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Marvin A. Sweeney

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Acknowledgments

This volume presents a collection of essays on the study of biblical and postbiblical theology and literature from throughout my career. Most have appeared in print in one form or another, but a few appear for the first time. They represent my efforts to reflect on the developing field of Jewish biblical theology, the critical and theological study of biblical literature, and in some cases Jewish literature and thought beyond the Tanak, that is, the Jewish form of the Bible, itself. They follow on two earlier volumes of collected essays that focus on the prophetic literature of the Bible: *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature*, FAT 45 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005; repr.; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), and *Reading Prophetic Books: Form, Intertextuality, and Reception in Prophetic and Post-biblical Literature*, FAT 89 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

I also thank my wife, Dr. Soo Jung Kim Sweeney, herself an expert in biblical literature, for her love and support.

I am privileged and grateful to have had a number of close friends in life, some of whom are now regretfully of blessed memory. I dedicate this volume to them in friendship and gratitude.

18 Cheshvan, 5782/24 October 2021
Salem, Oregon

Abbreviations

11Q19	Temple Scroll
8ḤevXIIgr	Wadi Sdeir Twelve Prophets Greek
AARCC	American Academy of Religion Cultural Criticism Series
AASF	Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae
AASOR	*Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
A.J.	Josephus, *Antiquitates judaicae*
AJBI	*Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute*
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
ANEP	Pritchard, James B., ed. *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
ANET	Pritchard, James B., ed. *The Ancient Near Eastern Texts*. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ARAB	Luckenbill, Daniel David, ed. *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*. 2 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926–1927. Repr., New York: Greenwood, 1968.
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments

ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
b.	Babylonian Talmud
B. Bat.	Baba Batra
B. Qam.	Bava Qamma
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
Ber.	Berakhot
BerOl	Berit Olam
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BHS	Elliger, Karl, and Wilhelm Rudolph, eds. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983.
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibSem	The Biblical Seminar
B.J.	Josephus, *Bellum judaicum*
BJS	Brown and Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BR	*Biblical Research*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten (und Neuen) Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2006.
CAH	Cambridge Ancient History
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CBS	Core Biblical Studies

CBW	*Conversations with the Biblical World*
CC	Continental Commentaries
CCARJ	*Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal*
CHM	*Cahiers d'histoire mondiale*
CHJ	The Cambridge History of Judaism
ChrH	Chronicler's History
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series
CurBR	*Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*
CRINT	Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
DDD	Toorn, Karel van der, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, ed. *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. Leiden: Brill, 1995. 2nd rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
Dtr	Deuteronomistic
DtrH	Deuteronomistic History
EBib	Etudes bibliques
EBR	Klauck, Hans-Josef, et al., eds. *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009–.
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
EdF	Erträge der Forschung
EncJud	Skolnik, Fred, and Michael Berenbaum, eds. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. 2nd ed. 22 vols. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FIOTL	Formation and Interpretation of Old Testament Literature
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religionen und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FTS	Frankfurter Theologischer Studien
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
HACL	History, Archaeology, and Culture of the Levant
Hag.	Hagigah
HALOT	Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stramm. *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–1999.
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament

HBAI	*Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*
HBANE	*Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East*
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
Heb.	Hebrew
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HR	*History of Religions*
HS	*Hebrew Studies*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTIBS	Historic Texts and Interpreters in Biblical Scholarship
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IB	Buttrick, George A., et al., eds. *Interpreter's Bible*. 12 vols. New York, 1951–1957.
IBT	Interpreting Biblical Texts
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	Buttrick, George A., ed. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. 4 vols. New York: Abingdon, 1962.
IDBSup	Crim, Keith, ed. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1976.
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
Int	*Interpretation*
IOS	*Israel Oriental Studies*
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JARCE	*Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBibTh	*Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie*
JBS	Jerusalem Biblical Studies
JES	*Journal of Ecumenical Studies*
JIBS	*Journal of the Institute of Biblical Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*

JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
LBC	Layman's Bible Commentary
LBT	Library of Biblical Theology
LCBI	Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible and Old Testament Studies
Lie *Sar*	Lie, A. G. *The Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria.* Paris: Geuthner, 1929.
LTQ	*Lexington Theological Quarterly*
LXX	Septuagint
m.	Mishnah
MdB	Le Monde de la Bible
Meg.	Megillah
MJ	*Modern Judaism*
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
MS A	Codex Alexandrinus. British Library, London.
MS B (1209)	Codex Vaticanus. Vatican Library, Vatican City.
MSS boc2e2	Minuscule 19, Vatican Library, Vatican City; Minuscule 82, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris; Minuscule 93, British Library, London; Minuscule 108, Vatican Library, Vatican City; Minuscule 127, State Historical Museum, Moscow.
MS c2	Minuscule 135. Universitätsbibliothek, Basel, Switzerland.
MS d	Minuscule 44. Stadtbibliothek, Zittau, Germany.
MS N	Codex Basiliano Vaticanus. Vatican Library, Vatican City.
MS p	Minuscule 106. Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea. Ferrara, Italy.
MS V	Codex Venetus. Biblioteca Marciana, Venice.
MT	Masoretic Text
Mur 88	Wadi Murabbaʿat Twelve Prophets
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
ND	Nimrud Documents
NEAEHL	Stern, Ephraim, ed. *New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land.* 4 vols. Jerusalem: Israel

	Exploration Society & Carta; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.
NEASB	*Near East Archeological Society Bulletin*
NIB	Keck, Leander E., ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible*. 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004.
NIBCOT	New International Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDB	Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob, ed. *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. 5 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006–2009.
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OG	Old Greek
OP	Occasional Papers
OT Guides	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTM	Oxford Theological Monographs
OxBS	The Oxford Bible Series
PEFQS	*Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*
Pirqe R. El.	Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer
POS	Pretoria Oriental Studies
Rab.	Rabbah
RB	*Revue biblique*
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
RevExp	*Review and Expositor*
Rosh Hash.	Rosh Hashanah
ROT	Reading the Old Testament
S. Olam. Rab.	Seder Olam Rabbah
SAC	Studies in Antiquity and Christianity
Sanh.	Sanhedrin
SB	Sources bibliques
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
SCS	Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SemeiaSup	Semeia Supplements

SHANE	Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Study Monograph Series
SS	Studies in the Shoah
SymS	Symposium Series
TA	*Tel Aviv*
TAPS	Transactions of the American Philosophical Society
TB	Theologische Bücherei
TDNT	Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
TDOT	Botterweck, G. Johannes, and Helmer Ringgren, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Translated by John T. Willis et al. 16 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2021.
TEH	Theologische Existenz heute
Tg. Ps.-J.	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
TGUOS	*Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society*
TJT	*Toronto Journal of Theology*
TLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TLJS	Taubman Lectures in Jewish Studies
TRu	*Theologische Rundschau*
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
y.	Jerusalem Talmud
Yad.	Yadaim
YJS	Yale Judaica Studies
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZB	Zürcher Bibel
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

Introduction

The study of biblical theology and literature has advanced markedly during the last decades of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first. Whereas biblical theology was once an entirely Christian- and Euro-American-centric enterprise, the 1980s and beyond have witnessed significant advances in the development of both Jewish biblical theology and Christian biblical theology as conceived by Asian, African and African American, Latino, LBGTQ, and other voices that had previously been excluded or ignored in the field. In the case of the study of biblical literature, methodological development in the fields of form-critical study, rhetorical criticism, text linguistics, literary plot development and characterization, textual criticism, canonical criticism, intertextuality, reception criticism, and other disciplines have had considerable impact on scholarly interpretation of the Bible and biblical texts.

My own work has focused on a combination of the development of the field of Jewish biblical theology, with an emphasis on canonical interpretation of the Jewish Tanak and the Christian Old Testament, in conversation with the above-noted developments in the study of biblical literature. I have sought to demonstrate that the Tanak has a distinctively Jewish voice in relation to the Old Testament, insofar as the Tanak envisions a three-part canonical and cyclical structure in which the Torah, "Instruction," focuses on expression of the ideals of ancient Israel and Judah in relation to YHWH within the world of creation; the Nevi'im, "Prophets," including both Former and Latter Prophets, focus on the disruption of that ideal due to foreign invasion and exile; and the Ketuvim, "Writings," focus on the restoration of the ideals of Israel and Judah as the foundation for the further development of Jewish life, history, and thought. The Old Testament likewise expresses a distinctively Christian outlook that envisions a four-part canonical and linear structure in which the Pentateuch focuses on the early history of G-d's relationship with humanity through the ancestors of ancient Israel; the historical books focus on the later history of ancient

Israel, which sees the ultimate failure of the Israelite monarchies and a restoration under foreign rule; the wisdom and poetic books focus on the ever-present questions of faith in G-d and understanding of the world; and the prophetic books look to the future of humanity beyond the Old Testament.[1] The New Testament then follows with a similar four-part structure focused on the significance of the revelation of Jesus as Christ or divine Messiah, in which the gospels focus on the earliest history of Jesus's life and crucifixion; Acts focuses on the later history of the early church; the epistles focuses on ever-present questions of faith and understanding in the aftermath of the revelation of Jesus; and the Apocalypse or Revelation focuses on the future return of Christ to redeem the world. Both Judaism and Christianity have distinctive understandings of the Bible that present the foundations of their theological perspectives and worldviews and the basis for dialogue between them and with other religious traditions.

Methodological development in the reading and interpretation of biblical literature contributes markedly to the development of Jewish and Christian biblical theology. Form criticism evolved from a diachronic method concerned with identification of short, self-contained, typically and generically defined literary units that functioned as the building blocks of biblical literature to a synchronically defined method concerned with uniquely formulated, larger, all-encompassing literary compositions in which multiple generic entities function in an effort to communicate with their reading and hearing audiences. Other critical methodologies function together with the newly envisioned form criticism to enable it to achieve its goals. Rhetorical criticism plays an important role in enabling form criticism to engage larger text structures and literary esthetics in an effort to understanding the communicative and persuasive functions of texts. Text linguistics play a key role in enabling form criticism to understand the semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects of textual formation, organization, and function. Literary plot development and characterization enable interpreters to understand better the roles of an extended concern with a plot or hermeneutical agenda in the formulation of larger texts together with the roles played by the configuration of individual characters within the plot. Textual criticism expanded from a field concerned with correcting the presumed erroneous errors in the Hebrew MT

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1. In accordance with Jewish tradition, I show respect for the deity by not spelling out divine names but rendering them as G-d and L-rd.

to understanding versions, such as the LXX, Peshitta, Targums, Vulgate, Dead Sea Scrolls, and others as literary and theological texts in their own rights that are uniquely formulated even when they are translations to express concerns and perspectives of their own. Canonical criticism functions as a means to understand the literary form and perspective of canons as a whole and the books that function within them as legitimate elements for interpretation even though they constitute unique combinations of their constituent books. Intertextuality evolved from a method concerned largely with innerbiblical exegesis to one that enables biblical texts to engage in dialogue with texts from their own canonical or historical background to texts from any historical period that develop biblical ideas or even texts that express no direct concern with the Bible in any form or with its ideas and perspectives. And reception criticism enables interpreters to understand how biblical texts were interpreted in other contexts and the roles played by those later contexts in influencing the interpretation of biblical texts. Altogether, the expansion and evolution of methodology in biblical interpretation presents interpreters with a much wider spectrum of possibilities for reading and applying biblical literature to address the needs and aspirations of later times.

The essays published in this volume complement those published in two previous volumes that were concerned with the development of form criticism and intertextuality in the reading of prophetic and apocalyptic texts.[2] They expand the purview of the earlier volumes by including concerns with the development and expression of biblical theology, particularly Jewish biblical theology; historical, comparative, and reception-critical studies; and the reading of texts from the Pentateuch, Former Prophets, Latter Prophets, and Ketuvim.

Parts 1–3 include essays on the methodological foundations of biblical theology and exegesis as well as the reading of biblical texts from the Torah.

Part 1 presents essays concerned with methodology in biblical theology and exegesis and reception criticism. "Biblical Theology in Canonical Perspective: Jewish and Christian Models," previously unpublished, lays out the basic theory of the canonical interpretation of the Jewish Tanak

2. Marvin A. Sweeney, *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature*, FAT 45 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); Sweeney, *Reading Prophetic Books: Form, Intertextuality, and Reception in Prophetic and Post-biblical Literature*, FAT 89 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

and the Christian Old Testament. "Form Criticism" presents current advances in form criticism in dialogue with other critical methodologies and example of its application to Gen 15. "Reconceiving the Paradigms of Old Testament Theology in the Post-Shoah Period" presents the foundations for Jewish biblical theology, with examples from Amos and Esther. "Jewish Biblical Theology" focuses on modern critical scholarship, the rationale for Jewish biblical theology, the distinctive forms of the Jewish and Christian Bibles, the Torah as foundation for the Jewish Bible, the conceptualization of the Jerusalem temple, the understanding of the nation Israel, the Davidic monarchy, the problem of evil, and the role of later Jewish tradition. "*Berit Olam*, the Eternal Covenant: Is the Eternal Covenant Really Conditional?" discusses the theological significance of the *berit olam* or eternal covenant in the Bible, and "Asian Biblical Theology and Filial Piety (*Xiao*)" presents a rationale for developing Asian biblical theology.

Part 2 focuses on issues of history, comparative studies, and reception. "The Origins of Kingship in Israel and Japan: A Comparative Analysis" presents a comparative study of the origins of kingship in Japan and Israel to argue that early Israelite kingship was based on a model of a politically and militarily weak center in the tribe of Benjamin in a tribal federation, which included more powerful tribes, such as Ephraim and Judah. "Genesis in the Context of Jewish Thought" discusses the role of Genesis in the development of later Jewish thought. "Dimensions of the Shekinah: The Meaning of the Shiur Qomah in Jewish Mysticism, Liturgy, and Rabbinic Thought" examines the Shiur Qomah as a liturgical text that instructs readers on how to understand themselves at prayer before G-d. "The Democratization of Messianism in Modern Jewish Thought" examines the Baal Shem Tov, Moses Mendelssohn, and Ahad Ha-Am as modern Jewish thinkers who developed the concept of democratized messianism from Isa 55 in relation to their respective movements in modern Judaism.

Part 3 includes essays concerned with the interpretation of texts from the Torah or Pentateuch. "Shabbat: An Epistemological Principle for Holiness, Sustainability, and Justice in the Pentateuch" discusses the understanding of Shabbat in the Torah. "The Jacob Narratives: An Ephraimitic Text?" presents arguments for viewing the Jacob narratives as an element of an early, foundational E stratum in the Pentateuch. "Form Criticism: The Question of the Endangered Matriarchs in Genesis" discusses the formal characteristics and role of the endangered matriarch narratives in Genesis. "The Literary-Historical Dimensions of

Intertextuality in Exodus–Numbers" points to the early understanding of Israelite firstborn sons as priests in Israel prior to the establishment of the dynastic Levitical priesthood. "The Wilderness Traditions of the Pentateuch: A Reassessment of Their Function and Intent in Relation to Exodus 32–34" points to the role of Deut 7, 1 Kgs 12, 18, and Exod 23 in shaping Exod 32–34 as a later J-stratum text that portrays later concerns with northern Israel into the Pentateuchal narrative. "Creation as Sacred Space in the Exodus Narratives" argues that the exodus narratives function as a form of creation narrative in Exodus–Numbers. "Moses's Encounter with G-d and G-d's Encounter with Moses: A Reading of the Moses Narratives in Conversation with Emmanuel Levinas" presents a Levinasian reading of the encounter between Moses and YHWH in Exodus. "Why Moses Was Barred from the Land of Israel: A Reassessment of Numbers 20 in Literary Context" presents a new explanation for YHWH's decision to bar Moses from entering the land of Israel. "Balaam in Intertextual Perspective" examines the Deir ʿAlla inscription as the target for an intertextual dialogue with the Balaam narrative in Num 22–24.

Parts 4–6 include essays on the Former Prophets, the Latter Prophets, and the Writings. Part 4 presents essays on the Former Prophets. "Davidic Polemics in the Book of Judges" argues that the present form of Judges is a Judean text that justifies Davidic rule by portraying the failure of the northern Israelite tribes to adequately rule themselves. "Rethinking Samuel," previously unpublished, argues that Samuel is a text heavily influenced by wisdom concerns that is designed to teach proper leadership to its readers. "Eli, a High Priest Thrown under the Wheels of the Ox Cart" examines the characterization of Eli in Samuel as an unfit leader for Israel. "Samuel's Institutional Identity in the Deuteronomistic History" argues that Samuel is an example of an early Israelite firstborn son who serves as a priest. "The Critique of Solomon in the Josianic Edition of the Deuteronomistic History" examines the critique of Solomon in 1 Kgs 3–11 as a redactional recasting of an earlier adulatory account of Solomon's reign. "Synchronic and Diachronic Considerations in the Deuteronomistic History Portrayal of the Demise of Solomon's Kingdom" answers criticism of the prior study of the critique of Solomon. "A Reassessment of the Masoretic and Septuagint Versions of the Jeroboam Narratives in 1 Kings/3 Kingdoms 11–14" argues that the Greek expansions concerning Jeroboam in 3 Reigns 12:20 constitute midrashic reflection and rereading of the earlier account of Jeroboam in 1 Kgs 11–12. "Prophets and Priests in the Deuteronomistic

History: Elijah and Elisha" points to Ahijah, Elijah, and Elisha as examples of northern non-Levitical prophetic figures who served as priests.

Part 5 presents essays on the Latter Prophets. "Revelation as Empirical Observation of Nature in the Prophets" points to the role of the observation of creation in prophetic texts as a basis for understanding divine action in the world. "Swords into Plowshares or Plowshares into Swords? Isaiah and the Twelve in Intertextual Perspective on Zion" examines the intertextual relationship between Isaiah and the Book of the Twelve Prophets in both the MT and LXX forms of the Bible. "Isaiah and Theodicy after the Shoah" examines the problematic figure of YHWH in Isaiah in the aftermath of the Shoah (Holocaust). "Sargon's Threat against Jerusalem in Isaiah 10:27–32" presents a historical reconstruction of Sargon's attempts to intimidate Jerusalem in 720 BCE. "Isaiah 60–62 in Intertextual Perspective" examines the intertextual relationships of Isa 60–62 in an effort to identify the Isaian servant as a priestly figure. "Jeremiah among the Prophets" examines the intertextual relationships between Jeremiah and the other prophetic books of the Bible. "The Ezekiel That G-d Creates" examines how the book of Ezekiel constructs the priest and prophet Ezekiel. "Ezekiel's Conceptualization of the Exile in Intertextual Perspective" examines Ezekiel's sign acts in Ezek 12 in relation to the account of Israel's exodus from Egypt. "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns in Reading the Book of the Twelve Prophets" examines the distinctive readings of the Book of the Twelve Prophets in the MT and LXX versions of the Bible. "Hosea's Reading of Pentateuchal Narratives: A Window for a Foundational E Stratum" examines Hosea's citation of the pentateuchal narratives concerning Jacob, Moses, and the wilderness in an effort to establish a basis for an early E stratum of the Pentateuch.

Part 6 presents essays on the Writings. "The Question of Theodicy in the Historical Books: Contrasting Views Concerning the Destruction of Jerusalem according to the Deuteronomistic History and the Chronicler's History" examines the theological significance of the contrasting conceptualizations of sin and punishment in the Deuteronomistic History and the Chronicler's History. "What Is Biblical Theology? With an Example on Divine Absence and the Song of Songs" examines the absence of G-d in biblical theology with specific focus on the Song of Songs. "Absence of G-d and Human Responsibility in the Book of Esther" examines the absence of G-d in biblical theology with specific attention to the book of Esther.

Altogether, the essays in this volume present my efforts to develop Jewish biblical theology in relation to methodological advances in biblical exegesis in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.[3]

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3. See Marvin A. Sweeney, *Tanak: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012); Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible after the Shoah: Engaging Holocaust Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); Sweeney, *The Pentateuch*, CBS (Nashville: Abingdon, 2017); Sweeney, *The Prophetic Literature*, IBT (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005); Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah: The Lost Messiah of Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Sweeney, *1 and 2 Samuel*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming); Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007); Sweeney, *Isaiah, with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature*, FOTL 16 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, FOTL (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016); Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4 and the Post-exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition*, BZAW 171 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988); Sweeney, *Jeremiah*, 2 vols., Illuminations (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming); Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, ROT (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2013); Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, BerOl (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000); Sweeney, *Zephaniah: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Sweeney, *Jewish Mysticism: From Ancient Times through Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020).

Part 1
Foundations

1

Biblical Theology in Canonical Perspective:
Jewish and Christian Models

1. Posing the Question

One of the major advances in biblical studies and theology over the last several decades has been the inclusion of a diversity of voices in the field of biblical theology.[1] The hermeneutical perspectives of religions, cultures, gendered identities, and nations are having a marked impact on biblical interpretation. Past generations focused on achieving a single, authoritative understanding of a given passage of Scripture, generally based in historical-critical scholarship and understood by many to support a theological perspective concerning the superiority of monotheism and the ultimate triumph of Christianity. Interpreters have now come to recognize that Scripture is a rich resource that can support a number of perspectives, such as African and Latino models of liberation theology; East Asian models of contextual theology that emphasize the interrelationship with Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist perspectives; gendered models of interpretation that focus on the means by which men and women, whether straight or gay, communicate in a given text, and others.

Perhaps one of the most foundational examples of inclusion in biblical scholarship is the inclusion of Jews in biblical interpretation.[2] The

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1. For overview discussions, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "Biblical Theology. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament," *EBR* 3:1137–49; James D. G. Dunn, "Biblical Theology. New Testament," *EBR* 3:1149–59; Benjamin D. Sommer, "Biblical Theology: Judaism," *EBR* 3:1159–69; Scott W. Hahn, "Biblical Theology: Christianity," *EBR* 3:1169–76. See also Leo G. Perdue, *The Collapse of History* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); Perdue, *Reconstructing Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

2. In addition to the overview discussions by Sweeney and Sommer cited above, see Sweeney, *Tanak*; Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*; Benjamin D. Sommer, *Revelation*

inclusion of Jews in biblical interpretation is a key issue, particularly in an allegedly postcolonial theological environment, insofar as Scripture, including both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, was written largely in a Jewish national, cultural, and theological environment even as it was appropriated, reread, and interpreted in a gentile Christian environment. Unfortunately, such models often sought to portray ancient Israel, Judah, or Judaism as sinful and rejected by G-d, whereas Christianity would represent the true people of G-d, who would receive the divine promises of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Although such supersessionist models are now beginning to pass away, at least in so-called mainstream Christian traditions, the recognition that the Bible originated as Jewish Scripture is frequently overlooked or underestimated as Christians of various cultures and perspectives seek to claim and interpret Scripture as their own.[3] Indeed, recognition of the hermeneutical significance of a distinctive form of the Jewish Bible known as the Tanak is rarely taken into account, as most scholars are trained to think of biblical interpretation only in relation to single books, texts within a book, or segments of Scripture. But rarely are modern scholars prompted to ask, What is the meaning of the whole? Such a viewpoint is reinforced

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and Authority: Sinai in Jewish Scripture and Tradition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Sommer, "Dialogical Biblical Theology: A Jewish Approach to Reading Scripture Theologically," in *Biblical Theology: Introducing the Conversation*, ed. Leo G. Perdue (Nashville: Abingdon, 2009), 1–53. See also Alice Ogden Bellis and Joel S. Kaminsky, eds., *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures*, SymS 8 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); Christine Helmer, ed., *Biblical Interpretation: History, Context, and Reality*, SymS 26 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005); Isaac Kalimi, ed., *Jewish Biblical Theology: Perspectives and Case Studies* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012); Marvin A. Sweeney, ed., *Methodological Studies*, vol. 1 of *Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, RBS 92 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019); Marc Zvi Brettler, *How to Read the Bible* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2005); David Frankel, *The Land of Canaan and the Destiny of Israel: Theologies of Territory in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001); Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985); Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Impotence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988); Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the G-d of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

3. For an important examination of the problems inherent in supersessionist Christian readings of the Bible after the Shoah, see Clark M. Williamson, *A Guest in the House of Israel: Post-Holocaust Church Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993).

by the Christian understanding that the canon appears in many forms and that canonical structure is a later perspective—whether from Judaism or Christianity—that is read into the interpretation of the biblical text.[4]

But canonical structure plays an important role, even when it is unrecognized, in reading the biblical text, particularly segments such as the Torah/Pentateuch, historical books, and prophetic books, whose place in the canon often determines the perspectives that interpreters bring to bear in their interpretation.

It is therefore necessary to examine critically the canonical forms of Scripture, both Christian and Jewish, to identify their distinctive theological viewpoints and their roles in shaping the ways in which Christians and Jews read Scripture. Discussion begins with the Christian canon of the Bible and then turns to the Jewish form of the Bible as the bases for comparative discussion. The paper attempts to demonstrate that understanding Jewish canonical perspective on the Bible aids in addressing a number of problems posed by reading the Bible in Christian canonical perspective.

2. The Christian Biblical Canon

The first observation concerning the structure of the Christian biblical canon may seem somewhat simplistic, that is, the Christian Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament, but this division nevertheless has important hermeneutical and interpretative implications for how Christians read the Bible.[5] The division into the Old Testament and the New Testament points to the linear, historical model by which Christians read the Bible as a history of G-d's progressive involvement in—and revelation to—the world at large. The term *Old Testament* refers to the old covenant between G-d and humanity, which is understood in Christian thought to refer to the Mosaic covenant at Mount Sinai, and it therefore represents a stage within G-d's progressive revelation to the world at large through the New Testament or new covenant based on the revelation of Jesus Christ.

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4. See esp. Sweeney, *Tanak*.

5. For discussion of the formation of the Christian Bible, see esp. Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and Its Background in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); Stephen B. Chapman, "Collections, Canons, and Communities," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, ed. Stephen B. Chapman and Marvin A. Sweeney (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 28–54.

The conceptualization of the Christian Bible as a presentation of G-d's progressive revelation to humanity is facilitated by the basic structures of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Christian Old Testament includes four basic segments, that is, the Law, the historical books, the wisdom and poetic books, and the Prophets. Interpreters correctly recognize that this structure is not universal in Christianity. It appears in Codex Vaticanus, the oldest complete Greek manuscript of the entire Old and New Testaments, dating to the fourth century CE, but other manuscript traditions in Greek, Syriac, Latin, and other languages appear in a wide variety of orders. Nevertheless, modern Bible translations frequently employ this order to define the presentation of the Christian Bible. This four-part order of the Old (and New) Testament has been functionally canonized, not so much through the efforts of ancient scribes or church authorities but through the more modern phenomenon of printing.

The four-part structure of the Christian Old Testament likewise presents an understanding of progressive historical revelation. The Law presents the earliest history of humanity from creation through the revelation of the law at Mount Sinai and Israel's journey through the wilderness to the borders of the promised land of Israel. It thereby presents the foundations of the covenant, including the Noachian covenant, the ancestral covenants, the Sinai covenants, and others, that lead ultimately to the New Testament in Christian understanding. The historical books, beginning with Joshua and continuing through Esther, Maccabees, or other books, present the later history of Israel from the conquest of the land through Persian or Hellenistic times prior to the New Testament. The poetic and wisdom books, such as Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and, in Roman Catholic Bibles, Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon, include books that address questions of faith, worship, philosophy, and epistemology in the present of all generations of human beings in history. Finally, the prophetic books, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Epistle of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, the Minor Prophets, and others, point to future restoration and revelation in the aftermath of punishment. Insofar as these books conclude the Old Testament, they clearly point to the New Testament within the structure of the Christian canon.

Indeed, the Christian New Testament displays a similar four-part structure that gives expression to the linear, historical progression of divine revelation in Christianity's conceptualization of the Bible. The first

segment is the gospels, which present the earliest history of Christianity in the form of the four authoritative gospels, which recount the life and significance of Jesus Christ. Second is the book of Acts, the historical book of the Christian canon, which recounts the later history of the earliest apostles following the crucifixion of Christ. Third is the epistles, which address questions of faith, doctrine, organization, and other issues that are of concern in the present for all generations of Christians. And fourth is the book of Revelation, which points to the future second coming of Christ as the final culmination of divine revelation to the world at large.

3. The Jewish Canon

The Tanak, the Jewish canonical form of the Bible, presents a very different structure and conceptualization of the Bible from that of the Christian Bible. It obviously does not include a New Testament, although reading and interpretation of the Bible is heavily influenced by the extensive body of rabbinical literature, which also enjoys canonical status in Judaism. Nevertheless, the Tanak stands as a discrete body of literature within the larger body of Jewish canonical literature.

The structure of the Tanak falls into three major sections, including the Torah or Instruction; the Nevi'im or Prophets, including both the Nevi'im Rishonim or Former Prophets and the Nevi'im 'Ahrononim or Latter Prophets; and the Ketuvim or Writings.[6] The initial Hebrew letters of each major segment of the Tanak, *tav* for Torah, *nun* for Nevi'im, and *kaph* for Ketuvim, form the acronym Tanak, which serves as the designation for the distinctive form of the Jewish Bible. The three-part structure of the Tanak is indeed based in part on historical progression, but it employs a very different model from that of the Christian Bible. Rather than the linear, historical progression evident in the Old Testament, the Tanak employs a cyclical pattern that entails a statement of ideals in Torah, a portrayal of the disruption of those ideals in the Nevi'im, and a presentation of the potential restoration of those ideals in Ketuvim.

Within the structure of the Tanak, the Torah, or Five Books of Moses, stands as the foundation for the Jewish Bible and indeed for Jewish tradi-

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6. For discussion of the formation of the Jewish Bible, see Sid Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1976); Timothy Lim, *The Formation of the Jewish Canon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

tion at large.[7] The Torah is so named because it is intended to serve as instruction for the Jewish people concerning YHWH as the true and only G-d of creation, humanity, formed in the image of G-d and tasked with assisting YHWH in completing and sanctifying creation; the distinctive holy identity of Israel or the Jewish people within humanity to act as a leading power in ensuring the completion and sanctification of creation; and the obligations pertaining to Israel or the Jewish people that are intended to form them as an ideal holy and just people in the world of creation. The Torah includes the narratives that relate the creation of the world by YHWH; the selection of Israel or the Jewish people as the holy people of YHWH who will be bound by an eternal covenant with YHWH that will play its role in completing and sanctifying creation; the deliverance of Israel or the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage, thereby demonstrating YHWH's covenant with Israel; the revelation of divine torah at Mount Sinai, thereby stating the bases for YHWH's covenant with Israel; and YHWH's guidance of Israel through the wilderness to the promised land of Israel. Overall, these narratives state the ideals of the Torah, that is, that Israel will become a just and holy people that will aid in completing and sanctifying creation.

The Nevi'im or Prophets present the disruption of the ideals of the Torah in both the Nevi'im Rishonim or the Former Prophets and the Nevi'im 'Aharonim or the Latter Prophets. The Nevi'im Rishonim present a narrative history of Israel's life in the land from the time of the conquest of the land under Joshua through the Babylonian exile. Interpreters have come to recognize the interpretative character of the Nevi'im Rishonim as a theological history that attempts to answer the question of why Israel was exiled from the promised land of Israel. The answer is that Israel failed to observe its covenant with YHWH. Following the Joshua narratives, in which YHWH grants the land of Canaan to Israel in fulfillment of YHWH's promises to the ancestors, Judges–Kings attempts to demonstrate that Israel and Judah did not abide by the covenant and thereby lost the land. The Nevi'im Rishonim is a selective history, and critical scholars are easily able to demonstrate why Israel and Judah were destroyed, that

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7. See Sommer, who argues that the Jewish Bible must be read in relation to later Jewish tradition (*Revelation and Authority*). But his model argues that later tradition actually defines the terms by which the Bible is read, much like classical Christian understandings of the role that the New Testament plays in defining the reading of the Old Testament.

is, they violated their treaties with their suzerains, Assyria and Babylon respectively, and suffered destruction and exile as a consequence. The Nevi'im 'Aharonim function similarly. Each of the prophetic books evaluates the experience of Israel and Judah from its own theological position and concludes that Israel and Judah suffered exile for failing to observe their covenant with YHWH based on each prophet's understanding of that covenant. Each book also projects a scenario of restoration—something that the Nevi'im Rishonim do not do—based on the distinctive theological viewpoint and understanding of each of the books of the Nevi'im 'Aharonim. Overall, the Nevi'im emerge as analytical works that attempt to explain evil in the world, generally the exiles of Israel and Judah from the land, and to project scenarios concerning their restoration.

The Ketuvim or Writings are frequently portrayed as an accidental collection of disparate books, but in fact they constitute an intentional collection with its own sense of conceptualization and purpose.[8] Overall, the Ketuvim present a scenario for the restoration of the ideals of the Torah that were portrayed as disrupted in the Nevi'im. They begin with the Psalms, which not only look forward to the celebration of YHWH's kingship in the world but also include an even greater number of laments that ask when YHWH will act to deliver the people. They turn to the wisdom books, Job and Proverbs, which present their respective understandings of YHWH's presence in the world of creation and the means by which humans may discern and learn from that presence. They continue with the Five Megillot or Scrolls, which present compositions that aid in celebrating and expressing the meaning of the major Jewish holidays. They continue with Daniel, which presents a scenario for the future sanctification of the temple in the midst of a profane world. Daniel appears directly prior to Ezra-Nehemiah and presents a narrative whereby the temple is rebuilt and sanctified to serve once again as the holy center of Judaism and creation at large. The Ketuvim conclude with Chronicles, which provides an alternative and corrected history of Israel that spans from creation to the restoration authorized by Cyrus in an effort to prompt readers to consider exile and restoration from an alternative theological viewpoint that stresses the demand for the sanctity of the temple and the Jewish people in the midst of creation and the viewpoint

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8. For a study that begins to take seriously the historical formation and theological meaning the Ketuvim, see Donn F. Morgan, *Between Text and Community: The Writings in Canonical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

that each generation is responsible for its own fate, whether that entails suffering or blessing.

4. Theological Issues

The Christian canonical form of the Bible presents a number of theological problems that need to be addressed. Comparison with the conceptualization of Scripture in the Jewish Tanak can aid in addressing these problems.

First, the basic conceptualization of the Christian Bible as a two-part division of Old Testament and New Testament functions as a means by which the New Testament undermines and supersedes the Old Testament as sacred Scripture.[9] The term *Old Testament* is derived from terminology that denotes old covenant and connotes antiquity, obsolescence, and irrelevance in a progressive historical model of divine revelation to the world at large. The Old Testament is understood to refer to the old Mosaic covenant of law, which entails Jewish failure or inability to observe divine commands that leads ultimately to divine judgment and thereby clears the way for the revelation of the new covenant of G-d with humanity through Jesus Christ as the true and exclusive covenant that supersedes the Old Testament. Christian interpreters have begun to recognize the implications of such a model for supersessionist theological perspectives, in which Jews are pushed aside as unfaithful obstacles to the recognition of the full plan of divine revelation and love in a suffering world. Christian scholars have proposed terminological change, such as First Testament, and have proposed viewing G-d's covenant with Judaism as an eternal ongoing covenant alongside that of Christianity, but the canonical problem of the interrelationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament has not been fully resolved.

Second is the conceptualization of the Law as the first major portion of the Old Testament.[10] The term *Law* is a misnomer brought about by Paul's translation of the Hebrew word *torah* as Greek *nomos* in his epistles. The

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9. See now Christopher R. Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of the Two Testament Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).

10. For a recent study that examines the role of law in prerabbinic Judaism, see John J. Collins, *The Invention of Judaism: Torah and Jewish Identity from Deuteronomy to Paul*, TLJS 7 (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017). For recent introductions to the Pentateuch, see Sweeney, *Pentateuch*; Thomas B. Dozeman, *The Pentateuch: Introducing the Torah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).

Hebrew word *torah* does not mean "law." The Hebrew word for "law" is *mishpat*. *Torah*, derived from the *hiphil* conjugation of the verb root *yarah*, means "to guide, to instruct," and the noun *torah* means "instruction." But rendering the word as "law" entails a hard and fast, monolithic meaning of the term that understands the Pentateuch to be collection of strict and rigid laws and meaningless rituals, the violations of which bring judgment on a legalistic society that understands punishment but not mercy. But an understanding of the function of torah in the Tanak aids Christian interpreters in recognizing that the Pentateuch is much more than law; it also presents the foundational narratives concerning the early history of Israel and humanity at large. Although the study of law has lagged far behind the study of narrative, interpreters are beginning to recognize that law is dynamic and flexible insofar as it is designed to provide a just and holy foundation for a viable society. Gerhard von Rad understood this problem and frequently assigned Priestly material to his doctoral students so they might begin to examine the holy center of Judaism, but even now many interpreters view the Pentateuch as the product of a later scribal culture immersed in discussion concerning the meaning and interpretation of earlier laws that often had more to do with self-preservation than creating a just and holy society.

The historical books lay out the fundamental history of Israel from the time of the conquest through the Second Temple period prior to the advent of Christ.[11] Early critical scholarship treated this material as a history of failure, especially since the interpretive agenda of the so-called Deuteronomistic History led ultimately to the Babylonian exile. The Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah were priestly histories that were too biased toward priestly concerns to be reliable, Esther was a vindictive book concerned with revenge against gentiles, and 1–2 Maccabees were little more than expressions of Jewish nationalism. But the historical books have benefited greatly from the recognition that theological agenda must not be confused with historical reconstruction. Some interpreters miss the point and maintain that the historical narratives must be dismissed as hopelessly biased inventions of Israelite and Judean history. But the role of these books in

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11. For discussion of the historical books, see esp. Antony F. Campbell, *Joshua through Chronicles: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004); Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical, and Literary Introduction* (London: Continuum, 2007); Richard D. Nelson, *The Historical Books*, IBT (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998).

the Tanak demonstrates that history is always remembered history, and the historical books must be recognized not only as attempts to record history but as attempts to analyze history and to learn from it as a means to learn the lessons of the past and apply them to the future.

Finally, the Prophets in the past have been viewed primarily as pronouncers of judgment against a sinful people of Israel and as the proclaimers of a bright future in which G-d would bring salvation to Israel and the world.[12] The placement of the Prophets immediately prior to the New Testament made it abundantly clear what that salvation would entail. But the Prophets have undergone a revolution in study, much like the historical books. Each prophetic book has its own distinct theological viewpoint, and each is fundamentally concerned with explaining disaster or evil in the world in the form of the destruction of Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem and the exile of the people. But interpreters are now beginning to recognize that the Prophets attempt to analyze the problems that Israel and Judah face and to project a solution to those problems. Again, the agenda of the Prophets—or more properly, the Latter Prophets—is much like that of the historical books or Former Prophets, namely, to learn from the mistakes of the past so that those lessons might be applied to rebuilding Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel and thereby realizing the ideals laid out in the Torah.

5. Conclusion

Consideration of the conceptualization and function of the books of the Bible in the Tanak, the Jewish canonical form of the Bible, can play an important role in rethinking some of the problems prompted by the structure of the Christian Bible in considering the conceptualization and function of biblical books. In this regard, it is important to note that the Tanak also serves as witness to Scripture in Christianity's understanding of the Bible. Such recognition can play an important role in addressing some of the problematic issues that have a risen between the two traditions.

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12. For discussion of the prophetic literature, see esp. Sweeney, *Prophetic Literature*; David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

2
Form Criticism

1. Definitions

Throughout the twentieth century, form criticism has served as one of the primary exegetical tools in the scholarly interpretation of biblical texts. It is a method of linguistic textual analysis that may be applied both synchronically and diachronically to texts in either written or oral form. Insofar as its object is the interpretation of biblical literature, it functions in tandem with other critical methodologies, such as textual criticism, tradition-historical criticism, redaction criticism, philology, rhetorical criticism, the social sciences, and linguistics, within the broader context of literary criticism. Form criticism focuses especially on the patterns of language that appear within the overall linguistic configuration or form of a text and the role that these patterns play in giving shape and expression to the text.

Form criticism presupposes an intimate relationship between language and the social and literary settings in which it arises and functions. Such settings generate common or recurring conventions of language or genres to meet the needs for human communication and self-expression, and genres in turn influence the settings in which they originate and function. Although a genre arises in a particular setting, it may function in a wide variety of settings other than that in which it originates. It may also be further shaped or developed in relation to the various settings in which it functions. By focusing on the formal shape and content of the text and by correlating that concern with examination of its underlying genres and its social and literary settings, form criticism emerges as a fundamental

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exegetical method that enables the interpreter to come to an understanding of its communicative functions and effects.

Each text is unique and constitutes a singular event of communication, but the typical conventions of language that function within a specific social or literary context play an important role in achieving the goals of the communication. This applies both to the contemporary and the ancient worlds. The credit card solicitation is a well-known example in which standardized modes of expression contribute to a unique communication that arises from the social context of sales and financing. It typically congratulates the recipient for exemplary management of finances, points out the advantages of consolidating all bills into one low monthly payment, and offers a low, fixed, introductory interest rate together with a hefty credit limit in an effort to entice the recipient to accept a credit card that reverts to relatively standard terms after six months or so. The contemporary novel arises from the social setting of literary artistry and communication. It employs a standard narrative form to develop a plot involving a set of fictional or semifictional characters, a situation that challenges the characters, and a means to overcome the challenge, in an effort to entertain, stimulate, and influence the reader.

The ancient world likewise employed standardized formal language features to facilitate communication. Prophetic speech uses a variety of formal features to validate and convey a prophet's message in an attempt to convince its audience to adopt a specific attitude or course of action because G-d requires it. For example, the formula "Thus says YHWH" typically introduces a discourse in which the prophet speaks a message concerning YHWH's expectations of the people. The "regnal reports" of Kings and Chronicles employ a standard form that reports and evaluates the reign of a king. The formulas concerning the beginning of a king's reign and his death and burial encase a report of his life's activities. Such reports provide the basis for an overall evaluation of his reign that contributes to a larger and distinctive interpretative presentation of Israel's or Judah's history that may call for increased observance of YHWH's requirements, the rebuilding of the land of Israel, or the like. In each case, typical genres of expression grow out of the social or literary setting to facilitate unique forms of communication, but they influence it as well by shaping the communication so that it will have some impact on those who read or hear it.

Form and genre are frequently confused, as both function together within various settings to produce communicative texts. Nevertheless,

they must be distinguished. *Form* refers to the unique formulation of an individual text or communication, whereas *genre* refers to the typical conventions of expression or language that appear within the text. Since form criticism was developed initially by German-speaking scholars, German words are often used in form-critical studies: *Gattung* for "genre," *Sitz im Leben* for "setting in life" or "social setting," and *Sitz im Literatur* for "literary setting." Terminology for the method itself likewise appears frequently in German. Thus *Formgeschichte*, "the history of form," and *Gattungsgeschichte*, "the history of genres," designate the method insofar as it is concerned with the development of literary forms and linguistic genres. Otherwise, *Formkritik*, "form criticism," and *Gattungskritik*, "genre criticism," designate the method when it is concerned fundamentally with the synchronic critical analysis of forms and genres.

2. History of Form Criticism

Like all viable and dynamic currents of thought, form criticism has evolved considerably during the course of its development. Of course, the understanding and articulation of form criticism must be evaluated in relation to the intellectual and theological concerns and presuppositions of the individual form critics themselves and the contexts in which they worked. From the outset, form criticism has been concerned with the interpretation of biblical literature in its present form, particularly in relation to the forms, genres, settings, and intentions of biblical texts. But the history of form-critical research demonstrates a shift from an early focus on the short, self-contained, original oral speech unit to an emphasis on the literary and linguistic structures and modes of expression of the much larger textual compositions in which smaller formal units function. Such methodological evolution also entails a shift from a relatively limited and one-sided emphasis on the social realities that stand behind and generate a text to a much broader emphasis on the social and literary realities that generate a text and that are in turn created and sustained by that text. The theological background for such a shift lies in the general development of twentieth-century theological thinking, in which a largely Protestant concern with the origins of religion, specifically the Bible and the events on which it is based, has given way to greater appreciation for the creative role played by later religious traditions and institutions, based especially on the perspectives of Roman Catholicism and Judaism. The sociopolitical background of form

criticism lies in the rise of the unified German state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the recognition of its failures through the course of World War II and beyond, which prompted reconsideration of its romanticist conceptions of ideal central authority.[2]

The origins of modern form-critical research appear in the writings of Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932). At the outset of Gunkel's career, biblical scholarship was dominated by an interest in the source-critical work of Julius Wellhausen and others who labored to identify the earliest written sources or documents within the present text of the Bible in an attempt to establish the Bible's literary history. Wellhausen's work provided the basis for his reconceptualization of the development of Israelite religion from the emergence of the early Israelite state and its critique in prophetic monotheism to the moral and religious teachings of Jesus. Such concerns must be placed in relation to romanticist attempts to define the character of the emerging German nation by examining the folk traditions of the German people and the Hegelian concept of progressively evolving centralized leadership.

Influenced especially by concerns for establishing the history of a religious tradition and by the folklore research initiated by Wilhelm Grimm and Jakob Grimm, Gunkel argued that it was possible to push beyond the earliest written sources of the Bible into the realm of the oral tradition of mythology and folklore that stand behind the biblical text. Such an attempt was warranted by the common belief of the time that the purest and most creative religious expressions were to be found in the earliest stages of human development and that they could be reapplied as an authoritative basis for the advancement of religion in the modern age. To this end, Gunkel argued that the literary creation accounts in Genesis and the visions of the end time in Revelation derived largely from earlier orally transmitted mythological traditions that could ultimately be traced back to Babylonia.[3] In his later commentary on Genesis, he attempted to establish its character not as history but as saga and to trace its tradition history

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2. For surveys of the development of biblical exegesis in general, see Robert Morgan with John Barton, *Biblical Interpretation*, OxBS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969).

3. Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895).

back to the originally oral stories about legendary figures that were told around the campfire by family or tribal units prior to the emergence of a unified Israelite state.[4]

Because of the prevailing view that primitive peoples were relatively simpleminded and incapable of memorizing lengthy texts, Gunkel focused his research on the short, self-contained literary units of Genesis, believing that these would best point to the original, short, oral forms of the individual stories that circulated among the people. Gunkel believed that through the course of oral transmission, such short units were brought together in episodic chains to form longer narrative cycles or sagas that focused on a particular theme or subject, such as the establishment of the world (i.e., the primeval history in Gen 1–11) or the lives of the patriarchs (i.e., the Abraham or Jacob-Esau cycles). Although Gunkel defined textual units by their brevity and self-sufficiency, insofar as they presented a complete plot or set of concerns he noted that various short units shared similar sets of common characteristics that enabled them to be classified as literary types or genres. Such genres include myths about the gods or divine action (Gen 6–9); historical sagas, which reflect historical occurrences (Gen 14); and etiologies, which explain the origins of tribal or national relations (Gen 29–31), names (Gen 32), ceremonies (Gen 17), geological features (Gen 19), and so forth. Gunkel's later research further developed the classification of narrative genres, especially folktales, as well as those of the psalms and prophetic literature.[5]

Throughout his life Gunkel continued to focus on the origins of biblical literature in the short, self-contained, oral unit and its function in the life of ancient Israelite society. But in his later writings and those of his student Sigmund Mowinckel (1884–1965), a more sustained examination of the setting of textual units began to emerge. Gunkel wrote a commentary on Psalms followed by an introduction to Psalms that was completed after his death by his student Joachim Begrich.[6] As in his Genesis commentary, Gunkel maintained that the psalms functioned specifically as oral texts in the social life of the Israelite people, particularly in cultic contexts in

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4. See Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977).

5. For example, Hermann Gunkel, *The Folktale in the Old Testament*, trans. Michael D. Rutter, HTIBS (Sheffield: Almond, 1987).

6. Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, HKAT 2/2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926); Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Einleitung in die Psalmen*, HKAT supplement (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933).

which the people expressed the various dimensions of their experience of the world and their relationship with YHWH. Gunkel identified several primary genres of psalmic expression: festival hymns, communal complaints, individual complaints, royal psalms, and thanksgiving psalms, each of which was employed in some form of worship service.

Mowinckel affirmed the basic validity of Gunkel's method but went much further than his teacher in defining the setting in which such poetry functioned.[7] As a Norwegian, Mowinckel was heavily influenced by Scandinavian interest in comparative religions and religious anthropology. Such interest was prompted especially by the presence in northern Scandinavia, Finland, and Russia of the seminomadic Laplanders, whose religious and linguistic traditions demonstrated many similarities with those of various Asian and Native American populations. Mowinckel was less interested in the origins of biblical literature than in the process of oral transmission itself in the life of the Israelite people and therefore concentrated his research less on defining the genres of psalmic poetry than on establishing the setting in which they functioned. Based on the comparative evidence of the Babylonian Akitu or New Year Festival, in which the kingship of Marduk and the Babylonian monarch were simultaneously affirmed and renewed, Mowinckel argued especially for the cultic setting of many of the psalms in an analogous Israelite fall new year festival in which the psalms would have expressed YHWH's renewal of creation, defeat of enemies, and sovereignty. Likewise, his work on the prophets emphasized the role played by schools of prophetic disciples who orally transmitted and elaborated on the work of the prophetic master until it was written down in the form of the prophetic book.[8] Thus Mowinckel's work is especially important for defining the institutional settings in which Israelite literature developed.

Similar concerns with institutional setting may be seen in the work of Albrecht Alt (1883–1956), another of Gunkel's students. Alt was primarily a historian who was intimately familiar with the geography and archaeological study of the land of Israel. In keeping with the sociopolitical currents in Germany throughout his lifetime, Alt was especially concerned with the

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7. Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien I–VI* (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1921–1924); Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. Dafydd R. Ap Thomas, 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962).

8. Cf. Sigmund Mowinckel, *Prophecy and Tradition: The Prophetic Books in Light of the Study of the Growth and History of the Tradition* (Oslo: Dybwad, 1946).

formation of the Israelite state and the concentration of its political and religious authority. Alt argued that Israel emerged as various tribal groups peacefully moved into the highlands west of the Jordan River and later came into conflict with the inhabitants of the coastal plain.[9] He argued that Israelite religion emerged from an amalgamation of patriarchal ancestral cults and Canaanite cultic practices that were taken over and adapted by the later Israelite state.[10] His study on the origins of Israelite law[11] noted the distinction between two basic types of law in the Bible: the casuistically formulated laws that began by stating a legal case as a set of circumstances followed by a statement of legal disposition or consequence ("If X event takes place, then the course of legal action to be taken is Y") and the apodictically formulated laws, which state categorically what one shall or shall not do ("Thou shalt not X" or "Cursed is the one who does X"). Based on the comparative evidence of ancient Near Eastern law codes, Alt argued that the casuistic laws represented a common ancient Near Eastern law form that was taken over by the Israelite tribes when they entered the land and that represented the disposition of actual legal cases in the "secular" Israelite courts. The apodictic legal formulations, however, were unique and represented the legal traditions that the tribes brought with them from the desert when they entered the land of Israel. They functioned especially in a cultic setting, in which YHWH's Torah was read to the people in order to familiarize them with YHWH's requirements and renew the covenant. Mixed forms ("If X takes place, then you shall do Y") represent attempts to combine the legal forms for application in the courts after settlement in the land.

As form-critical research progressed through the period of World War II, German scholars continued to be preoccupied with the underlying questions of state formation and the critique of political power, particularly against the background of the disastrous Nazi state. But they were also increasingly interested in the forms, settings, and functions of larger literary compositions in both oral and written forms. Overall, this resulted

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9. Albrecht Alt, "The Settlement of the Israelites in Palestine," in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 173–221.

10. Albrecht Alt, "The G-d of the Fathers," in *Essays on Old Testament History*, 1–100.

11. Albrecht Alt, "The Origins of Israelite Law," in *Essays on Old Testament History*, 101–71.

in the beginnings of a reconceptualization of form and genre, in that greater attention was paid to the role of genre in the formation of larger texts. Much of the discussion was centered on the work of Alt's students Martin Noth (1902–1968) and Gerhard von Rad (1901–1971).

Von Rad is especially known for his work in Old Testament theology,[12] but his methodological basis lay in tradition-historical and form-critical research. His early work focused on the formation of the Hexateuch and its role in the development of ancient Israel's theological outlook.[13] Von Rad noted the presence of a number of short, self-contained creedal confessions, such as Deut 26:5b–9, 6:20–24, and Josh 24:2b–13, in which brief summaries of YHWH's actions on behalf of Israel point to the means by which Israel developed and expressed its theological understanding of history. These creedal statements provided the basis for the collection and organization of various traditions that ultimately were assembled into the Hexateuchal narrative. Von Rad argued that J served as the collector, author, and theologian who assembled the various elements of this material and shaped it into a coherent narrative that provided the basic historical and theological outlook of the newly formed Davidic monarchy. The J narrative was recited to the people in the context of the cultic observance of the festival of Sukkot as a means to establish the identity of the various tribes as a unified nation with a single history and G-d. Von Rad's later work focused on how the J narrative served as the basis for the continued development of the Hexateuch. Ultimately, he applied the model to the entire Bible to demonstrate how salvation history constituted the fundamental theological outlook of Israel and provided the basis for the present form of the Bible. In terms of form-critical methodology, however, he demonstrated how a short genre could expand to constitute a much larger genre and that textual interpretation should not, therefore, focus exclusively on the earliest levels of composition.

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12. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. David M. G. Stalker, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962–1965).

13. *Hexateuch* refers to the first six books of the Bible. Some source critics before and during von Rad's career traced the pentateuchal sources into the book of Joshua as well. See Gerhard von Rad, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. Eric W. Trueman Dicken (London: SCM, 1984), 1–78.

Noth was fundamentally a historian, but his research employed form criticism and tradition history.[14] His early work focused on the formation of Israel as a cultic amphictyony in which the twelve tribes united themselves around a cultic center,[15] but his later research focused on the formation of historical traditions and their historiographical perspectives. His study of the Deuteronomistic History noted the presence of various short, self-contained, historical summaries throughout the books of Joshua–Kings (e.g., Josh 1, 23; 1 Sam 12) that summed up Israel's historical experience of YHWH and showed great similarities in literary style and theological perspective.[16] On the basis of these and other observations, Noth argued that Joshua–Kings constituted a single "Deuteronomistic History," in which the historian (whom Noth called "Dtr") collected a wide variety of earlier material and assembled it into a single composition that attempted to explain the destruction of the temple and Israel's exile from the land as YHWH's judgment of the people for their failure to adhere to the covenant as expressed in Deuteronomy. Similar work by Noth pointed to the "Chronicler's History" in the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Noth later attempted to define the formation of the Pentateuch as the coalescence at the preliterary stage of five separate tradition complexes centered on distinctive themes—exodus from Egypt, guidance into arable land, promise to the patriarchs, guidance in the wilderness, and revelation at Sinai—again in relation to the formation of Israel's identity as a unified state.[17] His results differ significantly from those of von Rad, but like von Rad he also identified larger literary units as genres and pointed out the creative, authorial role of later redaction.

Claus Westermann likewise has continued to examine the underlying concerns or intentions and generic (i.e., relating to genre) structures that generate biblical texts. His early work focuses especially on cultic laments and hymns of praise, whose surface structures he examines in an effort to define the word of G-d that prompted the psalmist to compose the work

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14. See, for example, Martin Noth, *The History of Israel*, trans. Stanley Godman (New York: Harper & Row, 1960).

15. Martin Noth, *Das System der zwölf Stämme Israels*, BWANT 4.1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1930).

16. Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien: Die sammelden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke in Alten Testament* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1943).

17. Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. Bernhard W. Anderson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972).

in the first place.[18] Similar concerns appear in his studies of pentateuchal narratives and prophetic speech. His study of Genesis narratives identifies the promise to the patriarchs as a primary concern of the plot but raises questions concerning the character of the promise as a genre.[19] Fundamentally, the promise is a basic motif of the Genesis narratives, but it can only be identified as a genre when the promise is germane to the resolution of tension in the plot. Otherwise, the narratives vary considerably in form, though the concern with promise remains constant. Finally, Westermann's study of prophetic speech forms points to the messenger speech form and the prophetic judgment speeches as relatively constant underlying features that are expressed in a variety of forms in the surface structure of individual texts.[20] Together von Rad, Noth, and Westermann note the distinction between form and genre and the role that genre plays in establishing form.

