

REVIEW

Izabela Eph'al-Jaruzelska, *Prophets, Royal Legitimacy and War in Ancient Israel*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2009, pp. 192 (ISBN 978-83-235-0469-6)

Royal Legitimacy and War in Ancient Israel is devoted to the history of prophetic tradition and heritage of kingdoms in the 9th and 10th centuries B.C.E. The book presents three general aspects: first prophecy, followed by royal legitimacy and lastly war in Ancient Israel.

Chapter One: Methodological Tools (Methodological Introduction)

The author applies, especially, sociological research methods, and consistently adheres to them. While it is true that this is not the only method of analysis of biblical text, it has of late been a very important one. It has principally been used in the process of reconstructing the history of biblical literature. Therefore, I could not agree with opponents of this book.¹ The scholarly methodology used by the author is very significant, but does not meet the guidelines marked by the Pontifical Biblical Commission which recommends textual analysis via different methods. It is also necessary to stress that the author uses philological analysis through multiple citations of Hebrew phrases from the Hebrew Bible.

The first general assumption made by Izabela Eph'al-Jaruzelska is that of Royal succession in the Kingdom of Israel. This focus is based on two different sources: the Hebrew Bible and non-biblical sources. The second section applies Aramaic and Assyrian inscription, particularly with evidence in Mari texts and varied Neo-Assyrian materials including West-Semitic inscriptions descended from the same period as the texts mentioned above.

Chapter Two: Legitimization of Royal Power

The general aspect investigated by the author is concerned with prophetic stories, like those of Ahijah, Jehu, and Elisha. The other aspects regard Israeli kings of the eleventh to the tenth century B.C.E. Additionally, the last section describes the legitimacy of kings. The first part considers the Deutoronomistic discourse including the activities of Ba'asha, Jeroboam and subsequent periods of authority in the Northern Kingdom. The second part focuses on the Deutoronomistic discourse: Aphek, Ba'asha and Jeroboam and other kings' worships, especially in Northern Israel. These two chapters also include information about Ba'asha, Jeroboam and the legitimacy of Kingdoms in Ancient Israel.

Chapter Three: Royal military activity

The third part is devoted largely to problems: the prophetic stories in Samaria (Aphek, Elisha and others). In summary, the book provides considerable value, as the author raises important questions with regard to ancient Northern Israel.

¹ See review of this book by W. Pikor, *Studia Biblica et Orientalia* 2 (2010), 191–201.

In my opinion the author arrives firmly at conclusions drawing from the presented data. The Kingdom of Israel did necessarily exist in the form mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. The author fluently uses Hebrew sources, which are duly noted. The publication meets all scholarly standards and as such is very important with regard to academic research on prophetic activity and its connections with the Northern Kingdom.

This book discusses very important issues concerning ancient Israel which are still open to debate. Throughout the work, the author pays attention to the scheme and stylistics of the stories mostly of three royal characters: Jeroboam, Ba'asha, Abash and Jehu. As evidence, she presents the specific terminology, phraseology and description scheme of both kings. In Eph'al-Jaruzelska's opinion the series of stories about these kings relates to the stylistics of prophetic narration. Thus such prophets as Ahijah, Hosea, or Micah, active in the later period, would have shaped the biblical description of some kings. For example, in order to determine the territory ruled by Jeroboam, there are the following phrases in the Book of Kings 1: וירם יד במלך. Also the description of his personality is characteristic for Northern historiography. The example here is the phrase גבור חיל.

According to the author, the narrative scheme about Jeroboam and Jehu not only develops in a typical way for the prophetic narration of the tenth to the eighth century B.C.E., but also reflects some prophetic narration not included in the Bible in which prophets (there is no necessity to call them prophets in the case of Aramean) try to accompany their kings. Each story about Jeroboam and Jehu has a consistent paradigm. At the very beginning, a king meets a prophet, then the king's influence increases and consequently his authority becomes legitimized. This scheme is a simplified version, but in each case it is represented similarly.

Izabela Eph'al-Jaruzelska touches upon the very important motif of secular prophecy. Above all, many of the prophets mentioned by the author were advisors, mainly during the political disputes and wars of the Northern Kingdom with Samaria and the Arameans. She is not the first one to reject this model. However it seems that this academic concept should be promoted as the right one.

Reading *Prophets, Royal Legitimacy and War in Ancient Israel*, one may notice that Eph'al-Jaruzelska not only downplays the role of kings in their authority in shaping political and social reality, but also pays attention to the immense influence of the prophets, who certainly had considerable control on shaping the biblical image of particular kings. This permanent image was adopted by the Hebrew Bible as the only one known to us.

Additionally, the author pays meticulous attention to subtlety in the Hebrew language in selected excerpts, for example the phrase: ויתן יהוה ביד במלך. This distinctly underlies that because of the prophets' help and political assistance, God gave power over certain land and people and judgment of enemies to particular kings.

On the other hand, there is a problem with dating some sources from the Book of Kings 1. It seems that Eph'al-Jaruzelska persists in believing that they come from the period of activity of the described kings and prophets, meaning the tenth to eighth centuries B.C.E. Evidently such a thought cannot be excluded. However, as the latest research shows, these and other biblical texts may be later literal stylizations. It may be as recent as after the period of Babylonian Captivity. It must therefore be admitted that the author suggests a Deuteronomistic point of view later than the described stories.

Apart from the above points, it should be noted that the concept presented by the author is very interesting and rarely discussed in biblical literature research. The last scholarly work of the kind was written in Poland in 2002, but that publication was based on different assumptions and was an entirely incorrect approach; methodologically and in the subject matter.² Izabela Eph'al-Jaruzelska exhibits well-founded erudition and perceives nuances in the biblical Hebrew of the Book of Kings 1 and other texts of the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, she notices differences which are the results of literary typology in respective motifs; fragments of the Book of Hosea may be such an example. The author distinguishes the allegory of phrases like חרון אפי from the more literal: לא אבוא בעיר,³ or even direct allusion to the king's ascendancy (kingship) (Hos 13,10), etc. The positive methodological and linguistic aspects of the publication bring much to the discussion about the history of the Israel of the tenth to the eighth century B.C.E.

Przemysław D. Dec

² M. Jasiński, *Posłannictwo Proroka w cyklu Elizeusza. Studium Egzegetyczno-Teologiczne 1 Krl 19-15 – 2 Krl 13, 21*, Poznań 2004.

³ This phrase could be found in the Babylonian Talmud and Talmud of Rashi but not in the Hebrew Bible.