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***From Noah to Israel: Realization of the Primateval Blessing after the Flood***

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The topic of blessing was long on the periphery of Old Testament exegesis and has only recently received adequate attention in different studies. This change becomes visible in the Cambridge doctoral thesis by Carol M. Kaminski, who examines how God's primeval blessing (taking up the creation blessing [Gen 1:28]) for Noah and his sons (9:1, 7) is realized in the following developing of the primeval history (in Gen 9–11) and in the patriarchal narratives (in Gen 12–50; Exod 1.1–7): the focus is “on the realization of the primeval blessing *after* the flood” (5).

The introduction presents briefly, besides the theme, the relevant passages in the primeval history (9:19; 10:1ff; 11:4) and the correlating scholarly discussion. Kaminski turns against the broad consensus that interprets the dispersal reported in the Table of Nations positively and that the scattering in chapter 11 “has a positive *effect* on the realization of the command to ‘fill the earth’ ” (4). With regard to method, source-critical models and their problems are mentioned briefly in order to dismiss their “atomistic approach” (7) and to analyze “the primeval blessing in its literary context according to its final form” (8).

In chapter 1 Kaminski dissents from the opinion that the remark that from Noah's sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth “the whole earth was peopled” (*npsḥ kl-h'rs* [9:19]) has to be interpreted as a fulfillment of the command to fill the earth (9:1, 7). After having demonstrated that 9:1, 7 is a repetition of the primeval blessing (Gen 1:22, 28) and that Exod 1:7 belongs in this context as well (stating the complete fulfillment of Gen 1 9, according to Kaminski), she discusses 9:19 and the meaning of *nps/pws*, which has, despite a broad interpretation tradition, to be translated as “scatter” (rather than “disperse”

or even “people/populate,” as some translations suggest). Regarding the context, 9:19 looks, therefore, not back to 9:1, 7 but “anticipates the scattering motif” in Gen 10–11 (21). It is worth noting in passing that in 9:7 Kaminski (12–13) rightly declines the text-critical conjecture *rdh* (based on the wording of 1:22).

Chapter 2 discusses 11:4, where the building of the city and the tower is motivated by the fear of being scattered abroad (*pwš*). In contrast to different scholarly opinions, Kaminski correctly insists that no explicit connection exists between the fear of the Babelites and the command to fill the earth; therefore, they do not disregard the divine command. Despite this convincing interpretation, the question remains whether Gen 11 always had the same meaning or whether there are discernable redaction-historical developments (and especially whether v. 4b belongs to such a late redactional layer); such considerations would have enriched the understanding of Gen 11 as well as that of v. 4b.<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 3 continues the argumentation by confirming the negative meaning of the *Leitwort* *pwš* (34ff.), which is associated with judgment (32–33), and by elaborating the connection between 9:19; 10:18; and 11:4. The evidence in 10:18 (“and afterwards the families of the Canaanites scattered”) suggests, as in 9:19, a negative contextual meaning of *pwš* and, therefore, supports the interpretation of 11:4.

Having demonstrated that 9:19 and 11:4 are not connected to the primeval blessing, chapter 4 demonstrates that the latter indeed is “in the *process* of being realized in the Table [of Nations in Gen 10], but it is not fulfilled there” (59, 141), for 10:32 states: “and out of these [families of the sons of Noah] the nations were divided”; *prd* means, according to a lexical study and a comparison of translations (the latter possessing an illustrative but not really argumentative force), “divide” or “separate” but not “spread abroad” (45ff., 55ff.).

Chapter 5 focuses on the genealogies of Shem, Ham, and Japheth and notes that they are presented in reverse order. As the singular introduction to the Shem genealogy proves, this is the main line (60–61); that it is presented last finds parallels in other patriarchal narratives (Gen 25; 36–37) as well as in the sequence of Cain and Seth (Gen 4–5) (62ff.). In analogy to the patriarchal narratives, where the blessing theme is connected with the main line of primogeniture, Kaminski concludes that in Gen 10 the same is true (68–69). Therefore she sees the primeval blessing being realized only in the Shem line (and not in

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1. For such a differentiated analysis, see the classic monograph by C. Uehlinger, *Weltreich und “eine Rede”*: *Eine neue Deutung der sogenannten Turmbauerzählung (Gen 11,1–9)* (OBO 101; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1990), 305ff., 572ff., who already fifteen years ago underscored the connection between 11:4 and 9:19. Regrettably, this and many other (chiefly German-speaking) works are not mentioned.

all of Noah's sons, as one usually argues), which is taken up in 11:10–26. Kaminski convincingly demonstrates the parallel structure of Gen 1:28/5:1ff. and 9:1/11:10ff. (73ff.; table 78), and she concludes that here the primeval blessing is particularly in the process of realization. But nevertheless the complete fulfillment is not yet achieved, and the blessing, therefore, refers beyond the primeval history to the patriarchal narratives.

