



Viktor Kókai Nagy and László Sándor Egeresi, eds.

*Propheten der Epochen / Prophets during the Epochs:
Festschrift für István Karasszon zum 60. Geburtstag /
Studies in Honour of István Karasszon for His 60th
Birthday*

Alter Orient und Altes Testament 426

Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2015. Pp. xii + 272. Hardcover.
\$97.00. ISBN 9783868351675.

Markus Zehnder
Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven

This Festschrift for István Karasszon collects nineteen essays, about half of them written by Hungarian scholars, the other half mostly by German scholars. The slot of the opening article, however, was assigned to Walter Brueggemann, who of course does not fall in either of the two categories. About half of the essays are written in English, the other half in German (a complete list is included at the end of the review).

As the title indicates, the focus of the collection is on the prophets. The last contribution, however, by László Sándor Egeresi, does not touch the topic; rather, it deals with the “Past and Future of Teaching Classical Hebrew in Hungary” (251–59). There is one additional contribution not related to the topic. It is the one offered by Albert de Pury, who shares his thoughts on “problematic” laws in the biblical and qur’anic traditions (151–60). De Pury compares the law on the stoning of a rebellious son in Deut 21:18–21 and its interpretation in the Mishnah with the law on adulterers in Sura 24:2. His interpretation of the latter betrays a clearly “Western” approach to a text that is rooted in a non-Western cultural setting, is at odds with the dominant orthodox Islamic views, and ignores the latter’s hermeneutical frame in which the life of Muhammad is key to the understanding and application of the Qur’an. In the final passage, entitled “Folgerungen und Ausblick,” de Pury puts whahabism and salafism on one level with (Christian) Biblicism and Zionist temple messianism, all in the category of “fundamentalist regression.” This seems to be an unhelpful simplification of a reality that is decidedly more complex. De Pury certainly

succeeds in identifying important questions, but a different approach is needed to enhance our understanding of qur'anic texts and to advance a meaningful comparison between biblical and qur'anic traditions.

There is space only to discuss some of the remaining essays. The first essay, by Walter Brueggemann, tries to open a window into the essence of prophetic speech on a general phenomenological level (1–12). In essence, prophecy, according to Brueggemann's view, is breaking the silence imposed by the powers-to-be, based in a sense of woundedness and disgust against the unjust transgression of divinely ordained creational order. The message of the prophets is marked both by a warning of imminent doom and a message of hope. This message is grounded in a trust of divine fidelity. Brueggemann further posits that the prophetic voice is an odd blend of divine voice and human voices but can be found not only in biblical texts. The gist of Brueggemann's essay is general and thus hardly of specific exegetical value. While it may be helpful to connect the critical light shed by biblical prophets and modern, nonbiblical agents on societal problems on one level, the distinctions between various such voices should nevertheless not be blurred. Also, the identification of societal issues that deserve criticism should not be taken as an easy task, since it necessitates careful analysis, especially in times where public opinion is often astonishingly casual in taking up this task. However the reader assesses the possible strengths and weaknesses of Brueggemann's essay, it was certainly a good idea on the side of the editors to open the collection with a contribution that is not too narrow in scope and too technical in nature.

The third essay, by Wolfgang Zwickel, investigates the question of whether the earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1 (and Zech 14:5) can be related to the archaeological findings of various sites in Galilee (31–49). He gives an overview of the archaeological record of eleven sites and shows that, in a majority of them, there is plausible evidence for both an earthquake in the middle of the eighth century BCE, as well as subsequent destructions caused by the campaigns of Tiglath-pileser III. He also points to the fact that the consequences of the earthquake are clearly less marked in areas south of Galilee. The pattern of rebuilding after the destructions caused by the earthquake shows that Jeroboam II tried to enhance the northern kingdom's connections with international trade routes. Zwickel's article is one of the most positive and instructive contributions to this volume; it is concise, well-researched, and methodologically sound.

The following three essays also deal with aspects of the book of Amos. The second, by Ernst-Joachim Waschke, is dedicated to the study of the message of the visions in the book of Amos (59–70). The larger part of the essay consists of a description of the content of these visions. In his brief analysis of the fifth vision (Amos 9:1–4), Waschke states that (1) the number of text-critical and source-critical problems is particularly high in this

case, (2) it is not possible to reconstruct a real event behind the text, and (3) the passage is definitely not from Amos. Waschke also asserts that there are no echoes of the visions in the collection of the Amos sayings in Amos 3–6. Connections do exist, however, with the hymnic passages in Amos. Following Christoph Levin, Waschke posits that the fourth vision exhibits a special character “als eine Art Urbild prophetischer Gerichtsankündigung.” The first two or three visions are understood by Waschke to be explanations of the fourth vision, while the fifth is an explanation of the previous visions and the entirety of the message of Amos in exilic times, confirming the truth of Amos’s words and applying it to a later generation. How the views presented in this essay might contribute to the advancement of the understanding of the book of Amos is for further discussion to demonstrate.

