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Israel Knohl, The Divine Symphony: The Bible's Many Voices (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society). Pp. 208. Hardcover. ISBN 082760761X. $ 30.

Israel Knohl is best known for his The Sanctuary of Silence (Philadelphia: JPS, 1995), in which he defended an early dating for P, and proposed that the Holiness Code is a priestly response to prophetic critique. His latest book builds on his earlier research to suggest that the Bible consists of a number of separate different literary and ideological currents which developed in relative isolation from each other and were only combined at a late stage. The multiplicity of traditions resulted in attempts to reconcile contradictions, for instance in Chronicles, but also in the tolerance for diversity characteristic of later Jewish literature. He proposes strong readings of the different schools; each, according to Knohl, had a clearly demarcated and profound ideological position, whose legacy was sectarian controversy in the Second Temple period. His interpretations are invariably fascinating and insightful; however, their very clarity and definitiveness, as well as the succinctness of the book, often makes one wish for more argumentation and uncertainty. Literary history is rarely clear; especially when one is dealing with the ancient past, one is often arguing in a vacuum.

The longest chapter is, as one might expect, that concerning P. As in The Sanctuary of Silence, Knohl holds that P is the work of priests closeted in the Jerusalem Temple, for whom God was an abstract deity utterly remote from human affairs. No action is attributed to God; he could only be worshipped in silent apprehension of his sublime majesty (p. 73). The priests rigidly divided the realms of good and evil, represented by primordial chaos and Azazel, holiness and impurity, light and darkness (p. 19). They also proposed a revolution in the understanding of God, from the creator, ethical God of Genesis, signified by Elohim, to the revelation of the impersonal deity as YHWH to Moses (p. 33).

The priestly conception of God, in Knohl's exposition, sounds remarkably like that of medieval philosophy. However, his thesis provokes several questions. What is the evidence for the silent worship of the deity? Does an argument ex silentio, that P is concerned mostly with sacrifice and impurity, suffice? Knohl acknowledges that there were songs sung in the Temple by the Levites, but considers that there was a radical ideological disjunction between the Levites and the priests, who performed their duties on "an island of silence in a sea of hymns and prayer" (p. 73). For centuries, priests and Levites maintained different views of the cult, without cross-fertilization or even awareness, by the Levites, of the difference. This does seem improbable. I also was not persuaded by Knohl's proposal for an evolution of the concept of God from Elohim in Genesis to YHWH in Exodus. The problem is that both concepts, according to Knohl, are true, but are they compatible? Did God evolve from one to the other? What does the revelation of the abstract deity, YHWH, do to that of the creator God in Genesis? The question is especially pertinent since Knohl's reconstruction of P's theology is derived largely from an analysis of the creation account. Another issue Knohl does not address is the nature and meaning of

sacrifice. Why is it that P is almost exclusively preoccupied with details of sacrifice and impurity? The austerity of the priestly concept of God is difficult to reconcile with the materiality of his cult.

Chronologically, Knohl follows his account of P with one of J. In contrast to P, J sees the realms of good and evil as entirely interwoven. Like many Jewish commentators, Knohl resists interpreting the story of the garden of Eden in terms of "original sin" and a "fall" (p. 40). Instead, J traces how good can emerge from evil, as in the case of Cain's foundation of cities, and vice versa. He argues that J constitutes a democratization of royal myths of origin, whose traces we still find in Ezekiel (pp. 42-43). In J, moreover, we find the transition from the universal to the particularist perspective, with the commission of Abraham. The emphasis on the national responsibility of Israel is "at the core of the Hebrew Bible" (p. 49).

The next chapter pursues the discussion of good and evil in Isaiah and the Holiness Code. Knohl thinks that Isaiah reintroduced the universal perspective in response to Assyrian imperialism (p. 56). Isaiah was the first to link holiness to morality (p. 63), in the context of increased prosperity and social disparity. Alongside Isaiah, and reacting to prophetic critique, the Holiness school affirmed the sanctity of Israel, the interdependence of ritual and ethical commandments, and proposed an ambitiously egalitarian social program. They also endorsed popular religion, such as the bringing of first fruits, in tandem with priestly ritual.

The next two chapters broach matters of controversy in Ancient Israel, one concerning the sanctuary, the other the monarchy. The priestly concept of God's immanence in the Tabernacle is contrasted with the prophetic tradition of a Tent of Meeting outside the camp, in which God is encountered in his transcendence, with the veneration of the calf at Bethel, and the Deuteronomic insistence that only God's name resides in the Temple. The prophetic and Deuteronomic views led to a reduction in the importance of the cult and the development of the study of Torah and the practice of prayer as the means of communication with God. A very brief chapter contrasts the divinization of the king as the son of God, which we find in some Psalms, with the Deuteronomic ideal of a limited monarchy and the radical critique of kingship in certain naratives.

Knohl continues, historically, with the crisis of the Babylonian deportation and the destruction of the institutions of state, which led to a renewed focus on the problems of evil and suffering. Ezekiel, according to Knohl, adopts two extreme positions, one asserting total freedom of the will, the other absolute determinism. Deutero-Isaiah, through the figure of the suffering servant, transforms Israel into a high priest for the nations which expiate their sin of idolatry (p. 115). The chapter concludes with a discussion of Job, which regards suffering simply as part of the fabric of life (p. 121).

The final chapter concerns the afterlife of ideological movements in the Hebrew Bible in the Second Temple period. This is a fascinating subject to which Knohl contributes rich insights. For instance, he

suggests that the School of Shammai was imbued with a sense of human inadequacy and existential guilt before God, while the School of Hillel stressed the intimacy between human beings and God in all aspects of their lives. This is manifested, for instance, in their different approaches to the recitation of the Shema. The Sadducees perpetuated the priestly tradition of the mystery of the cult, while the Pharisees promoted its popularization. The community of Qumran attempted to harmonize different scriptural traditions, for instance in the Temple Scroll.

This is a very stimulating book, from which I will benefit greatly, especially because of the clarity, forthrightness, and comprehensiveness of its views. However, it is selective; there is very little, for instance, on historical narrative and Wisdom literature. Secondly, it is historically conservative. Knohl dates most biblical literature to the First Temple period; he assumes without question the historicity of rabbinic figures and anecdotes, and the attribution of sources. One notes the omission of Christianity from his discussion of Jewish sectarianism. Finally, he does not take into account the complexity of each of his traditions. While the Bible may be many-voiced, each component of it is univocal. I am not sure that this does justice to the tensions and dialogic openness of the texts. Nevertheless, Knohl has a real gift for discerning the wood from the trees, and is to be congratulated on another splendid book.

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