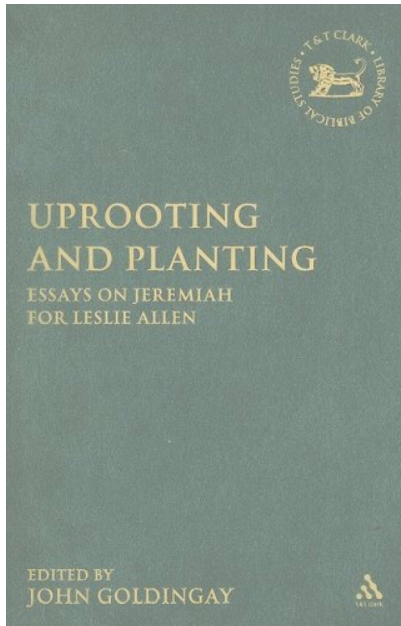


RBL 12/2009



Goldingay, John, ed..

Uprooting and Planting: Essays on Jeremiah for Leslie Allen

Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 459

London: T&T Clark, 2007. Pp. x + 178. Cloth. \$175.00.
ISBN 0567029522.

Wilhelm J. Wessels
University of South Africa
Pretoria, South Africa

Uprooting and Planting consists of eighteen essays dedicated to Leslie Allen to celebrate his seventieth birthday. John Goldingay, a colleague of Professor Allen, acted as the editor for this collaborative work on the book of Jeremiah. At first I wondered why essays on the book of Jeremiah, since Allen is known more for his work on other prophets and literature of the Old Testament. It soon became clear that, at the time of the creation of this book, he was working on a commentary on Jeremiah. As Goldingay explained, Allen would be forced by this book to engage the views expressed in this volume and that he would definitely not agree with all the diverse views presented in the essays. This implies, therefore, that one should not look for a unity in approach or perspective in this collected endeavor.

Suitably, the introductory essay centers on the person Leslie Allen: "Leslie Allen: An Educated Evangelical." This says a great deal of the person in the sense that he is respected as an educated scholar, contextualized within the evangelical tradition. Ralph Martin, in a personal way, briefly surveys Allen's journey from London to Fuller Seminary in the United States, where he did and still does his scholarly work. Aptly, the volume is rounded off with a curriculum vitae of Allen. What follows is a very brief overview of the essays on Jeremiah dedicated to Professor Allen.

The first of the essays is by Alice Ogden Bellis, writing about “Jeremiah 31:22b: An Intentionally Ambiguous, Multivalent Riddle-Text.” The solution she offers for the “strange” colon “a female encompasses a strong man” is that it is a riddle with multiple meanings. More than that, the meanings are intentionally ambiguous to form a complex pun. She surveys several suggested solutions to arrive at a combination of five possible solutions that, according to her, do justice to the Hebrew prophetic and poetic traditions.

The second essay, by Lawrence Boadt, has the title “Do Jeremiah and Ezekiel Share a Common View of the Exile?” In his view, “there is a note-worthy coherence in the purpose and theological outlook of both books as now constituted, which may or may not have differed from the main thrusts of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel themselves” (15). Key to both of these prophets is the idea or vision of a new exodus and a renewed Torah that will form part future of a restored people of God.

“Prophecy Interpreted: Intertextuality and Theodicy: A Case Study of Jeremiah 26:16–24” is the third essay in the volume, written by Ronald E. Clements. Intertextuality has recently received much attention and refinement, but Clements argues that it has long been practiced by prophets of the Old Testament. He uses Jer 26:16–24, the reference to the prophecies of Micah ben Moresheth, to show the relationship between an eighth-century prophetic text and an older sixth-century text. Clements concludes that the capturing of prophecy in written form provided good opportunities for new interpretations of texts.

Coming from a country where there is a great deal of poverty, William R. Dromeris is well-equipped to address the issue of poverty. In his essay “Jeremiah and the Poor,” Dromeris discusses the issues of peasants, patrons, urbanization, and rulers, as well as the all-important matter of land (see Jer 32:1–15). He, however, also devotes a section to Jeremiah and the poor and illustrates Jeremiah’s defense of the poor. He also draws a link between justice and fairness, on the one hand, and exile and punishment, on the other.

In “Jeremiah and the Superpower,” John Goldingay writes about the phenomenon of superpowers in history that dominated almost all societal aspects (politics, economy, culture, and religious life) at some stage. He in particular refers to Babylon in Jeremiah where this nation takes on a representative role of any nation in any period of time, a symbol for superpowers. He continues by referring to the subordination of superpowers to Yahweh and his control over them to put them down or raise another superpower if he so wishes. Goldingay ends by indicating that it is never too late for either Judah or a superpower to avoid negative outcomes such as war if they act accordingly to what Yahweh requires of them.

The next essay concerns Edom. In “YHWH, the God of Israel and of Edom? The Relationships in the Oracle to Edom in Jeremiah 49:7–22,” Linda Haney shows how a theology that she calls a “Damn Edom theology” (79) developed and how scholarship contributed in promoting this negative appreciation of Edom portrayed by the Latter Prophets. By discussing Jer 49:7–22, she shows how remarkably similar the relationship of YHWH with Israel is to that of YHWH with Edom.

In a rather lengthy and challenging essay with the title “Jeremiah 2–10 as a Unified Literary Composition: Evidence of Dramatic Portrayal and Narrative Progression,” Joseph M. Henderson sets out to read Jer 2–10 as a dramatic portrayal of Israel’s history in which both Jeremiah and YHWH are characters. His whole presentation results in negating efforts to present a biographical picture of the prophet Jeremiah. His approach brings a new perspective to the difficult issue of poetry and prose in Jeremiah. This essay has far-reaching implications for the study of the book of Jeremiah.

