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Kessler, John. "Review of *From Servant of YHWH to Being Considerate of the Wretched: The Figure David in the Reading Perspective of Psalms 35-41 (MT)* by Willem A. M. Beuken." *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses: Commentarii De Re Theologica et Canonica*, 98, no. 1 (2022): 156-160

Willem A.M. BEUKEN. *From Servant of YHWH to Being Considerate of the Wretched: The Figure David in the Reading Perspective of Psalms 35–41 (MT)* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 305). Leuven – Paris – Bristol, CT, Peeters, 2020. (16×24), xiv-173 p. ISBN 978-90-429-4115-1. €69.00.

In this detailed and thought-provoking work, Willem Beuken, Emeritus Professor, Catholic University of Leuven, presents his understanding of the figure of David in the reading perspective of Psalms 35–41 (MT). Beuken's focus is on the

“Davidisation” of these Psalms. By this he means the redactional process whereby these originally independent prayers were brought into an intertextual relationship with the broader Davidic tradition, present in 1-2 Samuel (and elsewhere). Beuken sees this intertextual linkage as having been accomplished primarily by means of specific lexemes, common to both literary traditions (11-14, 98). Readers of these prayers, being themselves acquainted with the David tradition, would recognize these linkages. These connections would include both those *explicitly* intended by the tradents of the original prayers (Beuken suggests that this was undertaken by “many persons and circles ... an amalgam of voices”, 110), as well as other allusions which, while not explicitly intended, would likely be *discovered* by informed readers, and stand in continuity with the purposes of the tradents (11-12, 103). However, these interconnections do not necessarily presuppose the chronological anteriority of the narratives vis-à-vis the Psalms. Both were developing literary entities. Thus, these intertextual connections take place in a “literary space” – in which the tradents and readers bring the figure of David into connection with the suppliants of the Psalms: “We adopt the point of view of readers who are familiar with the *vita David* as reported in 1-2 Samuel, and we are looking for the semantic, particularly lexical, elements in Psalms 35–41 that are able to evoke specific statements in the biography. In this way, our research does not concern the author’s intention, but the reception of the readers” (103).

Beuken’s study proceeds as follows. A brief introductory section (11-18) sets forth the nature of his project and its underlying assumptions. Part One (19-93) contains an analysis and fresh translation of Psalms 35–41, focusing upon prosodic and text-syntactical structure. In the final chapter of this section (83-93) Beuken presents his overall assumptions regarding the internal continuity of these Psalms, arguing that they manifest a “concatenation by lexical consecutiveness” (83). Beuken furthermore maintains that Psalms 35–41 consist of 2 parallel panels of similar structure, 35–37//38–41, both centred on the problem of theodicy (83). He maintains that readers are invited to read these Psalms both forward and backwards, noting the intertextual links between the various Psalms, and how these linkages influence the reading of the individual parts. Part Two, “Davidisation: Phenomenon and Assessment” (97-116), constitutes the heart of Beuken’s thesis. His positions are finely nuanced, and require careful attention. In Chapter 9, Beuken defines Davidisation as “the initiative of the author (as well ... as the redactor) to phrase or rephrase psalms in such a way that the text alludes to the person of David as he appears in the stories about him” (97). For Beuken this process goes beyond the simple inclusion of the name of David or references to events in the life of David in the Psalm superscriptions (although this is certainly part of the process). Rather, it implies that Davidic associations were woven into these Psalms by their framers so as to encourage readers to “consider the psalmist who speaks and is addressed (by God and others) within the text as an image of David” (97). Furthermore, the degree to which Davidisation is present in these Psalms varies; it may be greater or lighter (133). For Beuken the reader is highly active in this process. “The icon of David ... is the author’s creation, to be enhanced by the readers ...” (16, 98). Moreover, Beuken asserts that Davidisation facilitates the readers’ appropriation of these Psalms, inviting the faithful to identify with David in various circumstances of life: “David provides an outline of the needs of the average suppliant who hopes that God may hear, forgive, and deliver him from misery, and accept him with thanksgiving. The association confirmed the

