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BOOK REVIEW

Keith Bodner. *After the Invasion: A Reading of Jeremiah 40–44*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. viii + 179 pp. Hbk. ISBN 978-0-19-874300-2. \$115.50.

In this volume Keith Bodner turns his attention to Jer 40–44, a “creative and sophisticated narrative that makes a rich though perhaps underestimated contribution” to the prophetic book (1). Although Jerusalem falls in Jer 39, that chapter, Bodner notes, gives sparse attention to the event. In comparison, the following five chapters are devoted to those left in the land (the “bad figs” of ch. 24). In light of this disparity, Bodner considers why such an extensive narrative is devoted to the fate of the people left in the land, and why the prophet (and the delivery of his last words) is in the land of Egypt.

Besides providing a needed engagement with an often-neglected text, Bodner advances a thesis to explain the narrative attention given to those left in the land, namely that the chapters may serve to advance an ideology in favor of the Babylonian exiles. He also advances an application that “transcends the notion of a land squabble” (142). This application understands the narrative as speaking to any era or community of the people of God subjugated by foreign superpowers. Possible responses to such superpowers include violence and/or syncretistic accommodation, but Bodner reads chs. 40–44 as a “case study in heeding the prophetic voice even in difficult circumstances” (142). Such a word might be heard in any community, including those exiled to Babylon.

To pursue his thesis, Bodner primarily utilizes narrative poetics. The devices given particular attention are initially labelled emplotment, chronological markers, intertextuality, and the portrayal of the superpowers. These are not Bodner’s sole focus, and

he notes a variety of other features throughout the volume, which makes for rich reading. In a concluding chapter he reviews and summarizes yet a different constellation of poetic elements: spatial settings, intertextual echoes, irony, and characterization. The disparity between the elements for exploration and the much broader exploration that the author provides throughout the work is puzzling, since Bodner presents the more focused set of categories as being crucial to his thesis. As the volume unfolds, it becomes apparent that it is not.

Following the introduction, seven chapters trace the poetics of the narrative through its sequential unfolding (40:1–6, 7–16; 41:1–8, 9–15; 41:16–42:22; 43:1–13; 44:1–30). The first chapter shows the attention Bodner gives to the portrayal of the superpowers. Similar attention is apparent in chapter 6, which discusses how the power of Babylon extends even to Egypt. The portrayal of Babylonian power, Bodner argues, works within the book of Jeremiah to show the futility of the refugees' choices. As a face of the superpower, Nebuzaradan serves as a foil for the "recalcitrant members of the Judean elite" (16) who stands in a long line of foreigners who speak as if they are Yahwists.

The exploration of intertextuality is a major focus of this volume, and intertexts are presented both for characters and for places. According to Bodner, characters who are presented in an intertextual way include Johanan, who is compared to Joab (2 Sam 3:4–5), and Gedaliah, whose murder is connected to Abner's murder (2 Sam 3:22–30). Examples of spatial intertextuality are explored at length in chapters 4 and 5, which pair locales in Jeremiah with significant events from Israel's past at the same location. The encounter with Ishmael at Gibeon (41:12) "evokes memories of past *internal* conflict at this same spatial setting" (80), and the stop at Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem (41:17) provides a typological intertext with the royal land grant given by David to Barzillai, which included Geruth Chimham; now, at the same location, God's land grant to Israel is rejected as his people decide to depart the land. Several of these intertexts feel somewhat tenuous, and Bodner does acknowledge, regarding the Geruth Chimham connection, that "the data are insufficient for certainty," yet he concludes that "there is a sufficient

basis for believing” the viability of the intertext he draws (94). But what is the “sufficient basis” for such belief? Given the attention Bodner gives to intertexts in several chapters, an excursus outlining some methodological parameters is needed. On more certain ground, much is made of a linkage to Asa’s cistern as the location of Ishmael’s disposal of corpses (Jer 1:7–9), but in this instance the connection is specifically drawn by the text of Jeremiah.

Bodner engages with secondary literature on sociopolitical theory concerning those left in the land versus those exiled to Babylon and applies this information to the situation described in Jer 40–44. However, this engagement comes late in the work, in a discussion of narrative criticism as a preferred lens. Earlier engagement of sociopolitical questions alongside the volume’s thesis would strengthen the work, as it would assure the reader of Bodner’s awareness of such scholarly trends and provide confidence in his assessment of these trends and his reasons for electing a different methodological focus.

Bodner works with his own translation of the Masoretic Text. His commitment to a narrative approach is clear, for he notes only in passing the difficulties caused by the Masoretic Text’s differences from the Septuagint. Rather than explore these differences, he offers his findings for others to use “heuristically” (3) when engaging them. Similarly, attention is given to source-critical issues such as the double presentation of Jeremiah’s release in Jer 40 and the relation of narrative character to historical reality, but they are likewise noted in passing, and attention remains on narratological concerns.

The strength of this volume lies in its engagement with an episode in Israel’s life that is often overlooked, and in its consideration of the reasons for such an extensive account. Bodner’s familiarity with narrative analysis shows in his deft handling of the narrative’s plot and characterization, the gaps that occur in the narrative, and intertextual possibilities. His command of secondary literature is evident but does not overburden the discussion and is often confined to the notes. An index of authors’ and characters’ names and an extensive bibliography are helpful aids for research. This volume is recommended for scholars working

in Jeremiah, for upper-level undergraduates and graduate students, and for interested laypersons wishing to explore the intricacies of a well-told narrative.

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