CONTEXTUALIZING ISRAEL'S SACRED WRITINGS

ANCIENT LITERACY, ORALITY, AND LITERARY PRODUCTION

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Contextualizing Israel's Sacred Writings:
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edited by

Brian B. Schmidt

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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ÄAT	Ägypt und Alten Testament
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
ADAJ	Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan
ADPV	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
AJP	*American Journal of Papyrology*
AMD	Ancient Magic and Divination
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
AOAT	Alter Orient und Alten Testament
AoF	*Altorientalische Forschungen*
ArelG	*Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*
ASA	Annales du service des antiquties
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
AuOr	*Aula Orientalis*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BAAL HS	Bulletin d'Archéologie et d'Architecture Libanaises, Hors-Série
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BAAL HS	*Bulletin d'Archéologie et d'Architecture Libanaises, Hors-Série*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
BEStud	Brown Egyptological Studies
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation
BibOr	*Biblica et Orientalia*

BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BO	*Bibliothetica Orientalis*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Altestamentliche Wissenschaft
CHANE	Culture and History Ancient Near East
CIPOA	Cahiers de l'Institut du Proche-Orient ancien du Collège de France
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
DMOA	Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui
EBR	Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception
ErIsr	*Eretz Israel*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
Gibson, *TSSI*	John C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*. 4 volumes. Oxford: Clarendon, 1971–2009
HAHE	Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik
HBAI	Hebrew Bible Ancient ISrael
HEO	Hautes études orientales
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
HSCP	Harvard Studies in Classical Philology
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IAA	Israel Antiquities Authority
IDB	The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
IES	Israel Exploration Society
IOS	Israel Oriental Studies
JAJSup	Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JANES	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern studies*
JPOS	*Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*

JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTS	*Journal for the study of the Old Testament Supplements*
KAI	*Kanaanaeische und aramaeische Inschriften*. Herbert Donner and Wolfgang Röllig. 2nd ed. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966–1969
KTAH	Key Themes in Ancient History
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
LAPO	Litteratures anciennes du Proche Orient
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies
MUSJ	Melanges de l'Universite Saint-Joseph
NEA	*Near Eastern Archaeology*
NEAEHL	*The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations of the Holy Land*. Edited by Ephraim Stern. 4 vols. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society & Carta; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993
OEBA	*The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Archaeology* (Oxford Encyclopedias of the Bible). Edited by Danial M. Master. 2 volumes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013
OHBS	*Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*. Edited by J. W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OHBS	Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies
OLA	Orientalia lovaniensia analecta
Or	*Orientalia (NS)*
OTS	Old Testament Studies
PEFQS	*Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
RA	*Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*
RB	*Revue biblique*
REJ	*Revue des etudes juives*
RelSRev	*Religious Studies Review*
RSF	*Rivista di studi fenici*
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SEL	*Studi epigraphici e linguistici*
SHAJ	*Studies in the History and Archeology of Jordan*
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquty
ST	*Studia theologica*

TA	*Tel Aviv*
ThTo	*Theology Today*
ThZ	*Theologisches Zeitschrift*
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WSS	Avigad, Nahman and Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals*. Jerusalem: Israel Academy, IES, Institute of Archaeology, 1997
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
ZABR	*Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtgeschichte*
ZAS	*Zeitschrift für aegyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

INTRODUCTION

BRIAN B. SCHMIDT

FROM A CONTEMPORARY WESTERN PERSPECTIVE, IT IS AT THE SAME TIME both obvious and profound that literacy in the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean theaters emerged in a predominantly oral world. The implications of that reality, however, have made only sporadic and gradual inroads into the modern study of early Israelite society, the Hebrew Bible and the relevance of orality and literacy for the actual historical composition of biblical literature. Nonetheless, a run of volumes in recent years resulting from conferences, colloquia and symposia, various edited and authored books and articles, along with a variety of publications in dictionaries and encyclopedias, epitomize the (re)surge(nce) of interest in orality's intersection with ancient literacy. Along with these, a number of publications on primary sources, oral and written, some new, some previously known but newly treated, have invigorated efforts, and authors working on the primary sources exemplify more than ever an increasing self-consciousness with regard to the relevance of their data to the broader issues of cross-cultural literacy and orality.

