

Forschungen zum Alten Testament

2

Rolf P. Knierim

Text and Concept  
in Leviticus 1:1–9



J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen

Forschungen zum Alten Testament

herausgegeben von  
Bernd Janowski und Hermann Spieckermann

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in Leviticus 1:1–9

A Case in Exegetical Method

von

Rolf P. Knierim



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## Foreword

This study focuses on a particular aspect of exegetical method. Rather than abstractly discussing the theory of method, it concretely applies this aspect to the actual exegesis of a text. In the process, exegetical method and actual exegesis – are intended to – complement and control each other. This format also lends itself to a more direct dialogue with those publications on the same text in which methodology and exegesis interpenetrate in relevant ways.

At issue is the relationship in a text between its statement and its thought, between what is explicit and what is implicit, between what a text expresses and what is operative in, and even the presupposition for, that text, although it is not expressed. Texts not only speak, they also think as they speak. They are not simply story, but thoughtful story. Indeed, and this must certainly be said for the written biblical texts, they are in many respects the result of intensive intellectual processes into which considerable critical discernment was invested before, and for, making the decision regarding what had to be put into writing, and how it was to be put into writing. In this study, the relationship between a text's expression and its implicit thought is called Text and Concept.

The encounter with this issue in exegetical publications, or in the entire arena of biblical interpretation for that matter, is not new. It has never been avoidable. In more recent developments, it has surfaced in one way or another in virtually every established exegetical method. Yet the way in which the relationship between the text and its concept is handled is all too often more coincidental than methodologically conscious. This demonstrates not so much the violation of method by exegetes as a certain deficit of the method itself, within which this aspect is not sufficiently located in its own right.

That the exegetical process starts at the individuality of the extant text is based on the fact that each text exists first of all in its individual kind. However, this starting point is by no means intended to replace the study of the text's typical features, especially its genre and setting and their tradition history. It only means that a more controlled discernment of

the text's genre may be attained after, rather than before, all factors of its individual nature are taken into account. Consequently, the starting point in the present study at the text's individuality is just as advisable as the subsequent discussion of its genre is necessary.

The choice of Lev 1:1–9 is coincidental. This text is merely a case for the same focus which is necessary for all texts. Whatever the hoped for merits of the results of our study may be for our understanding of this specific text, the results themselves point to what may be exegetically achieved for all texts. Should the relationship between text and concept play more than a coincidental or peripheral role, this focus may affect the system of our exegetical method more than has been realized thus far.

I wish to express my admiration for and indebtedness to the editors of the *Forschungen zum Alten Testament*, professors Bernd Janowski and Hermann Spieckermann, and the publisher, Georg Siebeck, for their daring consent to publish this study written in English so early in their new series.

In Claremont, I am indebted to Marilyn Lundberg, senior Old Testament Ph.D. student and my former research associate at the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, for editing the manuscript, to Randy Merritt and Michael Phelps, senior Old Testament Ph.D. students and my current research associates, for their extensive contribution to additional editorial work and for creating the indices, to Cynthia Eades for word-processing, and to her husband Keith, also a senior Old Testament Ph.D. student, for voluntary assistance. Claremont Graduate School, the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, and the School of Theology at Claremont have provided various kinds of support without which even a short scholarly book could scarcely be carved out from an otherwise full professional schedule. Last but not least, the distinction between writing and instruction discussed in this study also applies to the different settings in which the study itself has been encountered: alone at my desk, and in the classroom with the doctoral students of my seminar. For the former and its purpose, the responsibility is mine alone. Regarding the latter, quite different, setting and purpose, I cannot but always be impressed by the commitment of these men and women to intensive exegetical labor, and thankful for our learning together.