These studies stand well within the methodological framework of Gunkel's original program in that they demonstrate a concerted attempt to refine his earlier understandings of form, genre, setting, and intention. Nevertheless, the experience of World War II changed the field of biblical studies in general and form criticism in particular as intellectuals in various fields began to question the preoccupation with tracing the historical development of ideal centralized leadership and authority in both politics and religion. French thinkers in particular began to delve into the fields of linguistics, literature, and sociology, which focused on the masses of people and the function of language in society rather than on elite leadership and central institutions. The result has been the emergence of methodological pluralism as scholars have experimented with new perspectives from which to interpret literature. Under the influence of such currents, form-critical scholarship and biblical scholarship in general have begun to focus more intently on the literary character of the Bible in its present written form rather than on its ideal, original, oral forms, and on the social context of the life of the people in which biblical literature was written, read, and interpreted. The foundations for such concerns were already present in the works of von Rad and Noth, who focused on larger literary compositions,

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18. Claus Westermann, *The Praise of G-d in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1965).

19. Claus Westermann, "Arten der Erzählung in der Genesis," in *Erforschung am Alten Testament*, TB 24 (Munich: Kaiser, 1964), 9–91.

20. Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech, with a New Foreword by Gene M. Tucker*, trans. Hugh C. White (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991).

albeit at the oral stage, and in the work of Westermann, who focused on the social and theological preoccupations that are expressed in biblical literature. But impulses from rhetorical criticism, semiotics and linguistics, and cultural anthropology have had a telling effect on form-critical studies in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Rhetorical criticism is an especially important influence on form criticism in that it points to the unique formulation of each individual text and to its impact on an audience. In his 1968 presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature, James Muilenburg noted the limited nature of form criticism's preoccupation with the typical elements of biblical literature.[21] Instead, he highlighted the Bible's literary character and the individual literary formulation of each text that appears within the Bible. In addition, he called for recognition of the function of rhetorical devices within a composition, namely, how the text was formulated to accomplish its goals. Although generic forms may appear within or even constitute a text, each text is unique, and its individual characteristics as well as its typical elements must be examined in order to understand it fully. Recent rhetorical critics have focused especially on the interaction of text and audience in an effort to understand the rhetorical function of biblical texts.[22] In a similar vein, studies of the performance of oral epic poetry demonstrate that each employs standardized or formulaic forms of expression to produce a unique text in interaction with its audience.[23] Such work has shown that Gunkel's focus on an original, self-contained, oral unit was mistaken.

Muilenburg's call for consideration of the unique formulation of a text coincided with a growing concern among European scholars with linguistics and semiotics and the role that the structures of language play in textual expression. Ferdinand de Saussure argued that each text is a communicative event in which the basic linguistic elements of *langue*, the common structures of expression in a linguistic system, and *parole*, the individual forms of expression in which a text appears, combine to produce the communication.[24] In his study of Russian folklore, Vladimir Propp further distinguished the roles of the "actant," who sends communication accord-

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21. James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 1–18.

22. Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah*, GBS (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

23. Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (New York: Athenaeum, 1974).

24. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959).

ing to his or her own presuppositions and intentions, and the "receiver," who receives the communication and understands it in relation to his or her own linguistic and conceptual context.[25] When Klaus Koch applied these principles to form-critical research, *langue* and *parole* emerged respectively as the underlying genres that inform the composition of a text and the individual literary structure of its presentation.[26] The actant and the receiver correspond to the distinction between the retentions of an author and the understanding and subsequent interpretation of a redactor, who redefines the meaning of the earlier text and places it into a new textual setting. Such a conception is important for the redaction-critical study of biblical literature as well, in that it provides a basis for distinguishing the concerns and understandings of an original author from that of a later redactor. Koch's commentary on Amos attempts to demonstrate these principles with a detailed analysis of the linguistic structure of the text coupled with analyses of the common structures of ancient Hebrew expression, the social settings of its oral and literary forms, and the preoccupations of its authors and redactors.[27]

Wolfgang Richter has further refined the linguistic basis for form-critical research by arguing that exegesis must be first and foremost a literary science.[28] He also contends that the exegete must be prepared to engage the text on the basis of its linguistic structures, including both its form and content, that is, the outer form of its literary or linguistic expression (cf. *parole)* and the inner form or the deep structure of the concepts that it communicates (cf. *langue*). Richter distinguishes between the *Sitz im Leben* (social setting) of the linguistic system in which language functions and the *Sitz im Literatur* (literary setting) in which the text appears. The text must first be analyzed according to its syntactical, semantic, and pragmatic linguistic features in order to identify its underlying generic structures and concerns. Although Richter focuses largely

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25. Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968).

26. Klaus Koch, "Linguistik und Formgeschichte," in *Was ist Formgeschichte? Methoden der Bibelexegese*, 3rd ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974), 173–97.

27. Klaus Koch, *Amos: Untersucht mit den Methoden einer strukturalen Formgeschichte*, 3 vols., AOAT 30 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag; Butzon & Bercker, 1976).

28. Wolfgang Richter, *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft: Entwurf einer alttestamentlichen Literatureheorie und Methodologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971).

on the synchronic level, a major goal of his research is to identify tensions within the text as a means to reconstruct its diachronic or redactional history. In large measure this focus is based on his definition of smaller, closed, linguistic units as the basis for exegesis and examination of their interrelationship within the larger text. Unfortunately, this definition unduly influences the interpretation of texts by introducing redaction-critical criteria at the outset of exegesis, that is, his focus on the short unit determines his view of the whole rather than vice versa. Indeed, redaction criticism is the final step in his obligatory sequence of methods. Richter's students have attempted to address the problem by focusing especially on the syntactic and semantic forms of expression in the final form of the text as the basis for exegesis, although their concerns frequently return to redaction criticism.[29]

More recently, Rolf Knierim has pointed more forcefully to the synchronic dimensions of biblical literature and to the underlying conceptual structures that generate the present form of the text.[30] He does not abandon diachronic concerns. Rather, he argues that redaction criticism takes place at the outset of exegesis in that the interpreter is faced with the final redactional form of the text, in which earlier text forms have been subsumed by redactors, who select, modify, supplement, and reconceive earlier texts in accordance with their own purposes and presuppositions. But Knierim maintains that the text must be understood first in its final form prior to drawing conclusions concerning its literary history. The exegete cannot assume that earlier text forms appear in the present form of the text. Knierim presupposes the work of structural anthropologist Claude Lévi Strauss, who argued that the deep structures of the human mind are based in the structure of language that in turn is derived from and defines the social structure of the society in which it functions.[31] Such

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29. Cf. Harald Schweizer, *Metaphorische Grammatik: Wege zur Integration von Grammatik und Textinterpretation in der Exegese*, ATSAT 15 (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1981); and Walter Gross, *Die Satzteilfolge im Verbalsatz alttestamentlicher Prosa*, FAT 17 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996).

30. Rolf Knierim, "Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered," *Int* 27 (1973): 435–68; Knierim, "Criticism of Literary Features, Form, Tradition, and Redaction," in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 123–65; Knierim, *Text and Concept in Leviticus 1:1–9*, FAT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992).

31. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke G. Schoepf (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967).

deep structures play a role in creating genres, but different genres within a text are not to be identified as the deep structures; they are generated by the deep structures and preoccupations of the human mind, and individual texts employ them within their larger semantic and literary structure. The exegete therefore cannot be limited to the analysis of short, self-contained units, although they will appear as components of the larger text. Instead, the synchronic literary structure of the text must be analyzed first in its full form in order to identify the underlying conceptions and presuppositions or assumptions that both generate the text and are expressed in it. The larger structure of the text then enables the exegete to come to decisions concerning the place of smaller units within the whole. Redaction-critical concerns no longer determine the overall interpretation of the text. Like Richter, Knierim presupposes the inseparability of form and content, but he does not presuppose a literary history for the text. According to Knierim, redaction-critical reconstruction may proceed only if inner tension in the text points to a literary prehistory. In sum, Knierim emphasizes analysis of the text in and of itself, rather than a preconception of what the text should be, as the basis for establishing its presuppositions, intentions, and basic conceptual structure.

Under the influence of the text-linguistic and literary-synchronic approaches of Richter and Knierim, form criticism is well placed in the late twentieth century to address the synchronic interpretation of large literary units, such as the Deuteronomistic History, the Prophetic Books, or wisdom compositions such as Proverbs or Job. This is particularly important in relation to other critical methodologies, such as canonical criticism, narratology, and poetics. Insofar as biblical books appear in their final, edited forms, form criticism provides the basis for both the synchronic and the diachronic interpretation of biblical literature. Form criticism serves as the indispensable basis for redaction-critical study. It provides the tools by which the interpreter may assess the form, genres, settings, and intentions of the present biblical text in order to determine whether or not earlier text forms may be identified, and it enables the interpreter to assess any earlier text forms that may be reconstructed from the present text. Hence, the form critic must be prepared to consider multiple forms, genres, settings, and intentions in the interpretation of the biblical text throughout its literary history. This has tremendous implications for the concept of setting in form-critical scholarship, because it requires the consideration of various types of settings—sociological, historical, and literary—as well as multiple expressions of each. Although a text may be composed in rela-

tion to a specific context and set of concerns, it will be read in relation to later literary, historical, and social settings, according to the presuppositions and concerns that are operative in those later contexts. The present writer's commentary on Isa 1–39 attempts to address the interrelationship between synchronic and diachronic interpretation by assessing the formal characteristics of texts throughout four stages in the composition of the book of Isaiah.[32]

Form criticism is uniquely suited among the critical methodologies in biblical exegesis to address both synchronic and diachronic issues in the interpretation of the biblical text. Insofar as it is able to interact fruitfully with other critical methodologies, it will continue to serve as a fundamental method of biblical interpretation. In addition to studies cited above, current form-critical work appears in the Forms of the Old Testament Literature commentary series, as well as in the works of many scholars on different parts of the Bible.[33]

3. An Illustration of Form Criticism at Work

In order to understand the present state of form-critical study, it will be necessary to discuss its basic components—form, genre, setting, and intention—in relation to the interpretation of a specific biblical text. Genesis 15 provides an ideal example: it is a foundational text for understanding the covenant between YHWH and Israel through Abraham; various genres appear within the present form of the text; its presence in the Pentateuch indicates that it has gone through several stages of composition; and it has been understood by later readers to express important theological principles, such as justification by faith (Christianity) and possession of the land of Israel (Judaism).[34]

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32. Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39, with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature*, FOTL 16 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

33. Among the most important such works for different parts of the HB are Suzanne Boorer, *The Promise of the Land as Oath: The Key to the Formation of the Pentateuch*, BZAW 205 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992); Frank Crüsemann, *The Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law*, trans. Allan W. Mahnke (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); Michael Floyd, "Prophetic Complaint about the Fulfillment of Oracles in Habakkuk 1:2–17 and Jeremiah 15:10–18," *JBL* 110 (1991): 397–418; and Christof Hardmeier, *Texttheorie und biblische Exegese: Zur rhetorischen Funktion der Trauermetaphorik in der Prophetie*, BEvT 79 (Munich: Kaiser, 1978).

34. For commentaries and studies of Gen 15, see especially George W. Coats,

3.1. Form

The first component of a form-critical analysis is assessment of the form of the text in question, and textual demarcation is the essential first step in such an assessment. Basically this entails defining the boundaries of the text, that is, determining where it begins, where it concludes, and why. A combination of factors relating to form and content play a role in this decision. Formulaic language that typically introduces or concludes a textual unit may mark its beginning. Examples include "And it came to pass that …"; "In the year that …"; "Thus says YHWH …"; "These are the words of …"; and "A song of ascents …" Similar formulas may mark a text's end: "and the land had rest for forty years"; "and X slept with his fathers, and Y reigned in his stead"; "utterance of YHWH"; "This is the Torah for …"; "In that day …" Motifs within the text, such as a change of character, event, setting, or the overall concern of the text, also play an important role in assessing its form. Although early form critics generally assumed that a well-defined, self-contained unit constituted an originally independent text, subsequent research has demonstrated that the interpreter cannot make this assumption, since such a self-contained unit may also constitute a component of a much larger whole.

Genesis 15 functions at several levels as a component of a larger narrative concerning the history of Israel through the exile (Genesis–Kings); this larger narrative includes the formative history of Israel, the ancestors of Israel (Gen 11:27–50:26), and the Abraham/Sarah cycle (Gen 11:10–25:11) or the narrative concerning the descendants of Terah (Gen 11:27–25:11). Nevertheless, Gen 15 is easily demarcated by its formal features and contents. The typical introductory formula, "After these things …" (cf. Gen 22:1, 22:20, 39:7, 40:1, 48:1), introduces the beginning of a new episode in the context of the larger narrative by referring back to previous events. Likewise, the formula "On that day," introduces the summation of YHWH's actions in verses 18–21 in a manner that commonly

Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature, FOTL 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983); Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis, A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972); Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36, A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985); David Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996); and John Van Seters, *Prologue to History: The Y-hwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992).

introduces the concluding segments of prophetic compositions (e.g., Isa 2:20–22; 4:2–6; 11:10, 11–16; Ezek 29:21, 30:9, 39:11–16; Zeph 3:16–20; Zech 3:10, 14:20–21). In addition, in Gen 15 the narrative shifts from concern with Abram's rescue of Lot and other Sodomites in Gen 14 to a concern with YHWH's promise to Abram. In Gen 16, the narrative begins with a focus on Sarai (who had not been mentioned in Gen 15) and the birth of Ishmael. Throughout Gen 15, the concern is YHWH's promises of descendants and land to Abram. The summation in verses 18–21 ties both descendants and land together in YHWH's promise. Based on form and content, Gen 15:1–21 constitutes a coherent, well-defined textual unit.

The second step in form-critical analysis is an assessment of the literary structure of the text. Again this requires close attention to the formal features of the text in relation to its contents. Fundamentally, this includes the syntax or sentence structure of the unit and its semantic features, that is, the use and function of its words, phrases, expressions, and so forth. Genesis 15 is a narrative that conveys its action and ideas on the basis of a dialogue or, more properly, an action-response sequence in which two major characters, YHWH and Abram, each speak or act in response to the other. Earlier form critics argued that Gen 15 comprises two basic structural subunits: verses 1–6, which take up the promise of descendants to Abram, and verses 7–21, which take up the promise of land.[35] Unfortunately, this determination was based in part on diachronic or redaction-critical criteria: verses 1–6 and 7–21 were seen to be two originally separate units within the text. Although there are ample grounds for these redaction-critical conclusions, the introduction of such diachronic criteria at this point unduly influences the synchronic analysis of literary structure. A synchronic analysis of the formal syntax indicates that the structure of Gen 15 is based a series of four verbs conjugated in the perfect tense that convey the successive stages of the narrative: "the word of YHWH was unto Abram" (v. 1); "and behold, the word of YHWH [was] unto him" (v. 4); "and he believed YHWH" (v. 6); and "On that day, YHWH cut with Abram a covenant" (v. 18).[36] With the exception of verse 18, each perfect verb introduces a *waw*-consecutive sentence structure, a typical biblical Hebrew narrative form that conveys a sequence of action that follows from the initial finite (in this

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35. See the commentaries by Coats, von Rad, and Westermann.
36. Unless otherwise stated, all biblical translations are my own.

case, perfect) verb. Each verb in the sequence is formulated as a *waw*-consecutive imperfect conjugation: "and he said" (v. 2), "and he brought him out" (v. 5), and so forth. Verses 18–21 do not require a *waw*-consecutive verbal sequence as they do not convey further action beyond that of verses 1–17. Instead, they present a statement by YHWH that summarizes the contents of verses 1–17. The result is a syntactical structure of four components: verses 1–3, 4–5, 6–17, and 18–21. The contents of each component or subunit define its role within the sequence of actions and motifs presented in the text as a whole. Further consideration of form and content within each subunit establishes its internal structure. Genesis 15:1–3 introduces the text by stating its initial premises or tensions: YHWH's promise to Abram that his "reward" will be great and Abram's response that he is childless and therefore has no heir to whom to pass this reward after he dies. Verse 1 employs the perfect verbal statement, "the word of YHWH was unto Abram in a vision," to convey YHWH's promise of a "reward." The term "reward" (Heb. *skr*) means "hire, fee, payment" and generally refers to wealth, but the text does not specify until later what this "reward" will be. Verses 2–3 convey Abram's response with two statements, each of which begins with a *waw*-consecutive imperfect verb, "and he [Abram] said." In the first statement (v. 2), Abram points out that he is childless and that Eliezer of Damascus (the capital of ancient Aram or Syria) will be the "heir of my house." In the second statement (v. 3), Abram reiterates this problem by stating that YHWH has not given him "seed" (i.e., children) and that "a slave of my house" will possess or inherit his wealth. The statement in verse 3 employs the Hebrew verb *yores*, a technical term that means "to inherit, take possession." The terms "heir of my house" and "a slave of my house" are difficult to interpret. "Heir of my house" is *ben-mešeq* in Hebrew, literally, "a son of *mesheq*." In the present context it is clearly a word play on Damascus, *dammeseq* in Hebrew, although the roots of the two words are not the same. Insofar as the meaning of *mešeq*, "heir," appears to be derived from an analogy with *mešeq*, "possession," it likely serves as a technical term for an adopted heir. "A slave of my house" is literally "a son of my house," which also conveys the sense of adoptive heir, that is, a son who is not born to Abram but who has entered his house by other means, such as adoption or purchase. Some take "son of my house" literally and argue that Abram asks a sarcastic question of YHWH, "Shall my own son inherit (when I have no son)?" In either case, verses 1–3 lay out the tension that is at work in the narrative as a whole.

Verses 4–5 resolve the initial tension of verses 1–3 by presenting YHWH's promise of a son to Abram. The subunit begins with a statement in verse 4 based on a perfect verbal conjugation, "and behold, the word of YHWH [was] unto him, saying …" which introduces YHWH's promise. In keeping with common Hebrew artistic style in parallel statements, the perfect verb "was" does not appear, since it is implied in the nearly identical verse 1. YHWH then makes an explicit promise that a natural son, not Eliezer, will inherit Abram's wealth. Verse 5 employs three *waw*-consecutive verbs to convey YHWH's actions and statements that validate and explain the promise that Abram's descendants will be as numerous as the stars of the heavens. Although verses 4–5 resolve the initial tension of verses 1–3, they also build toward the main subunit of the text in verses 6–17, in which YHWH promises the land of Canaan/Israel to Abram. Indeed, such large numbers of descendants require a land in which to live. In this respect, verses 4–5 leave open another question or tension from verses 1–3: what is Abram's "reward"?

In terms of both formal characteristics and content, Gen 15:6–17 constitutes the literary goal of the chapter in that it is the largest subunit of the text and conveys YHWH's promise of land to Abram together with an implicit promise of descendants (v. 13). It begins with the statement in verse 6 of Abram's reactions to YHWH's promise of verses 4–5, formulated initially with a perfect verbal form ("And he believed YHWH and considered him [YHWH] to be right"). The balance of the subunit employs a *waw*-consecutive sequence to convey the exchange of words and actions between Abram and YHWH: YHWH identifies the divine self to Abram and promises him the land in verse 7; Abram responds to YHWH, asking how he will know that this promise will be realized in verse 8; YHWH instructs Abram to prepare animals for a ritual that is commonly employed in the sealing of an ancient Near Eastern covenant or treaty in verse 9 (see further under genre); Abram does as he is instructed in verses 10–11; and YHWH states the future to Abram in a vision, including Israel's sojourn in a foreign land and Abram's peaceful death in old age, in verses 12–17. The term "deep sleep" (Heb. *tardemah*) in verse 12 frequently describes sleep or a trance state instigated by supernatural agency (Gen 2:21, 1 Sam 26:12, Isa 29:10, Job 4:13, 33:15, Dan 8:18, 10:9) and indicates the visionary context signaled in Gen 15:1. The phrase "know this for certain" in verse 13 is emphatic and validates YHWH's contentions. The "smoking fire pot and flaming torch" in verse

17 is a common representation of deities in Babylonian incantation texts; here it provides a symbolic image by which to represent YHWH passing through the pieces of the animals in a manner that will not compromise divine sanctity (cf. Ezek 1).[37] By passing through the pieces, YHWH signs or seals the covenant with Abram.

The role of Gen 15:6 in relation to the structure and content of Gen 15:6–17 requires further discussion. Verse 6 is normally taken as the conclusion to verses 1–5, but the initial perfect verbal form, "and he [Abram] believed YHWH," identifies it formally as the beginning of the unit in verses 6–17. Although Abram's response of belief in YHWH is a natural conclusion to draw from the preceding statement of YHWH's promises in verses 1–5, the placement of verse 6 at the head of verses 6–17 has several important interpretative consequences. First, verse 6b follows immediately upon verse 6a, in which Abram serves as subject. The failure to specify a subject in verse 6b indicates that Abram remains the subject of the verb. Second, verse 6 establishes the continuity of verses 1–3 and 4–5 with verses 6–17, indicating that in its present form Gen 15 as a whole forms a coherent unit even if it does have a literary prehistory. Third, the statement in verse 6b, "and he reckoned it to him as righteousness," is frequently understood as YHWH's reckoning Abram righteous for his faith (Gal 3:6–9; Heb 11:8–12), but this is to read Paul's understanding of justification by faith back into the text of Genesis. Normally, righteousness, like purity, is "reckoned" or "imputed" to human beings in a cultic context (Deut 24:13, Ps 106:31; cf. Lev 7:18; 13:17, 23, 28, etc.; 17:4), but the larger narrative framework of the Abraham/Sarah narratives must play a role in interpretation here. Throughout the Abraham/Sarah cycle, Abraham's righteousness is never questioned, but YHWH's is. Abraham does everything that YHWH requires, from moving to an unknown foreign land (Gen 12) to offering his son as a sacrifice (Gen 22). YHWH, on the other hand, makes promises of descendants and land to Abraham, promises that come into question throughout the narrative as Sarah has no son up to Gen 20, and YHWH demands the sacrifice of Isaac in Gen 22. Indeed, Abraham must take the moral high ground in Gen 18 when he demands to know whether YHWH will kill the righteous with the wicked at Sodom. Fourth, if YHWH's granting of the land to Abram is conditioned on YHWH's deciding whether or not Abram is righteous, then one

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37. See Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis*, AB 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 113–14.

must conclude that YHWH's prior promises of land to Abram in the narrative (Gen 12:7, 13:17) are not entirely sincere, which is the issue Abram raises in Gen 15:2. Fifth, if verse 6 concludes verses 1–5 or verses 4–5, Abram's subsequent request for validation from YHWH suggests that in fact he does not believe YHWH. The placement of verse 6 at the beginning of a subunit in verses 6–17 indicates that verses 7–17 explain why Abram believes YHWH, that is, YHWH gives Abram a sign. In the Hebrew Bible signs are a common means of validating a statement, especially a prophetic statement (see 1 Sam 10:1–16, Isa 7:1–25). The reader should bear in mind that the temporal sequence of Gen 15 does not fully follow the narrative sequence; Gen 15:1 states that YHWH speaks to Abram in a vision, but the visionary context is not evident until verses 12–17. Genesis 15:6 indicates Abram's perspective as a result of his encounter with YHWH, but at the outset of this encounter, the narrative provides ample evidence that Abram would have reason to question YHWH.

Finally, Gen 15:18–21 discontinues the pattern of dialogue or action and response. Although YHWH speaks in verses 12–17, the text does not revert to Abram for his reaction; the reader already knows Abram's reaction from verse 6. Instead, it employs a narrative statement formulated with a perfect verb, "On that day YHWH cut with Abram a covenant, saying …" and a quote by YHWH to explain the meaning of what is presented in the preceding material, namely, YHWH cut a covenant with Abram to give him the entire land. The reference to the ten Canaanite peoples apparently is intended to represent all of the peoples who inhabited the land prior to Israel.

The form of Gen 15 may be represented as follows:

Narrative Report of YHWH's Covenant with Abram (Gen 15:1–21)

I.	YHWH's promise of "reward" to Abram	1–3
	A. YHWH's word to Abram: expressed in vision	1
	B. Abram's response: no heir	2–3
	1. First response: I am childless	2
	2. Second response: "son of my house" (adoptive son) will inherit	3
II.	YHWH's promise of descendants to Abram	4–5
	A. First word: descendants from your loins will inherit	4
	B. Subsequent actions and statements concerning descendants: descendants will be like stars	5

Identifying this four-part structure of Gen 15 leads to some important interpretative conclusions. The structure conveys four basic assertions in the text: (1) YHWH promises a "reward" to Abram but does not specify what the reward is or to whom it will be passed (vv. 1–3); (2) in verses 4–5 YHWH promises descendants to Abram, which resolves one of the tensions in verses 1–3; (3) Abram believes YHWH, based on a sign presented to him in a vision (vv. 6–17); and (4) the encounter is identified as a covenant made by YHWH with Abram, which identifies the earlier reward as the land of Canaan/Israel. The literary structure of the text points to its deep structure or conceptual structure, in which YHWH is obligated to provide Abram with descendants and land, but no obligations are defined for Abram. Descendants and land are clearly interrelated in the present form of the text; numerous descendants require a place to live, and a land requires people to tend to it. Furthermore, the structure of the text points to YHWH as the questionable figure in the relationship, as the reader is left to ponder whether or not YHWH will fulfill this covenant. Abram's role is clear—he believes YHWH and considers YHWH to be trustworthy.

3.2. Genre

The second stage in a form-critical analysis is to assess the genres that appear within the present form of the text. Essentially, this calls for the comparative identification of typical language forms in the text that appear elsewhere in biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature. It also calls for discussion of the typical social and literary settings in which such generic language functions as a basis for assessing its role within the present text. Of course, attempts to reconstruct genres are constrained by the limited surviving textual base for ancient Near Eastern cultures and the inability to observe directly the use of language in these ancient cultures.

Fundamentally, Gen 15 constitutes a narrative that employs elements of dialogue or personal interaction in its portrayal of YHWH's concluding a covenant with Abram. In addition, it contains a number of generic forms that function within the narrative context. The first is the formula "the word of YHWH was unto Abram, saying …" in verse 1. This formula is known technically as the prophetic word formula. It appears frequently in narrative and prophetic literature as a typical means of introducing and identifying a prophetic word or oracle (e.g., 1 Sam 15:10; 1 Kgs 6:11; Jer 7:1; 11:1; 33:19, 23). It may be formulated as a first-person statement, such as "the word of YHWH came to me, saying …" (Jer 1:4, 11; 2:1; Ezek 6:1, 7:1). It also appears in the superscriptions to prophetic books as a means of identifying the following material as prophetic oracles from YHWH (Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zeph 1:1). This formula presupposes the social setting of prophetic oracular reception and the reporting or announcement of such oracles to some outside audience that either hears or reads the announcement.

The presence of this formula in Gen 15 is particularly striking in that it presents Abram as a prophet or at least an individual who experiences a prophetic vision. This, of course, ties in to the notice that Abram experiences the word of YHWH "in a vision" (v. 1). The term *vision* (Heb. *maḥazeh*), typically refers to prophetic oracular experience that includes both visual and auditory aspects (Num 24:4, 16; Ezek 13:7). Here it points to the vision experienced by Abram in Gen 15:12–17, in which YHWH appears to Abram while he is in a "deep sleep" or "trance," and informs Abram of Israel's upcoming four hundred years of forced service in a foreign land, YHWH's judgment of that nation and granting wealth to Israel, Abram's peaceful death in old age and burial, and the return of the fourth generation. In the context of the pentateuchal narrative, this

vision refers to Israel's slavery in Egypt, YHWH's deliverance of Israel from Egypt through Moses, Abraham's peaceful death at the age of 175 and his burial at Machpelah, and the return of Israel to the land following the generation of Joseph and his brothers. The language relating to the genre of prophetic oracles or visionary experience functions as a means of pointing to the future plot of the Pentateuch. It thereby aids in accomplishing two goals within the present narrative. First, it validates YHWH's promises to Abram. Of course, Abram will not see the full realization of this schema apart from this visionary experience, but the vision provides sufficient basis for him to accept YHWH's promises or covenant as valid, especially when he sees his own son Isaac and lives to a full age. Second, the vision validates YHWH's promises to the reader, who will in fact see the realization of the schema as she or he progresses through the Pentateuch. It thereby provides sufficient basis for the reader to accept YHWH's promises or covenant as valid.

The second example of generic language in Gen 15 is the appearance of the salvation oracle genre in YHWH's initial statement to Abram, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great" (v. 1). The typical reassurance formula, "Do not be afraid" ('al tira'), appears frequently throughout the Bible and the ancient Near East as the identifying phrase in oracles that promise salvation or reassurance (Isa 7:4–9; 37:5–7; 41:8–13, 14–16; 43:1–7; Pss 12, 35, 91, 121). The speaker can be a prophet (2 Kgs 6:16, Isa 10:24–27), YHWH (Gen 26:24, Deut 3:2, Josh 8:1), or other people (Gen 35:17, 42:23, Num 14:9, 1 Sam 22:23). The form appears to presuppose a situation of oracular inquiry (see Isa 37) and therefore relates to the prophetic word formula discussed above. Again, this form plays a role in validating YHWH's promise by portraying Abram as the recipient of a prophetic or oracular vision.

The third example of generic language in Gen 15 is the terminology that is bound up with the issue of Abram's descendants who will possess his "reward" (vv. 1–3, 4–5).[38] Here the language is not formulaic, but a number of technical terms appear that are related to the generic situation of inheritance in ancient Israel and the Near East. The key terms are various forms of the verb *possess* (*yaras*), which refers to the inheritance of property (2 Sam 14:7, Jer 49:1, Mic 1:15, Prov 30:23) and the terms "the heir of my house"

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38. On the background of this chapter in relation to ancient Near Eastern inheritance law, see especially Nahum Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), 120–36.

(Gen 15:2) and "a slave born of my house" (v. 3), which refer to the potential heirs of Abram's estate in the absence of a son. Ancient Israelite and Near Eastern law stipulates that the son or sons of a man shall inherit his property at death (Deut 21:15–17; see Gen 21:9–13, 27:1–40, 48:13–49:4; 1 Kgs 1:15–21, Code of Hammurabi 165–176).[39] In the absence of a son, ancient Near Eastern legal codes allow a man to designate another as his heir, including a slave born in his extended household, which is precisely the situation in the present text. Obviously, this language aids in raising the issue of Abram's succession and the possession of the land that YHWH will grant him later in the text. Once again, this language addresses the validity of YHWH's covenant with Abram, for without children the covenant and the promise of land are entirely meaningless. Insofar as the reader knows that Abram's covenant stands as the basis for YHWH's relationship with Israel, the issue is the validity of YHWH's covenant. The identification of Eliezer of Damascus as a potential heir raises a question: In the absence of a people Israel, do the covenant and land then transfer to Aram/Syria? The present form of Gen 15 asserts that they do not.

The fourth generic form in Gen 15 involves the self-identification formula in verse 7, "I am YHWH who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give to you this land to possess it." In biblical literature, this formula typically functions as part of the "prophetic proof saying," in which the identity of YHWH as the source of a prophetic oracle is established (1 Kgs 20:13, 28; Isa 41:17–20, 49:22–26; Ezek 25:2–3, 6–7; 26:2–6). It functions in relation to the prophetic or oracular genres previously discussed and aids in validating YHWH's promise to Abram.

But the self-identification formula also relates to language pertaining to a fifth genre in Gen 15. The expression in verse 18 reads literally, "On that day, YHWH cut with Abram a covenant." The expression "to cut a covenant" is a standard idiomatic form for expressing the making of a treaty in ancient Israel and the Near East.[40] The expression derives from the practice of sacrificing animals as part of the process of ratifying a treaty between two nations. Parties to a treaty walked between the halves of severed animals as a graphic portrayal of what would happen to them if they did not abide by the terms of the treaty ("As this calf is

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39. Theophile J. Meek, trans., "The Code of Hammurabi," *ANET*, 173–74.

40. For a discussion of ancient Near Eastern treaty practices, see Moshe Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the OT and in the Ancient Near East," *JAOS* 90 (1970): 184–203.

cut up, thus Matti'el and his nobles shall be cut up [if Matti'el is false])."[41] This practice apparently stands behind YHWH's instructions to Abram to cut several sacrificial animals in half so that YHWH, represented by the smoking fire pot and flaming torch, can pass between the pieces. In effect, YHWH signs or affirms the treaty, which validates YHWH's promises. Interestingly, Abram undertakes no action to ratify the covenant. The self-identification formula also plays a role in establishing the genre of Gen 15, because suzerain kings typically identify themselves at the beginning of a treaty (e.g., "The treaty which Esarhaddon, king of the world, king of Assyria, son of Sennacherib, likewise king of the world, king of Assyria, with Rataia, city ruler of …").[42] Furthermore, such treaties typically deal with the control of land as the suzerain monarch grants the right to a lesser vassal king, under specified conditions, to rule land without undue interference and to pass on the land to his sons as royal heirs.

Finally, YHWH's statement in verse 18, "To your descendants I have given this land from the River of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates," constitutes a standard oath, in which a party to a treaty binds itself to certain obligations. In the present instance, YHWH obligates the divine self to provide Abram's descendants with the land of Canaan/Israel. Again, the oath aids in validating YHWH's promise. Likewise, the formula "in that day" is a typical form employed in prophetic literature to announce a future event. This formula is part of the prophetic genres discussed above and aids in validating YHWH's promise.

In sum, a variety of expressions typical of genres from the spheres of prophecy, family property inheritance, and covenant or treaty making appear in Gen 15. All of the genres combine in the present form of the text to validate YHWH's promise of descendants and land to Abram.

3.3. Setting

Although early form-critical scholarship emphasized the role of the social setting (*Sitz im Leben*) in the interpretation of biblical texts, more recent scholarship has recognized the roles of both literary settings and historical settings in the assessment of the social setting of a text. Indeed, the three settings are not to be equated, since each pertains to a specific set of ques-

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41. Sefire treaty IA, trans. Franz Rosenthai, *ANET*, 660.
42. Donald J. Wiseman, "The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon," *Iraq* 20 (1958): 30.

tions concerning the context or matrix from which the text is generated
and in which it functions. Nevertheless, the three are interrelated. Histori-
cal setting frequently plays a key role in defining the nature of the social
setting. The social settings of the Israelite monarchy and priesthood, for
example, appear to be very different in the tenth, eighth, and sixth cen-
turies BCE as the realities and roles of each institution changed over the
course of time. Likewise, literary setting also plays a key role, especially
since the basis for reconstruction of the social setting of a text must lie in
the literature itself, which in turn functions in a literary context that has
some bearing on how that literature is shaped and understood.

The preceding discussion of genre established that Gen 15 includes
language from three major generic categories: oracular prophecy, family
succession and property inheritance narrative, and treaties between
nations in the ancient Near East. Each of these genres derives from a
specific social setting that must be considered in the form-critical inter-
pretation of Gen 15.

The generic language pertaining to oracular prophecy raises the ques-
tion as to whether Gen 15 was generated in relation to the social setting
of prophecy. Certainly, Abram is presented as receiving a prophetic vision
while in a state of "deep sleep" or "trance." Typically, prophets might isolate
themselves and deliver oracles in such a state of trance. Moses's speaking
to YHWH in the wilderness tent of meeting (Exod 33:7–11, 34:29–35),
YHWH's revelation to Samuel in the Shiloh sanctuary (1 Sam 3), and Eze-
kiel's breaking silence to deliver oracles to the Judean elders (Ezek 3:22–27,
8–11, 14) are examples of such activity. Although the language portrays
Abram in prophetic terms, there is little indication that the text itself derives
from the social context of oracular prophecy. Specific prophetic concerns
appear to play no role in the narrative, and Genesis elsewhere shows little
interest in portraying Abram or the other ancestors in prophetic terms.
The motif appears to function primarily as a means of signaling the future
plot of the pentateuchal narrative and of conveying YHWH's covenant
with Abram. This language may derive from the social context of oracular
prophecy, but it functions as a literary device in Gen 15.

The terminology of inheritance and family succession in Gen 15
appears to be the technical language employed in legal codes that define
such matters, even though Gen 15 is certainly not a legal text designed to
set policy concerning inheritance and succession in the Israelite family.
But issues of succession and inheritance do not pertain only to the family
sphere in ancient Israel; they pertain to the monarchy and priesthood as

well, in that both institutions employ a dynastic principle in determining succession to the throne or to priestly office. Abram is portrayed vaguely in priestly terms here, insofar as he receives oracular communication and prepares the sacrificial animals for the making of a treaty, but his role in this text and elsewhere does not appear to be primarily that of a priest. There are royal connotations in Abram's presentation, however, that must be considered.[43] Throughout the Genesis narrative, Abram is closely associated with the city of Hebron—indeed, he is buried there—a city that served as the capital of the tribe of Judah and the seat of David's first kingdom (2 Sam 2–5). Abram acts in a manner analogous to that of a king: he walks the length of his land and founds cultic sites (Gen 12), allocates land to family members (Gen 13), goes to war to protect them (Gen 14), decides the fate of family members under his authority (Gen 16, 21), stands up even to YHWH in order to maintain justice within his sphere (Gen 18), arranges a marriage for his son with a foreign principal (Gen 24), and enters into covenants (Gen 15, 17).

The language pertaining to covenant making likewise points to a royal setting. As noted in the previous discussion of genre, the assignment of land, the ritual of passing through the pieces of slain animals, and YHWH's self-identification formula all derive from the sphere of ancient Near Eastern treaty making. The social setting, then, is that of international relations in the ancient world, and this again points to the monarchy as the principal party involved in the making of such treaties. Indeed, the most telling aspect of Abram's royal presentation is the definition of the land YHWH promises him as "this land from the River of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates," for this is also the definition of the land claimed for David in 2 Sam 8 (see Num 34, Ezek 47:13–20). The royal context is confirmed by the portrayal of the land as Abram's "reward," or spoil of war, and by the assignment of the land to Abram's "seed," a designation that also appears in the language of YHWH's promise to David of an eternal dynasty ("When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring [seed] after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom" [2 Sam 7:12]). Genesis 15 portrays Abram in Davidic terms as the founder of a dynasty that will possess a land.

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43. See Ronald Clements, *Genesis XV and Its Meaning for Israelite Tradition*, SBT 2/5 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1967); Van Seters, *Prologue to History*, 248–51.

2. Form Criticism

These considerations demonstrate that the social setting of Gen 15 derives from the institutional setting of the royal house of David, inasmuch as it presents Abram as a precursor or model for the later Davidic monarchy. Like David, Abram is promised descendants and a land, and just as YHWH "makes firm" (*neʾman*) David's house (2 Sam 7:16, 1 Kgs 11:38) and expects David's descendants to hold faith (*heʾemin*) with YHWH (Isa 7:9), so Abram believes (*heʾemin*) in YHWH (Gen 15:6).

This, of course, raises the question of the historical setting of Gen 15. Based on the identification of Gen 15 as part of the J stratum of the Pentateuch, which is commonly dated to the time of the early Davidic monarchy in the tenth century, it would be easy to maintain that Gen15 is designed to justify the rule of the Davidic house over all Israel by pointing to Abram's covenant as a model for the claims of the Davidic house. But several factors call for caution. First, scholars persistently argue that E source elements, deriving from the Northern Kingdom in the eighth century, appear in the narrative, and many argue that J must be assigned to a date much later than the tenth century. Furthermore, the prophetic word formula appears especially frequently in literature that derives from the later period of the monarchy (Jer 1:4, 11; 2:1; 7:1; 11:1; Zeph 1:1) or even the exile and beyond (Ezek 6:1, 7:1; Joel 1:1), and the influence of treaty language is especially pronounced during the eighth and seventh centuries BCE, when Assyria imposed its power and treaties on Israel and Judah. It was in the aftermath of the Northern Kingdom's and later Assyria's collapse that the Davidic monarchy under Hezekiah and later Josiah attempted to reassert Davidic claims to rule the entire land of Israel. Although it is possible to date Gen 15 with its concern for Israelite/Davidic possession of the land to the period of the early monarchy, it is equally possible to read the chapter in relation to the interests of the Davidic monarchy in these later periods.

Finally, the literary context of Genesis must also be considered. As noted in the preceding discussion, Gen 15 functions within the context of the larger Abraham/Sarah cycle, in which the dominant motif is YHWH's promise of a son to Abram. The narrative highlights this fact at the very outset (Gen 11:30) and returns to the theme of Abram's descendants repeatedly throughout (Gen 12:1–3, 7, 10–20; 13:14–18; 16; 17; 18:9–15; 20; 21; 22). Indeed, the question as to whether YHWH will keep the promise to Abram is the basic motif of the entire Abraham/Sarah narrative from its outset in Gen 11 to the threat of Isaac's sacrifice in Gen 21. Such a question is pertinent to the early period of the monarchy, as narrative

tension concerning YHWH's promise to Abram would speak both to the narrative resolution of the issue and to the establishment of the Davidic house, especially at the succession of Solomon. These concerns would also be pertinent to the eighth and seventh centuries, when the Davidic house was attempting to reassert itself in the aftermath of Israelite and Assyrian collapse, and in the period of the exile, when the future of the Davidic house was in question. The relationship of the covenant in Gen 15 to that in Gen 17 is pertinent to this latter context. YHWH undertakes action to ratify the covenant in Gen 15, whereas Abram does nothing; but in Gen 17 Abraham undertakes the ritual of circumcision as a sign of his acceptance of the covenant. In the present form of the narrative the two texts must be read together, as they signify YHWH's and Abraham's entry into a covenant relationship. That Gen 17 presents Abraham in priestly terms, however, may speak to the realities of the exilic or postexilic periods, when the role of the royal house diminished and the priesthood became more prominent. The royal portrayal of Abram in Gen 15 is now qualified by a priestly portrayal of Abraham in Gen 17.

3.4. Intention

The concluding stage of form-critical analysis is the attempt to establish intention in the text. Intention in form-critical research refers to the meanings conveyed by a text on the basis of its unique literary form, the generic language that constitutes that form, and the settings from which the text derives and in which it functions. In other words, what does the text say based on its formal features? Thus, much of the intention of Gen 15 appears in relation to the previous discussion of its form, genres, and settings.

Intention has become a very controversial feature of form-critical scholarship in recent discussions of exegetical theory. The controversy pertains to the identification of a text as a linguistic communicative entity and the interrelationship between its two primary communicative aspects—the sender, who generates or employs the text in an attempt to communicate a message, and the receiver, who interprets the text and thereby understands. The issue revolves around the fact that the messages sent by the sender and perceived by the receiver might not be the same. Furthermore, there can be multiple senders and receivers of a text, depending on the setting in which the text functions. These issues are particularly important in relation to redaction criticism and reader-response theory.

With regard to redaction criticism, exegetical theorists recognize that the intention of the author of a text may differ markedly from that of its redactor, who reads and interprets it, edits it by adding or deleting material or by reworking the earlier text in some manner, or places it into another literary context. Authors and redactors are not the same; they do not share the same perspectives or worldviews, nor do they work in the same social, historical, or literary contexts. The result may be a text that is deliberately changed in the course of redaction as the later writers reformulate it to serve their own interpretative agendas and needs. The interrelationship between Samuel–Kings and Chronicles provides an example, since Chronicles appears to be a rewritten version of Samuel–Kings. The result of redaction may not be deliberate change in the text but change in its sociohistorical or literary context that in turn influences its interpretation. The placement of the oracles of Isaiah ben Amoz in the later context of the book of Isaiah is an example. Whereas the original oracles of Isaiah, many of which appear in their original forms in Isa 1–39, speak to Israel's and Judah's experience in the Assyrian period, they are applied to the Babylonian and Persian periods when they are placed in the context of a book that contains the works of Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 40–55) and Trito-Isaiah (Isa 56–66) as well.

The issues surrounding intention pertain not only to ancient readers but to modern ones also. Recent developments in reader-response theory point to the modern reader as interpreter and thus pose problems similar to those presented by redaction criticism. Every reader comes to a text with her or his own worldview, experience, and perspectives, and on the basis of those factors interprets the text with questions and presuppositions that derive from that worldview. Many reader-response critics question whether it is even possible to establish the original meaning of a text or the intentions of its author when that author is no longer available. Even if the author were available, the interrelationship of reader and text can render the author's intention irrelevant. Once the text is created, it exists as an entity unto itself that achieves meaning only when it is read. For many critics, meaning lies only in the reader, not in the text or the intentions of its author. Any construction of the author's intention necessarily represents the perspective and biases of the reader.

As these examples indicate, the interpretation of a text represents an interaction between the text and its interpreter, one that raises questions concerning the validity of attempts to reconstruct the intention or meaning of a text in relation to its sociohistorical setting or settings.

Nevertheless, the form critic must keep in mind that, whatever the perspectives or biases of the reader, readings are based on a text that was written by an author or authors who wrote with well-defined intentions in specific sets of sociohistorical circumstances. Modern readers may have to identify their own perspectives and biases and those of earlier readers, and it may not be entirely possible to do so with full certainty, but attempting to do so is simply a necessary aspect of textual interpretation. The logical alternative is to give up the enterprise of textual interpretation altogether or to accept any interpretative assertion as valid regardless of the criteria, or lack thereof, employed to produce it. The interpreter must keep in mind that no interpretation is absolute; each interpretation is inherently hypothetical and must be made on the basis of a self-critical analysis of available data.

With these considerations in mind, analysis of the formal features of Gen 15 points to an overall concern with the continuity of YHWH's covenant with Israel, including its identity as a people and its possession of the land of Israel. This is evident in the four-part formal structure of the passage, which points to (1) concern with possession of the land of Israel, based on its identification as Abram's "reward" that will be passed to his heirs (vv. 1–3); (2) concern with the continuity of Israel as a people based on its descent from Abram (vv. 4–5); (3) Abram's belief in the sincerity of YHWH's commitment to these promises, based on a sign that confirms YHWH's truthfulness and formal ratification of the covenant by YHWH (vv. 6–17); and (4) identification of the previous assertions and actions as a covenant in which YHWH obligates the divine self to provide Abram's descendants with the land of Israel defined according to the boundaries presented in the text (vv. 18–21). By highlighting Abram's belief in YHWH and considering YHWH to be righteous in the largest and most elaborate subunit of the passage (vv. 6–17), the text asserts that there is a basis for accepting YHWH's fidelity to the covenant as valid. Indeed, it is noteworthy that Abram does nothing but believe or accept YHWH's assertions in this text, thus emphasizing YHWH's credibility.

Furthermore, the generic language of the passage points to its social setting in the Davidic monarchy, which indicates that YHWH's promise of people and land must be understood in relation to the royal house of David. This social setting raises a number of interesting interpretative questions, since the concerns inherent in the text may be read in relation to a variety of historical and literary contexts. Much depends on a redaction-critical analysis of Gen 15, which is not possible in this article.

Nevertheless, redaction critics have traced the composition of the book of Genesis through several layers from the tenth- and ninth-century J stratum of the Pentateuch to the fifth- and fourth-century P stratum. Hence, Gen 15 might presuppose a secure Davidic state, such as that of Solomon, which justifies its existence and ideology by pointing to the patriarch Abram as the paradigm on which the Davidic monarchy is based. Or it might presuppose a situation in which the Davidic monarchy feels threatened by internal or external foes, such as the tenth-century revolt of the northern tribes or the eighth-century Assyrian invasions, and seeks to defend itself from criticism by pointing to Abram's covenant as a basis for its existence. It might also apply to resurgent Davidic states, such as those of Hezekiah or Josiah, which sought to reassert their claims over territory based on Abram's covenant. The reference to Eliezer of Damascus would be particularly germane in the eighth century, when the Aramaeans played a key role in placing their allies on the northern Israelite throne, which resulted in Israel's challenge to Assyria and the Northern Kingdom's ultimate destruction. Finally, the social setting in the Davidic monarchy can also point to a situation of threat or disruption in which the Davidic monarchy had ceased to function and an attempt was made to revive it or to reinterpret the covenant. This might apply to the sixth-century exilic period or the postexilic period from the late sixth century and beyond, when attempts were made to revive the monarchy (Haggai), or to a situation in which the Davidic promise was applied to the people in general and not necessarily to a Davidic king (Isa 55). Indeed, Gen 15 functioned in social settings and literary contexts well beyond the time of its composition, as shown by Paul's use of the passage to undergird his doctrine of justification by faith or by Judaism's understanding of it as a theological basis for the modern state of Israel.

4. Conclusion

Form criticism has clearly demonstrated its capacity for development and change over the course of its century-long history of research as it has interacted with a variety of other critical methods applied in biblical exegesis. Insofar as it provides the tools by which to assess the overall linguistic form and content of a biblical text while continuing to interact with other critical methods, form criticism is well positioned to serve as a fundamental method of biblical exegesis well into the twenty-first century.

3
Reconceiving the Paradigms of
Old Testament Theology in the Post-Shoah Period

1.

The field of Christian Old Testament theology, and indeed biblical exegesis in general, is currently undergoing a major methodological paradigm shift as it makes the transition from the Age of Enlightenment to the postmodern world. In his recently published survey of the field, Leo Perdue characterizes this methodological shift as "the collapse of history," which in his understanding refers to the general assault now being mounted by scholars who are dissatisfied with the historical paradigms that have dominated biblical exegesis and theological discourse for the past two to three centuries of the Age of Enlightenment.[1] To be sure, Perdue does not argue that historical criticism has become "*passé*, impossible, or insignificant for modern Old Testament scholarship and Old Testament theology," although many scholars maintain that such is precisely the case.[2] Rather, he points to the breakdown of the dominant scholarly consensus that posits a unified epistemological worldview based on historical positivism and that promotes historical-critical exegesis as the only legitimate means by which to arrive at an authoritative interpretation of the Bible. In an increasingly pluralistic climate that acknowledges the great diversities in the means by which human beings perceive their world and establish truth claims, historical

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1. Perdue, *Collapse of History*.
2. Perdue, *Collapse of History*, 4.

criticism has now become not the exclusive means to establish legitimate interpretation of the Bible but one among an ever-growing number of reading strategies that are employed to interpret the Bible, such as liberation and feminist hermeneutics, new literary and reader-response criticism, canonical hermeneutics, and others. One can no longer speak of a single normative method for engaging the field of Old Testament theology.

In discussing the reasons for this change, Perdue points to a variety of factors, such as the methodological diversity that appears in the field of theology at large and the need to engage the Hebrew Bible text with the constructive concerns of contemporary theology and culture. In short, he describes the character of the debate largely in terms of the proper exegetical and theological methods employed in biblical interpretation. But in order to understand the full dimensions of the debate, the methodological changes now taking place in Old Testament theology must be considered in relation to the political, social, and economic changes that have played major roles in bringing about this paradigmatic shift and in influencing its character and directions.[3] Indeed, the universalist, monolithic, or normative assumptions that informed the worldview of Enlightenment scholarship also played a role in determining who might participate in theological discourse. Although the rhetoric of the Enlightenment spoke of universal human reason as the essential criterion by which objective truth claims might be measured, in practice the historical progressive elements in Enlightenment thought combined with its relatively introspective and chauvinistic character to define the Western European, liberal Protestant, heterosexual male as the normative model of the human being capable of exercising reason in the modern progressive Enlightenment world.[4]

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3. For a full discussion of the impact on theological exegesis of the social, political, and economic changes that have taken place in the Western world since World War II, see Morgan and Barton, *Biblical Interpretation*.

4. For an example of this contradiction in Enlightenment German society, see Paul Lawrence Rose, *Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany from Kant to Wagner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). Rose's study points to the continuation of the anti-Semitic mentality in early Enlightenment German society, which advocated the emancipation of Jews while simultaneously demanding that they give up their distinctive cultural and religious identity that set them apart from their gentile counterparts. In effect, the emancipation of Jews in eighteenth-century Germany functioned as a call for their assimilation into the German mainstream or their disappearance as a distinctive social entity within German culture. See Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War against the Jews 1933–1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston;

In this regard, the epistemological claims of the Enlightenment must be viewed in relation to at least three underlying socioeconomic, political, and religious factors: (1) the political, economic, and religious ascendancy of Western European powers that were able to dominate much of the rest of the world; (2) the early industrial revolution that changed the socioeconomic fabric of preindustrial culture by giving the male much greater power and autonomy than he had possessed before; and (3) the constitutive influence of Protestant Christianity that, because of its inherent interests in theological repristinization and renewal and its role as the major religious voice in most of the Western European powers, was able to dominate and define theological discourse during the Enlightenment. All three of these factors played major roles in defining the objective, empirical, historical, and universal character of Old Testament theology during the Enlightenment period.

In light of changes in the character of each of these factors since World War II, many modern critics have successfully argued that no fully objective interpretation of the biblical text can be achieved in that biblical interpretation is not simply a description of the concerns of the biblical text. More properly, biblical interpretation must be understood as the product of the interaction of the text and the subjective concerns, perspectives, and biases of the reader.[5] Thus, subjective constructive theological concerns in fact enter into the supposedly objective historical-critical reconstructions of the past, in that historically oriented scholars have been insufficiently aware of or concerned with their own theological and social biases and the role that these biases play in historical exegesis. In this respect, historical-critical exegesis has frequently served as a means to legitimate the theological perspectives and sociotheological standing of its practitioners. Several examples demonstrate the point. The emphasis placed on the spiritual vitality of iconoclastic and individualist prophecy over against that of the institutionally oriented priesthood and temple reflects Protestant Christianity's separation from the Roman Catholic Church. The relative disinterest in the feminine or nurturing qualities of YHWH as opposed to

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Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1975), 23–47. She traces modern German anti-Semitism and the roots of the Shoah into the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.

5. Reader response criticism is especially influential in these perspectives. For a brief overview and bibliography, see Bernard C. Lategan, "Reader Response Theory," *ABD* 5:625–28. See especially Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

the role of YHWH as warrior, king, and judge who righteously takes land from less progressive pagans and gives it to his religious elect reflects both the male-dominated character of the Western European social structure and its interest in colonizing much of the non-European world. The interest in YHWH'S universal relationship to the nations as opposed to the "sinful" people Israel who transgressed the Mosaic covenant and thereby prepared the way for YHWH'S revelation to the gentiles reflects Christianity's ascendancy over Judaism and its rejection of Judaism's theological legitimacy in the aftermath of the Second Temple's destruction.

World Wars I and II, as well as other factors, have provoked the relative diminution of Western European political, economic, and religious power in the world at large, and the emergence of the postindustrial revolution has enhanced the social and economic roles of women relative to men. As a result, the dominance of the white, Anglo-Saxon, heterosexual Protestant male in theological discourse is now facing increasing challenges. The years since the world wars have seen the emergence of an increasingly pluralistic world in which growing numbers of national, social, and religious groups have been able to assert their views and roles within the larger world. Thus, contemporary Old Testament theology sees the influence of a great variety of voices and perspectives, such as those of women, Africans, Asians, Latins, Roman Catholics, Jews, gays and lesbians, and others, who were marginalized in the past because they stood outside the normal social paradigms for those who were considered to be eligible to engage in legitimate theological discourse. The result is greater attention to areas of specific interest to these constituencies that were routinely ignored or devalued in the past. Examples include the role of women in the Hebrew Bible, the social and literary dimensions of legal literature, the role of the priesthood and temple in Judean society, and the role of ethnicity within ancient Israel and Judah. The concerns of both past and present scholarship demonstrate that methodological discourse is as much a product of the identities of those taking part as it is of a concern to articulate the message of the Hebrew Bible itself. This does not mean, however, that historical criticism must come to an end. It simply means that those who engage in historical-critical exegesis must be aware of and account for their own biases and the ways in which they shape the character and results of theological exegesis.[6]

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6. See, for example, John J. Collins, "Is a Critical Biblical Theology Possible?," in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters*, ed. William Propp, Baruch Halpern, and David N. Freedman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 1–17.

2.