Yet expert opinion has failed to garner any kind of consensus on a wide spectrum of topics from definitions employed, data examined, questions posed, social reconstructions offered and the dates, loci, and productions conjectured, even collateral evidence considered and analogies invoked. Various theories applied and prospective implications proposed are in flux (e.g., literacy's and orality's juncture with human cognition and social complexity). What does verge on a developing consensus is that widespread ancient Levantine, and Mediterranean, literacy was not the direct and immediate outcome of the alphabet's invention or its implementation. From its beginning literacy's distribution involved a complex, open-ended process impacted at varying times by a wide range of convergent and contingent political, social, and historical factors. Moreover, the notion is gaining ground in recent literature that such factors as political and social stability, urbanizing or centralizing tendencies, economic mobilization and the vernacularization of writing fostered a West Semitic scribal world in which "ethnicizing"

literatures could be produced and transmitted. Furthermore, in the case of ancient Israelite tradition, and irrespective of biblical literature's first written recording, Hebrew was continuously used and biblical texts were preserved well beyond the demise of the Israelite and Judahite polities of the eighth and sixth centuries BCE. Lastly, with the demonstrable rejection of the "great divide thesis," researchers are increasingly recognizing that an orality-literacy continuum, the ongoing interaction of orality and literacy, the influence of oral aesthetics and multiformity on the production as well as the transmission and reception of texts, and writing's crucial role as a mnemonic device, all characterized ancient Levantine discourse. Throughout, and within the context of a predominantly oral world, writing remained the primary prerogative of elite society—that of scribes as well as their patrons.

The volume's contributions fall along three identifiable, yet broadly interrelated, trajectories: those that primarily explore the ever expanding epigraphic database for indications of the oral and the written in ancient Israelite society, those that first and foremost mine the Hebrew Bible for examples of the interface between orality and literacy, and those that integrate both of the above in pursuing specific questions such as scripturalization, the oral and textual dimensions of composition as it pertains to biblical poetry, prophecy and narrative and their antecedents, the dialectic between the oral and the written, and the ultimate autonomy of the written in early Israel.

Epigraphic Indications of Literacy and Orality in Ancient Israelite Society

Andre Lemaire seeks to elucidate the evidence for writing from the first millennium as it relates to the dating of the earliest biblical texts and he does so in response to recent statements that writing in more complex forms only emerged in the late eighth century context and that before then, such traditions were transmitted orally. Lemaire reviews the evidence from the Levant spanning 1000–750 BCE. At the earlier end of this continuum, we have Phoenician dedication inscriptions used for the purpose of marking ownership of objects widely distributed throughout the Levant. Then Lemaire surveys those of the later Aramaean kingdoms, Phoenicia, Palestine, and Moab. The inventory from Palestine is sparse, which raises the question of the political and economic situation in Cisjordan, while the sudden appearance of writing in Moab in the second half of the ninth and first half of the eighth centuries coincides with the inscribed stelae produced by the Aramaean kingdoms. In sum, the epigraphic database reveals a strong contemporary scribal tradition in Samaria and Tyre after 800 BCE. With the Deir Alla and Kuntillet Ajrud

plaster inscriptions we have confirmation of literary Aramaic and Phoenician traditions that were being copied in the first half of the eighth century. The original text (or "sepher") mentioned in the Balaam text from Deir Alla, "seems at least to date in the ninth or tenth centuries BCE," so "the beginning of a literary tradition in Israel and Judah in the ninth and tenth century is certainly not impossible."

Nadav Na'aman explores the epigraphic data that have been retrieved from archaeological excavations from Negev fortresses and cities of the eighth to sixth centuries BCE and what those data can convey with regard to the levels and distribution of literacy. The maintenance and compensation of state employees located at the fortresses were regularly recorded and dispensed on location using the cheapest writing medium, ostraca, in order to control expenses. In the exceptional case of Arad, the temple administration also required payment and maintenance for the priests and personnel. Bullae suggest that many of these writings were drafts of final form papyrus documents. The ostraca from the fortresses point to state officials as clerks of a sort, whereas Arad's temple requiring priests and administrators suggests scribes with higher levels of literacy at this unique early eighth-century site. The sapiental text from Horvat 'Uza of the seventh–sixth centuries also presupposes a scribe of higher training and ability. Priests, high royal officials, and military commanders enjoyed a higher level of literacy in Judah while low-ranking soldiers and lower-class individuals were illiterate. The distribution of inscriptions in domestic contexts at Horvat 'Uza may suggest that local inhabitants between the elites and the lower classes enjoyed a level of literacy somewhere in the middle.

