

Book Reviews

Jack R. Lundbom, *The Hebrew Prophets: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010. 258 pages; ISBN 978-0-8006-9737-2.

The book comprises two parts, each one containing a number of chapters. Part One deals with "Marks, Messages, and Measures of Authenticity in the Hebrew Prophets", and Part Two "Poetry, Prose, Rhetoric, and Symbolism in the Hebrew Prophets." In other words, the first part deals with the prophet and the authenticity of his message, and the second with the form of the Hebrew prophets' message.

Part One consists of three chapters which address the concept of prophet-hood, namely, "To Be a Prophet, What is it?" and "Measures of Authenticity". In Chapter One - "To Be a Prophet"- Lundbom identifies six characteristics that he calls "distinguishing marks"- of the Hebrew prophet: having the divine call, delivering the divine word, having a divine vision, performing mighty works, filled with the divine spirit, and being someone who prays. However, he informs the reader that "to cite distinguishing marks is not to imply that every prophet possessed all of them, for they did not. One mark, for example, was an ability to perform mighty works, and only a few prophets possessed this gift." (p. 8).

In Chapter Two- "The Prophetic Message- What Is It?" the author "lifts up the important messages of Old Testament prophets whose messages have been preserved"... "The aim here will be to let each prophet speak for him, or herself."(p. 32). First, the prophets' messages consisted of "foretelling" and "forthtelling": the first being prediction, the second, censuring current social, religious, and political ills. Second, the prophetic message may sometimes be a corrective speech. As such, he states, "it will contain a message people do not want to hear. (Mic. 2:6; Jer. 38:4)" (p. 33). Third, while the message of Deuteronomy is a "covenantal message", that of the prophets is very different. "For them, the covenant is now broken, requiring indictment and judgment if repentance is not forthcoming." (p. 34). Fourth, the prophets interfered in cases of social injustice, mainly towards widows, orphans, and marginalized peoples. Fifth, they sent messages to foreign nations for the evil they had done, mainly towards God's people. Sixth, these prophets proclaimed that their message was the authentic one. "Prophets make the charge that other prophets are delivering inauthentic messages, which means that true prophets must deliver authentic messages." (p. 35) Seventh, under "Messages of the Prophets", the author presents a kind

of survey of early messengers of Yahweh, early judges and prophets, and eighth century prophets. This last group of prophets represents, in fact, the golden age of prophecy in Israel and Judah. This is the longest part of the Book in which the author offers a selection of the different kind of prophetic messages that we find in the Old Testament. The author does not treat only Prophets whose names headed some Old Testament books (e.g., Isaiah and Jeremiah), but also those prophets whose stories take place within other books (e.g., Elijah and Elisha) or whose names are only mentioned somewhere in the Old Testament (e.g., Nathan and Huldah). Of Course, a special care is given to the treatment of the Classical Prophets. The author also provides a distinguishing feature for every prophet, summarizing his mission in a sentence.

In Chapter Three- "Measures of Authenticity"- the author exposes the elements and traits that demonstrate the authenticity of a prophetic message. First, he enumerates and explains the elements that constitute the "Locus of Authenticity"; these being: The Inspirational Event, the Prophetic Act, the Dynamic Message, and the Believing Community. Second, the author deals with "Tests for Authenticity"; which are: Visions and Signs, the Way of Yahweh, and Fulfillment of Yahweh's Word. Third, the author deals with "Prophetic Integrity", and this can be shown by Moral Behavior of the prophet himself. The prophet's ethical behavior not only gives his message the attribute of authenticity, but also shows his holistic integrity.

