

communication.

The notional “critical reader” of whom Toczyski speaks is a twenty-first century biblical scholar with professional competence and narrative empathy. He or she has access to a large “mental library” of ancient and modern interpretations of the text, which can function as a hermeneutical bridge between them and the ancient narrative. To explicate this mental library, Toczyski then proceeds to give a thorough, though admittedly not exhaustive, review of the interpretations of the narrative from ancient times to the present day. While he offers this survey as part of his three-dimensional analysis of the narrative, it is in its own right a fascinating study of the ways in which the Rahab character and her story have been read and retold over the centuries. These readings, Toczyski believes, form a rich dynamic database to which his own emerging reading will contribute.

Having elucidated the twin poles of the text’s interior structure and its reception, Toczyski then brings them both into a dialogue with the critical reader, in order to determine, as he quotes from Louise Rosenblatt, “what the reader lives through under the guidance of the text” (127). He re-examines the chronology of the narrative, the narrative comments it contains, and the dialogues within it, with the particular aim of discovering where the reader, sensitized by their mental library, might be caught up into the story in new ways.

One of the main ideas that emerges, and Toczyski makes quite a lot of this, is the power of story within and without the narrative. Rahab expresses

both rumor (“we have heard” of the mighty deeds that Yahweh has done for Israel v 10) and personal knowledge (“I know” Yahweh will act for you, v 9), a journey which provokes her faith and courage and causes her to instill fresh faith into the spies as she tells them their own story of the wonders of Yahweh. Toczyski likens this story to the hornet of Exodus 23:28, which goes ahead of the people of Israel to instill paralysis or inspire faith. He then explores the power of the Rahab story for Israel, providing as it does a means to re-evaluate their own values and customs. And the story has power over the critical reader today:

As with every story, the Rahab story can make the empathic reader experience something unique from the complexity of experiences in which characters are involved [173].

I found this monograph a helpful analysis of a number of dimensions of the Rahab narrative. I must confess that I did not always wholly see the benefit of the three-dimensional analysis in itself. In what way is the entire history of reception of a text part of my mental library if I am unaware of some of these readings as I approach the text? I do accept, however, that there is an unbroken chain of interpretations and that each one is likely to be influenced—positively or negatively—by the ones that precede it. Perhaps it is in this way that the reception history of the text is a hermeneutical bridge from the narrative to me. Nonetheless, Toczyski’s careful and thoughtful work has brought to light a number of new perspectives

on the narrative, and the book is one which future commentary writers and researchers on Joshua will need to consult.

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*The Hebrew Bible: Feminist and Intersectional Perspectives.* Edited by Gail A. Yee. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2018, Pp. ix + 183. Paper, \$19.00.

In the Preface to this work, Professor Yee articulates that this “book is intended for advanced undergraduate and graduate students in seminaries and universities, as well as interested lay readers” (vii). The book supplements standard introductions to the Hebrew Bible/Jewish Scriptures/Tanakh. It brings together “interpretation[s] from feminist and intersectional perspectives”—analyses that include “the interconnected lenses of gender, race/ethnicity, class, the so-called third world, and colonial status” (vii). Following Yee’s Introduction there are four major sections by various scholars devoted to The Torah/Pentateuch, The Deuteronomistic History, Prophecy, and The Writings. There also is an Index of Names and Subjects.

“Feminism,” Yee suggests, “refers to the political activism by women on behalf of women” (1). [Reviewer’s comment: While correct, it is unnecessarily polemical. There are women who would exclude men as feminists; in reality many men engage in political activism on behalf of women.

## Book Reviews

More accurate would be, “by people”]. Feminist Criticism in terms of biblical studies is a subset of “ideological criticism,” a mode of investigation that considers

the power differentials in certain social relationships in the production of the text (who wrote it, when, and why), how these power relations are reproduced in the text itself, and how they are consumed by readers of various social groups” [1-2].

“Intersectionality,” Yee explains, theorizes about the “complex interconnections between gender, race, and class that have marginalized black and nonwhite women in the subjugation they routinely experienced.” In addition she suggests that Intersectionality also addresses such matters as “sexuality, colonial status, ethnicity, physical ability, and so forth” (2). Major sections in her Introduction include *Becoming Visible*, *Recognizing Differences*, *Raising Voices*, and *Feminist Perspectives on the Hebrew Bible*. In this latter section she has subheadings on *Feminist Literary and Historical Interpretations of the Bible*; *Feminist Interdisciplinary Explorations of the Bible*; and *Intersectional Perspectives on the Hebrew Bible*.

Part 1 considers the Torah/Pentateuch. Carolyn J. Sharp’s chapter purports to address “Character, Conflict, and Covenant in Israel’s Origin Traditions.” Her inquiry pursues “three goals that lie at the heart of [her] feminist hermeneutics: to honor all subjects, to interrogate relations of power, and to reform community” (44). She seeks to “consider character,

conflict, and covenant viewed through a feminist prism” (45). Although she considers all five of the books of the Torah, and she does address those three aspects for Genesis and Exodus, and to an extent Leviticus, when it comes to Numbers and Deuteronomy much less is offered for the reader.

The focus of Part 2 is *The Deuteronomical History*, which covers the books of Deuteronomy-Joshua-Judges-Samuel-Kings. Here Vanessa Lovelace addresses “Intersections of Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality, and Nation.” She offers a good description of the term Deuteronomical history. Lovelace is critical of the tone of these books. A recurring theme in her chapter is violence against women. She addresses “Masculine Performativity in Joshua” (81). She writes that “Israel’s identity is certainly defined by its exclusiveness from other nations” (77), and then she begins to explore the intersection of gender and nation. She notes that in “Hebrew, both cities and land are grammatically gendered as feminine” (80) which presumably explains why she states that “the invasion of the land [in the book of Joshua] is depicted as the sexual violation of a woman” and that “Canaanite women [serve] as symbolic borders” (78–79). Lovelace refers to a description of the Samson cycle as “one where ‘patterns of masculinity and ethnocentrism intertwine’” (91). In her chapter, Lovelace analyzes the roles of several women, Rahab, Deborah, Jael, Delilah, Bathsheba and Huldah among others.

