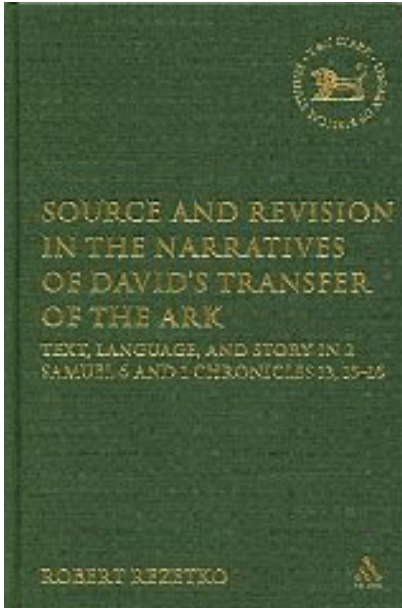


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Rezetko, Robert

Source and Revision in the Narratives of David's Transfer of the Ark: Text, Language, and Story in 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13, 15-16

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Source and Revision in the Narratives of David's Transfer of the Ark is a revision of Robert Rezetko's doctoral thesis completed at the University of Edinburgh in 2004 under the supervision of Graeme Auld and Timothy H. Lim. In this highly original thesis, Rezetko sets out to answer the question of how the ark narrative in 2 Sam 6 relates to the parallel material in 1 Chr 13, 15-16. Most commentators assume, and a few argue, that many portions of Chronicles are dependent upon the parallel account in 1 and 2 Samuel. Rezetko seeks to turn the scholarly consensus on its head. As he says, "Samuel's editors in the period of the Second Temple considerably reshaped an earlier version of the story of David's ark transfer. Consequently, many textual and linguistic details attested in MT 2 Sam 6 are secondary and often later than details in the parallel texts of MT 1 Chron 13, 15-16" (3).

Somewhat surprisingly, Rezetko uses the text-critical problems associated with Samuel as the basis of his study. Then he notes that Samuel has more detail regarding the united monarchy and a longer version of many episodes than the corresponding passages in Chronicles. Operating on the assumption that the shorter and cleaner text represents the original/earlier version, Rezetko believes that Chronicles was earlier than the final form of Samuel.

Rezetko organizes his thesis with a brief introduction, six chapters, and a brief conclusion. The introduction sets out the premises of his thesis. Chapter 1 provides the compulsory review of the literature. It is here that Rezetko lays out the gap in our knowledge that he seeks to address: What explains the complicated text-critical questions in 2 Sam 6? In summary, Rezetko seeks to prove that the ark narrative in 2 Sam 6 has come to us as the product of reshaping by successive editors “who sought to relate the story of David’s transfer of the ark to their own and their communities’ needs” (42). Chapter 2 sets out the methods Rezetko uses in his investigation. He uses both synchronic and diachronic approaches, which he finds to be in conflict as they deal with the ark narrative. But the impasse can be resolved by combining text-critical and literary approaches to reveal the “process of formation of these texts and the tales they transmit” (43). Then in chapters 3–6, Rezetko examines the ark narrative pericope by pericope.

In most places the thesis is clear and easy to understand. In a few places the style bogs down with extraneous detail that betrays the doctoral student trying to impress the examiners with exhaustive attention to every detail. At a deeper level, the critical issue here is the assumption that Samuel’s textual difficulties betray a later and highly edited version, while the “cleaner” text of Chronicles is the earlier version and closer to the original tradition. What is missing is a critical evaluation of this foundational presupposition. Is the cleaner text actually the earlier text? It is just as likely that the cleaner text of Chronicles is the later text, as evidenced by the majority view. Rezetko tells us that the later and older version of the story will have a greater degree of corruption, which may or may not be true. But then on Rezetko’s own view, Chronicles, a postexilic composition, was written close to the time when a single and authoritative text was agreed upon, in which case Chronicles would have few textual problems and may still be the later work. While Rezetko’s argument may or may not be correct, it seems the foundational principals of this thesis need a bit more investigation.

Another source of confusion comes from the way that Rezetko goes about finding textual anomalies that give evidence of editing. At its heart my concern comes from the lack of weight given to the purposes of Samuel and Chronicles and the stylistic features in the final form of the text. In several places Rezetko finds editorial additions in Samuel because of its “pro-David/anti-Saul polemic” (87). In many cases the variations are only between the Chronicles and Samuel accounts rather than between the MT and other texts of Samuel. So, it is appropriate to ask if the purposes of the different books have something to contribute to the discussion. The Chronicler undoubtedly writes with the question in mind: How are we the returning exiles related to Yahweh and the covenant community prior to the exile? Further, as Noth points out, Samuel and the Deuteronomistic History as a whole deal with the issues of Israel and Judah’s apostasy and judgment, which led to the exile and with God’s covenant faithfulness to David and his descendants.

On that basis, it seems that the writer of Samuel would tell a different version of the story than that told by the Chronicler regardless of when these texts reached their final form.

The suitability of this book depends in large measure on one's presuppositions. Nevertheless, there is much in this work that will prove useful to anyone studying the ark narrative. Rezetko's analysis of the differences between the ark narrative in Samuel and Chronicles will be a great starting place for any further study of this question. The charts and appendixes listing the variations between the LXX, 4QSam^a, and the MT of Samuel and Chronicles are invaluable. I recommend this book, even with the above reservations.