

STUDIES IN THE BIBLE AND JUDEAN DESERT SCROLLS

by

Prof. Jacob Liver*

This book is a posthumous collection of studies by the late Professor Jacob Liver who was chairman of the biblical studies department of Tel Aviv University, and who passed away on May 1, 1969 at the untimely age of forty-five. The articles collected here were published between 1953 and 1969 in various journals, Hebrew and English. These studies are a representative selection of Liver's diverse interests in the fields of biblical scholarship and reflect his scholarly personality. In addition to these studies, Liver wrote two books: *The House of David, from the fall of the Kingdom of Judah to the fall of the Second Commonwealth and after* (Jerusalem, 1959 – Hebrew) and *Chapters in the History of the Priests and Levites, studies in the lists of Chronicles and Ezra and Nehemiah* (Jerusalem, 1968 – Hebrew), as well as extensive articles in the Encyclopaedia Biblica of which he was an editor.

Liver was sceptical of classical Source Criticism and maintained that it was impossible to break up biblical prose into a few all-inclusive sources. His method, influenced by the teachings of Cassuto, consists of employing critical tools to uncover smaller units of tradition. This uncovering of traditions is the subject of the first two articles reviewed below.

In the first one, *Korah, Dathan and Abiram*, Liver dealt with the well-known difficulties in approaching the story of the rebellion, recounted in Num. 16, as a single literary entity. After having refuted the literary criticism of the Keunen-Wellhausen school, he argued that the story is composed of two sources. The first and basic one is that of the Reubenite rebellion against Moses led by Dathan and Abiram. This story is based on ancient traditions from the time of the wanderings in the desert which reflect the attempt of the tribe of Reuben to retain its primogeniture. On the other hand, the stratum telling of Korah's rebellion originates in the monarchical period and mirrors the struggle between Priests and Levites shortly before the stabilisation of the Temple hierarchy.

In the second paper, *The Story of the Spies and the Problem of the Penetration to Canaan from the South*, Liver again refutes the solutions offered by scholars of the Wellhausen school. In his opinion, the story (Num.

חקרי מקרא

* Jerusalem, Bialik Institute, 1971; original Hebrew title: ומגילות מדבר יהודה

13-14) is composed of two versions, each emphasising different points fitting the particular conceptions of the narrators; namely, the Hebronite version in which Caleb is the main figure, and a second version which arose in those cultic centres where the traditions of the 'edah' ('congregation') flourished. The figure of Joshua was inserted into the story at a later period and is not an integral part of it.

Liver's research establishes the pre-monarchical date of the institution of the 'edah' in contradistinction to the classical Documentary Hypothesis which attributes this term to the Priestly Source (P), regarding the latter as post-exilic. The same fundamental approach is characteristic of his *Studies in the Story of the Gibeonites*. In Liver's opinion, the story is founded on a genuine and early tradition about the Gibeonite covenant, into which a secondary aetiological element was interwoven. The hostile attitude against the Gibeonites suggests, according to Liver, that the story was composed at the time when Saul tried to exterminate them in their cities, where they still maintained their ethnic uniqueness. The story aims at justifying Saul's persecution of the Gibeonites by emphasising that the covenant with them was made only because of their deceitful act.

In his discussion on *The Half-Shekel Offering in Biblical and Post-Biblical Literature*, Liver challenges another fundamental assumption of classical Source Criticism according to which the commandment of the half-shekel offering (Ex. 30:11-16) reflects post-exilic conditions in which the half-shekel tax was imposed in order to cover the needs of Temple worship. Liver proves that the half-shekel offering of the Pentateuch differs both from the annual third-of-a-shekel tax levied according to the treaty of Nehemiah (Neh. 10:33-34) and from the half-shekel offering of post-biblical rabbinic law. The half-shekel of the Pentateuch is not an offering but ransom money connected with the census. The belief that the census was bound to prove dangerous to all those who participated in it belongs to the beliefs of the primitive tribal society and cannot have originated in monarchical times. The last example of this primitive conception is the story of the plague which followed the Davidic census (II Sam. 24). By the time of the Monarchy, the taking of a census was entirely routine, as Liver shows in his studies on the genealogical lists in the book of Chronicles.

The post-biblical halakhic law of the annual half-shekel offering was fixed, according to Liver, after the detachment of the Sects from the main body of the Jewish People during the last decades of Jewish autonomy. Therefore the sectarians refused to accept the law which instituted the annual half-shekel offering to the Temple, but continued to consider the half-shekel as a ransom for either the intra-sect census or a census of all Israel at the eschatological End of Days.

¹ cf. A. Hurvitz, Linguistic observations on the Priestly term 'edah' and the language of P. Summary of this article appears in this bulletin.

