

Itamar Singer, emeritus professor of Professor of Ancient Near Eastern History and Cultures at Tel Aviv University passed away on September 19, 2012 after a long illness. He leaves behind a loving wife. SBL recently and proudly published a collection of Itamar's works (*The Calm before the Storm* 2011). I know of no better way to pay tribute to one of the finest minds in Near Eastern studies than to let him speak for himself. The following excerpt is from his introduction to that volume:

“There are no dull periods in history but people usually find some periods and some topics more exciting than the others. Like most boys, I suppose, I was first fascinated by heroic figures such as Alexander the Great and Napoleon, but soon my interest turned to periods of turmoil and disaster, influenced perhaps by the fate of my own family. What intrigued me most was the question how could a relatively calm and prosperous period transform, often promptly, into a time of precariousness and disaster. Were the signs really written on the wall, as it is often claimed in retrospect, and if so, what could have been done to prevent the fateful events to come? I spent hours daydreaming what would I have done in such and such situation and the answers became less and less evident the older I grew.

“As a student of archaeology my initial attraction to periods of crisis naturally steered me into the world of the “Sea Peoples.” One of my first seminar papers attempted to take stock of the various theories concerning their origins and destinations, a topic that has continued to captivate me since. However, various circumstances during my post-graduate studies drew me into the orbit of another fascinating discipline, Hittitology, which would become the main focus of my scholarly pursuits for the decades to come. In due time I came to realize how intimately the two subjects are interconnected; in fact, I believe that only an integrated study of the two domains, ancient Anatolia and the “Sea Peoples,” can provide satisfactory answers to some of the pressing questions.

“Despite my strong historical inclination, as the topic for my doctoral dissertation I chose, following the advice of my supervisor Professor Heinrich Otten, the philological study of a large festival text, the KILAM. Anatolian religion indeed proved to have a strong appeal for me, but soon after my return from Marburg to Israel, the muse Clio lured me back to her discipline in a most persuasive way: a remarkable Hittite seal impression was found at Tel Aphek, near Tel Aviv, and the excavator asked me to publish it. This required me to plunge into the intricacies of Hittite glyptics and thirteenth-century international relations in order to explain how this princely bulla turned up in an Egyptian governor's residency in Canaan. This investigation paved the way for my major scholarly pursuit during the next thirty years—the political history of the late Hittite Empire, its means of domination in the Syrian and Anatolian provinces, and its intricate connections with the other contemporary members of the Club of Great Powers—Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, and Ahhiyawa.”

Billie Jean Collins