Part Two - "Poetry, Prose, Rhetoric, and Symbolism in the Hebrew Prophets" consists of three chapters (chapters four to six). In chapter 4- "Prophetic Discourse in Poetry and Prose"- the author deals first with "Hebrew Poetry" which is built largely by parallelism. Parallelism consists of two, or sometimes three, successive colons in which an idea is restated, embellished, or contrasted by repetition. Second, the author addresses "Poetry in the Hebrew Prophets". He states, "Lowth showed that large portions of prophetic discourse were in poetry, not prose, as previously thought." (p. 160). The author deals, third, with "Prophetic Oracles in Prose" saying that "prophets also spoke in prose, not just when they were conversing normally, but when they were delivering oracles or making other utterances commensurate with their office. This has not been generally recognized, however, probably because prose material in the prophetic books has been taken to derive from a second hand, and not to be the *ipsissima verba* of the prophet". In Chapter 5- "Rhetorical Discourse in the Prophets"- Lundbom turns our attention first to "Rhetoric in the Ancient Near East", and then to "Hebrew Rhetoric". He states that "Ancient Hebrew rhetoric survives largely in the Hebrew Bible, from which it may be concluded that during the eighth to sixth centuries BCE, it experienced its golden age, a full three centuries and more before the art achieved classical expression by Aristotle in Greece, and Cicero, Quintilian, and others in

Tome." (p. 166). We have in the Bible an array of figures of speech performing the same or similar functions as in classical rhetoric, as well as modes of argumentation known and classified by later Greek and Roman authors. Third, under "Prophetic Rhetoric", the author provides a window into the world of Hebrew rhetoric as it appears in oracles and other discourse emanating from the prophets and pays particular attention to rhetorical moves in the discourse of Jeremiah; "although Israel's prophetic movement began with Samuel, who, together with Nathan, Elijah, Micah ben Imlah, and others, burst in early upon the scene and delivered Yahweh's word with a power that still commands our admiration, the real prophets of pre-exilic Israel were the so-called writing prophets, namely, Amos, and Hosea in northern Israel, and Micah, Isaiah, perhaps Joel, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah in Judah a century and a half later." (p. 167). The author presents a kind of survey of rhetorical forms that are to be found in the prophets of the Hebrew Bible: Repetition, Accumulation, Tropes, Comparison; Contrast, Argument, Humor and Irony, and Drama. In chapter 6- "Prophetic Signs, Wonders, and Symbolic Behavior"- the author tackles the prophets' dramatic behavior. First, he discusses prophetic "Signs and Wonders" as some of Yahweh's messengers gave signs to support their divine words, for example, to Abraham (Gen. 18:10), to Moses (Deut. 34:10-12; Ex. 3). Second, the author deals with "Symbolic Acts" saying that "In Later Prophets, we begin to see a different sort of dramatic behavior... and the behavior... may be interpreted as a sign or wonder." He continues, "Symbolic acts, like the spoken word in all its fullness, were efficacious in bringing things to pass. Symbolic action was therefore a natural extension of the prophetic preaching." (p. 209). Finally, the author deals with "Prophets as Symbol" as sometimes the life of the prophet himself became the symbol, and we are given the example of Hosea.

The Hebrew Prophets offers the contemporary reader a thorough Introduction to the phenomenon of prophetism as we see it exemplified in ancient prophetic speech and as it is reflected in the Hebrew Bible. Lundbom takes the reader through well-known subjects that eventually became classical. These have been the preoccupation of Old Testament scholars for many years, and now we have accumulated much material dealing with the same subjects that are tackled in this book. Nevertheless, Jack Lundbom, in his *The Hebrew Prophets*, has added new material and showed a spirit of creativity by presenting a new approach that is able to attract not only new students to this field of study but also professional scholars and readers.

In the second part of the Book, the author shows a real innovative spirit by dealing with issues related to modern exegesis or hermeneutics such as "Rhetorical Discourse in the Prophets" (chapter 5). The author demonstrates that his awareness of the intensive use of this means in modern Bible interpretation. In fact, rhetorical analysis is not, in itself, a

new method; it has existed since the time of the classical Greek philosophers. What is new, however, is the use of it in such a systematic way for the purpose of Biblical interpretation and also the beginning and development of a "new rhetoric" particularly shaped for such a task. The reader, even the experimental one, can benefit from this approach to the Hebrew Prophets. The rhetorical aspect of any prophetic text can be the result of a literary analysis of this text. I wish that the author had shown this link between Rhetoric and literary analysis. In fact, literary analysis of the text has been and still is the major interest of all the approaches prevalent in the study of the Bible, beginning with the ancient literary analytical approach (also known as the documentary hypothesis) through the form-critical approach and the redaction critical approach. However, even if these approaches made great contributions to the study of the text, they were used with too skeptical a bias against the unity and integrity of the text. Perhaps this is the factor that has prevented the author from going more deeply into the issue of literary criticism. In any case, we see that dealing with Rhetoric in the Prophets should not make the author to completely neglect the Historical Critical method of exegesis.

