

Benjamin Kilchör. *Wiederhergestellter Gottesdienst: Eine Deutung der zweiten Tempelvision Ezechiels (Ez 40–48) am Beispiel der Aufgaben der Priester und Leviten*

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Given Benjamin Kilchör's previous thorough work on the relationships among Israel's constitutional documents in the Pentateuch,¹ he is well-qualified to assess the nature and significance of Ezekiel's vision of reinstated worship in the final nine chapters of the book. Having spent a good portion of my life in both Ezekiel and Deuteronomy, and having seen his convincing critique of the Wellhausenian approach to pentateuchal studies and a couple of earlier essays on Ezek 44, I had hoped he would investigate more fully the theology of Ezek 40–48 and its relationship to the hypothetical redactional reconstructions of the corpus's origins. This volume is exactly what I wanted.

Kilchör's strategy is clear: after reviewing the history of critical scholarship on the subject, he offers a detailed exegetical analysis of each literary segment of Ezek 40–48 that has a bearing on the status of the Levites and Zadokites in the new order envisioned by Ezekiel. His study includes a rigorous consideration of the relationship of that status to their respective roles in Israel's antecedent cult texts and traditions. The depth of research in this study is remarkable, including full use of both English and German secondary literature—as well as other languages. He is thoroughly familiar with both the history of research on the subject and remarkably current in his bibliography of recent works. In his interaction with literary interlocutors, he exhibits fairness and responds with sympathy and grace to opposing viewpoints. While Dr. Kilchör's presuppositions are clear, he obviously reads all with an open mind, always with the assumption that other scholars have important insights that we need to consider, and that all have something to teach us, even when they disagree with us.

Kilchör's volume demonstrates how far Ezekiel scholarship has come since I submitted my commentary manuscript on the book to the publisher in 1993. At that time, we could count the number of serious scholars involved in Ezekiel on two hands, and the number who paid serious attention to these last chapters of the book were fewer than that. This has changed dramatically over the past three decades, and we welcome the appearance of many new commentaries and full-length monographs on these last chapters.

When I submitted my work, my understanding of the theological significance of chs. 40–48 was quite superficial, as was that of others who were writing comparable commentaries. However, building on the work of specialists in this particular segment of the book like Jacob Milgrom,

Michael Konkel, Tobias Häner, Stephen Cook, Corrine Patton, Stephen Tuell, Michael Lyons, Kalinda Stevenson, and Nathan MacDonald, Kilchör has offered a compelling thesis both of the relationship between the status of the Levites vis à vis Zadokites on the one hand and the Levites and Priests in the Pentateuch on the other. I am understandably pleased with his adoption of a holistic hermeneutic as proposed by Moshe Greenberg, and as I have tried to pursue myself. In contrast to the complex, speculative, circular, and often contradictory redaction-critical proposals that prevail almost universally but are especially deeply embedded in German scholarship, his assumption that the final form is the authoritative text we should be studying leads to much more natural readings of Scripture. Whereas many simply marginalize features that create tensions by excision or discounting them as secondary and tertiary additions by later hands, Kilchör wrestles soundly with the significance of those very elements within their present literary contexts.

Not only do I find Dr. Kilchör's central thesis creative, engaging, and convincing, but on many counts he has also forced me to reassess my own views and accept his correction. The evidence he presents for the effect of the return of the divine Kabod to the temple complex as establishing a radical distinction between the inner court (which was accessible only to Zadokites) and the outer court, which was accessible to the people and in which the Levites ministered is sound. Based on his work, I will need to modify figure 7 (p. 572) in my *Commentary on Ezekiel 25–48*.

Among the dozens of intriguing topics Kilchör raises, I am especially intrigued by his explanation for the absence of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies, which has illuminated my understanding of the nature and function of the ark in the tabernacle and temple. Recently, I have argued that since the ark containing the “tablets of the ‘*ēdūt*’ (לַחַת הָעֵדוּת) “bore witness to both YHWH's and Israel's sworn covenant oaths two tablets were required, representing the commitments of the respective parties to the covenant.”²² Given the eternal and irrevocable (לְעוֹלָם) nature of YHWH's presence (43:7, 9; cf. 39:28–29) in Ezekiel's new order, YHWH no longer needs symbols/insignias of his commitment to the people. And the visible presence of the Kabod above the מקדש is all that the people need. Speaking of the new and highly permanent visible location of the temple, does this not set the stage for the incarnation, according to which “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us? We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, NIV)—a clear allusion also to Exod 34:6–7.

While it is understandably not a major subject in the manuscript, I am not quite satisfied with Kilchör's interpretation of the role of the prince in relations to the temple practices. He rightly points back to the use of the

word as the designation for the tribal leaders in Numbers, but probably does not give sufficient attention to the inner Ezekielian use of the word. In Ezekiel, the word designates the Davidic ruler, whether historical kings or the dynasty (e.g., 12:10, 12; 19:1) or the messianic David (cf. 34:23–24; 37:24–25). As the Davidic ruler, the person assumes the role of patron of the national religion. It strikes me as somewhat significant that in the allocation of the tribal territories, the tribe of Judah is nearest the temple. Since tribal identities (which Solomon and later kings had minimized) are obviously important in this new order, could it be that in 40–48 the “prince” is both a tribal and royal figure (though less so than the eschatological messiah, since “sin” offerings will need to be presented for him, 45:22). As the former, he functions as the “prince” of all the tribes. Just a thought.

I have a question concerning Kilchör’s interpretation of Ezekiel’s *ben ’ādām* as an Adamic priest. On this subject, I am surprised that he does not mention Marvin Sweeney’s recent publication in support because Sweeney also adopts this view (*Reading Ezekiel: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Reading the Old Testament [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2013]). Although Kilchör’s is probably a majority view today, and I used to hold to it myself, he might at least note that it is not held universally.

All in all, this is a spectacular piece of work—overdue by 150 years (since Julius Wellhausen’s original publication of *Geschichte Israels*, 1878; later, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, 1883). If my earlier review assessed Kilchör’s work on *Mosetora und Jahwetora* on the composition of the Pentateuch as the one of finest responses to the documentary hypothesis for the origins of the Pentateuch ever published, I will say the same for this book. While some may find Kilchör’s discussions overly repetitive and redundant, I find this feature helpful. The stakes are high, as is the need for perfect clarity. His strategy of exegetically examining the relevant texts first and then in ch. 3 addressing synthetically specific issues his exegesis raises is sound. This is a volume that all students of Ezekiel and of pentateuchal criticism need to read.

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1 See my review of *Mosetora und Jahwetora: Das Verhältnis von Deuteronomium 12–26 zu Exodus, Levitikus und Numeri* in *BBR* 27 (2017): 387–88.

2 Daniel I. Block, “For Whose Eyes: The Divine Origin and Function of the Two Tablets of the Israelite Covenant,” in *Write That They May Read: Studies in Literacy and Textualization in the Ancient Near East and in the Hebrew Scriptures; Essays in Honour of Professor Alan R. Millard*, ed. Daniel I. Block, David C. Deuel, C. John Collins, and Paul J. N. Lawrence (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020), 100–126, esp. pp. 124–26, for the implications for Ezekiel.