Prophecy is addressed in part 3. In Corrine L. Carvalho’s chapter “The Challenge of Violence and Gender under Colonization” she notes that,

those “studying for the ministry need to process their own reactions to misogynistic and patriarchal elements” in the Bible (107). Further, while the prophets’ messages were “clearly theologically meaningful for its audience, [today it] is often experienced as theologically repugnant by contemporary audiences” (108). She devotes sections to such subjects as *Women as Metaphors*; *The Hidden Lives of Real Women*; and *Not All Women are Created Equal*. An important section is devoted to *Intersectional Readings of Prophetic Texts*. In this segment she notes that

two of the most impactful contextual feminist stances have been *mu-jeerista* theology, coming from Latina and Hispanic women ... and *womanist* theology, or African American feminism [127].

Finally, in part 4, *The Writings*, Judy Fentress-Williams and Melody D. Knowles’s chapter titled “Affirming and Contradicting Gender Stereotypes,” points out some interesting contradictions. These ancient texts are probably “written by men for a male audience... and... reflect their ancient socioeconomic context... [where] the portrayal of God usually [is] in male images of king, judge and warrior.” Nonetheless these texts “also stretch and even contradict such assumptions in both the human and divine arenas” (137). The authors focus specific attention on Ruth and Esther; the Song of Songs, Ben Sira [Sirach, Ecclesiasticus]; *Woman Wisdom* in the wisdom books of Proverbs, Job, and the Wisdom of Solomon. There also are sections on God and Women and the Psalms; and finally

Women in the Retellings of the Nation's History: Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1–2 Maccabees.

As noted, this “book is intended for advanced undergraduate and graduate students in seminaries and universities, as well as interested lay readers.” One hopes that readers might question some of these essays by asking whether some of these voices are overly polemical or strident. An androcentric/patriarchal society is not necessarily misogynistic. Likewise, why is there not more of an effort to find gender-neutral language? God as *melekh* can also be translated as “ruler” or “sovereign”; it need not be king. Likewise the English for YHWH need not be Lord; other choices include YHWH itself using the actual Hebrew letters, Eternal, or Adonai. To that extent, there are some limits to the usefulness of this volume.

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*1–2 Samuel.* By Paul S. Evans. The Story of God Biblical Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018. Pp. 549. Cloth, \$44.99.

Discussing the different approaches of his fellow biblical scholars, Victor H. Matthews writes of maximalists and minimalists (Matthews, *History of Bronze and Iron Age Israel* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019]). Regarding the former, those who “rely on a faith commitment to guide their interpretations of the biblical materials and see the biblical account as a fully accurate account of Israel’s history,” that faction will be

pleased with Paul S. Evans’ work; the minimalists who “take the view that the Bible is basically a fictionalized account of events created in the Hellenistic period (third to second centuries BCE) by scribes and priests, who wished to create a foundation story for their community” (*History of Bronze*, p. 2) less so. Following the general rubrics of *The Story of God Biblical Commentary* series, Evans divides 1–2 Samuel into forty-seven sections. Each grouping features three parts: Listen to the Story, which includes the complete NIV text, with occasional references to other texts; Explain the Story, which presents some of Evans’ understanding of the historical setting for those chapter(s); and finally, Live the Story, which offers a very Christian-centric reflection on how the story can be lived in the real religious world. This book should serve well those who subscribe to a maximalist viewpoint, be they pastors, students, Sunday school teachers, or laity in general. Evans is an Assistant Professor of Hebrew Scriptures at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario.

As Evans explains in his Introduction, the point of view that he takes is a specifically Christian-focused one, that 1–2 Samuel “was written to teach its reader about God and [God’s] working in the world” both in the past, but also “in the future with the coming of Jesus Christ to fulfill the Davidic promises” (p. 19). It is with this last approach in mind that each section ends with some observations how Christians can live the biblical word in real time. For example, in the Live the Story part of David and Abigail

(1 Sam 25), Evans refers to “David as mixture of sinner and saint,” and then he prooftexts with a quote from Paul, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Evans then goes on to write of “God’s preventive grace,” explaining that “David’s struggle with Nabal illustrates the truth of 1 Corinthians 10:13 that ‘No temptation has overtaken you... God... will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear’ (259–60). In the section dealing with the woman at Endor (1 Sam 28) Evans shows two sides of his writing. On the positive side he offers a good exegesis on the wearing and tearing of robes (p. 280). Negatively, despite the fact that NIV never terms the woman a witch, in addition to correctly labeling her a medium, Evans many times describes her as a witch, and also as a charlatan. He is very unsettled about her activities (pp. 280–84). Although he generally writes well, at times Evans unnecessarily employs trite language. “... the cat was out of the bag”; “right under David’s nose” (p. 428); “how close he was to blowing it” (p. 258); “David who was currently in the business of capturing towns” (p. 280); “David... as his chickens come home to roost” (p. 432). Evans believes that “the modern church finds itself in a largely hostile environment”; yet Scripture “can be a source of hope for the church, which may be discouraged with their role in the world today” (pp. 433–44). His answer is that people “need to submit to God’s will” (p. 436). Given his approach and his goals, Evans succeeds in making this Scripture interesting for and accessible to his audience.