



Dozeman, Thomas

Exodus

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Frank H. Polak
Tel Aviv University
Ramath Aviv, Israel

Thomas Dozeman, who previously offered us studies of the Mount Sinai tradition and the narrative of the exodus from Egypt,¹ now enriches scholarship with an overall commentary of the book of Exodus. Like his previous studies, this commentary is based on a version of redaction criticism that acknowledges some of the methods of the literary approach but does not neglect the achievements of “higher criticism” and blends all in a theological perspective that includes the New Testament as well. Dozeman’s critical stance recognizes two basic sources: a non-Priestly composition (matching JE of classical source criticism) and a Priestly text. Dozeman mentions the possible subdivisions of these sources in general outline, but he relinquishes the attempt to specify them in detail. His commentary, then, often tends to a structural-synchronic approach, unless Priestly composition is assumed. The introduction opens with a treatment of individual genres, such as the hymn of Exod 15 and the law codes, and continues with a discussion of the inclusive genre of “salvation history,” matters of “authorship” (source and redaction criticism), and the structure of the book of Exodus. An extensive discussion of legal and cultic matters includes a treatment of the problem how to view the concept of law in the

1. Thomas B. Dozeman, *God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology and Canon in Exodus 19–24* (SBLMS, 37; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); idem, *God at War: Power in the Exodus Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

ancient Near Eastern context. Like many recent redaction-critical treatments, Dozeman's general outlook allows for a close connection between Deuteronomistic literature and the non-Priestly parts of the book of Exodus, positioning it on one sequence from Genesis to the Former Prophets.

Dozeman recognizes two main sections: the chapters on "the power of Yahweh in Egypt," recounting the exodus (Exod 1:1–15:21), and "the presence of Yahweh in the wilderness," covering the first sections on the wandering in the desert, the revelation at Mount Sinai, and the building of the tabernacle (15:22–40:38). The period of the wanderings is perceived as a marginal state "betwixt and between" the act of separation from the slavehood of Egypt (as previous condition) and the reintegration in the covenant as a new social structure. These three stages, then, are viewed as part of a continuous process that transforms the slavehood to Pharaoh into service of Yahweh.² The stage of the wanderings fulfills a preparatory role, as the Israelites are introduced to the world of divine guidance. On the other hand, this period continues the account of the exodus itself, since the deity continues to lead his people on their way. Thus Dozeman envisions a meaningful, continuous narrative that leads from the description of the enslavement to the institution of the covenant and the worship that gives it stability beyond the revelation. A finer subdivision recognizes the setting (Exod 1:1–2:25), the introduction of Moses and Pharaoh as characters (3:1–7:7), conflict (the confrontation between Moses/Yahweh and Pharaoh in the plagues and the final scene at the Sea of Reeds (7:8–15:21), the journey through the wilderness (15:22–18:27), the revelation at the mountain (19:1–24:11), and the construction of the sanctuary (24:12–40:38). Setting the (mainly) non-P narrative part from the Priestly account of the tabernacle, Dozeman discusses the Deuteronomistic associations of the tale of the golden calf and the tale of the second revelation on the mountain, including the tale of Moses' shining face. Various themes of the instructions for the building of the tabernacle and the building account are noted in a very modern treatment of the Priestly account. The theophany above the tabernacle (Exod 40:34–35) is viewed as a further development of the Priestly theophany theme (24:15b–18a) and the divine descent on Mount Sinai (ch. 19; non-Priestly), but the conclusion of the book (40:36–38) is represented as a dynamic continuation and foreshadowing of the divine guidance in the desert as it is developed in Num 9:15–23.

Thus the macro-structural treatment of Exodus is very appealing. In particular one notes that the discussion of the covenant scene at the divine mountain, which presents the first divine speech to Israel (19: 3–6), is convincingly represented as a covenant proposal,

2. Here Dozeman follows Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993) 142–44, although this discussion is not mentioned explicitly.

following Knutson's discussion of the negotiations between the Hittites and Ugarit. This view enables Dozeman to point to a continuously developing narrative in which 19:11b and 19:20–25 represent the contribution of the P author. The latter pericope is regarded as the introduction to the theme of law giving in which the Sabbath command (20:8–11) represents the Priestly contribution, although much and sympathetic attention is paid to the view that attributes the entire decalogue to P. The P historian is considered responsible for the unification and composition of the covenant rituals in chapter 24 (only vv. 3–5 and 7 are viewed as non-Priestly). This macro-structural treatment is complemented by detailed study of the central themes in each section, questions of literary structure, authorship problems, and textual and linguistic issues. Greek and Hebrew are given in transcription, whereby it is to be noted that in the Greek the *iota subscriptum* remains untranscribed. The textual treatment contains many notes on the LXX, including translation of the Greek and references to Wevers's commentary;³ grammatical notes often refer to GKC. The commentary itself brings, apart from Dozeman's insights, a particularly rich review of contemporary scholarship (including recent treatments by Propp, Houtman, Gertz, Dohmen, and Van Seters) and many references to ancient Near Eastern parallels, in particular in connection with ritual and mythical concepts.

All in all, this is a very useful commentary for scholars and students. On the other hand, this work has its shortcomings. First, the grammatical and lexical treatment at times is less professional. For instance, the polel of *bwš*, *bōšeš*, "to tarry" (Exod 32:1) is classified as the *pilpel* of *bōš* (701). The cultic term *'edūt* is rendered as "testimony." The rendering "treaty" is mentioned, but its Akkadian and Aramaic background is not discussed (612–14). The macro-structural interest is only rarely supported by the consideration of micro-structural and rhetorical patterns. For instance, the *Leitwort* *qōl* in the tale of the revelation on the mountain is mentioned in the textual notes (449) but not in the discussion of the structure of the narrative (455–56). The discussion of the theophany, in which the climax of verse 18 is attributed to the P author (455–56), should have included a reference to the view of Loewenstamm, who pointed out that "the trembling of nature" is a common theme in the theophanic scenes in Ugaritic, Akkadian, and biblical poetry.⁴ As to structure, the present commentary mentions the differentiation between the instruction regarding the building of the tabernacle (Exod 25–31) and the building process itself and even tabulates the distinctions (like the differences between the MT and the LXX) but does not provide any explanation for this differentiation.

3. However, in some cases a reference to the Samaritan Pentateuch was called for but is lacking.

4. S. E. Loewenstamm, "The Trembling of Nature during the Theophany," in *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures* (AOAT 204; Kevelaer: Bercker & Butzon; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1984), 173–89.

In short, this commentary is an important contribution to the study of Exodus and a very useful tool, but a full-fledged philological and literary commentary still remains a *desideratum*.