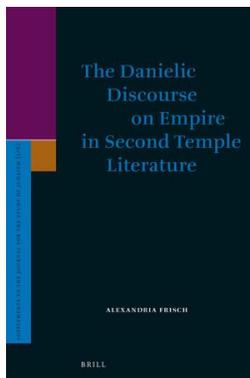




Reviews of the Enoch Seminar 2018.04.03

Alexandria Frisch, *The Danielic Discourse on Empire in Second Temple Literature*. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 176. Leiden: Brill, 2016. ISBN: 9789004331297. Pp. 263. \$132/€120. Hardback.

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In her book, Alexandria Frisch addresses the important and somewhat neglected scholarly issue, namely, the image of empires in the eyes of Jews in the Second Temple period, with a particular focus on the Book of Daniel and its discourse. As the author correctly notes, fortunately for us, the Jews, unlike other conquered peoples, created enough texts to enable us to investigate opinions of the ruled on this subject. It is also important that before the Second Temple Period, the Jews already had experience with previous empires. Therefore, despite the fact that the classical Hebrew language does not have the equivalent word for “empire,” the indicated research problem: “How, then, did the Jews understand empire throughout the Second Temple Period?” seems perfectly legitimate.

The author places a significant emphasis on the Book of Daniel, which largely shaped the worldview of Jewish authors writing in later times. Her ambitious intent was to use several of the research methods proposed so far, in addition to her own model. Although the time of the creation of and the subsequent influence of the Book of Daniel fell on the period of existence of the Seleucid Empire and the Roman Empire, the author rightly decided to begin with Jewish conceptions of earlier Near Eastern empires.

The book is divided into three main parts, each consisting of three chapters. In the first part, Frisch traces the historical outline of Near Eastern empires, pointing to the earlier role of Assyria and the Babylon in the history of the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah and the rooting of the monarchy in the identity of the Israelites. She draws attention to the role of deuteronomistic theology in 2 Kings and in First Isaiah with its idea that empires are only tools in God’s hands for punishing or rewarding Israel. This theology survived into the postexilic period, as reflected in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Frisch discusses the pivotal role of the Persian Empire in shaping the image of the empire in the Second Temple period. Then she turns to the discourse on the empire

in the Book of the Watchers from *Corpus Enochicum*. She suggests that there are elements in this text derived from the Greek myths that come together to create a new myth of the rise of the empire. Frisch argues that the author of the Book of the Watchers does not use exegesis, but historical eisegesis, placing the narrative of Gen 6:1–4 in the contemporary imperial context so that the biblical myth becomes an imperial myth. She bases her analysis on the concept by George W. G. Nickelsburg, which combines the Diadochi with the characters of the Watchers and the subsequent occupations of Jerusalem by the Seleucid and Lagids. Frisch highlights the political dimension of the myth about giants in Greece (barbarians outside the empire) and in Judea (Diadochi). She recognizes that in the Jewish adaptation of this myth, the Watchers and their offspring were identified with Hellenistic monarchies. In her opinion, this narrative is the etiological myth of the empire.

Frisch compares two visions of the empire present in the Book of Daniel: the vision of the empire as a terrestrial phenomenon controlled by God and the metaphysical (supernatural) dimension of empires controlled by angels. In this way, she shows a kind of camouflage that the hidden transcript used when the author wanted to indicate the impermanence of the most powerful empires.

As for the works that were written after the Book of Daniel, the author suggests that the Animal Apocalypse, the Third Sibylline Oracle and the Book of Jubilees follow Daniel in conceptualizing the empire with the help of the Genesis framework. She discusses the discourse of Daniel in the early Roman period with a reference to the first empire of the *orbis terrae* in the works from the period similar to Daniel, such as the Psalms of Solomon, 1QM, and the Testament of Moses. They reflect on the appearance of the Roman influence in Judea as well as on Roman imperial ideology, alongside the Jewish opposition to it. Frisch believes that the certainty with which the authors of these works indicate the end of the Roman Empire results from their knowledge of Daniel 1–6 and 9. The divine control over the empires indicated in these passages is discussed in the three works mentioned above, just as they refer to the evil nature of the empires of Daniel 7–12.

