

ANDREW M. GILHOOLEY, *The Edict of Cyrus and Notions of Restoration in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles* (Hebrew Bible Monographs 89; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2020). Pp. xiv + 163. Hardback. £50.00.

Careful readers of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah may have noticed that the end of Chronicles (2 Chron 36:22–23) and the start of Ezra (1:1–4) are remarkably similar. Recently, however, there has been very little research to make sense of these similarities. This monograph—an expanded version of Andrew M. Gilhooley’s M.Phil thesis, completed in 2018 at the University of St. Andrews—attempts to make sense of these similarities.

Gilhooley begins his work with an approach he calls, “a diachronically reflected synchronic reading” (7). The reader may wonder how exactly two texts which are dubiously dated can be read together and then examined. Rejecting what some may view as diametrically opposite methodologies, Gilhooley argues that one can be both sensitive to the literary meaning and historical development of a text (12), and in order to understand both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah one must analyse the text from a “canonical-critical approach” (17). Thus, Gilhooley uses compositional analysis and literary analysis. In his words, “this approach is a synchronic reading with a diachronic flair” (17).

The study ventures into diachronic analysis almost immediately. Gilhooley argues that 2 Chron 36:22–23 is the younger version and most likely borrowed from Ezra 1:1–4 (17). This is substantiated through an accumulative case. The unprecedented use of *ויעל* in 2 Chron 36:23 makes it likely that Ezra 1:1–4 is conventional and original while 2 Chron 36:23 is borrowed (23–24). The second case is stronger. 2 Chron 36:22 contains the longer name of Jeremiah (*yiramyāhū*) as opposed to Ezra 1:1 (*yiramyāh*). In Gilhooley’s analysis, it is more likely that a scribe lengthens a text rather than shortening it (24–27).

Having established that Ezra is the older text, Chapter 3 begins a study of Ezra-Nehemiah’s narrative goals assessed in light of Ezra 1:1–4. This part of the study is a helpful analysis of the literary artistry of Ezra-Nehemiah. Gilhooley rightly recognises that the Cyrus edict is the introduction to the objectives of the whole story (31) which is the construction of the temple and communal worship of Yhwh (33). He notes that there is a potential of these objectives being fulfilled within the course of the narrative. However, there is no clear juncture within the story that indicates a successful achievement of these objective. The temple which is built appears to be insignificant (Ezra 3:12–13) (47), the returnees are still in oppression (Ezra 4:6–23; 6:14; Neh 9:32) (55–57) and they are unfaithful to the Torah (e.g., Ezra 7–8) (59–62). Although more could be said in this space—for example, the negative endings of both Ezra and Nehemiah—the analysis is convincing.

Chapter 4 focuses upon Cyrus’ edict in 2 Chron 36:22–23. Unlike Ezra-Nehemiah which enunciates the failure of prophetic promises, Chronicles ends with the edict in hopes of a fulfilled restoration event (65). In Gilhooley’s words,

“Accordingly, Chronicles’ ending is eschatological” (66). This is not a conclusion with which all scholars agree, so a case is made in the chapter. It is argued that the complete restoration of the house of Yhwh will occur only in conjunction with the restoration of the “house of David,” but that does not happen (69–76).

Gilhooley ends his study with a discussion of 2 Chron 36:22–23 as the conclusion to the “Old Testament” canon. The study begins with an analysis of different forms of canonical criticism and argues that final form(s) of the Old Testament contain a transformation in structure due to context. And so, when a deliberate change is made to a canon structure “... macrostructure presents a theological message and hermeneutical guidelines” (104). He then discusses how medieval Jewish manuscripts, New Testament witnesses and Ben Sira place Chronicles in their canonical ordering (114–21). Gilhooley’s conclusion is that Chronicles likely occupies the ultimate position in the minds of these witnesses and thus acts as an eschatological conclusion to the end of the canon(s). An immediate critique would be the failure to engage in the study of the Christian canonical ordering. It does seem, however, that Gilhooley focuses on the canon which the New Testament authors are believed to have in their minds rather than the way that the canon was ordered later. Nevertheless, some interaction with the Christian ordering may have strengthened this part of the study.

Overall, this monograph is an insightful study. While some may disagree with the methodology, it offers a fresh perspective into how we might understand Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles as separate texts and as texts in conversation.

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DAVID JANZEN, *The End of History and the Last King: Achaemenid Ideology and Community Identity in Ezra-Nehemiah* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 713; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2021). Pp. vii + 272. Paperback. AU\$59.99.

How did Achaemenid ideology affect the identity of the post-exilic community in Jerusalem? This is the question David Janzen seeks to answer through the book of Ezra-Nehemiah. Once returning from exile, the repatriated community had to essentially “sort out” their identity. A part of that journey of forming identity is narrated in Ezra-Nehemiah. In recent years, scholars have been interested in the community identity of the repatriates. Contributing to this interest, Janzen offers up a study which should pique the interest of every individual seeking to understand the Jewish community post exile.

Janzen’s angle when studying identity in Ezra-Nehemiah is to focus on the way “the author shapes this identity in response to Achaemenid ideology” (3).