

*Het Archimedisch punt van de Pentateuchkritiek. Een historisch en exegetisch onderzoek naar de verhouding van Deuteronomium en de reformatie van koning Josia (2 Kon. 22-23).*

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## English Summary (pp. 361-370)

The Archimedean Point of Pentateuch Criticism. A historical and exegetical research into the relation between Deuteronomy and the reformation of king Josiah (2 Kings 22-23)

### INTRODUCTION

For centuries it has been assumed, in synagogue and church, that the authorship of the book of Deuteronomy rests with Moses himself. Yet in 1805 W.M.L. De Wette defended a thesis expressing a completely different view. According to him, the book of Deuteronomy is of a more recent date. He states that it was written in the 7th century B.C., shortly before the reformation of king Josiah. At first there was a great controversy about this new interpretation. More and more, however, the view expressed in the thesis has gained widespread approval. J. Wellhausen in particular contributed to this by his book *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (1878).

The idea that the Pentateuch had been composed out of a number of documents progressively gained ground in the second half of the 18th century. The 'sources' supposedly dated from various periods in the history of the people of Israel. Theologians were convinced that the major part of these writings could not date from Moses' times. Yet no precise point of reference had been established by which dating could be made more accurate. This is then what De Wette has supplied. In the description of king Josiah's reformation in 2 Kings 22-23 we read about a book of the law which, when found, is immediately adopted as a standard. This book of the law, according to De Wette, must have been the prototype of Deuteronomy and it must have been written shortly before that time. 2 Kings 22-23 appears to mention the discovery of an old book. Nevertheless, De Wette enunciates that it may have been a piece that was written shortly before.

The main argument in favor of the thesis that Deuteronomy is Josiah's book of law is considered to be the fact that he carries through the centralization of worship. Deut. 12 prescribes that the Israelites may sacrifice in only one place. Prior to Josiah's times this was never taken seriously; Samuel and others offered sacrifices in many places. From this De Wette draws the logical conclusion that there was no centralization in early times. Israelites were not obliged to offer sacrifices in the location of the tabernacle or temple. The law prescribing the local sacrifices is found in Exod. 20:24-

26. This scripture applies to the early times, but Deut. 12 only applies to the time of Josiah. Two contradictory regulations cannot originate from the same legislator. The history of Israel's worship shows a development from great freedom in sacrificing towards a firmly fixed

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centralization. Both laws have to be placed within this historical framework.

In this logical way De Wette supplies a point of reference for the reconstruction of the true dates of origin of the various elements of the Pentateuch. Archimedes attempted to locate a fixed point in the universe on which he could rest the lever by means of which he might lift the earth. De Wette furnished Pentateuch criticism its Archimedean point to put both synagogue and church tradition out of joint (O. Eissfeldt). This is how he received the honorary title 'father of Deuteronomy research'.

De Wette himself regarded Deuteronomy as one of the newest parts. After him, K.H. Graf, A. Kuenen, and J. Wellhausen, have put the four major sources of the Pentateuch in the order that has been acceptable to most theologians up to the present; Jahwist (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomist (D), and Priestly Code (P). The date of D in 622/621 is the pivot of this reconstruction.

The questions dealt with in this thesis are the following: which factors have led to the discovery of this Archimedean point? Are these arguments still useful today?

In order to study all pros and cons as well as possible I have decided to make use of an extensive historical survey. This answers questions like: How did people appreciate the tension between the two laws before De Wette? How did people explain the sacrifices on the high places? What was the identity of the book of the law that was found in Josiah's times? As many points of view as possible have been included in the historical survey. Due to this, famous academics are sometimes alluded to in passing, whereas relatively unknown researchers may receive extra attention due to their valuable contributions to or rejections of the De Wette thesis. Furthermore, this starting-point allows for a substantial addition to be made to recent surveys of the history of exegesis (e.g. S. Loersch, 1967 and H.D. Preuss, 1982).

The history of exegesis is described in chapters 1-10. In chapters 11-15 I expound my own opinion on these questions. From this discussion it becomes clear that the Archimedean point is less firm and fixed than what is generally assumed.

#### SUMMARY PER CHAPTER

The first chapter, which deals with Judaism, shows that rabbis have attempted several ways of equating the precept of Exod. 20:24-26 with other statements in the Torah. In the usual interpretation the precept refers to the brazen altar for burnt sacrifices, (Exod. 27), which is filled with earth or stones. Ibn Ezra rejects this equation and assumes that the text refers to different altars of earth or stones.

