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## The Two Descriptions of the Sanctuary in Deuteronomy.

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THE Book of Deuteronomy contains two descriptions of the place of Israel's worship. One of these, 'the sanctuary which the Lord elects out of all your tribes to set His name there,' occurs in only one passage, 12<sup>1-7</sup>; the other, 'the sanctuary which the Lord elects in one of thy tribes,' occurs sporadically through the book and is peculiar to it. In my volume on Deuteronomy I have pointed out that the first expression which can only mean centralization at Jerusalem occurs in a section which can be proved to be later in date than its surroundings, and which is readily separable from and inconsistent with the rest of the chapter. I have only to add to this that the phrase appears again only in a few passages in Kings, with their parallels in Chronicles, and that there it is definitely selected to mark Jerusalem. As to the other description of the sanctuary I was content to urge that it was ambiguous, since it might mean either 'any of thy tribes' or 'a definite one of thy tribes.' If, however, we take it to mean 'in one definite tribe' and so to refer to a single central sanctuary, it makes the Code wholly unworkable in its regulations about tithes, sacrifices, and festivals. If, on the other hand, it is interpreted as permitting a number of leading sanctuaries in several tribes, it makes the legislation uniform in its aim and practicable in its requirements.

It is necessary to emphasize that I find the ambiguity only in the expression 'in one of thy tribes,' because Oestreicher about the same period published a pamphlet<sup>1</sup> which took a somewhat similar position. But Oestreicher believed himself justified in holding that 'the sanctuary which the Lord elects' is in itself ambiguous. To him the definite article prefixed to sanctuary was used in a distributive sense, and the word might in itself mean any sanctuary. Then, comparing the language of Deuteronomy with the law of Ex 20<sup>24</sup>, 'in every place or sanctuary where I record my name I will come unto thee,' he insisted that the regulation in Deuteronomy went no further than

that in Exodus and represented the same attitude. He, further, failed to note or explain the significant change at 12<sup>1-7</sup> into the sanctuary elected out of all your tribes.

König was able to prove against Oestreicher<sup>2</sup> that there was no such distributive use of the article in Hebrew. But, besides this general law of Hebrew grammar, the definite article was peculiarly in place here. The sanctuary was to be a definite one, defined by the fact that it was elected by the Lord. The old freedom of the life before the settlement had ceased. Now that the people are in Palestine, they may not worship at any casual shrine, but must confine their sacrifices to sanctuaries which are authorized and have received the Divine sanction. But this does not determine that there can only be one such, since Yahweh may elect more than one. To make it clear that there was only one such, it would have been necessary to add another clause to that effect. This is what is done in 12<sup>1-7</sup>, 'The sanctuary which the Lord elects out of all your tribes to set his name there.' But this is what is not done in the phrase 'in one of thy tribes.' That expression, I repeat, is ambiguous.

To prove this, it is only necessary to collect the passages in the Code where *ehad* or *ahath* ('one') is followed by a plural noun. Fortunately the cases are fairly numerous; they are the following, 15<sup>7</sup> 16<sup>5</sup> 18<sup>8</sup> 19<sup>5</sup> 23<sup>17</sup>. In the first of these, 15<sup>7</sup>, order is given as to the treatment of a poor man, 'one of thy brethren within one of thy gates.' Patently the sense here is 'any of thy brethren in any of thy towns.' The words cannot mean 'one definite poor man out of one definite town of Israel,' otherwise they cease to contain a law with general force. Again, in 16<sup>5</sup> the people are forbidden to celebrate the passover 'in one of thy gates.' Here also the meaning must be as the English Version has translated it, viz. 'any,' since, if we were to understand 'in a definite town,' what the law as to passover meant was the transference of passover from one town to another. In 19<sup>5</sup> the man who has killed

<sup>1</sup> *Das Deuteronomische Grundgesetz.*

<sup>2</sup> *Z.A.W.*, 1925.

his neighbour is instructed to flee to 'one of these (asylum) towns.' Yet no one would venture to suggest that there was only one special asylum in which each individual Israelite could find refuge. Any of them was a sufficient shelter.