Following the essays on Amos are two contributions that deal with the book of Isaiah. The first is by Miklós Köszeghy on Isa 17:4–6 (89–94). The passage is ascribed to the prophet Isaiah himself and dated to the period of the Syro-Ephraimite war, threatening Judah with serious consequences should they join the anti-Assyrian coalition. In the main body of the essay, Köszeghy focuses on the valley of Rephaim, which is mentioned in verse 5. He maintains that this area was able to provide the inhabitants of Jerusalem with the necessary amount of food and that, in fact, they were dependent on this provision. That is why the mention of the harvest in the valley of Rephaim in Isa 17:5 was by no means random but a meaningful threat to the audience. While very brief, this study is helpful in shedding light on a specific detail of the passage under scrutiny.

The second Isaiah essay, by Zoltán Kustár, deals with the Hezekiah narratives in Isa 36–38 and 2 Kgs 18–19 (95–111). He maintains that the Hezekiah stories were first included in the book of Kings, then Isaiah, but that redactors of both books have made changes to the stories. It is less clear, according to Kustár, whether these narratives were originally independent or compiled by one of the redactors of the book of Kings. In the case of Kings, the narratives were inserted to sharpen the dissimilarity between the northern kingdom and Judah by pointing to the different outcomes of the rebellion against Assyria: whereas the people of Israel had turned away from the Lord, the king of Judah kept the commandments of the law. It is only after the exile that the Hezekiah narratives were also inserted into the book of Isaiah. In this new context, the narrative strengthens the book’s numerous predictions of the fall of Assyria and the liberation of Jerusalem and serves as a summary of this message at the end of the Proto-Isaiah collection. These predictions were likely compiled prior to the Hezekiah narratives, possibly around the time of Josiah. Following Fohrer, Kustár points out the structural similarities between the Ahaz narratives of Isa 7 and the Hezekiah narratives; they serve to highlight the essential difference between the two characters: a doubting Ahaz versus a faithful Hezekiah. Kustár assumes that it is more likely that the Hezekiah narratives served as a model for the Ahaz

narratives than the other way around. The theme of healing is identified as another feature that connects the Hezekiah narratives with Proto-Isaiah. In his brief summary, Kustár maintains that the demonstration of the trustworthiness of God's promises is the main intention for the insertion of the Hezekiah narratives in the book of Isaiah. The background identified is the threat of exile: even in this situation, God's promise of healing will not fail. Kustár's essay certainly shows how important redaction-critical observations may be for understanding any given passage. On the other hand, his dating of specific texts needs further concrete arguments to be more compelling.

The next contribution is by Csaba Balogh on the textual critical reconstruction of Hab 1:8 (113–25). In his circumspect and well-researched study, Balogh makes a strong argument for a new reading of the three latter cola of the verse, moving from "Their horses charge; their horsemen come from far away; they fly like an eagle swift to devour" (NRSV) to "Their horses gambol and swarm out; from afar they come, they fly; like an eagle swift to devour." The new reading is based on a combination of the respective differences between MT and LXX as well as 1QpHab and includes minor revocalizations in two instances and the rejection of the Masoretic word and sentence divisions. It remains to be seen whether Balogh's proposal will be accepted in future scholarship; it certainly cannot be ignored. At the same time, it is clear that in terms of the theological interpretation of the verse, no substantial changes are involved.

Előd Hodossy-Takács then examines the Uriah case as mentioned in Jer 26:20–23 (127–35). In his study, Hodossy-Takács tries to elucidate the historical circumstances of the Uriah case and compares this case to Jeremiah's own trial. Among the critical differences is that Jeremiah had a powerful supporter in the person of Ahikam, as opposed to the case of Uriah. The concluding part of his essay claims that the mention of Ahikam (in Jer 26:24) was an important means of promoting the reputation of the family of Shaphan; Hodossy-Takács also argues that the events referred to in Jer 26:20–23 did not take place around the same time as Jeremiah's trial, yet nonetheless preserved relevant information about the political situation in late preexilic Jerusalem. Overall, the essay is perhaps too general to be expected to have a major impact on the passage with which it deals.

Then follows Eckart Otto's essay on Moses as a suffering prophet in Deuteronomy and Pss 90–92 (137–49). Otto begins by stating that the Pentateuch has an answer to the collective catastrophe announced in Deut 31:16–21, in the farewell song in Deut 32, but that there seems to be no such answer to Moses's personal catastrophe of not being allowed to enter the Promised Land. He then points out that in Deut 4 and 29 Moses is depicted as an acting prophet of doom and salvation. The problem with God's own prophecy in Deut 31:16–18, however, is that only Moses's prophecies of doom are confirmed. The solution comes in chapter 32, where a message of salvation is detectable,

especially when the intertextual links to subtexts of salvation as found in Mic 5, Isa 43, and other texts are taken into account. The result of these observations is that the canon of the Hebrew Bible as a whole seems to confirm Moses's prophecy of salvation and redemption, with the Lord's mercy being identifiable as the deeper reason for the salvation. As far as Moses's personal fate is concerned, things look different. Both Deut 1:37 and Deut 9 are understood by Otto as pointing to Moses's death as a consequence of the rebellion of the people, who incited the Lord's wrath against them. In this way, Moses is likened to the model of the suffering righteous. In this case, it is Pss 90–92 that function as a subtext that elucidates Moses's individual fate, detectable especially in the intertextual links between Deut 32:36 and Ps 90:13 and Deut 32:4 and Ps 90:16. Otto detects a movement that goes from Moses's complaint about his fate of premature death to the answer of divine salvation in Ps 91 and thanksgiving in Ps 92. While most of the historical assessments proposed by Otto must remain open to further debate, the main thrust of the study, including the stress on the prophetic dimensions of the book of Deuteronomy and the observation of the sequence of judgment and salvation, in part based on the identification of intertextual links, certainly provides a perspective that is likely to prove stimulating and helpful.