Going back to Part One. When the author deals with "the Prophetic Message- What Is It?" in Chapter Two, particularly in the critical and sensitive section that he titled "Foretelling and Forthtelling" (p. 32), the author dared to remain at an equal distance between the conservative and liberal schools; he just displayed both trends without showing his own preference. His handling of the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, that came under the title "Second Moses" (p. 47ff), showed an insertion of a liberal view. In fact, just by naming this part "Second Moses" he shifts from the conservative view that Deuteronomy 32 is not the work of "First Moses", or the traditional Moses, and is therefore a suggestion of his revolution against the conservative camp and those who rejects the JEDP hypothesis. In addition to that, in dealing with "Second Isaiah" (p. 106ff), the fact that the author treated Isaiah and Second Isaiah in different places means that he effectively took a positive attitude towards the liberal school which we see in the second and third "Isaiah". Having implicitly recognized only "Proto-Isaiah" (Isaiah, chapters 1-39) and "Second" Isaiah (40-66), however, the author would have adapted the position of the intermediate wing of the Isaianic School that sees in the Book not more than two "Isaiahs". I see here that the author was very reluctant to take a firm standpoint and it is my feeling that he is convinced of the scientific value of the liberal school but has avoided taking this position explicitly. I wished that the author had developed the point regarding the prophecy of the Hebrew Bible; is it a prediction of the future? Is it for the near or the far future? From my point of view, seeing the Hebrew Bible's prophecy as a prediction for the far future had bad results on other issues like defining God's People in the New Testament, eschatology and others. Taking

prophecy as prediction makes the Bible (Christian and Hebrew Bibles) a book that tells the future of the world, and removes it from its remarkable soteriological target. What I have suggested may, however, not be the author's opinion and, for this reason, I wish he had taken a more obvious position in this very crucial issue about Hebrew prophecy.

The author also dealt with the prophets' message and neglected the prophets' role in the life of kings, priests and community of faith. If he did say something about this, he was extremely brief. Prophets were also kings' consultants and counselors. As such, it was difficult for them to avoid speaking politics or to make difference in their speech between sacred and profane. When I say this, I have in mind the prophet Nathan with King David, the prophet Isaiah with King Hezekiah, and the prophet Jeremiah when he supported the exile as "the will of God" and asked his audience to accept it willingly.

Going to Part Two, the author gave little space for dealing with "Rhetoric in the ancient Near East" (just one short paragraph, p. 165). I would have liked him to attempt to find the link between the phenomenon of prophetism in Israel and in the ancient Near East. Hebrew prophecy meets the ancient Near Eastern prophecy in many points, but this is what the author did not show. On another point, the author did not show the "evolution" of the task of prophecy in Israel. We know that the prophet was called "ro'" or "hoz" (seer) in ancient Israel, then he evolved to become called prophet. "Prophets" were not "inserted" in the society as "adult" from one day to another, instead, the matter started within an ancient Near Eastern context and later shifted away from it, finding its own particularity in a Hebrew context.

A thorough treatment of "the Hebrew Prophets" should also contain some comments on the difference between the Hebrew Canon and its "*nevi'ēem*", part of which is different from the "Prophets" role in the Septuagint Canon (Christian Canon). This difference in the canon is based on a difference on each sides' understanding of prophecy and prophetism. According to the Hebrew Canon, the "*nevi'ēem rishonēem*" (the early prophets) contained Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, but these are not prophetic sections in the Christian Canon. According to the Hebrew Canon, Daniel is also with the "*kethuvēem*" (writings), while in the Septuagint; Daniel is with the "Prophets". This difference in the two canons is related to the difference in prophetic understanding.

In conclusion, Jack Lundbom has provided scholars with an inspiring book that is helpful for both teachers and students of the Old Testament

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