Claremont, California  
September, 1991

Rolf P. Knierim

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# Abbreviations

## *I. Miscellaneous abbreviations*

BB	<i>Das Bundesbuch</i> (The Covenant Book)
Diss.	Dissertation
H	<i>Das Heiligkeitsgesetz</i> (The Holiness Code)
imperf.	imperfect
MT	Massoretic Text
P	Priestly Source
perf.	perfect
pers.	person
plur.	plural
sing.	singular

## *II. Publications*

ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament-Supplement Series
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
RSV	<i>Revised Standard Version</i>
THAT	E. Jenni and C. Westermann (eds.), <i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i>
TWAT	G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds.), <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i>
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament





## Introduction

It has always been observed in biblical exegesis that the texts contain not only statements but also presuppositions. The surface level of a text communicates to the reader explicit information, but it also points to aspects beneath itself which are, nevertheless, implicitly operative in it and which generate and control its form and content. Texts are linguistic semantic entities in which explicit statements and their presuppositions interact. Exegesis must, therefore, do more than paraphrase what a text says. It must also, however hypothetically, reconstruct a text's assumptions which lie underneath its surface.<sup>1</sup> It must explain its system, its *Gestalt*, if for no other reason than to help us achieve a better understanding of the text's statements. In doing so, it must distinguish between the critical paraphrase of the text's message and the reconstruction of its assumptions, and attempt to explain the relationship of both and their mutual convertibility.

The message of a text and its assumptions are mutually convertible. This is especially true for the relationship between a text and those of its assumptions that are conceptual in nature. However, in order that we

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<sup>1</sup> Some terminological distinctions are necessary for this study. The term "reconstruction" is, together with "deconstruction," frequently used in the arena of biblical hermeneutics for the reordering of dismantled = deconstructed biblical thought-systems, e.g., the system of patriarchy. This type of deconstruction and reconstruction is done in the process of reinterpreting the Bible for our modern time. In a similar sense, but also for the change of forms and contents within the biblical transmission history, terms such as "transformation" and "recontextualization" are used. In this publication, I prefer to employ the following terminological distinctions: "transformation" refers most generally to either the contextual or conceptual change of both form and/or content, in the process of innerbiblical transmission. "Recontextualization" refers to the adaptation of a given or traditional text and its concept into a new socio-historical context which is considered analogous to the old so that no conceptual change happens. "Reconceptualization" refers to the reordering of a biblical thought-system itself in the innerbiblical transmission history, but especially in its adaptation by modern interpreters for our time. As in the case of recontextualization, reconceptualization is complemented by deconceptualization. In distinction to these terms, the term "reconstruction," without the complementary notion of "deconstruction," is used specifically for the exegetical attempt to discover the presupposed but inexplicit assumptions or the conceptuality underneath a text.

may determine the relationship of these two factors, each must be recognized in its distinctiveness. The reconstruction of biblical “ideas” or “concepts” or “patterns,” and the focus on them in the study of the Bible, is valid in its own right and for its own purposes, apart from its function in the exegesis of texts — as long as it does not replace, or claim to replace, that exegesis. But apart from the fact that various types of reconstruction — via texts — aim at scholarly interpretations of worldview systems for their own sake, they demand a virtually complete body of literature rather than individual texts or confined groups of texts. While the “ideas” or “concepts” or “patterns” of worldview systems play a role in the so-called deep structure of texts, they neither self-evidently, nor necessarily, represent the concepts or assumptions (or assumed concepts and conceptual assumptions) that belong to the immediate reason for and meaning of an individual text, or of a coherent group of texts, or of a larger literary work. The conceptualities that are operative in the immediacy of a text are directly important for exegetical work. They represent the focus of the present study.

A *caveat* needs to be kept in mind, namely, the danger of circular argumentation in the determination of the relationship between text and concept. This danger always exists. But the possibility or danger of circular argumentation invalidates neither the basic necessity for determining the relationship between text and concept nor the legitimacy of hypothetically reconstructing a concept from a text. While reconstruction necessary for understanding is inevitably hypothetical, a hypothesis is better than none at all. Our option consists of the alternative between more or less substantiated hypotheses, not between a hypothesis or no hypothesis. The danger of circular argumentation is at any rate alleviated by the fact that the reconstruction, to whatever extent it can facilitate a better understanding of the text, is controlled by what the text permits.<sup>2</sup> Texts are more than lists of independent words (lexemes) and chains of unrelated sentences (syntagms). They are held together by supra-syntagmatic factors which constitute their entity. These factors are signaled by the grammatical and syntactical *cohesion* of the surface-

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<sup>2</sup> An updated study of the role which either the neglect of or attention to the presuppositions operative in the messages of the texts has played in the history of exegesis, beyond what is generally known and in addition to the developments generated by the fields of, e.g., form criticism, linguistics, semiotics, and structuralism, would be very instructive methodologically.

texts, while their *coherence* is conceptual in nature.<sup>3</sup> Whereas particular terms or statements on the surface of the text often point to these conceptualities, the concepts themselves are basically *infratextual*. And their typology is heterogeneous. A concept governing a text may be, e.g., genre-, style-, or situation-specific; it may be a particular theme, plot, concern, or intention. Its presence beneath the surface of a text may be strictly pericope-immanent, i.e., *intratextual*, but it may also be determined *contextually* as in larger literary works, or *intertextually* as in the coherence of separate literary works or documents,<sup>4</sup> or even *supra-textually* as, e.g., by certain worldview concepts. It may be traditional or new.

Of course, many existing studies pay attention to conceptuality. Among those that directly focus on the relationship between text and concept are interpretations concerned primarily with the composition or structure of identified literary works or biblical books. This is not the place for presenting a review on the surge of interest in the composition or structure of texts, on the different approaches and findings, or on a methodology of composition-analysis. Suffice it to say that, e.g., the interpretations of the composition of the Pentateuch or of parts of it in the recent works of E. Blum, H. Utzschneider, J. Milgrom, R. P. Knierim, and others, differ considerably. It is the difference in approaches and results that is a matter of concern at this moment, rather than the question of who is more or less correct. In any case, it seems that the interpretation of the composition of texts cannot ignore the relationship between text and concept but must consciously face it.

Last but not least, discernible individual pericopes exist in their own right. In the biblical literature they are usually parts of compositions or works, and the influence of context on them must not be ignored. Nevertheless, they are units in their own right, and sometimes reveal their individuality even in tension with their context. While it is certainly legitimate to start the exegetical process of a larger literary work with the explanation of its macro-structure or -composition and subsequently to move to the explanation of its parts, it is equally legitimate to reverse that exegetical process because either process will ultimately control the

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<sup>3</sup> For the helpful distinction between *Kohäsion* (cohesion) and *Kohärenz* (coherence), see H. UTZSCHNEIDER (15–16, etc.).

<sup>4</sup> Cf., e.g., the coherence of psalms which belong to the same group or genre, or of separate prophetic books which are based on the theological system of the deuteronomistic redactors.

results of the other. Specifically, however, an individual pericope in principle may, and often does, have a distinct focus which sets it apart even from such pericopes to which it belongs generically. And its distinctive individuality includes the relationship between its text and its concept or conceptual aspects. For this reason alone, exegetical work needs to inquire into the relationship of text and concept in individual pericopes as well as in larger works. It is, after all, not impossible that an outside concept controlling the interpretation of a pericope may obscure or even destroy its individuality.

The following study of Lev 1: 1–9 ventures into the direction just mentioned. If anything justifies this quest at the outset, it is the fact that the texts about the *עלה*, the burnt offering, are on several grounds clearly distinguishable. They individually focus on different subtypes of the same *עלה*. They may, and to a certain extent do, presuppose and indicate a common *עלה* pattern. But they are first of all the obvious result of a differentiated understanding of, and need for presenting, the subtypes, the different “cases” of the *עלה* sacrifice, rather than the common pattern itself. While the comparison of all subtypes and the interpretation of the entire *עלה* system is important, the degree and perhaps the quality of its reconstruction may be significantly enhanced by the exegesis of the conceptual nature of the distinctly individual texts.

These introductory remarks are only meant to focus attention on the distinction between text (specifically, surface text) and concept in the following study. The study itself, as an exemplar, and also the literature referred to will be concerned with highlighting this distinction more than with presenting a complete register of all exegetical data. These data are, at any rate, discussed in the relevant commentaries, monographs, and articles.

