
It will have become apparent that this is a diverse collection of somewhat varying quality. Without denying that the book is already quite long enough, some disappointment may nevertheless be registered that no place was found for a treatment of the Samaritan hopes for restoration, given the obvious centrality to the topic of their expectation of the Taheb, which may have had some influence on parts of the New Testament, and which relates restoration even more closely to a coming messianic figure than in the case of the Jewish Davidic equivalent. While I remain puzzled by the project’s concept as a whole, there is nevertheless bound to be material here which will prove to be of value to scholars working in a wide spectrum of fields in Jewish and Christian antiquity.

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One thing with which all biblical scholars are painfully familiar is the Documentary Hypothesis, which divides the sources/authors of the Pentateuch into the Yahwist (J), the Elohist (E), the Priestly Writer (P) and the Deuteronomist (D). In short, D’s legal corpus is supposed to date from the period of the late Judean monarchy, and aims to centralise and reform religious practice in Judah. P is dated later still, to the Persian period, and relates to the institution of the Second Temple. Within P is the distinct legal corpus of Lev. 17–26, called the Holiness Code (HC), which is supposed to date from the early part of the Babylonian exile. According to this theory, we have two distinct legal codes corresponding to two different periods of Jewish history, one shortly before the exile and one just after it. Van Seters is in agreement with this much, but this is as far as any such agreement goes.

Van Seters takes J and E as one source (J), which in itself is not so controversial. What is controversial, at least in respect of the Documentary Hypothesis, is Van Seters’ suggestion to assign a late date to J. More specifically, whereas J’s legal section, which is found in Ex. 20:23–23:33 and called the Covenant Code (CC), has previously been given an early date in relation to D and HC, with the corollary that the legal material in D and HC was to some degree dependent on CC, Van Seters argues that D and HC actually predate CC, thus reversing the direction of dependency.

To summarise thus far, the standard hypothesis puts the various strata in the following chronological order: CC–D–HC–P. Van Seters is proposing the following order: D–HC–CC–P, thus moving CC from the period of the early Israelite monarchy to the period of the Babylonian exile. According to Van Seters, what has thus far been considered the earliest legal corpus in the Pentateuch should now be considered to be one of the latest, composed not for the Israelites in the infancy of their nationhood but for the exiles in Babylonia, hence the title A Law Book for the Diaspora, a statement of the place, period and purpose of the composition of CC.

In order to establish this, Van Seters begins in chapter 1, ‘The History of Research on the Covenant Code’ (pp. 8–46), with a convenient summary of prior scholarship on CC. Van Seters contents himself with presenting the significant contributions and explaining why certain ideas are so entrenched in modern scholarship, often because
a number of assumptions have been accepted without any clear justification. He accomplishes this with no small degree of success, and this first chapter is well worth a read for more than the foundation it lays for the subsequent hypothesis. Van Seters’ assessment of the problems with the current consensus is of great value even if his alternative hypothesis is not accepted. In chapter 2, ‘The Framework of the Covenant Code’ (pp. 47–81), Van Seters examines the relationship between CC and its context within J. Following this, chapter 3, ‘The Civil Laws, or Mishpatim’ (pp. 82–127), considers the Israelite casuistic laws in the light of the Babylonian laws. In chapter 4, ‘Ethical Demands and Religious Obligations’ (pp. 128–71), Van Seters argues that the cultic aspects of CC are not evidence of its archaic origins, as is often supposed, but instead point to its exile composition for the needs of the diaspora communities.

For Van Seters, the Babylonian exile is the most likely period and place for any influence between Babylonian and Jewish law codes to occur. Thus the supposed earlier (pre-monarchical) influence of Babylonian casuistic law codes on Israelite law, apparent in CC, should be revised down to the exilic period. Furthermore, J, an exiled Jew writing in the latter part of the Neo-Babylonian period, was able to make use of existing Jewish sources (D, HC and other biblical writings), as well as various Babylonian legal corpora, in the composition of his new law code. According to Van Seters, there is no hint of CC’s dependency on P, so CC should be placed prior to the Persian period.

Van Seters rejects Alt’s distinction between the Israelite apodictic laws and the Canaanite casuistic laws, and the subsequent hypothesis that these two sources were drawn upon to form the earliest Israelite law code (i.e. CC). Firstly, Van Seters notes that there is no evidence for the existence of such a Canaanite law code, so we should look to Babylonian law codes for the casuistic influence (e.g. p. 123) and, hence, consider the exile as the period for this influence. Of course the problem here is that we are left with more assumptions, precisely the criticism levelled at the earlier theories. Assuming that such an external influence exists, and that this influence is indeed Babylonian and not Canaanite, this still leaves the issue of when this influence was exerted. Are we really being asked to believe that it took until the Neo-Babylonian period for the Israelites to discover casuistic law, and that to do this they had to live in Mesopotamia? Secondly, Van Seters rejects Alt’s argument that participial laws, particularly with the phrase ḥayyim ḥamed, are archaic, and instead states that they are best compared to similar forms occurring in HC and Ezekiel, thus dating them to the exilic period. Of course the problem here is that we are simply being asked to replace one cyclic argument with another. Whereas Alt assumes that those examples in CC are archaic and, based on this assumption, states that those similar examples in HC are influenced by the ‘earlier’ CC, Van Seters simply does the opposite, assuming that those examples in CC are late and therefore based on the ‘earlier’ HC.

