

Robert Vannoy, Deuteronomy, Lecture 12

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Exegesis of Deuteronomy 12, Pohl's addition to Halwarda

1. Phrase "the Place Which the Lord Your God Shall Choose": Halwarda

Now, let's get back to where we left off: the words in that phrase "the place which the LORD your God shall choose." A. Holwarda concludes that the question is not "one or more," but rather it's whether the place is selected by arbitrary human means, or whether the place is selected by divine choice. In other words, what he does is put stress on the verb, *bahar*, "the place which the LORD *shall choose*." The issue is not so much whether it's one or more of them, but that it is a place of the LORD's choice, it's not just an arbitrary choice. There are a couple of other factors that Holwarda appeals to to support his position. He says, "If Deuteronomy 12 says that all the offerings are to be brought to one place only, think of what that meant, practically speaking, for people who lived, for example, in Dan, way in the north, that's about ninety miles from Jerusalem." That would be like a family now making a trip to Florida, or something, from Philadelphia in order to offer a sacrifice. Now, you're going to walk that, and it's going to take you a while. He says it would mean an absence of at least a week.

a. Implications of Halwarda's Multiple Altar Approach

What I want to do is finish what Holwarda is arguing, then I'll come back to address the carrying of monetary means instead of an actual sacrifice because that's more feasible for transportation. Then I want to go back and look closer at the whole flow of thought in Deuteronomy 12. I want to suggest, on the basis of a more recent study, a modification to Holwarda's view that's going to apply to that.

But just think about the practical implications here. There are a lot of occasions on which an Israelite was supposed to bring a sacrifice. Would he have

to go to Jerusalem every time? What would it mean for the Levites? They were to accompany these people to the place of sacrifice. They'd be on the road all the time; they might as well just stay in Jerusalem instead of making the trip back and forth to distant points. So it doesn't seem as if Deuteronomy 12 requires only one central altar, one legitimate place of sacrifice. It doesn't seem that it's a very practical thing; it could never really have been carried out.

You know, from 2 Samuel 24 the place where the temple was chosen was on a threshing floor of Araunah where there seems to be some indication that here was a place that God would set apart. But you could say the altar at Bethel, where God appeared to Jacob, here there was a manifestation of God that gives a legitimacy, or sanction, since his name appeared there, to build him an altar there, too. There undoubtedly were other places, maybe some of them recorded, maybe some of them not recorded, where the LORD would have appeared and that would have given a legitimate right to build an altar. This is not just building an altar anywhere you feel like it, but a place where there was some divine sanction in some way. Admittedly, it is somewhat vague how that would normally work so let's go a bit further.

Holwarda's conclusion is that Israel did not have a law that bound the cult to one place alone, but Israel lived under a law that provided for local altars next to a central sanctuary. A central sanctuary, not in the sense of a sole sanctuary, but a primacy of place, you might say, would be given to the altar at the temple, or previously to the altar at the tabernacle, but that's not the exclusion of legitimate altars elsewhere. So that what was regulated was the place where the altar was to be built. The LORD would designate that in some way. The material out of which the altar was to be built, and then of course the offerings which were to be brought and how they were to be brought, that was all regulated in the Pentateuchal legislation. So arbitrariness and human contrivance are excluded in each of those areas or matters: the place, the materials, and the kind of offerings. It was all

regulated, and the LORD spelled that out, but God provided many altars to keep his people from temptation. The Canaanites had altars everywhere The Israelites were living in the middle of the Canaanites, and they had their altars, and if Israel didn't, it could easily lead them into temptation. But to keep them from that, to keep them in fellowship with himself, he provided a place for offering that would be accessible. So that's generally Holwarda's position.

2. Exegesis of Deuteronomy 2:1

What I'd like to do now is go back to Deuteronomy 12 and look at the chapter instead of just at that one phrase. Let's go down through the chapter and see how it flows. I'll just make a few comments on it, pretty much again following Holwarda's exegesis. If you have a Hebrew text, you might want to look at it. Deuteronomy 12:1 reads, "These are the statutes and ordinances which you shall observe to do in the land which the LORD, God of your fathers, gives you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth." These are the statutes and the ordinances. If you look at the text you see "the statutes and the ordinances." Holwarda takes those terms as basically synonymous, the *huqqim* and the *mishpatim*. He says those who try to distinguish between them say either that the *huqqim* refers to principles and the *mishpatim* to specific regulations, or the *huqqim* is religious, cultic requirements and the *mishpatim* civil law and criminal requirements.

He feels the distinction is hard to maintain. So he takes them as basically as synonymous. He points back to chapter six, verse one, where interestingly enough, *hamitzva* is prefixed to those two terms. Now I'm reading from the King James, which really is not a literal translation. The King James says, "Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances." The King James has plural there "commandments." If you look at the Hebrew text, it is singular: "Now this is the commandment [*mitzvah*], statutes, and ordinances." Now Holwarda takes the

mitzvah as the fundamental requirement, or basic commandment, namely, that of the first commandment: have no other Gods. That's the basic commandment. You have that *mitzvah*, no other gods, the basic commandment, then you have the *huqqim* and the *mishpatim* as the further outworking of the basic commandment. So that he feels chapters 6-11 concern mostly the *mitzvah*, the commandment, loyalty to the LORD alone. That's been dealt with in chapters 6-11. And now, in Deuteronomy 12:1, you begin consideration of *huqqim* and *mishpatim*, the further outworking of that, in more detailed regulations.

3. Exegesis of Deuteronomy 12:2-4

Interestingly enough, chapter 12 begins with consideration of the cult. And it's that, that the second commandment is concerned with: "You shall not bow down to them or serve them; you shall not make any graven image," and so forth. So Deuteronomy 12:2 then says, "You shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which you shall possess serve their gods upon the high mountains, up on the hills, and under every green tree." You shall utterly destroy all these places where the Canaanites serve their gods. They're to be destroyed.

Verse 3 says that "you shall overthrow their altars, break down their pillars, burn their idols with fire; you shall hew down the carved images of their gods, destroy the names of them out of that place." And then verse four says, "You shall not do so unto the LORD your god." If you look at the Hebrew text, "not you shall do *ken*," "so" or "thus." To what does the "so" or "thus" refer? It must be to the worship of the LORD in the manner of the Canaanite idols and at the heathen places of worship; at the heathen sanctuaries you're not to do so to the LORD your God. If Israel takes over the heathen places of worship, then that sharp antithesis between worship of the LORD and worship of these heathen deities is erased. So the basic idea Holwarda feels of chapter 6 to 11 is to serve the LORD only expressed here in verses four and five, and worked out in the area of the second

commandment.

So that the basic assumption, with respect to the places of worship, which you find in Wellhausen and in his followers, is fundamentally wrong. What does Wellhausen say? Wellhausen says Israel took over the Canaanite high places. Remember, Israelite worship evolved out of Canaanite heathenism and they just took over the Canaanite high places, and that only later, under prophetic influence, did you have opposition to that. And what this is saying is quite contrary to that. When you come into the land of Canaan, you're to wipe out all those places. And you're only to worship in the place which I will choose. Now, of course, it's true that Israel didn't always take that command seriously, yet the command was there. That's what they were to do, even though they didn't always follow it. So you find as early as in the book of Judges they were worshipping at the heathen high places, and they were condemned for that in Judges 2:1-5. But that's quite different than Wellhausen's thesis.

4. Exegesis of Deuteronomy 12:5

So verse five, "But to the place which the LORD your God shall choose, out of all your tribes to put his name there, even under his habitation shall you seek, and there you shall come." In sharp contrast with verse four, verse five starts in the Hebrew with *ki' im*. "But, unto the place," and that's a very similar expression to the one we looked at in verse fourteen. We'll come back to that later. But that's in contrast to the heathen places. To the place, which the LORD shall choose, that's where you're to go.

5. Exegesis of Deuteronomy 12:6

Verse six, "And there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes, your heave offerings of your hand, your vows, your freewill offerings, your firstlings of your herds, and your flocks." So the offerings are to be

brought to the place specified in verse five. You have these categories of offerings mentioned that are to be brought to that place. Then verse seven says, “There shall you eat before the LORD your God. You shall rejoice in all that you put your hand onto, you and all your households wherein the LORD your God has blessed you.” The offerings of verse six are to be eaten at the place of verse five. It all flows together. That’s to be done before the LORD; you shall eat before the LORD. The LORD is present in that place in some sense.

“And there you shall rejoice.” The Israelite sacrifices were different in concept than the Canaanites. In the Canaanite ritual, sacrifice had a magical character. You attempt by bringing the sacrifice to ensure fertility. In Israelite understanding the fertility of the land is a gift from the LORD, as Deuteronomy 8 says. The cult, or the sacrifice, are not magical; they don’t produce that. But the sacrifices are to be given as an expression of thanksgiving and rejoicing for what has already been received. So that they are told then, “You must eat before the LORD and you must rejoice in all that you put your hand unto, you and your household, when the LORD your God has blessed you.”

