

HALLVARD HAGELIA, *Divine Election in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2019). Pp. xi + 278. Hardback. £60/US\$80/€70.

Hallvard Hagelia has offered a broad ranging discussion on the challenging and, perhaps for some, troubling notion of divine election. His purpose is clear: “This book will demonstrate that election is ... a central theme ...” (x). The approach is to re-tell the narrative of election, offering explanatory elaborations of what is found in the text. Before considering the text itself, Hagelia defines what he means by the term election. In Chapter Two, election, together with promise, are described conceptually before identifying them with the frequently used Hebrew term *bachar*.

Chapter Three considers election in the primeval prologue. Hagelia points out that the term *bachar* occurs infrequently although the practice of election is implied by presence. Some examples are offered such as divine preference for Abel’s offering over Cain’s and the subsequent choosing of Noah. With sparse evidence for election, Hagelia concludes that the primeval prologue foreshadows more obvious election in later narratives. Importantly in this chapter he introduces the concepts of “elect,” “non-elect” and “anti-elect” suggested by J. Kaminsky (10) which enables Hagelia to identify thematic nuances.

Chapter Four explores the patriarchs’ election. While Hagelia focuses on the male characters, some space is also made for discussion of the female participants and election. Albeit limited, the concentration on female characters and election is a welcome and important aspect to this analysis. In addition, some comment is made about the non-election of characters such as Ishmael and Esau; these being illustrative of Kaminsky’s “non-elect.” One imagines that there is much more to be said on this aspect of the text.

When considering Abraham, Hagelia is careful to note that he is not elected based on intrinsic merit; however, he is clearly chosen as the recipient of divine promise in Genesis 12. Despite the particularity of divine election here, Hagelia emphasises the universal purview of election. He goes on to argue that the centrality of Abraham, as divinely elected, extends well beyond just the Abrahamic narrative. Isaac is considered a linkage between the more significant figures of Abraham and Jacob. Jacob “... is not directly said to be elected but he is clearly seen as God’s elect in the tradition from Abraham and Isaac” (52). For Hagelia, the Joseph novella, while not expressly identifying Joseph as elected, extends the theme of patriarchal election.

Chapter Five turns to Moses and Joshua. The election of Moses is only made explicit in Psalms 105 and 106. However, Hagelia states that “... the Moses narratives are permeated with the idea that Moses was elected by Yhwh ...” (65). He concludes that “Abraham and Moses are juxtaposed as elected, even though their missions were different” (72). Despite his certitude, Hagelia does admit that neither is explicitly described as elected. Joshua is viewed as a continuation of Moses’s election, with Hagelia stating that “Joshua is not less elected than

Moses, because Moses's commission is not fulfilled until Joshua's commission is fulfilled" (78).

The focus shifts to the election of David and Solomon in Chapter Six. Hagelia argues for them to be considered together as part of the Davidic dynasty. A key line of connection here is made between the everlasting Abrahamic covenant in Gen 17:13 and everlasting Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7). Towards the end of the chapter, due consideration is given to the extension of Davidic election to the subsequent davidides and the prophets who wrestled with the shortcomings of kingship in light of election.

Chapters Seven and Eight explore election in relation to place—the promised land and Jerusalem. Hagelia maps out the presence of both entities as elected through the whole Hebrew Bible text. These elections are viewed as integral to, rather than separate from, the election of individuals. This segues into the concluding chapters which consider the election of groups—the people of Israel and the remnant. In doing this, Hagelia helpfully highlights the way in which the notion of election is reflected upon leading up to the exile by the prophets and then re-imagined following the exile particularly in Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah.

To round out the survey, Hagelia devotes two chapters to what he calls “other elections” (182) and related matters which explore the question of how the “non-elect,” to use Kaminsky's categorisation (202), can be included among the elect. As a contrast to this interesting exploration, Hagelia then asks questions in the final chapter about the possibility for election to be lost with a particular focus on the northern kingdom of Israel leading up to their demise in 722 BCE. He admits that there is a level of ambiguity on this issue in the text.

Hagelia has attempted to cover the breadth of election as a theme in the whole Hebrew Bible while also exploring the concept in some depth. In doing this he has found a balance between tracing the broad narrative of election while frequently pausing to concentrate on the more formative sections in the text. Although more could have been said at times about less obvious characters in the major election narratives, he does do well to trace the development of the election theme, offer some in-depth analysis of relevant key texts, and prompt pause for consideration of this central biblical theme.

DAVID J. COHEN

Morling College, Australian College of Theology