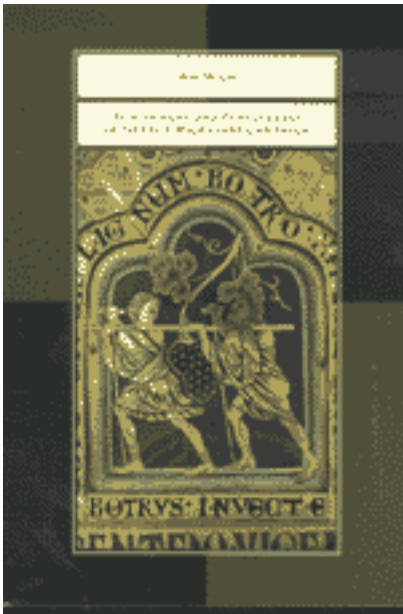


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**Lee, Won W.**

***Punishment and Forgiveness in Israel's Migratory Campaign***

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Although never explicitly noted, this book is a revision of Lee's 1998 dissertation under Rolf Knierim at Claremont Graduate University, entitled "Punishment and Forgiveness in Israel's Migratory Campaign: The Macrostructure of Numbers 10:11–36:13." It is the kind of dissertation that makes a splendid book, with its sustained argumentation, focus on interpretation of a large portion of text in the biblical corpus, and limited (but careful) review of past scholarship.

Citing the majority opinion that Num 1:1–10:10 is a distinct and coherent unit, the goal of Lee's analysis is to provide a structural analysis of the latter part of the book: Num 10:11–36:13. Although sensitive to the vast body of literature (especially commentaries) on the book of Numbers, Lee focuses his literature review on the earlier works of Gray, Noth, Budd, Olson, Milgrom, and Ashley, six key figures in the recent history of the interpretation of the book of Numbers. Lee focuses on their analysis and conclusions on the unifying concept and overall structure of 10:11–36:13. For each of these issues (concept, structure) Lee identifies two basic streams of scholarship.

For the unifying concept of this section of Numbers he identifies one stream that denies any significant unifying concept (Gray, Noth) and a second that finds a well-ordered and

coherent concept, whether that is God's enduring commitment to the Israelites despite setbacks (Budd), the transition from one generation to the next (Olson, Milgrom), or movement from orientation to disorientation to new orientation (Ashley). He notes an important contrast in starting points between these two streams: Gray and Noth start their analyses with past scholarship on the Pentateuch as a whole, while Budd, Olson, Milgrom, and Ashley begin their analyses with Numbers itself.

For the overall structure Lee notes the lack of agreement between the six scholars either on the macro- or microstructure of Num 10:11–36:13. However, again two basic streams can be discerned: those who choose geographical and/or chronological signals as key to the structure (Gray, Budd) and those who choose thematic criteria, whether that be Noth's combination of the traditions of Sinai revelation-guidance in the wilderness-preparation/beginning of conquest, Olson's focus on the death of the old and birth of the new, Milgrom's mix of Noth and Olson, or Ashley's focus on obedience from orientation through disorientation to new orientation.

Although affirming many aspects of this earlier scholarship, Lee is dissatisfied with their analysis and conclusions and attributes this to methodological deficiencies, especially the error of "surface reading" rather than "close reading" of the text, as well as a lack of attention to compelling literary evidence. As he writes: these scholars' structures portray their tendency to start with the assumption of a certain kind of thematic reality that in turn determines the literary analysis of the text and, as a result, to impose their themes on the text without considering the generic and functional individuality of each component unit within a whole." This prompts him to propose "a systematic discussion of the structure of Numbers 10:11–36:13, which accounts for the generative inexplicit conceptualities underneath the text" (46).

Lee's goal, then, is "to reconstruct the conceptual system of Numbers 10:11–36:13 at its highest level, that is, the macrostructure of the text," a conceptual system provided by the text itself, which is "located underneath its surface" (infratextual; 47). The way to access this infratextual dimension, according to Lee, is through "conceptual analysis," a methodology that he draws largely from Rolf Knierim. This approach focuses on information gained from both the surface as well as the subsurface level of the text in order to reconstruct the infratextual dimension.

Lee sees in recent form-critical reflection the impulse to bring together diachronic and synchronic approaches to the Old Testament, so that they should be viewed no longer as dichotomous but rather as complementary. Such complementarity is demonstrated in recent work (not surprisingly) by Sweeney and Knierim that gives priority to the final form of the text and sees the value of structural analysis to access the "underlying

matrices” generated by the human mind, rather than by sociolinguistic settings. Knierim, in particular, contends that the infratextual concepts in a text are more influential on the structure of a text than the typical aspects of its form. Thus, texts are “conceptualized linguistic-semantic” entities (54) with both explicit statements and implicit concepts.

Following his Doktorvater’s refining of traditional form criticism, Lee says that conceptual analysis is “interested in explaining a text, specifically as a conceptualized phenomenon” (55). This necessitates attention to the connotative surface level of the text (verbal, syntactic, semantic) through analysis of the text’s grammar, syntax, stylistic and rhetorical features, genre elements, and themes. But it also means attention to texts as conceptual entities with assumptions, presuppositions, or concepts operative in their thought system through suprasyntagmatic factors. Such a system is specific to an individual text and “located foundationally underneath the surface expression of the text” (56). Thus conceptual analysis means accessing both explicit statements and implicit presuppositions of a text and then investigating the relationship between the two. Priority is given to the presuppositions, for the linguistic and literary features of the text are in service of the composition and structure of the text.