The last two cases are specially instructive. In 23<sup>17</sup> the fugitive slave is allowed to live 'in the place which he chooses in one of thy gates,' where the parallel to the description of the sanctuary is specially close. Oestreicher has already appealed, as I have done, to this example. Objection has been taken to this appeal, because it is said that, so far from supporting our contention, the phrase really proves the opposite. No one, we are told, would suggest that the refugee could live in a dozen places at once. The town, before the man has elected to live in it, may be indefinite; but, once the man has chosen it, it can only be one.<sup>1</sup> Hence also the sanctuary which Yahweh elects becomes definitely one, after He has chosen it. But the analogy is imperfect, and the conclusion is inept. The uniqueness of the place which the refugee slave selects is involved in the nature of the case: it arises from the fact that a man cannot live in two places at the same time. But the uniqueness of the sanctuary is not in the nature of the case, if Yahweh can choose two and accept worship at both. To say that He cannot is to beg the question under examination from the beginning, and it is to contradict the plain sense of Ex 20<sup>24</sup>, 'in every place where I record my name I will come to thee.' Yahweh was regarded as able to record His name in several places.

Again, the last of the five cases is in certain respects the most illuminating, since here we have both the definite article as in 'the sanctuary' and the use of 'one' with a following plural noun. In 18<sup>6</sup> is the sentence, 'when the Levite comes from one of thy gates out of all Israel, where he happens to be living.' I cannot here, any more than in the case of 'the sanctuary,' accept Oestreicher's idea of the article being used distributively, so that we should read 'any Levite.' The man is defined by the article, because his character and his qualifications have already been described in the preceding verses of the chapter: 'the Levite' would be best rendered here in English by 'such a Levite.' In the same way 'the sanctuary' does not mean 'any sanctuary,' it means a sanctuary defined by the fact

that Yahweh has elected it. But the definition of the sanctuary by the article does not carry with it, in spite of the following phrase 'in one of thy tribes,' that there can be only one, any more than the definition of the Levite by the article carries with it that he is only one out of some specific town in Israel. He with his qualifications comes from any of thy towns where he happens to be living in Israel.

Gressmann,<sup>2</sup> however, finds a proof that the sanctuary of Yahweh's selection can only be one in 16<sup>5f.</sup>, 'thou shalt not celebrate passover in any of thy gates [which Gressmann translates *Ortschaften*], but (only) at the place of Yahweh's choice.' He writes: 'The contrast cannot be—Ortschaft and (placed outside the Ortschaft) sanctuary, for the sanctuaries belonged to the Ortschaft, in which or beside which they stood. Several holy places distant from the Ortschaft cannot, however, very well be intended, for then a plural would have been necessary. One must rather understand, not in any casual Ortschaft and not at any casual sanctuary, but only in one Ortschaft and at one sanctuary.' Here, however, Gressmann has not recognized the remarkable features in this law of passover which connect it with Northern Israel. Yet it is here that, more than anywhere else, the local reference of the Law is most evident. Addressed as it was to the people of Ephraim, the Law did not need to use the plural, for to those for whom it was meant there was only one Yahweh sanctuary, viz. their tribal shrine. Failing to recognize this, Gressmann has also failed to notice that in the verse to which he refers, it is not 'the sanctuary which Yahweh elects in one of thy tribes' which appears, but merely 'the sanctuary which Yahweh elects.' The Law does not speak of several sanctuaries or several tribes, because it is a local law. It speaks of the well-known sanctuary of Yahweh.

What the language used in the Code proves as to the meaning of the phrase 'in one of thy tribes' may be summed up. *Ehad* or *ahath* ('one') with a following plural noun occurs in six passages. In five of these it can only carry an indefinite sense and must mean 'any of thy.' The unquestioned sense of the expression in five out of the six cases ought to determine the sense in the sixth, unless very strong reason can be shown for adopting a

<sup>1</sup> That, I think, is a fair representation of König in *Z.A.W.*, and Sellin in *Gesch. des Isr.-Jüd. Volkes*.

