As MacDonald notes in his preface, there is an absence of books focusing on food in the Old Testament (p.vii), which he had planned to fill. However, as he comments, the end result "...is a set of preliminary studies that has been stimulated by reading the biblical text in dialogue with works on food and foodways in other cultures," (p.vii). The highlights of the book include the incorporation of anthropological insights with close readings of biblical texts in a manner that makes the texts more vivid, and certainly juicier! Those trained as biblical scholars receive clear and concise introductions to archaeological and anthropological studies that prove enlightening for the texts in this book and suggestive for an array of other biblical texts.

_Not Bread Alone_ consists of three appetizers or background chapters—discussions of food in biblical studies, anthropological studies of food, and food related insights from the archaeology of the ancient Near East. The main course offers readings of Deuteronomy, Judges, Kings, judgment table texts, and postexilic narratives where food plays a prominent role. The dessert suggests important directions for the _Wirkungsgeschichte_ of OT meals in the New Testament and modern Western culture.

The general introduction provides an overview on research related to food in modern biblical studies as well as suggesting reasons for its relative absence. The author names the following factors as important for the omission of further studies: 1) food's ubiquity both in the biblical texts and the modern world leading to the conclusion that it needs no further comment; 2) interpreters generally search the biblical material for religious and ethical ideas, making material concerns such as food appear less important; 3) the monumental study done by Robertson Smith more than a century ago; and 4) the close connections made between food and the difficult questions of sacrifice and dietary laws (p.3). MacDonald then surveys recent studies of the Bible on food related topics, noting insightfully that they tend to begin with food, but only as a _topos_ for discussing other issues, such as sexuality and gender (which are important in and of themselves), so the discussion of food itself becomes secondary.

The following chapter, “Food, Anthropology, Text and History,” provides a second introduction, this time to Mary Douglas' work on dietary laws beginning with _Purity and Danger_ (London: Routledge, 1966) and subsequent responses (Simoons, M. Harris, Milgrom, Houston). MacDonald suggests that his purpose here “...is merely to argue for the importance of a plurality of methodological approaches when examining a subject such as food in the Old Testament,” (p.16). The author highlights the main contours of Douglas' studies, showing how its structural foundations basically succeed in providing a logical system for Deut 14 and Lev 11. He goes on to note various challenges and updates to Douglas' system: of particular importance is his conclusion that biblical scholars need to move beyond Douglas' early structuralist (static) portrait of the Levitical laws and functionalist anthropological responses. This chapter provides a substantial overview of the state of scholarship on the dietary laws, but these laws do not play a significant role in most of the remaining chapters. In spite of its somewhat tangential nature, the chapter nevertheless shows the important role that interdisciplinary studies like anthropology can have for biblical studies (cf. p.44).

A third background chapter, “Milk and Honey: the Diet of the Israelites,” summarizes the detailed discussion of the breadth and variability of ancient Israelite diets in MacDonald's _What Did the Ancient Israelites Eat? Diet in Biblical Times_ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), which could function as a companion volume to the one currently under discussion. This chapter highlights the diversity of diets based on social standing, as well as the divergence between the biblical rhetoric (as well as the portrayal of Palestine in the Egyptian 'Tale of Sinuhe') and the story told by critical reconstruction of diets throughout the ancient world. MacDonald refrains from giving a clear cut picture of the diet and general food availability during the Old Testament period, instead focusing on the problematization of the generally superficial treatments provided in both ancient and modern sources.

“Chewing the Cud: Food and Memory in Deuteronomy” follows the theoretical work of anthropologist David Sutton, who draws attention to the close relationship between food and memory. MacDonald examines how “food is the vehicle through which Deuteronomy envisions Israel expressing her remembrance of YHWH” (p.75), since Israel's memory (or memorializing) in Deuteronomy, as he notes for Deut 26:1-15, occurs alongside the offering of food (p.76). He recognizes the centrality of communal consumption, especially as the locus for celebration of the past actions of YHWH on the part of the Israelites as well as YHWH's present provision (p.79). Perhaps most illuminating in this chapter is the use of Sutton's anthropological work on to role of hospitality narratives for modern Greek identity construction as a basis for interpreting the narratives of Deuteronomy 2 and the proscribed social relations between Israel and surrounding peoples in Deut 23:1-8 and 25:17-19. The chapter provides a very helpful introduction into the central role of food and meals in Deuteronomy.

