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Rofé, Alexander

Deuteronomy: Issues and Interpretation

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This important volume of essays provides easy access to the important contributions of Professor Rofé to the study of the book of Deuteronomy. The originality of his approach lies in a very compelling combination of modern biblical criticism and traditional Jewish interpretation (see, e.g., his statement on 149). The volume consists of fifteen essays that were published between 1972 and 2000. The first essay, an article on Deuteronomy for an encyclopedia (1–13) offers a good introduction to the book as well as to Rofé’s theories about its formation. Rofé argues that Deuteronomy was not written until the time of its “discovery,” under Josiah or shortly before. The first edition of Deuteronomy under Josiah is labeled D₁ and must be distinguished from the expanded book D₂. According to Rofé, this expansion took place very quickly and still under Josiah’s reign. D₂ added in Deut 11:31–12:7, a new interpretation of the original centralization law in 12:8–12 (for more details, see in the same volume the essay from 1972 on “The Strata of the Law about the Centralization of Worship in Deuteronomy and the History of the Deuteronomistic Movement” [97–101]). He also reworked the laws on homicide, war, and family and sex (see, on these, “The Laws of Warfare in the Book of Deuteronomy” [1985; 149–67]; “Family and Sex Laws in Deuteronomy and the Book of Covenant” [1987; 169–92]). Rofé also admits pre-Deuteronomistic material as well as a later priestly

redaction (D_p), as is shown in his essay on “The Organization of the Judiciary in Deuteronomy” (2001; the Hebrew text was published in 1975–76 [103–19]). After the introductory essay, one may pursue the review of Moshe Weinfeld’s *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (1974; 221–30), where Rofé insists on the necessity of diachronic distinction. The article about “Methodological Aspects of the Study of Biblical Law” (1986; 205–19), also contains a helpful presentation of Rofé’s methods in analyzing the legal texts of Deuteronomy.

In addition to the essays already mentioned, several other articles in the volume contain important contributions to the Deuteronomistic code in particular. In “The Arrangement of the Laws in Deuteronomy” (1998; 55–77), Rofé argues that this arrangement is due in most cases to the technique of association (similar opening, repetition of words or phrases, paronomasia, thematic association), which should be considered as the accepted scribal practice in antiquity. In “The History of the Cities of Refuge in Biblical Law” (1986; 121–47), Rofé considers Deut 19:1–7 to be the oldest legislation on this matter, stemming from the end of the Judean monarchy. Numbers 35 (“P”) and Josh 20 (“post-P”) presuppose the context of the Persian period. “The Tenth Commandment in the Light of Four Deuteronomistic Laws” (1990; 79–101) makes a case that four laws in the Deuteronomistic code offer an interpretation for the commandment “you shall not covet” (Deut 5:18): 19:14; 23:25; 23:26; 24:10–11. These four laws come from a common source; an author who was influenced by wisdom literature composed them.

Three essays are related to text-critical questions: “Deuteronomy 5.28–6.1. Composition and Text in the Light of Deuteronomistic Style and Three *Tefillin* from Qumran (4Q 128, 129, 137)” (1985; 25–46). These *Tefillin* attest, according to Rofé, a shorter text than MT that did not contain Deut 5:29–30. “Qumranic Paraphrases, the Greek Deuteronomy and the Late History of the Biblical נ”ש” (1988; 37–46) deals with four cases where LXX is supported against MT by Qumranic nonbiblical texts: Deut 19:18; 19:14; 29:18–19; 17:14–20. The last case suggests that LXX had a Hebrew *Vorlage* in which the king had become a “prince.” Rofé advocates the idea of a נ”ש”-recension in some Hebrew manuscripts of the Torah. In “The End of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32.43)” (2000; 47–54) Rofé offers the following reconstruction of the original Hebrew text based on the LXX: “Rejoice heavenly beings with Him and let the divine ones exult, for He will avenge the blood of His servants and He will cleanse the land of His people.” Two essays, finally, deal with the theology of Deuteronomy: “The Monotheistic Argumentation in Deuteronomy 4.32–40: Contents, Composition and Text” (1985; 15–24); and “The Covenant in the Land of Moab. Deuteronomy 28.69–30.20. Historico-Literary, Comparative and Form Critical Considerations” (1985; 193–203). In both essays Rofé insists on the fact that election (and not covenant) is the central theological topic of

Deuteronomy, especially in texts that were composed during the Babylonian exile or the Persian period.

The volume contains the following indexes: subjects, authors, and biblical, ancient Near Eastern, Greek, and rabbinic texts.

All the articles collected here are of much interest, and even if one will not agree with all of Rofé's conclusions, every scholar or student interested in Deuteronomy should have read them.