

Bernard Gosse, *David and Abraham. Persian Period Traditions* (Supplément no. 16 à Transeuphratène), 258 S., Pendé: Gabalda 2010, ISBN 2-85021-201-4.

This new book by B. Gosse is the answer to a question which the author already posed in 2002 (cf. in: *BZ* 46 [2002] 239-252), namely how during the Persian period there took place a gradual diminishing in the importance attached to the Davidic dynasty which came to be replaced by that of the patriarchs. Gosse's basic thesis is that, rather than Abraham's image influencing that of David, the process was *vice versa* (p. 11). Moreover, as Gosse acknowledges, many of the Abraham traditions date from the post-Exilic period; it is precisely in the Persian period "when Abraham was presented as an anticipation of David, of course the new David of the *Chronicles*" (p. 13).

As outlined in the first chapter, Gosse follows the method usually employed in his previous works, intertextuality. In this case, we have an analysis of the texts of the Hebrew Bible in which the names "Abraham" and "David" are placed in relationship to each other.

The second chapter opens with a consideration of the figure of David *in the books of Samuel in relation to the Psalter and the canticles*. There follows, in the third chapter, a study of the figure of Abraham in the books of Ezekiel and Nehemiah. This is necessarily brief in view of the paucity of references. According to Gosse, the text of Neh 9 should be placed between Ezekiel and Gen 15.

The somewhat larger fourth chapter is concerned with the relation between David and Abraham in the Psalter, above all by means of the study of the 'Davidic titles' in the Psalms. Gosse's conclusion is that "in the *Psalter* the mention of Abraham seems clearly a substitute for the disappearance of the Davidic dynasty" (p. 103); it is to be observed particularly in Ps 105 if that is read as a response to Ps 89. The titles of the Psalms, moreover, especially in Pss 42-83, respond variously to

the problem of the collapse of the Davidic dynasty, creating a more direct “link” between the person of David and the one who is praying.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to the study of the relationship between David and Abraham in the book of Isaiah, particularly in its Exilic redaction. Here, especially in the light of Is 55:3, “Abraham already appears like a substitute for David after the disappearance of the Davidic dynasty” (119); the favours promised by God to David are now being extended to the whole community.

The book continues with a shorter chapter devoted to the book of Chronicles. The Chronicler (cf. 1Chr 16) reused Ps 105, achieving an interesting synthesis in which David becomes a descendant of Abraham. After a rapid *excursus* on the Lucan Canticles, in the two brief chapters which follow, Gosse analyses the book of Jeremiah and, once again, Ezekiel, texts in which the figure of Abraham appears marginally (we note how Gosse has already cited the text of Ezek 33:24 at least eight times before reaching this point).

The ninth chapter deals with Genesis and opens with the astounding observation that “in the book of *Genesis* Abram-Abraham is very prominent” (p. 171). Gosse’s aim is to demonstrate that in Genesis Abraham “does not substitute [that is to say: “replace”, *ndr*] David but rather anticipates him” (*ibid.*), something that would be true above all of Gen 14-15. The remaining books of the Pentateuch, to which Gosse devotes the last two chapters, witness to the replacement of the David dynasty with that of the patriarch by means of the mention of the Fathers (Abraham – Isaac – Jacob), even if Num 24 (cf. 2Sam 22) offers a more favourable view of David.

The final pages of the concluding chapter (201-219) are given over to an attempt at giving a systematic chronology to the texts studied: it begins with Ezek 33,24, which is to be placed in the time of the Exile; then the Elohistic Psalter when it was still possible to think in terms of the restoration of the Davidic monarchy; then comes the replacement of David by Abraham in the Levitical traditions of Pss 105-106 and the synthesis between the two figures in the Levitical traditions of Chronicles; lastly come the presence of these traditions in the book of Isaiah (particularly in relation to Chronicles), with the later texts of Gen 14-15 (linked to Ps 110 – which is not a novelty!) and, finally, the universalism of Abraham in the Psalms of the Sons of Korah.

The method adopted by Gosse in this work does not quite convince. The author restricts himself too often to juxtaposing one text with another on the basis of common vocables rather than giving an analysis of the texts put forward. Gosse lists them one after the other, providing the reader with whole pages of biblical texts and word lists. The final attempt to give the texts studied a chronological framework is not convincing. Furthermore, the various chapters of the book simply end for the most part without a satisfactory conclusion.