## §1 Lev 1:1–9 within 1:1–3:17

In the extant text, Lev 1:1–9 is part of the macro-unit 1:1–3:17. This unit is a report of a Yahweh speech to Moses. It consists of two parts: the narrator's – expanded – introductory report formula (*about* a Yahweh speech) in 1:1, and his quotation *of* the speech itself to Moses in 1:2–3:17.<sup>5</sup> For the interpretation of the setting and intention of the text it is as important to note that the entire unit 1:1–3:17 is simply a report about a Yahweh speech to Moses mediated by the narrators who speak *about* Moses – and not a Yahweh speech without that mediation – as it is to note that the reported instructions themselves from 1:2, especially v. 2aß on, were given by Yahweh himself, and not by “the priests” of the priestly writings. The text does not even have a statement, let alone a report, about Moses' compliance with Yahweh's command given to him in v. 2aα.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, it certainly presupposes that compliance. And the conceptual nature of this presupposition should be assumed as implicitly operative in the text in view of the fact that the priestly literature reports such obedient compliances as one of the mainstays of its theology. That this conceptual presupposition coincides with the absence of a reference to it in the context means at least, whatever its inscrutable specific reasons may have been, that for the chain of transmission of the following laws (given for Israel's permanent existence rather than the commands given for the immediate execution of acute actions such as the building of the sanctuary, the ordination of Aaron, the judgment against Nadab and Abihu and against the blasphemer, and the organization of the camp) the emphasis on their origin was so

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<sup>5</sup> For different subdivisions cf., e.g., K. ELLIGER (27); G. J. WENHAM (48–49). R. RENDTORFF's “Auf die Anrede folgt der Befehl zur Weitergabe” (1985: 23) needs reformulation. V.1 contains no *Anrede*; it contains at best, in v. 1a, a reporting *reference to* a personal address (such as “Moses”), a reference that presupposes the address, and in v. 1b a reporting reference to the entire following speech. For the stylistic observations and their redaction historical implications here and in the following text, see the commentaries.

<sup>6</sup> In Leviticus, such reports or statements of compliance occur only within the contexts of Lev 8–10 and 24:10–23, in 16:34b, and in an indirect statement in 26:46.

decisive that their content quoted in the extant text was sufficient evidence for their mediation through Moses so that this mediation did not have to be explicitly mentioned.

The modern exegetical assumption that the laws about the rituals were originally created by priests means that the redactors created a hermeneutical shift by presupposing that their priestly laws about the sacrificial rituals originated in Yahweh's own instructions. According to this hermeneutical shift these instructions were given immediately after Yahweh occupied the tent of meeting, and before he gave any other instructions to Moses who (by conceptual implication) transmitted them to Aaron and his sons, our redactors. This shift, undoubtedly intended to absolutize the authority of the redactors' laws, amounts to more than a mere *recontextualization* of the same concept of the cultic laws. It amounts to a twofold *reconceptualization*: the laws themselves are Yahweh's laws and no longer priestly laws, and the authorization for the priests to transmit the laws and to perform the rituals depends on the mediation of the laws through the authority of Moses at Sinai and no longer on their own priestly tradition and authority.<sup>7</sup> The priests were no longer lawgivers or instructors of laws; they were reporters of received laws.

The phrase **מֵאֵהָל מוֹעֵד** in v. 1 bβ deserves particular attention. It is an explicit signal for the macro-structure of the entire Sinai narrative. After the tabernacle had been erected and the cloud had covered it and the **כְּבוֹד** filled it (Exod 40), Yahweh no longer called Moses from Mt. Sinai but now from the tent of meeting.<sup>8</sup> This signal points to the concept of the movement of the Yahweh revelation from the mountain to the tent, which is clearly operative on the contextual level itself and which reflects the tradition history about the relationship between Sinai and Israel's central sanctuary.<sup>9</sup>

Our focus on vv. 1–9 in Lev 1 does not mean that these verses represent, or ever were, a self-contained pericope. They represent only the beginning of the Yahweh speech report which continues after 1:9

<sup>7</sup> For the interpretation of the "Orakel-Konzept" of these Mosaic-priestly instructions, see H. UTZSCHNEIDER (148–149).

