
Blažej ŠTRBA, *Take off your sandals from your feet! An exegetical study of Josh 5, 13-15* (Österreichische Biblische Studien 32; Peter Lang; Frankfurt, 2008) 404 pp. ISBN: 978-3-631-57599-4. \$82,95

Over the past decade, there has been a resurgence of interest in the book of Joshua: its text, themes, and theology. This volume, by B.Š., is a welcome addition to such studies. With its clear conception, thoughtful approach, and deeply rooted scholarly foundations, this monograph should be of interest to everyone who does research in the Hexateuch.

The focus of Š.'s work, as laid out in the subtitle, is Joshua 5:13-15. With its command to Joshua to take off his sandals, this unit parallels and refers to the earlier account of Moses at the burning bush in the book of Exodus. Here, as elsewhere in the Pentateuch and in the book bearing his name, Joshua is closely linked with Moses. But what is the exact nature of the relationship between this material and earlier passages, as well as between Joshua and Moses? These are the issues that Š. sets out to delineate and resolve.

Š. devotes his first chapter to a full survey of earlier scholarship, so as to establish the *status quaestionis* (which is also the title of this chapter). As an overview, he divides earlier exegetes of this material into six groups or categories: the adherents of source criticism, those who emphasize comparative study through the use of extra-biblical literature, those who emphasize the text with special attention to its redactional history, those who work with the text in its final form, those who broaden the scope to encompass redactional and compositional criticism, and adherents of reader-response approaches.

Although the order in which Š. lists these groups or categories is largely chronological, it is also the case that many scholars reside in more than one category and that some recent researchers emphasize approaches that have lay essentially dormant for quite a while. Š. is an expert guide as he leads readers through these varying starting points, winding paths, and diverse conclusions.

Š. begins his second chapter with some methodological considerations. He wishes to make a place for diachronic considerations in the largely narrative analysis that he adopts: although his approach is primarily synchronic, Š. does not want to take us back to the pre-critical period; rather, he wishes to make use of all methods that can be brought to bear. As he carefully examines these three verses—phrase-by-phrase, often word-by-word—he looks at the ancient versions as well as the Masoretic Text. Among his most significant observations in this section is his identification of the “commander of the army of Yahweh.” Although the phrase appears in verses 14 and 15 with exactly the same consonants and vowels, in the former there are two *maqef*s, in the latter only one. The absence of a *maqef* in verse 15 between the word for “army” and the term he renders “Yahweh” allows Š. to translate the phrase here as

“the commander of the army, Yahweh.” This identification of the commander as Yahweh, which Š. demonstrates with a number of other arguments, is a major contribution to a new and fuller interpretation of this passage.

In the title of his third chapter, Š. refers to the “triple installation of Joshua,” in the process of which Joshua succeeds Moses. In Š.’s analysis, the first installation, this by the priest Eleazar, is narrated in Numbers 27:22-23. Deuteronomy 31:7-8 contains Moses’ commissioning of Joshua. This, however, constitutes the bestowing of only a part of Moses’ authority. It is left to Yahweh, in Deuteronomy 31:23, to complete, as it were, the transfer of power, allotting to Joshua the one task that Moses never achieved; namely, leading the people into the Promised Land. As of this moment, Joshua possesses an authority or power equal to that of Moses.

How is Š. able to maintain such a position in the light of Deuteronomy 34:10, which states, “and there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses”? It is to this question that Š. devotes by far his longest chapter (chapter 4). Although it may seem odd for an author to spend more pages in analyzing a passage other than the focus of his work—and, in fact, a passage that appears in another biblical book—Š. expresses confidence that only through such a detailed study of the last chapter of Deuteronomy can we fully appreciate the end of chapter 5 (and, as we shall see, the first part of chapter 6) in Joshua. To compress into a few words Š.’s research of over a hundred pages, I refer to his contention that the phrase quoted above from Deuteronomy 34:10 becomes operative only after Joshua; that is, Moses and Joshua share a unique prophetic office that no one after them was able to achieve. In this way, Š. avers, the end of Deuteronomy constitutes a “key to the Book of Joshua.” Such linkage is especially evident in the first five chapters of the book of Joshua, culminating in the circumcision of the males and the celebration of the first Passover in the Land, as described in Joshua 5:1-12.