6. Exegesis of Deuteronomy 12:8

Verse eight, in the NIV, says, “You are not to do as we do here today, everyone as he sees fit.” Now that says, apparently, that when Israel enters Canaan, she’s to change from present practice. “You’re not to do as we do here today, everyone as he sees fit.” And it seems that that change has respect to the place of sacrifice. Now the question is, what situation does Moses have in mind that is to change? He characterizes the situation as one that’s sort of unregulated; everybody does what’s right in his own eyes—“everyone does as he sees fit.”

Now, some understand that as a reference to the wilderness period and say that during the time of the wilderness wandering that was the situation; everybody did what was right in his own eyes during that entire wilderness period. Holwarda

rejects that. Holwarda says if you look at 12:8 in the Hebrew text, literally it's "not you shall do, according to all, *asher*, which *anaknu*, we are doing *hayom*, here today." The *anaknu*, the "we," Holwarda says the *anaknu* speaks of the present living generation, what "we" are doing. The *'osim*, we *'osim*, are "doing," indicates present continuing character of the practices referred to. Something's going on right at the time in which he's speaking. The *poh*, localizes it; it's not a reference to the wilderness time but to here and now, and *hayom* makes that more specific: today, it says. So what he says is, during the wilderness period, he feels it was possible to follow a regularly organized, cultic practice.

Why? Israel wasn't threatened by enemies. They have wandered through the wilderness; just with a few exceptional cases were they threatened by enemies. But the present situation when they come into the land of Moab, into the trans-Jordan area, they'd entered into conditions of warfare. They fought Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, those eastern kings there.

7. Exegesis of Deuteronomy 12:10

You look at verse 10 and it says, "But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the LORD your God has given you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety." Now they weren't in rest; they were in this condition of disruption. So in that condition there was deviation from the rule mentioned in Exodus 20:24. Exodus 20:24 said, "You are to sacrifice only in the place where I come to you." And here, you see, you are not to do as you do here today: everyone as he sees fit, everyone doing what is right in his own eyes, sacrificing most anywhere. So he feels that the period of unrest began when Israel fought Sihon and Og in the conquest of trans-Jordan, and that was the reason for the present practice. The war situation so disrupted normal orderliness that it led to arbitrariness with respect to places of sacrifice, and the people were just sacrificing anywhere. Moses sort of excuses it

because of the conditions.

But what he's saying is, that's going to change when you come into the land; then you don't do as you are doing here today, just sacrificing anywhere. "You are not to do as we do here today, everyone as he sees fit." Verse 9, "Since you have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the Lord your God is giving you." The excuse for the present situation is mentioned. They haven't yet reached that resting place.

Of course, here you get to that question we discussed earlier: When would they reach that resting place? Is it not until the time of David? I think it's better as Holwarda has suggested to do it in the time of Joshua immediately after the conquest as found in Joshua 21:42, and 22:4. I think verse 10 confirms that: "You will cross the Jordan, settle in the land the LORD your God has given you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety." The rest begins when the conquest is finished.

8. Exegesis of Deuteronomy 12:11-14

Then verse 11 says, "Then to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name—there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the Lord." When the wars of conquest are finished, which have caused arbitrariness with respect to the place of sacrifice, then that command is to be taken seriously: You should sacrifice only at the place the LORD your God will choose. Verse 12 pretty much corresponds with verse 7: "And there rejoice before the Lord your God, you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites from your towns, who have no allotment or inheritance of their own." Verse 13, "Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please." The matter of place is again emphasized. And I think here you see a little more indication of what the arbitrariness of verse

8 was referring to: “You’re not to do,” in verse 8, “as we do here today, everyone as he sees fit.” Verse 13 indicates what that is. “Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please, anywhere you see fit.” What they were doing there was just using any altar they found in the unsettled conditions to bring offerings and the altar law of Exodus 20 really wasn’t being followed.

Then verse 14 to conclude: “Offer them only at the place the Lord will choose in one of your tribes, and there observe everything I command you.” In contrast to the present arbitrariness, Israel later must hold to the prescribed instructions concerning place of sacrifice.