<sup>8</sup> See R. P. KNIERIM (1985: 404–405).

<sup>9</sup> For Lev 1:1 as well as for Exod 24:16–18 it is true that Moses must wait until he is called, so K. KOCH (1959: 45); B. JANOWSKI (313); R. RENDTORFF (1985: 22). The relevant difference, however, for the composition of the Sinai narrative, is that in Exod 24:16–18 and 25:1 Moses is called from the top of the mountain whereas in Lev 1:1 he is called from the tent of meeting.

until 3:17. An interpretation of the composition itself of 1:1–3:17 would have to address all its pertinent factors, which is not our aim. But it is necessary to include attention to the introductory statements in vv. 1 and 2a $\alpha$  in the discussion of the first specific unit, vv. 3–9 (which is our aim) because these two introductory statements, redactional as they are, may have affected the original text of the body of the following units; and they have certainly cast a hierarchic semantic structure over that body which affects it conceptually. As will be discussed later, the question of the generic identity of the texts contained in the quoted Yahweh speech is thereby affected. E.g., as far as the notion of “instruction” is concerned, it seems at the outset that this instruction is envisioned as a one time event in which the only instructor is Yahweh. Yahweh orally instructs Moses about laws concerning sacrificial rituals. Vv. 2a $\beta$  + b and 3–9 contain the first of these. This impression, however, is only gained from vv. 1 and 2a $\alpha$ , and also from the 2nd pers. plur. forms in v. 2a $\beta$  + b which belong to the redactors’ hands. The text from v. 3 on is not, at least not self-evidently, formulated in specifically instruction language, i.e., language that points to an instructional setting. The interpretation of the texts from v. 3 on as “instruction” seems either influenced by the instruction language of their introductory context in vv. 1, 2a $\alpha$  + b, which does not mean that their own language is self-evidently instruction language; or it rests on the grounds of our reconstructions of transmission historical processes behind those texts rather than on the characteristics of their own language. We need to be aware of these distinctions so that our focus on the material from v. 2a $\beta$  + b and vv. 3–9 on is not blurred by *a priori* exegetical assumptions.



## §2 Lev 1:2α within 1:2–3:17

The second part of the macro-unit, 1:2–3:17, the quoted Yahweh speech, also consists of two parts: Yahweh's commission of Moses in v. 2α to promulgate what follows to the Israelites, and the content of the commanded promulgation, now given to him in 1:2αβ–3:17. With regard to v. 2α we again note the implicit presupposition operative in the text, namely, that this content must have been orally transmitted by Moses to the Israelites, or it would not be known and its text could not exist. This observation is simple, but its explanation is complex and will not be pursued at this point. Suffice it to say that the text and its context imply an *infratextual* or *subtextual* conceptuality which must be rooted in the importance of the tradition-history of the Moses-concept for the priestly writers' claim to their own cultic legitimacy, even exclusivity, not only as the practitioners of the sacrifices but especially, and primarily, as the heirs and guardians of Yahweh's instructions to Moses for the Israelites.

### §3 Lev 1:2aβ + b and 3–9

The content of the quoted Yahweh speech to Moses will be the actual object of this study, whereby we will confine ourselves to vv. 2aβ–9 as the paradigm for pursuing the questions raised in the introduction.

Before discussing vv. 2aβ–9 specifically, we need to identify the place of these verses within the macro-unit 1:1–3:17. Its structure appears as follows:

Report of a Yahweh speech to Moses	1:1–3:17
I. The narrator's introductory report formula	1:1
II. His quotation of the speech	1:2–3:17
A. The commissioning of Moses	1:2aα
B. The content of the commission: on קרבן	1:2aβ–3:17
1. Concerning עלה	1:2aβ–17
2. Concerning מנחה	2:1–16
3. Concerning זבח שלמים	3:1–17 <sup>10</sup>

The subsection II.B.1. = 1:2aβ–17, concerning the עלה, is further subdivided into two parts:

1.a. The main case	vv. 2aβ + b <sup>11</sup>
1.b. Three subordinate cases	vv. 3–17
1) Concerning בקר	vv. 3–9
2) Concerning צאן	vv. 10–13
3) Concerning עוף	vv. 14–17

The statement about the main case, 1.a. = v. 2aβ + b, expresses an aspect that belongs to the entire section on the עלה, 1.b. = vv. 3–17, and to each of its subcases. It is not an abstraction of them, but introduces the

<sup>10</sup> The systematized order of this content, B., and also the problem of its arrangement are discussed in the pertinent publications.