It is against this background that the topic, reconceiving the paradigms of Old Testament theology in the post-Shoah period, must be understood. The Shoah, or Holocaust, as it is more popularly but inappropriately known,[7] is an especially important perspective by which to understand the changes that are now taking place in the field of Christian Old Testament theology, in that it points to the contradictions inherent in the supposedly objective and universalist claims of Enlightenment thought that have been expressed in the field. The attempted murder of the entire Jewish people in Europe during World War II was influenced in part by theological premises articulated within Christianity and identified as universal or normative during the Enlightenment. Christian theologians in many quarters have come to recognize the role that the *adversus Judaiaos* tradition played in denigrating Judaism and the Jewish people in the history of Christian theology and biblical interpretation and in bringing about the reality of the Shoah.[8] As a result, Christian theology has begun to confront an element of evil within itself that was brought about by an exclusivist and self-legitimizing worldview that failed to value the existence and theological validity of others. Both Jewish and Christian theologians, such as Emil Fackenheim, Paul Van Buren, Rolf Rendtorff, and others, have argued that the Shoah has forever changed the way in which the Hebrew Bible is to be read theologically.[9] The supersessionist models of the past that denied

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7. For a discussion of the issues concerning the terms *Shoah* and *Holocaust*, see Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman, "Why Do We Call the Holocaust 'The Holocaust?' An Inquiry into the Psychology of Labels," *MJ* 9 (1989): 197–211.

8. See, for example, John T. Pawlikowski, "Christology, Anti-Semitism, and Christian-Jewish Bonding," in *Reconstructing Christian Theology*, ed. Rebecca S. Chopp and Mark L. Taylor (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 245–68; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury, 1974); Williamson, *Guest in the House of Israel*; Paul Van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish Christian Reality*, part 2 of *A Christian Theology of the People Israel* (New York: Seabury, 1983).

9. Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Jewish Bible after the Holocaust: A Re-reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Paul M. Van Buren, "On Reading Someone Else's Mail: The Church and Israel's Scriptures," in *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte*, ed. Erhard Blum, Christian Macholz, and Ekkehard W. Stegemann (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 595–606; Rolf Rendtorff, "The Impact of the Holocaust (Shoah) on German Protestant Theology," *HBT*

theological legitimacy to Judaism and the Jewish people in Christian theology must be rejected as morally and theologically bankrupt.[10] This is not to say that Christian theology as a whole is even now entirely free of anti-Jewish bias. For example, recent studies of elements within liberation and feminist theology point to the continued polemical use of Jewish theological stereotypes to convey models of unacceptable behavior and viewpoint.[11] Likewise, the antagonism to modern Zionism in many Christian circles is informed in part by a monolithic view of Judaism only as a religious entity, and a victimized or dependent one at that, when in fact Judaism is a combination of religious and national identities.[12] Nevertheless, the extensive interest in this question on the part of Christian theologians demonstrates a major effort on the part of the church, or churches, to rethink its/their relationship to Judaism and the Jewish people in light of the Shoah.

A reexamination of the role of Judaism and the Jewish people in Old Testament theology, both as it has been conceived in the past and how it might be conceived in the future, is therefore crucial to the interpretation

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15 (1993): 154–67; Rendtorff, "Toward a Common Jewish-Christian Reading of the Hebrew Bible," in *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 31–45.

10. See Roger Brooks and John J. Collins, "Introduction," in *Hebrew Bible or Old Testament? Studying the Bible in Judaism and Christianity* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 1–11.

11. See, for example, Jon D. Levenson, "Exodus and Liberation," in his *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 127–59; Katharina von Kellenbach, *Anti-Judaism in Feminist Religious Writings*, AARCC (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994).

12. See Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 230–32; Norman Solomon, "The Christian Churches on Israel and the Jews," in *Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism in the Contemporary World*, ed. Robert S. Wistrich (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 1990), 141–54. On the continuity of the Jewish people from biblical times to the present as a distinct civilization, see now Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *Jewish Civilization: The Jewish Historical Experience in a Comparative Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). Eisenstadt characterizes the Jewish people as a "civilization" because of the limits of both religious and national definitions. Eisenstadt's understanding of civilization combines elements of culture, ontology, and social dynamics, and "entails the attempts to construct or reconstruct social life according to ontological visions that combine conceptions of the nature of the cosmos, or transmundane and mundane reality, with the regulation of the major arenas of social life and interaction" (13). For a full discussion of his understanding of civilization, see 5–21, especially 13–17.

of the Hebrew Bible in Christianity.[13] A great deal of modern Old Testament theology presupposes Wellhausen's historical-theological axiom that preexilic prophecy represents the earliest spiritual and universal core of the Hebrew Bible, whereas cultic matters and legal concerns represent the degeneration of pristine Israelite religion into a spiritually vacuous and ritualistic Judaism during the postexilic period. The Protestant theological agenda in such a conception is clear, as is the polemical interest in removing Judaism and the Jewish people as irrelevant to the true religious core of the Hebrew Bible, that is, the Jewish people (and the Roman Catholic Church) sinned by not recognizing the truth of G-d's intended purposes and thereby relegated themselves to theological subservience to Christianity. As Jon Levenson has shown, past Old Testament theology has been severely hampered by Christian scholars who devalue and marginalize Judaism, Jewish concepts, and the Jewish people in their assessments of the theology of the Hebrew Bible.[14] Walther Eichrodt's identification of Judaism's "torso-like appearance … in separation from Christianity" underlies his efforts to denigrate a great deal of Israelite religion as legalistic and unsuited to the new covenant of Christianity. Von Rad's *heilsgeschichtliche* model likewise enables him to ignore the reality of postbiblical Judaism by arguing that Israel's history of redemption, expressed especially by the eighth-century prophets, led inexorably to its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Although Judaism and the Jewish people do play roles in these theologies, their roles are defined especially by the theological stereotype of Israel as a monolithically sinful people that failed to recognize G-d's truth and thereby stand in judgment as foils to Christianity.

To be sure, scholars have been giving increasing attention both to the role that postbiblical Judaism and the Jewish people play in continuity with the articulation of theological ideas and practice in the Hebrew Bible and to the theological legitimacy of such ideas and practice. The Wellhausenian distinction between prophetic Israelite religion and postexilic, legalistic Judaism is now beginning to break down, as scholars recognize the constitutive role of the temple as the center of creation and religious and national life in Judah's worldview and the source of its moral order

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13. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Old Testament Theology and the Jewish Christian Connection," *JSOT* 28 (1984): 3–15; Rendtorff, "Impact of the Holocaust"; Rendtorff, "Toward a Common Jewish-Christian Reading."

14. Jon D. Levenson, "Why Jews Are Not Interested in Biblical Theology," in *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament*, 33–61.

expressed as Torah.[15] The commands to respect life, both human and animal, are rooted in priestly conceptions concerning the treatment of blood that underlie the kosher dietary laws, and the commands to respect and renew the land during the Sabbath and the temple Sabbatical and Jubilee years entail care for both the land and the poor who live in it, and underlie Judaism's long tradition of social and ecological responsibility. Likewise, scholars are paying greater attention to the social dynamism and theological creativity expressed within the Hebrew Bible. One such example is the Deuteronomistic History in the books of Joshua through Kings. The Deuteronomistic History does not reflect a historical account of sinful Israel's demise, but a theological reflection on the causes of evil in which the authors address the problem of theodicy by choosing not to argue that G-d is evil but that responsibility for evil lies instead within the people. As a result, Christian theologians are now coming to grasp the full theological significance of this issue: Judaism and the Jewish people are a theologically legitimate reality in their own right. They stand in continuity with the Hebrew Bible, which functions in two distinctive forms as the Tanak of Judaism and as the Old Testament, a component of the sacred Scripture of Christianity. Consequently, Judaism, the Jewish people, and the Hebrew Bible must be evaluated theologically both independently in and of themselves and in relation to Christianity.[16] They stand as the legitimate subjects of the Hebrew Bible and as its legitimate interpreters.

Such interaction in modern theological reflection is crucial to the well-being of both Christianity and Judaism. For Christianity, it provides the opportunity to address a moral problem that has been manifested in Christian theology in general and in Old Testament theology in particular, that

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15. Jon D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *JR* 64 (1984): 275–98; cf. Levenson, "The Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience," in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible to the Middle Ages*, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 32–61; Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Book of Isaiah as Prophetic Torah," in *New Visions of Isaiah*, ed. Roy F. Melugin and Marvin A. Sweeney, JSOTSup 214 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1996), 50–67; Richard D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993); John G. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989). Concern with the relevance of the Israelite cult to OT theology was anticipated in John L. McKenzie, *A Theology of the Old Testament* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974).

16. For a discussion of major issues posed by reading the Hebrew Bible in its own right and in continuity with Christian tradition, see Roland Murphy, "*Tanakh:* Canon and Interpretation," in Brooks and Collins, *Hebrew Bible or Old Testament?*, 11–29.

is, the Christian rejection of Judaism and the Jewish people as theologically relevant in their own right. It also provides the opportunity for Christianity to continue its examination of the Old Testament as a component of the sacred Scriptures of the church, to reappropriate it as sacred Scripture that is theologically valid in its own right, and to read it as such without distorting its message in relation to the New Testament. For Judaism, it provides the opportunity to articulate a distinctive theological understanding of the Hebrew Bible over against that of Christianity, so that Judaism does not function merely as a stepping stone to the New Testament within the larger context of Christian biblical theology. For both Christianity and Judaism, such interaction provides the opportunity to reconstruct their relationship in a manner that recognizes their common roots in the Hebrew Bible and at the same time respects the distinctive theological identity of each.[17]

3.

One must now ask what this means for the theological interpretation of the Christian Old Testament. During the years since World War II, Christian theological scholarship has increasingly turned its attention to the literary character and ideological perspectives of the books of the Hebrew Bible and to the social, political, and economic dimensions of the people of Israel who are presented in and who produced those books.[18] In both cases, these efforts represent to a large extent attempts to overcome the theological biases of the past. Literary critics have developed exegetical approaches that are less theologically selective, insofar as they have shown greater efforts to interpret the literature of the Hebrew

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17. A common Jewish Christian reading of the Hebrew Bible has its place in Jewish Christian dialogue, in that it points to the common roots of both Jewish and Christian traditions in the Hebrew Bible, but a common theology of the Hebrew Bible for both Judaism and Christianity as proposed by Rendtorff is mistaken because it threatens the theological legitimacy of each by collapsing their individual identities. See Rendtorff, "Toward a Common Jewish-Christian Reading"; see also the comments by Jon Levenson, "Theological Consensus or Historicist Evasion? Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies," in Brooks and Collins, *Hebrew Bible or Old Testament?*, 109–45; David Levenson, "Different Texts or Different Quests? The Contexts of Biblical Studies," in Brooks and Collins, *Hebrew Bible or Old Testament?*, 153–64.

18. For an introduction to this discussion, see the essays collected in Ronald E. Clements, ed., *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological, and Political Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Bible in its entirety as theologically relevant. Likewise, social-scientific approaches represent attempts to come to grips with the social reality of the people of Israel/Judaism as a living people in all of its socioeconomic, political, and ideological diversity, not as a stereotypical and monolithic theological construct.[19]

Nevertheless, the result has been somewhat of an impasse in Old Testament theology in that scholars, beginning especially with von Rad, have discovered that the books of the Hebrew Bible do not express a single coherent theology that can be identified throughout the Hebrew Bible and characterized as the theology *of* the Old Testament.[20] Rather, the Hebrew Bible expresses a variety of theological viewpoints that presuppose various social settings, both within and among the books contained therein, concerning the character of G-d, the people of Israel and Judah, the nations, and the cosmic dimensions of the world at large, that defy attempts at systematization.[21] Fundamentally, one might even ask whether theology is the all-encompassing standpoint from which to interpret the Hebrew Bible in view of the fact that the Hebrew version of the book of Esther does not even mention G-d, nor does it presuppose divine activity.[22] The issue has been further complicated by the insights of canonical criticism that point to the diverse conceptions of the Bible itself, insofar as different

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19. Various scholars, on the other hand, have argued that the portrayal of Israel in biblical literature represents an artificial construct of the postexilic Jewish community that attempted to establish its identity by a retrospective projection of its own self-image into the past. See, e.g., Philip R. Davies, *In Search of Ancient Israel*, JSOTSup 148 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); Thomas L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People: From Written and Archaeological Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 1992). Although such studies correctly raise a methodological issue of the extent to which later authors project their own self-understandings into the past, they must recognize that all historical writing is inherently retrojective. This does not negate the reality of the history that is written; it merely requires a certain sense of critical control on the part of scholars in that history must be read in light of the biases of its writers, to the extent that such biases can be identified.

20. For an overview of the discussion concerning the center of Old Testament theology, see Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 139–71.

21. See Rolf P. Knierim, "The Task of Old Testament Theology," *HBT* 6 (1984): 25–57; cf. John Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

22. See Levenson, "Why Jews Are Not Interested"; Marvin A. Sweeney, "Why Jews Should Be Interested in Biblical Theology," *CCARJ* (1997): 67–75.

canons, oftentimes containing different sacred books, as well as different arrangements and versions of sacred books, appear within the various communities of faith, whether Christian or Jewish.[23] In short, there is no single Old Testament, nor is there a single theology that encompasses the entire Old Testament. Rather, the Hebrew Bible, whether conceived as the Christian Old Testament or the Jewish Tanak, and the theologies or ideologies that are contained therein, are the products of the people who wrote and assembled the books that comprise the Hebrew Bible.

This has tremendous implications for conceiving Christian Old Testament theology because it points so clearly to the centrality of the human or Jewish role in articulating the theologies or ideologies that appear within the Hebrew Bible. In this respect, it points especially to the particularity and subjectivity of Old Testament theology, not only on the part of the Old Testament's modern interpreters but on the part of its ancient writers (and interpreters) as well. Whatever one might posit concerning the universal reality or absolute character of G-d, Old Testament theology must account for the fact that G-d, and all worldly reality and experience influenced by G-d, is presented in the Hebrew Bible, and indeed in the New Testament as well, from particular human standpoints. This applies both to the canonical forms of the Hebrew Bible and to the individual books or groupings of books that appear within its canonical forms. The distinctive canonical forms of the Hebrew Bible as Old Testament and Tanak, and the general means by which each has been shaped by and by which each expresses the distinctive and particularistic theologies and worldviews of Christianity and Judaism respectively, have been treated elsewhere.[24] The present discussion will focus on the human, or more specifically the Israelite or Jewish, role in writing the individual books of the Hebrew Bible and the implications of the insight for Christian Old Testament theology.

First and foremost, one must begin with the fact that the Old Testament comprises all of its books; that is, no books may be dismissed as

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23. See James A. Sanders, "Adaptable for Life: The Nature and Function of Canon," in *Magnalia Dei/The Mighty Acts of G-d*, ed. Frank M. Cross, Werner Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller Jr. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 531–60; Sanders, "Canon, Hebrew Bible," *ABD* 1:837–52; Marvin A. Sweeney, "Tanakh versus Old Testament: Concerning the Foundation for a Jewish Theology of the Bible," in *Problems in Biblical Theology*, ed. Henry T. C. Sun and Keith L. Eades with Garth I. Moeller and James M. Robinson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 353–72.

24. Sweeney, "Tanakh versus Old Testament."

theologically irrelevant, nor may portions of books, such as those written by later redactors, likewise be dismissed. Books such as Leviticus, Ezekiel, Nahum, Haggai, Proverbs, Esther, and Ezra-Nehemiah all have their place in the Old Testament canon, as do the Priestly writings of the Pentateuch, the final form of the book of Isaiah including all of its later redactional expansions, and the Chronicler's reworking of the Deuteronomistic History. Second, all of the books or writings that constitute the Old Testament in Christianity were written by Israelites, or more properly Judeans or Jews, in various historical periods and social settings. The writings of the Old Testament thereby reflect various theological or ideological viewpoints concerning the nature and character of G-d, as well as the nature and character of the world and human experience of G-d and the world, that were articulated within Judaism and amongst the Jewish people. Even when G-d speaks in the Hebrew Bible, the interpreter must recognize that G-d's word is presented by the author or authors of the text, and it reflects the particular understanding of G-d or human experience articulated by the authors within the text. The interpreter of the Bible cannot therefore assert definitively that any given text in the Hebrew Bible portrays G-d in G-d's absolute or universal character; rather, the texts of the Hebrew Bible present the author's or authors' perspectives on G-d and the nature of human experience within the world. The same must be said of the New Testament, which presents particular Christian perspectives on Gd and human experience. Third, the writings of the Hebrew Bible do not monolithically reflect only the theological concerns of ancient Jews; they reflect the social, economic, and political concerns of the people as well. Thus, the theological concerns expressed in the Hebrew Bible must be weighed in relation to such factors as the political character of the ancient Israelite and Judean states and the means by which the religious conceptions of the Hebrew Bible function in relation to the political and economic realities of ancient Israel and Judah. For example, Gen 15, understood in Christian exegesis to express the theological principle of Abram's/Abraham's justification by faith, promises that the patriarch will become a great people with a land whose borders coincide with those defined later as the boundaries of the Davidic state; that is, the promise to Abraham is presented in relation to the political interests of the later Davidic monarchy.[25] In short, the books

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25. See Ronald E. Clements, *Abraham and David: Genesis XV and Its Meaning for Israelite Tradition*, SBT 2/5 (London: SCM, 1967).

or writings of the Old Testament are the product of the Jewish people, and as such reflect the concerns of a living people who developed and expressed their views on G-d, the character of the world and the states in which they lived, and their own role in it, in relation to the diverse factors that characterize any living human society. Insofar as the Old Testament functions as sacred Scripture in Christianity, those specifically Jewish perspectives form a component of Christian revelation and theological reality.

<center>4.</center>

It is therefore crucial for the Old Testament theologian to recognize the theological significance of the particular Jewish nature of the presentation of G-d and human experience in the Hebrew Bible. Theologians have certainly recognized this issue, but in general have proceeded to identify as authoritative for Old Testament theology the supposedly universal aspects of G-d's character and human experience as expressed in the Hebrew Bible and to exclude from consideration, or at least to devalue, those elements that were considered to be particularistic. And yet one must ask whether such a distinction is possible; just as one never experiences the ideal universal representation of reality in Platonic thought, but only particular representations of the ideal, so one never experiences the ideal universal representation of G-d and human experience in the Hebrew Bible, but only its particular Jewish expressions.

With this in mind, discussion may turn to an examination of two major texts, Amos and Esther, that have some bearing on understanding the role of the Jewish people, in all of their social reality, in composing the writings of the Hebrew Bible and in articulating their theological and ideological viewpoints. In each case, the text presents a particular perspective on divine activity and/or human experience that reflects partisan viewpoints concerning the nature of G-d and human experience or attempts on the part of the authors to wrestle with the problem posed by G-d and experience in the world. Amos is chosen because it is generally taken to be representative of the universalist moral concerns of biblical prophecy, and Esther is chosen because it is frequently dismissed as lacking in theological significance or moral perspective. Both examples demonstrate that universal and particular perspectives cannot be so neatly separated in articulating the theological interpretations of the Old Testament. Rather, Jewish perspectives constitute the universal significance of the Old Testament and must be accepted as such in Christianity.

The first example is the book of Amos. Christian theological interpretation generally identified Amos as the paradigmatic prophetic representative of G-d's universal values of social justice and the pure, unmediated individual human encounter with the deity that it prompts the prophet to stand alone in condemning his own nation as sinful and announcing its destruction.[26] The grounds for interpreting Amos in this fashion include the oracles against the nations in Amos 1–2 that culminate in the prophet's condemnation of Israel; the oracles of judgment against Israel throughout the book that focus on socioeconomic abuse of the poor by the wealthy ruling class; the vision sequence in Amos 7–9, in which G-d appears to Amos to deliver the divine message of judgment; the narrative concerning Amos's confrontation with the high priest Amaziah in Amos 7:10–17, in which Amos declares that he is not a professional prophet; and the conclusion that the oracle concerning the restoration of the fallen booth of David in Amos 9:11–15 is a postexilic addition and therefore irrelevant to the message of the prophet.

Nevertheless, there are various elements of the book of Amos that point toward a more nuanced interpretation of the book and the presentation of the prophet contained therein.[27] First, Amos is Judean, a herdsman and dresser of sycamore trees from the Judean village of Tekoa, located south of Jerusalem. This identity is confirmed by his visions, all of which represent the common experience of a Judean agriculturalist, and by this consistently Judean viewpoint, which portrays YHWH's roaring like a lion, the symbol of the tribe of Judah. Second, Israel and Judah are two politically distinct kingdoms in which Judah, under the rule of King Uzziah/ Azariah ben Amaziah, was forced to serve as a vassal state to Israel, under the rule of King Jeroboam ben Joash. Third, the nations enumerated in the oracles against the nations were all subject to or allied with the northern Israelite empire established by Jeroboam ben Joash. Fourth, Amos

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26. For modern critical treatments of the book of Amos, see Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); James L. Mays, *Amos: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969); cf. Bruce E. Willoughby, "Amos, Book of," *ABD* 1:203–12.

27. For a more detailed treatment of Amos in relation to the methodological issues that are now influencing the interpretation of prophetic books, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "Formation and Form in Prophetic Literature," in *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. James L. Mays, David L. Petersen, and Kent H. Richards (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 113–26.

condemns the leadership of Israel for abusing the poor who are unable to support themselves and lose their land or possessions to the wealthy. Fifth, Amos is present at Bethel, the royal sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, during a time of sacrifice or the presentation of offerings, and his oracle condemning the Bethel sanctuary in Amos 9:1–10 appears immediately before the call for the restoration of the fallen booth of David in Amos 9:11–15.[28]

One must ask why he is at Bethel and how all of these various elements relate to the message that the book presents. When one nation was subject to another in the ancient world, it was required to pay some form of tribute to the suzerain nation. For an agriculturally based economy like that of Judah in the eighth century BCE, such tribute generally constituted a share of the country's produce. Whether it was regarded as a tax or as tribute, produce was collected by ancient governments through their sanctuaries, where it was dedicated to the gods and employed for use by the sanctuary and the government.[29] In the case of a suzerain country such as eighth-century Israel, the tribute presented by vasal states such as Judah would have been presented at the royal sanctuary at Bethel. It would appear that Amos is at Bethel in his role as herdsman and dresser of sycamore trees to present a share of the Judean tribute to Israel.

Several aspects of his message thereby become clear. First, his references to the plight of the poor, including the locust plagues and fires that followed the king's mowings (see 7:1–6), speak to the plight of Judean farmers such as himself who must bear the brunt of Judah's tribute obligations to Israel. Second, his condemnation of the nations, culminating in Israel, does not present a universal scenario of divine judgment but points to the subjugation of nations to northern Israel as a means to point ultimately to the fall of Israel for abusing its vassals and allies. Third, Amos does not condemn the leadership of his own nation but that to which his nation was subjected. In this regard, the call for the restoration of the fallen booth of David following Amos's call for the destruction of the Bethel altar must be seen from the perspective of the above considerations. It does not represent a postexilic hope for national renewal or messianic redemption, but Amos's call for the downfall of northern Israelite rule and the restoration of Judean

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28. For a treatment of Amos 9:11–15 that assigns the pericope to the prophet Amos, see Shalom Paul, *Amos*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

29. See Moshe Weinfeld, "Tithe," *EncJud* 15:1156–62.

independence and rule over the northern tribes of Israel as it had once existed under David and Solomon.

In short, the kingdom of Judah and the Jewish people stand at the center of Amos's prophetic message. Amos's call for judgment of the nations and of Israel does not represent a universalist demand for worldwide justice and proper treatment of the poor, but a partisan demand that speaks from the interests of an individual Judean who was part of a living nation with its own political, economic, and religious interests, perspectives, and identity. Amos's call for justice does not represent a theological condemnation of his own nation; rather, it constitutes an attempt to speak for the interests of both his nation and himself. In short, Amos is a Judean nationalistic prophet who calls for justice for his own people. In evaluating the theology and message of Amos, Old Testament theologians must take this partisan view into account as theologically legitimate. In calling for justice and speaking on behalf of G-d, prophets do not uniformly condemn their nation; they also speak on its behalf. More fundamentally, prophets are not only concerned with theology, nor do they withdraw from worldly affairs, but they engage as partisans in the political, social, and economic issues of their time. Even more fundamentally with respect to issues posed by the Shoah, they recognize the responsibility to speak up when they see evil rather than to remain silent when evil manifests itself in the world and thereby to allow it to take its course.

The second example is the book of Esther. Both Christian and Jewish theological interpretation of Esther generally views it as a problematic book with questionable or unclear theological significance.[30] One reason for this viewpoint is the complete absence of G-d or divine activity in the Hebrew version, generally conceded to be earlier than the extant Greek versions. A particular point of contention is that Jews take vengeance on their enemies in the aftermath of Haman's failure to destroy the Jewish people in the Persian Empire. In the view of some Christian interpreters, such so-called nationalism and bloodthirstiness on the part of the Jews

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30. For modern critical treatments of the book of Esther, see Bernhard W. Anderson, "Esther; Introduction and Exegesis," *IB* 3:821–74; Carey A. Moore, *Esther*, AB 7B (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971); cf. Moore, "Esther, Book of," *ABD* 2:633–43. For discussion of Esther in medieval Jewish interpretation, see Barry Dov Walfish, *Esther in Medieval Garb: Jewish Interpretation of Esther in the Middle Ages* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

justifies the punishment and humiliation that they have suffered by reject-
ing Jesus Christ.

In order to understand the significance of the book of Esther, par-
ticularly in the aftermath of the Shoah, it is important to consider several
key features of the book and the situation that it presents. First, it is
Holy Scripture, and it deserves to be taken seriously as such in that it
conveys theological truth that both Christianity and Judaism must hear.
Second, it portrays Jews as subject to a foreign power, in this case the
Persian Empire, which dominated the Near Eastern world from the sixth
to the fourth centuries BCE. Jews are thereby in a precarious social and
political position. Third, it presents Haman, a high-ranking official in the
Persian government, as the source of an official government program to
exterminate the Jews. No one in the Persian government or elsewhere in
the empire questions this action. Certainly, the death of his Jewish sub-
jects did not seem to be of great concern to King Ahasuerus. Fourth, the
only means to counter this attempted extermination was the newly mar-
ried Jewish queen Esther, whose identity as a Jew was not made known;
perhaps it would have worked against her in the Persian Empire. Further-
more, Esther had seen her predecessor, Vashti, banished on the slightest
whim of the king, who was angered when she refused to dance for his
cronies. Fifth, G-d does not appear or intervene in a time of overwhelm-
ing crisis for the Jewish community. Jews must take matters into their
own hands in order to save themselves; there is no one else, not even G-d,
who will help. Sixth, it is the enemies of the Jews who are attacked and
killed because they present a continuation of the threat posed by Haman.
The death of Haman would likely not end this threat but magnify it. And
Esther, recognizing her own precarious situation in relation to the king,
might not have the opportunity to act at a later time when the king tired
of her presence.

With these considerations in mind, the charges against Jews
made by theological interpreters of Esther ring very hollow, espe-
cially in light of contemporary discussion concerning attempts to
blame the victims of crime: "she asked for it"; "they deserved it." The
book of Esther does not advocate wanton killing or revenge; rather, a
fundamental issue of justice is at hand: the basic right of self-defense
in the face of threat. From a theological perspective, this must be
understood not only in relation to the principle of divine justice
but in relation to the responsibilities of human beings in the world.
When G-d is absent or chooses not to intervene, humans must act

to counter evil.[31] But then, a similar message is apparent in the book of Amos: when G-d is present, humans must also act to counter evil. This is a lesson not to be lost either by Jews or by Christians, particularly in light of the Shoah. It was not lost on the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto, who died in a failed attempt to resist the Nazi aggression because no one else would help them, or Jews from Mandate Palestine who fought the Nazis as part of the British Army in North Africa during World War II and later became the core of the Israel Defense Force; nor was it lost on so-called righteous gentiles, such as German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died as a martyr at the hands of the Nazis, or King Christian and the people of Denmark, who chose to don the yellow star identifying one as a Jew rather than hand over Danish Jews to the extermination camps.[32] But it was lost on countless numbers of people in Europe, the Middle East, and the Americans, including many common citizens who had little to do with the Nazis and many placed at the highest levels of government and church, who failed to raise their voices or to act for any number of reasons, such as fear of retribution, a refusal to believe the full scope of Nazi intentions, or a sense that somehow, the Jews deserved it.[33] Both Amos and Esther tell us that G-d demands justice, and we, both Christians and Jews, are obligated to bring it about, not only in the social world in which we live but in the interpretation of the religious traditions and Scriptures that guide us.

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31. Cf. Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust* (New York: Ktav, 1973), who develops the notion of "the hidden face of G-d" as a means to emphasize the role of human responsibility in confronting evil.

32. On the Warsaw Ghetto, see Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe 1939–1945* (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1987), 272–81. For an overview of Danish efforts to resist Nazi efforts to exterminate Denmark's Jews, and the successful smuggling of Danish Jews into Sweden, see Reitlinger, *Final Solution*, 345–51. For a detailed treatment of this issue, see Leni Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry: Test of Democracy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1969). See also Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

33. See, for example, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996); David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (New York: Pantheon, 1984).

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Obviously, much more can be said on this issue. The recognition of the significance of Judaism and the Jewish people in Christian Old Testament theology clearly has tremendous implications for a variety of issues, including not only the interpretation of the Old Testament within Christianity but the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament within the larger context of the Christian Bible and the overall relationship between Christians and Jews. In conclusion, a saying of Rabbi Hillel from the Mishnah is particularly pertinent to the concerns of this paper: אם אין אני לי מי לי וכשאני לעצמי מה אני ואם לא עכשיו אימתי, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself alone, what am I? And if not now, when?" (m. Avot 1:14).

4
Jewish Biblical Theology

1. Jews and Modern Critical Biblical Scholarship

Jews have been engaged in the critical and theological study of the Bible since the days of the writing of the Bible itself. Each of the Bible's literary works is written from a particular theological viewpoint, for example, the present form of the Torah emphasizes the role of the holy temple, portrayed as the wilderness tabernacle, at the center of a unified nation of Israel; the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings present a history of Israel that asserts divine righteousness by claiming that the Babylonian exile was the result of Israel's failure to abide by Torah; and the prophetic book of Isaiah is based on the principle of an eternal covenant between G-d and the people of Israel.[1] Furthermore, the Bible contains many examples in which its authors cited, debated, reinterpreted, and rewrote earlier biblical literature in order to express newer ideas concerning divine revelation, historical events, social religious policy, and the like, in relation to the needs and questions of later times. Examples include Deuteronomy's revision of earlier laws in Exodus to provide greater rights for the poor and women; the Chronicler's rewriting of history in Samuel and Kings to emphasize concerns with religious observance; the citation of

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1. On the Torah, see Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*. On Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, see Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 15 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981); Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 21–177. On Isaiah, see the chapter on Isaiah in Sweeney, *Prophetic Literature*, 45–84; cf. Christopher R. Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah; A Reassessment of Isaiah 36–39* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991). He emphasizes the role of Zion as the central concern of the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah's prophecies in Joel, Micah, and Zechariah to articulate very differ-
ent visions of Israel's future; and Job's debate with Proverbs concerning
the question of divine righteousness.[2]

Later Jewish writers continued such critical and theological engage-
ment with the Bible. The LXX, the earliest known Jewish translation of
the Bible, frequently rearranges and rewrites biblical literature to present
more aesthetically pleasing and logically consistent narratives (e.g., 1–2
Kings), to assert divine involvement on behalf of Jews in a time of threat
(e.g., Esther), or to emphasize the role of Jews in the larger Hellenistic
world (e.g., Isaiah).[3] The Talmud critically reinterprets the legal principle
of an eye for an eye so that it no longer calls for physical retribution but
calls instead for fines or other punishments appropriate to a crime (Exod
21:24–25; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21; m. B. Qam. 8.1; b. B. Qam. 83b–84a). The
Talmud also claims that Joshua must have written the account of Moses's
death in the Torah because Moses was unable to do so (b. B. Bat. 15a).
Medieval interpreters, such as Abraham Ibn Ezra, take the point further by
identifying additional statements in the Torah that Moses would not have
written. Indeed, Ibn Ezra raises questions as to whether Samuel wrote the
entire books of 1–2 Samuel and whether Isaiah wrote all of his own book.[4]

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2. On Deuteronomy's revision of earlier laws in Exodus, see Bernard M. Levin-
son, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (Oxford: Oxford Uni-
versity Press, 1997). On the Chronicler's rewriting of history, see Sara Japhet, *1 and 2
Chronicles: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993). On the
citation of Isaiah's prophecies in Joel, Micah, and Zechariah, see Marvin A. Sweeney,
"The Place and Function of Joel in the Book of the Twelve," in *Thematic Threads in the
Book of the Twelve*, ed. Paul Redditt and Aaron Schart, BZAW 325 (Berlin: de Gruyter,
2003), 133–54; Sweeney, "Micah's Debate with Isaiah," *JSOT* 93 (2001): 111–24; Swee-
ney, "Zechariah's Debate with Isaiah," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the
Twenty-First Century*, ed. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (Grand Rapids: Eerd-
mans, 2003), 335–50. On Job's debate with Proverbs, see Carol A. Newsom, *The Book
of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

3. On 1–2 Kings, see, e.g., Percy S. F. van Keulen, *Two Versions of the Solomon
Narrative: An Inquiry into the Relationship between MT 1 Kgs. 2–11 and LXX 3 Reg.
2–11*, VTSup 104 (Leiden: Brill, 2005). On Esther, see See Kristin De Troyer, *The End
of the Alpha Text of Esther: Translation and Narrative Technique in MT 8:1–17, LXX
8:1–17; and AT 7:14–41*, SCS 48 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000). On
Isaiah, see Arie van der Kooij, *The Oracle of Tyre: The Septuagint of Isaiah 23 as Version
and Vision*, VTSup 71 (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

4. Michael Friedländer, *The Commentary of Ibn Ezra on Isaiah* (New York: Feld-
heim, n.d.), 1:169–71.

Maimonides argues for a principle of historical development in Judaism that begins with the Bible. He claims that much of the Bible's language cannot be taken literally, but functions metaphorically so that it might point to larger truths that will later appear in Judaism, such as the emerging role of prayer rather than animal sacrifice as a means by which humans express themselves to G-d (*Guide for the Perplexed* 3.32). Lurianic kabbalists explain the presence of evil in the world by redefining the concept of G-d, claiming that the very act of creation renders G-d no longer infinite.[5]

It is somewhat ironic, then, that Jewish interpreters are considered as relative newcomers to the modern critical and theological study of the Bible that has emerged in the Western world since the early days of the Enlightenment.[6] Modern critical and theological scholarship has been primarily a Protestant Christian enterprise, as Protestants employ critical methods in an effort to recover the historical character of the Bible so that it might serve as the basis for reconstructing a pristine and authentic church that reflects the will of G-d.[7] Much of the methodology and perspectives employed actually originated in earlier periods as Jews and Muslims employed philological, historical, and theological arguments to assert the historical priority and truth of their respective traditions. As Christians were drawn into these debates, the historical character of the Bible became a fundamental concern as Christians sought to reform the church. Indeed, Martin Luther's Reformation was intended to return the church to its "authentic" Jewish roots by adapting only those books of the Christian Old Testament that were found in the Jewish Bible and by eliminating much of the church hierarchy and canon law that had developed over the centuries. Nevertheless, the overwhelming importance of the New Testament in Christian theology would continue to exercise great influence in biblical interpretation as Protestant theologians sought to demonstrate the historical process by which Israel violated its covenant

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5. For discussion of Lurianic Kabbalah and its concept of G-d, see Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1972), 244–86.

6. See Leon A. Jick, ed., *The Teaching of Judaica in American Universities: The Proceedings of a Colloquium* (New York: Ktav, 1970); S. David Sperling, ed., *Students of the Covenant: A History of Jewish Scholarship in North America* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); Sperling, "Modern Jewish Interpretation," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1908–19.

7. Emil G. Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation* (New York: Schocken, 1969); Kraus, *Geschichte der Historisch-Kritischen Erforschung*.

with G-d, thereby setting the stage for the revelation of Jesus as the agent through whom the entire world would be redeemed.

Because of the predominantly Protestant character of critical scholarship from the early days of the Enlightenment through the period following World War II, Jews and others (e.g., Roman Catholics) tended to be excluded from critical scholarship as Protestants employed it to address their own theological concerns.[8] The early years of critical scholarship were marked by a great deal of anti-Jewish sentiment, as late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars such as Wellhausen employed critical methodology to rewrite the Bible's history of religious development, claiming that the original spiritual impulse of the prophets had been corrupted by the growing influence of the temple, the priesthood, and its ritual laws. Thus Torah was no longer the foundational revelation of the Bible but a gradually developing document that was ultimately subjected to the destructive influence of Jewish priests, who rewrote the Torah in order to gain power over their own people. For Wellhausen, Judaism was "a mere empty chasm over which one springs from the Old Testament to the New."[9] Such argumentation prompted Solomon Schechter, then president of the Jewish Theological Seminary, to claim that higher biblical criticism constituted nothing more than higher anti-Semitism.[10] Derogatory attitudes toward Judaism continued among many Christian biblical scholars through much of the twentieth century, as illustrated by Eichrodt's claim of Judaism's "torso-like appearance" in relation to Christianity.[11]

Nevertheless, the experience of the twentieth century, including two world wars, the attempted genocides against the Jewish people and others, and the threat of nuclear destruction, has prompted a major rethinking of the sense of optimism, progress, and self-entitlement that dominated much of Protestant thinking throughout the eighteenth and

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8. In addition to the works cited above, see Levenson, "Why Jews Are Not Interested," 33–61, 165–70; cf. Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

9. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomenon to the History of Ancient Israel* (Gloucester, MA: Smith, 1973), 1.

10. Solomon Schechter, "Higher Criticism—Higher Anti-Semitism," in *Seminary Addresses and Other Papers* (Cincinnati: Ark, 1915), 36–37.

11. Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961–1967), 1:26.

nineteenth centuries. This experience has had an especially profound effect on Christian biblical theology because of the role the Christian Bible has played, particularly with its claims of Jewish sin in rejecting Jesus and in complicity in his death, in forming anti-Jewish attitudes that were prevalent in the cultural background of the Nazi state and its promulgation of the Shoah or Holocaust.[12] As Christians have begun to rethink their theologies, Jews and other previously marginalized groups, such as women, Roman Catholic theologians, and gays and lesbians, have begun to play increasingly greater roles in critical biblical scholarship and theological discussion. Consequently, Jews have become interested in the modern study of biblical theology and its implications for developing Jewish thought and identity and for rethinking Judaism's relationship with Christianity. Indeed, a Jewish biblical theology, which systematically interprets the Jewish Tanak in relation to Jewish tradition and concerns, is a pressing need for modern Jewish thought and interreligious dialogue. A number of important topics have emerged in recent discussion, including the rationale for Jewish biblical theology, the recognition of a distinctive Jewish Bible, the Torah and temple as holy religious centers, the role of the nation Israel, the problem of evil, and the role of postbiblical Jewish tradition.

2. Reasons for Jewish Biblical Theology

Although biblical theology has largely been a Christian theological discipline throughout most of its history, Judaism has much to gain by developing its own theological approaches to the critical study of the Bible.[13] The Bible is fundamentally Jewish literature, written by Jews in ancient times to express their understandings of G-d, the nation of Israel, and the world at large, that functions as the basis for all Jewish tradition. Christian biblical theology generally addresses its own concerns: the relation of the Old Testament to the New Testament, the character of G-d, the nature of human sin and the necessity of divine redemption through Christ, and the inclusion of gentiles in the divine covenant of Israel.[14] Jewish tradition has a very different set of concerns that are rarely addressed in Christian bibli-

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12. See Williamson, *Guest in the House*; Van Buren, "On Reading Someone Else's Mail"; Rendtorff, "Toward a Common Jewish Christian Reading."

13. See my essay, "Why Jews Should Be Interested."

14. For introductions to the field of biblical theology, see especially Hasel, *Old*

cal theology. Judaism discourages speculation concerning the nature and character of G-d, as attempts to portray or define G-d compromise divine sanctity and promote idolatry. Although Judaism is intimately concerned with G-d, it tends to focus far more intently on the responsibilities of human beings, who are expected to act as partners with G-d to ensure the completion and sanctity of creation at large.[15] Thus, Judaism is concerned with the character and nature of the people of Israel as an ongoing reality in world history; the development of halakah (Jewish law or practice), which defines the holy character of Jewish life; and the role of Judaism in bringing about *tikkun olam*, "the repair of the world," working to eliminate the presence of evil in the world.

Jewish theology and biblical interpretation also has much to contribute to the field of Christian biblical theology.[16] Fundamentally, it asserts that Judaism is not simply a prelude to the advent of Christianity in world history that will ultimately be absorbed as the entire world comes to recognize Christ. Instead, it demonstrates that Judaism constitutes a distinctive, legitimate, and continuing theological reality that must be accepted and engaged as such by Christians. Indeed, the recent proposal from within the Roman Catholic Church to regard Judaism as Christianity's older brother represents a step in this direction.

Although Judaism and Christianity develop out of the same roots in the Bible, they are not the same. Whereas Judaism maintains its understanding of the continuity of the Jewish people and their relationship to G-d, Christianity abandoned its originally Jewish roots very early in its

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Testament Theology; John H. Hayes and Frederick Prussner, *Old Testament Theology: Its History and Development* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985); Perdue, *Collapse of History*.

15. E.g., Eliezer Berkovits, *Man and G-d: Studies in Biblical Theology* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969); cf. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Reconceiving the Paradigms of Old Testament Theology in the Post-Shoah Period," *BibInt* 6 (1998): 142–61, repr. as ch. 3 in this volume.

16. For discussion of Jewish contributions to the field of biblical theology, see Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 34–38; Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 25–26; James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 286–311; Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Emerging Field of Jewish Biblical Theology," in *Academic Approaches to Teaching Jewish Studies* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 83–105. For a critique of Jewish biblical theology, see Ziony Zevit, "Jewish Biblical Theology: Whence? Why? and Whither?," *HUCA* 76 (2005): 289–340.

history as it looked to the gentile world for continued growth and theological development. As Christianity absorbed pagan religious systems and ideas, it developed a very distinctive theological view in which human beings were fundamentally incapable of overcoming their sinful nature and required divine intervention in order to achieve salvation. Acceptance of the principle that Judaism and Christianity are not fundamentally the same, despite their common origins in biblical tradition, is essential for the continued future development of both traditions. Such recognition has the potential to bring to an end the moral problem of a long tradition of Christian oppression of Jews, and it provides an opportunity for constructive dialogue and interaction between the two traditions.[17]

3. The Distinctive Forms of the Jewish and Christian Bibles

An important aspect of the recognition of the distinctive characters of Judaism and Christianity begins with consideration of the form and identity of the Bible in each.[18] Because Judaism and Christianity share a biblical tradition, the Tanak in Judaism and the Old or First Testament in Christianity, many consider the Tanak and Old/First Testament to be one and the same document. Although the Tanak and Protestant versions of the Old/First Testament include the same biblical books, they are arranged in very different sequences that point to the distinctive understanding of the Bible in each tradition. The theological implications of the Christian term *Old Testament* have been long recognized.[19] The term *testament* refers to a "covenant" or "agreement" between two parties, in this case between G-d and human beings. Within the Christian Bible, the Old Tes-

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17. On Christian oppression of Jews, see, in addition to Williamson, *Guest in the House*, see Jules Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964); Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*; Shmuel Almog, ed., *Antisemitism through the Ages* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1988). For examples of the interaction between Jewish and Christian biblical scholars, see Frederick E. Greenspahn, ed., *Scripture in the Jewish and Christian Traditions: Authority, Interpretation, Relevance* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982); Roger Brooks and John J. Collins, eds., *Hebrew Bible or Old Testament: Studying the Bible in Judaism and Christianity* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990); Bellis and Kaminsky, *Jews, Christians, and the Theology*.

18. See my essay, "Tanakh versus Old Testament."

19. For discussion of the formation of the Christian Bible, see Beckwith, *Old Testament Canon*.

tament constitutes the first major portion of the Bible, which refers to the original covenant between G-d and humanity that was established with the people Israel. The "old covenant" of Israel is expressed through the revelation of divine law to Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai, and the purpose of such revelation was that Israel serve as the means by which G-d would be revealed to the entire world. But Christianity maintains that G-d was compelled to punish Israel for failing to keep its covenant by bringing about the destruction of Israel and Judah by the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian empires. Such failure points to the need for the "new covenant" or New Testament, the second major component of the Christian Bible, which relates the revelation of Jesus as the Christ, who will bring forgiveness from sin and redemption to the entire world. Some Christian interpreters have recently adopted the term *First Testament* to eliminate implications that the Mosaic covenant has been superseded by the revelation of Jesus in the New Testament.[20]

The basic division of the Christian Bible into the Old/First Testament and the New Testament demonstrates fundamental principles of Christian theology. But such theological tenets also appear in the basic structure of each Testament. Thus, the four-part structure of the New Testament points to the Christian belief that a sinful world has not yet accepted Christ and that a second coming of Christ is necessary. It employs a chronological sequence to portray the historical process of Christian revelation. Hence, the four gospels relate the earliest revelation of Jesus, his crucifixion, and his resurrection as the foundation of the New Testament tradition. The Acts of the Apostles then relate the subsequent early history of the nascent church as it seeks to spread from Jerusalem to Rome, the center of the ancient Greco-Roman world. The epistles address timeless questions of Christian theology and church organization as Christianity prepares for Christ's return. Finally, the Apocalypse of John or the book of Revelation points to the future second coming of Christ as the culmination of human history.

The structure of the Christian Old/First Testament exhibits a similar four-part chronological sequence that traces the relationship between G-d and humanity from creation to the period immediately prior to the revelation of Jesus. This basic sequence applies both to the Protestant Old Testament and to the Old Testament of the Roman Catholic and Eastern

20. James A. Sanders, "First Testament and Second," *BTB* 17 (1987): 47–50.

Orthodox canons, although the latter include many more books than the Protestant version. The Christian Old Testament initially contained many books that did not appear in the Jewish version of the Bible, but Luther removed those books from the Old Testament and gathered them as a distinct group of apocryphal books in his efforts to reform Christianity and return it to its purported Jewish roots.

Like the gospels, the Pentateuch or Five Books of Moses relate the earliest history of G-d's relationship with Israel and humanity at large, from the creation of the world through the time of the patriarchs and matriarchs and the time of Moses's leading Israel out of bondage in Egypt and to the promised land. Of course, the primary event related in the Pentateuch is the revelation of G-d's covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai. The historical books then relate the subsequent history of Israel, from the time of its entry into the promised land under Joshua through the period of the Babylonian exile and the people Israel's life either in the land of Israel or in the diaspora under gentile rule. The poetical and wisdom books take up timeless questions of the character of G-d and the means by which human beings relate to G-d and the world in which they live. Finally, the prophetic books point to a future beyond the punishment suffered by Israel when G-d will reestablish a new relationship with Israel and the world at large. Within the larger context of the Christian Bible, the Prophets appear immediately prior to the New Testament so that the New Testament becomes the fulfillment of the Old.

The Jewish Tanak is organized according to a very different set of principles, which likewise demonstrate Judaism's fundamental theological world view that the Torah serves the basis for G-d's relationship with Israel and the world at large.[21] Tanak is an acronym for the three major parts of the Jewish Bible: Torah ("Instruction"); Nevi'im ("Prophets"); and Ketuvim ("Writings"). Although *torah* is often mistranslated as "law," it actually means "instruction," "guidance," or "revelation." The Torah includes the Five Books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—and presents the foundational history of Judaism and the world from creation, through the period of the patriarchs and matriarchs, and finally through the time of Moses, including the exodus from Egypt, the

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21. For discussion of the formation of the Jewish Bible, see Leiman, *Canonization of Hebrew Scripture*.

revelation of torah at Mount Sinai, and the journey through the wilderness to the promised land of Israel.

Altogether, the Torah presents an ideal view of the relationship between G-d and Israel as G-d forms Israel into a people, reveals the torah by which they are to live, and leads them to the land of Israel. The Nevi'im or Prophets includes two subdivisions. The Nevi'm Rishonim, or the Former Prophets, include the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, which relate an interpretive history of Israel from the entry into the land of Israel under Joshua to the Babylonian exile. The books attempt to demonstrate that Israel's suffering is the result of its failure to live according to the divine commandments given through Moses. The Nevi'im 'Aharonim, or Latter Prophets, include the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Prophets, which contain the prophetic oracles and narratives about the prophets that present their understandings of the reasons for Israel's suffering and the future restoration of the people once the punishment is complete. Altogether, the Prophets point to the disruption of the ideal relationship between Israel and G-d, but they also point to its restoration by asserting that G-d never abandons the covenant with Israel. Finally, the Ketuvim or Writings include the books of Psalms, Job, Proverbs, the Five Megillot or Scrolls (Ruth, Song of Songs, Qoheleth, Lamentations, Esther), Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles. These books take up the various means by which human beings understand and express themselves in relation to G-d as a prelude to the accounts of the restoration of Jewish life around the Jerusalem temple and divine torah. Essentially, the books of the Ketuvim are organized to point to the restoration of the ideal relationship portrayed in the Torah and disrupted in the Nevi'im. Thus, torah stands as the foundational and eternal basis for the relationship between G-d, Israel, and the world at large in the Tanak.

4. Torah as Foundation for the Jewish Bible

Because torah stands as the basis for the relationship between G-d and Israel in the Bible, it must be considered as a foundational concept in Jewish biblical theology. The revelation of torah to Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai provides the basic guidance for Israel to lead a holy life, which in turn leads to the recognition of G-d by the other nations and sanctification of the world at large. Biblical tradition maintains that the initial tablets given to Moses were housed in the ark in the Jerusalem temple, which functioned as the holy center of Israel through which torah

was revealed.[22] Consequently, Jewish biblical theology must consider the temple, its rituals, and the priesthood together with torah.

Christian biblical theology generally understands torah as "law," following Paul's rendition of the term as the Greek *nomos*.[23] In keeping with Paul's critique of law as the foundation of the Mosaic covenant, inherently sinful human beings are incapable of fulfilling the law completely and therefore require the forgiveness of sin offered through Jesus (Romans, Galatians). In subsequent Christian thought, law is frequently characterized as legalistic priestly ritual lacking in efficacy, spirituality, and rationale.

Such a conceptualization of torah contrasts markedly with the understanding of torah in Judaism and even in the Bible itself. Even a cursory reading of the Torah indicates that it contains not only legal material, but a great deal of narrative and poetic material that recounts the early history of the world and the people of Israel. Furthermore, the legal material addresses a whole range of religious and social issues, indicating that it is designed to provide the basis for a just and holy life in ancient Israelite society.[24] The Hebrew term *torah* is a noun derived from the *hiphil* form of the verb *yarah*, "to guide, show, instruct." Torah therefore refers to "guidance" or "instruction," that is, divine guidance in such areas as the history, social identity, and religious values of the nation that would form Israel into a living society in the ancient world. Torah ultimately refers to the entire body of Jewish teaching and tradition.[25]

5. The Jerusalem Temple

The interrelationship between Torah and temple must also be considered. Fundamentally, the temple priesthood was responsible for the instruction of the people in divine torah, including ritual matters, civil and criminal law, and Israel's sacred history. Indeed, Moses was a Levitical priest who

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22. Levenson, "Temple and the World"; Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*; Levenson, "Jerusalem Temple"; Moshe Weinfeld, "Zion and Jerusalem as Religious and Political Capital: Ideology and Utopia," in *The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism*, ed. Richard E. Friedman, HSM 26 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 75–115.

23. See W. Gutbrod, "Nomos," *TDNT* 4:1022–85.

24. See Marvin A. Sweeney, "Foundations for a Jewish Theology of the Bible: Prophets in Dialogue," in *Jewish Biblical Theology: Perspectives and Case Studies*, ed. Isaac Kalimi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 161–86.

25. See BDB, 434–36; cf. Lev 10:11; "Torah," *EncJud* 15:1235–46.

taught his people torah. Temples are clearly the location for such instruction in ancient Israelite society. Interpreters have noted the correlation between Mount Zion, the traditional location of the Jerusalem temple, and Mount Sinai in that both serve as the location from which torah is revealed to Israel and the world.[26]

The temple symbolizes G-d's presence in the world, functions as the center of all creation, and symbolizes many aspects of Israel's sacred history.[27] The holy of holies, where the ark of the covenant is housed, is built according to the pattern of an ancient throne room; the inner walls, doors, and columns of the temple are decorated with symbols of the garden of Eden, such as pomegranates, palm trees, animals, and cherubim; the molten sea, situated across from the altar outside the temple, likely symbolizes the sea from which creation proceeds and through which Israel walks dry shod in its escape from the Egyptian chariots; the seven-branched temple menorah or lampstand symbolizes light at creation, the seven days of the week, and the tree in the garden of Eden. The major temple festivals likewise symbolize both the natural world of G-d's creation and the sacred history of Israel. Pesach or Passover begins the grain harvest and commemorates the exodus from Egypt; Shavuot or Weeks concludes the grain harvest and commemorates the revelation of Torah at Sinai; and Sukkot or Booths marks the fruit harvest and the beginning of the rainy season, and commemorates the journey through the wilderness to the land of Israel. Altogether, the temple and torah symbolize the stability and perpetuation of creation together with the instruction and sanctification of Israel within the created world.

6. The Nation Israel

The central role of the nation Israel in Jewish biblical theology is self-evident.[28] Israel's origins are related to the creation of the world and the need for human beings to act as partners with G-d to complete and sanctify creation. G-d therefore chooses Abram/Abraham and Sarai/Sarah

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26. E.g., Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*.

27. See Levenson, "Jerusalem Temple"; C. T. Robert Hayward, *The Jerusalem Temple: A Non-biblical Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1996); Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, on 1 Kgs 6–8.

28. Orlinsky, "Biblical Concept of the Land"; cf. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1997).

for a special covenant relationship through which their descendants will form the nation Israel. The Bible contends that Israel is constituted as a nation holy to G-d and a kingdom of priests that stands at the center of all the nations of the world (Exod 19:6; cf. Isa 2:2–4, Mic 4:1–5, Ezek 47–48, Zech 14). The Bible is careful to specify that Israel was chosen for this role not by any special merit, but because G-d chose to keep the promises made to Israel's ancestors (Deut 9:4–7). Israel's experiences thereby become an example to the nations concerning divine power, justice, and mercy.

Although Israel appears in the Bible as a theological construct that is tied to the order of creation and the recognition of G-d as the creator, the sociohistorical reality of Israel that stands behind the construct must also be considered. Archaeological evidence confirms the emergence of the nation Israel in Canaan, beginning in the late thirteenth century BCE and continuing until the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.[29] The Egyptian pharaoh Merenptah lists Israel among the various Canaanite nations he claims to have defeated in 1220 BCE, and the hieroglyphs employed for Israel indicate that it was a seminomadic group.[30] Extensive building of fortified cities in the land from the tenth century BCE on points to the emergence of the Israelite and Judean kingdoms.[31] The recently discovered Tel Dan inscription makes reference to the ruling "house of David."[32]

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29. See Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990); Ephraim Stern, *The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732–332 B.C.E.)*, vol. 2 of *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

30. For a translation of the Merenptah stela, see *ANET*, 376–78.

31. Recent critique of archaeological method now tends to place the major period of ancient Israelite development in the ninth century BCE. See Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001); cf. William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

32. Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan," *IEJ* 43 (1993): 81–98; Biran and Naveh, "The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment," *IEJ* 45 (1995): 1–18.

7. The Davidic Monarchy

Indeed, the line of Israelite/Judean kings founded by David is a key institution of the Israelite state, since David established his capital at Jerusalem, his son Solomon built the Jerusalem temple, and the subsequent Davidic monarchs continued to rule over Judah in Jerusalem even after the northern tribes broke away to form the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Bible presents a great deal of information concerning both the theological character of the Davidic dynasty and its secular functions. Like the nation Israel, the house of David understands itself to have been chosen by G-d (2 Sam 7, Pss 2, 89, 110); just as David and his successors established and maintained G-d's temple in Jerusalem, so G-d established and protected the house of David, promising that it would rule in Jerusalem forever (Ps 132).