One difficulty, however, is MacDonald's general assumption that the connection between food and memory in Deuteronomy can be interpreted in relation to the matrix of "inscribed" and "incorporated" memory. MacDonald's analysis is helpful in that it recognizes that Deuteronomy (in every layer of the text) uses the inscribed written text— which is a form of memorialization itself—to prescribe an alternate and incorporated form of memorialization. However, his analysis does not take into explicit consideration the fact that Deuteronomy is only a text, meaning that the meals described and prescribed take place first and foremost in the _imagination_ of the hearers and readers. Therefore, MacDonald's analysis comes up against the question that confronts all uses of anthropology in biblical studies: how one is to make or describe the connection between the text and its world on the one hand and the bodily commensal experience of its audience on the other.

Some of the most exciting work in the book comes in MacDonald's discussion of the role of food in Judges. This chapter basically provides a reading of the entire book of Judges through the lens of food and food related imagery. The reading serves to support and flesh out the notions of disorder provided in other scholars' readings of the Judges. The chapter title, “Mixed Menus,” sums up, for
"Feasting For a King: Food and the Rise of the Monarchy" does not seem to come off as well as the other chapters. After linking his reading so closely to the biblical text in other places, this chapter tries to cover too much ground—models of state development in ancient Israel, anthropological perspectives on the role of feasting in social change, as well as archaeological evidence for feasting in pre- and early monarchical Israel—all in order to give a richer reading of 1 Kings 1-11 and the question of Israelite state formation. The introductory sections lead the reader to believe that MacDonald wants to weigh in on the role of feasting in the historical development of the United Monarchy. Since the historical character of a “united monarchy” is currently debated, MacDonald's discussion would have been better served by either providing a longer discussion of the current state of scholarship (i.e., the “Low Chronology”) or by framing his interpretation differently. More helpful may have been comparative texts from Ugarit and Mesopotamia for illuminating the importance and operation of the “king’s table” in these biblical texts (He is not unaware of this material, as it appears elsewhere in the book).

“Taste and Discernment: the Literary Motif of Judgement at the Table" leads readers through the motif of the table throughout the Old Testament. MacDonald begins by showing how food plays prominently in the role reversals of 1 Samuel: the theme is part of the setting for Hannah's story as well as providing further irony in the naming of Ichabod (not only “without glory,” but also “without heaviness” which contrasts with Eli’s girth and his sons’ confiscation of sacrificial meat; pp.169-72). The author notes the banquet setting for the rises of David and Solomon, as well as for the fall of the dynasty of Omri and Ahab. The strength of this chapter, like the chapter on Judges, lies in the way the stories spring to life through exploration of food motifs. This chapter also discusses the table theme outside of the so-called Deuteronomistic History, including Job, the Joseph story, the eschatological meals in Isaiah, and Exodus 24. As a side note, while MacDonald displays hesitancy about interpreting Exod 24:11 as a covenant meal (p.194), I would suggest the emphasis on the Torah dietary laws (pp.202-3). MacDonald compares these Jewish refusals through introduction of the Greek descriptions and moral judgments against the conspicuous consumption at the Persian feasts. The similarity between the Greek and Jewish material provides him with evidence for a Hellenistic (rather than Persian) dating of the novellae (pp.211-12). In general, MacDonald's forays open these texts for further rich harvests.

The matter at the back of the volume, especially the bibliography and subject indices (which are accompanied by indices of names and also of biblical passages), pulls together a wealth of information for readers interested in further exploring this rich subject.

"You Are How You Eat: Food and Identity in the Post-exilic Period" focuses on food motifs in Second Temple novellas from the Writings and the deuterocanonical books. Turning to Daniel and his friends' refusal of food, coupled with similar actions by Judith (10:5; 12:1-3), Greek Esther (14:16), and Tobit (1:10-11), MacDonald sees “the developing food consciousness amongst Jews in the Second Temple period…” (p.201), yet without undue emphasis on the Torah dietary laws (pp.202-3). MacDonald compares these Jewish refusals through introduction of the Greek descriptions and moral judgments against the conspicuous consumption at the Persian feasts. The similarity between the Greek and Jewish material provides him with evidence for a Hellenistic (rather than Persian) dating of the novellae (pp.211-12). In general, MacDonald's forays open these texts for further rich harvests.

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Not Bread Alone covers an incredibly broad range of texts and successfully provides bite-sized observations on food's various roles throughout the Old Testament corpus. The breadth of his study undoubtedly awakens the appetite for more study in this fruitful area.

Peter Altmann, University of Zurich, Switzerland