

In Memoriam: Associate Professor Carsten Vang (1953–2024)

Nicolai Winther-Nielsen
The Online Professor, Copenhagen
nicolaiwn@gmail.com

How sad it is for me to have to write this obituary in a volume celebrating the 200 Years of Danish Evangelical Scholarship. At the untimely death at the age of just 71, we have now lost a much valued and crucial member of the Triad of Hebrew Bible Scholars directing research in Denmark for half a century. Little did we know during the conference and celebrations in September 2023 that we would lose our esteemed colleague and warm friend so suddenly after some months of aggressive illness.

Carsten was an important and much appreciated teacher of the Hebrew Bible at the Lutheran School of Theology in Aarhus for 39 years. Although he retired officially in the summer of 2023, there was no way Carsten would give up his intellectual pursuit for teaching and communicating the message of the Bible. He carried on communicating the latest research and discoveries in archaeology to a broader audience in lay communities and to students and fellow scholars. We all benefitted from his almost encyclopaedic and multifaceted impressive fountain of knowledge.

Carsten was a teacher of meticulously checked facts which always served his goal of pointing to God and his Word – in the full Bible as he would always remind us – which always for him included the Hebrew Bible. So Carsten was a preacher with a message! At his memorial service, the pastor would draw on Carsten’s life teaching on the role of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53. In a remarkable way he did not try to become popular by holding majority views, but as a dedicated tutor he inspired many students to form their own personal views on challenging issues.

In his scholarly studies he began with a Master’s thesis on the Book of Jeremiah, with its use of Deuteronomy. He soon moved on to the main focus of his scholarly research delving into how the Book of Hoseah quotes or reuses Deuteronomy which he always and with much conviction dated to the early Judges Period. Throughout his life he maintained this minority view on the historical relationship between an early Torah and the later prophets.

Another major contribution was his editorial role for the journal *TEL* published by the Danish Society of Biblical Archaeology. He was involved in the society from 1991, almost from its founding, and he served it to the end of his life. He was a board member 1998–2004 and its chairman 2001–2004. It was a major feat that he in May 2023 had his essays from *TEL* edited into the publication “When Stones and Sherds Narrate” (Når sten og potteskår fortæller).

For more than a quarter of a century he published essays on results from archaeological digs in Israel and neighbouring countries, and he shared the latest discoveries within this field in meticulously held records. Based on his archaeological studies, he remained true to his belief in an early exodus and in the historical veracity of the history of Israel beginning with the patriarchs. He also took an interest in the scholarly debate of the New Testament and in Lutheran Theology. It was clear that he had an extensive knowledge of world history, always occupied with bits and pieces of cultural facts and was much appreciated as “The Walking Encyclopaedia”.

During the last 20 years of his career as an Associate Professor of Old Testament Studies, he served as Academic Dean in the years 2003–2006 and 2008–2018. He was meticulous in paying attention to new programs and curricula, and all he proposed and developed was planned into the last detail. His students always loved him for his care and concern for them as students and as human beings. He went the extra mile, answering their questions and reading their work critically and constructively. Growing up himself among poor farmers he broke his bonds and made an impressive career in higher theological education.

For ten years, I was his colleague at the Lutheran School of Theology in Aarhus, but our collaboration lasted much longer. Our path ran almost parallel in every way, right back from our youth, and as a young assistant teacher in Copenhagen I was able to follow him all the way from our student days planning meetings and presenting papers. During several years of collaboration, we prepared for the publication of the common translation of the Danish Bible in 1992 and shared the passion to achieve the best rendition of the books of the Hebrew Bible. He played a major role on the editorial committee.

He was not only a close friend to me, but also an inspiration and a helper in many ways at a very personal level. I am impressed by and also deeply influenced by how he defended the reliability of the documents of the Bible.

He was a devoted family man and leaves behind his wife, two daughters, their husbands and grandchildren.

He leaves behind a rich and lasting legacy.