The rabbis have examined various customs in regard to sacrifices in the course of time. They have divided history in periods in which sacrificing in high places was, or was not, allowed. They have also

made distinctions between great high places (where the tabernacle was located) and normal high places. Apparently,

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the problems noted by De Wette, regarding the practice of sacrifice, were taken into consideration from quite early times onwards.

Josiah's book of the law contained at least (a part of) Deuteronomy, but statements about its exact size are lacking.

It is difficult to assess the attitude towards the sanctuary at Elephantine. Yet, it may be not be directly inferred that the centralizing precepts of Deuteronomy were completely unknown in Egypt. The temple at Leontopolis served as a replacement for the desecrated temple at Jerusalem. Therefore, it may be looked upon as an emergency measure which does not conflict with the thought expressed in Deut. 12.

Chapter 2 deals with Christian views in the early church and in the middle ages. From earliest times onwards there has been a discussion on the questions that we are dealing with. Especially in the middle ages these questions gave rise to a number of lengthy treatises on the matter. In general the view was held that sacrifices were only allowed in the location of the tabernacle or temple. Only in special circumstances it was allowed to bring a sacrifice anywhere else (e.g. by specific order of God, or during the long-term separation of tabernacle and ark).

The book of the law found by Hilkiah is always equated with Deuteronomy. This happens fairly often in a discussion of Ezek. 1: 1. Here the opinions of Jerome (Hieronymus) exert considerable influence. Often, Jewish opinions appear to be known by Christian authors.

In the period of 1500-1750, which is dealt with in chapter 3, a remarkable continuity of opinions can be traced back to previous times. Usually, the topic is dealt with less extensively than the way it was dealt with by the end of the middle ages. An exception to this is the thesis of H. Wesselius, (Leiden, 1739), on the identity of the book of the law. For the first time, some academics restrict the size of the piece of writing to the laws or final chapters of Deuteronomy. Another new opinion is that all canonical books which had been written at the time of discovery were found.

Some forerunners of the Enlightenment, who are characterised by a rationalistic and deistic slant, question Hilkiah's integrity. These scholars suggest that he played an important part in the origination of the book. Whilst researching verifiable facts from the past, they observe that all information about Hilkiah stems from only one tradition.

In chapter 4, which deals with the period of 1750-1800, few new things may be said about the relationship between Exod. 20 and Deut. 12. Most exegetes assume that Deuteronomy was found (or just a part of it). Some suppose that the Pentateuch as a whole was found. Less and less academics attribute the authorship of the Pentateuch to Moses. Philosophers like Voltaire and Th. Paine, probably in agreement with others, question Hilkiah's integrity. The exegetes Michaelis and Eichhorn reject the idea that Hilkiah wrote the book of the law.

By the end of the 18th century the antithesis between Exod. 20 and Deut. 12, the identification of the discovered book of the law as Deuteronomy, and the doubts about Hilkiah's reliability were known in Germany. All of these notions are important concepts in W.M.L. de Wette's thesis.

Chapter 5 entirely deals with De Wette. Originally, his *Dissertatio* had been part of a larger work. A publication by J.S. Vater had thwarted its publication and necessitated De Wette to rewrite the manuscript into the *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament*. Since these *Beiträge* were not a later development of their author's thoughts, we must regard their contents in relation to the explanation of the *Dissertatio*.

From the writings of De Wette it appears that the antithesis between Exod. 20 and Deut. 12 was not new to him. He rejects a number of orthodox attempts of harmonisation. He is also familiar with the identification of Hilkiah's book of the law as Deuteronomy. His originality is evident from the way in which he combines these facts.

De Wette applies strict standards in order to establish what is historically sure. Especially the book of Chronicles does not meet these standards. The OT is almost useless as a tool for the reconstruction of Israel's early history, but its value as a religious book increases.

Chapter 6 contains a description of the period between De Wette and Wellhausen. Almost all Old Testament exegetes respond to the researches of De Wette. It turns out that apart from expressions of great appreciation there is also substantial criticism. When Exod. 20 and Deut. 12 are regarded as non-conflicting evidence, expositors tend to adapt the exegesis of the first chapter in favour of the second. The unity of worship existed in early days and Exod. 20 should not change that. The sacrifices of Samuel and others must be regarded as exceptions. P. Kleinert, however, adapts Deut. 12 to the 'Book of the Covenant'. Thus, he allows for sacrifices to be made in various places.

