

RBL 04/2006



Kalimi, Isaac

An Ancient Israelite Historian: Studies in the Chronicler, His Time, Place and Writing

Studia Semitica Neerlandica 46

Assen: Van Gorcum, 2005. Pp. x + 212. Hardcover.
€79.50. ISBN 9023240715.

Kenneth A. Ristau
Pennsylvania State University
State College, PA 16803

In this book Kalimi brings together his recent work that treats “fundamental issues of Chronicles, that is, its main genre; the date of its composition; the place of the author—Jerusalem, and the link between these and his writing” (9). The genre and the date of the composition are addressed in the first three chapters, while the place of the author is addressed in the latter six chapters. Seven of the chapters are revised or adapted versions of previously published articles, while two chapters are original contributions.

The articles are generally well chosen and appropriate to this volume, with the exception of the third and sixth chapters. The third chapter explores the Chronicler’s use of the literary technique of paronomasia and seems somewhat out of place in this collection and more suited to Kalimi’s *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*. The present volume might have been better served by the inclusion of “History of Interpretation: The Book of Chronicles in Jewish Tradition—From Daniel to Spinoza (2nd Century BCE until 17th Century CE)” in its place. The sixth chapter—the first of two original compositions in this book—is more of a short excursus or appendix and could have been relegated to such in this volume. I would have preferred to see “Zion or Gerizim? The Association of Abraham and the *Aqedah* with Zion/Gerizim in Jewish and Samaritan Sources” or “The Land of Moriah, Mount Moriah and the Site of Solomon’s

Temple in Biblical Historiography” in its place, even though both of these appeared in Kalimi’s previous essay collection, *Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy*.

In the first chapter, “The Characterization of the Chronicler and His Writing,” Kalimi evaluates some of the scholarly classifications of the Chronicler’s work and sets out his own judgment regarding the genre of the literary composition. Kalimi reviews proposals for the Chronicler as midrashist, exegete, theologian, and historian, concluding that the Chronicler is a historian.

In the second chapter, “The Date of the Book of Chronicles: Biblical Text, Elephantine Papyri and El-Ibrahimiya’s Aramaic Grave Inscription,” Kalimi examines the internal and external evidence concerning the date of the composition of Chronicles. Submitting largely a priori to the essential integrity and unity of Chronicles, he argues for a *terminus a quo* in the first quarter of the fourth century B.C.E. and a *terminus ad quem* in 333/2 B.C.E.

The third chapter, “Utilization of Pun/Paronomasia in the Chronistic Writing,” follows the meticulous pattern Kalimi developed for the analysis of literary features in his dissertation, most recently revised and published in English under the title *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*. The examples are thorough and reinforce once again the conclusions Kalimi reached in his dissertation, namely, that the Chronicler was an adept and sophisticated author with considerable literary skill.

In the fourth chapter, “The View of Jerusalem in the Ethnographical Introduction of Chronicles,” Kalimi mines the genealogies of Chronicles for references to Jerusalem. He shows that already in this prologue the Chronicler establishes the centrality and importance of Jerusalem as the home to the Davidic dynasty, the location of the temple and Israel’s religious life, and the “center for the whole nation” (93).

In the fifth chapter, “The Capture of Jerusalem in the Deuteronomistic and Chronistic History,” Kalimi compares the various traditions concerning the capture of Jerusalem in biblical historiography and demonstrates the literary techniques and textual influences that may have resulted in the Chronicler’s somewhat unique account. Kalimi also concludes that the Chronistic account lacks historical credibility.

In the sixth chapter, “The Eternal City: ‘Jerusalem’ versus ‘City of David,’” Kalimi investigates the usage of the appellations “Jerusalem” and “City of David” in Chronicles. He argues in four short pages that the Chronicler minimizes the associations between David and Jerusalem and that this is reflected in a greater reticence than the Deuteronomist for the appellation “City of David.”

In the seventh chapter, “The Twilight of Jerusalem: King Jehoiachin and the Temple Vessels in the Deuteronomistic and Chronistic History,” Kalimi investigates the Chronicler’s abbreviated account of the reign of King Jehoiachin (2 Chr 36:9–10) vis-à-vis 2 Kgs 24:8–17 and observes that though abbreviated it presents original information. Specifically, the Chronicler’s account suggests “the precious vessels had been moved to Babylon intact ... to underscore for his readers the continuity of holiness between the worship in their Temple and the worship in the Solomonic Temple” (123).

In the eighth chapter, “Jerusalem—The Divine City: The Representation of Jerusalem in Chronicles Compared with Earlier and Later Jewish Compositions,” Kalimi explores the unique portrait of Jerusalem in Chronicles. Kalimi argues that the Chronicler, on the one hand, is very concerned to heighten and impress upon his readers the importance of Jerusalem but, on the other hand, avoids an eschatological idealization or glorification of the city.

In the ninth chapter, “‘So Let Him Go Up [to Jerusalem]’: A Historical and Theological Observation on Cyrus’ Decree in Chronicles,” Kalimi presents some likely historical and theological messages that the Chronicler intended to communicate by ending the book with Cyrus’s edict and ending the edict with ויעל (“and let him go up”). Among other points, he argues that this call for *aliyah* may have motivated the decision to ultimately place Chronicles at the end of the Jewish canon.

Consistently, the chapters in the volume attest to Kalimi’s strengths in exegesis and stylistic analysis as well as his awareness of ancient interpretations. Kalimi always demonstrates a keen ability to see and draw relationships between passages, sources, or commentary in a way that yields insightful, although often impressionistic, readings. While not always compelling in my opinion, Kalimi’s contributions are judiciously argued and will stimulate research and debate among students and scholars.

In addition to these nine chapters, the volume includes a detailed table of contents, a list of abbreviations, a list of the six figures that punctuate the book, acknowledgements, a summary prologue, a very brief epilogue, a bibliography, and indices of sources, topics, and authors. Many of the chapters are best read in conjunction with Kalimi’s *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, which he frequently footnotes to support conclusions or assumptions. The collection is an important one for the study of Chronicles and those with an interest in the literary, theological constructions of Jerusalem in biblical historiography. It is a credit to Isaac Kalimi and will serve students and scholars well.