foreshadowing David’s later conquest of the city. In addition, for various reasons Hoffmeier does not accept the arguments (inter alia, by Finkelstein and A. Yadin) that the depiction of Goliath and his panoply fits in with late Iron Age and Persian Period Hoplite warriors and argues rather that it fits well with an early Iron Age scenario. While I fully agree that parts of the Goliath narrative can fit with the early Iron Age (and Hoffmeier quotes my views on this issue), I believe that he does not take into account that the David and Goliath narrative in the Bible has a long and rather convoluted development (as shown in numerous studies), so that reading it as
a simple, single event narrative oversimplifies the study of a very multifaceted text. While the inscription from Tell es-Safi/Gath with two names similar to Goliath provides cultural background to the Goliath story in the early Iron Age, it does not in any way prove the veracity of the narrative. Likewise, even if we accept that the recently found site of Khirbet Qeiyafa is Israelite (and I believe that this is the most likely explanation), it hardly supports the biblical narrative of the David and Goliath story, as the site was destroyed—indicating that perhaps, in fact, the Israelites lost in battle to the Philistines at this time! Thus, while additional ancient Near Eastern parallels to the background of this narrative are important, they can hardly serve to provide a clear-cut early, or, for other examples, late dating of this iconic text.

In “Two Hymns as Praise Poems, Royal Ideology, and History in Ancient Israel and Ancient Egypt: A Comparative Reflection” (115–35), S. T. Hollis compares the hymns of praise to kings in the Bible (for David in 2 Sam 22) to that of the Merneptah in the “Israel Stela,” suggesting that there are close parallels between these two texts, perhaps indicating common cultural backgrounds.

D. Kahn, one of the volume editors, in “One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward: The Relations between Amenhotep III, King of Egypt and Tushratta, King of Mitanni” (136–54), discusses Egyptian-Mitanni relations during the first half of the fourteenth century B.C.E. and suggests identifying a previously unknown short term period of animosity between the two kingdoms and attempts to explain the background and the historical developments connected with this.

A. Mazar’s “The Egyptian Garrison Town at Beth-Shean” (155–89) provides a general overview of the archaeological evidence for the Egyptian garrison at Beth-shean during the New Kingdom, one of the central points of Egyptian control of Canaan. While those looking for detailed reports on this site can now look at the three volumes that Mazar has published on his excavations, the chapter provides an excellent brief overview of the relevant issues at hand.

K. Muhlstein, in “Levantine Thinking in Egypt” (190–235), discusses the deep Levantine influence that can be seen in Egyptian culture, which he believes is more profound than often believed. This is demonstrated through various pieces of archaeological and textual evidence, but it can be aptly demonstrated through the Levantine influence seen in Egyptian literature, such as in the story of the Shipwrecked Sailor.

In “A View to a Kill: Egypt’s Grand Strategy in her Northern Empire” (236–51), M. Müller attempts to show a “Grand Strategy” in the imperial policy of the Egyptian New Kingdom. Borrowing concepts form military theorists such as E. Luttwak (“Grand
Strategy”) and Q. Wright, he claims that the Egyptian Empire had a sophisticated and flexible strategy in how they managed their empire and the relations with other powers and conquered regions, which enabled this empire to last for a long period.

B. Ockinga’s “Hatshepsut’s Appointment as Crown Prince and the Egyptian Background to Isaiah 9:5” (252–67) further develops earlier suggestions to see an Egyptian influence in the giving of names to the child in Isa 9:5, comparing it to the text at Deir el-Bahari in which Thutmose I names Hatshepsut as crown prince. He argues that the four names bestowed on the child in Isaiah can be connected to the practice of naming a crown prince.

B. U. Schipper, in “Egyptian Imperialism after the New Kingdom: The 26th Dynasty and the Southern Levant” (268–90) provides an excellent review and discussion of the imperial interests of the Egyptian Twenty-Sixth Dynasty in the Levant, well known in connection with the Egyptian interests in relation to the kingdom of Judah during the seventh century b.c.e. reviewing the archaeological, biblical, and textual sources, he stresses that the kingdom of Judah was of marginal interest in the “big picture” of the Egyptian imperial interests.

J. J. Shirley, one of the volume editors, offers “What’s in a Title? Military and Civil Officials in the Egyptian 18th Dynasty Military Sphere” (291–319), which discusses various classes of military and civil officials during the Egyptian Eighteenth Dynasty and, in particular, denotes the existence of civilian officials who took over military roles during military campaigns but should not be seen as military officials per se.

C. Vogel, in “This Far and Not a Step Further! The Ideological Concept of Ancient Egyptian Boundary Stelae” (320–41), discusses the ideological and practical meaning of Egyptian boundary stelae, shedding new light on their meaning, particularly in light of new evidence from Tell el-Borg in Northern Sinai.

The final paper, A. Zertal’s “The Arunah Pass” (342–56), discusses the geographical history of the well-known Arunah Pass, most famous from Thutmose III’s campaign to Megiddo. Zertal, based on the site of El-Ahwat, which he excavated, suggests a slightly more southern route for this pass.

All told, this volume contains a slew of very interesting, if at times provocative papers on a wide range of topics relating mostly to Egyptian-Levantine relations, mostly during the New Kingdom. As stressed above, the editors are to be thanked for producing this very nicely made and important volume.