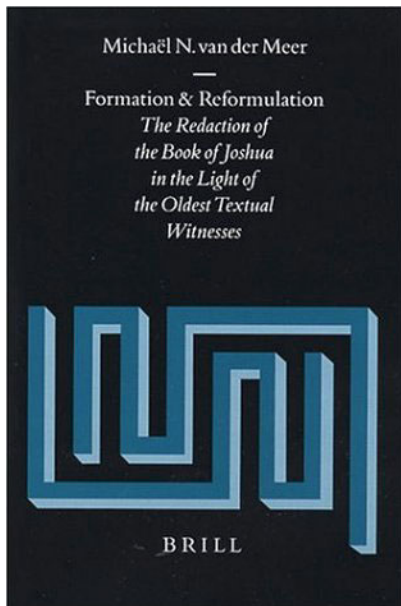


RBL 02/2006



Meer, Michaël N. van der

Formation and Reformulation: The Redaction of the Book of Joshua in the Light of the Oldest Textual Witnesses

Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 102

Leiden: Brill, 2004. Pp. xxiv + 571. Hardcover.
€158.00. ISBN 9004131256.

Kristin De Troyer
Claremont School of Theology
Claremont, CA 91711

This is a book that should be read by anyone interested in Deuteronomistic studies and/or text-critical studies. The Deuteronomistic scholar will be challenged by the insights stemming from text-critical studies, while the text critic will enjoy the refreshment course into Deuteronomistic studies. The book focuses on Joshua, which is indeed both a crux in Deuteronomistic studies (Joshua has elements of DtrH, DtrN, RedP, and eventually later Dtr redactions) and in text-critical studies (Joshua comes in different forms and texts).

Michaël van der Meer offers in his first chapter a general introduction dealing with the variant version of the books of the Hebrew Bible and their relevance to the history of the text, followed by an introduction to the book of Joshua as a test case. Then, chapter by chapter the author offers a superb survey of the issues at stake. Chapter 2 covers completely the theories regarding and issues of the Septuagint. Chapter 3 deals with the Qumran Scrolls of Joshua (all the possible texts related to Joshua). Then the author moves in chapter 4 to a brief but good survey of the redaction of the book of Joshua (focusing on Dtr). A short chapter 5 outlines his position on the relationship between textual and literary criticism. His goal is to separate the two methods and not to let them overlap, as do Tov, Ulrich, Mazor, Rofé, and others. Van der Meer argues: “Textual and literary criticism should be juxtaposed, not subordinated to one another” (156). In this

short chapter the author also explains his arguments for choosing to focus on four passages from Joshua: Josh 1 (ch. 6); 5:2–9 (ch. 7); 8:1–29 (ch. 8), and, finally, “8:30–35” (ch. 9). He then writes: “The method followed in these sections is that of keeping text-critical and literary-critical hypotheses separate *as long as possible*, in order to find out whether or not the results of an autonomous literary-critical analysis of the passages confirm the hypotheses regarding the formation of the passages developed on the basis of the text-critical data” (158, emphasis added).

Focusing on chapters 6 and 9, I note the following. In chapter 6 van der Meer deals with what he calls “quantitative variants,” meaning the lexemes of the Hebrew text that are not represented in the Greek text. (I wonder why these variants are labeled quantitative, for often they seem to offer qualitative differences). In this chapter the author offers a good synopsis with some notes. Then he takes the reader on a redaction-critical analysis of the Hebrew text common to MT and LXX. Next, he offers a discussion of the pluses in MT Josh 1. In the latter section, he again superbly synthesizes the views of many authors. I was hoping for a detailed analysis of the translation technique of the differences, but the discussion remained mostly on the redaction-critical level. Van der Meer concludes at the end of the chapter that “most if not all of its minuses vis-a-vis MT are the result of a conscious attempt to streamline the redundant and layered Hebrew text for the sake of a coherent and stylised Greek text and in that sense reflect the attempt of the Greek translator to produce a faithful, though not literal translation of the Hebrew original” (246).

In chapter 9 van der Meer deals with the complex issue of the different locations of the text of Josh 8:30–35 in the MT, Old Greek, 4QJosh^a, and so forth. What is remarkable in this chapter is that van der Meer offers his own reconstruction of the sequence of the Qumran fragments and their place within the reconstructed scroll. He argues that the scribe of 4QJosh^a used the elements of setting up the altar in two places: shortly after crossing the Jordan (so as to fulfill the commandment of Deut 27) and in its “true” location, namely, at the end of chapter 8 (or maybe at the beginning of ch. 9). His reconstruction is the main argument for his hypothesis defending the MT location, sequence, and originality of the text. I missed a detailed analysis here of the differences between the texts—an analysis that could have buttressed his hypothesis or not.

In conclusion, this volume is a must for every scholar of Deuteronomistic studies or text-critical studies who wants to take the debate to the next level.