Before following this trace, Kaminski claims in chapter 6 that the primeval history ends with an “element of grace” (87; see 91), and not of judgment (as G. von Rad assessed); however, this interpretation of the genealogies in Gen 10; 11.10ff. seems rather daring and would require further analysis.

Resuming the goal of the Shemite genealogy, chapter 7 turns to the patriarchal narratives (Gen 12–50), where the blessing theme, as evidenced by *prh* “be fruitful” and *rbh* “multiply” plays a prominent role. Kaminski emphasizes that these blessings are expressed as promises (no longer as commands) to the patriarchs: God guarantees, contrary to primeval history and in spite of the patriarchal behavior, to fully realize his promise (101ff.); therefore, God's “promise ... of increase contributes significantly to the realization of the primeval blessing after the flood” (110). The question of complete fulfillment, however, remains open.

The patriarchal narratives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob report their multiplication, so that the promise of increase is realized at an individual level. The genealogy leads to the twelve sons of Jacob, to whom the primeval blessing is reissued (Gen 35:11). In chapter 8 Kaminski argues that this blessing will be realized through all twelve sons, since any reversal of primogeniture is absent in Gen 35:22–26 (115ff.). They all represent Israel, which is described in a cycle parallel to that of Noah (119ff.; tables 121–22), and there are indications that the promise of increase now is in the process of being realized (47:27)—yet still not completely.

Only in Egypt, as is treated in chapter 9, is this promise of increase fully realized (Exod 1:1–7). Strong references back to Genesis (Exod 1:1/Gen 46:8; Exod 1:5/Gen 46:26–27; Exod 1:7/Gen 1:28; 9:1, 7; 47:27) prove that here, at last, the primeval blessing of Gen 1:28 and 9:1 has reached complete fulfillment for Israel (131ff.). Kaminski differentiates this realization from the “extension of the blessing to all nations,” which will “be a future fulfillment of the blessing in the macrocosmic world” (138; see 132–33, 137). This last conclusion, while interesting, is more systematic than exegetical and would need further substantiation.

The concluding chapter summarizes the argumentation (139ff.) and specifies some implications for further study in Genesis, especially concerning the relationship between creation and election (143ff.).

As already noted, with the blessing topic Kaminski examines one of the central aspects of the primeval history and the patriarchal narratives (cf. 8–9), which has long been an urgent desideratum. Unfortunately, it remains unclear how the specific question she treats, the realization of the primeval blessing after the flood, fits within the overall blessing topic.

A strength of Kaminski's study is that she questions hackneyed scholarly consensus and pursues new perspectives. However, she selects a very one-sided methodical procedure, which, in my opinion, must be criticized. Her attention to contextual analysis of the final text to the exclusion of diachronic models is only possible because she considers solely classical source-analysis as an alternative, without even mentioning newer redaction-historical concepts, particularly from the German-speaking area;<sup>2</sup> those models could neither be labeled as atomistic nor set against a literary context-analysis. As legitimate as the assignment of priority to the final available form is, as superficial is the resulting description of the "theology of the final author of Genesis" (145), ignoring all indications of a longer process of textual growth. If all textual formulations are read on one and the same level, it is not surprising that the profile of the overall text blurs, that is, becomes most complex. The analysis of the final text could have gained in depth and sharpness, if it had allowed for diachronic observations and corresponding hypotheses.

Connected with this is another problem: considering the treated texts, one can hardly resist the impression that they are selected quite coincidentally on the basis of general thematic similarities. Whether these criteria earn priority compared to diachronic observations is a permissible question. Inversely, Kaminski tacitly passes over broad areas of text in Genesis; here, also according to her methodology, a counter-check, which could have confirmed the results, would have been very desirable.

Lastly, although not responsibility of the author, there seem to have been difficulties with the printing: pages 119–26 are doubly printed, which is a somewhat confusing for the reader at the first moment.

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2. E.g., M. Witte, *Die biblische Urgeschichte: Redaktions- und theologiegeschichtliche Beobachtungen zu Genesis 1,1–11,26* (BZAW 265; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998); N. C. Baumgart, *Die Umkehr des Schöpfungsgottes: Zu Komposition und religionsgeschichtlichem Hintergrund von Gen 5–9* (HBS 22; Freiburg: Herder, 1999); with focus on intertextuality, B. Trimpe, *Von der Schöpfung bis zur Zerstreuung: Intertextuelle Interpretationen der biblischen Urgeschichte (Gen 1–11)* (Osnabrück: Universitätsverlag Rasch, 2000); see also the overview by K. Schmid, *Erzväter und Exodus: Untersuchungen zur doppelten Begründung der Ursprünge Israels innerhalb der Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments* (WMANT 81; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999), 165ff.; see n. 1 above.

To sum up: while Kaminski with her focus on the realization of the primeval blessing *after* the flood rightly examines an aspect of the blessing topic that was neglected for all too long a time, her methodical procedure raises serious objections. Nevertheless, her results may stimulate the discussions of the topic of blessing as well as about the compositional threads within Genesis and Exodus, although these discussions will have to be supplemented by further—synchronic and diachronic—dimensions.