

Klaus Koenen, *Klagelieder (Threni) (BKAT XX)*, 418 S., € 180,00, Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft 2015, ISBN 978-3-7887-2956-1.

The series *Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament* started more than sixty years ago with a format combining thorough historical-critical analysis with healthy biblical theology. Whereas some books of the Old Testament still need to be covered, the editors decided that some of the older commentaries already need to be replaced. In 2000 Thomas Krüger published a new commentary on Kohelet. This was presented as a „Sonderband“, because as an adaptation of the English original it did not fully follow the format of the series. As the first of a number of new editions according to the original format Klaus Koenen now presents a new volume on Lamentations. It replaces the one by Joachim Kraus, who needed in 1960 less than hundred pages for his commentary, less than a quarter of the pages filled by Koenen. All the more striking is Koenen's remark in the preface that the original manuscript finished in 2012 has been cut down, leaving out the reception history. This was published separately in 2013: *Die Klagelieder Jeremias: Eine Rezeptionsgeschichte* (Biblich Theologische Studien, 143). Koenen appears not be convinced by Adele Berlin, who wrote a commentary on Lamentations herself and states about this work: „I am not enamored of massive commentaries; the reader loses the view of the forest and often cannot even see the tops of the trees. The length of the commentary should be in proportion to the length of the biblical book“ („On Writing a Commentary on Lamentations“, in: Lee, N.C. / Mandolfo, C. (eds.), *Lamentations in Ancient and Contemporary Cultural Contexts*, 2008, p. 4). Koenen must have read this, because he seems to have made a serious attempt to cover everything written about Lamentations. Despite the separate publication in 2013 he also gives in his commentary elaborate presentations of the different views in past and present, before giving his own well considered evaluation. One can value this as the great merit of his commentary. It is not revolutionary, but very informative on many levels. He not only gives a full description of all textcritical issues, but he also shows in how many different ways biblical writers and their commentators through the ages have coped with the problems of suffering in relation to their belief in a just god. Inevitably, on some points the reader may not agree with Koenen. For instance, in his discussion of the question whether the use of alphabetic acrostics was meaningful in itself, he could have paid more attention to the comparison with the use of acrostics in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Of course, even this voluminous commentary will not turn out to be the definitive interpretation. There is a growing interest, also noted by Koenen, in the place of the book of Lamentation within the biblical canon and the history of the religion of Israel, as can be noted, for instance, in the recent *Theologie des Alten Testaments* by Jörg Jeremias. For those who do not have or do not allow oneself time to delve through Koenen's important book, there is also the opportunity to become acquainted with his views through the internet. Koenen is a prolific contributor to [www.wiblex.de](http://www.wiblex.de), where he published articles on amongst others „Akrostichon“, „Klagelieder Jeremias“, „Stadtklagen“, and „Zerstörung Jerusalems“.

Klaas Spronk, Amsterdam