

Preface

Threshing Floors in Ancient Israel: Their Ritual and Symbolic Significance explores the depiction of threshing floors in the Hebrew Bible. As locations used for threshing and winnowing crops, these areas were essential for food processing in ancient Israel, and yet the Hebrew Bible seldom highlights this fact. Instead, several significant cultic events are situated on threshing floors, a phenomenon that is intriguing and worthy of exploration. This book unpacks the multiple dimensions of threshing floors, with a particular interest in how they are viewed as both agricultural and sacred spaces.

This book is written as a revision of my dissertation, *Threshing Floors as Sacred Spaces in the Hebrew Bible*, completed at The Johns Hopkins University in 2013. Many people contributed to this work. In particular, my dissertation advisor Theodore J. Lewis provided immense guidance, thought-provoking questions, and heartfelt support, and my second reader P. Kyle McCarter Jr. provided invaluable conversations and ideas. Dissertation committee members—Sara Berry, Jane Guyer, and Michael Harrower—offered stimulating questions and suggestions. Each of these professors has shaped this revised work. My writing group members, Drs. Erin Fleming and Heather Dana Davis Parker, have read many drafts of this work through the dissertation and book phases. To say that

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Since completing my Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins, I have found a new scholarly home in the Catholic Studies department at DePaul University. My colleagues and students have been very encouraging and supportive, and I look forward to many more years at DePaul.

Special thanks also to Fortress Press for publishing this book. I had hoped to find a publisher to take interest in what I call “oft-overlooked yet very important agricultural spaces,” and I am happy that Fortress Press has greatly supported me in this endeavor and provided me the opportunity to share my work.

Just like threshing floors, there are multiple facets to me. I am fortunate to have scholarly and professional support, but the support of family and friends is even stronger. When it comes to thanking family, my grandmom, Delores B. Waters, will always be at the top of the list. She has been my foundation, inspiration, and greatest supporter. My parents, Delores and John, continue to give their love and encouragement without which this work would not be possible. I am very thankful to have Dr. Uncle Tony available to provide many laughs and “creative suggestions” for this publication. Thanks also to Fr. Uncle Sam, Aunt Mia, Cousin Nita, and Godmom Cherie for their prayers and support. Many thanks to my life partner and best friend, Joe, whose love has endured for many years and whose stimulating conversations have influenced this work. Several other family members and friends have been supportive throughout the process, and they all have my sincere gratitude.

My first book is dedicated to my mom, Delores B. Waters, for her years of love, guidance, sacrifice, and support. Thanks for helping me to be where I am today.