For Christopher Rollston, sources indicate that scribalism was a lofty profession that required a level of dedication and effort that spanned several years. It was also comprised of hierarchies, though privately scribes produced a range of texts. Yet education took place in small numbers often in domestic contexts among elites, not in public buildings. In early Israel, the high caliber of the Old Hebrew script, the synchronic and diachronic consistency in letter morphology, stance and (often) ductus, and the fact that distinct scripts were regionally developed reflects a significant investment aimed at producing a proper form of writing. The curriculum included orthographic conventions, hieratic numerals, and standardized epistolary formulae. Though small, it was sophisticated and capable of educating in an erudite and standardized manner. Rollston rejects the notion that scribes worked primarily outside the aegis of the state in guilds. The evidence points instead to the palace or state, and in particular the military and economic sectors. A biblical text like the Rab-Shaqeh story in 2 Kings 18 indicates that Judean scribes learned Aramaic as part of their formal training. Finally, Rollston describes the overall cur-

riculum as, "a complex collection of texts from widely different periods," showing "significant dependence on foreign literature and foreign traditions" that had "traveled far and wide" in oral, aural, and written forms.

Brian Schmidt narrates a history of literary production of length in the southern, inland Levant in three phases. The state-scribal development phase spanned the first half of the ninth century. Literature of length remained exclusively oral as requisite infrastructural, technological, material production, and media procurement sectors were early on reemerging from more rudimentary stages of development. Aspiring to emulate Assyria however, Levantine polities initiated enhancements and adaptations to scribal apparatuses and writing systems, as well as the production if not procurement of media materials. During the conflict-affective phase spanning the ninth century's second half, an inland polity or two reached the threshold of producing lengthy literature, but arrival of protracted, repeated, and ever-intensifying conflicts severely disrupted implementation. Six intraregional conflicts with Assyria spanning fifteen years from the mid-ninth century to its latter third were followed by six or more devastating interregional conflicts with Aram-Damascus, Moab, and Ammon dominating over Israel and Judah for the final thirty years of the late ninth century. Redirection, depletion, and exhaustion of substantial human and material resources resulted in a prolonged interruption in lengthy literary-text production among Levantine polities lasting forty years or more. Moreover, the interregional conflicts shifted instability and destruction onto home soil. This only exasperated previous resource losses, inhibited cultural expression and further proliferated postponement of lengthy literary production for the vanquished. Yet near the ninth century's end, during the royal prerogative phase, the victors fashioned unique monumental products of elite emulation and context-specific forms comprising lengthy literary texts. While suspension of written literature of length continued for the vanquished, production would emerge in the following centuries with the return of local stability, stimulus, and industry.

Jessica Whisenant's contribution reviews the epigraphic data across the Levant in order to identify the socio-historical processes and periods that informed the written composition of those works that later made up the Hebrew Bible. She surveys the Iron Age II Levantine evidence before drawing down her focus to the Iron II period in Israel and the Transjordan as the more immediate context for assessing the data in late Iron II Judah. Provisionally, the last was the most likely context in which the earliest texts that eventuated into the books of the Hebrew Bible were produced. Whisenant concludes that at best one can talk about works produced in this period and context that served as *sources* for the various books that later came to make up the Hebrew Bible. By the eighth century, monumental inscriptions that

preserved military and construction activities of the royalty were written down along with brief ritual and incantatory texts and prophetic oracles. For various practical and propagandistic purposes, state scribes sometimes left epigraphs at locations on contested border areas such as Deir Alla, Horvat ʻUza, or Kuntillet Ajrud. These along with such hypothetical (though highly plausible) texts as king lists and annals may have led to the production of a chronistic written tradition that strengthened Jerusalem's primacy, uniting the region around a single royal dynasty and a single cultic tradition conveying a unique, dual emphasis on the people as well as on the royalty.

