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Levitt Kohn, Risa

A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah

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Dalit Rom-Shiloni
Hebrew Union College-JIR
Jerusalem, Israel 94101

Risa Levitt Kohn's interest in Ezekiel's message to the exiles, "during one of the most traumatic periods in Israelite history" (1), brought her to study systematically the lexical and thematic similarities between Ezekiel and P, and Ezekiel and D/Dtr. The author poses questions regarding the nature of the relationship between Ezekiel and the above-mentioned sources. By considering the implications of these literary connections on the evolution of the Torah, Levitt Kohn is able to place Ezekiel within the context of Israelite history, theology, and literature.

The author joins a "gigantic controversy" in biblical scholarship, with J. Wellhausen and Y. Kaufmann as major speakers. In a thorough introduction (ch. 2), the author examines Wellhausen's thesis as well as Kaufmann's counterthesis regarding the evolution of the Pentateuch and Ezekiel's contribution to this process. Studying idiomatic similarities between the language of Ezekiel and P, on the one hand, and D/Dtr phrases, on the other, Levitt Kohn establishes (once again) the improbability of the assumption that Ezekiel preceded both P and D/Dtr sources. The author thus joins "Kaufmann's school" in this debate. In her study, Levitt Kohn strives to release Ezekiel from the burden laid on him by Wellhausen, who considered the prophet to be no less than "the original spiritual architect of Judaism" (thus Levitt Kohn [110]).

The author sets out four major arguments regarding the relationship between Ezekiel and the Torah (ch. 6). First, though the author argues that Ezekiel does not know the entire Torah (117), the prophet is certainly aware of both P and D/Dtr sources in their written form. Yet Ezekiel is not "working furiously to preserve these traditions for posterity. . . . Ezekiel is not safeguarding Israelite tradition from extinction" (111). Rather, he uses both

traditions, separately and in combination, as sources for his own pronouncements; “he questions these traditions, comments upon them, and, ultimately, reformulates them” (111).

Second, Levitt Kohn refutes the moderate path that explains the connections between Ezekiel and P as resulting from common priestly concerns, ideology, vocabulary, or heritage in general. She rather emphasizes the “*direct* literary allusions to P” in Ezekiel (112, emphasis original).

Third, the author illuminates Ezekiel’s independence with respect to his sources and explains his position in accordance with his main motives in using them. The legal standards of both P and D serve Ezekiel, on the one hand, as theological arguments to explain the 587 disaster and, on the other, as potential standards for his contemporaries’ improvement or as means to a future redemption. Yet, when neither P nor D serves his purpose, Ezekiel paves his own new way, which oftentimes integrates both schools’ ideologies (113–14).

Finally, through a comparison with exilic and postexilic literary compositions, Levitt Kohn places Ezekiel at the roots of a process of synthesizing pentateuchal literary sources, exemplified years later in the redactor’s work on the Torah, in Ezra-Nehemiah, and in Chronicles. In articulating Ezekiel’s combination of the contradictory theologies of P and D, then, Levitt Kohn gives the prophet primacy as precursor of the Torah redactor(s). Thus, she argues that Ezekiel anticipated the restoration authors and redactors in constructing an inclusive ideology that intentionally combined the rival streams of thought known to us as P and D. Hence, while denying Wellhausen’s appointment of Ezekiel as “architect of Judaism,” Levitt Kohn nevertheless awards the prophet another major role. Ezekiel is said to have established an integrated ideology that went beyond the preexilic separate Priestly and Deuteronomistic schools of thought. This ideology is considered to go hand in hand with Ezekiel’s self-presentation as a second Moses (109–10) and with his “dream of unified national theology” (118).

This overall thesis is based on examination of the nature of the relationships between Ezekiel and P and Ezekiel and D/Dtr. In chapters 3 and 4 the author concentrates on common lexical expressions and terms. She briefly discusses ninety-seven phrases shared by Ezekiel and Priestly sources (including H) and twenty-one phrases shared by Ezekiel and D/Dtr. These lexical lists are certainly one of the main benefits of the book. They suggest more similarities by far than have been presented in the previous general or specific studies of S. R. Driver, M. Burrows, A. Hurvitz, J. Milgrom, B. A. Levine, R. Polzin, and M. Rooker.

Levitt Kohn classifies the terms and phrases common to P and Ezekiel (ch. 3) in order to illustrate not only shared language but even thematic resemblances and differences. Ten categories of content are presented (30): Yahweh's relationship to Israel; covenant; land; social structure; law; holy days; tabernacle/temple and priesthood; ritual; humans, animals and plants; and miscellaneous.

In discussing Ezekiel and D/Dtr expressions (ch. 4), Levitt Kohn does not employ classifications of content; she lists mainly idioms that testify to "shared terminology," common not only to Ezekiel and D/Dtr but also to Jeremiah. Nevertheless, the author argues for the direct connection of Ezekiel to D/Dtr. Special attention is given to the relationship of Ezekiel and D/Dtr where alternative Priestly idioms are absent (e.g., ch. 4 idioms 9, 17) and particularly where they are present (e.g., idioms 4, 5, 7, 8 there). Following the lists in chapters 3 and 4, Levitt Kohn adds a conclusive analysis of each.

The most persuasive discussion in this book is chapter 5: "Fusing P and D/Dtr in Ezekiel." Although the examples are relatively scant, Levitt Kohn considers them to be "the most illuminating aspect of Ezekiel's use of P and D" (96). Indeed, the author's insights on Ezekiel's synthesis of P and D are thought-provoking.

