


Dariusz Dziadosz, *Gilgal. Biblia – Archeologia – Teologia. Studium historyczno-krytyczne deuteronomi(sty)cznych tradycji o podboju Kanaanu* (Biblioteka Szkoły Dabar 4; Rzeszów: Bonus Liber 2022). Pp. 696. PLN 55. ISBN: 978-83-67230-21-6

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Monograph by Fr. Prof. Dariusz Dziadosz *Gilgal. Biblia – Archeologia – Teologia. Studium historyczno-krytyczne deuteronomi(sty)cznych tradycji o podboju Kanaanu* [Gilgal. Bible – Archaeology – Theology. A Historical-Critical Study of the Deuteronomi(sti)c Traditions about the Conquest of Canaan] is an attempt to synthesise two scholarly approaches – archaeological and exegetical-theological – to provide an interdisciplinary, comprehensive study of both the location and the cultic-theological role of Gilgal in the pre-monarchic and monarchic periods of the Old Testament, and it is, by all means, a successful attempt. It is a constant challenge for biblical scholars to confront biblical data with those from archaeological research to arrive at answers about the relationship of the biblical editor's theological concept of epochs, places and persons to historical and geographical data obtained through empirical research. The dissonance that is often discovered is a warning light for the professional biblical scholar and an impulse initiating an investigation of the phenomenon in question, which, if its aim is a comprehensive and holistic analysis of the research problem, takes the form of a painstaking and meticulous analysis not only of the available material but also of the interpretative proposals available in the academic world. These are the features that characterise the entire scholarly work of Dziadosz and which undoubtedly pertain to the reviewed publication. The book has already found a wide positive resonance in the Polish circle of biblical scholars, becoming also an outstanding scientific achievement that has earned its author promotion to the academic title of professor.

The author, who holds the position of Head of the Department of Historical, Prophetic, and Sapiential Books of the Old Testament at the Institute of Biblical Studies of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, is already well-known in Polish biblical studies as the author of monographs on the Pentateuch and the historical books of the Old Testament, especially the Book of Genesis (*“Tak było na początku...” Izrael opowiada swoje dzieje. Literacka i teologiczna analiza wiodących tradycji Księgi Rodzaju* [“So It Was in the Beginning...” Israel Tells Its History. Literary and Theological Analysis of the Leading Traditions of Genesis] [Przemyśl: Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Przemyskiej 2011]) and

the Deuteronomi(sti)c work, including two volumes of commentary on the Book of Judges (*Księga Sędziów. Rozdziały 1–5* [The Book of Judges. Chapters 1–5] [Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Stary Testament 7.1; Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła 2019]; *Księga Sędziów. Rozdziały 6–12* [The Book of Judges. Chapters 6–12] [Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Stary Testament 7.2; Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła 2019]). It should be emphasised that there has been no monograph on Gilgal in the world literature so far, as well as that the author masterfully combined the exegetical-hermeneutical skills with the analysis of archaeological material, diachrony and synchrony. This methodological choice is reflected in the structure of the book. It consists of two main parts, the first of which is hermeneutical and archaeological in nature, while the second is exegetical and theological.

In the first part, entitled “W poszukiwaniu biblijnego Gilgal” (In Search of Biblical Gilgal) (pp. 29–158), the author begins with a semantic analysis of the *gl* and *gll* roots, moving on to passages in which the name “Gilgal” occurs in the Old Testament, analysing them geographically, before closing with an extensive exposition and critical evaluation of the archaeological evidence. The reader’s attention is particularly drawn to the latter, which is presented in the last chapter of the first part of the study, together with numerous conclusions. The author critically assesses the results of the archaeological research carried out so far, as well as points out that

in the absence of definitive results in the field of archaeology that would shed light on the biblical sources and encourage further exploration, more and more exegetes are inclined to the hypothesis that the Old Testament description of Gilgal is largely the product of an ideological and theological reworking of local oral and written traditions about the place, which in fact did not play as significant a role in the history of pre-monarchic Israel as was assigned to it by the sources included in the historical and prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible (p. 146).

Such optics brought to the forefront the main objective of the work, namely the reconstruction of the theological military, socio-political and religious role that Gilgal played in the eyes of the (post)Deuteronomi(sti)c editor.