The Interface of Orality and Literacy in the Hebrew Bible

For David Carr, the variations among biblical manuscripts can provide insights into the transmission process and the purpose of their tradents. Carr proposes a "third way," namely, the way of memory. The memory he has in view is not exclusively tied to an oral context or mindset. He illustrates this by citing examples of textual variants that can be correlated with any one of the three: literacy, orality, or memory. When a textual tradition is carried in the mind, memorized and then reproduced, it comprises what Carr refers to as a "memory variant," such as the exchange of one synonym for another. Memory variants, "made sense" to tradents as they strove in their "effort after meaning" and as such they constituted good variants. Carr notes that scribes often relied on memory and rarely consulted actual scrolls when recording brief quotes. Writing served the internalizing of tradition in order that one might memorize and perform it. In the case of biblical literature, we have evidence, even the combination, of textual, oral, and memory variants in the specific formation of long-duration literary-theological texts. Carr also proposes that emendation of the text should be seen as restoration rather than the change of text. Finally, Carr views memory variants as indicators of memory's operation in a multiform early manuscript and quotation tradition of the Hebrew Bible. In such cases, written biblical texts served to support memorization or internalization of tradition and facilitated oral performance.

Robert Miller first offers a review of orality-literacy research and its ongoing impact on biblical studies with a particular focus on the Goody-Ong dichotomy where the role of memory in orality is supposedly sacrificed in favor of the development of analytical and logical skills that literacy provides. He then reiterates the notion that orality and literacy frequently and intensively exist alongside each other in many societies and Israel and Judah are no exceptions. Since their literature began "predominantly oral," one can apply performance critical tools to passages in the Hebrew Bible that may

be orally derived. He highlights the determinative role of social convention in performance, but also qualifies this in quoting Vaz de Silva's view of performance that is, "shaped by the interplay between individually generated variations and community-enacted selection mechanisms." For Miller ethnography is also crucial to the reconstruction of practices performed in cases where we have no directly accessible contexts. As for Israelite oral performance, he highlights the analogies between it and Icelandic Skaldic and Eddic poetry. He then explores the postbattle celebrations in the Hebrew Bible including commemorative ballads that were sung and accompanied by dance. On the matter of performance criticism and historical investigation, Miller underscores the role of genre in oral performance and endorses research on collective memory as the next fruitful approach in exploring oral performance in ancient Israel.

Raymond Person takes up the Parry-Lord insight on multiformity of oral traditions by invoking current text critical scholarship in other ancient and medieval literature such as Homeric, Old English poetic, and medieval Arabic prose scholarship. He concludes that such texts reflect a cultural acceptance of the type of multiformity attested in oral traditions which also influenced scribal praxis in transmitting texts; no one instantiation is an exact replication of the tradition. Yet each text, just like each performance of an oral bard, is a faithful representation, although not a full iteration of that tradition. Person adds to the process the *Tendenz* toward expansion identified by scholars working in these various textual traditions. Although such expansions are organic to the traditions, he concludes that these literatures evince performative and compositional traits in the transmission processes that approximate oral processes. When viewed together or conjointly they are reflective of a broader collective memory. Following a review of recent Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship's more nuanced view that every copy of an authoritative text is representative of the broader tradition, Person explores 2 Sam 12:26–31 and 1 Chr 20:1b–3. He similarly suggests that while both texts are imperfect instantiations of a broader more inclusive mental text located in the collective memory of the community, each is nonetheless a faithful representation thereof. Yet the shorter Chronicles text might be closer to the earliest written forms of the tradition, while Samuel represents an expansion.

Frank Polak proposes that the tales of the patriarchal narratives reflect an underlying oral–epic substratum that formed the basic structure for the narratives in their present written form. The unity of the overarching patriarchal narrative was preserved in this oral–epic substratum while repetition and contradiction find their origins in the various oral and text-based narrators within the tradition. For Polak, the Genesis 12–35 narrative formed a "large-scale narrative platform" for various narrators who maintained the

stabilized narrative content (or *fabula*) as well as the plot (or *syuzhet*), but who produced variants, continuations and expansions of the basic elements of *fabula*. The platform was to a large extent defined by the oral performance. This finds verification in the number of explicit syntactic constituents, subordinate clauses, and noun groups within a given constituent. The Abraham and the Jacob narratives comprise a discourse profile Polak characterizes as a "lean brisk style" or LBS, which manifests basic features of spontaneous spoken language. The Deuteronomistic corpus is characterized by the "intricate elaborate style" or IES, which is representative of written discourse. The IES presupposes the advanced scribal education and chancery of the eighth century BCE, whereas the former approximates an earlier oral performance of poetry and narrative or "oral-derived literature." Polak proposes three avenues to explain the oral-written interface in the patriarchal narrative: literary design, stylistic profile and redactional process. When the style is high on the LBS scale, dictation by an oral narrator might be in view or a text composed by an orator or a writer well versed in oral performance. When the style is high on the IES scale, the connection is less direct as when general oral style is used rather than a specific performance.

Elsie Stern observes that in Ezra-Nehemiah (E-N) written scrolls are identified as reference points for torah and as an authorizing strategy within the text. Yet the meaning and content of written torah in E-N is not scripturalized. The content is neither identical to extant pentateuchal texts nor is it determinative of authoritative discourse. These articulations of torah within E-N as compositions of torah are expressive of an oral-literary mode. Within this modality, they are audience and context specific articulations that are grounded in received material preserved textually and orally, that has been internalized by the authorized tradents. They are not new inventions. While the content of written torah in E-N is often omitted, the identity of the tradents is not. The tradents are identified as articulators of torah, not interpreters or even brokers of it. This narrative pattern places E-N's representation of torah at the intersection of the book's two central propositions. Ezra, Nehemiah, and their compatriots are the unquestioned and unchallenged sources of torah and the torah that they generate is the only legitimate law of the land. As such torah functions to counter challenges to the right of the returnee community to claim local authority in postexilic Yehud.

Aspects of Israelite and Biblical Orality and Literacy in Comparative Perspective

James Bos explores the initial textualization of the oracle of doom genre in ancient Judah. Bos proposes that such were most likely composed in

writing in the seventh or sixth centuries either following the destruction of the north in 721 BCE as Judahite prophets predicted Israel's defeat and/or reflected upon it *ex eventu*, or in the context of a later intra-Judahite conflict between a pro-Babylonian elite faction ensconced in the northern Benjaminite region and a pro-Egyptian faction in Jerusalem. This conflict eventually led to Judahites predicting the downfall of other Judahites. In the first case, the Judahite perspective on Israel's fall, such oracles did not constitute doom oracles per se, but were oracles against a foreign nation (e.g., OAN). Yet such could have served as conceptual and generic models for later Judahite *ex eventu* doom oracles against other Judahites following Jerusalem's fall in 586. In the second scenario, early written *predictive* oracles approximated a turning inward, or a turning on its head, of the oracle against foreign nations. The former scenario, Israel's destruction as viewed from a Judean viewpoint, might have also been an influencing factor on the alienated Judahites' later pronouncements against their fellow Judahites. Once Jerusalem was in fact destroyed, such oracles attracted supplementary literary elaboration and spawned additional doom oracles that were *ex eventu*.

Seth Sanders seeks to answer the question: are there pre-Hellenistic Near Eastern literary examples of the Pentateuch's interweaving of parallel narrative variants? Based on an analysis of the Primary History, Sanders concludes that there are no such parallels and that this provides a crucial clue for locating its composition within a relative chronological history. Highlighting the Primeval History and the Pentateuch's preference for comprehensiveness over coherence, Sanders suggests that such "literary value" led to subsequent attempts by early Jewish commentators unfamiliar with them to harmonize and reconcile apparent contradictions. Sanders employs the literary topos of the flood in order to illustrate how the coherent Gilgamesh flood episode closely resembles the layers of the flood story as attested in the Priestly and non-Priestly sources. The Genesis flood account's interweaving of two parallel variant plots "seems alien to the whole of ancient Near Eastern narrative art…," where sequential or serial expansion or addition ruled the day. The interweaving of Genesis in two preexisting coherent sources depicts a very different literary and conceptual strategy of composition and results in incoherence. This situates the Pentateuch's comprehensiveness and incoherence within the larger relative chronological history of ancient Hebrew literature. He proposes a three-stage development from a "dominant" value of coherence to one of comprehensiveness and incoherence to a dialectical response that returned to coherence through the work of harmonization and conflation emerging in the Hellenistic period.

