

This is a doctoral thesis written under the supervision of Hans Barstad of the University of Edinburgh. The book is in three parts. An introduction gives a history of scholarly investigation into biblical prophecy and describes Kelly’s methodology (pp. 19–66). Kelly reviews older conceptions (e.g., that a biblical prophet opposed institutional religion from a position in the wilderness) and more recent proposals (e.g., that the biblical prophets did not consider themselves prophets at all; they were poets and thinkers who despised institutional prophets). Part 1 is a semantic investigation of נביא (“prophet”) and its denominative verb נבأ (“prophesy”), exhaustively mapping their semantic connections to other words in their immediate contexts in Jeremiah (pp. 69–107). For example, table 3 lists every occurrence of נביא as the object of a finite verb (pp. 81–82). Part 2 gives a close reading of the MT of Jer 1:4–19, 23:9–40, and 27:1–28:17 (pp. 111–264). In addition to a full bibliography, indexes of authors, texts, and subjects are included (pp. 265–332). Kelly concludes that all prophets were “cult” prophets (pp. 51, 147, 175–76, 260–63), implying that it is artificial to distinguish Jeremiah from the “false” prophets on the basis of their position vis-à-vis the temple. He further claims that prophecy is “divination,” an effort to discover and communicate God’s will, and that a prophet is a diviner whom YHWH has genuinely sent (pp. 217–19, 257–59).

The fruit of the semantic analysis in part 1 is quite meager in comparison to the labor involved for both Kelly and his reader. Not surprisingly, נביא often serves as subject to verbs of communication and is frequently found in a word pair with הכהן, “priest.” But Kelly draws questionable conclusions from his data. He states, “as מלך relates to שר, so הכהן relates to נביא . . . . It is a semantic piece of evidence which suggest that the נביא and הכהן are both related to the same domain of activity, particularly the cult” (p. 105; see also pp. 167–76). But the most one can legitimately deduce is the banal observation that as מלך and שר (“king” and “official”) are both civil authorities, so the נביא and הכהן are religious authorities. Moreover, the king is in a hierarchical relationship over the officials (thus, Jer 24:8, “the king of Judah and his officials”), but this is not true of a priest and a prophet. A priest may have authority over the temple precinct, but the word pair of נביא and הכהן does not imply that a prophet *qua* prophet is a subordinate functionary of
the cult. Jeremiah functioned as a prophet in diverse locations, including his prison cell (Jer 33:1) and the Egyptian diaspora (Jer 44:1). Even when he was forbidden from entering the temple complex, he did not cease to be a prophet (Jer 36).

Part 2 (pp. 109–264) is, as noted, a close reading of selected texts. Nevertheless, I often do not find it persuasive. For example, Kelly argues that Jer 1:7b, 9 are not dependent on Deut 18:18 and do not present Jeremiah as a prophet like Moses, although he acknowledges there are verbal parallels between these passages. He thinks, instead, that Jer 1:7b, 9 are to be interpreted in light of similar language used elsewhere in Jeremiah (pp. 132–34). This is a strange argument. If text B has been influenced by text A, it is not surprising that text B would contain several echoes of text A. Furthermore, Jeremiah’s complaint, that he does not know how to speak, is a conspicuous allusion to Moses (Jer 1:6; Exod 4:10), suggesting that Jeremiah is indeed like Moses.

To give another example: interpreting Jer 1:14, Kelly argues that Jeremiah’s vision of disaster coming “from the north” (מִמְצַפִּים) refers not to the Babylonian invasion but to a divine decree coming from Zaphon (תֵא שפָּו; Ps 48:3), the abode of YHWH (pp. 141–42). But in the very next verse (Jer 1:15), YHWH declares he is summoning the clans and kingdoms “in the north” (לֵבָנָה) to make war on Jerusalem. In Jeremiah, צפונה occurs 25 times, and it is often obviously or explicitly Mesopotamia (e.g., 3:18; 6:22; 10:22; 25:9; 46:6, 24) and nowhere explicitly Zaphon.

Kelly observes that Jeremiah’s criticism of prophets who claim to have had a revelatory dream is not an attack on the legitimacy of revelatory dreams (see pp. 197–200). This claim is, narrowly defined, valid, but it is worth noting that every occurrence of “dream” in Jeremiah is pejorative (23:25, 27, 28, 32; 27:9; 29:8), implying a distinction between Jeremiah and his officially sanctioned opponents.

As a final example, on pp. 222–24, Kelly argues that in 27:18 Jeremiah sincerely appeals to his fellow prophets to pray that the sacred vessels in the temple not be carried off to Babylon. This is not convincing. The protasis of the verse, “And if they are prophets,” is in context obviously contrary-to-fact. Jeremiah’s counterparts are, in traditional terms, false prophets, and his appeal is ironic.

No evidence requires that Jeremiah, although himself a priest, was in his prophetic role a temple functionary (one thinks also of Amos 7:10–17 and of John the Baptist, also a priest, who was the paradigmatic man in the wilderness). Also, Kelly’s choice of the term divination to describe the prophetic function is unfortunate. The term implies seeking divine guidance for a specific situation (“Shall we go into battle?”). It typically involved omen-taking
by entrails, flights of birds, lots, and yes, dreams. This is radically different from the theological and eschatologically oriented treatises we find in Jeremiah and the other prophets. Even so, Kelly’s book is exhaustively researched and provides a window into scholarship on biblical prophecy.

**JoAnna Hoyt. Amos, Jonah and Micah.**

JoAnna Hoyt’s commentary is in the Evangelical Exegetical Commentary series published by Lexham Press. She is also the Assistant Old Testament Editor of the series. The EEC series is described by the publisher thus: “Incorporating the latest in critical biblical scholarship and written from a distinctly evangelical perspective, each comprehensive volume features a remarkable amount of depth, providing historical and literary insights, and addressing exegetical, pastoral, and theological details.” In short, Hoyt demonstrates her achievement of these goals nicely in her volume. Her commentary does contain a significant amount of depth throughout when she presents the work of others in her literature reviews and commentary in general. For example, in her section on Amos’s structure, she surveys proposed structures based on two, three, four, and seven-unit divisions before refuting them for her own four-part structure, based loosely on discourse linguistics. While her bibliography is broad and generally adequate, some more recent works are not cited in her volume. Oddly, almost no scholar from the Book of the Twelve SBL section is cited, nor are the more recent challenges to the legitimacy of the covenant lawsuit theme (i.e., J. Nogalski or J. M. Trotter)—something she refers to throughout her Micah commentary.

Each prophetic book receives several hundred pages of commentary (Amos, pp. 1–334; Jonah, pp. 335–538; Micah, pp. 539–822). Hoyt offers a robust introduction to each prophet, which includes the common introductory topics such as author, date, setting, genre, and structure, but other sections as well, including “Intertextual Issues,” which analyzes quotations, allusions, and other connections to both OT and NT books, and “Theology,” which focuses on larger theological themes of the books like justice, judgment, the day of the Lord, mercy and repentance, and so on.