

against the book: that it has no religious worth, should/could be ignored, that it is bloodthirsty and vengeful, and even that it is “too Jewish.” Many of these scholars are Protestant, writing in the nineteenth–early twentieth century, and German (the significance of the latter points is not lost on Kalimi, 305). Particularly sobering for the modern guild is the presence of many highly-influential early Biblical scholars (de Wette, Driver, Paton, Gunkel, Eissfeldt).

In chapter 13, Kalimi identifies several Christian commentators who defend the book of Esther. However, he paints these authors as the minority “who swim against the stream of general hostility” (333). Yet while Kalimi’s survey does cover many hostile authors (26, by my count), the number of defenders of Esther is also not insignificant (12). As Kalimi notes, the reception was much worse in Germany than in the Anglosphere (333). While Christian opposition to the book is a proved phenomenon, generalising that opposition too much would be inaccurate.

While this book might primarily attract scholars interested in Esther, there is much that is worth the attention of all biblical scholars. Although Kalimi’s book is ostensibly dedicated to the book of Esther, he frequently raises questions that force modern biblical scholars to confront inconvenient facts about the origins of our field. It is interesting not only as an analysis of Esther but as a history of the field of Biblical studies. Kalimi shows that commentary on the book of Esther tends to bring anti-Semitism into the open, where in other parts of the field it might only be latent.

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TAMARA COHN ESKENAZI, *Ezra: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2023). Pp. xix + 504. Hardcover. US\$85.

Tamara Cohn Eskenazi’s commentary on Ezra represents a highly anticipated scholarly work that is sure to impress any serious student of Ezra-Nehemiah. This commentary serves as a replacement for Jacob M. Myers’s commentary published in The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries series from 1965, with an initial release on Ezra and another on Nehemiah which will be released in the near future. Eskenazi’s contribution comes at a pivotal moment in the field, as research on Ezra-Nehemiah and its relation to the Achaemenid empire is experiencing significant growth.

Eskenazi is no stranger to the book of Ezra. As a scholar who has published extensively and influenced the reading of Ezra-Nehemiah, this commentary offers a diverse range of approaches and perspectives, making it a valuable resource for all researchers. The commentary begins with an introduction to

contextual issues surrounding Ezra-Nehemiah and other preliminary issues. Although the commentary covers the text of Ezra alone, the introduction deals with approaches to reading both Ezra-Nehemiah. Ultimately Eskenazi, while sensitive to issues concerning redaction, studies the text as all the ancient sources do: as a single book (32–33). Thus, the commentary follows the MT, “where Ezra 1–10 is the first part of the unified Ezra-Nehemiah” (44).

Eskenazi’s commitment to study the narrative of the book is highlighted in her examination of critical issues. One of those issues is the dating of Ezra’s mission (cf., Ezra 7). While the canonical sequence puts Ezra’s mission during the reign of Artaxerxes I, some scholars argue that Ezra returned to Yehud during the reign of Artaxerxes II. Eskenazi’s approach is revealed in her conclusion that “the commentary below unfolds primarily with Artaxerxes I in mind, since it seeks to explicate EN’s agenda, and EN places Ezra before Nehemiah” (285). Some readers may not agree with the approach, nor the conclusion, and Eskenazi concedes that certain issues cannot simply be resolved in a commentary. However, the reader can appreciate the careful thinking and consistency in her argumentation.

One of the strengths of Eskenazi’s commentary is her ability to integrate resources from various scholarly perspectives, offering readers a multifaceted understanding of the text. For example, her analysis of the expulsion of foreign women and children in Ezra 10 demonstrates a nuanced approach that considers the broader context of women’s participation in public events. The expulsion of foreign women and children has been a difficult ethical pill to swallow for many commentators. Eskenazi, however, adds nuance to the discussion by noticing the explicit acknowledgement of women in Ezra-Nehemiah in the very scene (Ezra 10:1; Neh 8:2–3, 10:29–30). Thus concluding, “By specifying the presence of women at these important junctures, EN indicates their legitimate participation in public events. Indirectly, this points to why foreign women would be a concern” (392). The event narrated in Ezra 10, then, is not depicted as a battle between the sexes, but rather, should be understood on communal, cultural and possibly even ethnic levels. While not all may see the significance of this reading, nor agree with Eskenazi’s conclusion, these kinds of contributions should promote development on this part of the book.

Eskenazi’s commentary stands out for its fresh and insightful interpretations of the text, drawing on a wide range of secondary sources to provide a thorough examination of Ezra. Students and scholars seeking a scholarly yet innovative perspective on Ezra will find Eskenazi’s commentary to be a valuable and nuanced resource for their studies.

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