William Schniedewind explains how the Judean literary corpus gained authoritative religious status or scripturalization, while the great epics

and mythic traditions of Mesopotamia, Syria, and Greece did not. Biblical texts do not derive their religious authority from their origins in other precedent literature on which they depended such as Gilgamesh or from their supposed origins in the temples, since the palace scribal apparatus was more prominent in the preexilic period. Neo-Assyrian texts indicate that they could be dictated by the gods and written down by scribes. Something similar obtains with the composition of texts like the Josianic reforms and Deuteronomy or Exodus 24. Revelation is manifested in three ways in ancient Judah: through the use of divine writing, the adoption of the messenger formula for God, and the use of ritual magic used in treaties. The royal messenger formula was adopted under Assyrian influence as a way of endowing written texts with royal authority, and through the writing prophets, with divine authority. Similarly, ritual magic of the treaty blessings and curses and in magical rituals informed the composition of a text like Deuteronomy 27–29, Joshua 8, and Numbers 5. Huldah's prophecy came to Josiah in the form of a letter carried by a messenger that invoked the written treaty curses derived from ritual magic. All of these elements comprised authoritative forms of Neo-Assyrian writing. The Josianic reform narrative thus scripturalizes the scroll and embodies some of the earliest illustrations of the scriptualization process.

For Joachim Schaper, writing's practice increased significantly from the eighth century onwards. The emerging prominence of writing is a direct outgrowth of the increased division of labor in Israelite and Judahite societies. The palaeo-Hebrew script developed as a move toward uniformity in style by institutionalized Israelite scribes. It was not an expression of nationalism. Writing's effects on individuals and on social relations of production were profound. In the Hebrew Bible, conceptualizations of conversation and speech were projected onto the perceived discourse between the deity and humanity creating a sense of immediacy as when Moses communicated with YHWH, "face-to-face, as a man speaks to his friend." Writing shifts language from the aural to the visual domain making possible a different kind of introspection that restructures consciousness. The biblical rhetorical strategy of addressing readers together with the imagined audience in the world of the text created the sense of a unified group of listeners. Written texts served the auxiliary purpose of providing the basis for literate Israelites to "perform" texts on significant occasions (cf. Nehemiah 8). Both the written and the spoken word took on magical properties in ritualized performance. Jeremiah 36 and the Mari texts indicate that prophets dictated messages to scribes. Prophecy transformed into a more text-centered phenomenon and ceased to exist as an oral/aural activity. Schaper concludes that the dialectic between the written and the oral persisted, but an ever-increasing autonomy

and veneration (or fetishization) of writing in the context of an oral society eventually dominated.

The present volume has its genesis in the International Conference on Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World held in Ann Arbor during the summer of 2012 and organized by University of Michigan professor and chair of the Department of Classical Studies, Ruth Scodel. Papers presented in Ann Arbor at panel sessions devoted to biblical and Levantine studies have been combined here with others solicited subsequently for their timeliness and relevance to the topics of orality and literacy in the pre-Hellenistic southern Levant and in the Hebrew Bible.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Professor Scodel, to all those who participated in the planning, organization and the day-to-day, "hands on" support in making the conference an immense success and to the Departments of Near Eastern Studies and Classical Studies at the University of Michigan for their generous funding of the conference. I also want to convey my gratitude to the colleagues who contributed to the volume as it evolved in its postconference permutations. Including their research alongside an already compelling core of articulations has, with creative and rigorous tones, given voice to a series of crucial issues that would not have been possible otherwise. Finally, and most importantly, this volume would have not seen the light of day without the patience and diligence of all my fellow contributors and the incomparable expertise of Dr. Billie Jean Collins, friend, colleague, and indispensible technical editor who, by all good fortune, oversaw this project to its completion.

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