

Greetings to Angelika Berlejung for her 65th birthday

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Dear colleagues, dear Angelika,

Celebrating your 65th birthday is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on your remarkable achievements and on the impact, you have had on so many of us.

Angelika Berlejung— theologian, biblical scholar, archaeologist, and scholar of the ancient Near East— began her academic journey in disciplines that were, for a long time, dominated by men. For this very reason, each step of your career was not merely successful, but genuinely groundbreaking. The fact that today women have a strong and visible place within faculties of theology and archaeology throughout Germany is due, in no small measure, to the path you helped to open.

But you did not only break the glass ceiling; you also reshaped the academic landscape itself. Your work has consistently crossed boundaries—between archaeology, theology, and ancient Near Eastern studies—creating new conversations and new methodologies and making an immense contribution to all of these fields. This intellectual openness has been one of the hallmarks of your scholarship.

If we speak of achievements—academic, institutional, and cultural alike—your leadership at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Leipzig deserves special mention. Under your guidance, the faculty has become a leading international center for the study of the ancient Israel in its ancient Near Eastern context. You have initiated and sustained international collaborations, fostered truly interdisciplinary projects, created strong links with archaeological expeditions, and worked tirelessly to bring scholars of different nationalities and backgrounds together, gathering in Leipzig—not only in research and debate, but also in friendship and collegial exchange.

In doing so, you have taken a faculty once associated with figures such as Albrecht Alt and restored to it something of the intellectual vibrancy and international standing of those formative years—while at the same time giving it a very modern, inclusive, and forward-looking character.

But above all—and I believe many of the younger and early-career scholars here today will agree with me—your most enduring legacy lies in your support of the next generation. You have welcomed young scholars, women and men, from all over the world; you have supported them, opened doors for them, created opportunities, and offered encouragement at moments when academic life can be particularly challenging. For many, you have been a source of light and confidence at the very beginning of their scholarly paths.

I was fortunate to be among those young scholars. You supported me generously and consistently, without ever expecting anything in return. Thanks to that support, I was able to develop as a scholar and to build the academic career I enjoy today. For this, I will always be deeply grateful.

I am not among those who usually search for ancient wisdom in biblical texts. And yet, in Ecclesiastes chapter 3, we find words that speak powerfully to the human condition:

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.”

לכל זמן, ועת לכל חפץ תחת השמיים

And now—precisely now—is the time and the right season to say thank you.

Thank you, Angelika, for your scholarship, for your leadership, for your generosity, for your courage to cross boundaries, and for the care and responsibility you have shown toward people as much as toward ideas. Thank you for your friendship.

On behalf of all of us: congratulations, happy birthday, and *Mazal Tov*.