The term “Gilgal,” which occurs 41 times in the Hebrew Bible, can refer to many homonymous geographical locations. The author deliberately narrowed the scope of the exegetical-theological analysis to the three books of the Old Covenant – Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges – and thus to the 14 occurrences of the name “Gilgal,” noting that the unity of the chronology and topology provided by the editors of these books implies a unity of the location and theological significance of Gilgal in these texts, which cannot be said with equal certainty about the Gilgal mentioned in the other Deuteronomistic books, as well as the “Gilgal” mentioned in Josh 12:23 and 15:7. This is reflected in the structure of the second part of the monograph, entitled “W poszukiwaniu biblijnej koncepcji Gilgal w przedmonarchicznej historii Izraela” (In Search of the Biblical Concept of Gilgal in Pre-Monarchic Israelite History) (pp. 159–525), which consists of six chapters, being an exegetical and theological analysis of the occurrences of the name “Gilgal” in the following passages: (1) Deut 11:30; (2) Josh 4:19–20; (3) Josh 5:9–10; (4) Josh 9:6 and 10:6, 7, 9, 15, 43;

(5) Josh 14:6; (6) Judg 2:1a and 3:19a. The evidently annotative nature of the mention of Gilgal in Deut 11:30 makes it, in the present arrangement of the Hebrew Bible, a preparation for a theological reading of the meaning of Gilgal, which reaches its peak in the section Josh 3:1–10:43, while Judg 2:1a marks its twilight, due to the Israelites' idolatry and departure from the worship of YHWH. In particular, the reference in Judg 3:19a may indicate the original Canaanite character of the place and the significance of its transformation, which occurs in the context of the Israelites' entry into the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. The entire monograph is complemented by resources that aid the reader in exploring the subject: a collection of maps and illustrations, a bibliography and indexes.

The research carried out leads the author to note the already mentioned important difference between the historical and the exegetical-theological perspectives. The theological significance derived from the analysed texts is attributed by the author to the activities of the (post)Deuteronomi(sti)c and (post)priestly editorial circles of the Deut–Judg complex, who, after the Babylonian captivity, wished to introduce the contemporary generation to the idea of a logistical and military centre associated with monotheism, Yahwism, the cult of the Ark of the Covenant and the theology of the land and covenant. The choice of Gilgal was linked to later acts of worship attested by other occurrences of the term in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, the author is aware of the complexity of the issue and the multiplicity of proposals for solving this historical and exegetical problem, and an analysis of the available sources leads to the overly correct, though not very optimistic, conclusion:

It is still unclear whether this biblical Gilgal should be regarded as an inhabited and civilisationally developed space taken over by the Israelites, [...] or as a military base (encampment) established by Joshua, which [...] subsequently developed into a well-known socio-religious centre (p. 536).

The great merit of the reviewed monograph is its comprehensiveness. On the one hand, the author has made a very solid analysis encompassing multiple levels of the topic, starting from etymology and ending with interpretation in a theological key, on the other hand, extensively and exhaustively touching on all the biblical traditions about Gilgal, as well as a great number of interpretative theses and hypotheses, as evidenced both by the consulted bibliography and the critical evaluation of scholars' positions in the text of the monograph. Extensive footnotes, which for the author are an opportunity to present the positions of other researchers or to announce parallel research problems related to the topic – which make the work, despite its integrity, “open” and inspiring for further research – are a remarkable feature of the book, characteristic of the works of Dziadosz. The author combines the classical tools of exegetical-theological work based on the historical-critical method with innovative solutions. From the methodological point of view, one of them – another characteristic feature of the analyses found in Dziadosz's works – is the use of the Masoretic division of the text.

Another strength of the work is its clarity. Not only the clear compositional structure but also the already mentioned order of presentation of the material and the supplementing

of the analyses with relevant introductions and conclusions, guide the reader step by step both through the individual stages in the method of exegetical analysis and through the juxtaposition of the various concepts (this is especially true of Chapters II and III of Part One). In this way, despite the subject matter of the monograph being so particularised and requiring interdisciplinary knowledge of the subject matter and tools due to the methodology used, even a recipient with a fragmentary knowledge of archaeology and/or exegesis can benefit from the book. Probably the same motive underlies the transliteration of the Hebrew and Greek texts used by the author (as in his other works), which enables the original text to be read also by a reader unfamiliar with the ancient alphabets.

The monograph by Dariusz Dziadosz is an important voice in the scholarly discussion on Gilgal, both from the substantive and methodological perspectives. The author's diligence and care expressed in the compilation of such an ambitious work attest to his outstanding competence in philological, historical, ethnological, archaeological and exegetical-theological analysis. All this makes the reviewed work a valuable reference book for understanding not only the geography of ancient Syro-Palestine, but also the history of Israel at the stage of the conquest of the Promised Land and the period of the judges and their theological significance for the religious, social and national consciousness of the Chosen People.