It seems to the present reviewer that this is a vain exercise. It is possible to shuffle the cards (CC, HC and D) into any order, move them up or down a chronological chart and, with some ingenuity, come up with convincing argument as to why this order and temporal scheme is correct. This is an all-too-familiar scenario in biblical studies, and indicative of the frustration often felt by those who try to come to terms with the increasing number of theories on the Pentateuch in particular.

Following the ‘Summary and Conclusion’ (pp. 172–75) comes the ‘Notes’ section (pp. 177–205), which is frustrating. The present reviewer cannot understand why footnotes are abandoned in favour of endnotes in this way, thus forcing the reader to turn back and forth continuously.

Although many scholars, including the present reviewer, will find this book’s radical hypothesis difficult to accept, two points cannot be doubted. The first is that it cannot be ignored: any introductory course on the Pentateuch will need to incorporate Van Seters’ work into its syllabus alongside the older, better-established theories. The sec-
The first chapter, with its account of the history of the field and the weaknesses of the established theories, is useful in itself, regardless of whether the subsequent hypothesis is accepted.

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This convenient collection of essays unites the author's contributions on the book of Deuteronomy, written over the past thirty years. Since most of the contributions were originally written in Hebrew, the reader will welcome their availability in English for the first time. Naturally the different contexts for which the essays were originally written cause a certain lack of unity. However, what binds the essays together, apart from the topic, is 'an attempt at integrating the various facets of Biblical research with each other: textual criticism, Semitic philology, history of composition, form criticism and history of tradition, exegesis, history of legal institutions and—last but not least—history of religion' (p. xiii). Thus, the work is a magnificent example of the author's goal to combine traditional Jewish interpretation and modern critical scholarship.

The contents are as follows: 'The Book of Deuteronomy: A Summary' (pp. 1–14); 'The Monotheistic Argumentation in Deuteronomy 4:32–40: Contents, Composition and Text' (pp. 15–24); 'Deuteronomy 5:28–6:1: Composition and Text in the Light of Deuteronomic style and Three Tefillin from Qumran (4Q128, 129, 137)' (pp. 25–36); 'Qumranic Paraphrases, The Greek Deuteronomy and the Late History of the Biblical ' (pp. 37–46); 'The End of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:43)' (pp. 47–54); 'The Arrangement of the Laws in Deuteronomy' (pp. 55–78); 'The Tenth Commandment in the Light of Four Deuteronomic Laws' (pp. 79–96); 'The Strata of the Law about the Centralization of Worship in Deuteronomy and the History of the Deuteronomic Movement' (pp. 99–102); 'The Organization of the Judiciary in Deuteronomy' (pp. 103–20); 'The History of the Cities of Refuge in Biblical Law' (pp. 121–48); 'The Laws of Warfare in the Book of Deuteronomy: Their Origins, Intent and Positivity' (pp. 149–68); 'Family and Sex Laws in Deuteronomy and the Book of the Covenant' (pp. 169–92); 'The Covenant in the Land of Moab' (pp. 193–204); 'Methodological Aspects of the Study of Biblical Law' (pp. 205–20); and finally a 'Review of M. Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School' (pp. 221–30).

The very first essay offers a good summary of Rofé's thoughts on the origin and development of the book of Deuteronomy as a whole. He is convinced that the book as a whole was not written before the time of the 'discovery' during Josiah's reign. Furthermore, Rofé distinguishes between two editions (D₁ and D₂), the latter being the expanded version, a process that had already happened during the time of Josiah. This, however, does not mean—as several other essays show—that he is unable to argue for pre-Deuteronomic material as well as for some later priestly redaction (D₃) that happened 'after the cultic unification stratum' (p. 112). The essay on the methodological aspects of the study of biblical law represents a good supplement to the introduction because it clarifies much of Rofé's approach. Throughout the collection it becomes clear that Rofé insists on a detailed diachronic analysis of Deuteronomic texts and that meticulous philological work has to provide the basis for such an analysis. All of the fifteen essays provide much food for thought and argument. The contributions addressing the pressing question of the general organisation of the Deuteronomic code