The bulk of this book is consumed by a deep and careful conceptual analysis of the various pericopae within Num 10:11–36:13, so we can accomplish nothing more than showcase a limited portion of Lee’s work in this review. There is no better place for this than his work on Num 10:11–12, a section so essential to his conclusions on the structure and meaning of 10:11–36:13.

First Lee identifies two key surface indicators within 10:11–12 that highlight its rhetorical role in the macrostructure of the book of Numbers as a whole: the chronological marker in 10:11 (“the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month”; cf. 1:1) and the topographical/geographical marker in 10:12 (“then the Israelites set out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai”; cf. the focus on a single location in 1:1–10:10). Such recognition of surface features, however, is only half the work for Lee. He seeks to uncover that to which these explicit surface features point conceptually underneath the text. For this he relies heavily on Knierim’s work on Numbers, noting the importance of terms such as *ns’* and *hnh* to categorize this section as a narrative that denotes not only migration but also cultic pilgrimage and military campaign: “This concept of preparation and execution of the sanctuary campaign controls and provides the ultimate meanings for the chronological and topographical/geographical indicators” (98).

Lee not only works in this way on the highest level markers such as 10:11–12, but also down to the smallest subunits of 10:11–36:13. Before doing this he reveals his definition

of what comprises an individual unit and then lists the results of his study of each of the thirty-six units followed by the detailed analysis of each unit.

This all leads to his conclusion on the macrostructure of Num 10:11–36:13. Although aware throughout of diversity in the material found in this section of Numbers, it is in fact a self-contained, well-organized, and coherent unit. For Lee the decisive criterion for the significance of the thirty-six units within 10:11–36:13 is the conquest of Canaan, the land promised to the Israelites, as the goal of their continuing campaign (279). The fundamental conceptual basis without which the units would not exist as they do nor be placed where they are is Israel's failure to conquer the promised land from the south in Num 13–14. This clearly differentiates Lee from Olson (for instance), for whom the generational succession is so important, since in Lee's schema the generational succession is at best indicative of the transition from Yahweh's punishment of Israel to Yahweh's forgiveness of them. The general structure is presented as:

- 10:11–14:45: Event: failed campaign to enter the promised land from the south
- 15:1–36:13: Consequence: entrance into the promised land delayed by forty years
  - 15:1–20:29: Completion of Yahweh's punishment of all the exodus generation: the death of the exodus generation
  - 21:1–36:13: Actualization of Yahweh's forgiveness of the exodus generation: the call of the new generation as the new carrier of the divine promise of land

There is no question that this book represents a major contribution to the study of Numbers that will provide a new foundation for reflection on this book in years to come, especially for future commentary on the structure of the book as a whole as well as the individual units in 10:11–36:13.

Lee does a masterful job of placing his exegetical method into the larger hermeneutical context of critical methodologies. He is careful not to alienate these other approaches to the text, even as he creates space for his own approach. However, in his delineation of conceptual analysis, Lee makes the claim that "From the inception of form criticism, its goal has been to explain the biblical texts in their present form. However, the early history of its application to texts demonstrates that most form critics move backward to search for a short, self-contained, and 'original' oral element behind the sources" (63). This statement needs to be qualified, for it is clear that one key aspect of early form criticism was its agenda to uncover the various *Sitzen im Leben* of the biblical text. For instance, when the fruitlessness of searching for the original, unique historical setting of individual psalms was admitted, a level of historical rootedness was achieved by identifying the repeating liturgical contexts that gave rise to the compositions. Thus, even

if form criticism did bring too much emphasis on the typical aspects of the text (as Muilenburg so aptly expressed), this was a key aspect at the inception of form criticism.

Lee's analysis provides much-needed reflection on and definition for the rhetorical study of biblical material. Most commentaries on biblical books today provide some form of structural analysis of units ranging from the smallest pericope to entire books, but rarely is one's methodology for arriving at such structures provided, suggesting that little reflection has taken place. Lee offers careful reflection on key methodology and definitions, fulfilling a concern for proper method and definition expressed in the opening words of the book, where he notes his desire to find an "empirically verifiable procedure" that will enable him "to articulate the interrelationships among the many units of Numbers 10:11–36:13" (vii).

Such a lofty goal is to be applauded, but at times one wonders if his analysis is in the arena of science (empirically verifiable) or that of art. For instance, when he defines the "individual unit" for his study, he notes that the criteria for determining the boundaries of units is "not only compositional devices, such as linguistic, stylistic, rhetorical, formal, generic, and thematic signals, but also conceptualities under the text" (120), then adds, "It is possible that not one but a mixture of several devices works together to circumscribe the limits of a unit, to mark out a unit from adjacent units, and thus to establish the independence of the unit" (120). Here we see a clear admission that the identification of the rhetorical units cannot be controlled by consistent and repeating phenomena, but rather the interpreter needs to be sensitive to the various methodologies that could be used, even on the conceptual level.

This trend in Lee to look not only to the surface (which is much more easily "empirically verifiable") but also to the deeper conceptual level introduces a greater degree of subjectivity into the process. To enhance objective control over this process, Lee suggests a spiral of interpretation that returns to the surface level for confirmation once the conceptual level is mined. While this balance between the surface and conceptual levels does introduce greater debate (and some would say subjectivity) into the process, it is not to be regarded as an entirely negative aspect. Rather, it encourages a rhetorical analysis that transcends mere counting of discourse markers to suggest the underlying theological themes that hold these discourse units together. In this Lee has provided a case study of the kind of theological fruit that conceptual analysis can bear and thus provide a way to bridge the gap between biblical and theological studies in the academic world.