The last essay that will be presented in this review is Jutta Hausmann's study of Ezek 18. She claims that, because the proverbial saying quoted in Ezek 18:2 about the negative consequences of the previous generation's actions is also found in Jer 31:29, this may be understood as hinting at a widespread knowledge of this saying. She also points to the similarity between this saying and the notion of an inclusion of the third and fourth generations in the Lord's punishment of his enemies in the Decalogue. In her explanation of the subsequent passages of the chapter she argues that its goal is not a blatant rejection of the principle of intergenerational links between guilt and consequences but rather a shift in accent, with a stress on the acts of the present generation. This means that it is not denied that the past generation's actions have consequences for the next generation but that each generation must be aware of their own responsibility. What is also stressed is the fact that at each point the course of action may be changed and that such changes will have consequences in one or the other direction. Hausmann also observes that the main focus of the chapter is on advocating for life-promoting choices and that there is a connection between social responsibility and cultic activity. What is at stake in Ezek 18 is not so much an interpretation of the negative experiences of exile but a focus on the right direction of action in the present, which will prevent a new catastrophe from happening. The chapter, in Hausmann's view, also underlines that it is never possible to place responsibility for the present situation squarely on the actions of previous generations. In this sense, the text can be classified as pedagogical. It is certainly the case that there are many aspects of the questions raised in Ezek 18 that are not addressed in Hausmann's

study; nevertheless, she succeeds in bringing home important points that help to promote our understanding of this important chapter.

The impression of the volume as a whole is mixed. On the positive side, one can point to the rich variety of perspectives and topics and the quality of some of the essays. On the other side, some of the essays hardly advance our knowledge of the prophetic literature, and a good number are poorly redacted in terms of language. There is no overall thematic coherence to the collection (beyond the fact that most articles deal with prophecy), which is understandable in the given circumstances. I also note that, while relationships between biblical and ancient Near Eastern prophecy are dealt with in two studies and questions related to prophecy in postbiblical Second Temple Judaism in two additional studies, none of the contributions looks at the relationship between prophecy in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. In spite of the shortcomings, it is certainly positive that, through the publication of this Festschrift, a broader audience is made aware of the scholarly work being done in Hungary and other countries that were formerly hidden behind the Iron Curtain and where biblical scholarship was so much harder to pursue than in the Western world until that curtain fell.

Essays

- Walter Brueggemann, Prophet Voice: Silence Shattered from “Elsewhere”
- Walter Dietrich, Saul unter den Propheten
- Wolfgang Zwickel, Amos 1,1 und die Stratigraphie der eisenzeitlichen Ortslagen in Galiläa
- Rainer Kessler, Amos und die Weisheit
- Ernst-Joachim Waschke, Die Visionen des Amosbuches
- József Zsengellér, “Call a Scribe!”: Amos 7:10 and Ancient Near Eastern Prophetic Letters
- Miklós Köszeghy, Jesaja und das Refaim-Tal: Erwägungen zu Jes 17,4–6
- Zoltán Kustár, The Story of Isaiah with his King: The Role of the Hezekiah Narratives in 1–2 Kings and in Isaiah
- Csaba Balogh, Reconsidering Habakkuk 1:8
- Előd Hodossy-Takács, The Uriah Case (Jeremiah 26:20–23)

- Eckart Otto, Moses. The Suffering Prophet in Deuteronomy and Psalm 90–92
- Albert de Pury, “Steinigt den störrischen Sohn!” “Geißelt die Ehebrecher!”: Überlegungen zum Sinn von “problematischen” Geboten in der biblischen und der koranischen Überlieferung
- Jutta Hausmann, Ezechiel 18: Folgen des Handelns früherer Generationen und eigene Verantwortung
- Ibolya Balla, Concepts of Transgression and Restoration in Ezekiel and Malachi with Special Attention to the Cult: An Intertextual Survey
- Manfred Oeming, Kritik der reinen Vernunft: Die hermeneutische Funktion der Prophetie im Hiobbuch
- Ida Fröhlich, Prophetic Legitimation (and De-legitimation) in the Persian Period against Its Ancient Near Eastern Background
- Géza G. Xeravits, The Figure of Daniel in Late Antique Synagogue Art
- Viktor Kókai Nagy, Die Propheten und die religiösen Gemeinschaften bei Josephus
- László Sándor Egeresi, Shifts in the Paradigm: Past and Future of Teaching Classical Hebrew in Hungary