



Protestant Theological University

Review of: John Kaltner, Reading the Old Testament Anew

Hartog, P.B.

Published in:
NTT Journal for Theology and the Study of Religion

Published: 01/01/2020

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Hartog, P. B. (2020). Review of: John Kaltner, Reading the Old Testament Anew. *NTT Journal for Theology and the Study of Religion*, 74, 78–79.

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons). You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

This publication might have been made available through the PThU Research Portal under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the PThU website: <https://www.pthu.nl/over-ptthu/bibliotheek-ptthu/diensten/article-25fa-taverne-amendement-end-user-agreement.pdf>

Takedown policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright, please contact us providing details, and we will investigate your claim and remove access to the work if necessary: bibliotheek@pthu.nl.

Downloaded from the PThU Research Portal (Pure): <https://pure.pthu.nl>.

of the Kirta legend is thorough and quite creative but also quite speculative, as the author appears to realise. Contrary to most other scholars, van den Bosch assumes that King Kirta fulfilled his vow to Athiratu, which implied that he would give the goddess a large amount of silver and gold if he would acquire Hariya as his bride (KTU 1.14:IV). According to van den Bosch's unusual interpretation, Athiratu did not know that the vow had been fulfilled or was dissatisfied with the fulfilment. Following the birth of his children, she punished Kirta by making him ill. After Ilu had arranged Kirta's healing, Athiratu possibly incited Kirta's first-born son Yaššibu, whom she had suckled, to revolt against his father. In the ritual texts that refer to Athiratu, her sacrifices are mentioned before the sacrifices to the other goddesses but immediately after the sacrifices to the highest male gods, which demonstrates her relatively high position and, according to van den Bosch, her wisdom. At the end of the book, van den Bosch rightly concludes that the Ugaritic texts regard maternity as an essential characteristic of Athiratu. His conclusion that wisdom was also part of her 'anthropomorphic core' remains unsubstantiated, just like the idea that the Kirta legend marks a new stage in the marginalisation of Athiratu. A proper analysis of Athiratu's role in the Baal myth (esp. KTU 1.4:I-V and 1.6:I) would have yielded different conclusions, namely that Ilu and Athiratu enjoyed a good relationship, that Athiratu was fond of golden and silver presents, and that she was unwise when she suggested to appoint Athtaru as Baal's successor. In my view, Athiratu's relationship with Ilu may have made it attractive for Israelites to accept Asherah as a high deity, next to her husband El/YHWH; cf. the texts from Kuntillet Ajrud, which refer to 'YHWH and his Asherah'.

Paul Sanders, Protestantse Theologische Universiteit Amsterdam

Biblical Studies

John Kaltner, *Reading the Old Testament Anew: Biblical Perspectives on Today's Issues* (Winona: Anselm Academic, 2017), ISBN 9781599827742; 284 pp., \$ 29.95.

In *Reading the Old Testament Anew*, John Kaltner provides a thematic introduction to the Hebrew Bible. Rather than writing a comprehensive introductory work, Kaltner concentrates on six themes in the Old Testament: Creation; Covenant; Liberation; the Human Condition; the Other; and

Social Justice. The first chapter offers a succinct but up-to-date introduction to the Old Testament. Kaltner explains that his selection of themes reflects 'the book's intended purpose as a classroom resource for courses in religion or theology that have a biblical component in them' (8). Each theme is discussed under three headings: First Impressions (which identifies and briefly introduces the most important Old Testament passages pertaining to the theme); Second Opinions (where Kaltner sketches debates in Biblical Studies on the selected themes); and Implications and Applications (which offers questions for further thinking and reflection). Moreover, each chapter contains a section that treats the reception of these themes in art and literature. The chapter on covenant can serve as an example of Kaltner's approach: after briefly introducing Gen 6-9; Gen 15, 17; Exod; Deut; and 'covenant elsewhere in the Old Testament' in the first section of the chapter, Kaltner moves on to discuss issues of Pentateuchal source criticism, the role of covenant thinking in prophetic works, and the link between covenants in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern treatises in the second part. The Implications and Applications section offers questions such as: How has your understanding of the Bible changed after reading this chapter? or: Do you think the relationship between God and humanity as it is presented in the Old Testament is primarily healthy and positive? This shows that for Kaltner both exegetical and biblical-theological issues are of importance when reflecting on the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. Throughout the book Kaltner's writing is careful and nuanced. Yet the book explicitly addresses an audience with no prior knowledge of Biblical literature and, as a result, engagement with the Hebrew text of the Old Testament is absent from Kaltner's work. This would make the book somewhat harder to use in a context where general Introduction to Bible courses of the American type are not common, but I think *Reading the Old Testament Anew* can still fulfil a useful purpose as a resource in, for instance, an undergraduate Biblical Theology course. There, its thematic approach (which is still predominant in Biblical Theology, but has also been challenged on various grounds) would prove helpful, not only for how it collects the material, but also for stimulating debates on the losses and gains that come with thematic approaches. To sum up: Kaltner has written an engaging book, which is refreshing in how it opens up the Old Testament to students with no prior knowledge of it.

Bärry Hartog, Protestantse Theologische Universiteit

License and Permissible Use Notice

These materials are provided to you by the American Theological Library Association, operating as Atla, in accordance with the terms of Atla's agreements with the copyright holder or authorized distributor of the materials, as applicable. In some cases, Atla may be the copyright holder of these materials.

You may download, print, and share these materials for your individual use as may be permitted by the applicable agreements among the copyright holder, distributors, licensors, licensees, and users of these materials (including, for example, any agreements entered into by the institution or other organization from which you obtained these materials) and in accordance with the fair use principles of United States and international copyright and other applicable laws. You may not, for example, copy or email these materials to multiple web sites or publicly post, distribute for commercial purposes, modify, or create derivative works of these materials without the copyright holder's express prior written permission.

Please contact the copyright holder if you would like to request permission to use these materials, or any part of these materials, in any manner or for any use not permitted by the agreements described above or the fair use provisions of United States and international copyright and other applicable laws. For information regarding the identity of the copyright holder, refer to the copyright information in these materials, if available, or contact Atla using the Contact Us link at www.atla.com.

Except as otherwise specified, Copyright © 2021 Atla.