

Tôrâ in Prophetic Contexts

It remains now for us to examine the use of *tôrâ* in the prophetic literature. For this we think of the *nebi'im*, composed of the "former" prophets and the "later" prophets. Hence we begin with Joshua. Six times in Joshua (1:8; 8:31,32,34; 23:6; 24:26) the expression "book of the law" (*seper hattôrâ*) appears, sometimes qualified with "of Moses," once with "of God". There are several explicit references to that which "is written" and, hence also to "reading" all the words of Yahweh.⁵¹ This clearly points to a body of written material. Joshua 1:7, 8 simply continues with the parenetic use of the *tôrâ* of Moses, i.e., to encourage and instruct. According to 8:30-35, Joshua read "all the words of Moses" which had been "written in the Book of the Law," including the blessings and the cursings. Surely this would have been more than simply the Decalogue, at least the book of Covenant Renewal as commanded in Deut 27:1-14. But might it have included all the five books of Moses? We simply do not know. However it may be appropriate to digress and note that Exod 17:14 records the first command to Moses to write "in the book" (*basseper*). The late Barton Payne's comments are a *propos*:

It was to become a part, presumably, of some historical record already composed. What this record was is not stated, but it may well have consisted of the whole Pentateuch up to this point of Exod 17. Even the historical narratives of Genesis, moreover, present themselves as an authoritative standard for divinely approved conduct (Gen 39:9).⁵²

It seems that the subsequent events recorded in Exod 18, lend support to this position. We would note that God commanded Moses to write for a memorial and for recital of the mighty deeds of the Lord for the encouragement of Joshua -- hence for instruction.

In 1 Kgs 2:3, David is giving his death-bed charge to Solomon. The language is covenantal, similar to that in Gen 26:5. Again reference is made to "what is written in the *tôrâ* of Moses." This could be simply a reference to the book of Deuteronomy. The broader covenantal context, however, may indicate the whole Pentateuch.⁵³ This body of written material is referred to numerous times throughout the book of Chronicles as well. Certainly, by the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, the whole Pentateuch is considered "the Book of the *tôrâ* of Moses" or "of God" with authority for direction and governance of the people of God.

In this connection it is well to underscore something mentioned earlier. If, as we noted with respect to Deuteronomy as a book of covenant renewal, there is very little that might be properly called a *Codex iuris*, how much less when we take the whole Pentateuch into account. All of Genesis, half of Exodus and most of Numbers must be classified as history, specifically redemptive history. We draw the conclusion that the *tôrâ* of Moses must have a broader definition than merely "law, legislation." We submit that authoritative "teaching," or "instruction of Moses" would be most suitable, and this would be in keeping with our covenantal definition.

When we look at the "canonical" prophets we see again a concern for covenantal renewal based upon theology rather than on a code of ethics. Norman Snaith expresses this insight with clarity: