

## OPINION

according to the procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

of doctoral student asst. Zoran Tsvetkov Kalev

in the doctoral program "Holy Scripture of the Old Testament" from professional direction  
2.4. Religion and Theology, Faculty of Theology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",

The opinion was prepared by **Assoc. Prof. Galya Valcheva Yordanova, PhD** Shumen  
Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, as a member of the scientific jury for the  
procedure

### 1. Information about the dissertation student

**Zoran Tsvetkov Kalev** is a part-time doctoral student assigned with the right of defense to the Department of Biblical Studies at the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". His dissertation is on ""...evil before the Lord" in the book of Judges of Israel".

It is clear from the presented CV that the dissertation student completed in 2018 bachelor's degree in theology with teaching license, and in 2019 graduated with a master's degree in Contemporary Aspects of Theology. From 2020 to the present, he is an assistant at the Department of Biblical Studies at the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University. The mastery of a foreign language (English) implies the problem-free use of scientific literature in the original, which supports his research activity.

In his scientific research activity, the doctoral student asst. Zoran Kalev has participated in 5 scientific conferences.

His scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation are five in number.

The submitted documents for the procedure meet the requirements of PPZRASRB and are well arranged and completed. They certify the necessary academic and practical qualities and achievements of the doctoral student asst. Zoran Tsvetkov Kalev in the field of theological science in general.

### 2. General characteristics of the doctoral student's scientific works and achievements

The scientific works of a doctoral student asst. Zoran Kalev are related to biblical theology.

The presented work consists of a preface, an introduction, five chapters, two excursions, a conclusion, an appendix, a list of references. It has a volume of 317 pages. and with a scientific-critical apparatus of 592 footnotes. The literature used is correctly divided into works in Cyrillic - 32 titles and in a foreign language – 199.

The introduction offers a general characterization of the dissertation writing, defining the object, methods, purpose and tasks of the research. Here the topicality of the topic is justified and defended, a history of research on the issue is outlined, emphasizing those of them that are relevant to the thesis of the doctoral student.

The subject of the dissertation is clearly defined: to examine the term "evil before the Lord" in certain textual units of the Book of Judges, as well as depending on the context of other texts from Old Testament sources.

The purpose of the scientific presentation is to investigate and trace the use of the term "evil before the Lord" in the Book of Judges of Israel by determining what meaning is attached to it, both according to the studied book and in other textual sources of the Old Testament. In my opinion, the set goal is precisely formulated, and the separate stages of the research are presented as separate tasks. The tasks are multi-layered. The most important of them are: to present sufficient arguments for a date of composition of the Book of Judges and its connection with the hypothetical Deuteronomistic source, in which the early worship of Israel is subjected to a new interpretation; to trace how prophetic themes of idolatry may have influenced the use of the term "evil before the Lord."

To achieve the set goals, the following methods were used: historical-critical, exegetical analysis, criticism of sources and tradition, criticism of genres and forms.

In the first chapter *"Isagogical Notes to the Book of Judges of Israel"* theological problems in the interpretation of the Book of Judges related to the question of its authorship are presented. The genre and structure of the book are also examined, using Boyan Piperov's isagogical notes on the Book of Judges.

The second chapter is entitled *"Characteristics of the periods of 'evil before the Lord' in Judgement. 2 and Court. 3"*. In it, the doctoral student analyzes how the text sections in Judges ch. 2– 3 and summarizes that there is repetition of given expressions. This points to chronological and genre problems according to which later in the study the use of the term "evil before the Lord" is interpreted.

The third chapter of the dissertation presents analyzes of the materials about the time of the prophetess Deborah and the judge Gideon from Judges ch. 4–8 and the interpretation of the term "Evil before the Lord" in these passages.

*"The periods of 'evil before the Lord' in Judges ch.9 - ch. 10"* are discussed in the fourth chapter of the dissertation. The text in Judges ch. 9 occupies a central position in the composition of cycles of "evil before the Lord" in the Book of Judges. It presents connections with what was foretold earlier in Bethel (Judg. 2:3). And in chapter 10, the hardships and sufferings of the Israelites who were under the rule of the Philistines and Ammonites are discussed. It describes how God's anger was kindled against Israel because of their idolatry, and how they cried to the Lord for help after being troubled by their enemies. Also, there is another summoning of a judge to deliver them. The dissertation clearly emphasizes that the covenant renewal ritual scene in Judges ch. 10 is identical to other such genre forms whose dating is post-captive. Therefore, this finding can better argue the Deuteronomistic hypothesis for the compilation of the Book of Judges.