A core issue in this discussion is the question about the position of Deuteronomy. Is this book the key-stone or the foundation of the Pentateuch? Or should it be placed historically in the centre? Opinions vary greatly, even when it is dated in the 7th century.

Opponents of a 'pia fraus' at the book's introduction to the people insist that it is unthinkable that such an act would have been morally acceptable in Israel. Supporters claim that in those days other standards were applied than today. Their claims are based on extra-biblical parallels.

Authors who date Deuteronomy in the 7th century elsewhere also express serious doubt about the historicity of the Old Testament as such. Findings usually agree with the author's personal views on history, philosophy, and religious history.

The seventh chapter deals with J. Wellhausen's views. He discusses the question

of the centralization of worship in the first chapter of his work *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*. In his search for the position of the Priestly Code he adopts a date for Deuteronomy in Josiah's days. In general, his first chapter is in close agreement with De Wette.

The earliest period of Israel shows a freedom in offering wherever people desired. The second period is characterized by the centralization efforts. In the third period only one sanctuary is assumed. This history of worship results in the order: JE-D-P. This agrees with the findings from other topics that are dealt with.

The historical books bear the characteristics of the time in which they originated. Often, they tell more about their own times (by rendering a story about the past) than about previous times. In the book of Kings the rulers are judged by the D norm. In Chronicles the influence of P is noticeable. As a historian, Wellhausen is interested in the natural course of the history of Israel. His results, therefore, differ greatly from the opinions of the church. Since he is no longer capable of training pastors he decides to resign his professorship. In later publications he remains faithful to the view he once formulated.

Chapter 8 describes the reactions following Wellhausen's work. His work has contributed tremendously to the rise of the historical critical method, both in Germany as well as in Anglo-Saxon countries. The opponents point at Wellhausen's premises. They accuse him of being influenced by Hegel and Darwin. He would have been more of a history philosopher than someone who does justice to the Old Testament.

Some authors emphasize the phenomenon of the lay altars although they differ greatly individually. Some of them translate z-b-ch consistently as 'to slaughter'. There is a common agreement about the fact that both in Deuteronomy as in Leviticus the existence of private altars is acknowledged. Deut. 12 cannot demand centralization. A central sanctuary already existed in early times. Wellhausen did not distinguish between the two parts of worship when he played them off against each other.

A number of French academies dispute the credibility of the rendering of 2 Kings 22-23 and date Deuteronomy later, namely, in the exile period.

Some Assyriologists contribute evidence that helps to determine the age of Israel's customs in worship. In this way, the results of Wellhausen's purely literary method are slowly undermined.

The ninth chapter covers the period 1921-1950. In this time the position of De Wette and Wellhausen is strongly criticised. They are blamed for their general approach with its serious doubts about the transmission of events in the OT and its neglect of the information of surrounding nations. Objections are also made against their core idea of the development of worship. There is, however, little agreement on an alternative view. Is it necessary to assign a later date to Deuteronomy? Or should it be a much earlier date? It is even disputable whether

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Deut. 12 demands for centralization of worship. The majority of the exegetes, however, adheres to the currently accepted view.

Chapter 10, in which the last years are treated, shows how little agreement of opinion there is regarding the questions of our discussion. Yet a couple of tendencies may be observed. The book of Deuteronomy is now regarded as having a long period of origination. No longer it is looked upon as a product of the 7th century. Certain traditions may have been transmitted for centuries, and revised,

in order to serve in the eventual process of centralization at Jerusalem. This point of view results in extensive analyses of the various layers of the book.

Many authors show a deeper appreciation of the historicity of the reformation of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:22; 2 Chron. 31:1). This implies that the reformation of Josiah has not necessarily been an innovation. There are also more advocates of the chronology of Chronicles about Josiah (2 Chron. 34). Archeology has contributed to this correction of the view of De Wette and Wellhausen.

The book of the law that is found is almost always equated with (a part of) Deuteronomy. It is striking that chapter 27 is also included more often. Structural analyses and comparisons with ancient Eastern treaties have contributed to this. More and more the existence of a central sanctuary in early times is assumed. Thus, a deviation occurs from the earlier view, in which in principle that sanctuaries were regarded to be equal. The work of M. Noth has had considerable influence in this respect.