The theology undergirds the king's right to exercise power over and on behalf of the people; he collects revenues from the people, that is, one-tenth of their income in grain, wine, oil, and animals from herd and flock, to support the temple and the monarchy in the form of holy offerings presented by the people at the temple during the major holidays, Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot. The king is also responsible for the defense of the nation and the administration of justice. Israelite men are required to serve in the army at times of crisis, and the king is ultimately responsible for applying G-d's torah in carrying out the rule of the nation (Deut 17:14–20). He may serve as a judge or appoint judges from among the people and the priests. It is important therefore to note that the laws in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy include religious, criminal, and civil laws that are intended to guide life in ancient Israelite society. Thus, Israelite law treats all manner of situations that might arise in a living society, such as murder, manslaughter, theft, marriage, commerce, labor relations, property rights, and debt, in order to ensure a just, orderly, and viable society defined according to divine torah.[33]

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33. For studies in ancient Israelite law, see Jacob J. Finkelstein, *The Ox That Gored*, TAPS 71.2 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1981); Moshe Greenberg, "Some Postulates of Biblical Criminal Law," in *Studies in the Bible and Jewish Thought* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 25–41; Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics*.

8. The Problem of Evil/Shoah

The divine covenant articulated in the Bible clearly envisions Israel as an eternal nation that will not come to an end (Gen 15, 17). Nevertheless, the continuity of Israel was threatened at various historical periods when enemy nations invaded the land, destroyed its cities, and carried off large numbers of its population into foreign exile. Examples include the Assyrian destruction of northern Israel in 722–21 BCE and the Babylonian destruction of Judah and Jerusalem in 587 BCE. Just as the modern experience of the Shoah or Holocaust has prompted extensive theological discussion of the problem of evil, so the ancient experiences of Assyrian and Babylonian destruction and exile prompted a wide variety of approaches to understanding these catastrophes.[34] Such concerns are especially prominent in the writing of history in the Bible. The books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings present the basic history of Israel from the time of Joshua to the Babylonian exile, but they were written with the intention of attempting to explain the Assyrian and Babylonian disasters.[35] These books represent an example of theodicy, that is, an attempt to defend the righteousness of G-d by claiming that Israel had violated the terms of its covenant by failing to abide by G-d's Torah.[36] The prophetic books take a similar stance, arguing that Israel and not G-d was to blame for the disasters that overtook the people. Although these traditions have often been understood as proof that Israel is sinful and deserved punishment, it must be recognized that such works are inherently theological in nature.[37] They are written by authors who choose not to blame G-d for evil but to take responsibility for evil themselves and to learn from past experience in order to build a new future. Consequently, the prophetic and historical writings point to the restoration of Israel as well, in

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34. See Fackenheim, *Jewish Bible after the Holocaust*. For modern discussion of the Shoah, see especially Steven T. Katz, *Post-Holocaust Dialogues: Critical Studies in Modern Jewish Thought* (New York: New York University Press, 1985); Zev Garber, *Shoah: The Paradigmatic Genocide: Essays in Exegesis and Eisegesis*, SS 8 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994); Zachery Braiterman, *(G-d) after Auschwitz: Tradition and Change in Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

35. Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah;* Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings.*

36. James L. Crenshaw, "Theodicy," *ABD* 6:444–47; see also Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence*.

37. Sweeney, *Prophetic Literature*; Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

which Jerusalem and the temple will be rebuilt and the Davidic monarchy reinstated as G-d maintains the covenant with Israel.

Of course, these writings do not express the totality of the Bible's approach to the problem of evil. Other works are quite willing to raise questions concerning divine righteousness. Perhaps the best known is the book of Job, which portrays G-d's punishment of a fully righteous man for no apparent reason other than Satan's contention that Job would curse G-d if punished.[38] Job engages in extensive debate with his friends concerning the nature of G-d. When G-d appears to him at the end of the book, Job submits to G-d's power and righteousness even though it is never clear that his punishment was justified. Other books raise similar questions, such as Esther, in which G-d never appears at a time when the Jewish people faces complete annihilation, or Habakkuk, who asks G-d for deliverance from the Babylonians only to learn that G-d brought them in the first place.[39] Even Moses must argue with G-d to prevent the destruction of Israel in the wilderness (Exod 33, Num 14). The Bible offers a wide range of responses to the problem of evil, pointing to both human wrongdoing and divine capriciousness as causes of evil. Nevertheless, it never advocates the rejection of G-d, and it consistently points to the restoration of Israel following a period of punishment.

9. The Role of Later Jewish Tradition

Finally, the role of later Jewish tradition must be considered in relation to Jewish biblical theology. Much of modern, critical scholarship maintains that the Bible must be interpreted only in relation to the historical realities of the ancient world in which it was written, and that postbiblical tradition, whether Jewish or Christian, only distorts the Bible's original meaning.[40] There is a certain element of truth to such claims, and the study

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38. Newsom, *Book of Job.*

39. On Esther, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "Absence of G-d and Human Responsibility in the Book of Esther," in *Exegetical and Theological Essays*, vol. 2 of *Reading the Hebrew Bible for a New Millennium: Form, Concept, and Theological Perspective*, ed. Deborah L. Ellens et al., SAC (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 264–75, repr. as ch. 40 in this volume; Jon D. Levenson, *Esther: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997); Adele Berlin, *Esther*, JPS Bible Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 2001). On Habakkuk, see Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 451–90.

40. For a cogent attempt to rethink this view without rejecting historical work, see Perdue, *Collapse of History.*

of archaeology together with the languages and literatures of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan has contributed much to understanding the Bible. But the Bible is not simply a historical document that chronicles the life of an ancient people; rather, it functions as the foundational text of a much larger Jewish tradition that extends from antiquity to the present.[41] Later Jewish tradition, such as the Talmuds, the medieval philosophical tradition, the kabbalah, modern Zionism, and the modern religious movements of Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Orthodox Judaism, have continued to interact with the Bible and other elements of the tradition as they have developed their distinctive understandings of Judaism.[42] Indeed, Jewish tradition embodies a process of dialogue with G-d, with itself, and with the outside world as Jews forge their ideas and identities for the future.[43]

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41. For studies of biblical interpretation and hermeneutics beginning in the Bible itself, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); Fishbane, *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66*, Contraversions (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

42. For an example of how such work might be done, see my essay, "The Democratization of Messianism in Modern Jewish Thought," in *Biblical Interpretation: History, Context, and Reality*, ed. Christine M. Helmer with Taylor G. Petrey, SymS 26 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 87–101, repr. as ch. 10 in this volume.

43. Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Scribner's, 1970).

Berit Olam, the Eternal Covenant:
Is the Eternal Covenant Really Conditional?

1.

Modern biblical scholars generally posit two basic types of covenant between G-d and Israel/Judah in the Hebrew Bible, namely, the Mosaic covenant, a conditional covenant that depends on Israel's observance of divine stipulations or laws as presented in the Pentateuch/Torah, and the Davidic/Abrahamic covenant, an unconditional, eternal covenant based on the divine commitment to maintain relationship with the royal house of David, the city of Jerusalem and the Jerusalem temple, and the nation Israel/Judah as the descendants of Abraham forever.[1] In addition, each form of the covenant was further subdivided into a number of separate covenant traditions. For the conditional covenant, there was the Sinai pericope in Exodus–Numbers and the Deuteronomic covenant in Deuteronomy. For the unconditional covenant, there were a number of covenants, such as the Noachian covenant of Gen 9, the Abrahamic covenant of Gen 17, the priestly covenant of Phinehas in Num 25, the Davidic covenant of 2 Sam 7 and 23, and others.

Although this model has held firm for most of the latter twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, two recent studies have called it into question. The first is Steven D. Mason's 2008 monograph, *"Eternal Covenant" in the Pentateuch: The Contours of an Elusive Phrase*; the second is Jack Shechter's 2010 monograph, *The Land of Israel: Its Theological Dimensions;*

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1. For an overview of scholarly discussion concerning covenant, see George Mendenhall and Gary Herion, "Covenant," *ABD* 1:1179–1202.

A Study of a Promise and of a Land's "Holiness."[2] Mason's study examines the various *berit olam*, "eternal covenant," texts in the Pentateuch and argues that they present bilateral covenants that are in fact breakable and therefore conditional. Shechter's study examines the conditional blessings and curses in Deut 28–30 among other issues, notes the divine promise in Deuteronomy to return Israel from exile to the land once the people repent, and concludes that the Deuteronomic form of the covenant is in fact an unconditional covenant that may be disrupted for a period of time but is ultimately restored when the people return to G-d.

This paper reexamines the character of covenant in the Hebrew Bible from the standpoint of both of these studies. Following an examination of the *berit olam* texts in the Tetrateuch, the conditional covenant statements in Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets, the transformation of the covenant in the Latter Prophets, and statements about the covenant in the Psalms, it concludes that the modern bifurcation of covenant into conditional and unconditional covenants is no longer sustainable. Both the conditional and unconditional dimensions of covenant interact together within the various segments of the Hebrew Bible to form an understanding of covenant that accounts both for its ideal continuity and its disruption in times of distress throughout the Bible. Such a conceptualization has enabled Judaism to maintain its distinctive identity as a nation bound to G-d by eternal covenant that may nevertheless suffer exile from the land of Israel as a temporary means to account for national catastrophe. In the end, Judaism posits return to the land of Israel as the ultimate result of its eternal covenant with G-d.[3]

2.

The concept of a *berit olam*, "eternal covenant," or more properly "covenant of the world (of creation)," plays a key role in the books of Genesis,

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2. Steven D. Mason, *"Eternal Covenant" in the Pentateuch: The Contours of an Elusive Phrase*, LHBOTS 494 (New York: T&T Clark, 2008); Jack Shechter, *The Land of Israel: Its Theological Dimensions; A Study of a Promise and of a Land's "Holiness"* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2010).

3. On the centrality of the land of Israel to the covenant between G-d and Israel, see Harry M. Orlinsky, "The Biblical Concept of the Land of Israel: Cornerstone of the Covenant between G-d and Israel," in *The Land of Israel: Jewish Perspectives*, ed. Lawrence Hoffman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 27–64.

Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.[4] Mason's study treats six of these texts, including G-d's covenant with Noah in Gen 9:1–16, G-d's covenant with Abraham in Gen 17, the Shabbat covenant in Exod 31:12–18, the covenant of challah for the sons of Aaron in Lev 24:5–9, the covenant of the offerings for the sons of Aaron in Num 18:12–18, and the covenant of eternal priesthood for Phinehas in Num 25:6–15. With the exception of Num 25, each text is from the final Priestly stratum of the Pentateuch, which provides literary and theological coherence to the whole. Even Num 25 grants an eternal covenant of priesthood to Phinehas ben Eleazar ben Aaron, the ancestor of the Zadokite priestly line. Past scholars, such as Eichrodt, had argued that the *berit olam* represented a one-sided form of covenant that was solely an expression of divine grace and wholly independent of human action.[5] But Mason argues that in each case, the *berit olam* is bilateral, that is, between G-d and a human party, and that each instance represents an understanding of covenant that is breakable and therefore potentially conditional.

Genesis 9:1–16 presents the covenant of Noah, in which G-d promises never again to destroy the earth by flood. In the aftermath of the flood, which was brought about by human violence, bloodshed, and the mixing of blood as indicated by the sons of the gods marrying the daughters of Adam, the eternal covenant of Gen 9:1–16 grants humans the right to shed the blood of the living creatures of the earth, to satisfy both the need for food and the human proclivity for violence. Two restrictions are required here. One is that living beings are not to be eaten with their lifeblood still in them, and the other is that the blood of humans is not to be shed. Mason argues that the covenant is conditioned on the people's obligation to be fruitful and multiply.[6] He is mistaken here in that the covenant is conditioned on the people's proper treatment of blood, whether it is shed for the purpose of eating meat or by murder. Nevertheless, he is correct to point to the conditional nature of the covenant. The earth can be destroyed again for the crime of illicit bloodshed, even if it is not by flood.

Genesis 17 presents the covenant of Abraham, in which G-d promises an eternal covenant with Abraham and his descendants, including the promise that they will possess the land of Canaan as an eternal holding.[7]

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4. For discussion of the texts of the Pentateuch, see now Sweeney, *Pentateuch*.
5. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:56–63.
6. Mason, *"Eternal Covenant,"* 47–87.
7. Mason, *"Eternal Covenant,"* 88–122.

But Abraham and sons have obligations, too, for example, walking blamelessly in the ways of G-d and circumcision. Apart from the requirement for circumcision and adhering to YHWH as G-d, walking blameless in the ways of G-d is not defined in this passage. The Sinai revelation has not yet appeared at this point in the pentateuchal narratives, but walking blamelessly in the ways of G-d in Abraham's covenant would ultimately entail observance of YHWH's commandments when read in relation to the larger literary context of the Pentateuch. Should Abraham's descendants fail to meet these conditions, they will be cut off from the people for violating the covenant.

Exodus 31:12–18 presents the covenant of the Shabbat. Given the larger literary context of the Pentateuch, the Shabbat functions as a fundamental principle of creation, and it serves as an epistemological principle for pentateuchal laws that take up issues of economic and social justice, such as the slave laws of Exod 21:1–11, the harvest and gleaning laws of Exod 23:10–12, the laws concerning property return at the time of the Jubilee year in Lev 25, and others.[8] Exodus 31:12–18 stipulates that all Israel must observe the Shabbat as a *berit olam* between themselves and G-d.[9] Any who do not are cut off from the people and subject to death.

Leviticus 24:5–9 presents the covenant of challah (shewbread), that is, the braided bread presented by Israel at the temple on Shabbat for the sons of Aaron.[10] Of course, this covenant is tied to the eternal covenant of the observance of the Shabbat, and it is dependent on the existence of the temple, a functioning priesthood, and the ability of Israel to provide the challah, neither of which was possible following the destruction of both the first and the second temples. Although Mason's discussion suggests that the onus for the observance of this "eternal statute" is placed on the priesthood, it is in fact the obligation of all Israel to observe this stipulation by providing grain or flour for the challah in the first place. Indeed, the potential absence of the temple is a key issue in considering the nature of the *berit olam* as a covenant of creation. We shall return to this issue later.

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8. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Shabbat: An Epistemological Principle for Holiness, Sustainability, and Justice in the Pentateuch," in *Christian Origins and the New Testament in the Greco-Roman Context: Essays in Honor of Dennis R. MacDonald*, ed. Margaret Froelich et al. (Claremont, CA: Claremont, 2016), 53–81, repr. as ch. 11 in this volume.

9. Mason, *"Eternal Covenant,"* 123–62.

10. Mason, *"Eternal Covenant,"* 163–88.

Numbers 18:12–18 presents the covenant of the firstfruits offerings for the sons of Aaron.[11] Essentially, this text stipulates that the firstfruits and firstborn offerings of the Israelites at the temple are designated for the priests, but this requirement, too, is dependent on the existence of the temple with its functioning priesthood as well as the ability of Israel to provide the offerings. In the absence of the temple—and indeed in consideration of the exile of the people of Israel and Judah from the land of Israel—this stipulation is impossible to fulfill.

Finally, Num 25:6–15 awards Phinehas ben Eleazar ben Aaron the *berit kehunnat olam*, "the eternal covenant of priesthood," for his actions in killing an Israelite man and a Midianite woman who were engaged in some sort of illicit activity in Moab prior to entry into the land of Israel.[12] The nature of the illicit activity is uncertain. It seems to involve some sort of sexual engagement in a sacred setting. The narrative further suggests some sort of polemic against Moses, insofar as Moses's wife, Zipporah bat Jethro, is herself a Midianite woman whose status in Israel is questionable, especially since Moses is a Levite. Of course, Phinehas and his descendants are unable to fulfill their roles if there is no temple at which Israel can come for worship.

In sum, this brief overview of *berit olam* texts in the Tetrateuch demonstrates Mason's view that the so-called eternal covenant is in some respect conditional.[13] The eternal covenant presupposes the ideals of Israel's relationship with G-d, but in each case, those ideals can be undermined by Israel's refusal or inability to meet the terms laid out by G-d. Nevertheless, Mason misses an important point in the Tetrateuch, namely, the blessings and curses in Lev 26 that appear at the end of the Holiness Code. Leviticus 26:3 begins in conditional form, "If you walk in my statutes and my commandments you observe and do them, I will grant your rains in their season and the land will give forth its produce and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit." Similar conditional statements appear in Lev 26:14–17 if the people do not observe, that is, "And if you do not listen to me and you do not do all these commandments … I will set my face against you." But in the end, G-d is willing to accept the repentance of the people and restore them to the land. Lev 26–39–45 indicates that when those who survive will acknowledge their iniquity, then G-d will

11. Mason, "*Eternal Covenant*," 189–206.

12. Mason, "*Eternal Covenant*," 206–24.

13. Mason, "*Eternal Covenant*," 225–33.

remember the covenant with Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham as well as the land. Indeed, the passage emphasizes that G-d will never reject the people for violating the covenant. The covenant as articulated in the Tetrateuch is an unconditional covenant, although it is qualified by periods of punishment in cases of human failure.

But we must also ask why the *berit olam* in the Pentateuch is conditional. Modern scholars have become accustomed to think of the Hebrew word *olam* as a term that means "eternity." But such a meaning is not inherent in the term. The Hebrew word *olam* means "world" or "creation."[14] Although we might think of creation as something that will last for eternity, the Pentateuch does not share that view, as the flood narrative demonstrates. Indeed, we need to recognize the significance of this term, particularly since the Jerusalem temple—or any Israelite temple, for that matter—was apparently understood in ancient Israelite and Judean thought to function as the holy center of creation, namely, as long as the temple stood, remained pure, and functioned properly, the temple served as an indicator that creation was intact.[15] But if the sanctity of the temple were to be compromised, for example, for the failure to observe YHWH's holy requirements in the ritual or the ethical realms, creation would suffer. Likewise, if creation suffered, the sanctity of the temple must have been compromised by the failure of the priesthood or the people to observe YHWH's requirements. The sanctity of the temple and the continuity of creation are tied together insofar as the integrity and welfare of the one is affected by the integrity and welfare of the other. The book of Ezekiel demonstrates this principle clearly, namely, when the Jerusalem temple is destroyed in Ezek 8–11, creation suffers, and it is not restored until the ideal temple in Ezek 40–48 is created.

3.

Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets are frequently read in relation to each other because of the Deuteronomistic History hypothesis, which posits that the theological perspective of the Former Prophets is

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14. BDB, 761.

15. For this understanding of the Jerusalem temple as the sacred center of creation, see especially Levenson, "Temple and the World"; Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*; Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence*.

based on that of Deuteronomy.[16] Within Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets, we encounter texts that are frequently cited in support of the contention that the Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic covenant is conditional. The term *berit olam* does not appear at all in Deuteronomy, and it appears once only in the Former Prophets, in 2 Sam 23:5 in reference to the Davidic covenant.

The parade example for the conditional covenant in Deuteronomy is the blessings and curses section in Deut 28–30. Here, we see a situation much like that of Lev 26, which posits blessings if the people observe G-d's commandments and curses if the people fail to observe divine expectations. But Shechter observes that Deut 30 posits that G-d will restore the fortunes of the people, take them back in love, and return them to the land promised to their ancestors, where they will increase and prosper once again if they return to G-d and observe G-d's requirements once again.[17] Like Lev 26, Deut 28–30 therefore represents an intertwining of the conditional and unconditional aspects of the covenant. The people will be exiled if they fail to observe divine expectations. But once they are exiled, they have the option to repent, and when they repent, the unconditional nature of the covenant is enacted when G-d restores the people to the land.

When we turn to the Former Prophets, we see a history that is designed to explain the reasons for the Babylonian exile and the earlier exile of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, namely, the people of Israel allegedly turned to other gods and did not observe G-d's requirements.[18] Historically, the invasions of the Assyrians and the Babylonians and the ensuing exiles from the land happened for different reasons, namely, Israel broke its treaty with Assyria, which was first established in the late ninth century BCE when King Jehu of Israel submitted to King Shalmaneser III of Assyria. When King Pekah of Israel broke Israel's treaty with Assyria to realign with Aram, King Tiglath-pileser III invaded Israel and subjugated it in 732 BCE. When Israel revolted in 724 BCE during the reign of King Hoshea of Israel, King Shalmaneser V invaded again and destroyed the nation. Likewise, when King Jehoiakim of Judah broke Judah's long-standing treaty with Babylonia in 598 BCE, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded and exiled thousands from Jerusalem and Judah. When Judah revolted

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16. Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*.

17. Shechter, *Land of Israel*, 43–58.

18. Sweeney, *Tanak*, 171–261.

again in 588 BCE during the reign of King Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar invaded again and destroyed Jerusalem.

But the Former Prophets conceive the issue differently, that is, King Jeroboam ben Nebat of Israel introduced idolatry into the land, and King Manasseh ben Hezekiah of Judah sinned against YHWH by means of idolatry and murder. Consequently, from the standpoint of the Former Prophets, Israel and Judah were exiled from the land. Although the conclusion of the work in 2 Kgs 25 does not make a clear statement concerning the future of the nation, the blessings and curses in Deut 28–30 make it clear that G-d will restore the people to the land when they repent and resume observing divine expectations.

But the issue of covenant takes a somewhat different turn in the Former Prophets insofar as the one instance of the phrase *berit olam* appears in 2 Sam 23:5 in relation to the Davidic covenant. The Tetrateuch did not apply the *berit olam* to the house of David. As observed above, it applied the *berit olam* to creation, the people of Israel, the Shabbat, the priesthood, and the offerings that would be presented to support the priesthood. The Former Prophets, however, takes a special interest in the house of David, most likely because of all the major facets of the nation Israel—for example, the people, the land, the temple, the Torah, and the priesthood—the house of David was the only major institution of ancient Israel/Judah that was not restored in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile. Although prophets such as Haggai and perhaps an early form of Zechariah anticipated a restoration of the house of David, no Davidic king ever ruled Israel again following the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 587–586 BCE. As I have observed in my 2007 commentary on 1–2 Kings, the release of King Jehoiachin ben Jehoiakim from prison by Evil-Merodach of Babylon to eat at the king's table in 2 Kgs 25 portends the demise of the house of David based on the analogy of Mephibosheth ben Jonathan, who ate at David's table and subsequently renounced his claim to his father's inheritance, including the right to rule Israel (2 Sam 9, 19).[19]

The Former Prophets take a special interest in the covenant with the house of David. Second Samuel 23:5 posits a *berit olam* with the house of David, "For is my house not secure with G-d? For an eternal covenant [*berit olam*] He has appointed for me? Entirely arranged and observed? For

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19. Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 464–65.

all my success and desire, will He indeed not cause to blossom?" Indeed, the very famous Davidic promise text in 2 Sam 7 confirms the view of an unconditional covenant for the house of David even though it does not use the term: "I will raise your up your offspring after you who comes forth from your loins, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. Your house and your kingdom shall be secure forever before you; your throne shall be secure forever."

But as interpreters have long observed, the book of Kings presents a qualified view of the Davidic covenant. Three texts, 1 Kgs 2:1–4, 8:25–26, and 9:1–9, each qualify the Davidic covenant.[20] First Kings 8:25–26 may serve as an example:

> And now, O YHWH, G-d of Israel, observe for your servant, David my father, that which you spoke to him, saying, "there shall not be cut off to you a man from before Me sitting upon the throne of Israel; only if your sons watch their path to walk before Me as you have walked before Me." And now, O G-d of Israel, let your word which you spoke to your servant, David my father, be confirmed.

In short, the unconditional covenant of 2 Sam 7 and 23 becomes conditioned on the behavior of the descendants of David in 1 Kgs 2, 8, and 9, namely, if they observe divine expectations, only then will they rule over Israel forever. As Kings makes clear, the kings of Israel and Judah did not meet divine expectations, resulting in the exile of the nation. And so the house of David was never restored in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile. The restoration of the nation, however, was left an open question. Although the people of Israel and Judah are exiled in Kings because of the northern kings who followed in the sins of Jeroboam in the case of Israel (2 Kgs 17) and the sins of Manasseh in the case of Jerusalem and Judah (2 Kgs 21), the provisions of Deut 28–30 would leave open the possibility of their restoration on their repentance. No such provision is made, however, for the kings of Israel and Judah, including the house of David. In short, the covenant with the people is ultimately unconditional; the covenant with the house of David is conditioned.

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20. For discussion, see Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 59–61, 134, 138–40; see also Richard D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 18 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 99–118.

4.

And so we turn to the Latter Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve. References to the *berit olam* appear in Isa 24:5, 55:3, 61:8, Jer 32:40, 50:5, and Ezek 16:60, 37:26. No reference to *berit olam* appears in the Book of the Twelve. As my previous work has shown, each of the prophetic books posits punishment and ultimate restoration for Israel/Judah, but the Latter Prophets reconceive the Davidic covenant in the cases of Isaiah and MT Jeremiah.[21]

Although modern scholars are accustomed to read Isaiah in diachronic perspective as First, Second, and Third Isaiah, advances in critical synchronic literary reading strategies have enabled interpreters to read the final form of the book of Isaiah as a literary and theological whole even while recognizing the diachronic compositional history by which it achieved its final form.[22] In this respect, we may recognize that Isaiah posits a period of invasion and punishment at the hands of the Assyrians, but in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile, the book of Isaiah anticipates the return of the exiles to reestablish Jerusalem as the holy center of Israel and creation at large. In this context, Isa 24:5 posits that the *berit olam* has been broken by the people in the first portion of the book, but both Isa 55:3 and 61:8 posit that G-d will establish a *berit olam* with the returning exiles who will come to Jerusalem to restore Israel in the second portion of the book.

Isaiah thereby posits an unconditional covenant that has been disrupted by the Assyrian invasions and the Babylonian exile. It is instructive, however, to recognize how the Davidic covenant fares in the book.[23] The first portion of Isaiah in Isa 1–33 presumes the continuity of the Davidic covenant, but the second portion of the book in Isa 34–66 ultimately names and recognizes King Cyrus of Persia as G-d's Messiah and temple builder in Isa 44:28 and 45:1. Indeed, by the end of the book, YHWH emerges as the true king in Isa 66:1, but no Davidic monarch is to be seen. Isaiah 55:3–5 is especially instrumental in this respect, insofar as it applies the Davidic covenant to the people of Israel as a whole, namely,

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21. Sweeney, *Tanak*, 265–368.

22. See esp. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 31–62; Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, 1–40.

23. Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Reconceptualization of the Davidic Covenant in Isaiah," in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift W. A. M. Beuken*, ed. Jacques van Ruiten and Marc Vervenne (Leuven: Peeters; Leuven University Press, 1997), 41–61.

> Incline your ear and come to Me, listen, and let yourselves live, and I will make with you an eternal covenant, the secure fidelity of David. Behold, I made him a witness of nations, a leader and commander of nations. Behold, you will summon a nation that you do not know, and a nation that does not know you shall come running to you because of YHWH your G-d, the Holy One of Israel, for He has glorified you.

The book of Isaiah envisions an unconditional covenant for the people of Israel, but not one for the house of David.

An analogous set of observations may be made in relation to the book of Jeremiah.[24] Like Isaiah, Jeremiah posits a period of judgment followed by restoration of the people to Jerusalem and the land of Israel (see esp. Jer 30–33). The references to the *berit olam* appear in Jer 32:40 and 50:5, where in both cases they anticipate an eternal covenant to the returning exiles, who have suffered divine punishment in the book. We should also note the new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah in Jer 31:31–34, which differs from the prior broken covenant by having divine Torah written in their midst and on their hearts so that all of them will observe divine expectations. But the house of David is treated differently in MT Jeremiah. The royal oracle in Jer 23:1–8 anticipates the restoration of a righteous Davidic monarch, but the royal oracle in Jer 33:14–26 takes a different tack. Yohanan Goldman's close reading of the Hebrew in this text demonstrates that the Davidic promise is qualified in relation to the house of David in this passage.[25] Although the passage upholds the Davidic promise, the feminine singular pronouns in verse 16 indicate that the Davidic promise is also applied to the city of Jerusalem: "In those days, Judah shall be delivered and Jerusalem shall dwell secure, this is what they will call her [i.e., Jerusalem], 'YHWH is our righteousness.'" Furthermore, verse 18 applies the Davidic promise to the priests and Levites who will serve, presumably in the temple, before G-d. Once again, the Davidic promise emerges as unconditional, despite its disruption, but it is expanded to include the city of Jerusalem and the Levitical priesthood as well. By contrast, LXX Jeremiah does not include this passage and simply upholds the Davidic promise as articulated in LXX Jer

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24. Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Reconceptualization of the Davidic Covenant in the Books of Jeremiah," in *Reading Prophetic Books*, 167–81.

25. Yohanan Goldman, *Prophétie et royauté au retour de l'exil*, OBO 118 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 9–64.

23:1–8. Whereas MT Jeremiah reconceives the eternal Davidic covenant to apply to Jerusalem and the priesthood of the Jerusalem temple, LXX Jeremiah retains the traditional conceptualization of an eternal Davidic covenant applied to the house of David.

The book of Ezekiel likewise envisions a process of punishment followed by restoration culminating in the establishment of a new temple in Ezek 40–48 to replace the former temple that was purged in Ezek 8–11.[26] The phrase *berit olam* appears twice in Ezekiel. The first instance is in Ezek 16:60. Following a lengthy condemnation of Jerusalem for apostasy, G-d announces in Ezek 16:59–63 that Jerusalem has violated the covenant but that G-d will restore the covenant as a *berit olam*, "And I will remember my covenant in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an eternal covenant" so that the people will know that "I am YHWH" and that YHWH has forgiven them for what they did. The second instance appears in Ezek 37:26, in which G-d promises to establish a *berit shalom berit olam*, "a covenant of peace, an eternal covenant," with the reunited people of Israel and Judah gathered forever around YHWH's sanctuary in the land promised to Jacob.[27] It is noteworthy that Ezek 37:24 is the only instance in the book of Ezekiel that refers to the Davidic monarch as *melek*, "king." Otherwise, he is designated throughout the book as *naśiʾ*, "prince," and generally portrayed as a member of the temple congregation under the authority of the priests. Nevertheless, Ezekiel presents a model of covenant continuity that has suffered disruption, that is, the covenant is both unconditional and conditional, but the unconditional nature of the covenant overrides.

The Book of the Twelve unfortunately includes no reference to *berit olam*. When read as a whole, it nevertheless posits a period of punishment for Israel/Judah followed by restoration.[28] As part of that restoration, it posits that a Davidic monarch will play a key role in defeating Israel's enemies, ultimately enabling the nations to recognize G-d as the sovereign of Israel, the nations, and all creation.

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26. For discussion of Ezekiel, see Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel*.

27. For discussion of Ezek 37:15–28, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Royal Oracle in Ezekiel 37:15–28: Ezekiel's Reflection of Josiah's Reform," in *Israel's Prophets and Israel's Past: Essays on the Relationship of Prophetic Texts and Israelite History in Honor of John H. Hayes*, ed. Brad E. Kelle and Megan B. Moore, LHBOTS 446 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 239–53.

28. See Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*.

5.

When we turn to the Ketuvim, only two references to *berit olam* appear, and they both represent basically the same text. Psalm 105:10–11 refers to G-d's covenant with Israel by stating, "and He confirmed to Jacob a decree, to Israel an eternal covenant saying, 'to you I give the land of Canaan as the territory of your inheritance.'" First Chronicles 16:17 quotes Ps 105 as part of its liturgy for the entrance of the ark into the city of Jerusalem. There is no qualification for this covenant. We may note that a similar characterization appears in reference to the Davidic covenant in Ps 89, that is, YHWH promises a covenant for David forever. Although his sons might be punished, YHWH promises never to violate this covenant. Psalm 132 does qualify the Davidic covenant, however, by stating that if David's sons keep YHWH's covenant, then their sons will rule forever. In sum, the covenant with Israel in the Psalms is unconditional. The Davidic covenant, however, is qualified by the expectation that David's descendants must observe divine expectations.

6.

Our survey of biblical texts pertaining to covenant, and especially to *berit olam*, "eternal covenant," suggests that the common bifurcation of an unconditional Davidic/Abrahamic covenant and a conditional Mosaic covenant in the Hebrew Bible cannot be sustained. Rather, the concept of an eternal covenant is normative in the Hebrew Bible, that is, G-d's covenant with Israel is understood as an unconditional eternal covenant. Nevertheless, we have observed that the covenant might somehow be abrogated or suspended, as indicated in texts such as Lev 26, Deut 28–30, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, but in every case, a means was found to continue the covenant following suspension. Leviticus 26 and Deut 28–30 envision repentance by Israel/Judah as the prerequisite to restoration of the covenant, and Jeremiah and Ezekiel both envision the divine will as the prerequisite to covenant restoration.

The covenant with David is another matter. The eternal covenant with the house of David is qualified in the Former Prophets and in Ps 132 by statements that the covenant will be maintained if David's descendants observe divine expectations. In Isaiah, the Davidic covenant is qualified by assigning it to Israel, which is in keeping with the general notion of a *berit olam* with the descendants of Abraham. In MT Jeremiah, the Davidic

covenant is qualified by expanding it to include Jerusalem and the Levitical priesthood, in keeping with Jeremiah's identity as a Levitical priest who served in the Jerusalem temple. In LXX Jeremiah, the eternal Davidic covenant remains unqualified.

Such observations have important implications for biblical theology and especially for relations between Judaism and Christianity. The covenant with Israel is eternal; it may be suspended or put on hiatus for a period of time to account for national disaster or exile, but the normative expectation is that the covenant will be restored. It is therefore unconditional. The Davidic covenant, however, is somewhat ambiguous. Although the Davidic covenant is expected to be unconditional, Kings and Psalms render it conditional on the observance of David's descendants, and the full form of the book of Isaiah transforms it into a covenant with Israel at large. Israel or Judaism therefore has an eternal covenant that must be acknowledged by both Judaism and Christianity in their interreligious relations. History has seen the continued existence and vitality of Israel and Judaism. But it has also seen all too many occasions when Christian supersessionsim has resulted in disaster and murder of the Jewish people. The covenant of the house of David, however, is far more ambiguous, largely because the house of David disappeared from history as a viable political institution, prompting both traditions to reenvision their respective understandings of the house of David.

6

Asian Biblical Theology and Filial Piety (*Xiao*)

1.

Anyone attempting to construct an Asian biblical theology must face at least three fundamental challenges, each of which is rooted in the issue of diversity, namely, diversity in the forms of the Bible itself, diversity in relation to the contents of the Bible, and diversity in relation to the Asian religious, cultural, and social contexts in which an Asian biblical theology is expected to function. I have already addressed the first two of these challenges in my own efforts to construct Jewish biblical theology. But it is important to address these issues once again as Asian biblical theology will need to take into account the lessons learned from the Jewish Bible, even if the Asian biblical theology is based in Christianity.[1]

I will address the issues of diversity in the forms of the Bible and diversity in its contents first, prior to engaging the third challenge, namely, the diversity of Asian religious, cultural, and social contexts in the construction of Asian biblical theology. Here the question is, What is distinctively Asian about Asian biblical theology? Because we are in Taiwan—even if some of us are here only virtually—I will focus especially on East Asian cultures, Taiwan, mainland China, Korea, and Japan, in thinking about constructing a distinctively Asian biblical theology. With regard to East Asia—and beyond—the principle of *xiao*, filial piety or respect and reverence for ancestors and past generations, is a fundamental trait or concern in these cultures. I would therefore like to explore the implications of adopting *xiao* as a fundamental principle in the construction of (East)

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1. See Sweeney, *Tanak*; Sweeney, "Asian Biblical Theology."

Asian biblical theology, particularly because it entails a different relation-
ship with the religious traditions of East Asia, namely, Taoism, Confucian
thought, Buddhism, and Shinto, as well as Judaism, when considered in
relation to Christianity. I argue that Christianity benefits from engaging
these traditions constructively rather than attempting to deny or displace
them in constructing a distinctively Asian biblical theology. The Con-
fucian principle of *xiao* entails that Asian biblical theology would find
appropriate ways to build on earlier traditions, such as Confucianism,
Taoism, Buddhism, and Judaism, insofar as they are older siblings in rela-
tion to Christianity.

2.

Although we may think of the Bible as a single work that stands as the
basis for both Judaism and Christianity, there is no single form of the
Bible. At the most fundamental level, the Jewish and Christian forms of
the Bible differ markedly in that the Christian Bible includes both the Old
and New Testaments, whereas the Tanak is complete in itself without need
for a New Testament.[2] This phenomenon, of course, points to very differ-
ent conceptualizations of the Bible in each tradition. Christianity points to
Jesus Christ as decisive in the culmination of human history and human-
ity's relationship with G-d, whereas the Tanak, that is, the Jewish form of
the Bible, defines its relationship with G-d alone and therefore has no need
for an additional, mediating divine or semidivine figure, such as Jesus or
any other.

But the differences between the Jewish and Christian Bibles are not
limited to this simple issue. The Tanak is especially concerned funda-
mentally with an ideal relationship of holiness between G-d and Israel or
Judah, and it is this concern that shapes the form of the Tanak. It presents
a cyclical understanding of human history that begins with an ideal under-
standing of the relationship between Israel and G-d, sees the disruption
of that ideal, and reflects on and anticipates the restoration of that ideal
relationship. The Tanak begins with the Torah or Pentateuch, which pres-
ents the ideal relationship between G-d and Israel with a combination of
narrative history to establish identity and the revelation of laws that are
designed to establish a just and holy society. Following the presentation

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2. Sweeney, *Tanak*, 20–41.

of the ideals in the Torah, the Nevi'im or Prophets present the disruption of that relationship in both the Former and Latter Prophets. Both of these subsections are fundamentally concerned with the exile of both Israel and Judah from the land of Israel to foreign lands, the causes of that exile in the form of contentions that Israel and Judah had failed to meet divine expectations, and the prospects for restoration once the punishment was completed. Finally, the Ketuvim or Writings, that is, Psalms, the wisdom books, the Five Megillot, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles, are fundamentally concerned with the restoration of an ideal relationship between Israel and G-d, including reflection on both the human and the divine in the world of creation, as well as the rebuilding of Jewish life around the Jerusalem temple.

The Christian Bible is concerned especially with a linear view of theological history, in which G-d establishes a relationship with Israel and then posits that the relationship extends to the nations at large through Jesus Christ. The fundamental division of the Christian Bible into the Old Testament or covenant, which takes up the first stage of divine revelation to Israel, and the New Testament or covenant, which takes up the second stage of divine revelation through Jesus Christ, looks to the return of Christ at the end time as the culmination of human history. The linear structure of the Christian Bible also plays a key role in determining the order of books in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, the Pentateuch takes up the earliest history of the relationship between G-d and humanity from the creation of the world through the choice of Israel for divine revelation. The historical books then relate the later history of G-d's relationship with Israel. The wisdom and poetic books focus on the concerns of the present in every generation, namely, What is the character of creation, and how do human beings live in that creation in relation to G-d? Finally, the Prophets look forward to the future relationship between G-d and humanity. The New Testament is similarly structured. The Gospels recount the earliest history concerning the revelation of Jesus Christ. The book of Acts relates the later stages of early Christian history as Christianity moves from Jerusalem to Rome. The Epistles take up the eternal present with discussion of the major features of Christian theology and practice. And the book of Revelation looks to the future, when Jesus will return to the world to inaugurate the kingdom of G-d on earth.

When we turn to the second issue, the diversity among the contents of the Bible, we find that there is much disagreement and many differences in viewpoint among the various books that constitute the Bible, whether

it is understood in its Jewish or Christian form. The Torah or Pentateuch displays many differences, namely, there are two accounts of creation in Gen 1:1–2:3, which recounts the seven-day sequence of creation, and Gen 2:4–4:26, which recounts the narratives concerning Adam and Eve and their descendants. There are different bodies of law within the Pentateuch, such as the covenant code in Exod 20–24, in which a slave man serves for six years and has the option to go free but without any goods, his wife, or his children, and Deut 12–26, in which both men and women are able to go free after six years of service and their master is required to give them the means to support themselves so that they do not return to slavery. The historical accounts in Joshua–Kings and Chronicles differ markedly. Joshua–Kings posits that Israel suffers punishment due to the sins of its ancestors, particularly past Kings, such as Jeroboam ben Nebat, whose sins led to the destruction of northern Israel, and Manasseh ben Hezekiah, whose sins prompted G-d to destroy Jerusalem nearly sixty years after his death. Chronicles, on the other hand, posits that Jerusalem was destroyed not for the sins of Manasseh but for the sins of the present generation that allegedly corrupted the temple, resulting in its destruction. And Esther, often ignored because it does not mention G-d at all, looks to humans such as Esther for deliverance when G-d does not appear. The Prophets each have a distinctive viewpoint. Isaiah is a royal counselor who holds to an eternal Davidic covenant, whereas Jeremiah is a priest of the line of Itamar, who holds to Mosaic torah, but both redefine the Davidic covenant when the book of Isaiah identifies King Cyrus of Persia as G-d's Messiah and temple builder (Isa 44:28, 45:1) and identifies all Israel as recipient of the Davidic covenant (Isa 55), whereas Jeremiah redefines the Davidic covenant to apply to the city of Jerusalem and the Levitical priesthood (Jer 33:14–26). And Ezekiel, a Zadokite priest from the Jerusalem temple, looks forward to a new temple that will reestablish all Israel to the sanctity of Jerusalem (Ezek 40–48). Even the wisdom books disagree. Proverbs posits that one may learn G-d's principles by learning to observe creation, whereas Job argues that it is not so easy, insofar as G-d's wisdom is so well hidden that it is not possible for humans to understand it (Job 28).

Similar observations may be made with the New Testament. Although the New Testament is much smaller than the Old Testament and it is more consistently focused on one issue, namely, Jesus Christ, it, too shows some diversity of viewpoint. The four gospels each presents a very distinctive understanding of Jesus: Mark sees him as the apocalyptic Son of Man, Matthew as the fulfillment of Jewish Scripture, Luke-Acts as the Messiah for

all humanity, including Rome, and John as the epistemological foundation of creation. The epistles also differ. The Pauline epistles argue that there is no need for law as the foundation of the covenant, the Johannine epistles maintain focus especially on the significance of the human character of Jesus and the hierarchy of the emerging church, and Hebrews emphasizes the role of Jesus as priest who was vicariously sacrificed for the salvation of humanity.

Altogether, the Bible, whether Jewish or Christian, comprises a very diverse collection of works with very different viewpoints and worldviews. Instead of attempting to reduce the Bible to a single principle, such as *Heilsgeschichte*, in the case of von Rad, covenant in the case of Eichrodt, or the demythologization of Christ in the case of Rudolf Bultmann,[3] it seems proper to recognize and embrace the diversity of viewpoint and worldview inherent in the Bible itself in all of its forms in an Asian biblical theology. Perhaps it is the recognition and affirmation of such diversity of viewpoint that constitutes one of the major teachings that the Bible presents to its readers.

3.

It is with the recognition and affirmation of the Bible's diverse structure and contents that I begin my discussion of the construction of Asian biblical theology with the question, What is distinctively Asian in an Asian biblical theology? The answer I propose to that question is *xiao*, filial piety or the reverence due to parents and other elders in East Asian tradition. Although the concept is rooted specifically in Confucian thought, it permeates the cultures and traditions of East Asia, thereby making *xiao* a foundational concept of Taiwanese, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese cultures and of Taoist, Confucian, Buddhist, and Shinto traditions. In making such a proposal, I am well aware of the abuse of the principle of *xiao* in various social, political, cultural, and institutional contexts throughout East Asian history. I therefore reject any notion that *xiao* should serve as a means for the parents or the elders to subjugate their descendants or juniors. Rather, I envision the ideal conception of *xiao*, in which the relationship between parents or elders, on the one hand, and children or

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3. Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*; Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Scribner's, 1951–1955).

juniors, on the other hand, is reciprocal, in keeping with the dialectical perspectives of yin and yang theory. In such an ideal understanding of *xiao*, the children or juniors show due respect to the parents or elders, but the parents or elders also have the obligation to serve as worthy exemplars for their children and juniors. The principle of *xiao* entails a hierarchy, but the hierarchy entails that those on the upper levels of the pyramid *earn* the support of those on the lower levels. With respect to the focus on Asian biblical theology, such a model entails that Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Shinto, and Judaism have insightful and worthwhile teachings on which a Christian Asian biblical theology can build. It does not entail the rejection or repudiation of these traditions; rather, Asian biblical theology would recognize Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Shinto, and Judaism as elder siblings from which it can learn, even while constructing its own distinctive system of understanding the Bible, G-d, and humanity.[4]

3.1.

I begin with Taoism, which is one of the foundational philosophical schools in Chinese thought and heavily influential in Taiwanese culture as well.[5] According to Taoist tradition, its founder is Lao-Tze, known as the "Old Master," who is credited with writing the Tao Te Ching, "The Book of the Tao/Way and its Virtue." Chinese tradition maintains that Lao-Tze was a contemporary of Confucius, who lived during the sixth century BCE, but more modern scholars argue that Lao-Tze is a legendary figure or a historical figure who lived during the fourth century CE, when the earliest known manuscripts of the Tao Te Ching are dated. The Tao Te Ching maintains that Tao, commonly translated into English as the "Way," functions as the basic principle of order, power, and existence in the universe and that human beings must live in accordance with the principle of

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4. The following discussions of Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shinto are adapted largely from my paper "Asian Biblical Theology."

5. For introductory discussion of Taoism, see William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 1:48–85; Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 136–210. For discussion of the role of Taoism in contemporary Taiwanese society, see Cheng-tian Kuo, "Taiwanese Daoism and Religious Experiences," in *Religious Experience in Contemporary China and Taiwan*, ed. Yen-zen Tsai (Taipei: Chengchi University Press, 2013), 77–90.

wu-wei, nonaction, in order to live in accordance with the principles that guide the world. Chuang-Tze, a Taoist sage who lived 369–286 BCE, developed the teachings of the Tao Te Ching beyond its emphasis on *wu-wei* in human life. Chuang-Tze's teachings focus on how human beings might transcend the limitations of their finite minds and perceptions in order to understand better how to live in accordance with Tao. An especially important concept in Chuang-Tze's thought is the relativity of human perception and conceptualization. He illustrated this point by relating how he dreamed that he had been a butterfly, but when he awoke, he did not know whether he was Chuang-Tze dreaming that he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming that he was Chuang-Tze. His teachings on the relativity of perception and conceptualization point to the importance of understanding the perceptions of others as a means to understand and live the proper course of life in this world.

Because Taoism teaches the imminent nature of ultimate reality in the world, Asian biblical theologians will recognize that there is an affinity between Taoism and the wisdom literature of the Bible, most notably the book of Proverbs.[6] Proverbs is well-known for its introductory statement of principle that the fear or reverence of YHWH is the beginning of wisdom. But in defining how humans might experience YHWH in the world, Proverbs teaches that empirical study of how the world of creation functions leads to greater understanding of the divine principles by which the world is created and how human beings might live in conformity with those principles. Proverbs 30:24–28, for example, teaches:

> Four are among the tiniest of the earth, yet they are the wisest of the wise:
> Ants are a folk without power, yet they prepare food for themselves in the summer;
> The badger is a folk without strength, yet it makes its home in the rock;
> The locusts have no king, yet they all march in formation;
> You can catch the lizard in your hand, yet it is found in royal palaces.

Such a statement illustrates how divine order is a fundamental principle that is inherent in creation and that human beings would be well advised

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6. For discussion of this issue in relation to the prophetic literature of the Bible, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "Revelation as Empirical Observation in the Prophets," in *Philarchisophia and Classics* (China: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2007), 366–80 (in Mandarin), repr. in English as ch. 28 in this volume.

to learn how to live in the world by implementing the principles they learn by observing even the smallest creatures in creation.

Like the Tao Te Ching, Proverbs postulates a theology of divine imminence in which YHWH created Wisdom, personified as a woman, as the first act of creation, and personified Wisdom then advised YHWH throughout the remaining process of creation. In Prov 8:23, 27–30a, she states:

> The L-rd created me at the beginning of his course, as the first of G-d's works of old. In the distant past I was fashioned, at the beginning, at the origin of the earth.… I was there when he set the heavens into place; when he fixed the horizon upon the deep; when he made the heavens above firm, and the fountains of the deep gushed forth; when he assigned the sea its limits, so that its waters never transgress his command; when he fixed the foundations of the earth, I was with him as a confidant, a source of delight every day.

Such a perspective is not limited to the wisdom literature. Indeed, it appears in the prophetic literature as well, for example, in Isa 11:1–2, which illustrates how the growth of a new tree from a severed stump demonstrates how the house of David might rise once again after having suffered adversity:[7]

> And a twig shall grow out from the stump of Jesse, and a shoot shall sprout from its roots.
> And the spirit of YHWH shall fall upon him; a spirit of wisdom and understanding;
> A spirit of counsel and power; a spirit of knowledge and the fear of YHWH.

The passage goes on to describe the wisdom and piety of the new monarch and the inauguration of a future time when Israel and Judah will be restored under the new king's rule, when their enemies will be defeated, and when those exiled to Assyria and Egypt shall return to their homes. The typical phenomenon of trees, which suffer when they are cut down but afterwards take root to grow once again, provides the basis for Isaiah's prophecies of punishment against Assyria and restoration for Israel and Judah.

Both of these passages from Proverbs and Isaiah illustrate how Asian interpreters might constructively engage the Taoist tradition in formulating an Asian biblical theology.

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7. Sweeney, "Revelation and Empirical Observation."

3.2.

Asian interpreters may also constructively engage the Confucian tradition in formulating an Asian biblical theology.[8] Confucius, or Kung-Fu-Tze, is the most widely influential sage of Chinese tradition, and Confucian thought permeates the worldview of all East Asian cultures, including Taiwan, which has a Confucian shrine in downtown Tainan. Confucius is a well-recognized historical figure who lived in 551–479 BCE, during the so-called Warring States period in Chinese history. Confucian thought presupposes the concept of Tao as an epistemological principle in creation, but it is understood very differently than it is in Taoism insofar as Confucian thought postulates a hierarchical worldview in which the principles of Tao are best expressed in the world as the recognition of the will of heaven or T'ien. Confucius taught that the will of heaven best came to expression among human beings when they embraced the principle of jen, virtue, benevolence, or humanity, that is, when they proactively sought to apply jen to the government of states and the conduct of all, beginning with the leaders of society, who would then serve as examples for those under their authority. Confucian thought therefore calls for the use of proactive legislation and ritual action based on jen to regulate the life of human society. Kings, government officials, businesspeople, family heads, and so on must therefore demonstrate jen in Confucian thought in order to properly fulfill their leadership roles. Mencius, or Meng Tze, was the second major Confucian sage, who lived 372–289 BCE and developed Confucian thought by emphasizing the principle of I (*yi*), righteousness, propriety, or duty, to properly inform the social roles and moral obligations expected of and exercised by human beings.

When considering the potential influence of Confucian thought on Asian biblical theology, one would do well to consider the role of biblical law. Christian Asian biblical theologians may be hesitant to engage biblical law for theological reasons. Paul polemicizes against law as inimical to the attainment of salvation in the Christian tradition in Romans and Galatians, but interpreters must recognize that biblical law was never

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8. For introductory discussion of Confucian thought, see de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 15–33, 86–98; Chan, *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 14–85. For discussion of Confucian tradition in contemporary Taiwan, see Yen-zen Tsai, "Confucian Culture in Contemporary Taiwan and Religious Experiences," in Tsai, *Religious Experience*, 141–62.

intended to achieve salvation; rather, it was intended to establish a just and holy social order in ancient Israel and Judah. By way of example, the slave law in Exod 21:2–11 holds that a Hebrew slave may only serve a term of service lasting six years. At the end of his period of service, the slave was to be set free, unless he voluntarily chose to remain a slave in perpetuity. In considering such a law, interpreters must recognize that slavery did not function as a form of chattel slavery, which was practiced in the southern United States prior to the American Civil War or War between the States. Instead, it was a form of debt slavery that was intended and designed to repay debt in times of financial stress. Thus, the law was written to address financial need, and it was based on the Shabbat principle inherent in Israelite and Judean society that called for six time periods of labor with release in the seventh.[9] Such a law would then promote justice and holiness in Israelite or Judean society, just as law is intended to function in every society, including Taiwan and the United States. Furthermore, Israelite laws were not monolithic and unchangeable. They could be revised when found to be falling short of their ideals. Thus, Deut 15:1–18 revises the Exodus slave law by allowing women to be freed on the same basis as men and by stipulating that the master or creditor should give his former slave a share of the profits for which he or she had labored to ensure that they would not become a slave once again. And Lev 25 further revises the slave law by applying it to the ownership of land, requiring that land sold in times of financial stress be redeemed financially by a family member or returned to its original owner in the so-called Jubilee year.

Confucian thought is concerned with active, ideal leadership. In this respect, the book of Samuel also serves as a basis for considering the interrelationships between biblical and Confucian perspectives of leadership. Modern Western biblical scholarship is engaged in a debate concerning whether Samuel is a historical or a literary work, but consideration of Confucian values points to a means to move beyond this debate to consider the ways in which Samuel instructs readers in the values of leadership.[10] Samuel focuses on portrayals of leadership by

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9. Sweeney, "Shabbat"; Sweeney, *Pentateuch*, esp. 3–6, 46.

10. For examples of historical interpretation, see Steven McKenzie, *King David: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Baruch Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001). For literary models, see Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological*

the high priest Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas; the prophet and priest Samuel ben Elkanah; the first king of Israel, Saul ben Kish; and the third king of Israel, David ben Jesse. Eli and his sons are portrayed as entirely unfit for leadership due to incompetence on the part of Eli, demonstrated by his failure to recognize prayer on the part of Hannah and visionary experience on the part of Samuel, and corruption on the part of Hophni and Phinehas, who abused their priestly office and subsequently lost their lives and the ark of the covenant to the Philistines in battle at Aphek.[11] Samuel, however, is an exemplary figure who exercises leadership on all fronts throughout his lifetime as a prophet, priest, military leader, and judge on a par with Moses. Saul is portrayed as handsome, tall, and well-meaning, but he is incompetent by virtue of his failure to grow into his role as king and his willingness to violate the balance of power in Israelite society between king and priest by taking on the role of priest when he was not entitled to do so. David is the most complex figure in Samuel, particularly because he is portrayed as one who does no wrong and enjoys YHWH's favor in his rise to power. The portrayal of his actions in 1 Sam 16–2 Sam 9 illustrates an ideal and appropriate rise to power by David. But in 2 Sam 9–24, David appears to be an incredibly poor father who fails to instruct his sons in proper conduct, beginning with his own adultery with Bath-Sheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and his role in the murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite, to cover up his adultery. Consequently, his sons remain undisciplined, unchecked, and unfilial as they commit rape and murder and illegally attempt to seize power due to David's failure to discipline them. The book of Samuel thereby demonstrates affinities with both the wisdom tradition of the Hebrew Bible and the Confucian tradition of Chinese thought in its role as a manual for the study of leadership.[12]

Literature and the Drama of Reading (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Jan P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, 4 vols. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981–1993).

11. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Eli: A High Priest Thrown under the Wheels of the Ox-Cart," in *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Samuel*, ed. Keith Bodner and Benjamin J. M. Johnson, LHBOTS 669 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2020), 59–75.

12. For an earlier study of the affinities of Samuel and the wisdom tradition, see Roger N. Whybray, *The Succession Narrative: A Study of II Samuel 9–20 and I Kings 1 and 2*, SBT 2/9 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1968).

3.3.

