

Jan Dietrich

Der Tod von eigener Hand

Studien zum Suizid im Alten Testament, Alten Ägypten und Alten Orient

[Death By One's Own Hand. Studies on Suicide in the Old Testament, Ancient Egypt and the Ancient Near East.]

Published in German.

Suicide raises questions about the meaning and purpose of human life, and the definition of man as being capable of committing suicide is perhaps one of the most eerie, philosophically sophisticated and theologically inconvenient. Furthermore, suicide and the different ways society deals with suicide are currently being debated not only in society but in different fields of research too. Until now however, there has been no extensive study of suicide in ancient Israel and its neighbouring cultures of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and Syria, and it is the aim of this book to close this research gap. Jan Dietrich does not view suicide from medical or dogmatic-theological perspectives, which regard suicide as an act of mental illness or sinful deed. Instead, it is viewed from a historico-cultural and sociological perspective and focuses on the motives and meanings behind suicidal acts. By examining suicide from this angle, it is interpreted as an attempt to solve basic problems of life, and the historical material available is categorised into three basic forms: escapist suicides, aggressive suicides, and suicides of passage and sacrifice.

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