

# Editors' Forward

The International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (IECOT) offers a multi-perspectival interpretation of the books of the Old Testament to a broad, international audience of scholars, laypeople and pastors. Biblical commentaries too often reflect the fragmented character of contemporary biblical scholarship, where different geographical or methodological sub-groups of scholars pursue specific methodologies and/or theories with little engagement of alternative approaches. This series, published in English and German editions, brings together editors and authors from North America, Europe, and Israel with multiple exegetical perspectives.

From the outset the goal has been to publish a series that was “international, ecumenical and contemporary.” The international character is reflected in the composition of an editorial board with members from six countries and commentators representing a yet broader diversity of scholarly contexts.

The ecumenical dimension is reflected in at least two ways. First, both the editorial board and the list of authors includes scholars with a variety of religious perspectives, both Christian and Jewish. Second, the commentary series not only includes volumes on books in the Jewish Tanach/Protestant Old Testament, but also other books recognized as canonical parts of the Old Testament by diverse Christian confessions (thus including the Deuterocanonical Old Testament books).

When it comes to “contemporary,” one central distinguishing feature of this series is its attempt to bring together two broad families of perspectives in analysis of biblical books, perspectives often described as “synchronic” and “diachronic” and all too often understood as incompatible with each other. Historically, diachronic studies arose in Europe, while some of the better known early synchronic studies originated in North America and Israel. Nevertheless, historical studies have continued to be pursued around the world, and focused synchronic work has been done in an ever greater variety of settings. Building on these developments, we aim in this series to bring synchronic and diachronic methods into closer alignment, allowing these approaches to work in a complementary and mutually-informative rather than antagonistic manner.

Since these terms are used in varying ways within biblical studies, it makes sense to specify how they are understood in this series. Within IECOT we understand “synchronic” to embrace a variety of types of study of a biblical text *in one given stage of its development*, particularly its final stage(s) of development in existing manuscripts. “Synchronic” studies embrace non-historical narratological, reader-response and other approaches along with historically-informed exegesis of a particular stage of a biblical text. In contrast, we understand “diachronic” to embrace the full variety of modes of study of a biblical text *over time*.

This diachronic analysis may include use of manuscript evidence (where available) to identify documented pre-stages of a biblical text, judicious use of clues within the biblical text to reconstruct its formation over time, and also an examination of the ways in which a biblical text may be in dialogue with earlier biblical (and non-biblical) motifs, traditions, themes, etc. In other words, diachronic study focuses on what might be termed a “depth dimension” of a given text – how a

text (and its parts) has journeyed over time up to its present form, making the text part of a broader history of traditions, motifs and/or prior compositions. Synchronic analysis focuses on a particular moment (or moments) of that journey, with a particular focus on the final, canonized form (or forms) of the text. Together they represent, in our view, complementary ways of building a textual interpretation.

Of course, each biblical book is different, and each author or team of authors has different ideas of how to incorporate these perspectives into the commentary. The authors will present their ideas in the introduction to each volume. In addition, each author or team of authors will highlight specific contemporary methodological and hermeneutical perspectives – e.g. gender-critical, liberation-theological, reception-historical, social-historical – appropriate to their own strengths and to the biblical book being interpreted. The result, we hope and expect, will be a series of volumes that display a range of ways that various methodologies and discourses can be integrated into the interpretation of the diverse books of the Old Testament.

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The Editors

# Author's Preface

My first article on Zechariah 9–14 appeared in 1989 as “Israel’s Shepherds: Hope and Pessimism in Zechariah 9–14.”<sup>1</sup> That study employed insights from the field of anthropology to define the milieu from which and for which those chapters emerged. I defined the group as basically, but not uncritically “pro-Judean, with a place for a purified Jerusalem, and antiestablishment.” In addition, I described it as “antipriestly, nonmessianic, and opposed to [false] prophets of its own time.” I argued that “its hope for the future rested squarely on a pessimistic reading of Israel’s past, and it radically revised its received tradition.” I see little to revise in those sentences today. What has transpired in research on those chapters over those intervening decades, however, is an ever-increasing emphasis on their location in the Hebrew Bible, in particular their place and role in the formation of the Book of the Twelve. Two scholars have contributed the most to my own understanding of the place of Zechariah 9–14 within the Twelve: James Nogalski and Aaron Schart.

Whether one agrees with them (and I surely do) that the Book of the Twelve was intentionally edited over years to form a single work with deliberate internal dialogue and plot or one disagrees (as does Ehud Ben Zvi<sup>2</sup>) and argues that the Twelve is simply an anthology containing the work of twelve named prophets, it is or should be possible to agree that Zechariah 9–14 is a highly literary work that draws deliberately and skillfully on much of what is now held to be the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, both agreeing with *and* correcting those writings. I will pay careful attention to a number of those sources and their reuse and modification in Zechariah 9–14. I will attempt to extend the conversation about those chapters and their sources without making that the dominant issue. Indeed, by the design of the International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament series, the growth of the Twelve will be dealt with by Aaron Schart.

I wish to thank a number of people whose insights and encouragement have been helpful to me. Nogalski and Schart have already been mentioned, but I would like to add the names of others. The first is that of Robert R. Wilson, who taught me how to apply insights from anthropology to the Old Testament. The second is Trent C. Butler, a decades-long friend who listened to the thinking that went into early articles on Zechariah 9–14 and helped me probe my thoughts, and who has advised and supported me in the years since. Third, is John D. W. Watts, who invited me to join (and ultimately serve on the steering committee of) the SBL Consultation of the Book of the Twelve in the early 1990’s. Other scholars to whom I am particularly indebted in this commentary include Paul D. Hanson, David L. Petersen, Carol L. Meyers, and Eric M. Meyers, all of whose work over the years has provided the bedrock on which I have tried to build. More recently I would point to Mark J. Boda, Byron G. Curtis, and Marvin A. Sweeney as scholars whose

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1 Redditt, “Israel’s Shepherds,” 631–642.

2 See Ben Zvi and Nogalski (*Two Sides*) for an excellent summary and defense of each of the two approaches.

work on Zechariah 9–14 and the Persian period has been very helpful in (re)shaping my thinking. I am indebted to pastor/professor William J. Bryan and to my Georgetown College colleague Vince Sizemore in Information Technology Services for their help with computer software. Of course, I also wish to thank editor Helmut Utschneider for inviting me to undertake this project and Aaron Schart for his role in that invitation, as well as the American editor David Carr for his patience in working with me. I do not know, but owe a great debt to editors and others at Kohlhammer GmbH for their work on this volume.

Finally, I want to thank my wife Bonnie, whose patience and support was unfailing. She listened as I talked about what I have been thinking, and she helped proof read the early drafts this work underwent. To her this volume is dedicated.

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