intended effect of the psalms themselves" (98). Beuken differentiates "average" readers from "trained" ones, arguing that "average" readers will detect "thematic" resemblances, whereas "trained" readers (likely Second Temple scribes) would see "lexical" connections and re-phrase and re-work these texts to further the inter-connection between the two literary entities (99). Chapter 10 (101-107) explores the connections between Psalms 35-41 and 1 Samuel 16 - 2 Samuel 24. Beuken views their production as occurring in closely associated scribal circles (102-103). He explores the significance of the Psalm titles, the inclusion of 2 Samuel 22/Psalm 18 and of 2 Samuel 24, and concludes that "Davidisation, as a literary procedure of conferring or deepening significance, is an important quality of the ... Psalms" (107). Chapter 11 explores Beuken's understanding of intertextuality: he presupposes that 1-2 Samuel and Psalms 35-41 are to be read intertextually, identifying the locus where such intertextuality is to be found, and the means through which it is achieved (112-113). Reading these two textual groupings "simultaneously" is critical. Beuken evokes two hermeneutical and rhetorical devices in this regard: "metalepsis" (a form of ellipsis) whereby a precursor text is cited or echoed through small, elliptical allusions, which then prompt readers to set the two texts in dialogical juxtaposition (110), and anagnorisis, or literary recognition, wherein readers engage a given text in light of a second one, and fill gaps in one text by means of data from the other (112). However most importantly for Beuken, *neither text overrides the other*, evacuating it of its independent contextual meaning (107). I will explore this important qualification below. Part 3 contains a discussion of the *Persona David* in Psalms 35-41. Beuken views the seven different suppliants in Psalms 35-41 as one "person" who seeks an answer to the mysteries of divine providence and the problem of evil. He points out the various answers to such questions given in these Psalms, noting especially the instances where diverse perspectives are juxtaposed or qualified (119-126). This is followed in Chapter 13 by a discussion of the reception of these Psalms by readers, both within the more immediate context of the tradents, and by those more chronologically removed. In it he traces the "psalmist's" movement within the two "clusters" within Psalms 35-41 and views each as presenting a final vision of hope for the present and future, rooted in Yahweh's sympathy, and a call to those who are suffering to focus upon the good that God has already done in their lives (132). In Chapter 14 Beuken explores the ways in which, by presenting the words of these Psalms as those of a single speaker who has passed through numerous life experiences, various patterns within these Psalms have been deliberately configured to correspond to the image of David present in the broader tradition. These detailed patterns progress from despair and suffering to ultimate confidence. He concludes, "at the end of Psalms 35-41 ... in the quest for God's righteousness with regard to evil, the figure David helps readers to identify with the poor suppliant and find relief in confidence in God" (164). Beuken points to a critical criterion of selectivity whereby out of all broader Davidic traditions that *may* have existed, *certain ones* were deemed appropriate for the construction of his image in the Psalms: Yahweh's election of David, his life as lived under constant threat, his weakness, sin, and repentance, his unwavering faith in Yahweh, and his ultimate deliverance and security due to the faithfulness of God. The resulting image of David is not one of a superhuman saint but a faithful yet flawed individual (133). In a brief, concluding chapter Beuken examines the prospects for a "Davidised" reading of Psalms 42-43.

Beuken's study makes important contributions on at least two levels. First, it constitutes a major step forward in understanding the relationship between the content of Psalms 35–41 and their Davidic superscriptions. It moves beyond the assumption the purpose of such Davidic assignation was to endue these Psalms with authority, or arose from David's reputation as the "sweet singer of Israel." Rather Beuken demonstrates that the interrelationship between these Psalms and David is deeply rooted, woven into them in the process of their transmission and *intended to cause the reader to move dialectically between the Psalms and the image of David within the broader tradition*. This is especially so where David is depicted both as an example of trust and faithfulness, as well as capable of grievous sin and profound repentance. The intensely negative reaction of many non-academic readers of the Psalms when confronted with the common scholarly assertion, "David did not write this Psalm" attests to the success of the redactional process that Beuken describes. Moreover, such a response reinforces Beuken's suggestion that the Davidisation process rendered the words of various suppliants accessible to the Israelite faithful: the "anonymous" suppliant of these Psalms was thus given a name and a biography, and individual Israelites were invited into David's faith and trust, his successes and failures, Yahweh's election of him, and ultimately his confidence in Yahweh's deliverance.

Second, Beuken's work has implications for understanding biblical hermeneutics more broadly and scribal conventions in particular. At its core, Beuken's work analyses an instance in which two texts are read in terms of one another. Beuken successfully demonstrates that a later text may be read in connection with a precursor, without rendering the precursor text inaccessible or obsolete. He states: "We establish semantic matches between particular texts in Psalms 35–41 and 1-2 Samuel. These matches often must be labelled as possible but not as unmistakable 'echoes'. Each of the seven psalms has its own significance, constructed by one or several authors and can be prayed by any suppliant ... Likewise, the psalms need not, but still can be interpreted through a Davidic perspective" (110). Thus Beuken emphasizes that the reading strategy in evidence in these Psalms does not imply that the "precursor" text is devoid of its own integrity and significance, or subsequently loses it after it has been re-read. Rather, the same Psalm can be read either as the expression of an anonymous suppliant, or "through" the persona of David. One reading does not supersede the other. Readers often stumble upon evidence of this "two-level" relationship when they note that parallels between the two texts may function at certain points, but not others. Thus, some statements in the Psalms seem incongruous with the character of David portrayed in the tradition. Sometimes "gaps" are discernible between the two, for example Psalm 35. At times gaps in one text may be filled using data from the related text, at other points the gaps seem inexplicable. Such a reading strategy, it seems to me, *may be in evidence in other OT parallel texts, such as Samuel-Kings and Chronicles*. Moreover, it is clear that the NT writers tell the Jesus story in terms paralleling the OT narratives. What might the implications of the approach demonstrated by Beuken be for reading the numerous parallels between the OT and NT? Does Beuken's argument call into question the widely held supposition that the NT writers' reading of the OT was inherently supersessionist in perspective, and suggest an alternative mode of reading of these parallels? In sum, this superlative work is carefully argued, and despite its brevity (indeed, at times, readers might wish for more fulsome expressions of Beuken's positions) constitutes an

excellent proposal for understanding the “Davidic” Psalms. Many readers will appreciate Beuken’s extensive references to German scholarship that may be unfamiliar to them. The book’s deeply reflective and multi-disciplinary methodology, combined with Beuken’s long career in OT research, make the careful reading of this volume highly rewarding.

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