We as readers are now led full circle by Š. in chapter 5 of his monograph, returning to our starting point in Joshua. However, even as this happens, Š. expands the scope to include Joshua 6:1-5. The joining together of these seemingly separate incidents is, for Š., evident in the new set of instructions (in 6:2-5) with which the theophany at the end of chapter 5 concludes. For it is nothing less than the appearance of God that is at the heart of 5:13-15. Arguments from the text and from the application of narrative analysis converge at this point to demonstrate for Š. that this is indeed the case. It is here that, in addition to other methods, Š. makes good use of insights associated with reader-response approaches. In particular, he builds on the work of G. W. Savran. This allows for fruitful comparisons between Joshua 5:13-15 and theophanies narrated elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Within this expanded framework, Š. delineates the divine-human encounter with Joshua as inaugurating a new era; although this new era is marked by warfare at its beginning (as evident in the many battles of Joshua 6-12), its ultimate fulfillment is to be sought in the allotment of territory to the tribes and their settlement in the Promised Land.

When I evaluate a monograph such as this one, I do not emphasize terms like convincing/unconvincing; rather, I think in terms that reflect upon a response to these

two, related questions: Have I learned something about the book of Joshua (and, more generally, the Hexateuch) through this work? Will my reading of the biblical material hereafter be substantially changed because of my encounter with this author? In the case of this volume, the answer to both questions is most definitely positive. Some of Š.'s arguments seem, at least to me, to be more deeply grounded in the material than others. But the overall effect is of an edifice firmly rooted in fertile soil composed of ancient text and modern scholarship. I hope that B.Š. continues his fruitful explorations, thereby increasing the depth and breadth of the vineyard that is Biblical Studies.

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Jean LÉVÊQUE, *Job ou le drame de la foi* (Lectio Divina; Les éditions du Cerf; Paris 2007) 292 pp. ISBN: 978-2-204-08185-6. € 26,00

Job o el drama de la fe no es un comentario al libro de Job; tampoco una monografía teológica concreta. Estamos ante una recopilación de artículos o capítulos de libros publicados entre los años 1971 y 2001. El eminente exegeta francés, aquejado de una hemiplejía, ha recibido esta especie de homenaje de sus colegas Maurice Gilbert y Françoise Mies, que se han encargado del proyecto y de su preparación.

Los diversos materiales elegidos para su publicación han sido integrados en tres apartados: I. El libro en su contexto (11-81); II. El desarrollo de la intriga (83-173); III. Temas fundamentales del libro (175-275). El primer apartado contiene: 1. El contra-punto teológico ofrecido por la reflexión sapiencial; 2. El tema del justo sufriente en Mesopotamia y la problemática del libro de Job; 3. Sufrimiento y metamorfosis de Job; 4. Datación del libro de Job. El segundo apartado está compuesto por: 5. Job o la esperanza arrancada; 6. Tradición y traición en los discursos de los amigos; 7. Anámnesis y autojustificación: la conciencia del justo en Job 29-31; 8. La interpretación de los discursos de YHWH (Job 38,1-42,6); 9. El epílogo del libro de Job. Ensayo de interpretación. El tercer apartado integra: 10. El sentido del sufrimiento según el libro de Job; 11. El argumento de la creación en el libro de Job; 12. Sabiduría y paradoja en el libro de Job; 13. El mal de Job. El libro concluye con una lista de abreviaturas (277-278), un índice bíblico (279-283) y un índice de nombres propios (285-287).

El primer capítulo aborda los retos que plantearon a los sabios tanto la naturaleza y función del cosmos cuanto la naturaleza, el proyecto y el destino humanos. Cosmos y Hombre constituyen para el autor los ejes básicos de la reflexión sapiencial. El segundo capítulo sitúa la problemática más sobresaliente del libro (el sufrimiento del justo) en el marco del Próximo Oriente antiguo (los "precursores" literarios de Job). El tercer capítulo pone de relieve las peculiaridades que aporta el libro de Job a dicha temática. En el capítulo cuarto aborda el autor un tema todavía controvertido: