

than with the *RGNT* because of the larger size of this volume, which is about the same as a study Bible. At the same time, this issue would not at all give me pause from purchasing the work.

On the whole, this work fills an immense gap for those hoping to maintain and improve their Hebrew reading skills. With Hebrew vocabulary being so much more difficult than Greek, this volume is invaluable for the time it saves. I could not recommend it more highly.

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*Joseph Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of
Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37 – 50*

Lindsay Wilson

Paternoster Biblical Monographs

Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004, xvi + 339pp.,

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SUMMARY

This revised doctoral thesis addresses the question of the genre of the Joseph narrative. The Joseph story has been variously categorised, but with considerable debate on whether or not it is a wisdom text. Wilson argues persuasively that it includes ‘wisdom like elements’, but that a synchronic reading must also attend to its integration into the rest of Genesis where it develops the covenant themes from the Abraham story while also preparing for the events of Exodus. Joseph acts wisely, but this wisdom enables God’s purposes to be worked out.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese überarbeitete Dissertation widmet sich der Frage des Genres der Josephserzählung. Die Story über Joseph ist unterschiedlich kategorisiert worden, inklusive einer beachtlichen Debatte darüber, ob es sich um einen Weisheitstext handelt oder nicht. Wilson argumentiert überzeugend, dass die Story „weisheitsähnliche Elemente“ beinhaltet, dass sich eine synchrone Leseweise aber auch der Integration der Story in den Rest der Genesis widmen. In diesem Gesamtkontext entwickelt die Story die Bundesthemen der Story über Abraham weiter und sie bereitet gleichzeitig auf die Exodusereignisse vor. Joseph handelt weise, aber seine Weisheit macht es möglich, dass Gottes Absichten Gestalt gewinnen.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette monographie est la révision d’une thèse de doctorat sur le genre littéraire de l’histoire de Joseph. Ce récit a été rangé dans diverses catégories et la question de savoir si c’est un texte sapiential a été largement débattue. Wilson montre de manière convaincante qu’il inclut des éléments sapientiaux, mais qu’une lecture synchronique du texte doit prendre en compte la manière dont il s’intègre au reste du livre de la Genèse en prolongeant le thème de l’alliance qui domine le récit consacré à Abraham et en

préparant le récit de l’exode. Joseph agit avec sagesse, mais cela contribue à la réalisation des projets de Dieu.

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Originally prepared as a doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Melbourne, Wilson here tackles the question of the genre and purpose of the Joseph narrative (Genesis 37-50). Ever since von Rad argued that it was a wisdom text, the genre of the narrative has been vigorously debated, with a variety of criteria developed and rejected by scholars in seeking to assess this proposal. Wilson wades into this discussion, seeking to develop a model for understanding the finished text. He criticises previous research on wisdom in the Joseph narrative for failing to develop a proper method for identifying (or rejecting) wisdom in this narrative, though in fact the debates about how to identify wisdom go much wider than just this narrative. Rather than depending on particular terminology, social setting, form or content, Wilson argues for the presence of ‘wisdom like’ material which points to the role wisdom plays in the narrative. Although this is heuristically helpful, identifying these elements still seems a trifle impressionistic.

With his method established, Wilson then provides a close reading of the whole narrative, though because the wisdom like elements play a lesser role in chapters 46-50, this section is treated more briefly. Wilson focuses then on Genesis 37-45, analysing the way Joseph is presented, and in particular his characterisation. Against those who have suggested that Joseph is presented negatively, Wilson argues that the presentation of the dreams in chapter 37 and the encounters with his brothers leading to the point where he reveals himself offer a neutral interpretation of him because we are never given any indication of his motivation. This is not as convincing as the rest of his reading, principally because arguments from silence are difficult to substantiate. More impressively, he also shows how the Judah – Tamar narrative of Genesis 38 functions as a macrocosm of the whole of the Joseph narrative. Both the narrative as a whole and Genesis 38 in particular demonstrate the importance of acting wisely though the wisdom like elements do not have to include elements such as dream interpretation since Joseph does not employ wisdom techniques in their interpretation.

From the close reading, Wilson then explores the function of the wisdom like elements in view of the covenant context in which the narrative is now placed. Wilson is able to demonstrate that Joseph acts wisely but that through this God is actually achieving his own purposes. God’s kingly reign is thus demonstrated through the actions of the wise, so wisdom and covenant interact with one another. The Joseph narrative therefore demonstrates the value of acting wisely while also showing how God’s rule is worked out through those who do so. Covenant themes are evident throughout, but God’s sovereignty is not expressed apart from the faithfulness

and wisdom of God's people. This wisdom seeks to promote life and family because such wisdom is also consistent with God's covenant purposes.

