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**Levin, Christoph**

***Fortschreibungen: Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament***

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Thomas Römer  
University of Lausanne  
Lausanne, Switzerland CH-1004

This volume contains twenty-one essays by Christoph Levin, Professor of Old Testament at Munich. Twenty of them are in German, and one in English; all but two articles have already appeared between 1981 and 2001. The title of the volume itself already gives a clue as to Levin's methodological options. He heavily relies on the German *Literarkritik* and considers almost every repetition or difficulty in the text as an indication of redactional intervention. In most cases, according to Levin, the numerous additions to a text should not be explained by postulating comprehensive redactional layers but rather with the idea of a *Fortschreibung*, a sort of a continuous process of supplementation of the text, somewhat comparable to the notion of a "rolling corpus" proposed by W. McKane in his commentary on Jeremiah (ICC, 1986), where the text itself continuously generates additions and reinterpretations. In almost every essay the reader is confronted with the reconstruction of a very short *Urtext*, which was gradually supplemented by additions from uncountable hands.

The volume opens with a theological essay about justification in the Old Testament (1999), in which Levin underlines the fact that many texts of the Hebrew Bible strive to elaborate an adequate interpretation of the notion of divine justice. The ensuing essays are presented according to the order of the books in the Hebrew Bible. In an essay from 1994 Levin returns to the old idea that Gen 1:1–2:4 is not a literary unit and tries to

reconstruct an earlier source used by P. According to his reconstruction (see 24–26), this source mentioned neither the division into seven days nor the human task as “God’s image” nor the motif of God’s Shabbat. All these themes were added by P, or even later by a redactor who insisted on the preeminence of God’s word. The article on “justice of God in the book of Genesis” (2001) analyzes texts such as Gen 6ff.; Gen 18:22ff.; 20 and the Joseph story. Levin seeks to argue that the passages reflecting on the problem of divine justice are much later than the combination of J and P (he refers to these texts as *nachendrekationnel* [47]; this astonishing expression means that he considers them to be still later than the final redaction of the Pentateuch).

In an analysis of Gen 34 (first published in 2000) Levin reconstructs a primitive version of Dinah’s story in 34:1, 2\*, 3\*, 4, 8\*, 14\*, 15\*, 19\* (50), which would have centered on the practice of circumcision. The absence in this narrative of any kind of plot or intrigue renders this reconstruction somewhat difficult to accept. Levin distinguishes at least five other redactional levels in Gen 34, which transformed the story in several ways; some additions were intended to harmonize Gen 34 with the Deuteronomistic ideology; other redactors were apparently hostile to this development.

An important essay from 1985 deals with the Decalogue and the Sinai narrative. Levin argues that Exod 20 conserves an older form of the Decalogue (he also reconstructs, of course, an *Urdekalog* in 20:2–3, 5a, 13–17a). The Decalogue was inserted after the itinerary in Exod 19:2\*, 3a; 20:1. This insertion later generated the elaboration of a divine revelation on Mount Sinai, which was constituted by a “Geröll verschiedener Zusätze” (75). Consequently, there was no Sinai pericope before the Decalogue, which originated in the context of the Exodus story.

The next essay (published in 1996) deals with the relationship between the books of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. Here Levin picks up his theory about the origins of Old Testament covenant theology developed in his 1985 book (*Die Verheissung des neuen Bundes in ihrem theologieggeschichtlichen Zusammenhang ausgelegt*). According to Levin, there was no covenant theology before the exile, and the origins of this theology originally lay in Jer 7:22–23. Many readers will be surprised, to say the least, that Levin does not discuss the issue of Neo-Assyrian vassal treaties in this context. The question about the relationship between the book

Deuteronomy and the Yahwist (2000) summarizes ideas put forward in his 1993 book about J. Here Levin agrees with Van Seters and others in arguing that the Yahwist is later than the original book of Deuteronomy. The law about the altar in Exod 20:24–26 should be understood as polemic against the Deuteronomistic law of centralization and would already reflect the postexilic Diaspora situation.