9. Exegesis of Deuteronomy 12:18-26

Now, if you go back to summarize, you have these phrases that occur in the chapter. I’ve arranged here, in an order that starts with the simplest expression first, in verses 18 to 26, you get that expression that’s the simplest form. You find it in 18 and 26: The one thing is said with emphasis in that phrase, the choice of the place is dependent on the LORD’s choosing: “in the place which the LORD shall choose.” So over against arbitrariness, it is a choice of place; it’s the place that the LORD shall choose. When you go to verse 11, there’s an additional element; there you get the place which the LORD your God shall choose “to place his name in it;” to cause his name to dwell there. So the idea of that added expression is that there’s a special relation between such a place, a place of sacrifice, and the LORD and his self-revelation. God makes that place of sacrifice a place of self-revelation; it’s a place of manifestation of himself. Now some say the LORD’s name can dwell in only one place; Holwarda would contest that. There’s no reason why the LORD could not place his name in more than one place. I want to come back to that later, but for the present, leave it with that.

In verse 21, you get another additional element. “The place which the LORD your God shall choose,” Verses 11 and 21 are the same. It’s in fourteen

you get the additional expression “in one of your tribes,”—“the place which the LORD your God shall choose in one of your tribes.” Verse 21 is really the same as 11. We’ve already discussed that. It could be “in any of your tribes,” not necessarily “in one of your tribes.” Then the last expression, which is in verse 5, you have “the place which the LORD your God shall choose from all your tribes to place His name there to dwell.” There you sort of get all the phrases together; that’s in Deuteronomy 12:5.

2. Link to 1 Kings 8:16; 11:32

Now some have tried to link that with the expression in I Kings 8:16 regarding Jerusalem. I Kings 8:16, is particularly linked with verse 5 because 8:16 says, “Since the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city in any tribe of Israel to have a temple built so that my Name might be there, but I have chosen David to rule my people Israel.” “I chose no city to place my name there to dwell” (I Kings 8:16). There are numerous other references, like 11:32 of 1 Kings, “But you shall have one site for the sake of my servant David, and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel; he will have one tribe out of all the tribes of Israel.” Now what Holwarda responds to that is in all those texts, the term *hammaqom* does not occur, it’s not the place, it’s the city. So he feels there’s a distinction there, so that those texts don’t speak of a place of sacrifice, but a specific geographic location: the city. So he feels this doesn’t require centralization either.

Now, we’re quickly losing time here, but that’s basically Holwarda’s exegesis of Deuteronomy chapter 12. I think Holwarda really did a service to the evangelical community to point out the significance of this issue and then to suggest a way of reading Deuteronomy 12 that puts the biblical material in a much better perspective.

3. Pohl's Approach: National Central Sanctuary and Local Altars

However, there's been a more recent study, a very detailed study, and I put this on your bibliography. Again, it's a Dutch scholar, and it's not translated into English, but if you look at page six, the third entry, M.J. Pohl, *Het Archimedes Punt Van Pentateuch Kritiek, The Archimedean Point of Pentateuchal Criticism*, 1988. That's this volume, and that's a book-length treatment of this whole centralization issue. It's just been published. He really feels he is pushing the approach of Holwarda a step forward. His conclusion about all this that I've just gone over with you is that he thinks it's possible to read Deuteronomy 12 that way. But he thinks it's a bit forced. Then what he does is make a distinction that after reading this book recently, I'm inclined to agree with. I think his approach gives an improvement over Holwarda's.

He doesn't deny the possibility of Holwarda's exegesis, but he concludes that the reading's too forced, and that what Deuteronomy 12 does is permit only one central sanctuary, but does not address the issue of multiplicity of altars. In other words, what he does, when he goes to chapter 12 and you read, for example, verses 2 and 3, "you shall utterly destroy the places," he understands "place" there, which is plural, he understands that as a reference to central sanctuaries of the Canaanites. Then he feels what flows in the chapter is a contrast, and the contrast is with Canaanite practices. You're to destroy their sanctuaries, and then you are to bring your offerings to the central sanctuary that the LORD will choose in place of them. He reads verses 8 and following much as Holwarda does, but relates the statement to the place of the central sanctuary rather than just the location of altars. So in the confused period of the time of the wars in trans-Jordan, where the cult couldn't operate according to normal rules, that central sanctuary was being put around in arbitrary places. That's the way he understands it.

His conclusion is that chapter 12 addresses the issue of the central sanctuary. Most exegetes have read the chapter as a prohibition of all local altars,

but he says that's not addressed at all. It's not talking about local altars; it speaks only of the central sanctuary. He says that what Deuteronomy does, when you look at it as a book, there are two levels in view: On a national level, there's to be one central sanctuary; on the local level, many altars could be built. He feels that the book of Deuteronomy, in chapter 12, is stressing the national level, where there's to be one central sanctuary.