The value of this study lies primarily in Wilson's synthesis of the wisdom and covenant themes, demonstrating that wisdom can function more closely with covenant in the theology of the Old Testament than is often thought. These conclusions could be applied more widely than the Joseph Narrative alone, and we can look forward to further contributions from Wilson in this area.

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*God, Pharaoh and Moses: Explaining the Lord's
Actions in the Exodus Plagues Narrative*

William A. Ford

Paternoster Biblical Monographs

Milton Keynes / Waynesboro: Paternoster, 2006, xix
+ 248 pp., £19.99 / \$36.99, pb; ISBN 978-1-94227-
420-0

SUMMARY

Ford helpfully examines the theological problem posed by the plagues narrative. In short, why does Yahweh not immediately release Israel? He argues from a canonical perspective that attention to who says what and to who means that Exodus 9:13-19 and 10:1-2 can be taken together to suggest that Yahweh is responsive to the differing needs of Pharaoh and Israel to know God. This is then refined through a reading of the story of the Ark in 1 Samuel 4-7. The approach adopted offers a helpful model for reading other potentially 'problematic' texts.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Ford untersucht auf hilfreiche Weise das theologische Problem, das die Erzählungen über die Plagen aufwerfen. Kurz: Warum befreit Gott Israel nicht sofort? Er argumentiert aus einer kanonischen Perspektive heraus, dass Aufmerksamkeit darauf, wer was sagt, und Aufmerksamkeit darauf, das Exodus 9,13-19 und 10,1-2 als zusammengehörig verstanden werden können, nahe legt, dass Jahwe auf die unterschiedlichen Bedürfnisse des Pharaos und Israels reagiert, Gott zu kennen. Dieser Ansatz wird dann durch eine Untersuchung der Geschichte von der Bundeslade in 1. Samuel 4-7 verfeinert. Der in dem Buch übernommene Ansatz bietet ein hilfreiches Modell auch für andere potentiell „problematische“ Texte an.

RÉSUMÉ

Ford se penche sur le problème théologique posé par le récit des plaies infligées à l'Égypte. Pourquoi Yahvé ne délivre-t-il pas immédiatement Israël ? Adoptant une approche canonique, et considérant qui dit quoi et à qui, il s'efforce de montrer que les récits d'Exode 9.13-19 et 10.1-2 forment un ensemble indiquant que Yahvé vise à se faire

connaître au pharaon et à Israël selon les besoins différents de chacun. Ceci est complété par une lecture de l'histoire de l'arche de l'alliance en 1 Samuel 4-7. L'approche constitue un modèle utile pour la lecture d'autres textes potentiellement problématiques.

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Although many readers happily follow the account of the plagues in Exodus, others are struck by an important theological problem. Given that God clearly has the power to remove Israel from Egypt, why does he do so in the way that he does? In particular, why is there the pattern of hardening Pharaoh's heart and why does it take so many plagues before Israel is led out? Beyond this lies the additional question of exactly what Moses is instructed to ask. Is the 'three days' simply a ploy that is ultimately shown to be untrue? In this lightly revised PhD thesis from Durham (completed under Walter Moberly), Ford addresses these questions and in the process demonstrates the theological potential of a literary reading of the text.

Given the book's origins, it is no surprise that Ford first surveys existing approaches to these problems, finding them deficient in that they tend to privilege some texts over others or fail to attend to the narrative as we now have it. Hence, Ford offers a literary reading of the canonical text which pays particular attention to the development of the narrative and the specific question of who says what and to who. From this, he identifies 9:13-19 and 10:1-2 as crucial texts for consideration since both make some claim as to why the plagues narrative takes the form it does.

The heart of the book then lies in a close reading of these two passages, though especially in the case of 10:1-2 this is done in dialogue with the rest of the plagues narrative. Where 9:13-19 emphasises the need for Pharaoh to know who Yahweh is, 10:1-2 makes the same point for Israel. Where some have seen these as contradictory, Ford argues that these statements reveal that Yahweh is has multiple purposes where he responds differently to different needs. This then enables him to read the plagues narrative as a whole, noting the use of ambiguity in the matter of what it means for Israel to go, an ambiguity that is gradually unravelled as the plagues narrative proceeds. From this emerges a picture of God as one who is responsive to different situations, and who has multiple purposes through them.

Since Ford also aims to model a more widely applicable approach to 'problematic' texts which neither rejects nor naively accepts them, he then offers a reading of the story of the Ark in 1 Samuel 4-7. This text is chosen not so much for its own problems but because of the way it consciously reflects on the plagues narrative. Although the reading of these chapters offered here works well enough on its own, it did not seem as well integrated into the overall project as it might. On the one hand, Ford wants to explore it to examine its own use of the