

**Hisako Kinakawa, ed., *Migration and Diaspora: Exegetical Voices of Women in Northeast Asian Countries*.
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This is a small book but an example where size belies quality. The collection was drawn from papers presented at the meeting of the Society for Asian Biblical Studies (SABS) held at Sabah Theological Seminary in Malaysia, June 2012. The theme of the meeting was “Migration and Diaspora.” Hisako Kinakawa of Japan gathers, from papers presented at the SABS meeting, the voices of women from Korea, the People’s Republic of China, and Japan, each reflecting on the biblical text in her culture. The collection makes an excellent contribution to the SBL series *International Voices in Biblical Studies*.

In a short introduction, Kinakawa, as editor, introduces each essay noting the way its author brings her situation and that of women in her context into dialogue with the biblical text. Of this approach she says, “[t]hrough our social locations are diverse, all of us are committed to finding justice for women in our countries and in our contemporary living through our dialogue with biblical texts” (1). And she names the approach “feminist.”

Yoon Kyung Lee authors the first essay entitled “Postexilic Jewish Experience and Korean Multiculturalism,” and she turns her attention to the commandment of prohibition and cancellation of marriages with foreign wives as suggested by Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 9–10; Neh. 13). Lee reviews interracial marriage in Israel prior to the Persian period, concluding that “interracial marriage was not encouraged but neither was it prohibited” (5). This provides the backdrop to her examination of the complete ban on interracial marriage by Ezra and Nehemiah. From the outset, however, her analysis questions a stark division of “Jew” and “non-Jew” which would make the ban difficult if not impossible to administer. Careful analysis leads her to conclude that post-exilic Yehud was a “hybrid society” in contrast to what the ban might indicate. Using a post-colonial category of “regressive nativism” to examine the exclusivity of the Ezra/Nehemiah, Lee demonstrates how this constructs the “Other” but also how such a project ends up in failure. In a short, final segment of the article Lee turns to contemporary Korean society and reads it through the structures emerging from her study of Persian Yehud. After the long analysis of biblical Yehud, the dialogue with contemporary Korean society through that lens was brief. Her readers, like myself, may have hoped that more attention would have been given to that contemporary engagement.

In a second chapter, Lin Yan turns a lens on “Internal Migrations and Social Justice in Amos and Micah.” She is a Chinese citizen but has moved to a number of different locations within China, hence her term, “internal migration” and her consideration of herself as a migrant. She turns a similar lens on the prophets Amos and Micah who likewise migrated from their hometowns to prophesy in larger cities, using the critical categories of “migration” and “diaspora.” In contrast to Lee,

whose engagement with her contemporary context was scant, Lin Yan's, on the other hand, is expansive in relation to both internal and foreign migration. This sets the scene for her analysis of Amos and Micah as internal migrants bringing a specific prophetic challenge to social justice within their country of origin but not in their home towns. She also notes as thematic in both prophets a "Recalling of the Past and a Visiting of Old Places" as well as "Righteousness and Justice." She concludes with a claim that these two prophets are "representative of internal migration" but "convey a kind of universal value," (28) a new insight on these two well-known prophets from a new context.

Readers are returned to Korea in the third article in this collection, Yani Yoo, "Desiring the Empire: Reading the Book of Esther in Twenty-first Century." In the opening pages, Yoo sets the scene of modern industrialized Korea, founded on the labour of migrant workers, as the contemporary context for hearing anew the book of Esther, characterized, she claims, by "human desire of material things, power, and sex" (31). It is an Empire story, and, as such, Yoo claims it is dangerous because it teaches the powerful how to handle minorities. She proposes first to read Esther through the lens she lays out and then, in the second part of the article, returns to the Korean context. Yoo sees "desire" as a key analytic category in the opening chapters of the book: desire for power, food, and sex. Feasts become a place where these themes are played out; Yoo notes there are ten feasts in this short book. These categories provide readers with a new lens for reading this narrative, and Yoo provides the guidance readers need to engage these new lenses. From analytic categories, she turns to an analysis of characters, the king being the first. He is seen by her as skilfully managing interest groups. Haman, on the other hand, reveals different faces, while Esther and Vashti represent women. Indeed, characterization, according to Yoo's analysis, is complex and, in this, she offers new insights into the book. She claims the book is dangerous, the reader being "deceived by the juicy literary twists, complicated plot, and intriguing characters" (45-6). These, she claims, can obscure the book's support for the values of the Empire. Yoo then turns her reading lens back on Korea, demonstrating how society can obscure its support for the values of today's empire(s). This analysis is also insightful, like her innovative reading of the book of Esther.

Chanhee Heo is also Korean and her article is entitled, "The Samaritan Woman from the Perspective of a Korean Divorcee," indicating the contextual engagement that characterizes this article as it has the others in this collection. In her article, Heo summarizes the dominant interpretation of John 4, the Samaritan woman through the lens of patriarchy: "lustful, dull, and deceitful, whose role in this text is limited to reveal Jesus' amazing grace to the sinner who longs for true worship" (47). Heo, on the other hand, proposes a "feminist postcolonial reading" through the lens of a Korean divorcee. To facilitate such a reading, she draws on the hermeneutical principles of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza but acknowledges that these must be nuanced by the Asian perspective(s) provided by Kwok Pui-lan. She takes up Kwok's proposal of *dialogical imagination* which entails engagement with Asian myths and legends as well as with the social biography of those who constitute the context of interpretation. The novel she chooses as her dialogue partner within this interpretive model is *My Sweet Home* in which the main character is a divorcee. The social theory which informs her hermeneutic is that of Carl Rogers. Heo

undertakes her own reading of the biblical text followed by an engagement with the traditional interpretations. It is all this which she brings into dialogue with the novel, *My Sweet Home*. In this way, Heo has demonstrated layers of dialogue which yield new readings. Just one small critical comment: on page 50 there is a general and harsh critique of the context and experience of Jewish women in the first century. Amy-Jill Levine, a Jewish New Testament scholar would critique such generalizations made by Christian women scholars who can demonstrate an anti-Judaism in their analyses.

The final article in this unique collection is that of the editor, Hisako Kinakawa, and is entitled “Religious Migration and Diaspora,” bringing a particular nuance to the volume’s themes. Initially she outlines her own religious migration into Christianity and then into feminist interpretation of the biblical text. The textual focus of her essay is the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman in the Gospel of Mark, and she brings a particular twist to her interpretation: she explores the woman’s call to Jesus to “migrate” in his thinking, in his attitudes. This, she concludes, makes Jesus “diaspora” at least metaphorically together with the Jesus movement. A fitting note on which to conclude this small but unique volume.



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