Chapter 11 contains a discussion of the work of De Wette and Wellhausen and the results are assessed in the light of what needs to be dealt with in the last chapters.

It has to be established with which intention the books of Samuel and Kings have been written. It is important to know whether they supply all information on worship. This will determine whether the 'argumentum e silentio' may be applied.

De Wette and Wellhausen base their opinions on literary analysis. Now that archeology had contributed a considerable amount of information which may be used for comparisons it is good to analyse their opinions in the light of this. Many nations in the second millennium had achieved a high cultural level. It is a burning question whether such an evolution of culture, according to the authors' assumptions, would be acceptable.

Moreover, in this chapter the theological and philosophical views of De Wette and Wellhausen are discussed. It may be questioned whether these views have affected their exegetical results or whether these results are to be maintained independently. We must investigate this in the following chapters by means of an analysis of the exegeses of Exod. 20:24-26, Deut. 12, the history of the cult in Israel, and 2 Kings 22-23.

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Chapter 12 deals with the legislation regarding the place of the cult in Exodus. The Masoretic text of 20:24-26 probably offers the correct reading; permission is given for the construction of local altars. This text coexists with texts about the house of Jhwh, the tabernacle. This gives rise to the question whether both notions are in historical agreement with each other. In the past many objections have been voiced against the existence of a central sanctuary in early time. Voltaire, De Wette, and Wellhausen denied the existence of the tabernacle.

Archeologists have supplied a lot of material for comparison which had not been available in the previous century. This material shows the historical possibility of such constructions in early times. It means that, tentatively, we may maintain both statutes side by side in the sense that they supplement rather than contradict one another.

Chapter 13 starts with the interpretation of Deut. 12. We conclude that only one central sanctuary is allowed. The view expressed by Th. Oestreicher a.o., which states that Deut. 12 allows for an indefinite number of sanctuaries, is not correct. Most exegetes explain this as a prohibition against local altars, yet these altars are not mentioned. The chapter only deals with the central sanctuary.

In three places in the book of Deuteronomy it deals with altars that are independent of the tabernacle (16:21; 27:5-6 and 33:19). When we accept the unity of the book as it is, this means that there are two levels in the service of worship. On a national level, only one sanctuary is allowed (A). On a local level, the construction of altars is allowed (B). Due to the structure of the book it seems better to regard these two levels as complementary rather than contrary. This conclusion agrees with our result in relation to Exodus.

Now it becomes clear what De Wette, Wellhausen, and others have done. In Exodus and Deuteronomy they have compared two different levels with one another. From Exodus they have taken B and from Deuteronomy they have taken A since they did not consider the other information to be relevant. Thus, it is understandable that they noticed a contradistinction. Subsequently, they have analyzed the history of the cult in order to find out in which time the precepts seemed to apply best. As a result, B had to be a lot older than A. Our research has shown, however, that in Exodus as well as in Deuteronomy both levels exist.

The survey of the history of worship in Israel, given in chapter 14, shows that in every epoch there are indications of an existing central sanctuary. M. Noth defended the existence of five amphictyonic centres. Yet, the existence of only two, namely Silo and Jerusalem, can be proved with certainty. Israelites went to Jerusalem during the major feasts. At the same time, provided certain conditions were met, people were allowed to bring sacrifices elsewhere.

Usually, theologians regard the non-sacrificial slaughtering as an innovation of Deuteronomy. However, in 1 Sam. 14, Saul apparently acts according to the precept of Deut. 12. The simplest explanation of the information on this matter

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in the Pentateuch is that Lev. 17 applies to the desert period. Thus, it should be treated as an intermezzo between Exod. 20:24-26 and Deut. 12. The hypothetical evolution in the cult, from a great number of places of worship to a central sanctuary, therefore, does not seem to be born out by the facts at our disposal.

The critical remarks, of the author of Samuel and Kings, about the high places may be explained from the fact that, in practice, high places became an inroad for pagan influences. For practical reasons he deplored something that was legitimate in itself.

In chapter 15 a literary analysis of 2 Kings 22-23 led to the conclusion that the 'Reformbericht' (23:4-20) is not linked to the rest of the story. Chronologically, it does not have a close relationship with it. A comparison with ancient treaties resulted in a number of peculiarities which show that Josiah did not introduce new laws.