Buddhism originated in India as a Hindu sect that developed into its own self-standing tradition, but it also plays a major role in East Asian philosophy and religion.[13] Consequently, it presents its own opportunities for conceiving Asian biblical theology. Buddhism originated in the sixth through fourth centuries BCE as a Hindu sect based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, an ascetic sage who ultimately became known as the Buddha, "Enlightened One," in Sanskrit. The Buddha taught that life entailed suffering due to one's transient character, and he offered a "middle way" of addressing this issue that eschewed the extremes of excessive self-denial and excessive self-indulgence in a life of self-discipline and meditation. Key to his teachings is the recognition of the transient character of all reality, including the self, thereby ending human suffering or craving by the self for permanent life in this world. The Buddha's teachings ultimately developed into the branch of Buddhism known as Theravada Buddhism, that is, the Teachings of the Elders, which became especially influential in south and Southeast Asia, although it is also known in East Asia. The Mahayana, "The Great Vehicle," branch of Buddhism developed the concept of the Bodhisattva, "a Being of Wisdom," who delays recognition of enlightenment in order to assist others in recognizing enlightenment as well. Both traditions in Buddhism are ultimately concerned with living life in accordance with the true nature of the universe, which enabled Buddhism to interact constructively with Taoism in China. The Mahayana concept of the Bodhisattva likewise enabled Buddhism to interact with Confucian concepts of the ideal human being in China, Korea, and Japan.[14]

Both the Theravada and Mahayana branches of Buddhism upheld the Buddha's teachings of a transient reality and a transient understanding of self. Such an understanding of how perspective shapes the

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13. For discussion of Chinese Buddhism, see de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 266–368; Chan, *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 366–449. For discussion of Buddhism in Taiwan, see Yi-jia Tsai, "Taiwanese Buddhism and Religious Experience," in Tsai, *Religious Experience*, 59–76.

14. For Buddhism's adaption to Chinese culture, see esp. Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); Ch'en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

conceptualization of reality is a key concept for discerning Buddhism's capacity for contributing to the development of Asian biblical theology. When applied to historical narratives, such as the Former Prophets (Joshua–Kings), the Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, and the book of Esther, Buddhism contributes to an enhanced understanding of historiography or historical perspective. Much of modern Western biblical scholarship in the twentieth century focused on reconstructing the historical realities that underlay the abovementioned historical narratives, but later scholarship increasingly focused on their literary features and their historiographical perspectives. Especially noteworthy is the tendency of the Former Prophets, known in scholarly circles as the Deuteronomistic History, to focus on historiographical attempts to explain the destruction and exiles of northern Israel and southern Judah as the result of sins against YHWH committed by past generations, particularly the earlier kings, such as Jeroboam of Israel or Manasseh of Judah.[15] Chronicles, however, attempts to explain disaster by focusing on the sins of the figures or generations that actually suffer reversal, such as Josiah's death as the result of his own resistance to YHWH or the officials, priests, and people of Jerusalem who allegedly corrupted the Jerusalem temple, thereby causing its destruction.[16] The book of Esther posits that YHWH does not appear in a time of crisis, leaving an unlikely heroine, Esther, as the only person in a position to save her people from the attempted genocide of the Persian Empire.[17] Asian biblical theologians may learn much by understanding the respective historiographical principles of the narrative histories for analyzing the historical experience and suffering of East Asia during the past five hundred years as well as the prospects for restoration in the present and future. Issues might include the explanation for China's suffering from both the Western powers and Japan, Korea's conquest and division by foreign powers, the failures of Japanese leadership in the twentieth century, the prospects of Taiwan in relation to the claims of mainland China, Japan, and the United States, and the growing influence of secularism throughout East Asia.

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15. For discussion of these biblical texts in relation to issues posed by the Shoah, see Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*.

16. Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Question of Theodicy in the Historical Books: Contrasting Views concerning the Destruction of Jerusalem according to the DtrH and ChrH," *JIBS* 5 (2011): 7–37, repr. as ch. 38 in this volume.

17. Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, 219–22.

3.4.

The last East Asian tradition to be considered is Shinto, "the Way of the Gods," which is the national religious tradition of Japan, although it has been heavily influenced by Buddhism since at least the sixth century CE, when Chinese writers first made Shinto known to the outside world.[18] It is also heavily influenced by the rising secularism of Japanese society, particularly since Shinto was compromised by Japan's defeat in World War II following its efforts to conquer much of East Asia and the Pacific during the early twentieth century.

Shinto reveres the gods of Japan and holds that Japan is the central nation in the world of creation, insofar as Amaterasu Omikami, the sun goddess of Japan, played the key role in creating the Japanese islands and Izanagi and Izanami as the first human beings in the world. Shinto thereby constitutes in large measure a form of religious nationalism. Such religious nationalism is often held in great suspicion in the modern world because of its role in prompting Japan to claim its right to rule over other cultures from the Meiji Restoration through World War II. Other examples of modern nationalism, such as that of Germany in World War II, or those of the United Kingdom, the United States, both Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, the People's Republic of China, and other nations may also be considered. We might also consider China's historical identification as "the Middle Kingdom," which actually means "the central kingdom" in the world, as well as the roles played by the Republic of Korea and Taiwan as so-called Asian tigers that have built their economic, industrial, and military power even while facing threat and potential adversity in the world. But we must also recognize that nations have the right to assert and celebrate their own national identifies—and to defend themselves—as well as the responsibility to check their respective national identities from extremes that lead to attempts to threaten and conquer other nations in the world.[19]

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18. Ryusaku Tsunoda, William Theodore de Bary, and Donald Keene, *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 1:21–51; Joseph M. Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

19. See Yoram Hazony, *the Virtue of Nationalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2018); Natan Sharansky with Shira Woldsky Weiss, *Defending Identity: Its Indispensable Role in Protecting Democracy* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008); Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernism, Identity, and*

The study of biblical expressions of ancient national identity can therefore prove instructive in Asian biblical theology. The notion of Israel or Judah as the chosen people of YHWH or the house of David as the chosen monarch of Israel and Judah comes immediately to mind. King David allegedly built a great empire, but close study of the literary and archaeological records indicates that David's empire was not as grandiose as the biblical accounts suggest.[20] Furthermore, David's empire was established during a period of weakness on the part of the superpowers of the day, that is, Egypt, the Hittite Empire, Aram, Assyria, and Babylonia, but with the exception of the Hittites, these empires regained their power and ambition and ultimately overran and destroyed both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. We may also observe qualifications of the notion of chosen people or dynasty insofar as Deuteronomy stresses that such status does not entail the superiority of Israel or Judah; rather, it entails obligation to YHWH. Likewise, the demise of the house of David during the Babylonian exile and the early Persian-period restoration called for rethinking the status of the eternal Davidic promise by applying it to all Israel, as proposed in Isa 55, or to Jerusalem and the Levitical priesthood, as proposed in Jer 33.[21] Such lessons have been learned in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, at least to a degree, but they are also incumbent on the superpowers operating in the region, such as mainland China, the United States, and Russia. The question of how to balance the aspirations of national identity and the responsibilities to other nations in the world is a key question for the nations in the region, as it is also for Christianity itself, which has so often proved to be an agent of colonialism in the region based on its claims for universal adherence to Christ. How does Christ coexist, not only with Moses or Rabbi Akiva, but with

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International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Kevin M. Doak, *A History of Nationalism: Placing the People* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Don Oberdorfer and Robert Carlin, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

20. Joel S. Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007); cf. David Goodblatt, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

21. Sweeney, "Reconceptualization of the Davidic Covenant in Isaiah"; Sweeney, "Reconceptualization of the Davidic Covenant in the Books of Jeremiah."

Lao-Tze, Chuang-Tze, Confucius, Mencius, Siddhartha Gautama, and Amaterasu Omikami as well?

3.5.

Finally, the last tradition to be considered is Judaism. Some within Christian tradition maintain that Christianity has superseded Judaism due to the allegation that Judaism violated its covenant with G-d, and it was punished with the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and the exile of the Jewish people. But such an assertion is theologically unsustainable. The Bible is very clear throughout that ancient Israel and Judah held an eternal covenant, Hebrew *bərît ʿôlam*, with G-d that cannot be broken despite periods of punishment, such as those experienced with the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, first by the Babylonians in 587–586 BCE and later by the Romans in 70 CE.[22] There are to be sure assertions that the covenant is conditional in the Bible; Deuteronomy is the most influential and complete expression of the conditional nature of the covenant, but the blessings and curses in Deut 28–30 make it clear that any period of punishment and exile will come to an end with the repentance of the people and their restoration to the land of Israel. Deuteronomy 30:1–6 makes this principle clear:

> And it shall come to pass when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse That I have placed upon you, and you restore [them] unto your heart among all the nations where YHWH, your G-d, has dispersed you, and you return to YHWH, your G-d, and you listen to his voice according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, then YHWH, your G-d, will restore your fortunes, show mercy to you, and again gather you from all the nations where YHWH, your G-d, has scattered you, even if your outcasts will be at the end of the heavens, from there, YHWH, your G-d, will gather you, and from there he will take you, and YHWH, your G-d, will bring you to the land which your ancestors possessed, and you will possess it, and he will make you better and more numerous than your ancestors.

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22. For discussion of the *berit olam* in the Bible and Judaism, see esp. Marvin A. Sweeney, "*Berit Olam*, the Eternal Covenant: Is the Eternal Covenant Really Conditional?," *CBW* 33 (2018): 1–19, repr. as ch. 5 in this volume; see also Shechter, *Land of Israel*.

The repentance of Israel is the condition for its restoration as envisioned in Deuteronomy, and both the Bible and subsequent Jewish tradition are designed to call for precisely that in the form of exhortation to love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might, and to observe G-d's commandments (Deut 6:5–9). That exhortation is an ongoing process in the Bible, namely, in the Prophets and in works such as Ezra-Nehemiah, as well as in the rabbinic literature and beyond. The process is still ongoing. It is by no means yet complete, particularly as it is understood in all forms of contemporary Jewish tradition, thought, and practice. Although such a restoration is yet to be fully achieved, it remains the goal of all forms of Judaism today.

The eternal covenant of Judaism has important implications for any biblical theology, whether Asian or otherwise, and the relationship between Judaism and other forms of religious tradition, including Christianity, Islam, Shinto, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, as well as others not considered here. An assertion that the eternal covenant is broken is unwarranted; such an assertion misunderstands the fundamental nature of an eternal covenant that cannot be broken. Such an assertion would likewise deny divine purpose by charging that G-d was either wrong in establishing such a covenant or unreliable in rescinding it.

Furthermore, Judaism does not require other nations or religious traditions to observe Jewish law; only Jews are required to do that. The rabbinic laws of Noah require that other legitimate traditions recognize G-d, establish courts of justice, and forbid murder, adultery, bestiality, and the eating of living animals. Such conditions suggest that Judaism can recognize other religious traditions and that other religious traditions, including Christianity, as well as the Asian traditions discussed here, can recognize Judaism.

4.

In the end, an Asian biblical theology, based in Christianity, has the potential to recognize Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Shinto, and Judaism as ancestors or elder siblings in accordance with the principle of *xiao* or filial piety, even while asserting its own distinctive theological worldview. Such recognition would revolutionize religious worldview and practice in the world at large. I am well aware that such recognition is not likely to come easily. But such recognition can come, and it would bring us all closer to the time when all humans can live together in peace and in relationship with the divine.

Part 2
History, Comparative Studies, and Reception

7

The Origins of Kingship in Israel and Japan:
A Comparative Analysis

1. Kingship in Israel

The origins of kingship in ancient Israel and Judah have traditionally prompted a great deal of interest among both scholars and laypersons. The fundamental reasons for this interest are not difficult to fathom. For Christians, the origins of Israelite/Judean kingship point to the development of messianism in the Second Temple period that ultimately led to Christianity's conceptions of concerning the nature and significance of Jesus as the Messiah. For Jews, the origins of Israelite/Judean kingship coincide with the establishment of a secure and unified Israelite state with its political and religious capital in Jerusalem, which points ultimately to the development of the modern state of Israel and contemporary forms of Judaism.

Both traditions base their conceptions of the origins of kingship by and large on the image of David ben Jesse in the Hebrew Bible. The books of Samuel present him as a heroic figure who, with the favor of G-d, rose from humble origins in Bethlehem to claim greatness in Jerusalem. As a young shepherd boy, he killed the mighty Philistine giant, Goliath, with mere stones and a sling. As a young man, he successfully played his enemies off against each other as more and more followers were attracted to his side. Ultimately, he secured his nation's future by defeating the

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Philistines, who had dominated Israel throughout the early Iron Age in Canaan, and emerged as the ruler of an Israelite empire that extended throughout the Syro-Israelite corridor between Egypt to the south and Mesopotamia to the north. By designating Jerusalem as his capital and the site of the temple to be built by his son Solomon, David assured his place as a venerated figure in the traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Because of his success, the image of David tends to overshadow that of his predecessor, Saul ben Kish, the first king of Israel. Despite a promising start as a heroic figure who found kingship while looking for his father's lost asses and who delivered the beleaguered city of Jabesh-Gilead, the books of Samuel present Saul as an abject failure in comparison to David. Underlying this presentation is an interest in the demise of the Saulide dynasty following the assassination of Saul's son Ish-Baal and its replacement by the much more successful Davidic line, which continued for some four hundred years. The Bible points to several explanations for the failure of the Saulide dynasty. Saul was from Gibeah, a city of questionable character, in which the rape and murder of a visiting Levite's concubine mirrored similar actions attempted against Lot's visitors in the city of Sodom (Judg 19–21; cf. Gen 19, 1 Sam 11). Saul's personality was unstable and depressed, as indicated by his frequent mood changes and his attempts to kill his own son Jonathan (1 Sam 8–19, 20). His failure to contain the Philistines on the one hand and the increasing popularity of David on the other appear to have aggravated the situation (1 Sam 18:6–9). Finally, 1 Samuel points to various sins on the part of Saul. He overstepped his bounds as monarch in 1 Sam 13 by presiding over the sacrifice at Gilgal and thereby abused his office by appropriating for himself the role of the priest. Likewise, he disobeyed divine commands conveyed by the prophet Samuel in 1 Sam 15 by failing to kill the Amalekite king, Agag, and by failing to dedicate the booty of the Amalekites to G-d.

Although these explanations may well be historically accurate, they serve ideological or propagandistic narrative in the books of Judges and Samuel to justify the rise of David to kingship as an act of YHWH's divine favor. But this ideological perspective tends to mask some important features of Saul's kingship and the sociopolitical context in which it functioned that point to the fundamental causes of his failure. Saul's kingship was inherently weak from the beginning. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, which was recognized throughout Israelite tradition as the smallest and weakest of the tribes that constituted Israel. He was therefore not able to exercise full authority

over all the tribes because he lacked coercive power, that is, he exercised authority only with the consent of the other tribes. David, on the other hand, was from the tribe of Judah, which was one of the larger tribes within Israel and therefore was able to exercise a great deal of coercive power. The coercive capacities of Judah and Ephraim are evident in that both tribes ultimately seized kingship for themselves, that is, David in Judah and Jeroboam and the successive northern dynasts in Ephraim. In these cases, the appropriation of kingship by the relatively more powerful tribes, Judah and Ephraim, points to the failure of the twelve-tribe federation of Israel, which split into the respective kingdoms of Judah in the south and Israel in the north.

These observations point to a fundamental question concerning the royal function of the relatively weak tribe of Benjamin in the early Israelite tribal federation: Why does Israel institute an inherently weak monarchy based in the rule of Saul ben Kish of the tribe of Benjamin? Most studies of the origins of kingship in Israel point to sociopolitical factors: the need for defense against the Philistines; the need for centralized administration of land; the production, distribution, and taxation of agricultural goods; trade, and so on.[1] The biblical narratives point to a concern with the abuse of royal power, expressed in Samuel's warning concerning the cost of kingship to the people (1 Sam 8, 12) and Solomon's imposition of taxation, the corvee, and other obligations as causes of the revolt against the house of David by the northern tribes (1 Kgs 4–5, 9).[2] Overall, this suggests the

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1. For surveys and studies of the origins of kingship in Israel, see Keith Whitlam, "King and Kingship," *ABD* 4:40–48; Albrecht Alt, "The Formation of the Israelite State in Palestine," in *Essays in Old Testament History and Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 223–309; Georgio Buccellati, *Cities and Nations of Ancient Syria* (Rome: University of Rome Press, 1971); Robert B. Coote and Keith W. Whitlam, *The Emergence of Early Israel in Historical Perspective* (Sheffield: Almond, 1986); Frank Fick, *The Formation of the State in Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985); Norman Gottwald, *The Tribes of YHWH: A Sociology of Liberated Israel, 1250–1050 BCE* (London, 1980); Chris Hauer Jr., "From Alt to Anthropology: The Rise of the Israelite State," *JSOT* 36 (1986): 3–15; Tomoo Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties of Ancient Israel*, BZAW 142 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977); Noth, *Das System der zwölf Stämme Israels*. See further Robert L. Carneiro, "A Theory of the Origin of State," *Science* 169 (1970): 733–38; J. David Scholen, "Caravans, Kenites, and Casus Belli: Enmity and Alliance in the Song of Deborah," *CBQ* 55 (1993): 18–38; Lawrence E. Stager, "Archaeology, Ecology, and Social History: Background Themes to the Song of Deborah," in *Congress Volume: Jerusalem 1986*, ed. John A. Emerton, VTSup 40 (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 221–34.

2. For analysis of the portrayal of Solomon in the DtrH, with an emphasis on his role in causing the revolt of the northern tribes, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Critique

basic reasons for the initial selection of Benjamin as the royal tribe within Israel. By designating a relatively weak tribe within Israel as the center for royal authority within the tribal federation, the relative power of the larger tribes, such as Ephraim and Judah, could be held in check within the larger tribal structure in that neither would be able to employ royal authority to advance its interests over against those of the other tribes. The designation of Benjamin as the royal tribe would present the more powerful tribes from dominating the others by seizing kingship. It thereby enabled smaller tribes within the federation to exercise greater influence as the larger tribes would have to compete with each other by persuading the monarch and smaller tribes to adopt a specific course of action. By holding the power of the larger tribes in balance in this fashion, the system enabled them to function together as components of a larger federation that presumably would serve the interests of all the tribes involved. In the case of early Iron Age Israel, a relatively weak central kinship provided the means for the tribes to unite in order to face the threat posed by the Philistine coalition.

This explanation for the organization of early kingship in ancient Israel around a relatively weak royal tribe may be illustrated by a comparison of the origins of kingship in Japan and its historical development. Like ancient Israel, ancient Japan was constituted as a tribal federation in which various clans or tribal groups, called *uji*, comprised the larger sociopolitical unity.[3] Likewise, ancient Japan resembles ancient Israel in that kingship was assigned to a relatively weak central tribe, the Yamato, which tended to exercise power in relation to relatively more powerful tribes or clans such as the Soga, Fujiwara, Ashikaga, and Tokugawa, among others.[4] In this regard, the early Japanese system demonstrated a similar interest in

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of Solomon in the Josianic Edition of the Deuteronomistic History," *JBL* 114 (1995): 607–22, repr. as ch. 24 in this volume.

3. Paul Wheatley and Thomas See, *From Court to Capital: A Tentative Interpretation of the Origins of Japanese Urban Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

4. On the origins and ideology of Japanese kingship, see esp. Joseph M. Kitagawa, "The Japanese Kokutai (National Community), History and Myth," *HR* 13 (1973–1974): 209–26; Kitagawa, "Matsuri and Matsuri-goto: Religion and State in Early Japan," in *On Understanding Japanese Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 117–26; Kitagawa, "Monarchy and Government: Traditions and Ideologies in Pre-modern Japan," in *On Understanding Japanese Religion*, 83–97; Manabu Waida, "Sacred Kingship in Early Japan: A Historical Introduction," *HR* 15 (1975–1976): 319–42. See also Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*.

checking the power of larger tribes within the federation over against the others as each tribe had to compete for influence by persuading the monarchy and the other tribal groups to adopt specific policies or courses of action. In both cases, the system failed; in Israel, Benjamin was supplanted by Judah and Ephraim; in Japan, the Yamato clan tended to be dominated by other, more powerful clans throughout the entire history of the monarchy. Nevertheless, the Japanese model points to the principle of weak central kingship as a means to hold together the competing interests of more powerful tribes or clans within a larger federation.

2. Kingship in Japan

The Japanese imperial family is the Yamato clan. According to Japanese tradition, the Yamato clan traces its lineage back to the chief Japanese deity or *kami*, Amaterasu Omikami, the goddess of the sun, who symbolizes order and stability, both in the natural and the human realms.[5] One of the earliest Japanese chronicles, the Nihon-Shoki or Nihongi, "The Chronicle of Japan" (ca. 720 CE), states that the Yamato line began when Amaterasu saw disorder and chaos in the land caused by Omono-nushi (Prince Plenty), the son of Amaterasu's brother, Susa-no-o.[6] Susa-no-o is the *kami* of the storm, who was expelled to the Izumo shrine of western Japan for his destructive pranks against Amaterasu and the land at large. Because of the problems caused by Omono-nushi, Amaterasu commissioned her grandson, Ni-ni-gi, the grain *kami*, to descend to earth and to institute kingship. Her charge to Ni-ni-gi illustrates the intention to restore order and stability to the land: "The luxuriant Reed Plain Land of Fresh Rice Ears

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5. For discussion of the early history of Japan, see Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, 3–45; Joseph M. Kitagawa, "Prehistoric Background of Japanese Religion," in *On Understanding Japanese Religion*, 4–40; Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank, *East Asia: The Great Tradition* (Boston: Mifflin, 1960), 450–518; George Sansom, *A History of Japan to 1334* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958), 3–81; Delmer M. Brown, ed., *Ancient Japan*, vol. 1 of *The Cambridge History of Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

6. For an excerpt from the Nihongi on this tradition, see Ryusaka Tsunoda, William Theodore de Bary, and Donald Keene, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 1:17–18; for the full text in English translation, see W. G. Aston, *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to AD 697*, Transactions and Proceedings of the Japan Society, Supplement 1 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1896), 76–79.

is a country which our descendants are to inherit. Go, therefore, our imperial grandson, and rule over it! And may our imperial lineage continue unbroken and prosperous, coeternal with heaven and earth."

Although Ni-ni-gi may in fact be a historical figure who was mythologized during the course of Japanese mythological development, the first known historical emperor of Japan is Kamu-Yamato-Iware-Bike, better known by his posthumous Chinese appellation, Jimmu Tenno.[7] According to Japanese tradition, he is identified as Ni-ni-gi's great grandson, who led his clan from the island of Kyushu in approximately 660 BCE, pacifying various tribes encountered along the way, until he reached the Yamato region near Mount Koya and Isé in southeast-central Honshu. There he established the Yamato dynasty as the central authority over various clans or *uji* throughout Japan. The dates and details of his reign are very questionable. Most scholars agree that the Yamato dynasty established its authority during the middle of the fourth century BCE, at some point prior to the Japanese invasion of Korea in 369 CE.[8] Furthermore, the accounts of Jimmu Tenno's migration reflect attempts to project later realities back into an earlier time. Many scholars recognize, for example, the influence of movements by known Yamato monarchs to conquer so-called barbarians during the third–fifth centuries CE as important elements in shaping the accounts of Jimmu Tenno's reign. Although the early Japanese traditions present Jimmu Tenno's reign as a model of Yamato royal authority over the other *uji*, it is clear that his power, or that of the later Yamato monarchs who served as models for the presentation of his reign, was based on a coalition of powerful tribal or clan groups that assimilated conquered *uji* as campaigns progressed. There is also a great deal of scholarly speculation that Jimmu Tenno's power may also have been based in part on support from the Korean chieftains, who may well have been related by kinship or some close political association, or on relations with Chinese rulers.[9] In any case, the model for

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7. See Reischauer and Fairbank, *East Asia*, 462–69; Sansom, *History of Japan*, 12–21; Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, 4–11; J. Edward Kidder, "The Earliest Societies of Japan," in Brown, *Cambridge History of Japan* 1:48, 102; Matsumae Takeshi, "The Early Kami Worship," in Brown, *Cambridge History of Japan* 1:350.

8. Sansom, *History of Japan*, 17.

9. Sansom, *History of Japan*, 17, 19. For a full discussion of the history of the early Yamato kingdom and its relations with the various kingdoms in Korea, see Delmer M. Brown, "The Yamato Kingdom," in Brown, *Cambridge History of Japan*, 1:108–62.

Yamato authority in this period is not one of absolute power over other tribal groups but one of power based on alliance with powerful clans that agreed to Yamato rule.

In fact, the model of absolute Yamato authority over the *uji* appears to represent attempts to portray Yamato rule in idealistic terms. A survey of much of Japan's subsequent history demonstrates that the Yamato family exercised only titular authority, as real power was held by various families or clans that intermarried into the Yamato line or that controlled religious/ governmental institutions or military power. During the sixth–seventh centuries CE, the Soga clan was able to exercise a great deal of influence in the royal house by marriage and other devices that diminished the power and influence of competing *uji*.[10] One important device was the promotion of Buddhism, insofar as the Buddha was identified as a new *kami*, which tended to displace more traditional Shinto deities and open the way for political change as well. The Soga employed their influence to arrange for the nomination of Empress Suiko (592–628), the first woman to hold the imperial authority, which she exercised through her nephew, Prince Sho-toku (773–621). It was only with the support of the Soga clan that Prince Shotoku was able to establish a centralized monarchy with a Chinese-style bureaucracy in which Buddhism served as the religion of state. Although the seventeen-article constitution attributed to Shotoku shows clear signs of later authorship, it reflects a policy that saw the unification of the state at the expense of the power of local clan chieftains who were incorporated into the state bureaucracy. As the architects of such a system, the Soga clan exercised considerable influence.

Soga power was finally challenged and eliminated by Kainatori, the chief of the priestly Nakatomi clan (later renamed Fujiwara) who, together with Prince Naka-no-oye, engineered a coup d'état that saw the assassination of the Soga leadership and the institution of the so-called reform era of the latter seventh century.[11] During this period, Prince Naka-no-oye, later known as the Emperor Tenchi, and his successors eliminated

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10. Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, 24–26; Reischauer and Fairbank, *East Asia*, 474–78; Brown, "The Yamato Kingdom," 160–62; Inoue Mitsusada with Delmer M. Brown, "The Century of Reform," in Brown, *Cambridge History of Japan*, 1:163–201; Kitagawa, "The Shadow of the Sun: A Glimpse of the Fujiwara and the Imperial Families in Japan," in *On Understanding Japanese Religion*, 102–10.

11. For a full study of the rise of the Nakatomi or Fujiwara clan and its role in Japanese government, see Kitagawa, "Shadow of the Sun," 98–116.

opposition groups with the support of the Fujiwara clan. Fujiwara family members played important roles in the codification of written law codes, such as the Omi, Taiho, and Yoro codes, which concentrated the power of the state, and the compilation of the historical chronicles, such as Nihonshoki (Chronicles of Japan) and the Kojiki (Records of Ancient Matters), which portrayed a close relationship between the Fujiwara (Nakatomi) and imperial (Yamato) clans in the mythological accounts of early Japanese history. The Fujiwara were able to maintain their leading position in the imperial court through the Nara (710–794) and Heian periods ((794–1185) of Buddhist influence, in which the capital was located at Nara and Kyoto, respectively, by contracting marriages with the imperial line.

Subsequent periods in Japanese history began to see a shift in the forms of Japanese kingship with the emergence of the military office of shogun, which exercised true political power while the emperor was relegated to a predominantly ceremonial role. During the Kamakura period (1185–1333), power shifted to the feudal rule of the Minamoto family, which annihilated the rival Taira clan forces that dominated the Kyoto court from 1156 until 1185.[12] Likewise, the Muromachi (1333–1568) and the Momoyatna (1568–1600) periods saw the ascendance of the Ashikaga family under Ashikaga Takuji and the creation of the Ashikaga shogunate.[13] Following the downfall of the Ashikaga shoguns during the late sixteenth century, Tokugawa Iyeyasu (1542–1616) was able to establish the Tokugawa shogunate (1600–1867), which saw the capital move to Edo (Tokyo) and the isolation of Japan from the outside world.[14] With the demise of the Tokugawa shogunate due to the dissatisfaction of the *daimyo*, or feudal landholders, and the appearance of the western naval powers in Japan, true power returned to the emperor Meiji (1868–1912), who embarked on a program of national unification and modernization designed to make Japan into a major world power, but after his death, power reverted to the military once more.[15]

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12. See Sansom, *History of Japan*, 234–63; Reischauer and Fairbank, *East Asia*, 519–33.

13. Reischauer and Fairbank, *East Asia*, 553–78.

14. See Reischauer and Fairbank, *East Asia*, 579–668; Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, 131–76. For detailed treatments of the Tokugawa period, see Herschel Webb, *The Japanese Imperial Institution in the Tokugawa Period* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); Robert N. Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion: The Values of Pre-industrial Japan* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957).

15. For the Meiji restoration, see Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, 177–261.

From 1912 to the present, the emperor has continued to serve more or less as a figurehead while true power is exercised by others.

3. The Model of Japanese Kingship in Myth and History

The model of Yamato rule as a weak central authority supported by the strength of more powerful coalition allies appears to be reflected in the mythological traditions concerning the origins of Japan, including the character of the Japanese *kami* and their interrelationships as well as early accounts concerning the origins of the Japanese people and kingship. Such myths reflect the social structure of prehistoric Japanese society in that they present the early Japanese as a collection of autonomous tribal groups or *uji* that were very difficult to unite under a central authority. Furthermore, the myths reflect the creation of central Yamato authority by portraying Amaterasu Omikami, the *kami* of the Yamato clan, as the stabilizing force among both the divine and the human realms. In this regard, the various *kami* presented in the early mythological traditions frequently represent tribal groups that interact with the Yamato imperial house. The influence of later interests in the presentation of Japanese mythology must therefore be recognized, particularly that of the Fujiwara clan, which played a major role in the composition of the Nihon-shoki and the Kojiki and which projected its ancestors or *kami* as close associates of the Yamato line from the beginning.[16] Nevertheless, the mythological traditions provide an important means for understanding the structure of prehistoric Japanese society and the role of the Yamato house within that society as a weak central authority supported by more powerful allies.

The first major indication of the character of Yamato authority is the identification of Amaterasu Omikami as the *kami* of the Yamato clan and as the chief deity of Japan in general. That she is a woman and not a warrior figure indicates that she attains this role not through her own coercive power or role but through the consent of others to support her as a central authority figure. This is evident in the history of the abovementioned myth concerning the descent of Amaterasu's grandson, Ni-ni-gi, to earth to assume kingship in Japan. Oka Masao has traced the origins of

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16. For discussion of Fujiwara influence in the composition of the Nohon-shoki and the Kojiki, see esp. Kitagawa, "Shadow of the Sun," 111–13. On the general relation of early Japanese mythology to social and political reality, see Takeshi, "Early Kami Worship," 322–58.

this myth to the ancestors of the Tenno or Yamato clan, Altaic-speaking tribal groups that entered Japan from Manchuria and Korea around the third century CE.[17] Their chief deity was not Amaterasu but a male figure named Takamimusubi (the *kami* who descends from a tall tree), whose grandson descended to earth to assume kingship in an earlier form of the myth.[18] In the later development of the myth, Takamimusubi's daughter marries the son of Amaterasu, originally an Austroasian grain and farming goddess, thus begetting Ni-ni-gi. The later myth reflects the union of these two ethnic groups to form the later Yamato clan. In this regard, the matrilineal character of the Austroasian group, originally from a region in China south of the Yangtze River, is noteworthy, especially since their tribal chiefs appear to have been female shaman figures who exercised authority not by physical strength but by their relation to the divine realm, which enabled them to employ the coercive power of others in the tribe.

This Austroasian model of feminine shamanistic authority appears to underlie the pattern or basis for later Yamato rule and the portrayal of Amaterasu in the mythological accounts of her relations with other *kami*. This is especially evident in the accounts of her relations with her brother, Susa-no-o, the *kami* of storm and rain.[19] In keeping with the disruptive and destructive character of storms, Susa-no-o is portrayed as the capricious and mischievous little brother of Amaterasu. His pranks cause considerable damage to the natural realm, such as the mountains and rivers, and they are particularly destructive in relation to agricultural and pastoral concerns as well. Susa-no-o damages the rice fields and fills the irrigation ditches with mud, and lets the animals out of their pens. These acts would be of particular concern to Amaterasu, as a stable and agricultural existence was the basis for her role in establishing order in the world. The culminating acts of destruction and disorder that challenged Amaterasu's natural order, however, took place when Susa-no-o polluted Amaterasu's palace with dung and broke through her roof to fling a dead, flayed pie-bald colt into her weaving room. Amaterasu became so upset as a result of

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17. For a full discussion of Oka's theories, see Kitagawa, "Prehistoric Background," 19–22.

18. For a discussion of the development of early mythology, see Kitagawa, "Prehistoric Background," 27–31.

19. For extracts of the myths concerning the interrelationship between Amaterasu and Susa-no-o, see Ryusaku Tsunoda, de Bary, and Keene, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 1:4–50.

these acts that she hid in a cave and refused to come out, leaving the land without sun and thereby disrupting the natural order of the cosmos and agricultural life.

The means by which this situation is resolved in the myth indicates the character and exercise of royal power in ancient Japan. When Amaterasu refused to emerge from the cave and left the country in chaos, the council of the *kami* took matters into their own hands. Their first action was to banish Susa-no-o to the Izumo shrine of western Japan, thereby containing his power and his capacity for disruptive mischief. When they were unable to cajole Amaterasu into emerging from the cave, various *kami* devised a dance ritual to lure Amaterasu out of the cave. Special roles of the ritual were devised by Ame no Koyane no Mikoto, ancestor of the Nakatomi (Fujiwara) chieftains; Futo-dama no Mikoto, ancestor of the Imibe chieftains; and Ama no Uzume no Mikoto, ancestress of the Sarume chieftain.[20] Altogether, the myth points to the divine origins of the Shinto morning ritual that welcomes Amaterasu, the sun, into the world each day and apparently plays a role in convincing her to return. The special roles assigned to the *kami* of the various tribal groups points to the social reality of support for Yamato rule on the part of more powerful allies among the *uji*. In this case, the disruption of the land must be settled by Amaterasu's presence, but it is the *kami* of the powerful *uji* who made that presence possible and thereby enabled Amaterasu to establish order in the land.

Apart from the portrayal of influence by the Fujiwara and other clans, this portrayal of the exercise of imperial authority in prehistoric Japan is confirmed by early Chinese accounts of their embassies to Japan and their descriptions of the Japanese people and monarchy. The Wei Chih, or "History of the Kingdom of Wei," written in 297 CE, is one of the earliest descriptions of Japanese society prior to the development of writing and chronicles in Japan itself.[21] The Wei Chih describes Japan as a society that includes more than one hundred communities or tribes, indicating the early tribal social structure that preceded the *uji*. It states that the country

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20. See Tsunoda, de Bary, and Keene, *Sources of Japanese Tradition* 1:27–29, esp. 28; Aston, *Nihongi*, 42–44; Kitagawa, "Shadow of the Sun," 112.

21. See Tsunoda, de Bary, and Keene, *Sources of Japanese Tradition* 1:3–7; Ryusaku Tsunoda and L. Carrington Goodrich, *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories* (South Pasadena, CA: Perkins, 1951), esp. 8–21. See also Ryusaku Tsunoda and L. Carrington Goodrich, "The History of the Later Han Dynasty," in Tsunoda and Goodrich, *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories*, 1–8.

formerly had a man as a ruler, but this led to disturbances and warfare among the tribal groups. Consequently, a woman by the name of Pimiko, a Chines rendering of the Japanese Himeko, "Princess," was selected as ruler.[22] She is described as mature in age, but unmarried, and occupied with magic and sorcery. She was secluded in a palace, where she was served by one thousand women attendants. Her brother assisted her in ruling the country, apparently serving as her spokesman and only male contact. Following the death of Pimiko, the Wei Chih reports that a male king was selected, but the people would not obey him and warfare broke out again among the tribal groups. Order was restored only when a thirteen-year-old girl named Iyo, a relative of Pimiko, was placed on the throne. Overall, the Wei Chih's account seems to reflect the earlier Austroasian pattern of a female shaman chieftain served by a male attendant or oracle diviner. It likewise reflects the power of the competing tribes to disrupt the system, which is only restored when a female shaman figure is installed as ruler. Neither Pimiko nor Iyo appear to exercise coercive power in their own right, and they are therefore unable to mount a military threat to any of the tribes, but their presence on the throne provides the means to persuade the competing parties to give up their conflicts. In this case, power is exercised not through armed coercion but through persuasion by a central leader who is unable to exercise independent armed force.

The portrayal of Amaterasu's authority in the mythological accounts therefore appears to reflect the sociopolitical realities of prehistoric Japan. Amaterasu herself was unable to exercise coercive force herself to bring order to the land when Susa-no-o engaged in all of his destructive pranks. It was the council of *kami* who exercised such force by banishing Susa-no-o and imposing fines and other restrictions on him. Nevertheless, the presence of Amaterasu was essential to the institutions of order in the land. For that reason, the council of *kami* had to persuade her to

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22. See Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, 4–6. On the name Pimiko as a Chinese rendering of Himeko, see Tsunoda's comments on the "Hou Han Shu," or "History of the Later Han Dynasty," in Tsunoda and Goodrich, *Japan in Chinese Dynastic Histories*, 5–6 n. 15. She is sometimes also identified with the legendary empress Jingo, a female shaman figure who served as co-regent with her husband, Chuai, and ruled after his death during the years 200–269 CE. For discussion, see Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, 21–22; Reischauer and Fairbank, *East Asia*, 468; Okazaki Tahashi, "Japan and the Continent," in Brown, *Cambridge History* of Japan 1:286–97; Takeshi, "Early Kami Worship," 333–34, 336.

manifest her presence in the world and thereby to ensure natural (and social) order. Likewise, prehistoric Japanese society appears to employ a model of rule that placed a female shaman figure on the throne.[23] Like the portrayal of Amaterasu in the mythological tradition, she was unable to exercise coercive power on her own; such power was controlled by the various tribal groups who agreed to her rule. Nevertheless, she was an essential figure to creating order and stability among the tribes, not only because she represented the divine realm through her shamanistic rule, but because her lack of coercive power presented no threat to the tribes and enabled them to look to her as the stable political center while presumably pursuing their individual interests through negotiation with other tribes under authority. Altogether, this model is one of weak central kingship, insofar as the ruler did not exercise independent coercive or military power, that enabled the more powerful tribal groups to work together within a single system.

4. The Model of Israelite Kingship in Biblical Literature

The above discussion of the origins and exercise of kingship in Japan provides a useful perspective for understanding the origins and exercise of kingship in Israel, insofar as both cultures present a model of a weak central kingship that functions in relation to more powerful tribes or clans within a larger federation. Overall, it points to the institution of a weak centralized kingship as a means intended to hold competing tribes or clans together in a single federation without any one group exercising excessive power by seizing the throne itself. In practice, however, it demonstrates that larger clans or tribal groups are able to manipulate the system to serve their own interests by marrying into the royal tribe or allying with it to provide coercive power. In such cases, the advantage of such a close relationship to the royal line enabled Japanese clans, such as the Soga, Fujiwara, Ashikaga, and Tokugawa, to dominate the royal line or relegate it to a ceremonial role, and thereby exercise royal authority without seizing the throne itself.

In the case of ancient Israel/Judah, a somewhat analogous situation seems to apply, in that a number of more powerful tribes are organized around a weak central monarchy in the tribe of Benjamin. The issue is

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23. See Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, 19–22.

somewhat clouded, however, by the nature of the source material in the Hebrew Bible, most of which was written in Judah in the aftermath of the collapse not only of the original Benjaminite system but of the northern Israelite and Judean monarchies as well. Overall, the literature portrays a decided Judean propagandistic perspective that emphasizes the interests of the ruling house of David.[24] Nevertheless, the narratives point to the federated nature of David's kingship and weaknesses within that federation that led ultimately to the collapse of David's united monarchy. Furthermore, the Judean/Davidic attempts to discredit the Benjaminite and northern Israelite or Ephraimite monarchies in the narratives of the Deuteronomistic History point to the originally federated nature of Israelite kingship, in which the larger competing tribes of Ephraim and Judah were held in check by a weak central Benjaminite monarchy.

Judean attempts to discredit the monarchies of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the Deuteronomistic History are relatively well known. As Frank Moore Cross and others have demonstrated, the books of Kings deliberately promote the institution of an ideal Davidic kingship, represented by such figures as David, Hezekiah, and Josiah, in contrast to the northern kings, all of whom are condemned as following in the evil of Jeroboam, the first king of the northern Israelite state.[25] The portrayal of Jeroboam as an idolater who erects the golden calves at the sanctuaries of Bethel and Dan is clearly ideologically charged in that the golden calves were apparently intended to serve as nothing more than mounts or thrones for the invisible YHWH, analogous to the role of the ark of the covenant in the Jerusalem temple.[26] Such a function was well-known in the various cultures of the ancient Near East, which commonly depicted their gods as mounted on thrones, lions, bulls, or other figures. The basic reason for the polemic is not northern Israel's idolatry but its rejection of the house of David and the Jerusalem temple (see 1 Kgs 12:26–33).

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24. On the role of propaganda in biblical literature and the ancient Near East, see Mario Liverani, "Propaganda," *ABD* 5:474–77.

25. See Frank M. Cross Jr., "The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History," in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274–89. See also his study "The Ideologies of Kingship in the Era of the Empire: Conditional and Eternal Degree," in *Canaanite Myth*, 219–73. For an overview of research on the DtrH, see Steven L. McKenzie, "Deuteornomistic History," *ABD* 2:160–68.

26. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 73 n. 117.

The polemics of the Deuteronomistic History against the northern monarchies reflect the failure of Judah and the Davidic dynasty to maintain their hold over the northern tribes. In this regard, Alt's contention that David's kingship was a federation between Judah and the northern tribes is very much to the point.[27] Prior to David's assumption of kingship over all Israel, he was king of the tribe of Judah alone and ruled from Hebron (see 2 Sam 2–5). During this period, he was formally a Philistine vassal and engaged in intermittent warfare against the northern tribes of Israel ruled by Saul's son Ish-Bosheth or Ish-Baal (see 1 Sam 27, 29).[28] Following the assassination of Ish-Baal and Israel's request that David become their king as well, David was faced with a major political problem: the location of his capital. If he continued to rule from Judah, he would likely lose his newfound support in Israel, and if he moved his capital to Israel, he would likely alienate Judah. The solution, as articulated by Alt, was to establish a neutral capital that belonged neither to Israel nor to Judah. The Jebusite city of Jerusalem served this purpose admirably. Located on the border between the northern tribes of Israel and the southern tribe of Judah, it belonged neither to Israel nor to Judah. The conquest of the city by David's personal guard commanded by Joab rather than by troops from Israel or Judah ensured its neutral status as the "city of David." The capitulation of the city without a major battle ensured that its Jebusite population, aligned neither with Israel nor with Judah, would continue to provide a neutral site for David's rule over a federation including the northern tribes of Israel, the southern tribe of Judah, and the city of Jerusalem, which David turned into the religious and political capital of the whole.

In such a system, the interests of Judah and the northern tribes would obviously compete, but David's neutral stance would ensure a relatively workable system. The collapse of the system following the death of Solomon may be attributed to the fact that Solomon did not serve as a neutral ruler. His division of the kingdom into twelve administrative districts, each of which was responsible for the support of the royal court for one month of the year, placed a disproportionate share of the tax burden on the northern tribes (1 Kgs 4). Furthermore, his imposition of the corvée

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27. Albrecht Alt, "The Monarchy in the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah," in *Essays on Old Testament History*, 311–35.

28. The traditions in 2 Samuel refer to Saul's son as Ish-Bosheth (*Man of Shame*), apparently a polemical reference to his true name, Ish-Baal or Esh-Baal ("Man of Baal"; 1 Chr 8:33, 9:39).

to build his palace and the temple together with his ceding of twenty cities to Hiram king of Tyre in order to pay for these projects likewise placed a greater burden on the northern tribes (1 Kgs 5, 9:10–22).[29] The northern tribes revolted because Solomon did not serve as an impartial rule with the federation of Israel and Judah.

Davidic/Judean polemics against the house of Saul are also well documented and point to the fact that David essentially took over the structure of Saul's monarchy in instituting his own rule. The narratives in the books of Samuel contain the so-called History of David's Rise or the Apology of David, which justifies the rise of Davidic kingship in Judah over against that of Saul in Benjamin.[30] Overall, Saul is portrayed as an abject failure who suffered from an evil spirit or severe depression (1 Sam 16:14–23) and was unable to defeat the Philistines or to rally the people of Israel to his side. This is in striking contrast to David, who met with success at every turn and enjoyed the favor of YHWH, and who won the support of all Israel, including Jonathan, Saul's son and apparent successor, and Michal, Saul's daughter, who was married to David (1 Sam 17–27). Saul's various sins, such as his abuse of office in taking over priestly roles and his failure to kill the Amalekite Agag, prompted even the prophet Samuel to abandon Saul and secretly to anoint David as king (1 Sam 13–16). But these polemics apparently mask a coup d'état on the part of David against the ruling house of Saul. As noted above, David fought Saul's son and successor, Ish-Bosheth or Ish-Baal, and assumed kingship over all Israel following Ish-Baal's assassination. Other sons of Saul were held in check, such as the cripple Mephibosheth, who ate at the king's table (2 Sam 9), or killed, such as the seven sons of Saul who were hanged for their crimes against the Gibeonites (2 Sam 21). The role of Michal is especially indicative. David's marriage to the daughter of Saul provided him with the legitimacy to hold the throne as a son-in-law of Saul, but his refusal to have relations with her ensured that she would never produce children who might challenge his right to the throne (2 Sam 6).

From these factors, it becomes clear that David essentially took control of Saul's dynasty and ruled Israel as the legitimate successor of Saul by virtue of his marriage to Michal and the death or ineffectiveness of Saul's

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29. See Sweeney, "Critique of Solomon."

30. Jakob H. Grønbæk, *Die Geschichte von Aufstieg Davids (1. Sam. 15–2. Sam. 5): Tradition und Komposition*, ATD 10 (Copenhagen: Munksgard, 1971); P. Kyle McCarter, "The Apology of David," *JBL* 90 (1980): 489–504.

sons. It also points to the likelihood that David's kingdom employed the same political structure as that of Saul, that is, a federation of larger tribes in which a small royal entity stood at the center. This role is evident in the narratives concerning Saul's calling the tribes to war when Jabesh-Gilead was attacked by the Ammonites by cutting up his oxen into twelve pieces and by sending a piece to each tribe as a summons to war (1 Sam 11). The kingdom did not function as a single entity but as a federation of twelve units, although the muster of troops indicates a division between Israel and Judah alone (1 Sam 11:8). In other cases, he seems to have operated on a regional basis. When he fought the Philistines at Michmash in the northern territories, he summoned men from Israel (1 Sam 13–14). When he fought the Amalekites at Telaim near the Negev, he chose men from Judah (1 Sam 15). Traditions concerning Saul's pursuit of David into the wilderness of Maon (1 Sam 23:24–29), Ein Gedi (1 Sam 24), and Ziph (1 Sam 23:15–24; 26) likewise presuppose his authority in Judah, and his final battle at Mount Gilboa in the vicinity of Beth Shean presupposes his authority in Israel (1 Sam 31).

When David became king of all Israel, however, the tribe of Benjamin no longer served as the weak center of the kingdom; the city of Jerusalem filled this role instead. The public procession in which the ark of the covenant, the primary religious symbol of pre-Davidic Israel, was transferred from Kiriath Jearim in the Benjaminite territory to Jerusalem would make this point very clear, and publicly proclaim David as Saul's (and Ish-Baal's) legitimate successor over the federated kingdom of Israel and Judah (2 Sam 6). Given David's Judean background, it would also indicate that Judah, through David, had succeeded in taking control of the Benjaminite/Saulide ruling house and thereby shifting the balance of power in the federation away from its major competitor, Ephraim. Ephraim's interests in asserting power within the federation are evident in the history of pre-monarchic Israel as presented in the book of Judges. The tribe of Ephraim is frequently presented as attempting to assert its influence over smaller tries. In Judg 8:1–3, Ephraim questions the independent actions of Gideon of Manasseh, asserting their leading role in countering any outside threat to the tribes. In Judg 12, a similar situation arises with Jephthah of Gilead, who is forced to fight against Ephraim when they attack him in an attempt to assert their authority. Likewise, the war against Benjamin in Judg 20 is organized and conducted from Bethel, site of the main Ephraimite sanctuary, and provides the means by which Benjamin is brought under the control of the other tribes.

The presentation of Ephraim in this fashion indicates Judean interests at work that attempt to present Ephraim as a threat within the tribes due to its efforts to extend its power. That the book of Judges likewise polemicizes against Saul by identifying his city Gibeah as the site where the Levite's concubine was raped and murdered (Judg 19–21) indicates Judean interests in undermining his credibility. This is accomplished by tying in motifs from narratives concerning the visits of two angels to Lot's house in Gen 19, when the men of Sodom tried to rape the visitors, and the narrative concerning Saul's deliverance of Jabesh Gilead (1 Sam 11), in which Saul summoned the tribes to war by cutting his oxen into twelve pieces, just as the concubine's body was cut into twelve pieces to summon the tribes to war against Benjamin.

The polemics against both Ephraim and Benjamin in these narratives indicate Judean attempts to justify their appropriation of kingship. Ephraim, the major competitor of Judah within the system, was a threat to the smaller tribes. Benjamin, the relatively small and weak tribe that emerged as the ruling center of the coalition, was corrupt and therefore unworthy of kingship.[31] The narratives in Judges, Samuel, and Kings present a scenario in which David was able to take control of the federated kingdom formerly ruled by the Benjaminite house of Saul. In such a case, the Saulide house appears to have served as a weak central monarchy that attempted to balance or to provide a check on the competing interests of

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31. On the polemical character of the Judges narrative, see Moshe Weinfeld, "Judges 1.1–2.5: The Conquest under the Leadership of the House of Judah," in *Understanding the Prophets*, ed. A. Graeme Auld, JSOTSup 152 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 188–400, who demonstrates that Judg 1:1–2:5 was composed to highlight the role of Judah in the conquest of Canaan and the failure of Benjamin. Note also that the account of the Judean judge Othniel (Judg 3:7–11) is the only account of a judge that portrays a fully successful return of the people to YHWH. In the other accounts of the Judges, all of whom are from the northern tribes, problems emerge, such as the conflicts among the tribes (Judg 4–5, Deborah; Judg 6–9, Gideon; Judg 10–12, Jephthah; Judg 19–21, war with Benjamin) or Canaanite/idolatrous religious practices (Judg 6–9, Gideon/Jerubaal's ephod; Judg 10–12, the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter; Judg 13–16, Samson's marriage to a Philistine woman; Judg 17–18, the creation of an idolatrous sanctuary at Dan). The culmination of the Judges cycle is the deterioration of the unity of the tribes of Israel and the repeated notices that there was no king in Israel (Judg 18:1, 19:1, 21:25). Judah represents a force for order in the book of Judges, in contrast to the northern tribes, who are unable to govern themselves. By this means, the book of Judges presents a scenario which prepares the way for the failure of Saul and the eventual rise of the Judean monarch David.

the more powerful tribes Judah and Ephraim. David succeeded Saul by marrying into the Saulide house and preventing Saul's descendants from challenging his authority. In assuming Saul's kingship, he apparently attempted to institute the same system employed by the Saulide house, but transferred the center from Benjamin to Jerusalem. Ultimately, the federation failed. David's move shifted the balance of power toward Judah, and when Solomon proved unable to assure the interests of the northern tribes centered on Ephraim, the northern tribes revolted, leaving the house of David to rule only the tribe of Judah.

4. Conclusion

Altogether, the model of the origins and constitution of kingship in Japan provides a model for understanding the origins and functions of kingship in ancient Israel. Just as the Yamato house was a weak central monarchy at the center of a federation of constituted by the Japanese *uji* or tribal/clan groups, so Benjamin served as the royal tribe at the center of an Israelite tribal federation. Likewise, just as the Yamato house depended on stronger tribal groups, such as the Soga or Fujiwara, to exercise coercive power, so Saul depended on the cooperation of the Israelite tribes to rule and to fend off outside threats. Although both systems were apparently intended to provide a check on the power of the stronger tribes within the respective federations, they both failed, but for different reasons. The Japanese system failed because stronger tribes were able to gain control of the Yamato house by marrying into the imperial house and using their resulting influence to control the decisions of the monarchy, or they were able to bypass the Yamato house in later periods by relegating it to ceremonial significance. The Israelite system failed when David married into the Saulide house and ultimately gained control of the monarchy, thereby giving Judah greater power within the system. In any case, the Japanese model provides a valuable perspective for understanding the character of early Israelite kingship and the course of its subsequent history.

8

Genesis in the Context of Jewish Thought

1. Introduction

Genesis, or *Bərē'šît*, "in (the) beginning of," as it is known in Hebrew, is the foundational text of the Torah ("Instruction"), the Bible, and Jewish tradition as a whole.[1] Although Genesis does not encompass the entirety of Jewish thought, its preoccupation with G-d, creation, human beings, Israel's ancestors, and the covenant between G-d and Israel makes Genesis a quintessentially important text that informs much of Jewish life, tradition, and thinking. Genesis is not presented as a systematic account of Jewish philosophy or theology. Instead, it appears as a narrative account of Judaism's understanding of creation and the origins of the Jewish people.

Genesis takes up G-d's creation of the world at large (Gen 1:1–2:3), the origins and early history of human beings (Gen 2:4–11:9), and the history of the ancestors of Israel (Gen 11:10–50:26), including Abraham and Sarah (Gen 11:27–25:11); Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 21–22; 24; 26; 27); Jacob, his wives, Leah and Rachel, and their handmaidens, Bilhah and Zilpah (Gen 25:19–35:29); and the twelve sons of Jacob, whose descendants formed the

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1. For Jewish commentary on Genesis, see esp. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Andrea L. Weiss, eds., *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* (New York: Union of Reform Judaism Press, 2008); Jon D. Levenson, "Genesis," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 8–101; W. Gunther Plaut and David E. S. Stein, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (New York: Union of Reform Judaism Press, 2005); Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989); Nossom Scherman, *The Chumash: The Stone Edition* (Brooklyn: Mesorah, 1993); and Meir Zlotowitz, *Bereishis*, 2 vols. (Brooklyn: Mesorah, 1986).

twelve tribes of Israel (Gen 37:2–50:26). Genesis also takes up figures such as Ishmael (Gen 25:12–18) and Esau (Gen 36:1–37:1), but these figures receive only minimal notice, as their descendants branch off from the people of Israel to form foreign nations. Genesis thereby stands as the introduction to the Torah narrative, which continues in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy with Israel's exodus from Egyptian slavery (Exod 1–15), the revelation of YHWH's torah at Mount Sinai (Exod 19–Num 10), the years of wandering through the wilderness on the way to the promised land of Israel (Exod 16–18, Num 11–36), and Moses's last speeches to the people as they prepare to take possession of the land (Deuteronomy).

Because of the central role that the Torah plays in Jewish life and thought, portions of the Torah are read as the central feature of Shabbat, weekday, and holiday worship service.[2] The current annual cycle for reading the Torah originated in the Babylonia diaspora at some point following the composition of the Mishnah, and it has been in use for well over a millennium and a half. As the first book of the Torah, Genesis is divided into twelve parashiyot, or weekly Shabbat portions of roughly equal length. Each parashah is accompanied by a prophetic or haftarah ("completion") portion that aids in interpreting the Torah text. The liturgical reading of the Torah thereby serves as a means of divine revelation insofar as every Jew has the opportunity to encounter and study the text of the Torah in the context of Jewish worship. As an expression of the revelation of divine instruction to Judaism, the liturgical reading of the Torah becomes the basis for applying the divine teachings to daily Jewish life.

The discussion that follows proceeds first with consideration of the literary structure of Genesis within the context of the Torah as a whole, and then continues with consideration of creation, human origins, Abraham and Sarah, Jacob, Rachel, and Leah, and Joseph and his brothers. Each segment indicates important concerns that become the subjects of reflection in Jewish thought.

