

## BOOK REVIEW

**Nitya, *The Reciprocity of Love and Obedience in the Formation of Israel: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Deut 8:1-6 in the Light of Deut 6:4-5 and 7:8***, Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2025, Pages: xviii+134, ISBN: 978-81-982119-3-4

The book under review, *The Reciprocity of Love and Obedience in the Formation of Israel: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Deut 8:1-6 in the Light of Deut 6:4-5 and 7:8*, is a commendable effort by Nitya FCC, an emerging biblical theologian. The volume is her licentiate thesis in Biblical theology submitted at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bengaluru. Antu Nayankara, the director, provides the volume with a Foreword detailing the development of the work.

The book includes a General Introduction and a General Conclusion. The theme is explored and presented through three chapters, each with its own introduction and conclusion. The author states that the study emphasises the reciprocal relationship between God's love and the obedience of the Israelites during their formative journey in the wilderness (p. 3). It provides an exegetical and theological reading of the text, utilising both diachronic and synchronic methods. The exegesis and theological analysis are carried out using historical-critical and synchronic approaches, and the application of the text is approached from a theological perspective.

The first chapter offers the historical background of Deut 8:1-6. It includes an initial analysis covering delimitation, literary context, historical context, structure, form, translation, and linguistic analysis of the text. It also presents a connecting theme of love and obedience from Deut 6:4-5 and 7:8. Deut 6:4-5 forms the core statement of biblical faith (p. 29). Deut 8:1-6, 6:4-5, and 7:8 reveal a profound reciprocity between love and obedience as essential to Israel's covenant relationship with God. These passages emphasise the importance of hearing as a call to obedient action and the love of God as central to that obedience. Collectively, these passages illuminate the interaction between divine love and human obedience, which are central themes of the research.

The second chapter provides a detailed exegetical analysis of Deut 8:1-6, 6:4-6, and 7:8. In this section, each word and phrase are analysed to uncover the original meaning and context of the text. The exegesis of these passages reveals the interconnected themes of love and obedience. Obedience is seen as the proper response to God's unwavering love and faithfulness. Through various trials, God humbled the Israelites to teach them about His providential care and to rely on Him. The wilderness experience served to build Israel's trust in God and to test whether they would remain faithful to His commands (p. 77). The passage highlights that obedience is a loving response to God's providential care.

The third chapter examines the theological importance and application of the reciprocity between love and obedience. It explores the profound connection between love and obedience within the theological and practical dimensions of faith, with Deut 8:1-6 as the primary focus in light of Deut 6:4-5 and 7:8. This discussion considers the theological importance and practical use of the passage and emphasises the relevance of the reciprocity between love and obedience in today's world. The chapter explores how love and obedience are interconnected and their role in spiritual growth. The study highlights a significant theological truth: that God initiates love towards His people, which calls for a response of wholehearted devotion. In His infinite love, God provides commandments to help Israel flourish, and the people faithfully follow these commandments as an act of devotion and commitment. This reciprocal relationship of love and obedience fosters trust and strengthens their covenant relationship. The message of the text applies across the spiritual, ecclesial, and ethical aspects of life, and in the Indian context, it calls for a holistic integration of faith, justice, and service, shaping both personal and communal expressions of Christian discipleship (p. 112).

The general conclusion summarises the research findings at a glance: reciprocity of love and obedience in the formation of Israel, the theological pedagogy of the wilderness experience, theological links between God's love and His care, love as indicative and obedience as imperative, thematic continuity between Deuteronomy and Christological fulfilment, and reciprocity as a moral framework. The author also highlights areas for further research in the field.

The present work by Nitya FCC serves as a guiding light for every disciple of Christ and all the people of goodwill in his or her spiritual, ecclesial, and social life. The list of abbreviations of the frequently used

documents (p. xvi-xviii) provided at the beginning, the footnotes, the detailed bibliography (p. 120-129), the glossary (p. 130-131), and the index (p. 132-134) at the end are highly useful for further research and study. What makes this work impressive and appealing is the clarity of presentation. Although this work is small in size and comprises only three chapters, it is very relevant and worth engaging with, as it explores the theme of reciprocity of love and obedience, not only in the formation of Israel but also its theological implications and applications in spiritual, ecclesial, and ethical domains, particularly in the Indian context. The author deserves appreciation, and I recommend this edifying work to teachers and students of sacred scripture and theology.

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