The identity of the book of the law cannot be fully ascertained. A number of details indicates that the book of Deuteronomy is implied. Probably, chapters 6-31 were found. Perhaps even the whole book

of Deuteronomy was found. An argument in favour of our assumption is the fact that this book was handed down as a covenantal document. Moreover, there are numerous reasons to assume that Deuteronomy is not a pseudepigraphic piece of writing.

Josiah may have started his reformation on the basis of the first statements of the Decalogue. A king, he was responsible for the purity of the cult. In this respect, centralization may be regarded as a means by which this purity could be achieved. The introduction of Deuteronomy need not have initiated the purges and the centralization. Probably, the book of Chronicles presents a correct description of what took place in the sense that many purges had taken place prior to the discovery of the book of the law.

All this means, that there is no reason why we should revise the exegesis of Exodus and Deuteronomy that was given above. A central sanctuary and local altars were allowed to exist side by side. Abuses at local altars provoked the reformations of Hezekiah and Josiah. The author of Kings regards the abuse as one of the major causes for the downfall of Juda and Israel. For this reason he evaluates individual kings by their attitude towards the high places.

#### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The consequences of our conclusions for Pentateuch research are quite important. The hypothesis of Graf, Kuenen, and Wellhausen is based on the assumption that D may have originated in the 7th century, whilst J and E were came into existence before that. P is of a much later date. Now that D turns out to be much older, the fixed point for dating J, E and P has disappeared. It was found that the development in the history of the cult was an inaccurate standard of measurement for dating purposes.

I only tested chapter 1 of Wellhausen's Prolegomena. Subsequent chapters are

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awaiting further analysis. Although based largely on the date for D in the 7th century and on the history of worship as presented in his first chapter, they also include additional information which has not been dealt with in this study. More research, such as that of J.G. McConville, is necessary to test the other arguments.

The popularity of the views of De Wette and Wellhausen is attributed especially to their interest in a neglected piece of information, namely, the local sacrificial practices, and to their brilliant application of current notions of philosophy and religious history. An excellent reconstruction of Israel's cultural history could be made due to their presuppositions. Yet, in the light of our findings, it is evident that the majority of their presuppositions have to be abandoned now. Hence, the exegetical arguments have to be revised. Moreover, their presuppositions are more germane to their exegesis than what is usually presumed.

The 19th century is characterised by a fundamental disbelief of any tradition. In previous centuries people had often been too credulous. In a reaction to this people perhaps became too sceptical with regard to the sources. This vindicates the question now whether certain elements of tradition should



be trusted more than what is prescribed by views dating back from the past century. A case for this is made by archeological finds. Archeology does not have to prove the biblical stories. Proving biblical stories does not belong to its competence. In many cases, however, archeology proves the currency of certain customs in certain times. Thus, it is proved that the same customs in biblical stories may be historically correct.

The history of our research reveals which decisions have been taken with respect to the exegesis. In the past centuries certain 'Copernican changes' have been brought about (e.g. on the basis of the principle that the course of OT history has to be explained as 'naturally' as possible). According to T.S. Kuhn the interpretation of facts largely depends on the paradigm within which science operates. Our analysis of De Wette and Wellhausen's view on Israel's religion shows that a different frame of interpretation is equally acceptable. Hence, we have to question whether it is desirable to continue exegetical research within the current frameworks. It appears that a revision of the premises of exegetical research would be necessary.

In this thesis it has been argued a number of times that the tradition in the Old Testament in some respects is historically more accurate than what is usually assumed. Arguments, however, are not proof in the literal sense of the word. Besides, it is impossible to prove whether the pieces that we discussed present a view which is unhistorical. At this point we touch upon the personal conviction of anyone involved in such research. According to Kuhn, rational arguments, experience, and falsification only rarely suffice to replace a single paradigm by

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another. To a major extent, the decision is made at a level of personal conviction as to whether arguments exegetical, archeological, historical and philosophical are convincing. This became clear in our discussion of De Wette and Wellhausen and it is also applicable to the author and reader of this dissertation. Personally, I am persuaded that a vital element in De Wette and Wellhausen's arguments is rather weak. The fixed point in dating the sources of Pentateuch is less firmly fixed than the point in the universe which Archimedes searched for.

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