4. Deuteronomy 16:21; 27:5-6; 33:19 Non-Centralized Altars in Deut.

In other places in the book Deuteronomy you get this addressed; for example, look at Deuteronomy 16:21. This is a hard one for the Wellhausen school. The verse says, "you shall not plant a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the LORD your God which you shall make for yourself." That doesn't seem to be talking about a central sanctuary; that seems to be talking about local altars. When you come into the land and you put up your altars, don't put trees near them as the Canaanites did. Deuteronomy 27:5-6, that's about Mount Ebal and Gerizim, "There shalt thou build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. You shalt not lift up any iron tool upon that." But there you have an altar in 27:5 and 6 at Ebal and Gerizim; that's not the central altar. And in 33:19: "They shall call the people onto the mountain; there shall they offer sacrifices of righteousness, for they shall feast on the abundance of the sea and treasures hidden in the sand." That has to do with Zebulun and those tribes in the north with Issachar; it speaks of offering sacrifices there, in their territory. So he feels that the book addresses this on two different levels. On the national level, there's one central sanctuary, that's in Deuteronomy 12. And on the local level there are many altars, as seen in some of these other passages in the book of Deuteronomy.

5. Multiple Altars in Exodus

Then what he says is that in Exodus you have the same two levels. On the

national level, you get provision for the tabernacle, Exodus 25-27. That's where the instructions are given as to how the tabernacle is to be built. Then in verses 36-40, it's actually set up, so on the national level you've got one central sanctuary--the tabernacle. On the local level, you've got that altar law of Exodus 20:24-26. Of course, when you get into Leviticus, you have the local level; all the prescriptions there are for various times of sacrifices that are to be brought. So he says when you understand that structure of both Exodus and then Deuteronomy, he says what Wellhausen did was to compare two different levels of Exodus and Deuteronomy. In other words, let's put it this way: Here's Exodus, and here's Deuteronomy. Exodus 25-27, 36-40, then 20:24-26, this would compare Deuteronomy 16:21, 27:5 and 6, and 33:19; this is local, that is national. Now what he's saying is, what Wellhausen did was, he's comparing (B) with (A); he's taking two different levels--one level in Exodus and the other level in Deuteronomy--and comparing them. He says it's understandable then that Wellhausen sees a contradiction. So what Wellhausen tried to do was to give these two things a different place in Israel's historical development. He's comparing apples with oranges. So the result was (B) was viewed as much older than (A), and he explained the difference as development in time.

Now what Pohl suggests in this recent volume is that both levels appear in both Exodus and in Deuteronomy, and it's incorrect then to compare regulations that deal with different aspects of the cult. What you need to do, if you're going to compare, is you need to compare the same thing. Compare this as local and compare this as national, and you find unity and no problem. But you see, that does involve a modification of Holwarda's view about Deuteronomy 12. To understand the issue being addressed in the chapter, it's the issue of the central sanctuary, not the issue of multiplicity of altars, and I think this is probably a better way to look at the chapter.

6. Vannoy's Analysis of Pohl & Halwarda

So Pohl feels Halwarda's view is too forced. I think Pohl's exegesis fits better. Pohl discusses that phrase about "the place where I will place My name to dwell," and feels that is consistently used with the central sanctuary of worship. Now you could argue that Exodus 20:24 says the same thing; it comes close to saying the same thing. But it's not precisely the same wording. Exodus 20:24 says, "In all the places where I record my name." It's very close; it's a similar idea. I think what that's saying is, that there has to be some sort of a divine designation of place where to build the altar, but "the place where I cause my name to dwell" seems to refer either to the tabernacle or to the temple where the ark was the central sanctuary.

Now, Pohl tries to work that out, and quotes a lot of references with that in verse 8 of chapter 12 he would say that has to do with the central sanctuary, and in the time of war it's being moved around, just being put anywhere. It's not talking about multiplicity of altars; it's just talking about that central sanctuary, that tabernacle.

7. High Places Discussion

I wanted to discuss the high places with you. I think that the issue was increasingly felt that at these high places, syncretism is taking place, and that's why good kings were wiping out the high places. It's not the issue of altars *per se*; it's what's going on at the altars. It's purification of worship; it's not centralization of worship. And I think that can be established, we had time to look through a lot of texts.