The fifth chapter of the dissertation is entitled *"The Book of Judges - Exegetical Problems"*. In it, the lecturer makes an exegetical comment on the texts in the Book of Judges dedicated to the high priest Phinehas. The theme of "evil before the Lord" in canonical, non-canonical literature and the Apocrypha is analyzed, as well as the conceptual frameworks that served to write post-exilic sources with the above-mentioned status.

In the first Excursus *"Evil before the Lord"* in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature, the lecturer gives examples with two sources from the apocalyptic texts of the Jews from the time of the Second Temple. These are the Book of Jubilees and the Damascus Document from the Qumran manuscripts of the Dead Sea region. In both texts examined, the terminology of the Deuteronomistic corpus is found, including the description "evil before the Lord." The idea that

Israel carries sinfulness from ancient times is expressed through the main theological concept in the Book of Judges of Israel, which deals with the hardships and trials in the lives of the Israelites after the conquest of Canaan.

In Excursion 2, entitled "*Committing 'Evil Before God' According to the Demonology of the Book of Zohar*", material from the Book of Zohar is analyzed in which the Israelites' propensity for idolatry is presented as a consequence of demonic abductions upon them. The universal guilt of the Chosen People is explained as being caused by the action of evil spirits. The dissertation emphasizes that in the Book of Judges no grounds for such a claim can be found.

The conclusion correctly summarizes the scientific conclusions made in the presentation.

Appendices at the end of the dissertation research are images related to idolatry and religious pluralism and related to the historical timeline in the Book of Judges. There are also two text appendices to them, entitled: Moses is punished like Israel in the Book of Judges. Comparison between Deut. 1 and Court. 2, as well as the Plot in Judges 17–18 as a Deuteronomistic source.

The publications are related to the topic of the dissertation and well illustrate its content. The submitted abstract meets the requirements.

In relation to the scientific publications submitted for participation in the procedure, I summarize the following:

- meet the minimum national requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the scientific field 2. Humanities and professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Holy Scripture of the Old Testament);
- there is no plagiarism that has been proven in accordance with the law.

### **3. Content analysis of the scientific and scientific-applied achievements of a doctoral student contained in the materials for participation in the procedure**

I agree with the contributions that PhD student asst. Zoran Kalev presents, namely:

First: the presented study is an attempt at a systematic analysis of the Book of Judges from the point of view of criticism of the sources, while at the same time the documentary theory of the emergence of the Pentateuch is affected. Emphasis is placed on the term "evil before the Lord" and it is developed as important for future understanding of the problems of textual criticism that arise in the study of the Pentateuch.

Second: the proposed work, with the materials from the Dead Sea manuscripts cited as examples, have not been included in a Bulgarian theological study of the Book of Judges. Such materials are the Apocrypha of Joshua, the Apocrypha of Josephus, the Words of Moses, and fragments of the Damascus Document.

### **4. Critical notes and recommendations**

The source from which they were taken is not reflected in the attachment to the images. It is good to indicate their source, i.e. correct citation increases the reliability of any scientific research.

My shared observations are in good faith and do not change my overall positive impression.

## **5. Personal impressions of the candidate**

I don't know Ace personally. Zoran Kalev, but only through the dissertation work and publications presented by him, and therefore I am only commenting on his research skills. To the already made assessment of the dissertation development, I also add good information and language culture.

## **6. Conclusion on the application**

After reading the materials, scientific work and publications presented in the procedure, as well as after analyzing their significance and applied scientific contributions, I declare that the scientific achievements meet the requirements of the ZRASRB doctoral student asst. **Zoran Tsvetkov Kalev** has in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the field of Old Testament theology and can independently conduct scientific research.

## **Conclusion**

The dissertation contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results that have their contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and due to the above, I confidently give my positive assessment for the submitted dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "*doctor*" to asst. **Zoran Tsvetkov Kalev** in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional direction 2.4. Religion and Theology (Holy Scripture of the Old Testament).

10.02.2025 r.

Prepared the opinion:

(Assoc. Prof. Galya Yordanova, PhD)