

Review of: "Deuteronomistic Redaction and the Evolution of the Decalogues in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5"

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This article deals with the question of literary and historical development of two versions of the Decalogue that appear, in the canonical text of the Pentateuch, in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. The author begins by expressing his general agreement with the view of Erhard Blum that the Tetrateuch – i.e., the books Genesis-Numbers – underwent a Deuteronomistic redaction followed by a Priestly one. Then, after a detailed survey of previous scholarship on the development of the Decalogues, the author presents his own view on the topic. He singles out the differences between the Decalogue in Exodus 20 and the one in Deuteronomy 5, suggesting that the latter version reflects a more advanced stage of social evolution in Iron Age Judah, along with elements of a specifically Deuteronomistic outlook. He dates the Deuteronomistic form of the Decalogue around the time of Josiah's Deuteronomistic reform ca. 620 BCE, which implies that an earlier form of the Decalogue was extant before. However, the author also finds Deuteronomistic phrases (in addition to other phrases attributed to a Priestly redaction) in Exodus 20 and suggests that they were likewise added to an earlier original version.

It should be noted that the list of supposedly Deuteronomistic phrases in Exodus 20 is not supported by reference to a general study of Deuteronomistic phraseology, such as Moshe Weinfeld's *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (1972), which makes one wonder to what degree the expressions in question are indeed typically Deuteronomistic. In addition, the author's discussion of the Hebrew noun *pesel* does not mention that this term is characteristic of Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic history (14 occurrences out of 31 in the Hebrew Bible) and Deutero-Isaiah (8 occurrences), which would support the author's argument of the relative lateness of this term. On a different note, the author's statement "It may be that the weekly observance of the Sabbath arose only during the Babylonian Exile (or perhaps in the late pre-exilic era), as a custom by which Jews affirmed their distinct identity" does not take account of the fact that the seventh-day rest is mentioned, with the verb *ShBT*, at the end of the Covenant Code (Exod. 23:12), which appears to significantly predate both the Deuteronomistic and the Priestly legislation. Also, there are indications that the members of the Judean garrison at Elephantine, in the 5th century BCE, observed a weekly Sabbath by refraining from concluding transactions on that day before the sunset. These data suggest that the weekly Sabbath was practiced well before the Babylonian exile.

Toward the end of the article, having singled out what, in his view, are specifically Deuteronomistic elements in the Decalogue in both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, the author states: "...we have reconstructed a short form of the commandments. This is a form that feasibly could have been carved into tablets of stone. Even if such carving never

occured, the commandments should have been in shortened form at some point in the transmission to give rise to the tradition that Moses did carve them on tablets of stone.” Yet, recalling that Deut. 27:2-4 enjoins the Israelites to write “all the words of this Torah” on some plastered stones, which could hardly be practical even if “this Torah” refers to some kind of Ur-Deuteronomium, one wonders whether this specific argument holds water. Also, the author discusses the number of the commandments in the reconstructed original version of the Decalogue, after the editorial additions have been removed. He concludes that the actual number is 12, and compares it to the so-called Ritual Decalogue in Exodus 34, where he sees the same number of the commandments. This raises a difficulty, since Exod. 34:28 speaks explicitly of “ten words/commandments,” and the same expression appears in Deut. 4:13, most likely with reference to the Decalogue in the following chapter. One can suppose that in both instances, 10 is merely a typological number, but then the actual number of commandments may well be other than 12, since 12 is also a typological number that would fit the context better if it also matched the actual count.

The author concludes by stating: “It appears that the Exodus 20 text sans the Priestly editing is older than the Deuteronomy 5 text,” and laying out the modifications that this conclusion requires for Blum's theory. Overall, the author's conclusion is sensible, despite the problems outlined above, and despite the fact that the author himself does not explicitly detail the constituent elements of the Priestly redaction in Exodus 20. Thus, the article's contribution to the ongoing study of the Decalogue is valuable.