

“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.

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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).

Such a focus in turn reveals his general approach: a close reading of the Ezra-Nehemiah from the author's perspective with a close study of Persian works which give context to the biblical text. Janzen reveals his conclusions early by stating that the author of Ezra-Nehemiah was shaped by Achaemenid ideology, and that the Yahwism of Ezra-Nehemiah is "a variety that is entirely compatible with Achaemenid ideology" (3).

In order to justify such claims, Janzen begins by reviewing the literature surrounding the composition, authorship and date of Ezra-Nehemiah. If Achaemenid influence upon the author ought to be demonstrated, then the author themselves must be alive closer to the date of the Achaemenid rule. Janzen finds the often-assumed studies which identify redactional seams unconvincing, and thus concludes that we need not believe that Ezra-Nehemiah was composed over a period of centuries (26–27). Additionally, Janzen finds the attempts to date Ezra-Nehemiah into the Hellenistic period to be thoroughly unconvincing, "... there are no obvious signs of Hellenistic composition, no Greek loan words or references to distinct aspects of Hellenistic culture ..." (27). While this may be an untenable position to some, Janzen offers a fair rebuttal against the many works which argue for a Hellenistic date (28–38).

Chapter 2 focuses on the text of Ezra-Nehemiah, separating the book into three parts: Ezra 1–6, Ezra 7–10 and Nehemiah 1–11. Janzen argues that the community in Ezra 1–6 is portrayed as the ideal generation. They show loyalty to the king, which is what Janzen believes to be one of the author's markers of an ideal community (53). Moreover, the community is a foil to the "adversaries" who are introduced in Ezra 4. These adversaries are a people who have lived in the margins of the Persian empire, and the longer a community remains away from the centre of the empire, the more corrupt they become (54). The same can be said of Sanballat and Tobiah (Neh 2:10) who desire to see the repatriates crumble, thus acting in direct opposition to the will of the king (64–65).

Chapter 3 argues that the Achaemenids are depicted as beneficent kings. For instance, they alone speak divine commands and act to restore happiness in the land of Judah (128). Janzen also argues against a negative reading of "slave" in Neh 9:36, because in Achaemenid ideology, there is no better fate than one that serves the Persian king, and Ezra 7 "dispels any distinction between disloyalty to God and disloyalty to the king" (121). If Janzen is correct, then Ezra's self-designation of "slave" is not a description wrought out of anguish but a note on reality, and that reality is the best-case scenario.

In Chapter 4, Janzen assesses the justifications of the Achaemenids for using torture as a means of restoring happiness throughout of the empire. This section contains a detailed analysis of Persian texts and concludes that the Achaemenids were certainly capable of committing horrible acts but were also able to do good (140). Ezra-Nehemiah, in Janzen's assessment, does not write against the empire, but instead mimics its punishments (145–49). One reason Janzen gives for

this phenomenon is due to Ezra-Nehemiah's ideology: it sees no contradiction between the law of the king and the law of God (154).

Chapter 5 analyses Ezra-Nehemiah in its probable context. Janzen argues that Ezra-Nehemiah contains a worldview of a very elite group (168). Unlike other post-exilic texts, Ezra-Nehemiah's community identity is rooted in the issues the governor and the elite think are pertinent (185). For instance, Third Isaiah accepts foreigners worshipping Yhwh in the temple (Isa 56:1–8) (184), but Ezra-Nehemiah does not. In fact, Janzen argues that Chronicles, Haggai, First Zechariah, Third Isaiah and Malachi are all compositions from various factions within the post-exilic community, some from the elite circles and others more in the margins (201). But the germane point is that “[n]one of these early Persian-period writings links the community's identity to their relationship to the empire ...” (191). If there was a group whose wealth and status were tied to the Persian empire, they would be the group that wrote Ezra-Nehemiah. The empire was vital to their identity, life and even their theology.

Janzen has contributed to an area of study that has a growing interest. Indeed, questions surrounding how exactly Ezra-Nehemiah's ideology regarding the Persian empire affects their identity has not been studied at this length. This monograph contributes greatly to that area. Although not all readers will be convinced, they will still be able to appreciate the meticulous thought put into trying to understand Ezra-Nehemiah in its proposed context.

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ELIZABETH H. P. BACKFISH, *Hebrew Wordplay and Septuagint Translation Technique in the Fourth Book of the Psalter* (LHBOTS 682; London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2019). Pp. xiii + 168. Paperback. AU\$59.99.

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In this publication of her PhD dissertation, Elizabeth Backfish makes an important contribution to the discussion of biblical wordplay and how it is represented in Greek translation. There are three chapters plus a brief conclusion, beginning in the first chapter with Backfish defining and nuancing the language used to discuss wordplay, and then presenting the rationale for this project. The second chapter systematically works through all the psalms in Book IV (Psalms 90–106) which use Hebrew wordplay, describing, classifying and demonstrating the implications of the wordplays. The third chapter then delves into the Septuagint and discusses the methods and the extent to which wordplay comprised a role in translation. The concluding chapter summarises the findings and discusses those fields where this study has made contributions.

The opening chapter gives an impressive survey of the state of the field. The discussion of literary devices is often hamstrung by imprecise and contradictory