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THE DEUTERONOMIC REDACTOR IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

by G. T. MANLEY

OUR veteran friend and colleague is indefatigable in his pursuit of Deuteronomic problems! His industry is an inspiration to younger men; and he retains a freshness of mind which enables him to grasp issues without being unduly moved by "parti pris", and to expound them with an acumen which indicates that the qualities which won the Senior Wranglership sixty-five years ago are still active. It is a delight to have this further study from him.

THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY of July, 1953, contained an article by Professor E. J. Young with the title: "The Alleged Secondary Deuteronomic Passages in the Book of Joshua". He showed there that these portions could be more satisfactorily explained as the work of an author who was acquainted with the whole Pentateuch.

The book of Judges is also said to have undergone a "Deuteronomic redaction". Writing in 1951 Professor Snaith comments upon "the remarkably varied and contradictory" picture of the book of Judges presented by modern scholarship, but adds that at any rate "all are agreed that at one time there was a D-Judges".¹

Writers of the Scandinavian school eliminate the redactor by making the whole series of books Deuteronomy to 2 Kings the work of one Deuteronomic author or school of authors.²

But the older view that an earlier collection of narratives was at one time "worked over" by a "Deuteronomic redactor" still has a strong hold in this country. It is advocated in the I.C.C. commentary by G. F. Moore and in the Introductions to the Old Testament of S. R. Driver and of Oesterley and Robinson; and it is this that we wish to examine.

It is built upon two prior assumptions:

1. It adopts Wellhausen's hypothesis of the four documents J, E, D, P, of which Deuteronomy (D) originated in the 7th century B.C. and was the "book of the law" discovered by Hilkiah.

2. It assumes also that the "ethical monotheism" of Israel, with its accompanying ideas, was the product of the prophetic move-

¹ *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Oxford, 1951), p. 91. C. F. Burney is noted as an exception.

² See A. Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, II, pp. 87 f.

ment of the 8th century B.C., and therefore that where these ideas appear in Judges they must be the work of a "Deuteronomic" editor of a later date.

The Deuteronomic point of view is said to be evident in the introductions and conclusions of the main narratives,³ and to be confined to the central part of the book, viz., 2: 6-16: 31,⁴ the sections which precede (1-2: 5) and follow (chs. 17-21) being later additions. The accounts of the six "minor judges" in 10: 1-5 and 12: 8-15 must also be later insertions, because from them "the Deuteronomic viewpoint is entirely absent".

This "framework" offers a contrast to the body of the narrative in three respects:

1. It expounds the Deuteronomic "philosophy of history".
2. It exhibits a Deuteronomic style and vocabulary.
3. It represents the judge "as ruler over the whole people", whereas elsewhere he "appears as leader in some particular district". This is said to correspond to the Deuteronomic passages in Joshua which make the conquest appear swift and complete, whereas the older parts prove it to have been partial and gradual.

Such is the hypothesis: do the facts justify it ?

I. THE DEUTERONOMIC OUTLOOK ON HISTORY

The didactic purpose of the author of the framework is perfectly clear: he teaches that when the people forsook the God of their fathers and served Baalim, He allowed them to fall into the hands of their enemies, but when they turned and cried unto Him, He raised up for them a deliverer. But to see in this "a contrast to the body of the narrative" is to set up a false antithesis.

It is the *same* story-teller who tells the tale who also points the moral; the lesson which is explicitly stated in the framework is already implicit in the facts themselves; the history exemplifies the teaching. But does not this suggest that both introductions and stories belong to the same author, who selected them for the sake of the lessons which they taught? This in fact is granted by G. F. Moore, who considers that "the author of 2: 6-16: 31 used an older collection of tales already made to point the moral that unfaithfulness to Yahweh was the prime cause of all the evils that befell the people".⁵ He goes further and finds traces of this earlier compilation in the framework itself, which he attributes to E. So

³ According to Oesterley and Robinson (p. 77) the passages are 2: 6-3: 6; 3: 7, 11, 12-24; 4: 1-3; 6: 1; 10: 6-16; 12: 1.

⁴ Interesting problems arise concerning chs. 17-21, but are outside the scope of this article.

