

Uriah Y. Kim. *Identity and Loyalty in the David Story: A Postcolonial Reading*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008. 256 pages. \$70.

In line with his previous postcolonial reading of biblical nation narrative, *Decolonizing Josiah: Toward a Postcolonial Reading of the Deuteronomistic History* (2005), Uriah Kim re-reads the Davidic story of national establishment with postcolonial concerns. In this volume, Kim employs a postcolonial hermeneutic for the reassessment of David's hybrid identity and nation narrative in 1 Samuel—1 Kings 2. Just as the title reveals his intention to practice "a postcolonial reading" rather than to *theorize* it, his identity-specific hermeneutics thus sets its ultimate goal to "encourage Asian Americans to examine their location in North America and to engage David from their own context" (14).

Under this pursuit, Kim utilizes Homi Bhabha's postcolonial concept of *hybridity*. The whole monograph has a bipartite focus on the *hybrid* identity of David (chs. 1-4) and the *hybridization* of his kingdom (chs. 5-6). Firstly, Kim re-investigates the hybrid characteristic of David. By reflecting on his social location as a hybrid, Kim particularly places the David narrative within his Asian-American context. Secondly, Kim focuses on the reappraisal of nation. While exclusive nationalism in the nation narrative favors "some normative groups over and against others" (15), *hybridity* resists the unified logic underneath the nation narrative as it respects a space of *liminality*: "[i]n the space of liminality, different voices of the people emerge and hybrid and multiple identities can co-exist" (16).

Kim's utmost contribution of this volume is his conceptual amplification of *hesed* (faithfulness in Hebrew) in light of Korean term, *jeong* (affection and sympathy). This book functions on a significant hermeneutical axle of this word *hesed* with first half dealing with *hesed* in the identity of David and the rest employing *hesed* relationship as the hermeneutical key for the hybridization of Davidic kingdom.

The first chapter introduces the hybrid identity of David. While challenging the biblical narrator's apologetic presentation of David as innocent of bloodguilt, Kim identifies competing images of David as "a Machiavellian man of *Hesed*" (26). In the Bible, David defeats Saul and becomes the winner thus, readers find favor in him regardless of his Machiavellian attitudes. However, Kim warns that Asian American readers likely "meditate on the Machiavellian David to edify their faith and guide their lives to succeed in America" (14). Through a shift of hermeneutical focus into his idea of *hesed*, Kim recognizes David's *hesed* relationship, which is apparent in his inclusivism within the process of hybridization of his kingdom, as his real difference from the ethnocentric policy of Saul (Benjaminite).

Kim devotes chapter 2 to understanding *hesed* as a postcolonial term. With identifying the explanatory limitation of loyalty (acts of will) for *hesed*, he employs a Korean term *jeong*, "affection-and-kindness," (54) for a fuller understanding of *hesed* (acts of will and the heart). According to Nelson Glueck and Katharine Sakenfeld, *hesed* has been understood as an obligatory action motivated by certain relationship or responsibility. Yet, Kim sees *hesed* as the outcome of *jeong* which is "capable of transgressing boundaries that separate individuals from making connections" (54-55). On that note, Kim quotes W. A. Joh's explanation of *jeong*, which "emerges out of relationships that are not always based on mutuality" (55). Through chapters 3-4, he further exemplifies how this *hesed*, from the perspective of *jeong*, is a key theme in the David story.

In chapters 5, "The Hybridization of David's Kingdom," Kim extends his discourse of hybridity from the identity of David into his kingdom establishment. Although Kim broadens his

focus, David's hybridity and *hesed* are still the most important motives for his radical inclusivism. Kim particularly attributes David's achievement in amalgamating his hybrid kingdom to "his ability to forge a *hesed*-relationship across ethnic, regional, or religious boundaries" (175). For instance, by including non-Israelite nations into his core military group (1 Sam 26:6, the Philistines, Gittites, Cherethites, and Palethites), David practiced "his version of an ethos of egalitarianism" (177).

The last chapter, "The Purification of the David Story," is devoted to the identity politics of Davidic kingdom. Whereas David forges a *hesed* relationship to distinguish his hybrid kingdom from others, "the narrative tried to construct the identity of Israelites in opposition to non-Israelites, which included 'foreigners'..." (183). Although those non-Israelites played a crucial role in building David's hybrid kingdom, *hesed* is disregarded within the process of purification in order to construct a coherent identity as Israelite. Kim exemplifies a case of Uriah the Hittite who may be like Israelites but not quite.

As Kim ultimately sets his goal in the Introduction to spare a reading space for minoritized communities, the Epilogue achieves its goal by illustrating the practical application of his postcolonial reading into his social location (222). As a hyphenated immigrant Uriah (the Hittite-Israelite) was victimized by the identity politics of Davidic monarchy, (Uriah) Kim's life as a Korean-American was confronted by those of North America. As Kim declares his unhomeliness in-between the United States and Korea (226), it is his ultimate wish to restore the transgressing capability of *hybridity* so that different voices in the United States can co-exist and be connected.

Just as Kim highlights the concept of "hybridity," his contribution also has a hybrid characteristic: theological and socio-political level. On the theological level, Kim challenges the mainstream understanding of David's identity and loyalty. While majority only creates binary description of David which avoids holistic understanding, Kim recognizes a postcolonial/hybrid David. By suggesting alternative understanding of *loyalty* from the Korean concept of *jeong*, Kim also identifies a *hybrid* loyalty (acts of will and of the heart) in David's identity and his kingdom politics.

Even though Kim implemented postcolonial hermeneutics for the reappraisal of nation and David narrative at the literary level, this analysis actually creates a social space for its marginal readers. Applied into Kim's own social location, *hybridity*, which is not only just an outcome of his postcolonial alternative reading of the David narrative, plays a crucial role as a futuristic concern ("father's dream," p.222) of a hybrid father for his son and the entire American society. In this regard, Kim's postcolonial reading of Davidic monarchy, which speaks for modern readers' current concerns of identity politics, profoundly rejuvenates the life of the Bible, of biblical scholarship, and of its readers. And this seems what he has wished for:

"To disconnect biblical scholarship from current affairs is to treat the Bible primarily as an ancient text that matters only to a small number of specialists and hide its direct impact on today's world. Postcolonial interpreters insist that interpretation of the Bible must address issues and concerns that matter to the world at large, rather than be limited to interests and affairs that count only to the guild of biblical scholars" (20).

Hyun Woo Kim
Yale University