<sup>11</sup> The signals in the text for this placing of the “main case” together with the עלה-unit are ambiguous. According to its literal statement, v. 2aβ + b could function as an introduction to the entire macro-unit, B., on קרבן. However, that unit in the extant text is interrupted by Lev 2, to which 1:2aβ + b does not refer, and the content of the apodosis in 1:2b is in part resumed in 3:1, so that 1:2aβ + b seems in the extant text to function specifically as the introduction to 1:3–17.

condition and the first regulation common to each of them. With this in mind, we can focus on vv. 2aβ–9.

Before any other consideration of structure and genre, it is important to note that the two sections in vv. 2aβ + b and 3–9 are composed according to the traditional method by which case law corpora were composed, by moving from the common to the specific aspect(s). Furthermore, each of the two sections is composed according to the basic structure of case laws themselves, by an introductory protasis stating the case and a following apodosis stating the prescription for the case. Substantively, as well as syntactically, the two parts of each law belong together, and neither is isolated from the other.<sup>12</sup> And this is the point where the conceptual problems arise.

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<sup>12</sup> The genre of case law in which this Yahweh instruction is cast means that an assumed genre “Ritual” consisting only of the texts contained in the apodoses (vv. 2b without 2aβ, and 3aβ–9 without 3aα, etc.) will not only have to be isolated from its extant redactional layers; it either will also have to be isolated from its case law protases in order to demonstrate an originally pure form of “Ritual,” or its case law form will have to be included in the explanation of the form of a genre “Ritual.” In any case, the relationship of case law and “Ritual,” and the possible transformation of a purely prescriptive “Ritual” to case law will have to be explained.

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Reinhard Gregor Kratz

## Kyros im Deuterocesaja-Buch

Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Entstehung und Theologie von Jes 40–55

Die Kyros-Aussagen im Jesajabuch spielen eine entscheidende Rolle bei der Erklärung von Jes 40–55 als einem separaten Textbereich, für den sich die Bezeichnung Deuterocesaja eingebürgert hat. Sie werden fast einhellig zu den zentralen Verkündigungsinhalten von Buch und dahinter vermutetem Propheten gerechnet. An ihnen bricht denn auch die deuterocesajanische Frage in aller Schärfe auf, die die Forschung seit Entdeckung des Buches begleitet hat und heute besonders kontrovers diskutiert wird: Wie erklärt sich die Einheitlichkeit der Schrift, die sich doch aus vielen einzelnen Worteinheiten zusammensetzt? Die hier vorgelegte Analyse der Kyros-Texte und der literarischen Kontexte im Dtjes-Buch macht deutlich, daß es sich dabei weder um eine nur zufällige Sammlung von Einzelworten noch um eine einheitliche, planvoll durchgestaltete Komposition handeln kann, wie vielfach behauptet wird. Vielmehr wird schon in den Kyros-Texten eine literarische Schichtung wahrgenommen, die sich auf verschiedenen Ebenen durch das ganze Buch hindurch verfolgen läßt.

Die Spannung von Einheitlichkeit und Komplexität im Dtjes-Buch findet so in dem Modell der kontextgebundenen Fortschreibungs- und Auslegungsgeschichte eine neuartige Erklärung. Außer der Analyse der Kyros-Texte möchte die Arbeit auf diesem Wege Einsichten in das Werden des ganzen Buches, speziell noch in die Götzen-, die Ebed-Texte und ihre buchinterne Auslegung sowie in den Vorgang der Fortschreibung an sich vermitteln, in dem sich die Entwicklung und Entfaltung der ›deuterocesajanischen‹ Theologie(n) vollzogen hat.

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