⁵ I.C.C., p. xxi.

he writes that Judges 10: 6-16 is "not entirely the work of the author of our book of Judges (D), but contains the work of an older introduction conceived in a similar spirit".⁶

It follows that the outlook on history is no proof that the author owed his inspiration to the newly-discovered book of Deuteronomy. Indeed, the expression "Deuteronomic outlook" can be used in two different senses. If it mean that the introductions in Judges correspond with Moses' words concerning Israel's future which are found in "the opening and closing chapters" of Deuteronomy,⁷ this is certainly true. But if it be bound up with the hypothesis that Deuteronomy was a product of the 7th century B.C., and used to describe a "philosophy of history" developed by a school of Deuteronomists who followed, this is something different, and lacking foundation. Unfortunately the two meanings have been sadly confused.

It is fair enough to describe this view of God's dealings as "prophetic". It is plain in Is. 1: 19, 20; and G. F. Moore traces it back to Hosea.⁸ But why stop there? We find it in the words of the prophet Gad (2 Sam. 24) and of Samuel (2 Sam. 12: 14, 15).⁹

II. STYLE AND VOCABULARY

The framework is said to exhibit a Deuteronomic style. Now Driver says that the book of Deuteronomy introduced "a new style of flowing and impressive oratory" developing the thought "into long and rolling periods".¹⁰ It can hardly be said that the introductions in Judges conform to this description.

The likeness in vocabulary can be tested by considering the most frequently occurring phrases in each case. Driver has supplied us with a list of 70 expressions characteristic of Deuteronomy, of which the two most frequent are "go in and possess" (35 times) and "which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (34 times). Now both of these are found in Joshua¹¹ but nowhere in Judges.

Other thoughts characteristic of Deuteronomy are "love" towards God and thy "brother"; and "statutes and judgments", inculcating care for "the fatherless and widow". Some at least of these might have been expected from one who derived his inspiration particularly from the book of Deuteronomy, but they are not there.

⁶ *Ib.*, p. 276.

⁷ I.C.C., p. xviii.

⁸ *Ib.*, p. xviii.

⁹ To ascribe such passages also to Deuteronomic redaction is argument in a circle.

¹⁰ I.C.C., pp. lxxxvi f.

¹¹ Josh. 1: 11; 23: 13.

According to the theory we are examining the main object of Deuteronomy was the centralization of worship in Jerusalem, indicated as the "place" where Yahweh had "set His name". But the supposed redactor reveals not the slightest awareness of this.

Another characteristic phrase in Deuteronomy is "the oath which the LORD sware to the fathers" (27 times). This is repeated in Judges 2: 1, but that is in the part said to be pre-Deuteronomic!

The book of Deuteronomy has much to say of provision for "the Levite within thy gates": they are not mentioned in Judges 2: 6-16: 31; though they figure in Judges 17 and 18, said to be non-Deuteronomic.

Thus far the test gives only negative results; let us now apply it to the phrases which are common to the framework of Judges.

Here the introductions repeat the following:

1. They "did evil in the sight of the LORD".¹²

2. And "served Baalim".¹³

3. They "forsook the LORD (God of their fathers) who brought them out of Egypt".¹⁴

4. The anger of the LORD was kindled.¹⁵

5. He sold them into the hands of their enemies.¹⁶

6. They cried unto the LORD.¹⁷

7. The LORD raised them up a deliverer.¹⁸

1. The first of these can fairly be called Deuteronomic, since it is found there four times (4: 25; 9: 18; 17: 2; 31: 29). But it is not exclusively so; it occurs also in Nu. 33: 13, and was used by Samuel (1 Sam. 15: 9) and Nathan (2 Sam. 12: 9).

2. The words Baal and Baalim are conspicuous by their absence in Deuteronomy.

3. The words are not found in this form in Deuteronomy. The ideas are present in Ex. 3: 7, 13, 15.

4. This clause is found first in Ex. 4: 14, then three times in Numbers (11: 10; 12: 9; 25: 3) and three times in Deuteronomy (7: 4; 29: 27; 31: 17).

5. Almost as in Deut. 28: 68 and 1 Sam. 12: 9.

6. Not in Deuteronomy, but in 1 Sam. 12: 10.

7. Not in Deuteronomy, but cf. Ex. 3: 7, 8.

¹² 2: 11; 3: 7, 12; 4: 1; 6: 1; 10: 6; 13: 1.

¹³ 2: 11, 13; 3: 7; 10: 6.

¹⁴ 2: 12; 10: 6 (cf. 10: 10, 13).

¹⁵ 2: 14; 3: 8.

¹⁶ 3: 8; 4: 2; 10: 7 (cf. 4: 12).

¹⁷ 3: 9, 15; 4: 3; 6: 6; 10: 10.