In the article *The 'Sons of Zadok the Priest' in the Dead Sea Sect*, Liver explains the leading role played by the Sons of Zadok within the sect, as well as their prominence in its eschatological system, by the fact that the founders of the sect were actually priests of the house of Zadok.

The Doctrine of the Two Messiahs in Sectarian Literature in the Time of the Second Commonwealth is a by-product of Liver's great study on the history of the House of David after the destruction of Judah. Here he stresses the paramount position of the priestly Messiah of Aaron in comparison to the minor importance of the Davidic Messiah in the sectarian messianic beliefs. He explains this phenomenon by the political emergence of the high-priesthood during the period of the Second Commonwealth.

Common to all the above-mentioned studies is Liver's 'realistic', non-theological approach to biblical problems. This is also true of another group of studies in this volume, which are investigations of biblical historiography and deal in particular with the problems of the books of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. These Bible books formed a major field of interest for Liver, as is demonstrated by his book, already mentioned, *Chapters in the History of Priests and Levites, studies in the lists of Chronicles and Ezra and Nehemiah*. In his treatment of these Bible books, whose historical value had been depreciated by classical Bible study, he was deeply influenced by his teachers Professor B. Mazar and the late Professor M. H. Segal.

History and Historiography in the Book of Chronicles is a general survey of the importance of the Book of Chronicles and the historical sources embedded in it for a systematic study of the history of Israel in the biblical period. In spite of the fact that there are legendary portions, exaggerated numbers and a general slant towards a particularist view, authentic historical material is also to be found in Chronicles, for example, genealogies, the stories pertaining to Pharaoh Shishak's invasion in the reign of Rehoboam, the judicial reforms of Jehoshaphat, and the important chapter on the reign of Uzziah, about whose political strength we know only from this source, and from the Annals of Tilgath-Pileser III of Assyria.

The nature of the sources which the Chronicler used is the subject of an article "*So all Israel were Reckoned by Genealogies, Behold they were written in the Book of the Kings of Israel*" (I Chr. 9:1). This very verse raises the question of the connection between the tribal genealogies in the Book of Chronicles and the "Book of the Kings of Israel" hinted at by the verb *hityahes* which is often synonymous with the verb *hitpaqed*, 'present oneself for a census', and alludes to the military levy. Such military census lists were recorded together with other historical material in "The Books of the Kings of Israel and Judah", which probably served as a primary source for the Chronicler.

The Beginning of the "Return to Zion" is a discussion of the historical reliability of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the principal source of

our knowledge of the history of the period of Restoration. Liver makes a strong case for the historical authenticity of the Edict of Cyrus arguing that it accords with the description of Cyrus as a devotee of the god Marduk on the Babylonian Cylinder. The Edict of Cyrus is the bill of rights of the Jerusalem Temple, permission to the exiles to return to Zion being mentioned only in passing. In Liver's opinion, there is no basis for the assumption which postpones the beginning of the settlement in Judah until Darius's reign according to the apocryphal First Book of Esdras – an imaginary story which was widespread among Hellenistic Jews.

On the Problem of the Order of the Kings of Persia in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah is a study of another aspect of the historical reliability of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The order of the Persian kings generally coincides with the known facts. The discrepancies in the fragmented text of the book of Ezra and the problems connected with the order of the events of Ezra ch. 4-6 are the work of an editor in the early Hellenistic period, when he was drawing on the already fragmentary text in front of him.

This book also includes the following studies. *The Chronology of Tyre at the beginning of the First Millenium B. C.*, using Hellenistic sources, fixes the date of the founding of Carthage in North Africa in the year 825 B. C., and hence the following dates may be determined: 979/8 B. C. for Hiram's ascent to the throne; 968/7 for the building of Solomon's temple; 971/70, Solomon's ascent to the throne; 930/31, the division of the united kingdom into the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

In *The Wars of Mesha, King of Moab*, Liver discusses Mesha's inscription and its comparison with the Bible. The article is, on the one hand, an historical and topographical commentary on the Mesha inscription, and on the other hand it determines the relation between Mesha's victory and the campaign of Jehoram, son of Ahab King of Israel, against Moab. In Liver's opinion, the events recounted in the Mesha Inscription antedate the failure of the above-mentioned campaign attributable to Mesha's fortification of the flatland in northern Moab. Thus Jehoram and his allies were left no choice but to attack Moab from the south, from Edom. Jehoram's failure to capture Kir Hareseth caused him to lose his previously captured territories, since no territorial continuity was created between the conquered territory and the area of Israelite settlement in Gilead.

In his discussion in *The Book of the Acts of Solomon*, Liver shows that this book was the source of the history of the reign of Solomon and not a part of "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah". In *The Figure of Balaam in Biblical Tradition*, Liver establishes the antiquity of the framework story and the relatively late authorship of the parables

Review by SHMUEL AHITUV