

# RECENSIONES

## Vetus Testamentum

Liane FELDMAN, *The Story of Sacrifice*. Ritual and Narrative in the Priestly Pentateuchal Source (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 141). Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2020. xiii-245 p. €104,00

Liane Feldman's monograph presents an innovative analysis of the Priestly traditions of the Pentateuch that reimagines the meaning of the ritual texts of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, their place within the literary history of the Priestly source (P), and the methods we use to study them. A sophisticated and well-crafted study totalling 200 pages, Feldman begins her book, in chapter 1 (pp. 1-28), by identifying three scholarly trends in earlier studies of P that she aims at displacing. First, Feldman criticizes the tendency of scholars to uncritically classify P's ritual laws as "nonliterary" (1) — dense, repetitive, and generally lacking in artistry when compared to the so-called narrative parts of P. Second, Feldman challenges the classic hypothesis that the earliest Priestly narrative (what Continental scholarship dubs "Pg") was largely devoid of cultic instructions and was only later edited to include the ritual laws of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Such a diachronic distinction between law and narrative, Feldman insists, fails to appreciate the integral role that the ritual texts play in advancing the overarching story of P, on the one hand, and the critical importance of narrative features in shaping the Priestly ritual texts, on the other. Third, Feldman maintains that much of the scholarship of P has operated from the reductionist premise that P's ritual instructions are only valuable for what they can tell us about how the cult functioned in ancient Israel. While Feldman concedes that P's rituals may resemble some of the rituals that were performed in Israel, she insists that the purpose of their textualization is not to codify actual practice. Rather, they serve the *literary* purpose of constructing a story world that conveys the importance of sacrifice for ensuring the successful functioning of the cult established at Sinai.

Feldman therefore argues that we should approach the Priestly ritual texts as literature, or what Feldman terms "literary ritual" (10). The four chapters that follow (Chapters 2-5) offer a close reading of Exodus 40 – Leviticus 7 (Chapter 2), Lev 8,1 – 15,33 + Num 7,1 – 8,4 (Chapters 3 and 4), and Leviticus 16–17 (Chapter 5), revealing how they serve to advance the plot, character development, and spatial setting of the Priestly narrative. The narrative coherence of Exodus 40 – Leviticus 17 and Num 7,1 – 8,4, Feldman contends, undermines scholarly attempts to posit major compositional breaks within these materials. While Feldman admits the presence of minor glosses and additions within P's ritual texts (for example, she concedes that the statement in Lev 1,4 that the burnt offering effects *כפר* is a late gloss [see 64 n. 96]), she argues that the vast majority of the instructions for the construction of the tabernacle and its sacrificial cult, the account of the