As the title of the next essay, “The Book of Jeremiah (MT) and Its Early Second Temple Background,” indicates, John Hill takes into account the long compositional history of the book of Jeremiah up to the time of the Second Temple (Persian period). The composition was influenced not only by the events that led up to the crisis of 587 but also by events in the Second Temple period. This he does by comparing the Masoretic recension of Jeremiah with the Alexandrian Septuagint recension of Jeremiah.

The title of the next essay, “Word of Jeremiah–Word of God: Structures of Authority in the Book of Jeremiah,” gives a clear indication of the issue Else K. Holt wishes to discuss. She confronts readers with the issue of authoritative words of God. She refers, on the one hand, to “narrative discourse,” which is indirect theological discourse that leaves room for critical engagement. Over against this, prophets claim to be messengers of God conveying his authoritative words. She comes to the conclusion that “the word of God is a metaphor for God, that Jeremiah is a metaphor for the word—and Baruch a metaphor for Jeremiah” (188). The book of Jeremiah is therefore a book of metaphorical theology, which allows us to engage it critically.

In “Prophet and Singer in the Fray: The Book of Jeremiah,” Nancy C. Lee’s approach “leans” towards oral-poetic and sociorhetorical approaches. Her premise is that there are two poetic voices in Jer 1–25: “a communal lament-singer” and Jeremiah’s voice. This first singer (likely female) speaks on behalf of the besieged and suffering people of Judah. Lee also discusses the dialogue between Jeremiah and this lament-singer.

In “The *Mis-Pi* Rituals and Incantations and Jeremiah 10:1–16,” Marilyn J. Lundberg reads Jer 10:1–16 in conjunction with the *mis-pi* (opening of the mouth) rituals and

incantations of Assyria and Babylon. It concerns the concepts behind the cult images in the ancient Near East and its relationship, in this regard, to the selected text in Jeremiah.

In “The Laments in Jeremiah and 1 QH: Mapping the Metaphorical Trajectories,” Michael S. Moore examines the intertextual parallels between the laments in Jeremiah and the Hodayot scroll from Qumran Cave 1 (1QH). His interest is in the common metaphors between the laments in Jeremiah and 1QH and why some of these metaphors were adapted and even transformed in 1QH.

The next essay, by Tom Parker, “Ebed-melech as Exemplar,” discusses two possible translations of the rhetorical question “Can Ethiopians change their skin?” He argues that the correct translation should imply no. He refutes the negative connotations attached by some to Ethiopians by presenting Ebed-melech’s positive and constructive role in the book of Jeremiah. He concludes by saying that Jer 13:23 implies that it is the Israelites who were in need of change.

In “Baruch among the Sages,” Leo G. Perdue discusses the role of scribes and sages in Israel and Judah and then relates it to the book of Jeremiah. In this regard, Baruch comes into play as a Deuteronomic scribal official and amanuensis in Jeremiah and 1 Baruch, as scribe, teacher of the Torah, and seer in 2 Baruch, and as apocalyptic seer in 3 and 4 Baruch. Perdue finally arrives at the conclusion that “Baruch becomes the exemplary sage in both Eretz Israel and the diaspora during the Second Temple period and early Rabbinic Judaism” (289).

In another essay on Baruch, “Baruch as First Reader: Baruch’s Lament in the Structure of the Book of Jeremiah,” Pamela J. Scalise endeavors to show that the nonchronological order of oracles in the book of Jeremiah serves the function of a “large interpretive lens” (292) for the book. She in particular pays attention to the function of Jer 45. She concludes by saying that the suggested “interpretive structure” presents Baruch as the first reader of the scroll, as a model for readers of the book.

Marvin A. Sweeney’s “Jeremiah’s Reflection on the Isaian Royal Promise: Jeremiah 23:1–8 in Context” argues against the notion that many hold that Jeremiah was unsympathetic to the royal house of David. He argues in this essay that Jer 23:1–8 reveals that the prophet had a more nuanced view of the house of David. He remarks that Jeremiah appears to be a reflective figure who took the past tradition seriously (the Isaian tradition) in an attempt to understand issues of his own time.

The final article, by Roy Wells, “Dislocations in Time and Ideology in the Reconception of Jeremiah’s Words: The Encounter with Hananiah in the Septuagint *Vorlage* and the

Masoretic Text,” confronts researchers of the book of Jeremiah with the complexity of the text tradition of the book. Wells addresses the issue of the Masoretic Text, a Hebrew *Vorlage*, and the Septuagint version (LXXV) of the Jeremiah text. He does this with the Hananiah episode as his focus. It is clear that we should speak of text versions of Jeremiah rather than of *the* text of Jeremiah.

It is always difficult to engage critically a compiled work of this nature, due to the variety of material included and the freedom of the authors to pursue their own interests. However, this book offers a wide spectrum of views on Jeremiah research and would benefit any researcher interested in the Jeremiah debates. Debates on the book of Jeremiah have been raging for many years, and still one is surprised by the new and fresh views promoted in this volume. I appreciate the focus of the essays on the text of Jeremiah and the wealth of knowledge displayed in the various articles. There is also a good representation of scholars as far as gender is concerned. The book as a whole is well-edited by Goldingay and should be in all libraries and on the shelves of serious Jeremiah researchers and students. The downside of this publication is its price, which will have the outcome that many will not be able to afford it.