

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.

Fall 2012

The Editors

Authors' Preface

The undersigned have been constantly aware of the honor of being permitted to write one of the first two “pilot volumes” of the series *Internationaler Exegetischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament/International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament*. Over the years of our collaborative work we have become increasingly aware of the challenges that such a project brings with it. The Editors' Forward informs the reader about the goals and principles of this undertaking. Our own specific interpretation of these goals and principles as they relate to the interpretation of the book of Exodus can be found in the introduction to this volume. Above all it remains for us to express our gratitude here for all the support that we have received while working on this project.

It would have been impossible to complete this commentary in the brief period of six years if we had not received such generous material support from the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*. Between 2009 and 2012, the DFG financed Wolfgang Oswald's work by providing him with a temporary position at the University of Tübingen. This support also enabled Helmut Utzschneider to take a semester's leave. This semester was then extended by a further free semester, taken in advance, to an entire year of research due to the kind cooperation of the Lutheran Church in Bavaria. In the meantime, Jutta Krispenz filled his position at the Augustana-Hochschule.

In addition to this, the material assistance provided by the DFG helped support the “Colloquium on the Theory of Exegesis” that was held in the Old Testament department of the Augustana-Hochschule during the years 2008–2012. This colloquium was exclusively dedicated to texts and themes from the exodus narrative. We were able to invite many colleagues who are also involved in interpreting the book of Exodus to this “exodus academy.” We would like to express our particular gratitude for the contributions of Rainer Albertz, Christoph Berner, Erhard Blum, Georg Fischer, Shimon Gesundheit, Thomas Krüger, Dominik Markl, and Frank Polak.

We have also received much encouragement and inspiration from the editors of IECOT. In particular, we will remember with great fondness two intensive weeks in Jerusalem, 2011, where we were able to discuss large swathes of our manuscript with Shimon Gesundheit, the volume editor. The discussions took place in the Faculty Club of the Hebrew University and the library of the Church of the Redeemer during a block seminar that was part of the “Studium in Israel” program.

In the final stages of our work we received generous support from various quarters. Our colleague Stefan Seiler carefully reviewed the translation – we naturally bear responsibility for any mistakes that remain. No less our thanks go to Philip Sumpter for the sensitive translation and especially to David Carr, the American IECOT chief editor, and to Ulrike Guthrie (IECOT work site in New York) for the careful redaction, copy-editing and proofreading of the English edition. Our student colleagues from the Augustana-Hochschule Michael Rummel and Bernhard Schröder, along with the reliable Mrs Andrea Siebert, helped us with general corrections. Last but not least, Walter Dietrich, the chief editor, and his colleagues in Bern, Sara Kipfer and Heidi Stucki, accepted the manuscript. Jürgen Schneider and

Florian Specker of Kohlhammer Publishing House were our constant and understanding contact persons. To all these people, we express our warmest gratitude.

Neuendettelsau/Tubingen in the summer of 2014
Wolfgang Oswald and Helmut Utzschneider