
BY

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Jerusalem

I

The unification of worship in Jerusalem, accomplished by King Hezekiah of Judah by the end of the eighth century and again by his great-grandson Josiah in the year 622/1 B.C.E., was a unique act, unprecedented in the Ancient Near East and rich in consequences for the religion of Israel and for the derived monotheistic religions. Old Testament criticism has continually sought to shed light on the circumstances of this event. But the dearth of information from any other source has always compelled it to rely mainly on the principal document connected with the reform, the Book of Deuteronomy ¹, in order to reconstruct the history of the movement that led to this reform.

The passage in Deuteronomy which prescribes the unification of worship is acceptedly Chapter xii, vss. 1-28. In this passage, however, we are confronted with many repetitions: no fewer than four times are the Israelites ordered to sacrifice only in the chosen place; twice they are enjoined from sacrificing elsewhere; twice secular slaughter of animals is permitted; and twice the people are commanded to shed the blood on the earth and not to ingest it with the flesh of the animals. Besides that, there is a remarkable shift in address: up to vs. 12 the second person plural is used; from vs. 13 on—the second person singular. Consequently, some Biblical critics came to the conclusion

¹ Cf. A. Alt, “Die Heimat des Deuteronomiums”, Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel, II, München 1953, pp. 250-275, ad p. 262. The understanding of Josiah’s reform as part of his revolt against Assyria (so also S. Zemirin, Josiah and His Times [Hebrew], Jerusalem 1951) is not supported by the study of the religious policy of the Assyrian Empire; cf. M. Cogan, Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C., University of Pennsylvania Ph.D. Dissertation, Philadelphia 1971.
that the passage is a composite of several strands, and that each strand must be attributed to a different redaction of Deuteronomy.

The theory did not go unchallenged. The hortatory style of Deuteronomy could account for some of the repetitions; especially when such a radical innovation as the unification of worship is decreed. As for the shift in person, it does not appear to be a reliable indicator of distinct authorship in Biblical Hebrew. Therefore we must search for more objective criteria for the literary analysis of this pericope.

In search of such objective criteria, one may begin by inquiring about the extent of the pericope. An assumption of modern criticism is that the unification law and, indeed, the entire Code of Deuteronomy begin with Deut. xii 1. This can scarcely be true.

In much the same way, in the style of the Deuteronomic School it appears also as a transitional formula (Judg. ii 23-iii 1). In such a transition, elements of the new sentence repeat, in inverted order, elements of the preceding one; for instance, "וַיָּמְנוּ אֶל הַמָּרָא אֶלֶּה" is followed by "ָלַי אֶל הַמָּרָא אֶלֶּה". What seems to be an opening formula here is xi 31 which has four interesting parallels:

Deut. xviii 9 — לֹא תִּלְעִשַּׁת ָלַי אֶל הַמָּרָא Num. xxxiii 51f — הַמָּרָא אֶל הַמָּרָא Num. xxxiv 2 — אֶל הַמָּרָא אֶל הַמָּרָא Num. xxxv 10 — אֶל הַמָּרָא אֶל הַמָּרָא

In all these cases, the opening formula is a temporal subordinate clause constructed with יְ+pronoun+participle. The causative inter-