

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

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+ 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

plagues narrative, and on the other to use it as a further example of a problematic text. Yet these two goals do not really mesh because it means that an intertext effectively controls the problems of this text rather than allowing the literary method employed elsewhere to address its own theological problems. Resolution of this dichotomy would have allowed this chapter to work better within the overall argument, though the potential of Ford's approach is still evident. In all, this is a solid contribution that effectively demonstrates the importance of the combination of theological awareness and literary sensitivity.

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Deuteronomistic Theology and the Significance of Torah

Peter T. Vogt

Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006, xi + 242 pp.,
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SUMMARY

Vogt challenges the dominant interpretations of centralisation in Deuteronomy, arguing that although it has a radical programme, it is neither demythologising nor secularising. Rather, it is a radical case for making Torah central to Israel's life. Vogt offers a fair critique of alternative interpretations and makes a good case for his own by his careful reading of the text. This is a stimulating reading of Deuteronomy which is worthy of serious consideration by future interpreters of the book.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Vogt fordert die herrschenden Interpretationen über die Zentralisierung im Deuteronomium heraus und argumentiert, dass das Buch zwar ein radikales Programm enthält, aber weder demythologisierend noch säkularisierend ist. Deuteronomium liefert vielmehr eine radikale Argumentation für das Anliegen, die Torah zum zentralen Element des Lebens Israels zu machen. Vogt bietet eine faire Kritik an den alternativen Interpretationen und liefert durch eine sorgfältige Behandlung des Textes gute Argumente für seinen eigenen Ansatz. Dies ist eine stimulierende Lese-weise des Deuteronomiums, die es wert ist, von zukünftigen Auslegern des Buches ernsthaft in Betracht gezogen zu werden.

RÉSUMÉ

Vogt remet en cause les interprétations dominantes du thème de la centralisation dans le Deutéronome et soutient que, bien que ce livre propose un programme radical, il ne s'agit ni de démythologisation ni de sécularisation. C'est plutôt un plaidoyer pour donner à la Torah la place centrale dans la vie d'Israël. Vogt fait une critique pertinente des autres interprétations du livre et défend la sienne sur la base d'une étude soignée du texte. Son travail est stimulant

et mérite d'être pris en considération dans l'interprétation du Deutéronome.

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It is surprisingly easy for certain interpretations to become entrenched in biblical scholarship so that alternative approaches might not be recognised. An example of this might be the interpretation of the theme of centralisation in Deuteronomy which has often been interpreted as a radical attempt at creating a social structure centred on the sanctuary. In this revision of a doctoral thesis completed under Gordon McConville at Gloucester, Vogt places this interpretation under the microscope to argue that centralisation in Deuteronomy is about sacrifice and not social structure. Associated with the dominant approach to centralisation, many interpreters have seen Deuteronomy as both secularising and demythologising earlier texts dealing with worship. Although these latter issues do not depend upon the dominant interpretation of centralisation, they are closely bound up with it, which is why Vogt treats them together.

Demonstrating the book's origin as a doctoral thesis, Vogt begins by providing an overview of his methodology before taking the interpretation of Deuteronomy 16:18 – 18:22 as a case study in which to explore the way different scholars have interpreted the motif of centralisation and their relationship to the central ideology of the text. Vogt is able to show that there is considerable diversity in the interpretation of the text, even though all agree that centralisation is important, and that this pattern can be traced back through a century of Deuteronomy scholarship. This diversity does not stop the themes of secularisation and demythologisation from being important, though again there is diversity. It is this diversity in interpretation rather than fresh data that impacts the text that justifies this fresh reading of the text.

Following this, successive chapters are devoted to Deuteronomy 1:9-18, 4:1 – 6:9, 12 and 16:18 – 18:22 to explore the issue of centralisation and its relationship to secularisation and demythologisation. Vogt is aware that he has not covered all the possible texts on his themes and so presents these as a set of sample readings which demonstrate the possibility of his alternative. That alternative is still radical, but rather than demythologising or secularising earlier texts, Vogt argues that Deuteronomy seeks to put *Torah* at the centre of the community's life. Thus, the social structures of 1:9-18 and 16:18-22 are concerned with elevating *Torah*, so that *Torah* is effectively what replaces Moses. This is why *Torah* needs to be passed on. Vogt also argues that Deuteronomy 12 does not require a social centralisation but only a centralisation of sacrifice, though he is open to the possibility that there might be more than one shrine, the key issue being that worship happens only at the place that Yahweh chooses.

Overall, Vogt's reading is persuasive, though some