2. The Literary Structure and Worldview of Genesis

Modern literary critical research has identified the formula ʾēlleh tôlədôt, "these are the generations of," as a key organizing feature that points to

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2. Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993).

the literary structure and theological worldview of Genesis in particular and the Torah at large.[3] The term *tôlǝdâ*, "generation," plural *tôlǝdôt*, "generations," is derived from the Hebrew verb root *yld*, "to give birth," and therefore refers to the successive generations of human beings that were born during the course of early human history.

The first instance of the formula appears in Gen 2:4, "these are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created," which introduces the following account of human origins with the creation of Adam and Eve in Gen 2:4–4:26. The formula appears subsequently in Gen 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1; and 37:2, where in each instance it signals progressive stages in the history of humanity and Israel, from "the generations of Adam" in Gen 5:1 through "the generations of Jacob" in Gen 37:2.

Scholars initially identified this pattern as a feature of Genesis alone, but subsequent research points to the significance of the formula in Num 3:1, "and these are the generations of Aaron and Moses on the day that YHWH spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai," as a text that deliberately continues the pattern initiated in Genesis.[4] Although the narratives concerning the exodus from Egypt, the revelation of Torah at Mount Sinai, the wilderness period, and Moses's last speeches to Israel in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are structurally organized according to a sequence of itinerary formulas that trace Israel's journey from Egyptian bondage to the borders of the promised land of Israel, the formula *ʾēlleh tôlǝdôt* in Num 3:1 serves as a redactional device that ties these narratives together with those of Genesis. The sequence of history in the final form of the Torah narrative therefore culminates with Moses and Aaron, the two Levitical or priestly leaders of Israel at the time of the revelation of Torah at Mount Sinai. Moses is the leader of Israel in the exodus and wilderness period, through whom G-d's Torah was revealed to Israel at Mount Sinai. His older brother Aaron is the founder of the priestly line of Israel, through which torah continued to be revealed and taught to the people in the monarchic and Second Temple periods. Because the *ʾēlleh tôlǝdôt* formula plays the dominant role in the literary structure of the Torah, the accounts of the exodus and Sinai revelation in Exod 1:1–Num

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3. Frank M. Cross Jr., "The Priestly Work," in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 293–325; cf. Sweeney, *Tanak*.

4. Matthew Thomas, "These Are the Generations: Identity, Promise, and the Toledoth Formulae" (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2006).

2:34 are thereby subsumed under the account of twelve tribes of Israel in Gen 37:2–50:29 so that the entirety of Gen 37:2–Num 2:34 becomes the account of the history of the twelve tribes of Israel. The ʾēlleh tôlədôt formula in Num 3:1 then introduces the account of the history of Israel under the guidance of the Levites, Moses and Aaron, then follows in Num 3:1–Deut 34:12.

The following diagram of the formal literary structure of the Torah indicates the key role played by the ʾēlleh tôlədôt formula in presenting the synchronic literary structure of the Genesis narratives within the larger context of the Torah as well as the secondary role played by the itinerary formula in Exodus–Deuteronomy:

<div align="center">

Synchronic Literary Structure of the Torah:
History of Creation/Formation of People Israel

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I.	Creation of heaven and earth	Gen 1:1–2:3
II.	Human origins	Gen 2:4–4:26
III.	Human development/problems	Gen 5:1–6:8
IV.	Noah and the flood	Gen 6:9–9:29
V.	Spread of humans over the earth	Gen 10:1–11:9
VI.	History of the Semites	Gen 11:10–26
VII.	History of Abraham (Isaac)	Gen 11:27-25:11
VIII.	History of Ishmael	Gen 25:12–18
IX.	History of Jacob (Isaac)	Gen 25:19–35:29
X.	History of Esau	Gen 36:1–37:1
XI.	History of the twelve tribes of Israel	Gen 37:2–Num 2:34
	A. Joseph and his brothers in Egypt	Gen 37:2–50:26
	B. Deliverance from Egyptian bondage: Rameses	Exod 1:1–12:36
	C. From Rameses to Sukkot: consecration of firstborn	Exod 12:37–13:19
	D. From Sukkot to Etam: pillar of fire and cloud	Exod 13:20–22
	E. From Etam to the sea (Pihahirot/Baal Zephon): deliverance at sea	Exod 14:1–15:21
	F. From Reed Sea to wilderness of Shur/Elim: water in wilderness	Exod 15:22–27
	G. From Elim to wilderness of Sin: quails and manna	Exod 16:1–36
	H. From Sin to Rephidim: Amalek and Jethro	Exod 17:1–18:27
	I. From Rephidim to Sinai: revelation of torah	Exod 19:1–Num 10:10

This diagram indicates that the Genesis narratives serve as a prelude to those concerned with the exodus from Egypt, the revelation of torah at Sinai, the wilderness period, and Moses's repetition of the torah in Deuteronomy immediately prior to Israel's entry into the promised land. Genesis thereby serves as a means to establish Jewish identity. As the descendants of Abraham and Sarah, who first established the covenant with YHWH, Israel emerges as a distinct and holy people among the nations of the world to whom YHWH's torah is revealed. YHWH's torah is designed to provide the basis for a just and holy national life in the land of Israel in which Israel may serve as partners with G-d in sanctifying and complet-ing creation and by which Israel might serve as a model to the nations of the world. By the same token, Israel or Judaism has obligations to G-d and to the world at large to live in accordance with divine torah to further the task of sanctifying and completing creation by establishing a just and holy human society. Such a conceptualization forms the basis of the system of

Jewish halakah, Jewish law and practice, which comes to expression in the Talmudic and subsequent rabbinic tradition to develop the teachings of the Torah so that they might be applied to the entirety of Jewish life.

3. Creation

The initial narrative concerning creation in Gen 1:1–2:3 points to a number of important issues in Jewish thought, including the fundamental concept of creation as an act of overcoming chaos and establishing order in the world, the sanctity of all creation, the role of speech as creative act, and the interrelationship between G-d and human beings.

Interpreters are accustomed to read the first statement of the creation account in Gen 1:1 as a statement of *creatio ex nihilo*, or "creation out of nothing," which presupposes that nothing existed prior to G-d's creation of the world.[5] In English, Gen 1:1–2 would then read, "In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was formless and void." But such a statement conflicts with other depictions of creation in the Bible, for example, Job 38, Ps 74, and Isa 51, which indicate that G-d overcame a chaos monster as part of the process of creation in which a pre-existing world of chaos was brought into order. Close analysis by medieval biblical commentator Rashi (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, 1040–1105) of the initial words of Gen 1:1, *bərēʾšît bārāʾ ʾlhym*, indicate that they cannot be read as "in the beginning G-d created," because the term *bərēʾšît* is a construct form that lacks a definite article. The verb *bārāʾ* cannot be read as a perfect verb, but it must be rendered as an infinitive that forms a construct chain with the terms that precede and follow. Consequently, the verse must be read as, "In (the) beginning of G-d's creating the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless and void." The result is a statement in which the earth preexisted creation in a state of chaos that was put into order by G-d. G-d's act of creation then becomes a model for human action in the world, namely, the task of human beings modeled on G-d becomes one of overcoming chaos in the world and placing the world into order. This emerges as a fundamental foundation for halakah or Jewish law and practice, in which the task of the Jew is to act as a partner with G-d in the world to sanctify and complete creation by observing G-d's mitzvot (*miṣwôt*) or commandments. Although the former reading is known in

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5. See Levenson, *Creation and the Presence*.

Judaism, its model of divine power presents G-d as an absolute figure who appears to be less amenable to interaction with human beings or the world at large. Nevertheless, these two understandings of the initial statement of Genesis indicate the transcendent character of G-d both as an absolute power distant from creation and as an imminent power who is intimately engaged in the world of creation. In fact, both models of G-d are operative in Jewish thought.[6]

The model for overcoming chaos in the world of creation appears to influence the seven-day sequence of creation, which plays a significant role in indicating the sacred character of creation. G-d creates by calling into being the various aspects of creation over a six-day period and then rests on the seventh day. Creation thus emerges as a progressive revelation of elements of order and holiness in our world, that is, light, the heavens, earth and sea, day and night, living creatures and birds, and finally human beings. The culmination of this six-day sequence of creation in the Shabbat is a fundamental feature of the world of creation, in which Saturday, the seventh day, is sanctified as the holy day of rest. The Shabbat thereby serves as a means by which human beings become partners with G-d in completing and sanctifying creation. The seventh day might otherwise appear as any other, but observance of the Shabbat recognizes and establishes the holiness of the day—and thus of time in general—and serves as a means by which order, sanctity, and the recognition of the role of G-d in the world are then made known to and encountered by all.[7] Interpreters have noted the correlation between the language of Gen 2:1–3 concerning the completion of work on the Shabbat and that of Exod 40 concerning the completion of the wilderness tabernacle, which of course functions as a model for the holy temple in Judaism. In this respect, the creation narrative in Gen 1:1–2:3 anticipates the institution of the temple as the holy center of creation and the holy center of Israel in Jewish thought.[8] Indeed, the observance of halakah in

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6. E.g., Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William W. Hallo (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1985); Buber, *I and Thou*.

7. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1951).

8. See Michael Fishbane, "Genesis 1:1–2:4a: The Creation," in *Text and Texture: Selected Readings of Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 1–16; and Levenson, "Temple and the World."

Judaism is conceived as creating the temple within each individual as corollary to the institution of the holy temple in Jerusalem.

Although creation is portrayed as a seven-day sequence of work and sanctification, G-d's acts of creation actually comprise ten speech acts in which G-d speaks and elements of creation come into being (see Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29). Speech functions as the fundamental act of creation in Genesis. Insofar as speech is to a certain degree intangible, that is, words cannot be seen or defined in three-dimensional terms, and yet they are perceived and clearly have an impact on the world of creation, the power of speech motivates human beings to act and to create in the world. These ten "words" in Gen 1:1–2:3 point to divine speech as an epistemological factor in creation in which YHWH's instruction or torah constitutes the epistemological foundation of creation. Even within the Bible, Prov 8 points to the notion of divine wisdom, here portrayed as an abstract principle personified as a woman and the first of G-d's creations, as the epistemological foundation of the world. Jewish mystical works, such as Sefer Yetzirah or the Book of Creation, then examine the phenomenon of divine speech and the characteristics of the Hebrew letters by which G-d's words are formed in order to articulate an understanding of G-d's interrelationship with the world.[9] G-d's ten speech acts thereby become the basis by which G-d's ten fundamental qualities or emanations then inform or infuse all of creation. Human beings share the capacity of speech with G-d, and they therefore have an obligation to recognize that they serve as a crucial means by which the ten divine emanations are manifested in the world.

The above understandings of divine and human speech point to a fundamental aspect of the account of creation in Gen 1:1–2:3, namely, human beings are created in the image of G-d. Genesis 1:27 indicates that there is already some gender ambiguity in the creation of human beings, insofar as it first states that G-d created "the human being," Hebrew *hāʾādām*, as a single entity, but then immediately follows with a statement that G-d created "them" as "male and female." Such a statement is traditionally understood as an indication that human beings are incomplete until they recreate the union of the primal human being, that is, through human union and procreation, human beings act like G-d in

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9. A. Peter Hayman, *Sefer Yesira: Edition, Translation, and Text-Critical Commentary*, TSAJ 104 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

creating human life. Such an act is sacred, however, insofar as it entails not only the sexual act of reproduction but also the educational act of raising a child with proper instruction and guidance to become a full human being, ready to accept one's own responsibilities for completing and sanctifying the world of creation. Consequently, G-d's statement in Gen 1:28, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth," becomes the first commandment of Jewish tradition that is incumbent on all Jewish men. Furthermore, the following command that humans should "master" the earth and "exercise dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, and all the living things that creep on earth" entails a human responsibility to sustain creation as well.

But the construction of the human being as both male and female in Gen 1:26–29 has another dimension, namely, that the "image," Hebrew *ṣelem*, of G-d in which the primal human being is created is in fact a combination of both male and female (Gen. Rab. 8:1; Zohar 134b). In other words, just as the primal human being is a combination of male and female, so is G-d. Such a construction of the divine is apparent in the kabbalistic literature that defines G-d's ten qualities to balance the male and female aspects of G-d. It is on the basis of these considerations that Gen 1:31 emphasizes that the creation of human beings was "very good." In other words, human beings are conceived as partners with G-d in creation who are tasked with the sustenance, completion, and sanctification of creation at large.

4. Human Beings

The next four segments of Genesis, Gen 2:4–4:26, 5:1–6:8, 6:9–9:29, and 10:1–11:9, each take up different aspects of the conceptualization of human beings.

Genesis 2:4–4:26 takes up the issue of human origins. This passage is well-known in modern critical scholarship as the second account of the creation of human beings, Eve's interaction with the snake in the garden of Eden leading to the expulsion of Adam and Eve, and Cain's murder of Abel. Each of these passages raises issues addressed in subsequent Jewish thought.

The account of human creation in Gen 2:4–24 provides important foundations for the conceptualization of human beings in Judaism. At the most fundamental level, G-d's creation of the human being is accomplished when G-d blows "the soul of life," Hebrew *nišmat ḥayyîm*, into the human's nostrils. The Hebrew term *nəšāmâ* then becomes the term for "soul" in

rabbinic discourse. Furthermore, the term *hāʾādām* is often translated as "Adam," but the use of the definite article indicates that it is not a proper name. The term should be understood as "the human," and once again we see a figure that has not yet been differentiated into two gendered beings. Interpreters have noted that the process of creating Eve calls for imposing a deep sleep on the human and then removing a *ṣelaʿ* from him. Although this term is often understood to be a "rib," the term *ṣelaʿ* actually means "side," which has been understood in rabbinic and kabbalistic circles to indicate that the creation of Eve was in fact a gender differentiation of the primal human being into a male, Adam, and a female, Eve, which builds on the above-noted statement in Gen 1:26 that G-d had created a human being, identified concurrently as a single androgynous human being and as two gendered figures.

The two references to the creation of male and female also provide the basis for the rabbinic legends concerning Adam's first wife, Lilith, who is linked to Gen 1:26.[10] Because the wording of this verse indicates a simultaneously produced male and female figure, Lilith is said to have demanded equality with Adam, which Adam and G-d found intolerable. As a result, Lilith was expelled from the presence of Adam and G-d to become a demon figure known for giving birth to the myriads of demon figures in Jewish folklore and for causing the deaths of infants. Lilith, however, has been rehabilitated in Jewish feminism as the model woman who refused to submit to Adam's authority.[11] The second creation of a female in Gen 2:21–24 then produced Eve, who was considered subordinate to Adam because he was created first. Our observations concerning the non-gendered character of the primal human in this passage undermine such an interpretation, however, and modern interpreters have noticed that the phrase employed to describe her in Gen 2:18, *ʿēzer kənegdô*, does not mean "a helper fit for him," as it is so frequently translated. Instead, the term *ʿēzer* is frequently employed to describe G-d, and the term *kənegdô* means "over against him," indicating her status as a power figure equal to Adam.[12]

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10. For discussion of Lilith, see esp. Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990).

11. E.g., Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990).

12. See Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 78–86, esp. 84–85.

Our passage also serves as an important basis for the field of Jewish ethics. Rabbinic sage Akiva ben Joseph employed a system of hermeneutics that viewed every feature of the text of the Torah, no matter how seemingly insignificant, as a source for understanding deeper meaning within the Torah text. One of his parade examples was the development of the rabbinic notion of human free will, expressed through the concepts *yeṣer haṭṭôb*, "the inclination for good," and *yeṣer hārāʿ*, "the inclination for evil," that are found within every human being, prompting humans to choose between them in making moral decisions.[13] Akiva's development of these concepts depends on the subtle differences in rendering the verb *wayyîṣer*, indicating the creation of the human being in Gen 2:7 and the verb *wayyiṣer*, indicating the creation of animals in Gen 2:19 (see b. Ber. 61a). The difference between the two verbs is simply orthographic, that is, the rendition in verse 7 is written with a long i-class vowel, *hireq*, which requires an extra consonant, *yod*, whereas the rendition in verse 19 is written with a short *hireq*, which requires no extra *yod*. Akiva interpreted the extra *yod* in the verbal form of verse 7 to indicate that human beings were created with something extra, deriving the terms *yeṣer haṭṭôb* and *yeṣer hārāʿ* from the verb root, *yṣr*, "to create, form," which appears in two verbal forms of verses 7 and 19. The notion of human free will is an essential feature of Jewish moral philosophy or ethics, and it is developed further in the works of Saadia Gaon, Moses Maimonides, and others.[14]

The dual references to human creation also provide the basis for Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's discussion of the dual nature of the human being in modern Jewish thought.[15] Soloveitchik argues that the first instance in Gen 1:26 indicates the creation of Adam I, "the majestic man," who employs his mind and efforts to master or utilize his environment, whereas the second instance in Gen 2:4–24 indicates Adam II, "the covenantal man," who submits to G-d as his master and works to "till" or "sustain" the universe as holy in keeping with the human mandate from G-d. This differentiation in human types becomes the basis for understanding the interrelationship

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13. Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979), 1:471–83.

14. Saadia Gaon, "Sefer Emunot ve-Deot, Treatise 4," in *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trans. Samuel Rosenblatt, YJS 1 (New Haven; Yale University Press, 1948), 180–204; Moses ben Maimon, *Guide for the Perplexed*, 2nd ed., ed. and trans. Michael Friedländer (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), 3.17, pp. 282–88.

15. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "The Lonely Man of Faith," *Tradition* 7 (1965): 56.

between secular life and thought on the one hand and halakic life and thought on the other.

Eve's encounter with the snake in the garden of Eden in Gen 3:1–24 also raises important issues concerning the nature of human beings. Many follow the Genesis account in accusing Eve of sin for eating the forbidden fruit and feeding it to her "husband with her" (v. 6). Such accusations are based on the clear divine instruction in Gen 2:16–17 in which G-d forbade the human to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil lest the human die. One may note that Eve was not yet created, and so there is a question as to whether she even knew of the prohibition, but the fact that Adam and Eve were both created from the primal human being indicates that she should have known and not been persuaded by the snake's arguments. One may also ask about the role of Adam. If he was present "with her," as indicated in verse 6, why did he not take the responsibility to prevent the eating of the fruit? A further question pertains to the claim that Adam and Eve will die as a result of eating the fruit. The denial of this claim was part of the snake's argument, although the text indicates that Adam and Eve would become mortal when they were expelled from the garden of Eden. Nevertheless, the text never makes it clear that they had been immortal in the garden. In any case, the text serves as an illustration of human free will among the earliest human beings, that is, they made their choices to disobey G-d's instruction and they were punished for it. There is a question of theodicy in G-d's concern that the human might become like G-d in learning to distinguish good and evil. Why did G-d attempt to prevent humans from gaining knowledge of good and evil? In fact, Eve gives human beings this fundamental capacity, which likewise provides foundations for human moral thought and action.

Finally, the narrative in Gen 4:1–26 concerning Cain's murder of his brother Abel raises further issues. The introduction of murder raises a fundamental problem in human life. The narrative makes it clear that the shedding of human blood is an unacceptable disruption of the sanctity and order of creation, but it also points to a question of human responsibility. When G-d asks Cain where his brother Abel might be following the murder, Cain's response, "Am I my brother's keeper?" in verse 9 functions as a rhetorical question that answers itself. Of course, he is responsible for his brother, and his punishment underscores that responsibility.

The narrative in Gen 5:1–6:8 concerning human development focuses on the spread of humans throughout the earth. We may note the issue created when divine beings, "the sons of G-d," here understood as angels,

mated with the daughters of human beings to produce the nephilim or giants in the world. The issue here is the blurring of boundaries between the heavenly and the earthly realms, or the sacred and profane. Such mixing of the divine and human realms is strictly prohibited in Judaism insofar as it points to a scenario in which human beings seek to become divine or in which G-d is conceived in human terms, thereby compromising G-d's holy and eternal character.

The portrayal of Noah and the flood in Gen 6:9–9:29 presents the flood as divine punishment for the moral issues of violence that arose among human beings in prior narratives. Noah, identified as a righteous man, is instructed by G-d to build an ark, gather his family and pairs of all the animals of the earth, and place them in the ark so that they survive G-d's flood. The narrative is a fundamental depiction of the reversal of creation in Gen 1:1–2:3 insofar as the water that inundates the earth reverses the separation of dry land and water that was the basis of creation. To a certain degree, the construction of the ark anticipates the construction of the Jerusalem temple in that both have upper windows for light, both are compartmentalized, both employ bitumen to seal the wood construction, both are constructed with three levels, and both play roles in saving humanity from destruction before the holy presence of G-d. Once the flood is over, the drying of the waters and the release of animals to populate the earth once again function as a new creation narrative as the earth is put back into order.

A key element in the narrative is the establishment of the divine covenant with humanity in Gen 9:1–17 never again to destroy the earth with a flood. The issue here is the human capacity to shed blood. In order to assuage the human capacity for violence, G-d grants human beings the right to eat animals for food, with the provision that the flesh of animals may not be eaten with its blood in it. Blood is the locus of life in Jewish thought, and it thereby conveys a degree of sanctity that must be respected. Consequently, animal offerings made at the altar of the temple must have the blood drained from the body in the sacrificial service. The prohibition of the eating of blood thereby becomes the first and fundamental element of the system of kashrut, the Jewish dietary laws that govern the eating of meat, beginning with the treatment of blood as the sacred locus of life.[16] By limiting the means by which human beings may eat meat, Genesis

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16. Jehuda Feliks and Harry Rabinowicz, "Dietary Laws," *EncJud* 6:26–45.

limits the means by which blood can be shed to satisfy the human capacity for violence. The illicit shedding of blood, whether human or animal, remains prohibited and will require a reckoning by G-d, that is, humans are held accountable for the shedding of blood as shed blood compromises the sanctity and integrity of creation.

Genesis 10:1–11:9 again takes up the spread of human beings throughout the world in the aftermath of the flood as Noah's sons become the ancestors of the world's major population, namely, Shem becomes the ancestor of the Semites in the Near East, Japhet becomes the ancestor of humans in Europe, and Ham becomes the ancestor of humans in Africa. At this point, all humans speak the same language, and the nations cooperate to build the tower of Babel so that they might ascend the heavens to prevent themselves from being scattered all over the world. What the people mean by such a statement is unclear; perhaps they intend to challenge G-d, but this is never stated. It is clear, however, that G-d objects to this action and confounds their languages to prevent their further cooperation and completion of the project. The basic issue appears to be the challenge of divine authority. Babel after all is the Hebrew name for the city of Babylon, which is built on the plain of Shinar. One the one hand, Babel thereby represents human authority and empire that in biblical tradition are considered as contrary to G-d. At the same time, it is difficult to understand why G-d objects to peaceful human cooperation, particularly when such ideals are articulated in texts such as Isa 2:2–4 and Mic 4:1–5, in which humans stream to Zion to learn G-d's torah. The difference lies in the purpose of the cooperation, suggesting that the intent to challenge G-d—much as the Babylonian Empire challenged divine order in the world by destroying Jerusalem and the temple—rather than to learn from divine instruction, is the basic concern of this narrative.

5. Abraham and Sarah

The next two segments of the Genesis narrative include the history of the Semites in Gen 11:10–26 and the history of Abraham in Gen 11:27–25:11. Genesis 11:10–26 focuses specifically on the descendants of Shem as a means to narrow the focus to Abraham within the larger context of humanity. Genesis 11:27–25:11, titled "and these are the generations of Terah," concentrates on Abraham (Abram) ben Terah, who, together with his wife, Sarah (Sarai), becomes the ancestor of Israel.

Two major issues for Jewish thought emerge in the Abraham narratives. The first is Abraham's covenant with YHWH, which defines the terms by which the people of Israel and G-d are bound together. The second is the question of YHWH's fidelity to that covenant, which in the aftermath of the Shoah or Holocaust has become an increasingly problematic question in modern Jewish thought.

The major texts that take up the question of covenant appear in Gen 12:1–9, 15:1–21, and 17:1–27, each of which states divine promises to Abraham, including the promise that his descendants will become a great nation, that G-d will grant them the land of Israel, and that Abraham's descendants will be obligated to adhere to YHWH and YHWH's expectations. Genesis 12:1–9 lays out the general parameters of YHWH's promises to Abraham, and Gen 15:1–21 and 17:1–27 take up the sealing of the covenant between the two parties.

Unfortunately, modern critical scholarship has often functioned as an impediment in reading these chapters as scholars have sought to identify the J, E, and P strata that have formed these narratives. Although identification of the compositional history of Genesis is a legitimate and important task, source-critical work often neglects the literary coherence and theological significance of the final form of these texts. Two fundamental issues stand out.

First, full understanding of the ratification of the covenant requires that these texts be read in relation to each other, not as separate elements of discrete historical sources.[17] Genesis 12:1–9 introduces the theme of YHWH's promise to Abraham. Genesis 15:1–21 portrays a covenant ceremony in which YHWH, symbolically represented by a flaming torch and smoking fire pot, passes between the pieces of sacrificial animals to ratify the covenant just as kings subject to Assyria would ratify their covenants or treaties with the Assyrian king.[18] In other words, YHWH signs the covenant in Gen 15. Genesis 17:1–27 portrays Abraham's ratification of the covenant through the ceremony of circumcision, known from ancient Egyptian practice as a means by which young priests were dedicated to holy service, which symbolizes the oath to adhere to YHWH

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17. For discussion, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "Form Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 58–89, repr. as ch. 2 in this volume.

18. Sarna, *Genesis*, 114–15.

and to observe YHWH's expectations. In other words, Abraham signs the covenant in Gen 17.[19] With both YHWH and Abraham as signatories, the covenant is ratified. Adherence to YHWH and the observance of YHWH's will provide important religious foundations for Jewish monotheism and the observance of halakah as a function of that adherence.

Second, YHWH's promise to Abraham includes not only a son and descendants, but the land of Israel as a central element as well. YHWH explicitly states in Gen 12:7, 15:18, and 17:8 variations of the formula "I will grant this land to your offspring." Genesis 17:15–22 makes sure to specify that YHWH's covenant with Abraham and the promise of the land of Israel includes his son by Sarah, Isaac, and his descendants, but it does not include his son by Hagar, Ishmael, and his descendants. Ishmael and his descendants will receive their own covenant with YHWH to become the ancestor of the Arab peoples and Islam in general so that Judaism and Islam have a relationship with each other due to their common ancestry from Abraham. But the promise of land to Isaac and his descendants marks an important distinction in Jewish thought that provides the religious foundations for modern Zionism as the political dimension of Judaism.[20]

But the question of YHWH's fidelity to the covenant also comes into play when one recognizes that Israel's loss of land is a factor in the composition of Genesis, insofar as much of this material is written in the aftermath of the fall of the Northern Kkingdom of Israel to Assyria in 722–721 BCE and the fall of Jerusalem and Judah to Babylon in 587–586 BCE.[21] To a large extent, the present form of the Abraham narratives is designed to examine critically YHWH's fidelity to the covenant in light of the question as to whether or not Abraham and Sarah will have a son to carry on the promises of many descendants, a land in which they will live, and an ongoing relationship with YHWH.

The Abraham narrative raises this question at the very outset. In identifying the line of Terah in Gen 11:27–32, the narrative makes sure to focus on Abram/Abraham as the primary character, but it also includes his wife, Sarai/Sarah, noting that she is barren in verse 30. The motif of Sarah's barrenness then becomes the leitmotif of the Abraham/Sarah narratives. Although the question of Sarah's barrenness is ultimately resolved,

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19. Sarna, *Genesis*, 125–26.
20. Orlinsky, "Biblical Concept of the Land."
21. Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, 23–41.

the narrative is constructed to highlight the tensions inherent in this question throughout.

The first four episodes in the Abraham/Sarah narrative are designed to portray Abraham as a righteous servant of G-d, whereas G-d's character comes into question. Genesis 12:1–9 portrays YHWH's grandiose promises to Abraham just as YHWH commands Abraham to travel to the land of Canaan so that these promises may be realized. Abraham obeys YHWH without question, but when he settles in Canaan, Abraham is faced with drought and starvation. Genesis 12:10–20 is the first example of the wife-sister motif, in which the patriarch claims that his wife is in fact his sister while dwelling in a foreign land to avoid the threats of death to the patriarch posed by foreigners who would take the wife by force.[22] Many interpreters condemn Abraham for claiming that Sarah is his sister and allowing her to be taken into Pharaoh's harem, but such condemnations ignore the mortal threats to both of them. In a patriarchal society, Abraham takes action that constitutes the ultimate humiliation for a man precisely because of his desperation at the situation in which G-d placed him. Abraham's actions nevertheless ensure that he and Sarah will live. Ultimately, G-d intervenes to inform Pharaoh of the truth concerning Sarah's identity, but readers must recall that this threat is entirely of YHWH's making. Genesis 13 shows Abraham's magnanimity. When Abraham's shepherds quarrel with those of his nephew Lot over pasturage rights, Abraham settles the issue by telling Lot to choose his pasturage and Abraham will pasture his flocks elsewhere. As the senior male in the extended family, Abraham has every right to take the choice pasturage, but he does not do so. Finally, in Gen 14, Abraham does not hesitate to rescue Lot when he is abducted by Mesopotamian raiders. Upon the successful release of the hostages, Abraham pays his tithe to El Elyon, G-d on High, at the sanctuary at Salem, later known as Jerusalem. But he nevertheless refuses to accept reward from the king of Sodom, thereby ensuring that he has no relationship with this evil city. Altogether, Abraham's character is upheld, but YHWH's is questionable.

The covenant texts in Gen 15, 16, and 17 highlight the question of YHWH's character. When YHWH promises Abraham that he will

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22. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Form Criticism: The Question of the Endangered Matriarchs in Genesis," in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen*, ed. Joel M. LeMon and Kent Harold Richards, RBS 56 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 17–38.

become a great nation in Gen 15, Abraham astutely points out that he has no son to continue his heritage and inherit his land and property, prompting YHWH to show him the future of his nation and to define its land. The birth of Ishmael to the Egyptian handmaiden Hagar in Gen 16 seems like a cruel joke, especially since Sarah was earlier taken into the harem of the Egyptian pharaoh and Egypt would later become the oppressor of Israel in the exodus narratives. The circumcision of Ishmael as part of the eternal covenant in Gen 17 highlights this tension, prompting YHWH's promises that the covenant will go to Isaac, who remains unborn.

Resolution comes in Gen 18–19, 20, and 21, only for the tension to be resumed in Gen 22 and 23. When YHWH, in the form of one of three visitors, informs Sarah that she will have a son at age ninety, she laughs, prompting the name Isaac for her son, which in Hebrew means "he laughs." YHWH's promises are many, but fulfillment remains wanting. The issue of credibility is heightened once again when Abraham becomes the moral voice of the narrative, demanding that YHWH not kill the righteous with the wicked in the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The wife-sister motif emerges once again in Gen 20 while Abraham and Sarah reside in Philistia, and Abraham must once again take desperate means of protection until YHWH finally intervenes. When Isaac is finally born in Gen 21, all seems well, until YHWH demands that Abraham sacrifice Isaac as a test of his faith. Abraham does not hesitate to fulfill YHWH's command as the reader is left aghast at the thought that the sacrifice might actually go through, until YHWH intervenes at the very last moment to affirm Abraham's righteousness. The irony is not lost on the reader, who has seen a righteous Abraham throughout but has questions about YHWH's own fidelity. The issue continues in Gen 23, when Sarah dies. Rabbinic commentators note that Sarah died without ever seeing her son Isaac again and speculate that this was a punishment for her own treatment of Hagar following the birth of Ishmael (b. Rosh Hash. 16b, Gen. Rab. 45:5, 58:5).

Although the human characters, Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac, suffer tremendously in these narratives, YHWH's fidelity is finally affirmed as Abraham marries Isaac to Rebekah, ensuring that there will be a future for the line and the covenant that G-d has made.

The question of the reality or continuity of the covenant has been a key issue in modern Jewish thought. Richard Rubenstein denied the covenant

altogether and argued that modern Judaism must abandon its theological myths concerning a righteous G-d to pursue a cultural expression of Jewish life in the land of Israel and the world at large.[23] Fackenheim called for affirmation of G-d as the 614th commandment of Jewish tradition to ensure the continuity of Judaism, thereby denying Hitler a posthumous victory.[24] Eliezer Berkovits argued that the hidden face of G-d in the Shoah affirmed the Jewish principle of human free will in allowing human beings the freedom of divine control so that they might learn to choose righteousness.[25] Abraham Joshua Heschel argued that G-d suffers as a result of human wrongdoing.[26] Elie Wiesel points to the absurdity of G-d in the Shoah, and David Blumenthal likens G-d to an abusive parent who must be forgiven so that the victim of abuse may heal.[27] Despite the trauma suffered by Jews in the Shoah, the relationship with G-d, no matter how difficult it may be, must be affirmed as humans take on their roles as partners with G-d in the sanctification of creation.

6. Jacob, Rachel, and Leah

The next components of Genesis include the history of Ishmael in Gen 25:12–18 and the history of Jacob in Gen 25:19–35:29. The history of Ishmael accounts for Ishmael and his descendants so that the narrative might narrow its focus to Isaac and his descendants in the history of Jacob. The history of Jacob, titled "And these are the generations of Isaac ben Abraham," then focuses on Jacob as the ancestor of the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Jacob narrative is characterized by its focus on characters who represent the eponymous ancestors of Israel, each of the twelve tribes of Israel, and Israel's neighbors, Edom and Aram. Although source-critical scholarship frequently divides the Jacob narrative into J, E, and P components, the source-critical approach has proved to be particularly unhelpful

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23. Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966).

24. Emil Fackenheim, *G-d's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections* (New York: New York University Press, 1970).

25. Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust*.

26. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *G-d in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Meridian and Jewish Publication Society, 1955).

27. Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Random House, 1973); David R. Blumenthal, *Facing the Abusing G-d: A Theology of Protest* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993).

in reading the Jacob narratives insofar as it fragments the plot and charac-
ter development of the narrative as a whole. Overall, the narrative depicts
Jacob, the ancestor of Israel, in relation to his fraternal twin brother, Esau,
the ancestor of Edom, and his uncle Laban, the ancestor of Aram. The nar-
rative also portrays the births of Jacob's twelve sons, each of whom is the
ancestor of one of the tribes of Israel.

Insofar as the narrative portrays tension in the relationships between
Jacob/Israel and Esau/Edom and Laban/Aram, it appears to presuppose
the historical and political events of the late ninth and early eighth cen-
turies BCE, when Edom broke free of Israelite/Judean control and Israel
ultimately broke free of Aramean vassalage.[28] Throughout this period,
which extends from the reign of Ahab ben Omri through the reign of
Jeroboam ben Joash, Israel was a vassal first of Aram and later of Assyria.

Throughout the narrative, Jacob overcomes obstacles that appear
before him, such as his rivalry with his brother, Esau, for the affections
of his parents; his repeated entrapment into servitude for the hands of his
wives, Rachel and Leah, as well as the means to support them by his uncle
Laban; and the antagonism between his wives as they compete with each
other for his affection. The narrative makes it clear that sometimes these
obstacles are the result of his own shortcomings, such as his attempts to
outdo the dimwitted Esau or his clear preference for Rachel over Leah.
In the end, Jacob is crippled by his encounter with the unnamed man at
the River Jabbok, who names him Israel, and he suffers the death of his
beloved Rachel, ironically because of his own statement that whoever pos-
sesses the household gods of Laban should die (Gen 31:32).

The Jacob narrative is designed to reflect on the character of the nation
Israel during a difficult period in its history, when it was oppressed and
subjugated by the Aramaeans, lost control of Edom, and undoubtedly suf-
fered from internal tensions as its political fortunes waned. Such critical
self-reflection is also characteristic of the modern state of Israel through-
out its own history.

Many are well aware of the role that Theodor Herzl played as perhaps
the best-known of the leading figures in the foundation of modern Zion-
ism.[29] Following his encounter with anti-Semitism in France during the
trial of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, Herzl concluded that Jews had no place

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28. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Puns, Politics, and Perushim in the Jacob Cycle: A Case
Study in Teaching the English Hebrew Bible," *Shofar* 9 (1991): 103–18.

29. Walter Laquer, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken, 1976), 84–135.

in the modern nation-state and that they must therefore found their own. In his view, all Jews must move to the proposed Jewish homeland or be forever lost to Judaism. Although he was a consummate politician and fundraiser, Herzl was a highly assimilated Austrian Jew who had little understanding of Jewish identity and history. Consequently, he was willing to accept the British offer of Uganda to serve as the new Jewish homeland. Even when he was compelled to accept Ottoman-ruled Palestine as the only viable home for Jews, he had little conception of the interrelationship that modern Jews might have with the Palestinian population of the land of Israel or with the larger Arab and Muslim world.

Ahad Ha-Am (Hebrew, "One of the People"), the pen name of Asher Ginsberg, was less well-known in the Western world but was far more effective and self-reflective than Herzl in conceptualizing the modern Jewish state.[30] Ha-Am first of all recognized the importance of the land of Israel, the historic homeland of the Jews, as the necessary location for a modern Jewish state, and compelled Herzl to accept only Ottoman Palestine as the homeland for modern Jews. Ha-Am called for a culturally defined Zionism, which recognized Jews as a distinctive culture that had existed throughout its history both in the land of Israel and in the diaspora. Ha-Am envisioned a continuing relationship between the modern state of Israel and diaspora Jewish culture in which Israel would serve as the foundation for continuing Jewish identity and the diaspora would function as the source for new ideas that would enable the modern Jewish state to progress. Because of his focus on cultural identity, Ha-Am recognized that the modern Jewish state would have to forge a constructive relationship with its Palestinian Arab population as well as with its neighbors in the larger Arab and Muslim world.

The debate on the character of modern Israel continues today. Modern religious Zionism evolved from the thought of ultra-Orthodox scholars such as Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and his son Tzvi Judah Kook, as well as political and labor parties, such as the Mizrachi labor movement and Gush Emunim.[31] Religious Zionism views G-d's commandment that Jews should settle the entire land of Israel and live in accordance with Torah as imperatives for modern Jewish life. Indeed, the religious and political right in Israel is especially influenced by Sephardi Jews whose ancestors

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30. Laquer, *History of Zionism*, 162–71.
31. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, trans. Michael Swirsky and Jonathan Chipman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

suffered under Arab rule and were expelled when modern Israel was created. Many on the Jewish left question the character of Israel as a modern Jewish state and instead envision a secular democratic state that would encompass both its Jewish and Arab populations.[32] But Yasser Arafat's refusal to accept a peace agreement in 2000, the Hamas seizure of Gaza following the Israeli withdrawal in 2005, and the rise of Iranian-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon have convinced the majority of the Israeli public that a viable peace agreement may not be possible. Indeed, Natan Sharansky, a former leader of the Soviet Refusenik movement and former Israeli cabinet minister, argues that modern Israel must simultaneously affirm both its democratic and Jewish identity while defending itself from threats and pursuing peace with its neighbors.[33]

7. Joseph

The final components of the Genesis narrative include the history of Esau in Gen 36:1–37:1 and the history of the twelve tribes of Israel in Gen 37:2–50:26. The history of Esau accounts for the descendants of Jacob's fraternal twin brother, Esau, who is the eponymous ancestor of Edom. Genesis 37:2– 50:26 is introduced by the formula "These are the generations of Jacob," and it focuses on Joseph ben Jacob, the first son of Jacob's beloved wife, Rachel, and his turbulent relations with his brothers. Despite the focus on Joseph, the narrative is ultimately concerned with the eponymous ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel, who will continue the covenant initiated with Abraham and Sarah. The narrative therefore introduces the lengthy segment in Gen 37:2–Num 2:34 that takes up the early history of the nation Israel during the times of the exodus from Egypt and the revelation at Mount Sinai.

The Joseph narrative is especially concerned with the figure of Joseph, his conflicts with his brothers, who sell him into Egyptian slavery, and his rise to power and maturity in Egypt that ultimately enables him to reconcile with his brothers and save their lives.

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32. Yoram Hazony, *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

33. Natan Sharansky, *The Case for Democracy: The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004); Sharansky and Weiss, *Defending Identity*.

The narrative raises two key issues in subsequent Jewish thought. The first is the question of Jewish assimilation into a gentile culture, and the second is the question of conflict and difference within the people of Israel.

With regard to the issue of assimilation, Joseph is ultimately a successful figure in Egyptian society who, despite various obstacles that he must overcome, rises to a position of power in Egypt second only to Pharaoh. As a member of the royal court, he is given an Egyptian name, Zaphenath Paneah, and married to an Egyptian woman, Asenath the daughter of the priest Potiphera, who bears his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. The narrative subtly indicates the problematic nature of Joseph's situation. The first instance is by the inclusion of a side narrative in Gen 38 concerning Tamar and Judah in which Tamar takes action that ultimately ensures that Judah's descendants are Jewish.[34] The second is by Jacob's adoption of Manasseh and Ephraim as his own sons in Gen 48. Although the adoption ensures the status of Manasseh and Ephraim as eponymous ancestors of tribes in Israel, their identity as the key tribes of northern Israel and the Judean character of the Tamar narrative suggests some polemic by southern Judah against the north.

Rabbinic Judaism defines a Jew as one who is born of a Jewish mother or one who has converted to Judaism.[35] The Jewish identities of Manasseh and Ephraim are resolved in rabbinic tradition by assertions that Asenath is the daughter of Dinah adopted by Potiphera (Pirqe R. El. 38, Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 41:45, 46:20) or that her father must have converted to Judaism, as Joseph only gave grain to Egyptians who were circumcised (Gen. Rab. 85:2, 90:6, 91:5). Nevertheless, Joseph's sojourn in Egypt points to the question of Jewish assimilation. Throughout the history of the Jewish diaspora, Jews have been under tremendous pressure to assimilate into gentile societies, either by converting to Christianity or Islam or by intermarrying with non-Jewish spouses.[36] Modern experience with intermarriage indicates that without the conversion to Judaism of the non-Jewish spouse, the children born to such a marriage are unlikely to maintain a Jewish

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34. Genesis 38 is part of a sequence of narratives that take up the motif of the endangered matriarch and tie it into the question of assimilation in the Joseph narrative (see Sweeney, "Question of the Endangered Matriarch").

35. Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1985).

36. E.g., Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989).

identity. Indeed, with intermarriage rates of approximately 50 percent in the United States, assimilation into the larger secular society emerges as a major threat to the continuity of Judaism in the diaspora. Consequently, the various Jewish movements have had to rethink traditional attitudes to intermarriage, which is strictly forbidden in halakah but is nevertheless a reality in Jewish life. The Reform Jewish movement accepts children born to Jewish men as Jewish, although the other movements flatly reject this option. The Conservative movement is becoming more and more open to gentile spouses, although it does not authorize intermarriage and envisions the conversion of the gentile spouse to Judaism. All forms of Orthodoxy require the halakic conversion of the gentile spouse before a marriage can take place.

The second issue raised by the Joseph narrative is conflict and competition within the Jewish community, particularly with regard to the different understandings of Judaism that have developed through history. Indeed, this phenomenon is evident in the condemnation of the northern kingdom of Israel for idolatry throughout the books of Kings, but modern research indicates that King Jeroboam's use of the golden calves was not a deliberate attempt at idolatry but emblematic of a very different construction of Israelite religion or Judaism in his day, in which the calves functioned as mounts or thrones for the invisible YHWH much as the ark of the covenant functioned in the Jerusalem temple.[37]

Every major period in Jewish history saw any number of movements that were frequently in competition with each other.[38] The later Second Temple period saw a variety of parties that held to different constructions of Judaism. The Sadducees were a Zadokite priestly group who maintained that the Jerusalem temple constituted the foundation of Jewish identity and religious practice, whereas the Pharisees or early rabbis focused on Torah observance. The Essenes viewed the temple as corrupt and envisioned a holy war in which nonobservant Jews and gentiles would be defeated by the army of the Sons of Light, and the Zealots envisioned a very real war in which the Romans and their supporters would be defeated. Even when rabbinic Judaism emerged as the dominant form of Judaism following the destruction of the Second Temple, the Karaite movement, originating in Babylonia during the mid-eighth century CE,

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37. Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, 67–72.

38. For an overview of Jewish history, see Robert M. Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History* (New York: Macmillan, 1980).

rejected the Oral Torah or Talmudic tradition of the rabbis in favor of a system of written Torah interpretation that ensured the role of the Bible as the foundation for Jewish thought and practice. The controversy between rabbinic and Karaite Judaism ultimately led to the inauguration of Jewish rationalist philosophy in the work of Saadia Gaon, who sought to defend rabbinic Judaism against the Karaite, Muslim, and Christian polemics. He was in turn challenged by Judah ha-Levi, who argued in favor of Judaism based in the experience of the divine in his celebrated work, the Kuzari. In the late eighteenth century, the rationalist understanding of Judaism promoted by Moses Mendelssohn, who argued that Judaism must be accepted as a religion of reason alongside Christianity, contrasted markedly with the understanding of the Baal Shem Tov (Israel ben Eliezer), whose spiritualistic form of Hasidic Judaism was rooted in earlier kabbalistic thought.

Contemporary Judaism sees a number of Jewish denominations, each with a differing view of Judaism.[39] Reform maintains that Judaism is rooted in the revelation at Sinai, but the need to change and adapt to modernity is an essential element of that revelation. Conservative Judaism maintains that revelation takes place throughout history as Jews in each generation define Judaism in their own times. Modern orthodoxy has a multitude of movements, such as modern Orthodoxy, Haredi Judaism (ultra-Orthodox), and Habad Judaism, but all hold to traditional halakah based on the view that all of Jewish tradition was revealed at Sinai and Jews are still in the process of learning its entirety.

Jewish history is replete with examples of different constructions of Judaism. The issue points to the richness of Judaism throughout history, but it also points to divisive conflict with potentially dangerous consequences like those suffered by Joseph, such as the efforts to disenfranchise Ethiopian Jews, Jews born of mixed parentage, or those converted to Judaism by nonhalakic movements.

8. Conclusion

Although the book of Genesis is written as a narrative history of the origins of the world and the nation Israel, it functions as a foundation for a

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39. Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism: The Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Traditions* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984).

multitude of issues in subsequent Jewish tradition and thought. The examples given here regarding the character of creation, the nature of human beings, the often challenging relationship between G-d and human beings, the character of the nation Israel and its relations with its neighbors, and conflicts and competition among rival movements in Judaism throughout its history point to the importance of Genesis as an ancient book that also addresses Jewish issues of later times.

Dimensions of the Shekinah:
The Meaning of the Shiur Qomah in
Jewish Mysticism, Liturgy, and Rabbinic Thought

1.

The Shiur Qomah, "The Measure of the Body (of G-d)," is one of the most problematic, controversial, and misunderstood writings in all of Jewish tradition.[1] The Shiur Qomah is known primarily for its discussion of the measurements of the body of G-d. For example, Shiur Qomah section B states,

> From the place of the seat of His [G-d's] glory and up is (a distance of) 1,180,000,000 parasangs. From His glorious seat and down is (a distance of) 1,180,000,000 parasangs. His height is 2,300,000,000 parasangs. From the right arm until the left arm is 770,000,000 parasangs. And from the right eyeball until the left eyeball is (a distance of) 300,000,000 parasangs. The skull of his head is 3,000,003 and a third parasangs. The crown of his head is 600,000 parasangs corresponding to the 600,000 Israelite minions. Thus, He is called the great, mighty, and awesome G-d.[2]

1. For a brief overview, see Gershom Scholem, "Shi'ur Komah," *EncJud* 14:1417–19.
2. See Martin S. Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 189–90. For the Hebrew text again with English translation, see Martin S. Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions*, TSAJ 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 127–28.

A parasang is an ancient Persian measurement, equivalent to about three-quarters of a mile.[3] The concluding statement, "Thus He is called the great, mighty, and awesome G-d," justifies the immense measurements given for G-d's body.

The Shiur Qomah grows out of the *merkabah* mystical tradition of the late talmudic period.[4] It is an attempt to elaborate on the experience of the priest and prophet Ezekiel, whose vision of G-d in Ezek 1–3 stands as the foundation for the Jewish mystical tradition. Particularly important in this respect is Ezek 1:26, which describes the presence of G-d in anthropomorphic terms, namely, "and above the expanse over their heads was the semblance of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and on top, upon this semblance of a throne, there was the semblance of a human form." The Bible prohibits the representation of G-d in human or any other tangible form. And interpreters should note that as a priest of the holy Jerusalem temple, Ezekiel is careful throughout the vision to use the language of simile to avoid any statement that G-d can be so portrayed.[5] Nevertheless, the Shiur Qomah does portray G-d in human terms, and its interest in the measurements of the body of G-d raises therefore raises serious theological questions about the work, insofar as Judaism views attempts to portray G-d in any physical form as idolatry and apostasy.[6]

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3. Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 192. For the Shiur Qomah's understanding of the length of parasang, see Shiur Qomah, sec. E (Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 215; Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts*, 147). Cohen's edition is based on the Sefer ha-Qomah version, a short version of the text represented in MS Oxford 1791, a fifteenth-century German manuscript that Cohen believes best represents the *Urtext* of the work (see *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts*, 9–10). But Cohen's position has been critiqued by Peter Schäfer in reviews of *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*. See Schäfer, review of *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, by Martin S. Cohen, *JSJ* 16 (1985): 129–31; and Schäfer, "*Shi'ur Qoma*: Rezensionen und Urtext," in *Hekhalot Studien*, TSAJ 19 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 75–83.

4. But see now Howard M. Jackson, "The Origins and Development of *Sh'ur Qomah* Revelation in Jewish Mysticism," *JSJ* 31 (2000): 373–415. He traces the origins of the work to the early Tannaitic period and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE.

5. For discussion of Ezekiel, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "Ezekiel's Debate with Isaiah," in *Congress Volume: Ljubljana 2007*, ed. André Lemaire, VTSup 133 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 555–74; Sweeney, *Prophetic Literature*, 127–64; Sweeney, "Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile," in *Form and Intertextuality*, 125–43; Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel*.

6. But see Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of G-d and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). He demonstrates the interest in portrayals of the body of G-d in ancient Israel.

The Shiur Qomah appears in several different versions in a variety of manuscripts, and it is quoted or referenced by a number of major Jewish scholars from late antiquity and the Middle Ages, beginning with the poet Eleazar ha-Kallir and continuing with such sages as Saadia Gaon, Moses Maimonides, Abraham Ibn Ezra, and others.[7] Eleazar ha-Kallir, generally dated to the sixth century CE, appears to draw on the Shiur Qomah in his poetry comparing Adam's image to that of G-d, *kidemut bor'o heyot demuto, keqomat tamar qomato*, "His [Adam's] image was like that of his creator; his *qomah* [body] like that of a palm tree."[8] When the Karaite movement challenged rabbinic Judaism beginning in the eighth century CE, the anthropomorphic portrayal of G-d in the Shiur Qomah was one of the primary bases for their objections to rabbinic haggadah.[9] The early tenth-century sage Saadia Gaon responded to the Karaites with a treatise that attempted to defend the Shiur Qomah as an allegory, not unlike the Song of Songs, that attempted to convey esoteric teachings concerning the true nature of G-d.[10] Moses Maimonides considered the Shiur Qomah to be the fraudulent invention of Byzantine haggadists, and he states that the work should be burned. He argues that anyone who would conceive of G-d in such a corporeal manner should be considered a heretic, an Epicurean, in a category with animals, and as having brains filled with the lunacies of old women.[11] Abraham Ibn Ezra, on the other hand, quoting Rabbi Ishmael, maintains that "anyone who knows the measurement of the creator is certain to have a share in the world to come" (commentary to Exod 33:21).[12]

Modern scholars have not always been enthusiastic about the work, but research nevertheless points to the importance of the Shiur Qomah in the development of Jewish mysticism. Heinrich Graetz (1817–1891)

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7. For discussion of the manuscripts, text recensions, and the provenance of the text, see Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts*, 1–26, 183–232; Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 43–76; cf. Peter Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, TSAJ 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), vii, xiv, sections 688–704. For discussion of the history of research up to the late 1970s, see Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 13–32; for later research, see Jackson, "Origins and Development," 376–78.

8. See Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 61–65.

9. Scholem, "Shi'ur Komah," 1418.

10. Scholem, "Shi'ur Komah," 1418; Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 31–34.

11. Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 33.

12. Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts*, 220.

viewed the Shiur Qomah as part of his overall understanding of mysticism and kabbalah as "malignant growths in the body of Judaism." He argued that the work was a monstrosity that was smuggled into Judaism during the ninth century by Jews who sought to imitate the work of Muslim sectarian mystics who themselves were concerned with the dimensions of G-d's body.[13] Elijah Benamozegh (1822–1900) argues that the Shiur Qomah is an authentically rabbinic forerunner of kabbalistic thought that employed bodily description as part of a larger attempt to convey the true character of G-d's glory.[14] Philipp Bloch (1841–1923) viewed the Shiur Qomah as a text designed to teach Jewish children something of the majesty and greatness of G-d and of mathematical computations.[15] Adolf Jellinek (1820–1893) recognized the antiquity of the Shiur Qomah from rabbinic times and argued that it was a midrashic elaboration on the portrayal of the bridegroom in Song 5. In Jellinek's view, the dimensions of the body of G-d are so great as to be beyond human comprehension.[16] Moses Gastor (1856–1939) argues that the Shiur Qomah was written in Jewish gnostic circles interested in filling the gap left by gnostic literature by providing a full description of G-d.[17] Gershom Scholem (1897–1982) maintains that Jellinek's link between the Shiur Qomah and Song 5 is weak and argues instead that it is a second-century elaboration on Ps 147:5 composed as part of a larger *merkabah* rabbah text.[18] Saul Lieberman (1898–1983) agrees that the Shiur Qomah was an early Tannaitic exposition of Song 5, maintaining that the text portrays G-d as a youthful warrior at the Red Sea or at

13. Heinrich Graetz, "Die mystitische Literatur in der gaonischen Epoche," *MGWJ* 8 (1859): 67–78, 103–18, 140–53; see Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 13–16.

14. Elie Benamozegh, *Ta'am Leshed: Nouveaux Dialogues sur la Kabbale* (Livorno: Benamozegh, 1863), see Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 16–18.

15. Philip Bloch, *Geschichte der Entwicklung der Kabbala unr jüdische Religionsphilosophie* (Trier: Mayer, 1894); see Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 18.

16. Adolf (Aaron) Jellinek, *Bet Hammidrasch*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Bamberger and Wahrman, 1938), 6:xxxxlii–xxxxliii; see Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 18–20.

17. Moses Gaster, "Das Schiur Komah," *MGWJ* 37 (1893): 179–85, 214–30; see Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 20–21.

18. Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the G-dhead: Basic Concepts of the Kabbalah* (New York: Schocken, 1991), 15–55; cf. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 63–67; Scholem, "Shi'ur Komah," 1417–19.

Mount Sinai.[19] Ithamar Gruenwald offers little that is new apart from his observation that the text is intended for public recitation.[20] Martin Cohen maintains that the Shiur Qomah is an early work that influences Sefer Yetzirah and lays the foundations for the kabbalistic notion that the divine sefirot come to expression in the form of the human body.[21] Howard Jackson argues that the concern with the body of G-d grows out of anxiety among the Tannaim over the loss of the Jerusalem temple as the locus for divine revelation.[22] Vita Daphna Arbel demonstrates that the portrayal of the body of G-d in the Shiur Qomah grows out of Mesopotamian mythology concerning Marduk and other Mesopotamian gods.[23] Peter Schäfer argues that the concern with the dimensions of the body of G-d derives from portrayals of the angels in *merkabah* literature, such as Metatron, who states in 3 Enoch, "I was enlarged and increased in size according to the measurement [*shiur*] of the world in length and breadth."[24]

Several important factors grow out of this research, that is, (1) the interest in Shiur Qomah in midrashic elaboration on earlier biblical texts concerned with the portrayal of G-d, (2) the incomprehensibility of the measurements given, (3) the mythological portrayal of G-d as the creator and primary power of the universe, (4) and the role of Shiur Qomah in public recitation. I would like to build on this research by noting the liturgical elements of the work and arguing that the Shiur Qomah is fundamentally a liturgical text intended for public recitation. The various depictions of the measurements of G-d's body are interspersed among liturgical texts that, when read together, construct a heavenly liturgy based on the standard Jewish prayer service. The incomprehensibility

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19. Saul Lieberman, "*Mishnath Shir ha-Shirim*," in *Jewish Gnosticism: Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* [Hebrew], ed. Gershom Scholem (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1965), 118–27.

20. Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, AGJU 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 213–18.

21. Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 51–76.

22. Jackson, "Origins and Development."

23. Vita Daphna Arbel, *Beholders of Divine Secrets: Mysticism and Myth in the Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 123–31.

24. Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 306–15.

of the divine measurements, observed by Jellinek, is deliberate.[25] Such
a technique is intended to impress the audience of the Shiur Qomah
with the majesty of the divine presence. By placing the divine measure-
ments in the midst of a heavenly liturgy, the Shiur Qomah prompts those
engaged in Jewish worship to attempt to imagine themselves before the
incomprehensible grandeur and glory of G-d. In order to demonstrate
this hypothesis, this paper first examines the interrelationships between
the Shiur Qomah and the Bible texts noted above, that is, Ezek 1:26, Song
5, and Ps 147:5. It then turns to the construction of the prayer service
that provides the basic structure of the Shiur Qomah's presentation of the
divine measurements.

<div align="center">2.</div>

Although Judaism forbids the physical portrayal of G-d as idolatrous,
the Bible is filled with statements that suggest a physical character for
G-d. Genesis 1:26 states, "Let us make humankind in our image." Num-
bers 12:8 states, "with him [Moses] I [G-d] speak face to face, and he
beholds the form of YHWH." Isaiah 33:17 states, "Your eyes will see the
king in is beauty." Ezekiel 1:26 portrays "a throne in appearance like
sapphire and seated above the likeness of the throne was something that
seemed like a human form." Psalm 147:5 states, "Great is YHWH and
abundant in power, His understanding is above measure." And Song
7:8 states, "This is your body like a palm tree and your breasts are like
its clusters." All of these texts are understood in one form or another
as references to the portrayal of G-d, and interpreters have struggled
throughout the history of Jewish interpretation to ensure that they are
not read as expressions of idolatry. Indeed, Hos 12:11 provides a key
criterion for reading such passages as metaphors, "I spoke to the proph-
ets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets I speak
in similes/silence."[26]

The ark of the covenant would have served as a tangible symbol for
the presence of G-d in the holy of holies of the First Temple. Thus, the
Bible's references to YHWH, who is enthroned above the cherubim,
are attempts to portray the divine presence in relation to the cherubim

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25. Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrasch*, 6:xxxxlii–xxxxliii.
26. For discussion of Hos 12:11, see Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:125.

of the ark and the holy of holies of the Jerusalem temple (e.g., Isa 6, Ezek 1). But the absence of the ark in the Second Temple would have prompted mythological speculation concerning the portrayal of the divine presence, both during the Second Temple period itself and in the period following the destruction of the temple. Thus, Dan 7 portrays G-d as one "ancient of days" with a garment like white snow and hair like lamb's wool. G-d's throne is portrayed with the imagery of fire streaming forth before G-d and the myriads of attendants. Heikhalot Rabbati dispenses with portrayals of G-d altogether and focuses instead on the seven levels of heaven through which the mystic traveler must pass and the many angels who must be acknowledged on the journey to the throne of G-d.

We have already noted Ezekiel's portrayal of G-d in Ezek 1:26, but let us consider the full text in Ezek 1:26–27,

> And above the firmament which was above their head, like the appearance of a stone of sapphire, was the likeness of a throne, and above the likeness of the throne was a likeness like the appearance of a human being upon from above. And I saw like a sight of Hashmal, like the appearance of fire encasing it round about, a vision of His loins and above and a vision of His loins and below. I saw what was like a vision of fire, and it was shining all about.

As a Zadokite priest, Ezekiel is fully aware of the prohibition against the tangible portrayal of G-d—here in human form—and interpreters have already observed in the book's extensive use of the language of simile to avoid a direct statement that G-d takes any tangible form. Readers may further note the use of the imagery of fire, and earlier wind and water, to portray G-d because these elements are tangible, but they function admirably as metaphors insofar as they are tangible elements that have no inherit delimitation to their forms. Rabbinic literature recognizes the problem here and includes Ezek 1 among the texts that may be expounded only by a sage who knows his own knowledge (m. Hag. 2:1). In discussing this statement, the Gemara to Haggigah makes it clear that such tangible portrayals of G-d are acceptable, but they must be properly interpreted and expounded because of the knowledge of G-d that they convey. Thus the Gemara cites the case of a young boy with exceptional ability who understood the meaning of *hashmal* in Ezek 1:27 and began to expound on it. A fire immediately consumed him because he had not yet reached a fitting age to engage in such

interpretation.[27] Likewise, the Gemara cites the famous legend of the four who attempted to enter Pardes, here understood as an appearance before the throne of G-d. Of the four who made the attempt, only Rabbi Akiva was successful, because he possessed knowledge and qualities that the other three lacked. Thus the Gemara maintains that one must approach such texts carefully, and it holds out the example of Rabbi Akiva, arguably the greatest sage of Jewish tradition, as an example of the qualities one must possess to expound upon such texts properly.[28]

Interpreters may consider the Song of Songs, an example of ancient love poetry in which a woman anticipates union with her lover, generally in very explicit sexual terms. Rabbinic tradition regards Song of Songs as an allegory concerning the intimate relationship between G-d and Israel. Indeed, m. Yad. 3:5 indicates an ancient debate as to whether Song of Songs should be considered as sacred Scripture. Rabbi Akiva ultimately rules that Song of Songs must be regarded as sacred Scripture, declaring it to be the holy of holies of sacred Scripture that was revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai so that the book is now read as part of the liturgy for Pesach.

Song of Songs 5:10–16, which has played an important role in discussion concerning the Shiur Qomah, is an example of the *wasf* poetic form, a poetic device employed in ancient Egyptian love poetry to provide explicit descriptions of the body of the male or female lover.[29] In this case, the lover is male:

My beloved is clear skinned and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand.
His head is finest gold, His locks are curled and black as a raven.
His eyes are like doves by watercourses, bathed in milk, sitting by a brimming pool.
His cheeks are like beds of spices, enhanced by perfumes.
His lips are like lilies; dripping flowing myrrh.
His hands are rods of gold, filled with beryl;
His belly a tablet of ivory, decorated with sapphires.
His legs are like marble pillars set in sockets of fine gold.

27. For discussion of this passage, see my essay, "The Problem of Ezekiel in Talmudic Literature," in *After Ezekiel: Essays on the Reception of a Difficult Prophet*, ed. Paul M. Joyce and Andrew Mein, LHBOTS 535 (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 11–23.

28. For discussion of the Pardes legend, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "Pardes Revisited Once Again," in *Form and Intertextuality*, 269–82.

29. See Roland Murphy, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars.
His mouth is sweet and all of him is delightful.
This is my beloved, and this is my darling, O daughters of Jerusalem.

The imagery is clearly erotic and, when applied to an understanding of the presence of G-d, portrays G-d metaphorically in very human terms. Of course, we do not know that the male lover must represent G-d and the female lover Israel. And so, the portrayal of the female lover in Song 7:2–10, which might also describe G-d:

How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O daughter of nobles!
Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master's hand.
Your navel is like a round goblet—mixed wine shall not be lacking!
Your belly like a heap of wheat entwined with lilies.
Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle.
Your neck is like a tower of ivory, your eyes, pools in Heshbon by the gate of Bath-Rabbim,
Your nose is like the Lebanon tower that looks toward Damascus.
Your head upon you is like crimson wool, the locks of your head are like purple—
A king is held captive in the tresses.
How beautiful you are, how lovely! Love with all its rapture!
This, your body is like a palm, your breasts are like clusters.
I say: I will climb the palm, I will take hold of its branches;
May your breasts be like clusters of grapes, may your breath be like the fragrance of apples,
And your mouth like fine wine.
Let it flow to my beloved as new wine, gliding over the lips of sleepers.

Here we may note especially verse 8, "This, your body is like the palm, your breasts are like clusters," particularly because the Hebrew work *qomatek*, "your body," is employed to describe the body of the female lover. It is, of course, the same term employed in the title of the Shiur Qomah. And the following proposal to climb the palm and take hold of its branches would be read as an act of adherence to G-d. And so also the portrayal of the woman in the Song of Songs could easily be read as a metaphorical portrayal of G-d.

Scholem also cites Ps 147:5 as a Psalms reference that has very clear reference to Shiur Qomah:[30] "*Gadol adoneinu verav koach*, 'Great/Big is

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30. Scholem, *Mystical Shape*, 23–24.

our L-rd, and mighty of strength.'" This verse also describes G-d in tangible terms, this time in terms of size and strength. But the significance of this verse is tied to its gematria associations. Interpreters have observed that the Hebrew phrase *verav koakh*, "and mighty of strength," has a numerical equivalence of 236, that is, *vav* =6, *resh* = 200, *bet* =2, *kaph* = 20, and *het* = 8, and the total is 236. Cohen argues that this number is significant for the Shiur Qomah because it provides the basis for the assertions that the height of G-d in Shiur Qomah section B is 2,300,000,000 parasangs and that the crown of G-d's head is 600,000 parasangs. Reflection on a verse from the psalm that portrays G-d in sexual terms, like the Song of Songs, forms the basis for calculating at least some of the basic measurements for G-d's body employed in the Shiur Qomah.

In sum, the above examples indicate that Shiur Qomah represents midrashic reflection on biblical passages concerned with tangible portrayals of G-d. Some, such as Ezek 1:26–27, Song of Songs, and Ps 147:5 provide the basis for Shiur Qomah's interest in the measurements of the body of G-d.

<div align="center">3.</div>

The next stage of discussion is a consideration of the liturgical character of the Shiur Qomah. Hints of such a character are already evident insofar as the Shiur Qomah is viewed by some as a text that calls for reflection on the presence of G-d and that it is designed for public recitation. But an overview of the text demonstrates that it includes all of the basic elements of a Jewish prayer service, albeit modified to portray a heavenly liturgy.

Shiur Qomah section A begins with the superscription for the work, *Sefer ha-Qomah 'Inyenei Merkavah*, "The Book of the Body, Topics concerning the Chariot." [31] Immediately following, the Shiur Qomah begins with a familiar prayer that initially corresponds to the opening paragraph of the Amidah, *Baruch 'attah 'Adonay 'Eloqeinu, 'Eloqei 'Avraham, 'Eloqei Yizhaq, 'Eloqei Ya'aqov, ha-'El ha-gadol, ha-gibbor, veha-nora', 'El 'Elyon*, "Blessed are you, O L-rd, our G-d, G-d of Abraham, G-d of Isaac, G-d of Jacob, the great, mighty, and awesome G-d, G-d Most High." But then the text diverges from the standard form of the Amidah, *Qoneh shamayim*

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31. Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 187–89; Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts*, 125–26.

va'aretz, 'attah hu' melek, malkei hamlakim, and so on, "Creator of heavens and earth, You are king, king of kings, etc.," in place of the expected *Gomel hasadim tovim we-qoneh ha-kol, etc.*, "the one who keeps fidelity and who creates everything, etc." Indeed, as the Shiur Qomah's version of the opening paragraph of the Amidah continues, it focuses on the throne of G-d and the fiery presence of G-d on it: "And your seat on the throne of glory and the celestial creatures ascend to the throne of glory. You are fire, and your throne is fire, and your celestial creatures and servants are fire, etc." Readers will recognize that the version of the opening paragraph of the Amidah presented in the Shiur Qomah is influenced by biblical texts that present the presence of G-d as a flaming presence, namely, Ezekiel's portrayal of a flaming presence of G-d in Ezek 1:26–27, Isaiah's portrayal of the seraphim as flaming angels around G-d in Isa 6, and Daniel's portrayal of a stream of fire breaking out from below the throne on which G-d sits in Dan 7. Such a flaming presence of G-d suggests a heavenly vision of G-d, and the liturgy that accompanies and conveys this vision of G-d's flaming presence suggests that it is a heavenly liturgy, analogous to the earthly liturgy that we pray as part of the standard worship service on earth.

Turning to section B, readers see a concern not with liturgy but with the dimensions of the body of G-d.[32] Rabbi Akiva is the speaker in this section, and he reports what Metatron, the angel of the presence of G-d, has told him:

> From the place of the seat of his glory and up is a distance of 1,180,000,000 parasangs. From his glorious seat and down is a distance of 1,180,000,000 parasangs. His height is 2,300,000,000 parasangs. From the right arm across until the left arm is 770,000,000 parasangs, and from the right eyeball until the left is a distance of 300,000,000 parasangs. The skull of his head is 300,000,003 and a third parasangs, and the crown of his head is 600,000 parasangs, corresponding to the 600,000 Israelite minions. Thus is He called the great, mighty, and awesome G-d.

This statement is followed by a series of unpronounceable names concluded by the familiar statement from the Shema, *Baruch hu' ubaruch shem kavod malkuto le'olam va'ed*, "Blessed be He and blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever." Here, readers see an interest in relat-

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32. Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 189–92; Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts*, 127–28.

ing the dimensions of the divine body to a key statement from Amidah concerning G-d's size and other qualities as well as to a statement from the Shema concerning G-d's eternal royal glory. But readers must also consider the numbers given for the dimensions of G-d's body. As observed above, these numbers are derived in part from the numerical equivalencies of the statement concerning G-d's stature in Ps 147:5, that is, the 2,300,000,000 parasangs of G-d's height are derived from the numerical equivalent 236 from the statement *verav koakh* in Ps 147:5, "Great is G-d, and mighty of strength." The number 230 is accounted for in the height of G-d, and the remaining number, 6, is then related to the 600,000 who witnessed G-d's revelation of torah at Mount Sinai in Exod 19 (see Num 2:32).

Turning to section C,[33] readers see that the opening statement reads, "And all who know this secret are certain to acquire the world to come." Following references to G-d's protection of the righteous, the text appears to presuppose the Kaddish that marks the conclusion of the Amidah in the standard Jewish prayer service. But, of course, it deviates from the standard form, *lephikach 'anahnu hayevim lehalel lepa'er leshabach ulero-mam lebarech, ulehagdil melek gadol, melek gibbor, melek adir, etc.*, "and therefore we are obligated to praise, beautify, glorify, and to exalt, to bless, and to magnify the great king, the mighty king, the strong king, etc." The passage goes on to heap praise on G-d for all of G-d's actions on behalf of creation and Israel, much as the standard form of the Kaddish does in the standard Jewish prayer service. Of course, G-d's qualities are here magnified beyond those of the standard Kaddish, but this would be a reflection of the role that this Kaddish plays in a heavenly liturgy. And readers may note that in section Cx, an alternative paragraph identified by Cohen for this portion of the Shiur Qomah, a new and embellished version of the Mi Kamocha appears, "Who is like our L-rd? Who is like our G-d? Who is like our King? Who is like our Savior? There is none like our G-d. There is none like our L-rd. There is none like our King. There is none like our Savior." Again the embellishments of this version of the Mi Kamocha point to a heavenly liturgy.

Turning to section D,[34] readers encounter an initial statement by Rabbi Ishmael. Rabbi Ishmael is well known as the sage who established the thir-

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33. Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 193–96; Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts*, 129–34.

34. Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 197–214; Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts*, 134–47.

teen principles of exegesis as well as the figure who plays a key role in the narration of the Heikhalot Rabbati, namely, the *merkabah* text that relates an attempt to ascend through the seven levels of heaven to appear before the throne of G-d. Here Rabbi Ishmael makes a statement that is remarkably akin to the Kedushah of the Jewish prayer service: "I saw the king of king of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, as He was sitting on an exalted throne and His soldiers were standing before Him to the right and to the left." This statement then introduces another section concerned with the bodily measurements of G-d. Rabbi Ishamel recounts how Metatron spoke to him and how he then asked Metatron the measurements of the body of G-d. He recounts Metatron's lengthy statements concerning the measurements and holy names of each of the body parts of G-d pertaining to the feet, the soles of the feet, the calves, the thighs, the loins, the heart, the neck, the head, the mouth, the beard, the face, the cheeks, the forehead, the eyes, the arms, the shoulders, the palms of the hands, the fingers, and so on. Upon concluding this description, section D once again concludes with the familiar statement from the Amidah, "Therefore is He called the great, mighty, and awesome G-d." Again, the measurements of the body of G-d are related to liturgical context.

Following a large number of sections concerned with descriptions of the holy and awesome presence of G-d, section M then comes forward with another familiar statement from Jewish liturgy akin to the *'Aleinu* prayer that appears near the conclusion of the Jewish prayer service.[35] Section M reads, *'aleinu leshabeka, lepareka, ulebarekkha, ulegadlekha, ule-haktirekha, uleyahadekha, 'adon kol haberiot, 'eloqei kol hanishamt, 'eloqei kol hanepashot, hai hahayim harishon veha'aharon*, and so on, "We are obligated to praise you, to beautify you, and to bless you, and to magnify you, and to crown you, and to declare your unity, O L-rd of all creation, G-d of all souls, G-d of all life, the Life of Lives, the First and the Last, etc." Again the modified form of a standard liturgical prayer points to a worship service in the heavenly realm, beyond our normal experience. It is followed by the concluding section of the Shiur Qomah, section N,[36] which calls on its audience to fall on your face before G-d, who resides in heaven, and continues with a detailed portrayal of the heavenly temple and all of

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35. Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 245–48; Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts*, 165–68.

36. Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*, 248–65; Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts*, 169–82.

its retinue at a time of worship. Cohen's alternative section Nx concludes with statements that the worshipers are to go out into the world to do acts of torah following their encounter with the divine.

This survey of the Shiur Qomah points to a very significant feature of this text, namely, the portrayals of G-d's presence and the measurements of G-d's body are interspersed among sections that present a modified version of the Jewish worship service, including the Amidah, the Kaddish, the Mi Kamokha, the Kedushah, and the Aleinu, followed by instruction to go out into the world and practice the teachings of torah. As observed above, the modified nature of this liturgy points to a heavenly liturgy in which the worshipers pray the major sections of the Jewish worship service before G-d, whose bodily form and the measurements of the divine body parts are provided among the major segments of the liturgy.

<div align="center">4.</div>

This paper must now ask, What do readers conclude concerning the preceding discussion?

First, readers must note that the Shiur Qomah is based in reflection on scriptural texts that portray G-d in tangible terms or that suggest such a portrayal. Ezekiel 1, Song of Songs, Ps 147, and many other texts noted above indicate that, like many ancient Near Eastern cultures, ancient Jews employed tangible bodily imagery to portray the presence of G-d. Readers must also recognize that such portrayal is considered as metaphorical, as indicated in Hos 12:11 and elsewhere. Indeed, the names given to the body parts of G-d are apparently intended to express divine qualities, although it is not always clear what they are. Insofar as the tangible portrayal of G-d is intended to provide a foundation for reflection on the divine character, Shiur Qomah takes up such portrayal as a means to engage in its own reflection on the divine.

Second, readers must recognize the numerical component of such a portrayal. Gematria appears to play a role in Shiur Qomah's reflection on the body of G-d. This discussion has noted how Ps 147:5 reveals the number 236 when read through the lens of gematria and that this number is instrumental in calculating major dimensions of the divine body. Other numerical dimensions may be similarly derived, although interpreters do not yet know them all. But there is another dimension to the numerology apart from the recognition of the numerical equivalents themselves, and this is the gargantuan dimensions employed in Shiur Qomah. Shiur

Qomah maintains that G-d's height is 2,300,000,000 parasangs. Although that is a calculable number, it is a figure beyond normal human comprehension. Such a feature is an indispensable aspect of Shiur Qomah's depiction of G-d, that is, G-d has a massive divine presence, but the divine presence is beyond human capacity to comprehend in any meaningful way. The point of such numbers is not to limit the divine presence; it is to demonstrate the overwhelming dimensions of the divine presence.

Third, Shiur Qomah has a liturgical dimension insofar as it is composed and structured around the major elements of the Jewish prayer service. It includes versions of the Amidah, the Shema, Kaddesh, the Mi Kamoka, the Kedushah, and the Aleinu, and the depictions of the divine body are interspersed among these liturgical elements. Such a strategy is quite deliberate insofar as Shiur Qomah intends to place its readers in the context of worship of the divine presence of G-d. But in doing so, it reformulates the Jewish prayer service beyond that which we normally experience to one that must be identified as a heavenly prayer service. When in the context of the *merkabah* or Heikhalot literature, such a strategy is hardly surprising, as this literature constantly employs liturgical dimensions in its portrayals of the divine and human attempts to relate to G-d. But here, readers must recognize that the liturgical structure is foundational, that is, liturgy sets the structure of the text, and the depiction of the body of G-d is intended to be read within the context of that structure and not vice versa. When this fundamental feature of the Shiur Qomah is recognized, readers must conclude that the Shiur Qomah employs the bodily dimensions of G-d as a means to address its readers, asking them to imagine the overwhelming presence of G-d before them as they pray.

In sum, then, the Shiur Qomah is not an embarrassment or a monstrosity, as some past scholars have argued; it is an attempt to reflect on the presence of G-d in the context of Jewish prayer and worship. By portraying the tangible and immense presence of G-d in the context of Jewish prayer, the Shiur Qomah emerges as a text that asks its readers to remember before whom they pray and to reflect on before whom they live throughout their lives in the world of creation in which G-d has placed them.

10

The Democratization of Messianism in Modern Jewish Thought

1.

One of the issues raised in reaction to the development of Jewish biblical theology is the extent to which theological interpretation of the Tanak will interact with later Jewish tradition.[1] Although there is a long tradition of Jewish interpretation of the Bible from antiquity to the present, the impact of modern historical-critical scholarship and comparative Near Eastern studies has prompted many Jewish (and non-Jewish) biblical scholars to contend that biblical interpretation should focus only on the biblical text itself and not on the later rabbinic traditions of Judaism (or for Christian interpreters, the New Testament).[2] There is indeed a certain justification for

1. Levenson, "Why Jews Are Not Interested," esp. 286–87; Sweeney, "Emerging Field of Jewish Biblical Theology," esp. 99–101. For overview discussion of the field of Jewish biblical theology, see, in addition to Sweeney, Gerhard Hasel, "The Emerging Field," in *Old Testament Theology*, 286–311. See also Bellis and Kaminsky, *Jews, Christians, and the Theology*.

2. See, e.g., Mattitiyahu Tsevat, "Theology of the Old Testament—A Jewish View," *HBT* 8 (1986): 33–50; Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "Tanakh Theology: The Religion of the Old Testament and the Place of Jewish Biblical Theology," in *Ancient Israelite Reli-*

studying and maintaining the integrity of the Bible's own presentation of its theological ideas, particularly since modern scholars are acutely aware of the role that later tradition has played in shaping and often changing or distorting interpreters' understandings of the biblical text. Nevertheless, there is also a certain justification for asking how the Bible relates to subsequent Jewish tradition, including the understanding(s) of the biblical text in later tradition and its conceptualization of Judaism and Jewish thought at large. One might point, for example, to the role that the modern experience of the Shoah (Holocaust) has played in prompting interpreters to direct some important questions to their reading of the biblical text that were either overlooked or deemphasized by earlier interpreters, such as the potential for divine absence, complicity, or sorrow in the face of evil; or the rheological significance of the establishment of modern Israel in the aftermath of the Shoah.[3] Indeed, with the postmodern emphasis on the contextualization of biblical interpretation, the question of the relation of the Bible to subsequent Jewish tradition is essential to the development of Jewish biblical theology.[4]

It is with this in mind that I would like to address the conceptualization of messianism in several modern strands of Jewish thought. Biblical texts frequently speak of a Davidic monarch, who will deliver Israel/Judah from oppression and play a role in inaugurating an ideal age of peace and restoration for the people of Israel/Judah and indeed the world at large.[5] Such an understanding of a personal messiah has loomed large

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gion, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 617–44.

3. E.g., Fackenheim, *Jewish Bible after the Holocaust*; Fackenheim, *G-d's Presence in History*; Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*; Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust*; Garber, *Shoah*; Braiterman, *(G-d) after Auschwitz*; Tod Linafelt, ed., *Strange Fire: Reading the Bible after the Holocaust*, BibSem 71 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000); Williamson, *Guest in the House*.

4. Sweeney, "Why Jews Should Be Interested"; Sweeney, "Reconceiving the Paradigms"; Marvin A. Sweeney, "History of Israelite Religion or Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Theology? Jewish Interest in Biblical Theology," in *Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy: Studies in Scriptures in the Shadow of Internal and External Controversies* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2002), 107–59.

5. For overview discussion of the texts and concepts of messianism in the Hebrew Bible, see esp. Marinus de Jonge, "Messiah," *ABD* 4:777–78; Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel from Its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah* (New York: Macmillan, 1955); Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, trans. George W. Ander-

in the development of Christianity, and it has also played a role in Judaism at various points throughout its history, but the concept of an ideal messianic age in which a royal Davidic figure is absent or serves only in a marginal role appears to be far more influential in the various movements of modern Judaism. Indeed, a number of biblical texts portray such an ideal age either without the presence of a messiah or with the marginal involvement of such a messianic figure (e.g., Isa 2:2–4; 35; 49–54; 55; 60–62; 65–66; Ezek 40–48, Hos 14:2–9, Joel 3–4, Zeph 3:14–20, Zech 12–14). The book of Isaiah is particularly important in this regard. The first part of the book contains several important messianic texts that articulate the notion of an ideal Davidic monarch (e.g., Isa 9:1–6, 11:1–16, 32:1–8), and the second part of the book announces the Persian king Cyrus as the messiah and temple builder (see Isa 44:28, 45:1) and later even G-d as the true royal figure (see Isa 66:1–24) while applying the Davidic covenant to the people of Israel at large (see Isa 55:1–13, esp. v. 3).[6] Although the significance of this democratization of the Davidic covenant has been discussed extensively in relation to its biblical context, either within the book of Isaiah itself or in relation to the larger framework of the Bible as a whole, relatively less attention has been paid to the role of such a concept in modern Jewish thought.[7]

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son (Nashville: Abingdon, 1956); Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979). For a discussion of messianism in the general history of Judaism and Jewish thought, see Harold Louis Ginzberg et al., "Messiah," *EncJud* 11:1407–17; Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "Messianic Movements," *EncJud* 11:1417–27; Ben-Sasson, "Messiah," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 458–60; William Scott Green and Jed Silverstein, "The Doctrine of the Messiah," in *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 247–67; Harris Lenowitz, *The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

6. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Multiple Settings in the Book of Isaiah," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1993 Seminar Papers*, ed. Eugene H. Lovering Jr. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 267–73; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*.

7. See Sweeney, "Reconceptualization of the Davidic Covenant in Isaiah"; Otto Eissfeldt, "The Promises of Grace to David in Isaiah 55:1–5," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenberg*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (London: SCM, 1962), 196–207; Hugh G. M. Williamson, "'The Sure Mercies of David': Subjective or Objective Genitive?," *JSS* 23 (1978): 31–49; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, AB 19A (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 366–73; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 431–38.

This essay therefore provides a cursory examination of the notion of a democratized messianic age in several major streams of modern Judaism and Jewish thought. It focuses especially on the role of kabbalistic thought in articulating the interrelationship between G-d and human beings and in laying the foundation for modern notions of a messianic age. In presenting such an examination, it provides the basis for relating the notion of a democratized Davidic covenant in the book of Isaiah to modern expressions of the role of Jews and Judaism at large in bringing about an ideal messianic age.

<div align="center">2.</div>

I would like to begin by quoting a story told about the Baal Shem Tov, the Podolian rabbi and mystic faith healer, who founded the modern Hasidic movement in Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century:[8]

> One day [the Baal Shem Tov] promised to show [his disciples] the Prophet Elijah. "Open your eyes wide," he said. A few days later they saw a beggar enter the House of Study/Beit Midrash and emerge clutching a book under his arm. Shortly thereafter they watched him leaving a ceremony, taking along a silver spoon. The third lime, he appeared to them disguised as a soldier on a horse, asking them to light his pipe. "It was he," said the Baal Shem, "The secret is in the eyes."[9]

The point of this story is to teach that the prophet Elijah, who will precede the Messiah, could be anyone and everyone. By portraying the prophet first as a common thief who steals a book from the Beit Midrash and later a silver spoon from a celebration and then as a Russian soldier, who was

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8. For discussion of Israel ben Eliezer (the Baal Shem Tov) and the foundation of Hasidic Judaism, see Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 325–50; Gershom Scholem, "The Neutralization of Messianism in Early Hasidim," in *The Messianic Idea, and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1972), 176–202; Simon Dubnow, "The Beginnings: The Baal Shem Tov (Besht) and the Center in Podolia," in *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present*, ed. Gershon David Hundert (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 25–57; Benzion Dinur, "The Origins of Hasidism and its Social and Messianic Foundations," in Hundert, *Essential Papers on Hasidism*, 86–208.

9. Adapted from Elie Wiesel, *Souls on Fire: Portraits and Legends of the Hasidic Masters* (New York: Summit, 1972), 27.

always perceived as a threat by Jews, the Baal Shem Tov emphasizes the Hasidic teaching that every human being possesses a spark of the divine within and that every human being is therefore capable of being recognized as the prophet Elijah. By stating that "the secret is in the eyes," the Baal Shem Tov emphasizes the need for his disciples to recognize the holiness of divine presence chat is inherent in the world of creation at large and, indeed, in themselves in particular.

Although rooted in the Hasidic tradition, such a story well illustrates the general view of messianism that pervades most movements of modern Judaism, namely, the messiah is not a supernatural individual, whose appearance in the world will inaugurate the new age of the kingdom of G-d. Indeed, such a conceptualization of the messiah appears to be characteristic of the Christian tradition in general. Judaism, however, has experienced a number of would-be messiahs, Zerubbabel ben Shealtiel (see Hag 2:20–23), Jesus of Nazareth, Shimon bar Kosiba/bar Kokhba, Shabbetai Zvi, Shukr Kuhayl I and Shukr Kuhayl II of Yemen, and even the implicit claims concerning the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menahem Schneerson,[10] but every one of them has failed to realize the biblical expectations of the world of creation at peace in which all nations will recognize G-d at the holy temple in Jerusalem. Although there is still room for a personal messiah in some elements of Judaism, as the last-cited example of the Lubavitcher Rebbe indicates, modern Judaism tends to think in terms of a messianic age in which all Jews—and indeed all human beings—have the divinely ordained responsibility to work for the sanctification of the entire world of creation.

In order to illustrate this contention, the remainder of this essay discusses three basic movements and individuals that have played constitutive roles in defining the outlook of modern Judaism and its perspectives on the messianic age, namely, kabbalistic thought as taught

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10. On Zerubbabel ben Shealtiel, see Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 2:549–55. On Jesus, see Lenowitz, *Jewish Messiah*, 34–49. On bar Kokhba, see Richard G. Marks, *The Image of Bar Kochba in Traditional Jewish Literature* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); Lenowitz, *Jewish Messiahs*, 49–59. For a detailed study of Shabbetai Zvi, see Gershom Scholem, *Shabetai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah (1626–1676)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); cf. Lenowitz, *Jewish Messiahs*, 149–65. On Shukr Kuhayl I and II, see Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman, *The Jews of Yemen in the Nineteenth Century: A Portrait of a Messianic Community* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), esp. 104–58; Lenowitz, *Jewish Messiahs*, 235–56. On Lubavitcher Rebbe, see Lenowitz, *Jewish Messiahs*, 215–23.

by the sixteenth-century mystic of Safed, Isaac Luria; modern Jewish philosophy as taught by eighteenth-century Berlin rationalist, Moses Mendelssohn; and modem Zionism as conceived by the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thinker Asher Ginzberg, better known by his pen name, Ahad Ha-Am.

<div align="center">3.</div>

Although much of modern nineteenth-century Jewish scholarship castigated Jewish mysticism as an illegitimate expression of Jewish superstition that had rejected the principles of modern rationalism, twentieth- and now twenty-first-century interpreters of Judaism have begun to recognize the foundational role that Jewish mysticism plays in the conceptualization of modern Jewish thought.[11] Scholem, the late historian of Jewish mysticism, almost singlehandedly demonstrates that Jewish mysticism was not a deviant or heretical offshoot of Judaism, but instead it plays a crucial role in defining modern Judaism's view of G-d, human beings, and the world. Indeed, he very perceptively demonstrates that concepts from Jewish mysticism underlie modern Reform Judaism and the modern Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment of Eastern Europe.[12]

Scholem traces the influence of Jewish mysticism on modern Jewish thought through the experience of the false messiah, Shabbetai Zvi (1626–1676), who proclaimed himself to be the messiah in 1665 but converted to Islam some two years later when he was arrested by the Ottoman Turks and threatened with death if he did not renounce his claims.[13] Scholem demonstrates that Shabbetai Zvi's experience, particularly the claim that he was a hidden messiah whose conversion marked his willingness to descend into the deepest depths of sin in order to redeem the world, was instrumental in the foundation of modern Hasidism a century after his death. But in fact, the foundations for Shabbetai Zvi's claims and the

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11. On the castigation of Jewish mysticism, see, e.g., Heinrich Graetz, *A History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1891–1898), 3:522–62, esp., 546–57. For general studies of Jewish mysticism, see esp. Scholem, *Major Trends*; Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

12. See Gershom Scholem, "Redemption through Sin," in *Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 78–141.

13. See also Scholem's larger study of Shabbetai Zvi, noted above, and *Major Trends*, 287–324.

worldview of modern Hasidism owe much to the kabbalistic system of thought devised by Isaac Luria (1534–1572).

Luria was born in Jerusalem, was brought up in Egypt, and taught a group of mystic disciples in the city of Safed from 1570 until his death from the plague in 1572.[14] In true mystical fashion, he wrote no literary works, but his disciples recorded his teachings after his death. Luria lived in a desperate time for the Jewish people, immediately following the expulsion of the Jewish population of Spain by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1492. The exile and destruction of Spanish Jewry had tremendous repercussions throughout the Jewish world, since Spanish Jewry had emerged as the premier Jewish community of the medieval world, known for both its advances in Jewish learning and its high standing in Muslim and later Christian Spain.

The exile of Spanish Jewry posed the fundamental question of evil to Jewish thinkers of the day, much as the Shoah or Holocaust challenges modern Jewish and Christian theology. How could G-d stand by and allow the destruction of the world's preeminent Jewish community? Drawing on earlier kabbalistic concepts of the ten sephirot, that is, the ten emanations or qualities of G-d that permeate the world and every human being within it,[15] Luria and his disciples devised a theological system that attempted to discern the character of G-d and the nature of the world of creation that G-d had produced. The ten sephirot included abstract qualities, such as the will, wisdom, undemanding, the capacity for lovingkindness, the capacity for punishment, dynamism in the material world, and stability in the material world, that pointed to qualities shared by human beings, G-d, and the world at large. Luria argues that it is the interaction of these qualities within the personality of G-d that prompts G-d to create the world. Although G-d is infinite, G-d's lovingkindness prompts G-d to create the world. But the creation of a finite world limits the infi-

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14. For discussion of Isaac Luria and the development of Lurianic Kabbalah, see Scholem, *Major Trends*, 244–86; Solomon Schechter, "Safed in the Sixteenth Century, A City of Legists and Mystics," in *The Jewish Expression*, ed. Judah Goldin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 258–321; R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "The Safed Revival and its Aftermath," in *Jewish Spirituality from the Sixteenth Century Revival to the Present*, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 7–33; Lenowitz, *Jewish Messiahs*, 125–47.

15. For discussion of the ten sephirot of Kabbalistic thought, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "Ten Sephirot," *DDD*, 837–43; Gershom Scholem, "Kabbalah," *EncJud* 10:489–653, esp. 556–79, 588–601.

nite character of G-d and calls forth the quality of punishment or evil that
is inherent in G-d and the world created by G-d. Luria expresses the cre-
ation metaphorically as G-d's pouring divine light into ten earthenware
jars. Of course, such a metaphor points to an effort to contain the infinite
nature of G-d in finite vessels. In Luria's thought, the finite vessels were
unable to contain the light of G-d. Seven of them shattered, and thereby
scattered divine sparks of light mixed together with the finite pieces of the
shattered jars throughout the world of creation. Such a metaphor points to
the conceptualization of human beings, each of whom possesses a spark
of divine light within that is encased in a finite vessel. Insofar as every
human being possesses such a spark of divine light within, Luria argues
that every human being has the responsibility to recognize that divine
light and to act on or to actualize that divine spark within in order to
carry out the human responsibility to act as partners with G-d cosanctify
the world in which we live. In this manner, Luria metaphorically claims
that human beings must gather the sparks of divine light from among
the broken shards of the shattered vessels, reassemble them, and thereby
restore the holy, divine presence in the world of creation. Indeed, such a
reconstitution of the holy presence in the world constitutes the repair of
the world or *tikkun olam* in Luria's thought. Because Jews were designated
by G-d to bring knowledge of the holy presence to the world at large,
Luria argues that the exile of Jews throughout the world is intended to
play a role in sanctifying the world. In short, the evil of exile became the
platform by which the goodness of divine holiness would be realized in
creation at large.

Luria's conceptualization of the repair of the world, or *tikkun olam*,
has implications for understanding the nature of messianism in Jewish
thought. Every Jew and every human being possesses the divine spark
within and has both the capacity and the responsibility to act on that
spark to bring about *tikkun olam*. In this respect, anyone and every-
one represents a potential messiah for the world. It is this principle
that underlies Shabbetai Zvi's claims to be the messiah—although the
results hardly brought about the *tikkun olam* that Lurianic kabbalah
envisions—and it is this principle that underlies modern Hasidism of all
varieties. Indeed, for modern Hasidism, particularly the Habad move-
ment, a holy life begins with the mental sephirot or divine qualities, that
is, *hokmah*, "wisdom," *binah*, "understanding," and *da'at*, "knowledge,"
that is, HaBaD, that then actualize the moral sephirot of lovingkindness
and judgment and the material sephirot of dynamism and stability in the

lives of human beings.[16] Through the manifestation of holiness in one's mental, moral, and material life, one may live a holy life and bring about *tikkun olam*.

<div align="center">4.</div>

As noted above, Scholem argues that Jewish mysticism, under the influence of the career of Shabbetai Zvi, plays an important role in laying the groundwork for the emergence of Reform Judaism in Western Europe. Scholem's argument is based in large measure on the Shabbatean contention that the coming of the messiah entails the abrogation of torah; namely, Shabbetai Zvi early in his career began to violate precepts of the torah publicly in order to affirm his messianic status, and his later conversion to Islam was taken as a proof of his role in bringing about the sanctification of the entire world. Insofar as early Reform Judaism in the nineteenth century would call for the end of traditional Jewish observances that purportedly had no place in the modern world, Scholem sees a link between the Shabbatean experience and modern Reform.[17] And yet, such a characterization of the link misconstrues the issue. The crucial question in Reform Judaism is not the abrogation of torah; it is, in fact, the question of the place and role of Jews in the modern world.[18] Indeed, the same question underlies the formulation of modern Orthodox Judaism in Germany during the same period.[19] We might also observe that the recent moves of the Reform movement to more traditional forms of observance point to a

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16. For discussion of Habad Hasidism, see Rachel Elior, *The Paradoxical Ascent to G-d: The Kabbalist Theosophy of Habad Hasidism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Elior, "The Contemplative Ascent to G-d," in Green, *Jewish Spirituality from the Sixteenth Century*, 157–205.

17. See Scholem, "Redemption through Sin," esp. 84.

18. For discussion of the emergence of Reform Judaism in Germany and the development of early Reform theology, see Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 10–224; Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe: The Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968).

19. Note, for example, Samson Raphael Hirsch's adaptation of the principle *torah in derekh eretz*, "torah with the way of the world," which expresses his call for traditional Jewish observance while living in the modern world. For discussion, see Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, 584–90, esp., 586; Meyer, *Response to Modernity*,

fundamental concern with the question of what constitutes torah and its observance in the modern world.[20]

Modern Reform Judaism and modern Orthodoxy share the contention that Judaism serves as a means to bring knowledge of G-d to the world at large. They differ markedly in their views on how this is accomplished, but both are grounded in the view that G-d's Torah was revealed to Israel at Mount Sinai, outside the land of Israel, and that the designation of Israel/Judaism as a holy people was an event of worldwide significance intended to reveal G-d to the world at large. Both contend that Jews play an instrumental role in sanctifying the world, and thereby in bringing about the messianic age of peace and holiness in the world as all come to recognize G-d. We might note the basis for such a contention in Lurianic kabbalah's understanding of exile and *tikkun olam*, but we must also consider the work of Enlightenment Jewish philosopher Mendelssohn (1729–1786), who laid the foundation in Jewish thought for the emergence of both modern Reform and modern Orthodox Judaism.[21]

Mendelssohn was the son of a poor Torah scribe named Mendel in the city of Dessau. He was a child prodigy, having mastered Talmud and Maimonides by the age of fourteen. When his teacher, Rabbi David Frankel, left Dessau in 1743 to accept an appointment as chief rabbi of Berlin, young Moses followed. In Berlin, Mendelssohn became one of the first Jews to study in the university, and he quickly mastered philosophy, aesthetics, mathematics, and languages, such as German, Greek, Latin, French, and English. Indeed, Mendelssohn was an anomaly for his time, an educated and enlightened Jew, which most in Christian society thought to be impossible. Young Mendelssohn achieved great stature in Berlin as a leading intellectual, particularly after he won first prize in an essay

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77–79; Noah H. Rosenbloom, *Tradition in an Age of Reform: The Religious Philosophy of Samson Raphael Hirsch* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1976).

20. See Dana Evan Kaplan, "Reform Judaism," in Neusner and Avery-Peck, *Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, 291–310, esp. 305–6.

21. For studies of the life and thought of Mendelssohn, see David Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973). For a study of Mendelssohn's principles of biblical interpretation in relation to Enlightenment thought, see Edward Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment: Jews, Germans, and the Eighteenth-Century Study of Scripture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

competition sponsored by the Berlin Royal Academy, beating the young Immanuel Kant.

Mendelssohn adhered to the general principles of reason that were characteristic of the day and spent much of his career writing in the areas of philosophy and aesthetics. His treatise *Phaedon* argues for the principles of rational religion in the Enlightenment world, namely, G-d's existence, divine providence, and immortality of the soul, each of which could be demonstrated by rational argumentation.[22] Although he was viewed as a modern Socrates, Mendelssohn was frequently challenged by Christian intellectuals to defend his adherence to the "backward" Jewish religion or to convert to Christianity, which was conceived at the time as a religion of natural reason. As a result of these challenges, Mendelssohn in 1783 published his classic work, *Jerusalem, or On Religious Power and Judaism*, which is widely recognized as the foundation for modern Jewish thought.[23] It is a work concerned fundamentally with the place and role of Jews in modern Enlightenment society, and it articulates a philosophy of Judaism that defines Judaism as a modern religion of reason. It begins with the question of the right of religious authorities to excommunicate adherents for heresy. Mendelssohn argues that the right of coercion belongs only to the state, not to religion, and that the state has no right to apply coercion in matters of conscience. Religion is a matter of reason, and a true religion of reason properly holds to three essential rational truths, belief in G-d, divine providence, and immortality of the soul, because each can be demonstrated by rational arguments. In this respect, Judaism is a true religion of reason, as is any other tradition that holds to these principles, such as Christianity. But Mendelssohn rejects the notion of supernatural revelation; all people have an innate ability to discover the rational truth of G-d. To make G-d dependent on a supernatural revelation suggests that G-d is not omnipotent, since G-d would be unable to give humans the capacity to discern G-d themselves. For Mendelssohn, the revelation at Sinai is not the revelation of religion—for G-d was already known prior to Sinai—but the revelation of Mosaic law, which is designed to form Israel into the holy Jewish people and thereby to stimulate reflection and contemplation that would facilitate recognition of G-d. Although Jews had been formed

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22. For discussion of *Phaedon*, see esp. Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 140–58.

23. Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem, or On Religious Power and Judaism*, trans. Allan Arkush, with commentary by Alexander Altmann (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1983).

originally as a nation, the end of that nation meant that Jews could go out into the world and bring knowledge of G-d or rational religion to the world at large. Practically speaking, Mendelssohn's conception of Judaism as a rational religion meant that Jews could live simultaneously as loyal and productive citizens of the modern European nation and as faithful and observant adherents of the Jewish religion. To that end, Mendelssohn calls on Jews to learn German, to learn secular knowledge, and to live as full citizens of the gentile societies of the time, in order to demonstrate knowledge of G-d to the world and to play their roles in bringing that world to its ultimate perfection. For Mendelssohn, such perfection is encapsulated in his contention that G-d intends not a single religion but a diversity of religions in which human beings would learn to accept and respect the beliefs of others while adhering to their own.

Indeed, Mendelssohn's principles stand at the basis of modern Reform and Orthodox Judaism insofar as each defines itself in religious terms so that Jews may live in the diaspora. Abraham Geiger, the primary architect of nineteenth-century Reform Judaism in Germany, for example, calls for the modernization of Judaism so that Jews could live legitimately as citizens of the modern European state.[24] Samson Raphael Hirsch, the primary architect of modern Orthodox Judaism, articulates the Talmudic principle of *torah im derekh eretz*, that is, "torah with the way of the world," so that Jews could adhere to traditional observance of torah while living in the modern secular state.[25] Both see the role of Jews in the world as models of holiness that call on human beings to recognize the reality of G-d and thereby to bring about the sanctification or perfection of the world at large.

<p style="text-align:center;">5.</p>

Scholem also argues that the Shabbatean movement plays a role in laying the foundations for the Haskalah movement, that is, the Jewish Enlightenment, that was known initially in Western Europe but ultimately found its

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24. For discussion of Geiger, see Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, 591–97; Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 89–99; Michael A. Meyer, "Abraham Geiger's 'Historical Judaism,'" in *New Perspectives on Abraham Geiger: An HUC-JIR Symposium*, ed. Jakob J. Petuchowski (New York: Ktav, for Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute for Religion, 1975), 3–16.

25. See n. 19 above. See also Benjamin Brown. "Orthodox Judaism," in Neusner and Avery-Peck, *Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, 311–33.

deepest and most widespread expressions in Eastern Europe. Again, Scholem points to the nihilism of the Shabbateans as a primary contributing factor in the development of the Haskalah, particularly since the Haskalah gives expression to Jewish secularism and the abandonment of traditional Jewish observance in its calls for Jews to enter the modern age.[26] And yet here, too, the religious dimensions of Jewish mysticism cannot be ignored. Although Eastern European Hasidism began with an anti-intellectual outlook that rejected traditional Jewish practice and learning in favor of individual spiritual expression, Hasidism very quickly adapted itself to traditional torah study and practice as the Hasidic rebbes came to understand that the development of the mind or inner divine essence was crucial to the expression of Jewish spirituality in the moral and material realms of Jewish life.[27] As noted above, the focus on the mental aspects of the divine emanations in the human being and the world at large produced Habad Hasidism, which emphasizes *hokmah* (wisdom), *binah* (understanding), and *da'at* (knowledge) as the fundamental basis for both the divine and human personality and sense of self-consciousness. It is this sense of self-consciousness that motivates modern Hasidism in its efforts to promote holy life and thereby to sanctify the world.

And yet the kabbalistic/Hasidic interest in the mental qualities of the divine/human personality was not limited only to religious forms of Jewish expression. The secular, rationalistic orientation of the Haskalah in Eastern Europe was also profoundly interested in the question of the Jewish mind or spirit that stood at the core of the Jewish individual and the Jewish people as a whole. Indeed, the question of the Jewish spirit stands at the basis of modern Zionism, the political movement of Judaism that calls for the reestablishment of a Jewish nation.[28] Although we frequently think of Herzl as the founder of modern Zionism, he was a highly assimilated Austrian Jew who had little formal Jewish education or sense of Jewish identity. He tended to be an effective organizer and publicist for modern

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26. Scholem, "Redemption through Sin," 84.

27. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, 340–43; Elior, *Paradoxical Ascent*; Elior, "Contemplative Ascent to G-d."

28. For studies of the history and intellectual outlook of modern Zionism, see Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Laqueur, *History of Zionism*; Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea* (New York: Athenaum, 1979), esp. 15–100.

Zionism, but he was not a major theoretician.[29] That role is more properly assigned to his eastern European counterpart, Ginzberg, better known by his pen name, Ahad Ha-Am, "One of the People," who worked out the theoretical foundations of modern Zionism and its understanding of the character of the Jewish state and the Jewish people.[30] Insofar as he defines the national character of the Jewish spirit as the basis for Jewish national self-identity, it is apparently no accident that he started life as a traditional Hasidic Jew.[31]

Ginzberg was born to a traditional Hasidic family in the Ukraine in 1856 and achieved a reputation as a brilliant young Hasidic Talmud scholar. When his family was forced by the Russian May Laws to move to the city of Odessa in 1884, young Ginzberg encountered a city in which the secular Haskalah was in full swing. Influenced by the Haskalah, the general intellectual atmosphere of Odessa, and the openly anti-Semitic policies of the Russian government, Ginzberg quickly emerged as the leading figure in the Hovevei Zion movement, which called for Jews to return to the land of Israel, since Jewish life in Russia—and, indeed, in Europe in general—was becoming untenable.

Under the pen name Ahad Ha-Am, Ginzberg calls for the recognition of the Jewish spirit or Jewish national character as the basis for cultural Zionism. He argues that the Jewish people, like all nations, possess a distinctive culture and spirit that defines its national character and that prompts the continued development and progressive outlook of the Jewish people through history and into the future. Of course, one sees the influence of kabbalistic/Hasidic thought insofar as the intangible divine emanations or qualities stood at the core of both G-d and the individual human being, much as the intangible Jewish spirit stood at the core of Jewish culture and national character. Because of his notions of historical

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29. See esp. Avineri, *Modern Zionism*, 88–100; Laqueur, *History of Zionism*, 84–135.

30. See esp. Avineri, *Modern Zionism*, 112–24; Jacques Kornberg, "Ahad Ha-Am and Herzl," in *At the Crossroads: Essays on Ahad ha-ʿAm*, ed. Jacques Kornberg (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 106–29. For a collection of his writings, see *Ahad Haʿam, Collected Essays*, trans. Leon Simon (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1948). Note especially his essay "Flesh and Spirit," 139–58.

31. For a background study of the interrelationship between Hasidism and the Haskalah in Eastern Europe, see esp. Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985).

progression, Ahad Ha-Am believes that the period of national religious expression has come to an end, but that the core of the Jewish personality has been defined by its keen sense of ethics and absolute justice throughout its history. He argues that this sense of ethics and justice had developed during the origins of Jewish national history in the land of Israel and that it is rooted in the outlook of the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, who continually call for justice and ethics in ancient Jewish society. Bear in mind that Moses was a prophet and that Mosaic law is fundamentally concerned with the questions of justice and ethics as well. In Ahad Ha-Am's estimation, this distinctive Jewish character is the product of Jewish life in the land of Israel as the Jewish sense of self-identity is formed as a part of its national character. For Ahad Ha-Am, life in the land of Israel forms the Jewish national spirit, and continued life in the land of Israel is essential to the continued development of that Jewish spirit and a distinctive Jewish culture. Life in exile, in which Jews had suffered under the oppression of the nations, had deprived Jews of the freedom necessary to develop Jewish national culture. A return to the land of Israel is an absolute necessity for the future of the Jewish people, because only in Israel would Jews have the freedom from persecution to define their own national life and character.

And yet Ahad Ha-Am recognizes full well that the historical experience of the Jewish nation includes some seventeen hundred years of exile in foreign lands following the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE and the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt against Rome in 135 CE. To that end, he notes how life among the nations had provided Jews with the opportunity to learn about and participate in the advances that were being made throughout the world, in technology, in social thought, in the arts, politics, and so on. One might note here the Lurianic reinterpretation of exile, since Ahad Ha-Am looks for the positive aspects of a very negative experience. Despite the threat of anti-Semitism, life in the diaspora enabled Jews to adapt the more progressive elements of the world in their efforts to ensure the continued development and progress of the Jewish nation. To that end, Ahad Ha-Am calls for a close relationship between Jews living in the diaspora and Jews living in the land of Israel. Jews living in Israel would develop the distinctive national character of Judaism through life in the land, and Jews living in the diaspora would develop the progressive notions of human advancement in the modern world. Through such interaction, Ahad Ha-Am maintains that the Jewish nation would serve as an example for the other nations of the world in its emphasis on absolute justice and ethics as the quintessential core of

the Jewish national character. Again, we might note that the emphasis on justice and ethics as the core quality of Jewish culture builds on earlier kabbalistic/Hasidic notions that the divine/human personality is obligated to bring about *tikkun olam*, "repair of the world." Although we no longer have a holy center for the world of creation, we have in Ahad Ha-Am's thought an ethical center for the world of the nations. In his estimation, it is a Jewish obligation to develop the ethical core articulated by the prophets as the basis for the Jewish national personality.

It is this understanding of the distinctive national character of the Jewish people, based in the ethics and justice of the prophets, that stands at the core of modern Zionist thought and the self-understanding of the modern state of Israel. We might also note that the notions of a distinctive Jewish people or nation likewise stand at the core of modern Conservative Judaism and its offshoot, Reconstructionist Judaism.[32] Although modern Americans are very accustomed to thinking in terms of the separation of church and state, the foundations of the modern Jewish state arc very much rooted in the religious traditions of Jewish mysticism.

<div align="center">6.</div>

ln conclusion, it seems dear that messianism has had a profound impact on modern Jewish thought. Although there is still a place, at least in some circles, for a personal messiah, modern Jewish thought in general has moved to a collective understanding of a messianic age in which Jews in general have the responsibility to work for the continued improvement and, ultimately, the perfection of the world in which we live. Insofar as the book of Isaiah—and in particular, Isa 55:3—points to a democratized understanding of messianism in which Jews and Judaism in general stand as heirs to the Davidic covenant while G-d ultimately functions as the righteous king, Jewish biblical theology would best illustrate its con-

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32. For studies of modern Conservative and Reconstructionist Judaism and their distinctive theologies or worldviews, see Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism*, 81–111, 179–87; Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Greater Judaism in the Making: A Study of the Modern Evolution of Judaism* (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1967), 350–80, 450–511; David Gordis, "Conservative Judaism: The Struggle between Ideology and Popularity," in Neusner and Avery-Peck, *Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, 334–53; Robert G. Goldy, *The Emergence of Jewish Theology in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

temporary relevance by pointing to the influence of such a concept in the articulation of modern Jewish thought. In this regard, it should be noted that Judaism does not envision a world in which all human beings become Jewish. Instead, it envisions a world in which Jews play a role in bringing knowledge of G-d to the world at large, but in which gentiles will develop their own distinctive religious traditions that will express that knowledge. The so-called Noachian laws in the Babylonian Talmud (b. Sanh. 56–60) call on Jews to observe the entire Torah, but they call on gentiles to observe seven precepts: to avoid idolatry, blasphemy, bloodshed, sexual sins, theft, and eating from a living animal and to establish legal systems.[33] In such a conceptualization, the vision of the messianic age announced by the prophets in which all nations will stream to Zion to give up war and to learn the teachings or Torah of G-d will also email the recognition by all nations of their obligation to develop their own distinctive approaches to bringing about *tikkun olam* or the repair of the world while simultaneously recognizing the right and responsibility of other nations to work toward the same end.

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33. See Steven S. Schwarzchild and Saul Berman, "Noachide Laws," *EncJud* 12:1189–91.

Part 3
Torah

11

Shabbat:
An Epistemological Principle for
Holiness, Sustainability, and Justice in the Pentateuch

1.

Last August, my wife and I drove north through the San Joaquin Valley of central California, once a fertile breadbasket that supplied some 40 percent of the agricultural produce grown in the United States. Although we were well aware of the drought that has plagued California and other parts of the western United States for several years now, we were shocked and dismayed at the devastation we witnessed all along Interstate 5. Coming from a declining agricultural area in central Illinois, I shudder at the consequences that such drought and devastation portend for our food supply, particularly since the world human population has expanded from some two and half billion when I was born to some seven billion today. I fear for the future of our children as they enter a world facing chronic shortages of food and the potential outbreak of violence as human beings begin to compete for resources in an increasingly overtaxed world.

