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Kolani, Nicodème Bakimani: **Le livre d'Amos**. La place et la fonction des éléments supposés tardifs. – Berlin: De Gruyter 2019. (XIV) 395 S. (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 510), geb. € 99,95 ISBN: 978-3-11-056095-4

This book is the publication of Nicodème Bakimani Kolani's diss. defended in February 2017 at the Faculty of Theology of Strasbourg Univ. under the direction of Eberhard Bons. The diss. aims to show that the massoretic text of Amos' book can and must be read as a coherent work. The research on Amos considers some passages of the book to be late. By showing that these passages are not disparate and unclear elements in their contexts, the study underlines how they are, on the contrary, quite indispensable, and most finely constructed, so as to contribute in their place to the literary and theological project of the book of Amos.

Two chap.s deeply evaluate the research on Amos, starting from Wellhausen and other authors of the early 19th century, who question the authenticity of certain passages, such as the oracle of salvation in Am 9 or the structuring of the book between oracles and visions, to the most recent structural analyses. The late character of certain passages is in fact very often assessed on the basis of an analysis of the overall structure of the book. The other three chap.s examine the incriminated passages to show the relevance of their position and the necessity of their presence in relation to the overall movement of the book: by disputing, on the one hand, the positions of the research on them, and by proposing, on the other hand, a translation and an exegetical analysis. The oracles against Tyre (Am 1:9–10), Edom (Am 1:11–12) and Judah (Am 2:4–5) are first of all indispensable in the gradation of the oracles against the nations, in order to prepare the oracle against Israel. Hymns (Am 4:13; 5:8–9 and 9:5–6), which participate in the revelation of a figure of God – creator, powerful not only to destroy, but above all to overthrow – are necessary for the organicity of the book. Finally, in chap. V, an analysis of the biographical account (Am 7:10–17), the oracle against the merchants (Am 8:4–14) and the oracle of salvation (Am 9:11–15) is proposed. Each of the three passages appears as a key element whose absence would strongly hinder the unity and the dynamic of the message of Amos: the first according to the indispensable political dimension, the second as a recapitulation of the criticisms formulated in Am 2–6, and the third to confirm the portrait of God and his justice.

The book offers the results of an impressive work on the literature concerning Amos over the last two centuries. Even if this presentation of research is oriented towards the hypothesis that K. seeks to demonstrate, the fact remains that the more or less hundred p.s to which it is devoted represent a very useful and very well organized contribution to the studies on the book of Amos. Moreover, the studies on the supposed late passages also include a very rich set of references to the literature. The indexes fortunately complete the quality of this effort. The analyses in the strictly

exegetical chap.s are quite classical. K. presents a translation after discussing the meaning of difficult words, examines the insertion of the passage in its context through lexicographical recurrences or resonances or more of the order of content. Perhaps a more detailed analysis than a simple translation, for example of the structure of the texts under examination, would have been useful, and would have contributed effectively to the demonstration. One may regret some (editing?) mistakes.¹

The coherence of the series of oracles against the nations in the first two chap.s of Amos is solidly demonstrated by the author. Consistency that should not be sought in a formal similarity, nor in a non-existent geographical order, but rather in the gradation of the “sins” reproached to each of the nations, the gravity of which is increasing. It is not necessary to look for improbable dates of the events reproached, because they are in a certain way typified. What is important is the growing seriousness of these crimes, a barbaric treatment of humans that rises to its paroxysm, an absence of pity that completely denies normal, if not fraternal, relationships. The assembling of the oracles then highlights the figure of a God who is master and judge of all nations, who does not tolerate iniquity in any way in history. The author’s demonstration, which is quite convincing, brings out an important point, which he hardly mentions: the necessary link between crime and its consequence, which is destruction. Clearly, this is a major point in the prophet’s thought; however, the observation only takes into account the link between the first sentence of the refrain with which each oracle begins (“because of three rebellions of [...] and because of four”) and the consequence of these crimes (“I will send fire and it will devour the palaces of [...]"). It is important not to lose the link with the second sentence of the refrain: “and I will not go back [on my decision?]”. The question of the prophet Amos is not only that of the punishment of crimes (through which his social criticism will unfold), but also the question of the decision of God, master of history. The future of the nations, and of Israel with them, appears to be destruction and disappearance: will God change the course of history? The verb *shouv* must be followed throughout the book (as well as the verb *haphak*).

In his analysis of the biographical narrative in Am 7, the author has well noted his position between the third and the fourth vision, that is to say after the third vision which significantly modifies the scope of the first two. These include the possibility of a reversal of God’s decision to punish and destroy, which no longer happens with the third vision, nor with the fourth. Moreover, Amacias’ accusation against Amos is precisely on the issue of the future of Israel. Prophetic responsibility and ministry can only be properly understood in relation to the word, which announces the end, unlike the word of a priest or king, and which questions the divine mastery of history.

It is difficult to give an account of the place and function of doxologies (Am 4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6). By taking the variability of the form of the Amosian discourse in its proper place and by showing that it cannot be a question of imported liturgical texts, the author shows the coherence of these three pieces, and the relevance of their position. The exaltation of God’s creative power aims at recognizing and magnifying his power, more than his eventual status as saviour; the crimes denounced by the prophet turn out to be directly opposed to God’s creative project, inasmuch as they cause ruin and destruction: they “change” (*haphak*) justice into poison, while God “changes” darkness into morning light; the power of the God of the universe, that of a sovereign judge, presides over the destiny of people in history. One could extend the author’s analysis and note how much, with regard to the question of the end-destruction and God’s decision in history, the evocation in the doxologies of the

¹ For example, a Hebrew word is missing from lines 15a and 16a of the text on p. 261. Footnote 112 on p. 227 refers to Amos 13!

Creator God, whose power is unequalled because he can “change everything”, introduces a major element of reflection for the continuation of prophetic tradition.

Certainly, the prophet Amos initiated in the 8th century a critical word on society, as the author underlines in his conclusion by identifying those who are the target of the admonitions of the shepherd of Teqoa. But a prophet speaks on behalf of God, as K. emphasizes in the analysis of the biographical account, which means that he thinks within the question of justice as a theological question, here that of the divine decision in history, under the influence of the inevitable end that is looming. What could be more significant, then, is the tiny word “perhaps” which the biblical writer has placed at the very center (Am 5:15) of a discourse whose coherence is now clearly demonstrated by K.’s work.

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