<sup>2</sup> In a review of the 'Code of Deuteronomy,' *D.L.Z.*, 1925, p. 249 f.

different rendering there. I have been content in my book to make a lower claim than in my judgment the facts warrant, and have only insisted that in the sixth case the language is ambiguous and tolerant of the meaning which is there given to it. And it seemed enough to urge two things in connexion with such a rendering. On the one hand, there is another phrase referring to the sanctuary in the Code, which is not ambiguous, which is inconsistent with the laws alongside it, and which is later in date than these. That demands explanation. And the only explanation which seems adequate is that the phrase in 12<sup>1-7</sup> was added to make the ambiguous phrase definite and to enforce what the Code failed to enforce, centralization of worship at Jerusalem. On the other hand, if the phrase 'in one of thy tribes' be taken to mean the permission of several tribal sanctuaries, the Code in which it occurs is self-consistent, serves one definite aim, viz. that of forbidding worship at any except Yahweh sanctuaries, and, above all, is capable of being enforced. If it be taken to imply centralization, the Code cannot be enforced.

But one final matter deserves attention and demands explanation. The men who, we are told, drafted or codified the Code of Deuteronomy in the time of Josiah used a phrase which was perfectly clear to enforce centralization. They spoke about the sanctuary which Yahweh elects out of all your tribes. The phrase was current, for it appears in 1 K 8<sup>16</sup> 14<sup>21</sup> 11<sup>33</sup>, 2 K 21<sup>7</sup> (with parallels in Chronicles). There it is employed in connexion with the dedication of the Temple by Solomon, the rupture of the Northern tribes, and the apostasy of Manasseh. The implication is clear: Jerusalem became the sole centre of worship as soon as the Temple was built, it remained such in spite of the break away of the larger part of the nation, and it endured though Manasseh defiled the Temple. These men, when they meant centralization, used language which could not be misunderstood. Yet, in the body of the Code of Deuteronomy, they introduced another phrase, which according to the

language of that Code was at least ambiguous. The only explanation of this remarkable fact which seems credible is that they did not introduce the words 'the sanctuary which Yahweh elects in one of thy tribes,' but that they already found it there. But this implies that we are free to interpret the words after the language of the Code itself.

When we do this and translate 'the sanctuary which Yahweh elects in any of thy tribes,' we see that Ex 20<sup>24</sup>, the Code of Deuteronomy, and Dt 12<sup>1-7</sup> form three stages in the development of Israel's religion in connexion with its place of worship. In Exodus we have the people either still in their nomadic condition or only casually settled here and there. The sanctuary, if the people are to worship at all, must be as mobile as the men who use it. All that is insisted on is that Yahweh must have recorded His name there, *i.e.* it must be a Yahweh shrine. In Deuteronomy we have arrived at the settled conditions of Palestine. The tribes have found their local home. The freedom of worship which was permitted by Exodus is producing irregularities like the casual shrines and hedge priests that Micah set up. It is possible and necessary to demand that this should come to an end. We have, therefore, a number of tribal, recognized sanctuaries, and we have worship restricted to these. In Dt 12<sup>1-7</sup> appears the final stage, which was made practicable through the disappearance of Northern Israel as an independent kingdom and through the discrediting of its local shrines. Worship is now restricted to Jerusalem. But no one yet dreams of carrying that law back to the Mosaic period. Men are still aware of the historic facts, that Jerusalem only came into the hands of Israel under David, and that the Temple was built by Solomon. Then, and only then, Yahweh elected His sanctuary out of all your tribes. It was left to a later generation to make centralization into a dogma, to regard Moses as having instituted the solitary sanctuary, and to date the origin of one sanctuary and one priesthood in the time when Israel became a nation at Sinai.