

VI. Briefly Noted

Miqra LeYisra'el: Sefer Devarim

Jeffrey Tigray, *Sefer Devarim, 'Im Mavo U-Feirush (Deuteronomy, with Introduction and Commentary*. In *Mikra Le-Yisrael* series. 2 volumes. Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, and Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2016. (Revised and expanded Hebrew version of *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy*, 1996). ISBN 978-965-13-2577-9 (vol.1, cloth); ISBN 978-965-13-2578-6 (vol. 2, cloth)). Hebrew.

Jeffrey Tigray's critical commentary on Deuteronomy is part of the series *Miqra LeYisrael* (Bible for Israel), a series of critical commentaries on the Bible geared to scholars and general reading public. His commentary makes extensive use of traditional Jewish *meforshim* and modern biblical criticism and the disciplines that contribute to understanding the *Miqra* in the context of the cultures of the Ancient Near East, including, philology, history archaeology of the region, and literary scholarship.

Tigray's exegesis (*peshat*, plain meaning) and eisegesis (critical commentary dealing with the historical background of Deuteronomy, its language and literary form) are mirrored in the Hebrew names of the Fifth Book of Moses. *Devarim* from *'eleh ha-devarim*, "These are the words" (Deut 1:1), handed down Masoretic Text, and *Mishneh Torah*, "Repetition of the Torah" (meaning of English "Deuteronomy"), taken from Deut 17:18, permitting interpretation read into and with text. Deuteronomy is essentially a lengthy speech that Moses delivered to the Israelites on the Plains of Moab just before they entered the land of Canaan. It embraces five retrospective discourses and poems that Moses addressed to Israel shortly before his death (1:6-4:43, 4:44-28:69, 29-30, 32, 33), plus two narratives about his final acts (Chaps. 31, 34). Moses' Second Discourse (Deut 4-26), which includes the foundations of the covenant, prohibition of idolatry, governance of the people, etc., reflects the Sinaitic revelation forty years earlier.

Tigray's verse-by-verse commentary is tight, inclusive, and expansive. Individual words, phrases, idioms receive careful scrutiny; multiple meanings and cross references are featured; not uncommon, parsing sentences and connecting small blocks of verses to make a capital point; and comparative study to understand background, legality and narrative of a Deuteronomic law, belief, practice is beneficial, helpful and pragmatic. Detailed bibliographic references and voluminous notes conclude each chapter; also, points of interest to the Hebrew reader are referenced. Abbreviations, glossary, maps, and illustrations are included.

Tigray's mission to write a critical and detailed Jewish commentary on the Fifth Book of Moses succeeds in merging Revelation (Tradition) and Reason (critical thought). Typical is the *raison d'être* of the Shabbat commandment. That is to say, *evolutionary* thought, God resting on the seventh day (physical anthropomorphism) from His acts/days of creation (Exod 20:8-11) to historical memory of Israel's birth narrative from slavery to freedom observed in cessation of labor on the seventh day to self, household, slaves, and animal life (Deut 5:12-15). Tigray's approach is engaging. Intra-inter-extra textual discussion allow him to view the subject as a whole, explain the purpose and structure of the chapter sections, give some historical development into later time periods, provide contrast to other legal codes, and explain how this section has been converted into *Halakha* and on.

The importance and centrality of *Devarim* in Jewish history, memory, and tradition is underscored in the Introduction and in multiple excursuses to the commentary. Introduction succinctly summarizes the commentary's title, composition and history, and importance in Jewish tradition. Of salient importance, Tigray's summary and explication of the main themes of Deuteronomy: monotheism (concept, belief,

loyalty), covenant (legal, spiritual, emotional, *not* entirely suzerain-vassal treaty), Israel (people, land, and nations), law, worship (centralization, desacralization), intellectual orientation (honesty, Godfearing, wisdom, discernment), humanitarianism (duties to aliens, outcast, disadvantaged), and style (exhortatory, didactic, sermonic).

In sum, Tigay's updated and revised *Devarim* commentary is novel and groundbreaking. An important Hebrew contribution to understand the centrifugal role that *Devarim* plays in Jewish history throughout the ages.

Kochvei Yitzhak

Moshe Pelli, *Kochvei Yitzhak, The Journal of the Haskalah in the Austro-Hungarian Empire*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2016. xix + 609 pp. ISBN 978-065-493-990-4 (paper); ISBN 978-965-493-991-1 (ebook). Hebrew.

The Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment; 1770s – 1880s) was a diverse intellectual movement among the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe and with certain influence on Jewish savants in the West and Muslim lands. The *Haskalah* pursued two complementary objectives. It sought to preserve the Jews as a separate group and worked for a modernization of Jewish ethos and culture, especially a revival of Hebrew for secular purposes, pioneering the modern press and literature in the language. Concurrently, it strove for acculturation not assimilation of the Jews in surrounding societies, including the study of native vernacular and adoption of modern values, culture and appearance, all combined with economic stability. The *Haskalah* promoted the rationalization of Jewish beliefs and behavior, freedom of thought and enquiry over perceived rabbinic restrictions.

Interested scholars may know a great deal about the history and culture of Jewish Enlightenment, but less about related titles and contents of books, monographs, article and related items, and seemingly *klum* on important articles published in periodicals. Moshe Pelli (University of Central Florida), *maskil b'doreinu*, has stepped in to fill the lacuna. He has published five volumes in a series of monographs and annotated indices on periodicals of the Haskalah for Magnes Press, 2000-2015. *Sha`ar LaHaskalah [Gate to Haskalah]: An Annotated Index to Ha-Me'asef, The First Hebrew Periodical (1783-1811)* was the first publication (2000). Pelli's comments on *Ha-Me'asef* (where *maskilim* is first used, October, 1783) sets the stage for the volumes that follow. In the current volume, he researches the Vienna based Hebrew journal, *Kochvei Yitzhak (KY)*, edited by Mendel Stern (1811-1873), and cultivates insights on the *maskilim* who have contributed to its pages. Annotated entries, vary in length, encapsulate the accomplishments of artists, leaders, educators, literati, politicians, revolutionaries and religious leaders. A broad sweep of Jewish and Hebrew topics are printed in *KY*; Jewish education, Hebrew literature and poetry, Bible, Rabbis, contemporary historical-political-societal issues and concern affecting the Jewish polity and