Reading carefully through chapters 3 and 4 of the book raises several methodological questions. (1) There is no methodological explanation of how the lists were compiled. Should one conclude from the study that the author had exhausted the idiomatic resemblances between the literary compositions she studied? One may note at least two "missing" idioms. The first is shared by Ezekiel and P: *'akhal 'al ha-dam* ("to eat with the blood"; Ezek 33:25 and Lev 19:26, elsewhere found only in 1 Sam 14:33–34). The second is shared by Ezekiel, H, D, and Jeremiah: *'asah to'evah* ("to commit abominations"; Ezek 16:50; 18:12; 22:11; 33:26, etc., and Lev 18:26–30; 20:13; as well as Deut 18:12 and Jer 7:10; 44:22).

(2) The focus on the literary-historical relationships of the texts under scrutiny unfortunately kept the author from considering in chapter 3 both the stratification of P and H and the literary complexity of the book of Ezekiel itself (mainly 1–39 and 40–48). This aspect of the procedure is left without sufficient explanation (30); it is even sharply questionable as one studies the list of idioms and its analysis (31–85) and eventually reads the author's conclusion that "Ezekiel's linguistic correspondence to PT is as pervasive as its correspondence to the HS, *if not more*" (85, emphasis added). The data call for more complex classifications, and such would hardly harm the author's "chief concern to cast the net as wide as possible" within the common corpus of P and Ezekiel (30). On the contrary, a more nuanced approach would have enriched the study and

would have been even more useful for future studies of the interrelationship between Ezekiel and his sources.

(3) Furthermore, chapter 3's discussion sharpens the question of whether the restriction to idiomatic similarities is justified when discussing the relationships between literary compositions. Clinging to similarities in vocabulary leads to overlooking additional thematic allusions in the sources. For example, there is no mention of the phrase *mishp'tey no'afot w-shofkhot dam*, "the punishment of women who commit adultery and murder" (Ezek 16:38; 23:45; clearly alluding to Lev 18 and 20). This methodological question is wider by far than the limits of this review, but it comes constantly to mind when reading the book.

Levitt Kohn's work has the potential of being an important contribution to the field of inner-biblical interpretation. Yet the discussion is not focused on this angle, though in several discussions Ezekiel's interpretive perspective is suggested (*'erets mgureyhem*, "the land of their sojourning" 3.6 [39]; *rav lakhem*, "Enough!/You've gone too far!" 10.8 [68–69 and elsewhere]), and some of the terminology of inner-biblical analysis is sporadically used (e.g., "echo," "allusion," "reversal"). Moreover, it seems that the author is aware of this limitation she has imposed on her study, and her comments regarding other thematic affinities are of great importance and relevance for the argument (for instance, 94–95).

Despite this limitation, in establishing P (H) and D/Dtr as source texts for Ezekiel, Levitt Kohn's study lays a foundation for further research on inner-biblical interpretation and allusion. The data presented in the lists should aid further studies of the functional and thematic use made by Ezekiel of these earlier sources.

(4) The analytical discussions of the relationships between Ezekiel and P or D/Dtr are unfortunately not as helpful as the lists themselves (ch. 3, 75–84; ch. 4, 93–94). The analysis in each chapter is aimed at considering general characteristics of the ways that Ezekiel uses his sources. However, the discussions can hardly be taken as conclusive, since they treat only a relatively small portion of the phrases adduced (forty out of ninety-seven terms in P; seven out of twenty-one terms in D/Dtr). Moreover, methodologically the analysis is heterogeneous, mingling categories of genuine inner-biblical interpretation (e.g., "1. Reversals"; "5. Literal to Metaphorical") with several types of context or content allusions ("2. Legal citations"; "3. The Exodus and the Restoration"; "4. Tabernacle to Temple?"). Finally, some of the classifications are at least questionable. For example, the data adduced and the conclusions reached concerning "The Exodus and the Restoration" (80–81) seem inadequate, since most of the expressions discussed do not support the "Second Exodus" theme.

(5) Without prolonging this review, caution is due with reference to some of the parallels discussed, since it seems that they can hardly be evaluated as more than coincidentally shared phrases (e.g., ch. 3, idioms 5.1; 8.2–5, 11; 9.7, 11; 10.19, among others; ch. 4, idioms 5, 12, 20).

Levitt Kohn's overall thesis is definitely intriguing and well-supported. The author contributes a comprehensive study of the idiomatic similarities between Ezekiel and P and Ezekiel and D. For many of these shared expressions she succeeds in proving the direction of influence, placing Ezekiel last in this literary relationship, not first.

However, I would question the new role Levitt Kohn imposes on Ezekiel. Based on the relatively small number of examples of conflated P and D phrases and ideologies (only five examples are presented), can Ezekiel really bear the burden of initiating an inclusive national ideology? Does Ezekiel mark a unique change in his integration of earlier pentateuchal sources (Jeremiah seems to be especially close to Ezekiel in this respect)? And an even more bothersome question: Is it not highly conjectural to assume a preexilic rivalry between P and D literary schools that Ezekiel (being one of the priests in exile) allegedly was anxious to settle? I definitely agree with Levitt Kohn that in the prophet's rich message, both allusive and original, Ezekiel had a tremendous impact on the constitution of an exilic ideology, yet I would doubt whether Ezekiel was the "liminal figure" that the author (in agreement with Wellhausen) wants to see in him (117).

In conclusion, Levitt Kohn's study should definitely serve scholars of both Ezekiel and the Pentateuch. As a window for further research, it could, moreover, be instructive for scholars interested in inner-biblical interpretation.