¹⁸ 2: 16; 3: 9, 15.

It should be noted that three of these expressions are found in verses which Moore¹⁹ considers pre-Deuteronomic, namely (3) in 2: 12a, (4) in 2: 20 and (7) in 2: 10.

The evidence again is mainly negative. It is not such as to prove that the author was ignorant of Deuteronomy, but is not such as to suggest, much less to prove, literary dependence upon that book.

III. THE CONQUEST: COMPLETE OR PARTIAL

Is it true that the framework treats the conquest of the land as swift and complete, while the narratives prove it to be slow and gradual? The contrast thus suggested is artificial; for the two aspects are really complementary to each other. This can be seen in Deborah's song, the unity of which is freely admitted. There verses 2-5 treat Israel as one people and praise Yahweh for avenging them; the verses that follow, however, show that this unity is only an ideal, far from realized in practice. In a similar manner the book of Joshua at the beginning sees Israel as one nation, with Joshua as its leader, and the tribes gathered round him, as at Shechem. His successes and failures are recorded, and lists are given both of the cities which were taken and the land which still remained unconquered. Even when the people were settled, and Joshua towards the end of his life addresses them, the completion of the conquest still lies in the future (Josh. 23: 5), and this in a speech assigned to D!

The same phenomenon is seen in the book of Judges. We are told²⁰ that Judges 1: 1-2: 5 gives the true picture of what happened; yet verse 1 pictures "the children of Israel" unitedly seeking counsel from Yahweh. Throughout the book "the children of Israel", or Israel, is used sometimes of the whole nation and sometimes of a part. There is no difference of language used regarding either the six major or the six minor judges; of all alike it is said that they "judged Israel". The territory over which their rule extended is left entirely vague. Gideon refused the kingship (8: 22), Abimelech claimed it (9: 6) and ruled in Shechem, but there is nothing to show how far his authority was accepted. Of the rest we only know that they "judged Israel".

IV. CONCLUSION

So the props, by which the theory of a Deuteronomic redaction are supported, fall one by one. It is faced also with inherent

¹⁹ Moore regards much of the framework as pre-Deuteronomic, namely 2: 12a, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22a, 23; 3: 1-6; 10: 15, 16.

²⁰ I.C.C., p. 8.

weakness. Can it be thought likely that an author, having the narratives before him, would set to work to contradict them in important particulars?

There is the further disadvantage that whereas history relates the discovery of the book of the law, the Deuteronomic school to which it was supposed to give rise has left no historical trace of its existence.²¹

On the other hand, let it once be granted that Moses and Joshua were real persons, and that the author of the book of Judges lived not long after the events he records, and most of the difficulties vanish.

The historical books from Exodus to Joshua give a very lifelike picture of Moses and Joshua, and their relationship the one to the other,²² nor need we doubt the real existence of Eleazar and Phinehas. Into their hands were committed (Deut. 31: 9) the documents which Moses left behind him, and certainly some of Moses' words would linger in Joshua's memory.

Judges 2: 6-9 reproduces Joshua 24: 28-31 and so links this part of the book with the last days of Joshua, and with the renewal of the covenant in Shechem.²³

The words in Judges 1: 21 indicate a date not later than the reign of David, and it is significant that there is nothing in chs. 1-16 which necessitates a later date than this.

Jewish tradition ascribes the authorship of the book of Judges to Samuel. This may not be correct, but should not be too lightly dismissed. For if Samuel wrote "in a book" the manner of the Kingdom (1 Sam. 10: 25) he may well have written much more. But if not Samuel, why not some historian of David's reign?²⁴ (cf. 1 Chr. 29: 29). If, as many scholars think, Deborah's song was a contemporary document, and other parts first written down soon after the events they describe, why should centuries elapse before use was made of them? An author of that period could have been well acquainted with Moses' teaching, and it is not necessary to assume that he possessed a completed Pentateuch, though that is far from impossible.

If once the zeal for analysis could be tempered, and the bondage of the Wellhausen traditions be broken, the Deuteronomic redactor could easily be dispensed with.

London.

²¹ Cf. E. Robertson, *The Old Testament Problem*, p. 35.

²² See G. T. Manley, *The Book of the Law*, pp. 159 ff., 174 ff.

²³ See G. E. Wright, *The Old Testament against its Environment*, pp. 29, 37.

²⁴ H. M. Wiener divided it into two sources, due to Nathan and Gad.