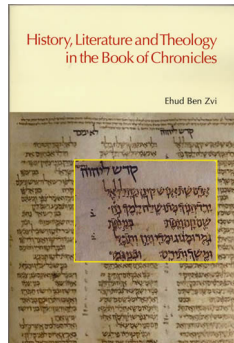


○ REVIEW OF EHUD BEN ZVI, *HISTORY, LITERATURE AND THEOLOGY IN THE BOOK OF CHRONICLES*

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Over the past 15 years, Ehud Ben Zvi has produced a stream of essays and articles on Chronicles. This volume collects 11 of these previously-published essays and adds two new pieces and an introduction. The previously-published pieces have been slightly modified from their original publication, mainly through updates to the references and the addition of footnote material. As such, the volume demonstrates both the development of Ben Zvi's thought on Chronicles and the cumulative effect of that thought. Ben Zvi's is a significant body of work on Chronicles, and having these pieces together in one volume (along with the two new pieces) will greatly facilitate the appreciation and use of this work. Reviewing a collection of essays is often difficult, but in this case, I see it as an opportunity to also read the changes in the field over the period of time spanned by these essays.

The book is organised thematically rather than chronologically. That is, the chapters are not presented in the order they were published or written, but rather in four groupings. The first section, entitled 'Introductory Essays', contains two chapters: an introduction to the collection as a whole, and a general essay, 'The Book of Chronicles: Another Look' (originally published in 2002). The second section, entitled 'Chronicles and the Rereading and Writing of a Didactic, Socializing History', contains five chapters: 'Observations on Ancient Modes of Reading of Chronicles and their Implications, with an Illustration of their Explanatory Power for the Study of the Account of Amaziah (2 Chronicles 25)' (new essay), 'Shifting the Gaze: Historiographic Constraints in Chronicles and their Implications' (2001), 'The Chronicler as a Historian: Building Texts' (1997), 'The Secession of the Northern Kingdom in Chronicles: Accepted "Facts" and New Meanings' (Ben Zvi 2003), and 'About Time: Observations about the Construction of Time in the Book of Chronicles' (Ben Zvi 2000). The third section, entitled 'Chronicles and Theology as Communicated and Recreated through the Rereading of a Historiographical, Literary Writing' contains five chapters: 'A Sense of Proportion: An Aspect of the Theology of the Chronicler'

(1995), 'Observations on Women in the Genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1–9' (2003; co-authored with Antje Labahn), 'Ideological Constructions of Non-Yehudite/Peripheral Israel in Achaemenid Yehud: The Case of the Book of Chronicles' (new essay), 'A Gateway to the Chronicler's Teaching: The Account of the Reign of Ahaz in 2 Chronicles 28:1-27' (1993), and 'The Authority of 1–2 Chronicles in the Late Second Temple Period' (1988). The fourth and final section, entitled 'Chronicles and Literature: Literary Characterizations that Convey Theological Worldviews and Shape Stories about the Past', contains one chapter: 'When A Foreign Monarch Speaks' (1999). There is a full bibliography and indexes of biblical references and references to authors cited.

If one takes the collection as a whole, it is clear that certainly by the late 1990s, Ben Zvi had formulated certain key arguments about Chronicles. First, he sees Chronicles as the product of a literate elite culture (the *literati*); these *literati* were reading and rereading the written texts of their culture and these rereadings were then expressed in a new text, Chronicles. This argument is similar to Ben Zvi's arguments about prophetic texts (Ben Zvi 2000; Ben Zvi 2003), although in the case of a text like Micah, Ben Zvi sees the re-reading as occurring within the same scroll/text. Second, as a result of the first argument, Ben Zvi is interested in reading Chronicles as a textual (re)production rather than using Chronicles as a source for reconstructing the history of Iron Age Israel/Judah or reading Chronicles mechanistically in the light of Samuel-Kings. Third, he situates Chronicles within the culture of Achaemenid Yehud, and does not so much use Chronicles to talk about Yehud as he uses the Yehud context to say something about Chronicles. Fourth, he argues consistently that while individual episodes may be read and interpreted as pieces, they must also be considered within the context of the whole book and its overarching themes and messages. For this, see also his recent contribution 'Observations on Josiah's Account in Chronicles and Implications for Reconstructing the Worldview of the Chronicler' (Ben Zvi 2006, 90) which unfortunately is not included in this volume.

In his earliest exegetical essay, 'Gateway' (from 1993), Ben Zvi characterizes his project as a 'historical-critical' one (p. 211). Yet, as one reads through the pieces in chronological order, it becomes clear that certainly by the late 1990s, his project is no longer recognizable as a 'historical-critical' one (new historicist, perhaps). Even in that early essay, he argues that the historical-critical project requires an understanding of 'communicative meanings', that is, a literary-ideological analysis of the text (p. 211). This collection mirrors a shift within the study of the book over the past 10–12 years that may be seen in the difference between the commentaries of Japhet (1993) and Williamson (1982) and the more recent commentaries of Knoppers (2004a), Knoppers (2004b), Klein (2006) and (to a lesser extent) McKenzie (2004): while the earlier commentaries spent a great deal of time outlining the differences between Chronicles and its 'source' texts, the later commentaries and Ben Zvi's essays spend more time exploring how Chronicles works as a text. To be sure, the realisation that the Chronicler had or knew versions of the 'source' scrolls that differ from the MT version has propelled some of this shift. But more importantly, the recognition of the exhaustion of the historical-critical project as traditionally conceived finally arrived to the study of Chronicles.

Ben Zvi's approach should properly be characterised as derived from narrative poetics and a Stanley Fish-type of textual pragmatics, two approaches that are opposed on the surface: narrative poetics is a systematic approach, while pragmatic readings emphasize local, 'natural' readings. Yet Ben Zvi uses poetics to look at how the text works while at the same time assuming that a 'natural' reading of the text would lead to his conclusions. The theoretical underpinnings

of the project are sketched very lightly: on historiography as a genre (pp. 101–103), on meaning and intentionality (pp. 211–213), on narrative and characterisation (pp. 270–272), and largely in the footnotes of these early essays. The theoretical/methodological underpinnings are assumed in the other pieces. Yet the potential problems with the approaches are not detailed. For example, Ben Zvi locates meaning as the effect on the original readers of the text; but while this move removes the illusory ‘authorial intention’ from play, it may be just as illusory to think that we can reconstruct an ancient reader. It is in this way that Ben Zvi may be seen as remaining within a historical-critical project.

Although Ben Zvi has changed his mind over the years (cf. p. 4), perhaps some further discussion of the ways his thinking came to change on such issues as author versus implied author might have been included in this introduction to the book. The notes do often address the evolution of his thinking, but it might have been more helpful to have summarised the development of his approach in the introduction. Instead, the introduction is used to comment largely on the exegetical insights of the essays and how he would extend them now: pragmatics wins over poetics.

Ben Zvi’s readings of individual passages are sensitive, and his sense of the overall themes and ideological construction of Chronicles is acute. His major contribution by collecting these essays is to show the relationship between individual episodes and the whole of Chronicles. In the introduction to the book, he notes the increasing discussion of Chronicles in recent years, and hopes that he has contributed to that increase (p. 5). I would say that he has, and this volume reminds us of this contribution.

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