

BOOK REVIEWS

Andersen, Francis I., and David Noel Freedman. *Micah: A New Introduction and Commentary*, AB, vol. 24E. New York: Doubleday, 2000. 637 pp. \$42.50.

Francis I. Andersen has retired as Professorial Fellow in the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Melbourne, Australia. David Noel Freedman (Professor of Hebrew Bible, University of California, San Diego) has been the general editor of the *Anchor Bible* (AB) series from its very inception. Both are literary giants in the field of OT studies. Their combined efforts and expertise have produced one of the most comprehensive commentaries on Micah to date. (The same is true of their earlier AB volume on Hosea.) It follows the highly respected standards of the AB series: precise translation, extended discussion in constant dialogue with other scholars, reconstruction of the historical background of the text, and a description of the author(s) and original recipients of the message.

A few pages (xvii-xxi) deal with preliminary elements, such as events and kings featured by the eighth-century prophets, maps, and abbreviations. The Introduction (3-29) presents such issues as Micah's place among the Minor Prophets, the texts and translations, literary units, traditional divisions, and organization of the book of Micah. In an extended discussion of Mic 1:1 (103-129), the authors indicate that Micah shares editorial qualities with other eighth-century prophets: the use of an introductory oracle, the identification of the prophet, dating of his activity, the mode of divine revelation, and subject matter. They believe that this "suggests a common editorial policy, even the same editorial pen" (128).

Andersen and Freedman organize their commentary around "a collection of oracles that have been arranged in three 'books'" (16). They are called "books" because each of these chapters is structured and unified around a common theme so as to render it a distinct literary unit. The first of these, covering 1:2-3:12, is called "The Book of Doom" (130-391). Divided into several subunits, its central theme is judgment that is directed against Samaria and Jerusalem. It is comprehensive in nature and scope. But while condemnation and punitive action are dominant, these are not the final words. Judgment is intended to bring a wayward people back into covenant relationship with God. Indeed, "embedded in these judgment speeches . . . is an oracle of hope (2:12-13)" (254). It is a promise reserved for the remnant of Israel.

Micah 4:1-5:14 constitutes "The Book of Visions" (392-499). From the outset, Andersen and Freedman point out that "the unity of this section . . . , its literary character, the history of its development, and its original setting are difficult to determine" (392). By establishing its literary structure Andersen and Freedman suggest that the overarching motif of these visions is the universal sovereignty of YHWH. "Yahweh dominates chapter 4 and no human agent is conspicuous" (471). In chapter 5, "the act of raising up a deliverer [is] exclusively an act of God" (477). His rulership is not limited to the present, but extends to the distant future, even to the "end of days." This eschatological emphasis is seen in the code word *w'hayāh* ("and it will come about"), which is the organizing principle of chapters 4-5.

"The Book of Contention and Conciliation" comprises Mic 6:1-7:20 (500-601). In

the contention, we have the classical elements of a covenant or prophetic lawsuit. Chapters 6 and 7 reverberate with the ominous tones of judgment and threat, but YHWH's *hesed* ultimately ensures triumph in that the remnant is reconciled with God. Chapter 7, celebrating God's unqualified forgiveness (7:18-20), is the "eschatological climax" of the book (562). The commentary concludes with useful indices of authors, subjects, biblical and other ancient references, and languages (606-637).

This work is commendable on several fronts. First, in their analysis of the book, the authors follow a systematic (and therefore clear) organizational formula: a concise introduction to each "book," translation of each literary section, an introduction covering the main issues of that section, and extensive notes and commentary on each unit, providing extensive treatment of key words and themes. Second, the commentary evidences excellent research and consistency. The bibliography (33-99), which the authors claim "does not attempt a complete listing of the literature on the book of Micah" (33), is a virtual goldmine for anyone conducting research on this biblical prophet. In-text citations allow the serious student to pursue further investigation. Third, by emphasizing language analysis, Andersen and Freedman have continued the rich tradition of the AB commentary series. An example of this, as briefly outlined on page 392 (and developed in the pages beyond), is the chiasmic structure of chapters 4-5 (Book 2), based on the key word *'attah* ("now").

The division of Micah into three books brings freshness to the heretofore stultified debate regarding the structure of the book. But it is precisely here that this commentary also demonstrates some measure of weakness. Andersen and Freedman claim that there is a central theme that forms the literary backbone of each "book" in Micah. They also acknowledge the presence of subthemes in each "book." But they do not clearly indicate how these subthemes are linked to the central theme to produce a unifying principle that gives each section its defining character as a "book."

While Andersen and Freedman pay attention to the importance of the LXX in Micah studies (see their concise, but informative discussion, "The Texts and Translations of the Book of Micah," 3-5), one would have expected some transliteration and translation of that important textual witness such as is provided for the MT. Without this, it is difficult for the inquiring reader to evaluate the quality of the Greek translation (5).

At times Andersen and Freedman indulge in speculation. Such is the case with their suggestion that the eighth-century prophets "were edited in conjunction or succession by the early seventh century to constitute a kind of proto-corpus of prophetic writings" (105) such that "the original collection had four books, one for each of the four generations of eighth-century prophets in chronological order—Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah" (ibid). Andersen and Freedman simply have not produced the evidence to support such a claim.

I believe that this commentary is highly informative and useful for the person who has a good grasp of biblical Hebrew and a firm command of English. I do not think that the target of the general editors is met in this volume, namely, that the AB series "is aimed at the general reader with no special training in biblical studies" (ii).

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