

BN

Biblische Notizen
Biblical Notes

*Neue Folge. Herausgegeben von Kristin De Troyer und
Friedrich Vinzenz Reiterer, Salzburg.*

Betreut am Fachbereich Bibelwissenschaft und Kirchengeschichte
der Paris Lodron Universität Salzburg.

Katherine E. Southwood, Danilo Verde and Martina Weingärtner (eds.)

Pain in the Hebrew Bible

Pain runs as a vivid thread through the fabric of the Hebrew Bible, a marker of human vulnerability that resists fixed categories. It moves between the physical and the emotional, the individual and the collective, the immediate and the remembered. Its expression is shaped by language, filtered through culture, and constrained by social convention. While earlier thinkers often viewed pain as incommunicable, many now argue that it can be meaningfully expressed. Biblical texts, in this light, articulate pain through a range of narrative, poetic, and rhetorical strategies – offering not a unified theory, but a rich and varied repertoire for making suffering intelligible. This special issue shows how multiperspective approaches to pain can enhance our understanding of biblical literature and contribute to broader reflections on human suffering.

Helmut Utzschneider / Wolfgang Oswald, Exodus 16–40 (Internationaler Exegetischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament), 400 p., € 119,00, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2023, ISBN 978-3-17-042576-7.

In 2013, Helmut Utzschneider and Wolfgang Oswald have published the first volume (Exodus 1–15) of their Exodus commentary in the series *Internationaler Exegetischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament* (IEKAT). Exactly ten years later, the second volume (Exodus 16–40) has been published. Again, they remain faithful to the fundamental principle of IEKAT, paying particular attention to both a synchronic and diachronic approach to the Biblical text, and even interrelating both, where possible.

As in the first volume, Utzschneider has focused on the synchronic approach of most of the pericopes – he has also translated the Hebrew text into German. And even in taking the Hebrew Massoretic text as his source text, when discussing and translating each individual passage, he also pays attention to variant readings of especially the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch that are deemed relevant.

Oswald, in turn, has taken on the diachronic approach to the text (also the synchronic analysis of the so-called Covenant Code in Exod 20,21b–23,19 and the Covenant text in Exod 34,10–28 are his). In doing so, he builds on the “kompositionsgeschichtliche Gesamtkonzept” already presented in detail in the first volume. The origin of the book of Exodus looks as follows, according to Oswald: an “Exodus-Gottesberg-Erzählung” is the oldest layer; in it, Israel only stayed in the desert for short times. Deuteronomistic authors expanded this narrative at various points (among others in Exod 17,8–16*; 19,3–8*; 24,4–8; 32,7–8; 34,10–28 – all verses that were commonly associated with a Deuteronomistic redaction in traditional source or redaction-critical research into the origins of the book of Exodus). The interventions of the Priestly composition – which is also demonstrable in the book of Genesis – for the first time created the idea of a weeks-long desert journey. The origin of the so-called “Heiligtumserzählung” (Exod 25–31*; 35–40*) is also to be found within the Priestly milieu. Finally, it was within the so-called Torah Composition – developing during Babylonian and Persian times – that the depiction of a long desert sojourn full of hardship became an important topic. Indeed, the desert motif was an ideal metaphor to refer to the desolate state of Jerusalem and the people of Israel during the exilic and early post-exilic period.

Oswald is convinced of the soundness of his reconstruction of the origin and development of the text of Exodus 16–40. This very fact, however, entails that the reader sometimes gets the impression that this is the only correct model, while within current research on the Pentateuch nothing is more controversial than the question of the origins and dating of these texts. The way in which the aforementioned verses are plainly characterised as “Deuteronomistic”, without taking into account the remarkable points of divergence with regard to the typical characteristics of Deuteronomistic literature, is an example thereof.

Reading the commentary, the reader hardly notices that the text has been written by two different authors. This shows that Utzschneider and Oswald worked very intensively together. The result of this interaction can also be found in the “Synthesen”, that conclude the discussion of each individual pericope, being the result

of intensive discussions between the authors. In these very accessible syntheses, the authors also regularly focus on the history of interpretation of the passages in question. Here, attention is paid to the way in which some texts have functioned, for instance, within rabbinic Judaism, the New Testament or the Christian churches, or the extent to which they could even play a role within interreligious dialogue (e.g. on p. 73 following the story of Jethro's sacrifice in Exod 18,7-12). In addition, the reception of texts in literature is also occasionally discussed, such as Thomas Mann's description of the Ten Commandments as "die Quintessenz des Menschenanstandes" (p. 117).

The fact that the intent of IEKAT is to present a commentary series addressing both Biblical scholars and theologians, but also a wider interested audience, implies unavoidably that each of the addressed audiences may occasionally be left hungry. What may seem too specialised for some may be too general and insufficiently nuanced for others. To a critical Bible scholar, therefore, the commentary sometimes feels somewhat 'dogmatic' when, with regard to difficult texts, an occasionally too simplistic explanation is given. For instance, the authors assume that the piercing of the ear of a slave who is released but chooses to remain in service to his master happened in some sanctuary. However, this is nowhere mentioned in the text of Exod 21,3-6. Or, in Exod 25,10, one translates the term used to name the wood from which the ark of the covenant was made as 'acacia wood' without any further explanation, while the meaning of the Hebrew term *šittîm* is not at all certain (this is also the reason why some translations, such as the King James version, opt to transliterate this term as "shittim wood" instead of translating it).

Nevertheless, these are obviously matters of detail that are especially salient to scholarly Bible exegetes, and they do not diminish in any way the great value of this second volume of Utzschneider and Oswald's Exodus Commentary, being a highly accessible source of information for both study and preaching, to which the indexes of Hebrew terms, key terms and Bible references also make an excellent contribution.

Hans Ausloos, Louvain-la-Neuve