In the final part, Frisch discusses Daniel's discourse in the period after the defeat of the 66–70 uprising and the fall of the temple, analyzing the following works: Antiquities of the Jews, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and the Revelation of John. She discusses the use of Daniel in the works of Josephus. As many scholars earlier, Frisch underlines Josephus' significant silence regarding the anticipated demise of the last empire. According to her, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch and Revelation took on the imperial Roman ideology by using mimicry and mockery. Frisch suggests that the most important thing is that Daniel provided a solid starting point for all those who wanted to discuss imperial power on their own terms. So even when Jewish writers took over imperial ideology, they did not do it unconsciously, but they gave it their own specifically Jewish form, which owes much to the discourse of the Book of Daniel.

The book is logically constructed and Frisch shows a good knowledge of the literature on the subject. One may make a rather trivial remark that literary works are mainly an expression of opinions held by elites and we are not able to evaluate how exactly these reflected the views of the masses. Hence, instead of speaking of Jewish opinion one should rather emphasize that the analyzed opinions are of Jewish literati.

There are no quotes in the original languages, but it does not seem to be a disadvantage with the chosen topic of the book. As a small drawback, quite common, however, among English-speaking scholars, I noticed the lack of quotations of scholarly literature from languages other than English and German. However, Frisch deserves credit for using not only the Jewish primary sources, but also Greco-Roman literature. She guides the reader through successive religious texts, skillfully analyzing the concepts of empire and historical events that were alluded to and hidden in them.

I am not entirely convinced about the necessity of referring to the idea of mimicry and mockery when dealing with the Second Temple Jewish texts. For instance, according to Frisch, the author of the Psalms of Solomon made a subtle change in the imperial Roman ideology. It was not Jupiter who gave the Romans power over the world, but God. However, it seems that this concept does not necessarily come from the revision of Roman ideology, but is consistent with the earlier notions of power given to foreign rulers by God, which appeared in the Bible long before any Roman foot touched Judea.

One may find the term “Greeks,” which is sometimes used to refer to the third Seleucid empire, slightly unfortunate because it simplifies the concept of a Hellenistic type of monarchy. The issues of literary dependency are always problematic and Frisch is well aware of this. It concerns all parallels between the Book of the Watchers and Greek mythology, for example, the Prometheus myth standing allegedly behind the Asael story.

The author suggests that the division of the Watchers into dozens indicates a military formation which seems quite probable. The footnote mentions that the Macedonian phalanx was divided into tens-dekas. However, it is worth remembering that Moses also used an administrative system where the smallest number was ten. Furthermore, this division is reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Roman army (*decuria*).

I think it would be quite an interesting issue to ask the question: what access the said authors had to the Book of Daniel? That they were familiar with the text is rather out of the question. Josephus and the author(s) of the 1QM could even have had in front of their eyes the scroll of Daniel while creating their works. And what about the other authors?

Setting the time limit for the existence of the empires by Daniel was certainly important for the authors who wrote later, but above all for the groups that were not the purpose of Frisch’s research, namely for insurgents, as evidenced by, inter alia, Jerome. There is a work dedicated to this issue written by A. J. Tomasino (*Daniel and the Revolutionaries: The Movement of Late Second Temple Palestine*, Ph.D. thesis, Chicago 1995); although it is understandable that the author did not reference it as it has not yet been published. I suppose, however, that in the first part of the book, the author would profit from the work of L. T. Rowlett, *Joshua and Rhetoric of Violence* which deals with the issue of Assyrian imperial ideology and its influence on Deuteronomistic thought.

The analysis of the selected Jewish texts confirms with a high probability the rightness of the thesis regarding the use of Daniel’s discourse, in various perspectives on the empire of “polemics” with the ideology of the empire. Certainly the book written by Frisch is a significant contribution to the study of the concept of empire in Jewish thought and extremely helpful to anyone interested in the issue of empire and Jews.