The following three essays deal with the problem of reconstructing early, premonarchical Israel. No one will be astonished to learn that Levin systematically concludes in favor of the postexilic dating of the texts and institutions that he analyzes. The system of the twelve tribes (1992) is a literary fiction from the end of the Persian period, which may be explained by the importance of genealogies, as reflected in the first nine chapters of Chronicles. Judges 5, the Song of Deborah (an essay written in 2001, published here for the first time) is not the oldest text of the Hebrew Bible, as it was traditionally held. In its original form, it is already a post-Deuteronomistic addition to the story of Judg 4. Levin summarizes his view about the premonarchical Israel in an essay published in 2000. He insists on the fact that the biblical presentation of Israel's origins should be considered as theology and not as historical facts. The texts reflect the situation of postexilic Judah; they have little to do with the *hapiru* of the end of Bronze Age or the beginning of the Iron Age.

An essay on the Elijah stories (1992) leads to the distinction of two main redactional layers: one presents Elijah as "man of God"; the other is interested in the accomplishment of Yhwh's word. The story of the reparation of the temple of Jerusalem under Joash (2 Kgs 12; essay published in 1990) underwent in the fourth century B.C.E. a priestly redaction in 3b, 5–17\*, which was itself later completed by other additions (175). The original story in 2 Kgs 12:5\*, 6, 10\*, 11–16 already depends on the story about Josiah's restoration of the temple in 2 Kgs 22:3, 7–9. This latter one does not belong to DtrH but should be considered a postexilic insertion. The question of the original story about King Josiah is taken up in the following essay (published in 1984), where Levin argues that DtrH contained only 2 Kgs 22:1–2; 23:8a, 25a\*, 28–30. If one reads that "story" one may find that it contains almost nothing substantial. Why attribute such a fragment to DtrH? There is no theological interpretation of Israel's history and no explanation as to why Josiah was such an important king. The fact that Levin calls 2 Kgs 22–23 a "Cloaca maxima" (203) is for the reviewer difficult to understand, since the analyses of Hoffmann, Françoise Smyth, and many others have evidenced the compositional techniques and the elaborate message of these key chapters of the book of Kings.

The following three essays deal with the book of Jeremiah. In an article from 1981 Levin advances convincing arguments for the case that the few dates in Jeremiah that relate the beginnings of the prophetic ministry with the reign of Josiah are later interpolations, which build a forty-year time span with Jeremiah's prediction to the Babylonian exiles (see Jer 1:2; 3:6; 25:3; 36:2). In a nonpublished work from his student time (1974), Levin analyzes the issue of child sacrifices in the book of Jeremiah. The only reliable information may be found in Jer 7:31, but even here one may doubt that it has a historical background. The reviewer still wonders why postexilic redactors would have invented the idea of human sacrifices if the latter never existed during the monarchy. The story about

the Rechabites in Jer 35 (1994) was originally limited to verses 1\*, 2\*, 5 (the prophet asks the Rechabites to drink wine). All the rest stems from numerous additions, which projected a “nomadic ideal” on the Rechabites, the origin of whom remains then rather obscure for the historian.

In an 1995 essay Levin analyzes Amos 7:10–17, which should be understood in his view as a midrash based on 1 Kgs 13. This implies that the Jeroboam mentioned in Amos 7 is not Jeroboam II but Jeroboam I. The chronological information in Amos 1:1 was added still later than Am 7:10ff. and stems from a redactor who tried to correct the misunderstanding of the author of 7:10–17. According to an article from 1997, the different texts in Amos dealing with the poor should be understood not in the context of the eighth century B.C.E. but as a protoapocalyptic insertion linked with a theological emphasis on the “poor.”

An essay from 1993 argues that the edition of numerous psalms was the work of a group apparently related to the *anawim* and which, in the Hellenistic period, considered itself as the “righteous” or the “pious.” Psalm 136 was conceived as a conclusion for the whole Psalter, since it was written together with Ps 118:1–4 as one psalm. This psalm was cut into two pieces in order to insert new material. This means that the popular idea according to which Ps 119 was intended as a conclusion should be given up. The last essay on the poor in the Old Testament (2001, in English) returns to the question of the *anawim*, whose origin should be found in the economic modernization in Persian and Hellenistic times. “The poor, who interpreted their fate as the fruit of obedience to the Torah, expected Yahweh to bring about the reversal of that fate, either through the intervention of the Last Judgment or the coming of the Messiah” (338).

The volume concludes with indications about the original publications of the collected essays as well as with the usual indexes (Hebrew words, themes, authors, biblical texts). The confidence that Levin places in the *Literarkritik* is sometimes intriguing. Nevertheless, he quite often brings forth interesting ideas that deserve examination and discussion, even in the English-speaking exegetical world.