We need to worship according to the regulations that God has given us. Let's say you go to the central sanctuary three times a year to the major festivals. It's in Deuteronomy, and it's also in Exodus, three times a year "all your males shall appear before the LORD God." Seems to me that, on those occasions

especially, there was a requirement to go to the central sanctuary. For others--a sin offering, a trespass offering, whatever occasion might require an offering, paying a vow--he could go to the nearest local sanctuary, and normally that would be the case. Not that you couldn't go to the temple as well, but you didn't have to go to the temple.

The Levites were scattered around. It seems to me that they must've had some officiating capacity at a lot of these local altars, but then they also accompanied the people when they went to Jerusalem at the time of the major festivals.

There are Evangelicals that have interpreted Deuteronomy 12 as saying there is one legitimate central sanctuary. They'll explain the Samuel passages as being, well, that's before the temple was built, or before the rest that is spoken of in II Samuel chapter 7, when David says "the LORD gave him rest." Then Deuteronomy 12 applies subsequent to David, but you see, it's awfully hard to work that out because there are too many references that still don't fit that scheme.

I think often altars were located on high hills. It seems sometimes the Israelites took over heathen high places. That was illegitimate because they were explicitly told not to do that. But they could build an altar to the LORD on a high hill, as Samuel did. He went up to the high place and it seems to be perfectly legitimate to offer a sacrifice to the LORD on a high hill. There's nothing wrong, I think, with the high place *per se*; it's only as the high places began to introduce syncretistic, or heathen, worship that they become condemned.

8. Comparison of 1 Kgs 15:14, 1 Chron. 14:3 and 2 Chron 33:17

Let me just give you a couple interesting references. In I Kings 15:14, speaking of King Asa, you read, "Although he did not remove the high places, Asa's heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life." Now, look at II Chronicles 14:3, speaking of Asa: "He removed the foreign altars and the high

places, smashed the sacred stones, and cut down the Asherah poles.” So Kings says he didn’t remove the high places, and Chronicles says he removed the foreign altars in the high places. It seems to me that in Kings you have a reference to the high places where the LORD was worshipped: legitimate high places. Now you ask what’s the basis for that? Look at II Chronicles 33:17; this is from the time of Manasseh, but you read in 33:17, “The people, however, continued to sacrifice at the high places, but only to the LORD their God.” It seems to me you have to make distinctions between the type of worship that was going on at high places. It wasn’t always necessarily evil or wrong. And it seems to me that then when you read in Chronicles of Asa--he tore down the high places--and you read in Kings he didn’t tear down the high places--maybe the way you explain that is that he tore down the high places that were involved in heathen worship. But he left the high places that were used in the worship of the LORD. I don’t know. It’s just a suggestion about that. But it seems to me that multiplicity of altars was not forbidden, and that the high place issue, even though it’s a confusing one, has to do with whether the worship at the high places being carried on there worshipped the LORD or whether it was syncretistic, heathen worship.

9. Holwarda Summary: Deut. 12 Does Not Support a Single Legitimate Altar

Alright, one more and we’ll stop. Holwarda says Deuteronomy 12 is talking about multiplicity of altars, and what he’s saying is the chapter is not to be read in a way that says there’s only one legitimate altar. It can be the place the LORD chooses in any place and in any of your tribes. There can be a number of altars as long as they follow the regulations of being built according to Exodus 20 and the location is not one of arbitrary choice, but one the LORD has indicated. There can be as many altars as follow those regulations.

10. Pohl Deut. 12 National Sanctuary; Local many altars

Now what Pohl says is the chapter's not talking about multiplicity of altars, it's talking about the place of the central sanctuary. He says it doesn't even address the issue of multiplicity of altars. It's only talking about the national level, central sanctuary, and what it's saying is, when you come in to the land of Canaan, the place where I cause my name to dwell, in one of your tribes is going to be the place in which that central sanctuary is to be located. And so you cannot compare then that material that's addressing the issue of a central sanctuary with the material out of Exodus that has to do with a local situation and with places of sacrifice. They were also legitimate places of sacrifice. You're comparing this national level with this local level, which results in creating the appearance of a conflict. Both books address both situations. Exodus addresses the national situation with its material on the tabernacle and, of course, Leviticus, with some of its material on the Passover and various feasts and festivals, and the Day of Atonement is at the national level. The local level is the altar law. So you have both levels in both books, and the appearance of conflict is a result of not understanding that. Okay, let's stop.

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