

B.M. LEVINSON, *A More Perfect Torah. At the Intersection of Philology and Hermeneutics in Deuteronomy and the Temple Scroll* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2013).

Inaugurating the new Eisenbrauns series "Critical Studies in the Hebrew Bible", Levinson's "A More Perfect Torah" brings together two studies that investigate the relation-

ship between composition history of the biblical text and its reception history at Qumran and in rabbinic literature.

Part I “Revelation Regained: The Hermeneutics of ׀ and ׀K in the Temple Scroll” (pp. 1-43) contains a lightly revised and updated article that was co-written with Molly M. Zahn and first published in 2002. The study, which is innovative in terms of content and methodology, examines the frequent (10 times) replacement of conditional ׀ with ׀K in the Temple Scroll and argues that a new conceptual model is necessary to explain the phenomenon accurately. Levinson/Zahn first turn to the use of conditional ׀ in Second Temple literature and show, that by late Second Temple times, ׀K had become the standard conditional (p. 10). This fact makes the Temple Scroll’s retention of the conditional ׀ “just as anomalous as its replacement by ׀K. From the perspective of Qumran Hebrew, the Temple Scroll should not have retained ׀ at all. From the perspective of its biblical *Vorlagen* and other rewritten Scripture texts like 4QRP, it should have retained every ׀. It is the simultaneous departure from both norms, virtually unique to the Temple Scroll, that requires explanation” (p. 13). Levinson/Zahn contend that the author/redactor of the Temple Scroll intended to present “a more perfect Torah – one more worthy of God” in order to supersede the Pentateuch (p. 15). This hermeneutical project permeates the text in their view even to the level of the choice of conditionals.

In order to make sense of the outdated conditional ׀, which the author/redactor obviously used to give the text the patina of “Scripture”, he devised a consistent system governing the use or nonuse of ׀. Levinson/Zahn have determined that there is a definite correlation between the choice of conditional and the manuscript’s formal system of spacing. In the Temple Scroll, all appearances of conditional ׀ that occur in the middle of a line are preceded by a larger-than-normal interval. When conditional ׀ appears at the beginning of a line, most often the previous line ends with an interval. In three exceptional cases, the previous line runs to the left margin. In effect, conditional ׀ was restricted to a specific function in the Temple Scroll: It marked the beginning of a new unit of law (p. 18). These observations make it possible to determine when a biblical source text formulated in ׀ might be substituted by ׀K. Levinson/Zahn specify two triggers. The first one is the desire for redactional smoothing: Six of the ten replacements occur where the author/redactor of the Temple Scroll has set source material that contains protases beginning with ׀ directly following a section of text that contains protases beginning with ׀K. Following the literary model of the first set of laws, the author/redactor changed ׀ in the following section to ׀K (pp. 19-21). The second trigger reflects the author/redactor’s recognition that the legal corpora of the Pentateuch are inconsistent in their use of conditional ׀ and his desire to maintain the consistency of his own system: The casuistic laws of the Covenant Code employ a distinctive system for distinguishing between main clause (consistently marked by conditional ׀) and subconditionals (marked by ׀K), whereas Deuteronomy significantly modified this older system (׀ was given an additional function: It could mark a subordinate clause if a new law begins with an apodictic general rule, p. 26). There are four places where the author/redactor incorporated one of Deuteronomy’s new legal units into the scroll. In these cases (Firstlings, Tithes, Witness Law, Vows), Deuteronomy’s innovative use of ׀ to mark a subcondition or continuation conflicted with the author/redactor’s use of conditional ׀ only to mark a new law unit. In each case the author/redactor leveled the “anomalous” ׀ to ׀K.

In two instances, the protasis is introduced by the pleonasm ׀K ׀ (11QT 53:11; 58:10). Levinson/Zahn take this double conditional to test their proposed model in which an ostensibly syntactical issue is best explained in terms of an engagement with the biblical text. In the first case (׀K ׀ in the law of vows, 11QT 53:9-54:7) the pleonasm resulted

from the interference between the author/redactor's source text (Deut 23:22) and the long series of subconditionals beginning with  $\text{אם}$  that he anticipated would follow. In the midst of a multilayered transition the author/redactor deployed both conditionals at the point of overlap (p. 38). In the second case ( $\text{אם יכ}$  in the law of the king, 11QT 57-59), conflicting literary precedents gave rise to the pleonasm (2 Kgs 3:26 and 2 Sam 10:11=1 Chr 19:12).

In their study, Levinson/Zahn aptly demonstrate the value of bringing together linguistics and hermeneutics. In this respect the study remains important even if scholars did not agree with the theses, that the author/redactor of the Temple Scroll wanted to replace the Pentateuch (but only to supplement it, thus e.g. H. Najman, JSJSupp 77, 2004, pp. 52-53 and L. T. Schiffman, CBET 67, 2012, p. 178).

Part 2 is entitled "Reception History as a Window into Composition History: Deuteronomy's Law of Vows." Levinson, who is the sole author here, builds on observations made in part 1 concerning the use of the conditionals in the law of vows. The methodological emphasis in this study, however, rests on the connection of historical-critical and the history of interpretation approaches. Levinson expounds that the passage Deut 23:22-24 contains previously unrecognized difficulties in sequence and syntax: Deut 23:23 not only interrupts the logical connection of the content of vv. 22 and 24 (pp. 47-50). But the verse also creates a sequence of conditionals not attested elsewhere in Deuteronomy's legal corpus (the law in v. 22 begins with  $\text{כי}$  followed by protasis-marking  $\text{וכי}$  in v. 23, thus creating a sequence of  $\text{כי} + \text{וכי}$ ). Furthermore, in no other sequence of two laws does the second law negate both the protasis and the apodosis of the preceding law, representing its *complete antithesis* (v. 22.24: if you make a vow ..., v. 23: but if you refrain from vowing ..., pp. 65-74).

Turning to the history of interpretation Levinson shows how readers have attempted to work around or smooth over the difficulties in Deuteronomy's law of vows. I can only point to some important examples: The author/redactor of the Temple Scroll leveled according to his own syntactical rules (as demonstrated in part 1)  $\text{כי}$  in v. 23 to  $\text{אם}$  and posited the law, in effect, as a subcondition. Then he proceeded to effectively sharpen v. 23 into an independent admonition against making any vow at all (p. 51). Qoheleth reordered the law's sequence in 5:3-4, so that the Deuteronomic encouragement to refrain from vowing (v. 23) no longer disrupts the continuity between the two verses concerned with fulfilling vows once they are made (vv. 22 and 24). Instead, the admonition to abstain from vowing concludes the unit, thus receiving the emphasis. The restoration of the more logical order of the content of Deuteronomy's law of vows suggests that Qoheleth read the law as a disordered text (p. 61). The debate in Sifre Deuteronomy, pisqa 265, provides further evidence that Jewish communities in antiquity found it difficult to read Deuteronomy's law of vows, let alone as an intelligible statement of what one should or should not do: R. Meir reads Deut 23:23 as an independent admonition, silencing 23:22 altogether (p. 63). In contrast to this, R. Judah posits v. 23 as a subcondition and asserts the primacy of Deut 23:22. According to Levinson, one might go so far as to suggest that, at the level of exegesis, R. Judah attempts text-critical surgery on the law of vows, removing the problematic interpolation in order to read the law coherently (p. 64).

All those attempts are in Levinson's view indicative of v. 23's being an interpolation. The reception of Deuteronomy's law in Num 30:3 indicates that Deuteronomy did not yet contain the disruptive verse 23 (pp. 76-77). This not only strengthens the case for an interpolation but dates it to sometime between 450 B.C.E., which is the likely date proposed for this redactional layer in Numbers, and 300 B.C.E. (since v. 23 is presupposed by the Septuagint translator and Qoheleth). The history of interpretation thus offers a window into the composition history of Deuteronomy's law of vows.

In an "Afterword" (pp. 81-93), Levinson reviews the *Habilitation* thesis of S. Paganini about the Temple Scroll (BZAR 11, 2009), since it broaches the issues of the Temple Scroll's reworking of biblical law and the reception of Deuteronomy's law of vows in the Temple Scroll. Levinson challenges the thesis especially in two central points. First, Paganini notes that the plural addressee of MT Deut 13:1a appears in the Temple Scroll in the 2nd-person singular, and contends this to be an ideological change. Paganini maintains that the Temple Scroll author/redactor has intentionally shifted the addressee of the text from the nation (in the plural) to Moses (in the singular). God, as speaker of the text, here allegedly chastises Moses for his tendentious transformation of the Covenant Code in the book of Deuteronomy and seeks to undercut his authority. Levinson rightly emphasises that this claim goes beyond the evidence, because the same leveling to a consistent singular in the verse can be recognized in other textual witnesses as well (where Moses still remains the speaker). Based on the evidence of the versions, which Paganini did not take sufficiently into account, there is little reason to believe that the reading marks an intentional ideological transformation designed to demote the status of Moses (pp. 89-90). Second, Paganini insists that the Temple Scroll author/redactor treated Deuteronomy differently from other legal material in the Pentateuch, seeking to undermine the authority of Deuteronomy and of Moses as speaker. However, the Temple Scroll author/redactor seeks to improve the editing not only of Deuteronomy. Levinson points to the treatment of the law of vows that offers a good example: The Temple Scroll author/redactor is not simply responding to Deuteronomy in isolation from the rest of the Pentateuch, but to the redacted nature of the Pentateuch itself. The same issue applies with regard to the matter of the voicing of the Torah. The Temple Scroll author/redactor does not target Deuteronomy alone in rejecting Mosaic mediation, as Paganini implies. The Temple Scroll author/redactor systematically rewrites the vows material from Numbers 30, just as he did for his Deuteronomic sources, to give it a direct divine voicing (pp. 90-91).

Within biblical studies, where there are so many competing models for understanding the formation of the Pentateuch, the Temple Scroll would seem to offer valuable empirical evidence, not only for the way that scribes worked with texts in antiquity, but also for the hermeneutical issues they confronted in seeking to integrate originally inconsistent sources into a unified document. The categories of "Scripture" and "Rewritten Scripture" are, according to one conclusion of Levinson's insightful study, not so far apart as is often assumed. The fields of "Bible" and "Second Temple/Dead Sea Scrolls" should ideally be more closely integrated than they are today (p. 92). With this, I believe, one can only agree.

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