Those of us who identify in one form or another with the Jewish and Christian traditions rooted in the foundational instruction of the Pentateuch and beyond must recognize that we human beings bear at least some degree of responsibility for ensuring the viability of the world in which we live. Genesis 1:26–28 posits that G-d created human beings on the penultimate day of creation and charged us with responsibility for "mastering" the earth and "ruling" over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all

the living things that creep about on earth as we become fruitful and mul-
tiply and fill the earth.

And yet in our own arrogance and conceit, we so frequently forget
that we are a part of creation itself as we focus on ourselves as the ultimate
masters of creation to the exclusion of the context of creation as a whole in
which we were created. We forget that our roles as masters and rulers call
for responsible action to recognize and ensure the holiness, justice, and
sustainability of creation. Our own irresponsibility begins with the ways in
which we read Genesis diachronically, by positing that the seven-day pro-
cess of creation is Priestly and therefore not as worthy of consideration as
the purportedly earlier J tradition, which focuses more on human beings
in the world of creation rather than on creation itself. Although some very
useful work has been done on J in this regard, contemporary scholarship
now questions the early date and even the existence of J.[1] In any case a
focus on J alone gives only a small part of the picture.

To that end, I propose reading the Pentateuch from a synchronic per-
spective, which recognizes that the seven-day process of creation points
to the holy Shabbat as an epistemological principle that informs creation
and the role of human beings within it. I do not intend that a synchronic
reading would replace diachronic readings; rather, I see synchronic and
diachronic readings as complementary.[2] I will attempt to demonstrate
this contention by examining two fundamental issues. The first issue
is the holy nature of creation itself and human responsibility in it as
expressed in Gen 1:1–2:3. The second issue is the laws of the Pentateuch
that employ the seven-day Shabbat principle as the basis for governing
the agricultural calendar and treatment of the land and for ensuring
social justice among the people of the land. Treatment of the legal materi-
als will include the Covenant Code of Exod 20–24 and its supplement in
Exod 34; the laws of the tabernacle; offerings, holiness, and other matters

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1. E.g., Theodore Hiebert, *The Y-hwist's Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early
Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); cf. James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and
the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); Gary A. Anderson, *Genesis of
Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westmin-
ster John Knox, 2001). For current discussion of the J stratum of the Pentateuch, see
esp. Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid, eds., *A Farewell to the Y-hwist? The
Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, SymS 34 (Atlanta:
Society of Biblical Literature, 2006).

2. For a methodological overview, see Sweeney, "Form Criticism," 58–89.

in Exod 25–30, 31, 35–40, Leviticus, and the supplements in Numbers; and the book of Deuteronomy.

<div align="center">2.</div>

Genesis 1:1–2:3 presents an account of G-d's seven-day creation of the world that serves as the foundation for the entire pentateuchal narrative when read synchronically.[3] Indeed, it serves as the foundation for the entire Bible, whether the Bible is understood as the Tanak, the Jewish form of the Bible, or the Old Testament, the first major portion of the Christian form of the Bible. Insofar as the process of creation presented in Gen 1:1–2:3 culminates in the holy Shabbat, the Shabbat both completes and sanctifies that creation and thereby provides the epistemological basis that defines the character of creation and the means by which life, including human life, functions ideally within it.

In order to understand the Shabbat as the epistemological foundation of creation, we must consider several dimensions.

First is the initial statement of creation in Gen 1:1–2. Until relatively recent times, non-Jewish interpreters have understood these verses to describe a process of creation of out of nothing or *creatio ex nihilo*.[4] Such an understanding holds that G-d is the supreme creative power in the universe and the beginning point or Alpha of creation, which of course entails an Omega, or a point at which creation will come to an end. Such an understanding is based in Christian theological understanding of a creation that will ultimately reach its culmination with the second coming of Christ and thereafter cease to exist as we know it, ushering in a new age of eternal salvation. But such a conception is not supported by the text of Gen 1:1–2. It presupposes a finite understanding of Gen 1:1, "in the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth," followed by a second set of finite statements in Gen 1:2, "and the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the deep, and the spirit of G-d was hovering over the face of the waters." Thus we have a sequence of statements in which the earth is first created out of nothing in verse 1 and then in verse 2 we have a description of the state of the earth following its initial creation.

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3. For full discussion of the synchronic literary structure of the Pentateuch, see Sweeney, *Tanak*, 45–167.

4. For discussion of this point, see esp. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence*.

But such a reading is grammatically impossible based on the traditional form of the Hebrew MT.[5] As medieval Jewish Bible exegete Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi, 1040–1105 CE) demonstrated nearly a millennium ago, the Hebrew term, *bereshit*, often translated "in the beginning," cannot stand as an independent clause. The Hebrew term *reshit* is a constructive form that must be read in relation to the following term in the sentence so that *bereshit* can only read "in the beginning of." Thus the sentence *bereshit bara' Elohim et ha-shamayim ve'et ha'aretz* must read in awkward English, "in the beginning of the creating of [by] G-d of the heavens and the earth," or in better English, "when G-d began to create the heavens and the earth.…" In such a reading, Gen 1:1 can only be read as a subordinate clause that requires a following clause to serve as the primary assertion of the sentence, namely, "when G-d began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the wind of G-d was hovering over the waters." In such a statement, the earth is an unformed, preexisting entity at the outset of G-d's creation; that is, the earth already existed in an undefined form prior to G-d's creation. G-d's act of creation is not *creatio ex nihilo* or creation out of nothing; rather, it is the shaping and definition of the unformed earth that existed before G-d's creation commenced.

Indeed, the traditional reading that presents the notion of *creatio ex nihilo* is derived from the LXX reading of the text, *En archē epoiēsen ho Theos ton ouranon kai tēn gēn*, "in the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth," an interpretative reading of the Hebrew influenced by Hellenistic notions of creation circulating in the Egyptian Jewish community during the third–second centuries BCE.

Such a difference in interpretative perspective is not simply an exercise in semantics. Instead, it points to a divine model for human action in the world. Whereas the LXX reading of the text presents a model of divine action that humans are unable to emulate, the MT reading of the text presents a model of divine action that humans are indeed able—and perhaps—expected to emulate. Just as G-d takes a situation of unformed chaos and creates order and definition out of the chaos, so human beings, who are given dominion in creation, are expected to create order out of

5. See esp. Harry M. Orlinsky, *Notes on the New Translation of the Torah* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1969), 49–52.

chaos in the world of creation in which we live. The MT statement becomes a basis for calling for human action based on the model provided by G-d.

But we must also recognize that the seven-day process of creation in Gen 1:1–2:3 entails a dimension of sanctity that is inherent in creation. Creation in Gen 1:1–2:3 proceeds on the basis of six days of divine action and one day of divine rest. As we well know, the six days of creation are highly ordered to provide the basic structure of creation in two parallel three-day sequences.[6] The first sequence in days one through three calls for the creation of the basic structures of creation, beginning with the differentiation between light and darkness on day one, the differentiation between the waters of the earth and the waters of the heavens on day two, and the differentiation between the dry land, which produces plant life, and the waters of the sea on day three. The second sequence on days four through six fills in some of the details for the basic structures created on the first three days. The second sequence therefore includes the lights of the heaven, which function to reckon time, and the sun and the moon, which function to distinguish day and night on the fourth day; the creation of sea creatures and the birds of the heavens on day five; and the creation of living creatures, culminating in human beings, on day six. The subsequent pentateuchal narrative will signal other creation, such as features associated with the exodus from Egypt and the wilderness narratives in Exodus–Numbers, but the basic foundations of creation are treated in Gen 1:1–2:3.

Although Gen 1:1–2:3 maintains that G-d completed the divine work of creation after six days, creation remains incomplete without the sanctification of the seventh day of Shabbat. Genesis 2:2 makes it clear that G-d completed the work on the seventh day, not on the sixth, that is, "and G-d completed His work which He had done on the seventh day, and G-d ceased on the seventh day from all the work which He had done." In sum, the full creative process of creation requires both the six days of divine labor and the seventh holy day of cessation of labor and rest by G-d.

But this brings us to the role of the human being who was created on the sixth day within creation. The human, created as male and female in the image of G-d, is endowed with the responsibility to master the earth and to rule it. We must understand what such mastery or dominion entails. The usual interpretations of the Hebrew words used for mastery,

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6. Fishbane, "Genesis 1:1–2:4a."

Hebrew *vekivshuha*, "and master it," and dominion, Hebrew *uredu*, "and rule it," generally envision something akin to total domination. In the case of the Hebrew root *kbš*, the *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* defines it as "to subjugate" in reference to nations and slaves and as "to violate" in reference to women.[7] In the case of the Hebrew root *rdh*, the *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* defines it as "to tread" in reference to a wine press and as "to rule (with the associated meaning of oppression)" in reference to the earth, nations, peoples, and so on.[8] Such understandings have suggested to interpreters that human beings are given virtually unlimited dominion over the earth and its creatures that would constitute unrestrained autocratic and oppressive rule.

But a basic principle of power politics holds that such autocratic rule is impossible without the consent of those governed. Such consent might be gained through use of force, but in the long run, such models of rule prove to be unviable. Rather, effective dominion is best gained by demonstrating to those ruled that they have something to gain from the leadership of those in power. In short, effective rule entails a sense of responsibility on the part of those in power to demonstrate to those ruled that they will benefit from the actions of their rulers. Such a model applies to the statements in Gen 1:26–28 that humans are given dominion and rule over the earth and its creatures. The dominion and rule granted by G-d to humans in Genesis entails that they will exercise appropriate responsibility in exercising their power. Insofar as G-d creates the world according to a seven-day pattern that culminates in the holy Shabbat, human dominion entails responsibility for ensuring the holiness of creation as the foundation for its viability or sustainability.

But what does this mean? For one, Shabbat calls for a day of rest for all creation so that creation might rejuvenate itself and thereby better ensure its viability or sustainability. Such a principle of rejuvenation applies to land, animals, and human beings in the world of creation. But it is not limited to simple rest and rejuvenation. As the so-called Holiness Code in Lev 17–25 indicates, holiness also entails a combination of moral and ritual principles, such as the proper treatment of blood, appropriate marriage and sexual relations, appropriate ownership and care for land, proper observance of sacred times and offerings, proper actions by the

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7. *HALOT*, 460.
8. *HALOT*, 1190.

priesthood, proper treatment of the elderly, and much more. In short, the use of Shabbat as an epistemological principle in creation signals an entire code of conduct that is incumbent on human beings to ensure their proper, holy, just, and sustainable life in the land that G-d grants to them.

Finally, we must also consider the placement of the P account of creation in Gen 1:1–2:3 immediately prior to the J account of creation in Gen 2:4–4:26. Under the influence of source criticism and the self-contained character of each narrative, we have been accustomed to read these narratives diachronically and independently of each other. But the more recent recognition of intertextual reading strategies demands that we consider the synchronic literary context in which a narrative appears. In this case, Gen 1:1–2:3 sets the terms by which Gen 2:4–4:26 is read, and Gen 2:4–4:26 draws out the meaning and implications of Gen 1:1–2:3. To be brief, Gen 1:1–2:3 sets the basic holy structure of creation and the place, role, and responsibility of human beings within it. Genesis 2:4–4:26 then examines the character of human beings within that creation, and it points to problems, for example, human companionship, knowledge, the capacity for wrongdoing, and human mortality, that must be addressed.

3.

The Covenant Code in Exod 20–24 and its supplement in Exod 34 is part of the larger narrative concerning the revelation at Mount Sinai in Exod 19–Num 10. Some recent studies have argued that the Covenant Code must date to the Babylonian period due to its well-demonstrated dependence on both the casuistic formulations and the legal substance of the Code of Hammurabi, but such studies overlook Israel's relationship with the Neo-Assyrian Empire from the late ninth century BCE and Assyrian dependence on the Code of Hammurabi for its own legal texts.[9]

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9. See the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III (*ANEP*, 355), which depicts the submission of King Jehu of Israel to King Shalmaneser III of Assyria in the late ninth century BCE, and the vassal list of the Assyrian monarch Adad-nirari III. See Stephanie Page, "A Stela of Adad Nirari III and Negal-ereš from Tell al Rimah," *Iraq* 30 (1968): 139–53, which lists King Joash of Israel as one of his vassals in the early eighth century BCE. For the dating of the Covenant Code to the Babylonian period, see John Van Seters, *A Law Book for the Diaspora: Revision in the Study of the Covenant Code* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); David P. Wright, *Inventing G-d's Law: How the Covenant Code of the Bible Used and Revised the Laws of Hammurabi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

The Covenant Code includes apodictic legal forms that are dependent on analogous forms that appear throughout Neo-Assyrian suzerain-vassal treaty texts.[10] Furthermore, the mid-eighth-century BCE Judean prophet Amos cites the Covenant Code throughout his indictment of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in Amos 2:6–16.[11] The Covenant Code appears to be the earliest of Israel's law codes, written in the northern kingdom of Israel during the late ninth or early eighth century BCE. Its dependence on Neo-Assyrian suzerain-vassal treaty forms indicates an interest in portraying YHWH as the great suzerain monarch who defines the terms of the relation to the vassal, Israel.[12]

The Covenant Code begins in Exod 20:2–14 with a version of the Ten Commandments. Although some consider the Ten Commandments to be a form of ancient Israelite law, the commandments cannot function as such insofar as they do not include any form of legal adjudication or resolution for the various problems they address. Insofar as they include a combination of commands and prohibitions, the Ten Commandments function as a statement of moral and religious principles that inform the laws found within the following law collection.

We may note, however, that the Shabbat appears in Exod 20:8–11, which commands Israel to "remember the Shabbat Day to sanctify it," and specifies this command by calling for the people of Israel, their children, their servants, their cattle, and resident aliens in their midst to rest on the seventh day. The text justifies this command by noting that YHWH created the heavens, earth, sea, and everything in them in six days of labor and then blessed and sanctified the seventh day as a day of rest. Although some posit that this is a P text, Hosea cites the Ten Commandments in Hos 4, Jeremiah cites them in Jer 7, and Isaiah notes the Shabbat in Isa 1:10–17. As part of the Ten Commandments, the command to remember the Shabbat day and the basic instructions concerning its observance and justification constitute a basic principle of the Israelite legal system.

The first instance of the application of the Shabbat principle to a case in Israelite law is the slave law in Exod 21:2–11. This law stipulates that a

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10. See Wiseman, "Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon"; *ANET*, 534–41.

11. See my commentary on Amos 2:6–16 in Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 214–18.

12. See also Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament*, AnBib 21A (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978); McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1972).

man who becomes a slave may serve for a maximum of six years but must be freed in the seventh year, unless he goes through a formal procedure to declare himself a slave for life. When he goes free, he receives no payment from his master. If his master provided him with a wife and he had children, they remain with the master. If a woman becomes a slave, she is not released like a man after six years of service because it is presumed that the master may marry her himself or give her as a bride to one of the men in his household. She may only go free if her husband does not provide her with food, clothing, and sexual relations, which ensures that she will have children who will care for her in her old age. Examples of the application of this law appear in the Jacob narratives of Gen 29–31, in which Jacob serves his father-in-law, Laban, for six years each in return for the bride price to marry his daughters, Leah and Rachel, and another six years to acquire a share of the flocks that Jacob helped to produce so that he might support his family.

The slave law is clearly an application of the Shabbat principle to the practice of debt slavery, that is, a man may assign himself to work as a slave for another because he is no longer able to support himself or his family. He works for six years, and then he goes free or rests in the seventh. Although it constitutes an early attempt to provide a just solution to the problem of poverty or indebtedness, there are clear problems with the formulation of this law. The failure to provide support for the newly released slave plays a role in ensuring the likelihood that he will return to debt slavery; the problems he faced when he first became a slave have not been resolved, and the chances of his return to slavery are high—and indeed are supported by the current formulation of the law, which allows him to declare himself a slave for life. Furthermore, the refusal to release a wife given to him in slavery or children born to him in slavery provides a very powerful incentive to remain a slave in perpetuity. The refusal to release a woman sold into slavery may provide even greater incentive to avoid slavery, but nevertheless it does nothing to resolve the problem of poverty that motivates consideration of slavery in the first place. Even if the woman is released from slavery due to the negligence of her husband, she faces a life of poverty, lack of support, and little likelihood that she will find another husband apart from slavery.

The second instance of the application of the Shabbat principle to a case of Israelite law appears in Exod 22:28–29, which calls on the people to give the first produce of the grain and fruit harvest to YHWH as well as the

firstborn sons and the firstborn of the cattle and the flocks. The application of the Shabbat principle appears in the command to allow the firstborn to remain with its mother for seven days prior to presentation as an offering to YHWH. Firstborn sons apparently served originally as priests for YHWH prior to the institutionalization and sanctification of the tribe of Levi (Num 3, 8, 17–18). The seven-day delay in offering the firstborn son evolves into the practice of circumcision for Israelite/Judean men following the seventh day after birth (see Gen 17). As a result, Israelite/Judean men are consecrated for divine service.

The third and final instance of the application of the Shabbat principle in the Covenant Code appears in Exod 23:10–12, which calls for the people to farm their land for six years and then let it lie fallow in the seventh. The principle here points to an underlying concern with allowing the land to renew itself without being depleted of its fertility to produce food. Such a practice continues in contemporary farming to avoid depletion of land. The principle is also applied to the replenishment and care of the poor in the land and the wild animals. Israelites should let the fallow land lie during the seventh year so that the poor may take whatever food grows up on the land during that seventh year. Animals are likewise allowed to feed from the plot without interference. The principle is also applied to vineyards and olive groves. A restatement of the command to observe the Shabbat concludes the paragraph by reiterating that the people should work for six days and then rest on the seventh, including draft animals, servants, and resident aliens in the land.

Overall, the Covenant Code applies the Shabbat principle to ensure the replenishment and viability of both human beings and land. The Shabbat principle thereby functions as an application of sustainability in creation and social justice in the human realm.

Similar perspectives appear in the supplement to the Covenant Code in Exod 34. Exodus 34 presents a revised from of many of the laws of the Covenant Code following Moses's breaking of the tablets of the original covenant during the golden calf incident. In the narrative, Exod 34 functions as a statement of the laws of the covenant written on the second set of tablets that were meant to replace the first set. In diachronic terms, they likely represent a J revision of some elements of the Covenant Code written during the late monarchic period. The intent of the revision would have been to overcome some of the problems inherent in the original formulation of the laws so that they might better serve the purposes for which they were written.

The only instance of the application of the Shabbat principle appears in Exod 34:19–21, which calls for the people to present the firstborn of cattle and sheep to YHWH for an offering. But the law addresses the problems inherent in the earlier formulation of Exod 22:28–29 by specifying that the firstborn of an ass is to be redeemed with a sheep; otherwise, its neck is to be broken. No rationale for the redemption of an ass is apparent; indeed, asses were routinely offered in the ancient Near Eastern world, although asses are not included among the animals that may be eaten by human beings insofar as they do not chew the cud or have a cloven hoof. Likewise, the firstborn son is redeemed, although the text does not specify the purpose other than to present an offering to YHWH, presumably in thanks for the birth of a firstborn son. As was the case in Exod 23:12, the legal paragraph in Exod 34:21 concludes with a restatement of the command to observe the Shabbat to provide the basis for the preceding legal instructions, although the present text makes sure to specify that the rest takes place during plowing and harvest times.

As in the case of the Covenant Code, the supplement in Exod 34 appears designed to ensure the sanctification of the herds, flocks, and human beings in keeping with the principles articulated in relation to the Shabbat.

4.

The next laws to be considered are those of Exod 25–30, 31, 35–40, Leviticus, and Numbers.

We may begin with the instructions concerning the construction of the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the ordination of the priesthood that will serve in it in Exod 25–30, 31, and 35–40.[13] These narratives are assigned to the Priestly stratus of the Pentateuch and point to the construction of the tabernacle not only as the pattern for the temple to be built for YHWH in the land of Israel but as the culmination of creation as well.[14] Exodus 25–30 present the instructions to build the tabernacle; Exod 31 presents statements concerning the builders and the observance of Shabbat; and Exod 35–40 present an account of Israel's compliance with the instructions. Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber noted the parallels between the account of creation and the account of the construction of the

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13. Antony J. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 44–61.

14. Levenson, "Temple and the World."

tabernacle, indicating that the account of the tabernacle, with its portrayal of the introduction of the divine presence of YHWH in the form of a pillar of cloud and smoke into the tabernacle, would constitute completion of creation.[15] Michael Fishbane summarizes the observations of Rosenzweig and Buber, who noted that statements from Gen 1:1–2:3 were echoed in Exod 39:43 (Gen 1:31), Exod 39:32 (cf. Gen 2:1), Exod 40:33b–34 (cf. Gen 2:2), and Exod 39:43 (Gen 2:3).[16]

Evidence of the concern with the Shabbat is apparent within Exod 25–30, 31, and 35–40. The menorah or lampstand of the tabernacle is constructed with three lights branching out from both of its sides to signify the six days of labor and a seventh lamp in their center to signify the Shabbat (Exod 25:31–40, 35:17–24). The account of the ordination of the priests in Exod 29 likewise shows concern with the Shabbat by positing a seven-day process for the consecration of the priests who would serve in the holy tabernacle and temple. Following the account of the instructions to build the tabernacle, Exod 31 presents YHWH's statements to Moses concerning Bezalel ben Uri ben Hur and Oholiab ben Ahisamach as the architects and artisans who will oversee the construction. Immediately following in Exod 31:12–17 is the account of YHWH's statements to Moses concerning the observance of the Shabbat as a *berit olam*, "eternal covenant" or "covenant of creation," which provides the theological foundation for the building of the tabernacle, that is, it provides the means to sanctify and complete creation by observance of the Shabbat and other holy observances that will take place at the tabernacle and temple. Indeed, the account of the compliance with the instructions to build the tabernacle in Exod 35–40 begins with instructions to observe the Shabbat in Exod 35:2–3, which once again provide the rationale for the construction of the tabernacle and temple.

Leviticus 1–16 presents instructions concerning the offerings to be presented to YHWH at the tabernacle and temple and various other instructions concerning the priesthood and the sanctity of the people. These chapters are clearly the work of the P stratum.[17] We may note another account of the seven-day ordination of the priests in Lev 8 and various instructions in Lev 12–15 concerning the seven-day purifications of those who have become unclean by reason of childbirth, skin disease, bodily emissions, leprosy, and so on, and the culminating in the purification of

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15. Sweeney, *Tanak*, 101–4.
16. Fishbane, "Genesis 1:1–2:4a," esp. 11–13.
17. See Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 61–67.

the sanctuary in Lev 16, which among other things requires the sprinkling of the blood of the sin offering on the altar seven times.

The Holiness Code in Lev 17–26 is generally considered to be a Priestly work, although many scholars argue that it dates to a much earlier period than the rest of the P stratum.[18] Interpreters have noted that the Holiness Code elaborates on the laws that appear in both the Covenant Code in Exod 20–24 and the Deuteronomic law code.[19] It is fundamentally concerned with the holiness of the people, beginning with the treatment of blood and sexual relations in Lev 17, 18, and 20. Leviticus 19 presents a combination of moral and ritual instruction that includes many of the elements found in the Ten Commandments. Following the initial command to be holy in verse 2, verse 3 turns to commands to revere one's parents and to observe YHWH's Shabbats. A second presentation of the instruction to observe YHWH's Shabbats appears in verse 30, which emphasizes the importance of Shabbat observance in the Holiness Code. Leviticus 23 presents instruction concerning the observance of holidays in ancient Israel and Judah. This calendar begins with the observance of the Shabbat in verse 3. It specifies the times for the observance of Passover as seven days in Lev 23:4–8. The observance of Shavuot is calculated by counting seven weeks from Passover, thereby employing the Shabbat principle as the basis for calculation. The festival of Sukkot is observed for seven days, like Passover. The Covenant Code in Exod 20–24 did not mention these times, and so Lev 23 represents a specification of the times of observance for these holidays. The festival calendar in Deut 16:1–17 does mention the times, but Lev 23 presents a far more elaborate discussion. The presentation of the bread of the presence in Lev 24:5–9 likewise follows a seven-day pattern defined by Shabbat.

Perhaps the most elaborate use of the Shabbat principle in the Holiness Code appears in Lev 25, which discusses the observance of the Jubilee year. The Jubilee year is determined by counting off seven weeks of years for a total of forty-nine years and then observing the fiftieth year as the Jubilee year. It is a development out of the previously discussed seven-year agricultural cycle in Exod 23:10–12 and the laws concerning the release of debts in Deut 15:1–18. Leviticus 25 instructs the people to work their land for six years and allow it to lie fallow in the seventh year, as in

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18. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 61 n. 76.

19. Jeffrey Stackert, *Rewriting the Torah: Literary Revision in Deuteronomy and the Holiness Legislation*, FAT 52 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

Exod 23:10–12, but it builds on both Exod 23:10–12 and Deut 15:1–18 by envisioning a Jubilee year of the release of all debts and the return of property. According to Lev 25:13–17, any land sold by an Israelite to another Israelite to raise capital returns to its original owner. The transaction actually functions as a form of lease. The seller will retain only those funds applied to the years that the buyer had control of the land, and the buyer will be obligated to pay only for those years that he actually held control of the land. The law presumes in verses 18–22 that YHWH will grant greater fertility in the land so that the people may harvest more food that will last them through the seventh year when the fields lie fallow. Verses 23–28 require that all land may be reclaimed by its original owners. He may redeem his land when he has sufficient funds, but his land will be returned to him in the Jubilee year even if he lacks funds.

Leviticus 25:29–34 specifies that a house sold in a city may be redeemed up to a year following the sale, but afterwards, it may not be redeemed. A house in a village that lacks a wall may be redeemed and is released in the Jubilee year. The city houses of the Levites are an exception in that they may be redeemed and returned to the Levites in the Jubilee years. Houses owned by Levites in an unwalled village may not be sold.

Leviticus 25:35–46 forbids Israelites to lend money to their kinsmen at interest. A kinsman is not to be treated as a slave but is considered a hired hand who will serve only until the Jubilee year, after which he is released. Only gentile slaves may be purchased and retained following the Jubilee year. An Israelite who becomes a servant of a resident alien may be redeemed by his kinsmen. The price for his redemption is calculated according to the number of years left until the Jubilee year. If he is not redeemed, he is released in the Jubilee year.

Leviticus 26 concludes the Holiness Code with a presentation of blessings and curses that will come upon the people depending on whether or not they observe YHWH's expectations. If the people do not observe the seventh year in which the land lies fallow or the Jubilee year, they will be exiled from the land so that the land may make up its lost Shabbat time. By contrast, the blessings and curses in Deut 28–30 envision an exile that will continue until the people repent from their failure to observe divine expectations.

Although Lev 27 is not considered to be a part of the Holiness Code, it builds on the provisions of the Holiness Code by stipulating that the value of land consecrated to the temple is calculated in relation to the Jubilee year. Anyone who redeems land consecrated to the temple must add one-fifth of its

value at the time of its redemption. Likewise, animals and tithes consecrated to the temple may be redeemed by an additional one-fifth of their value.

The laws of Numbers are rather disparate when compared with Leviticus and appear first in the Sinai narrative in Num 1–10 and then in the wilderness narratives in Num 11–36. Most are considered P, but there may be reason to challenge this assessment in some cases.

The Nazirite law in which a person may consecrate him- or herself to divine service in Num 6 envisions a seven-day purification period in case of contact with the dead or other defilement. Numbers 8 once again envisions *menorot* with seven lamps each. Although it portrays an ordination for the Levites, it does not specify a seven-day period.

Whereas the manna and quail narratives in Exod 16 note that the food does not appear on Shabbat, the corresponding narrative in Num 11 makes no mention of the Shabbat. There is no mention of the Shabbat throughout Num 12–18, which includes the selection of Aaron and the tribe of Levi to serve as priests. Numbers 19 calls for sprinkling the blood of the red heifer seven times to purify the tent of meeting. Likewise, someone subject to contact with a corpse requires a seven-day purification period. Numbers 23–24 indicates that Balaam builds seven altars to offer seven bulls and seven rams when he attempts to curse Israel. The discussion of offerings for holy times in Num 28–29 includes instructions concerning Shabbat offerings in Num 28:9–10. Numbers 28:16–27 calls for offerings and the eating of unleavened bread on the seven days of Passover, Num 29:17–34 specifies the offerings for the seven days of Sukkot, and Num 29:35–38 calls for an observance on the eighth day. Numbers 31:19–20 requires a seven-day purification period for those who killed Midianites or came into contact with the dead.

5.

The last law code to consider is the book of Deuteronomy, which functions synchronically within the literary structure of the Pentateuch as Moses's repetition of the laws previously revealed at Sinai. But a diachronic reading of the book indicates that these laws are not repetitions at all. Instead, they represent revision of many of the laws of the Covenant Code examined above.[20] The book of Torah discovered during Josiah's temple renovation according

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20. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics*; cf. Bernard M. Levinson, *Legal Revision and Religious Renewal in Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 137–69.

to 2 Kgs 22–23 appears to be a version of Deuteronomy insofar as Josiah's reforms coincide with many of Deuteronomy's requirements. Many scholars have consequently argued that Deuteronomy must have been written in the Northern Kingdom of Israel during its last years, but Deuteronomy's principle of cultic centralization suggests that it was actually composed in Judah. The revised versions of the laws found in Deuteronomy give greater rights to the poor and to women, which would suggest that the laws were revised to address the needs of the Judean rural farming class or *am ha'aretz*, the very group that placed the eight-year-old Josiah on the throne in 640 BCE following the assassination of his father, Amon ben Manasseh, during a failed coup against the house of David. The laws of the Holiness Code in Lev 17–26 appear to revise those of Deuteronomy as well as the Covenant Code, indicating ongoing attempts to revise earlier laws in order to ensure a just legal system in ancient Israel and Judah that would evolve in keeping with the emerging needs of the nation.

Like the Covenant Code, Deut 5 includes a version of the Ten Commandments that serves as a statement of the principles that come to expression in the Deuteronomic law code. The commandments are quite similar to those of Exod 20, although the wording often differs in an effort to clarify the meaning of the text or offer a different understanding of the commandment in question. Thus the command concerning the Shabbat in Deut 5:12–15 begins with "observe the Shabbat day to sanctify it just as YHWH your G-d commanded you" in contrast to the command to "remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it" in Exod 20:8. Apparently, the Deuteronomic version aims to emphasize the people's action to observe the Shabbat and the qualification that YHWH had commanded such observance adds incentive to the command. The Deuteronomic text also adds the bull and the ass to the list of animals that will rest on the Shabbat as well as reference to male and female servants, all of which are added to ensure that all in the Israelite or Judean households are recognized as having the right to observe the Shabbat. The additional reference to the male and female servants also serves as a basis to provide a different rationale from that of Exod 20. Whereas Exod 20 justified the Shabbat by pointing to YHWH's creation of the universe in six days and rest on the seventh, Deut 5:15 calls on the people to remember that they were slaves in Egypt and that YHWH freed them from slavery, thereby justifying their observance of Shabbat. Indeed, the exodus from Egypt plays an important role in the theology of Deuteronomy, whereas Shabbat, although present, appears to play a lesser role.

The key expression of the Shabbat as an epistemological legal principle in the Deuteronomic law code appears in the laws concerning the year of release and the treatment of Israelite and Judean slaves in Deut 15:1–18.

The law concerning the year of release appears in Deut 15:1–11. It refers to the seventh year as a year of *shemittah*, which refers to release or the remission of debts. It appears to presuppose the Covenant Code slave law of Exod 21:2–11, which allows male debt slaves to go free in the seventh year of service, and the law concerning the use of agricultural fields in Exod 23:9–11, which requires Israelite and Judean farmers to allow their fields to lie fallow in the seventh year so that they might be replenished through rest and so the poor might glean from them to support themselves. The Deuteronomic law extends the principle to the remission of debts for Israelites and Judeans, that is, any debt owed by Israelites or Judeans is forgiven in the seventh year as a means to give aid to the poor among the people and ensure fulfillment of the principle stated in verse 4 that there shall be no poor in the land among the people of Israel and Judah. In case one might decline to grant loans as the year of remission approaches, verses 9–11 call on the people to make the loans anyway, although no mechanism is included to ensure the observance of such practice. The debts owed to Israelites or Judeans by gentiles, however, are not remitted.

The laws concerning treatment of a Hebrew, that is, Israelite or Judean, slave then follow in Deut 15:12–18. The Deuteronomic laws differ substantively from those of Exod 21:2–11 in a manner that gives greater rights and support for the slave. Deuteronomy 15:12–18 continues to envision a six-year period of service with release in the seventh year, but it differs from the Covenant Code by stipulating that the master is required to grant to the newly freed slave a share of the flock, threshing floor, and vat, which ensures that the slave will have at least some capital to make a fresh start following his period of service. Such a grant helps to cut down the rates of recidivism that would have been inherit in the Exodus version of the law, in which slaves were freed with nothing to support them, practically ensuring that they would not be able to support themselves once freed and would likely choose perpetual service as a slave. Unlike the Exodus version of the law, women are also granted the right to go free in Deut 15:12, which again provides incentive for slaves who otherwise might remain in slavery because their wives are not freed with them. Nothing is said about the children, however. Nevertheless, Deut 15:16–18 continues to allow a slave to choose perpetual slavery if he or she so desires. Again, the ratio-

nale for these laws is Israel's experience of having been slaves in Egypt and YHWH's redemption of the nation from Egyptian bondage.

Otherwise, the Shabbat principle appears in relation to the observance of the major holidays as stated in Deut 16:1–17. Passover appears to be one festival that combines Passover and Matzot, and it is observed for seven days, during which the people eat no leavened bread. As one would expect, the festival is justified by YHWH's redemption of the nation from Egyptian bondage. Likewise, the festival of Shavuot is celebrated seven weeks after Passover. The law very deliberately states that sons and daughters, male and female slaves, Levites, resident aliens, orphans, and widows will take part in the celebration, and it justifies the celebration because YHWH redeemed the nation from Egyptian bondage. Finally, the festival of Sukkot is celebrated for seven days like Passover. YHWH's blessing of the people in the land provides the rationale for the observance.

<div align="center">6.</div>

Overall, the preceding survey demonstrates that that the Shabbat serves as a holy epistemological principle for the formulation of law in the Pentateuch. Specifically, the Shabbat appears as a holy principle of creation itself in Gen 1:1–2:3, and it thereby serves as the template for conceptualizing the character of land and creation at large and the basis for Israelite and Judean life within that creation and land. It serves as the basis for the covenant between Israel/Judah and YHWH, and it provides the foundations for the laws of festival observance and socioeconomic justice in ancient Israel and Judah. Although the Shabbat appears to provide a foundation for the synchronic reading of the Pentateuch, it also functions as a basic epistemological foundation for diachronic readings as well, insofar as it informs the formulation of Israelite law codes from the time of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the eighth century BCE, the Judean kingdom of King Josiah in the seventh century BCE, the post-Josian Judean kingdom in the late seventh and early sixth century BCE, and the postexilic restoration of Nehemiah and Ezra in the fifth–fourth centuries BCE. The Shabbat's principle of rest and holiness for all creation thereby provides a basis for conceiving the need and reality of the replenishment of creation as an inherent element of creation and human life within creation itself and as a basis for ensuring socioeconomic justice for Israelite and Judean life within creation. Such an agenda has implications for the contemporary world as well.

12

The Jacob Narratives: An Ephraimitic Text?

Pentateuchal criticism has changed markedly since the mid-twentieth century, when the Wellhausenian J, E, D, P source model, modified by von Rad, dominated scholarly discussion of the field.[1] Scholars have now come to recognize that Wellhausen's model is inherently flawed, particularly in relation to its heavy reliance on the use of divine names as the key criterion in source differentiation. Wellhausen admits throughout his *Die Composition des Hexateuchs* that he is unable to distinguish J and E.[2] Others maintain that the sources must be reconceived so that they are viewed as interde-

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1. For overviews of pentateuchal research, see Ernest Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 96–164; Reinhard G. Kratz, "The Pentateuch in Current Research: Consensus and Debate," in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz, FAT 7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 31–62; David M. Carr, "Changes in Pentateuchal Criticism," in *The Twentieth Century: From Modernism to Post-modernism*, vol. 3.2. of *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Saebø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 433–66. Although Wellhausen initially dated the J source to the early post-Solomonic Davidic monarchy in the ninth century BCE, von Rad argued for a Davidic-Solomonic date in the tenth century BCE as the basis for the J source, which was concerned with the unification of the tribes into a single nation under Davidic rule (see von Rad, "Form-Critical Problem").

2. Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bucher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin. Reimer, 1889); cf. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*. For study of each of the four major sources of the Pentateuch, see esp. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*.

pendent strata that build on and interpret each other in succession rather than as discrete, independent sources.[3] Still others maintain that J can no longer be viewed as the foundational source or stratum for the Pentateuch dating to the early Davidic-Solomonic period.[4] Rather, scholars have come to see J not simply as a self-standing source but as a much later stratum of the text, dating to the late monarchic or exilic period, that both supplements and rewrites earlier material. This judgment is due in large measure to perceived Assyrian and Babylonian influence in the composition of the narrative.[5] Some contend that J can no longer be distinguished from E and argue instead for a pre-P layer in the Pentateuch; others have attempted to refine the classical source-critical theory of independent sources; and still others have given up on source (or strata) criticism altogether.[6]

The problems outlined here point to the need to rethink Wellhausen's paradigm, particularly his understanding of the E source of the Pentateuch. Whereas Wellhausen posited that E was simply a supplement to J, the later dating of J and its character as a stratum rather than a source raise the possibility that E was the foundational source of the Pentateuch, that J edited the earlier E source, and that P edited and supplemented the combined EJ strata.[7] Such a contention is buttressed by the observations of a number of scholars that the Jacob (and possibly the Joseph) narratives are fundamentally northern or Ephraimitic narratives in their earliest forms, insofar as they present Jacob as the eponymous ancestor of Israel and highlight northern Israelite locations, institutions, and historical

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3. E.g., Hans Heinrich Schmid, *Der sogenannte J-hwist: Beobachtungen und Fragen zur Pentateuchforschung* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976).

4. E.g., John Van Seters, *The Y-hwist: A Historian of Israelite Origins* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013).

5. Thomas Christian Römer, "The Elusive Y-hwist: A Short History of Research," in *A Farewell to the Y-hwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid, SymS 34 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2006), 9–28.

6. For the argument for a pre-P layer, see, e.g., Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis*. For an attempt at refining the classical source-critical theory, see, e.g., Joel S. Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012). For discussion of synchronic approaches to the reading of the Pentateuch, see Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch*, 160–64; Cees Houtman, *Der Pentateuch: Die Geschichte seiner Erforschung neben einer Auswertung*, CBET 9 (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 249–78.

7. See Tzemah L. Yoreh, *The First Book of G-d*, BZAW 402 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010).

issues throughout the narrative.[8] In order to test this hypothesis, I examine the Jacob narratives in relation to both their synchronic and diachronic dimensions. Redaction-critical work cannot presume earlier layers behind a text; it must demonstrate their presence.[9] I therefore begin by examining the present, synchronic form of the Jacob narratives in the context of the present P stratum or final form of the Pentateuch. I then turn to a redaction-critical study of the narrative in an effort to discern its underlying narrative forms. Based on the differentiation of northern Israelite and southern Judean interests, I argue that the Jacob narratives function as part of the P *tôlədôt* ("generations") structure of the final form of the Pentateuch, which identifies Jacob as the third of the major patriarchs of Israel and the father of twelve sons who sired the twelve tribes of Israel. Nevertheless, the Jacob narratives originated in northern Israel as an account that addressed Israel's conflicts with Aram and Edom during the late ninth and early eighth centuries BCE. Following the demise of northern Israel in 722/721 BCE, the Jacob narratives were brought south and edited by Judean scribes in an effort to demonstrate how Jacob's flawed character led ultimately to the emergence of Judah as the leading tribe of Israel.

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A full understanding of the final, synchronic, literary form of the text is the necessary prerequisite for redaction-critical study.[10] To that end,

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8. E.g., Albert de Pury, "The Jacob Story and the Beginning of the Formation of the Pentateuch," in Dozeman and Schmid, *Farewell to the Y-hwist?*, 51–72; de Pury, *Promesse divine et legende cultuelle dans le cycle de Jacob: Genese 28 et les traditions patriarcales*, 2 vols., EBib (Paris: Gabalda, 1975); Erhard Blum, *Die Komposition der Vatergeschichte*, WMANT 57 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 5–270; Blum, "The Jacob Tradition," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, VTSup 152 (Leiden; Brill, 2012), 181–212; Carr, *Reading the Fractures*, 256–71; David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 473–75; Sweeney, "Puns, Politics, and Perushim"; Daniel E. Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible: History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). See also Yair Zakovitch, *Jacob: Unexpected Patriarch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), who often points to earlier traditions behind the present form of the text but generally eschews source-critical discussion.

9. See Knierim, "Criticism of Literary Features"; Marvin A. Sweeney, "Introduction," in *Reading Prophetic Books*, 1–16; Sweeney, "Form Criticism."

10. See the works cited in n. 9 above.

scholars have recognized that the present form of the Pentateuch is for-
mally structured according to a sequence of *tôlǝdôt* formulas that trace
the origins of the nation of Israel from creation through the emergence
of Israel under the leadership of Moses and Aaron on their wilderness
journey to the promised land of Israel.[11] Cross first identified the eleven
instances of the *tôlǝdôt* formula in Genesis, and Matthew A. Thomas
identified the twelfth example in Num 3:1, "and these are the generations
of Aaron and Moses on the day that Yhwh spoke to Moses on Mount
Sinai."[12] Each *tôlǝdôt* formula in the structure of the Pentateuch intro-
duces the "descendants," that is, generations, of the figure named in the
formula. The P *tôlǝdôt* structure clearly disrupts two underlying struc-
tural patterns—the so-called Sinai pericope in Exod 19:1–Num 10:10 and
the itinerary formula pattern identified by Cross in Exod 1:1–Num 36:13.
Such a pattern points to a P redaction of the Genesis–Numbers narrative
that also incorporates Deuteronomy into its structural pattern. The result
is a twelve-part formal literary structure for the Pentateuch, as listed on
the following page.[13]

The Jacob narratives appear as rubric IX, "Generations of Isaac: his-
tory of Jacob," so named because of its focus on Isaac's sons, Esau and
Jacob, in Gen 25:19–35:29. Overall, this narrative recounts how Isaac's
second son, Jacob, overcame his older brother; married his wives and
concubines, Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilhah; and freed himself from
the control of his uncle and father-in-law, Laban, to become the ances-
tor of all Israel and heir to the covenant promised by YHWH to his own
ancestors, Abraham and Isaac. Jacob thereby becomes the key figure in
the history of Israel, insofar as his twelve sons become the ancestors of
the twelve tribes that constitute the nation of Israel. The culmination
of this history in XII, "Generations of Aaron and Moses: history of
Israel under the guidance of the Levites" (Num 3:1–Deut 34:12), indi-
cates the need for priestly guidance of a nation whose ancestors, such
as Jacob, often show deficiencies of character in their interrelations.
Such an agenda would naturally serve the interests of the final P form
of the narrative.

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11. For full discussion of the following, see Sweeney, *Tanak*, 45–167.

12. Cross, "Priestly Work"; Matthew A. Thomas, *These Are the Generations: Iden-
tity, Covenant, and the "Toledot" Formula*, LHBOTS 551 (London: T&T Clark, 2011).

13. See Sweeney, *Tanak*, 49–50.

Synchronic Literary Structure of the Pentateuch:
History of Creation/Formation of People Israel

I.   Creation of heaven and earth   Gen 1:1–2:3
II.   Generations of heaven and earth: human origins   Gen 2:4–4:26
III.   Generations of Adam: human development/   Gen 5:1–6:8
        problems
IV.   Generations of Noah: Noah and the flood   Gen 6:9–9:29
V.   Generations of the sons of Noah: spread of humans   Gen 10:1–11:9
        over the earth
VI.   Generations of Shem: history of the Semites   Gen 11:10–26
VII.   Generations of Terah: history of Abraham (Isaac)   Gen 11:27–25:11
VIII.   Generations of Ishmael: history of Ishmael   Gen 25:12–18
IX.   Generations of Isaac: history of Jacob   Gen 25:19–35:29
X.   Generations of Esau: history of Esau   Gen 36:1–37:1
XI.   Generations of Jacob: history of the twelve tribes of Gen 37:2–Num 2:34
        Israel
XIII.   Generations of Aaron and Moses: history of Israel   Num 3:1–Deut 34:12
        under the guidance of the Levites

Redaction-critical study also requires a formal analysis of the final form of the Jacob narratives as the basis for any attempt to identity earlier material behind the present form of the narrative. The aim of such an approach is to determine what elements function together to form a coherent narrative and what elements stand out as potentially disruptive in the text, suggesting secondary composition. The coherence of the narrative, based on its northern Israelite locale and interests, will become especially important when we consider the redactional functions of the wife-sister narrative in Gen 26, the Dinah narrative in Gen 34, and the final episodes in Gen 35:22–29 below.

The formal literary structure of the Jacob narratives is episodic in character.[14] It begins with the *tôlǝdôt* formula in Gen 25:19, which introduces the following narrative as an account of the generations or descendants of Isaac. It then moves through its constituent episodes. The tensions within the family of Isaac, particularly between Jacob and Esau and between Jacob and Laban, are a key feature of these narratives. Such tensions also

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14. For discussion of the methodological principles employed here, see esp. Sweeney, "Form Criticism," 58–89.

appear in the relationship between Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel, who are in constant competition for Jacob's attention.

The account of the marriage of Isaac to Rebekah and the birth of their sons, Esau and Jacob, follows in Gen 25:20–26, including subunits devoted to Isaac's age at marriage (v. 20); the birth of the sons and the conflict between them (vv. 21–26a), signally a conflict between two nations; and Isaac's age at the birth of his sons (v. 26b).

The account of the differentiation between Jacob and Esau follows in 25:27–34. It includes subunits beginning with the differentiation between the boys proper (vv. 27–28), which characterizes Esau as a hunter beloved by his father and Jacob as a homebody beloved by his mother. Genesis 25:29–34 follows with an illustration of the differentiation between Jacob and Esau, insofar as Esau willingly forfeits his birthright to Jacob to satisfy his hunger.

The account of Isaac's and Rebekah's travels in southwestern Judah and Philistia follows in 26:1–33. Its subunits trace the movement of the ancestral family through the region beginning in verses 1–16 with Gerar, where YHWH blesses Isaac with the lands promised to Abraham and the Philistine king, Abimelech, grants protection to Isaac and Rebekah following his recognition of Rebekah as Isaac's wife. Their sojourn in the Wadi Gerar then follows in verses 17–22 with an account of Isaac's disputes with the Philistines over the wells he has dug. It concludes in verses 23–33 with Isaac's and Rebekah's move to Beersheba, where YHWH swears to bless Isaac for the sake of Abraham and Isaac reconciles with Abimelech.

The final and largest unit of the Jacob narratives appears in 26:34–35:15, which presents the account of how Jacob obtains YHWH's blessing and promise and becomes the ancestor of Israel by fathering twelve sons, who will in turn become the ancestors of Israel's tribes. The account includes four major subunits, which in turn are complex and include many elements of their own.

The first subunit appears in 26:34–35, which portrays the distress of Isaac and Rebekah over the marriage of their firstborn son, Esau, to Hittite women. This brief subunit is crucial to the narrative insofar as it points to Esau's unsuitability for the covenant due to his marriage to foreign women. It also serves as the instigation for Jacob's journey to Aram, where he will seek his wives from the family of his mother so that he might father suitable sons to serve as heirs to the covenant.

The second episode, 27:1–45, portrays Jacob's actions in securing his father's blessing of the firstborn in place of his nominally older brother,

Esau. This episode is likewise crucial to the plot because it builds on the favoritism of the parents, Isaac for Esau and Rebekah for Jacob, which causes so much tension within the family. It also explains Esau's enmity toward Jacob and Jacob's need to flee to Aram, both to find suitable wives and to save his life. The subunits within this text include verses 1–4, in which Isaac instructs Esau to prepare game so that Isaac may bless him; verses 5–13, in which Rebekah instructs Jacob to deceive Isaac so that he might obtain the blessing of the firstborn in Esau's place; verses 14–29, in which Jacob carries out the plan to take the blessing; verses 30–40, in which Esau discovers Jacob's deceit and obtains a substitute blessing that will enable him eventually to break free from Jacob; and verses 41–45, in which Rebekah instructs Jacob to flee to Haran to escape Esau's wrath and to find suitable wives from her family.

The third subunit, 27:46–31:54, presents an account of Jacob's journey to Paddan-aram to find wives from the family of his mother's brother, Laban. The subunit includes five elements. The first (27:46) recounts Rebekah's disgust with Esau's Hittite wives. The second (28:1–5) recounts Isaac's sending Jacob to Paddan-aram to find a wife. The third (28:6–9) recounts Esau's marriage to Mahalath bat Ishmael in an attempt to satisfy his parents. The fourth (28:10–22) recounts Jacob's vision of YHWH at Bethel, where YHWH promises Jacob the covenant of his ancestors, including the land of Israel, descendants, and fidelity. The fifth (29:1–31:54) recounts Jacob's sojourn in Haran, including his marriages and the birth of his children. Genesis 29:1–31:54 in turn comprises six subunits of its own. The first (29:1) relates Jacob's arrival in Haran. The second (29:2–14a) recounts Jacob's meeting with his beloved Rachel and her father, Laban. The third (29:14b–30) recounts Jacob's marriage to Leah as a result of Laban's trickery and his subsequent marriage to Rachel. The fourth (29:31–30:24) recounts the birth of Jacob's children to his wives and concubines, including Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah to Leah; Dan and Naphtali to Rachel through her handmaiden, Bilhah; Gad and Asher to Leah through her handmaiden, Zilpah; Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah to Leah; and finally, Joseph to Rachel. The fifth (30:25–43) recounts Jacob's negotiation of his wages with Laban, and the sixth is 31:54, which recounts Jacob's departure from Haran and his resolution of his borders with Laban.

The fourth subunit, 32:1–35:29, recounts Jacob's return to the land of Israel, including the change of his name to Israel, his reconciliation with Esau, the death of his beloved Rachel, the birth of Benjamin, YHWH's bestowal of the covenant of his ancestors on him, and the death and

burial of Isaac. This subunit includes eight subunits of its own. In the first (32:1–22), Jacob prepares for his encounter with Esau at Mahanaim. In the second (32:23–33), Jacob wrestles with a man and is renamed Israel. In the third (33:1–17), Jacob reconciles with Esau at Sukkot. In the fourth (33:18–34:31), Jacob sojourns at Shechem, where his daughter Dinah is raped and his sons Simeon and Levi take revenge. In the fifth (35:1–15), YHWH names Jacob as the patriarch of Israel at Bethel and Jacob sanctifies the site. In the sixth (35:16–20), Rachel dies while giving birth to Benjamin at Ephrath/Bethlehem. In the seventh (35:21–26), Reuben commits a transgression by lying with his father's concubine, Bilhah. The eighth (35:27–29) concludes the history of Isaac with an account of Isaac's death and burial by Jacob and Esau at Kiriath-arba/ Hebron, the burial site of Abraham and Sarah.

The formal structure of the history of Isaac in Gen 25:19–35:29 appears as follows:

Tôlǝdôt Yiṣḥaq: The Jacob Narratives (Gen 25:19–35:29)

<center>2.</center>

The preceding discussion of the synchronic literary form of the Jacob narratives in Gen 25:19–35:29 demonstrates that they function as a unit within the overall *tôlədôt* structure of the present P-stratum form of the Pentateuch. Jacob appears in the narrative as the third in the sequence of the ancestors of all Israel, and he achieves the right of the firstborn, the blessing of his father, Isaac, and the covenant promised by YHWH to his ancestors Abraham and Isaac by overcoming his older brother, Esau, to ensure the future of his people. Whereas Esau shows little regard for his birthright and marries women who are either unsuitable or marginalized in the covenant trajectory of the nation Israel, Jacob travels to Paddan-aram to find a suitable bride from his mother's family and ends up with two wives who are the daughters of his mother's brother, Laban, and their handmaidens. The twelve sons born as a result of these marriages will go on to become the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. Interpreters have long recognized that Jacob is the eponymous ancestor of Israel; indeed, he is twice renamed Israel, in Gen 32:32–33 and 35:9–12.[15] But the broader literary context of the final form of the Pentateuch, which is

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15. For recent studies of the Jacob narratives, see esp. Michael Fishbane, "Genesis 25:19–35:22: The Jacob Cycle," in *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 40–62; John G. Gammie, "Theological Interpretation by Way of Literary Analysis: Genesis 25–36," in *Encounter with the Text: Form and History in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Martin J. Buss, SemeiaSup (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 103–15; Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Almond, 1981); Blum, *Die Komposition des Vätersgeschichte*, 5–270; Ronald S. Hendel, *The Epic of the Patriarch: The Jacob Cycle and the Narrative Traditions of Canaan and Israel*, HSM 42 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987); Sweeney, "Puns, Politics, and Perushim"; Van Seters, *Prologue to History*, 277–310; Carr, *Reading the Fractures*, 233–89; de Pury, "Jacob Story"; John E. Anderson, *Jacob and the Divine Trickster: A Theology of Deception and YHWH's Fidelity to the Ancestral Promise in the Jacob Cycle*, Siphrut 5 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011); Blum, "Jacob Tradition"; Fleming, *Legacy of Israel*, 72–90; Sarah Shectman, "Rachel, Leah, and the Composition of Genesis," in Dozeman, Schmid, and Schwartz, *Pentateuch: International Perspectives*, 207–

widely understood to be a Priestly Judean narrative based on its final P redaction, concentrates on Jacob as an ancestor of all Israel. Such a portrayal generally obscures the fact that Jacob's identification as the ancestor of Israel presupposes the political and theological standpoint of the Northern Kingdom of Israel with its temple in Bethel rather than Israel as viewed from the Judean understanding of all Israel and the Jerusalem temple. A number of features of the Jacob narratives point to this conclusion.

First is the narrative focus on Jacob as the founder of the sanctuary at Bethel. Bethel and Dan are the two temples designated by King Jeroboam ben Nebat as state sanctuaries for the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Dan is located far to the north to serve the northern territories of the Galil and beyond, but Bethel is located in the tribal territory of Ephraim, where it functions as a royal sanctuary, according to Amos 7:13. Both Bethel and Dan are portrayed as sites of idolatry insofar as both are furnished with images of the golden calf, which are identified in 1 Kgs 12:25–33 as idols used for the worship of illicit gods. Such worship functions as part of the basis for the condemnation of King Jeroboam ben Nebat and ultimately the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, insofar as all of Israel's kings allegedly followed in the sins of Jeroboam to lead the people astray and thereby justify the punishment of northern Israel (2 Kgs 17). A comparative analysis of the function of the golden calves in relation to ancient Near Eastern divine iconography indicates that the golden calves did not actually function as gods at all, as claimed in the Kings narrative; rather, they functioned as mounts for deities, much as bulls functioned as mounts for the Canaanite Baal and Aramaean Hadad, lions functioned as mounts for the Egyptian Hathor, and the ark of the covenant functioned as a throne for the Judean YHWH.[16] Northern Israel did not commit idolatry; instead, the golden calves would have been conceived as mounts for the northern Israelite YHWH. The reason for the depiction of the golden calves as idols of illicit gods is based on the need of the Judean authors of the Deuteronomistic History to explain that the destruction of northern Israel did not

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22; Zakovitch, *Jacob: Unexpected Patriarch*, Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 230–45.

16. For portrayals of Hadad or other storm gods mounted on a bull, see *ANEP*, 500, 501; and on a lion, *ANEP*, 486. For portrayals of Hathor, Qadesha, or other female deities mounted on a lion, see *ANEP*, 470–74. For a goddess mounted on a horse, see *ANEP*, 479. For full discussion, see Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, 67–72; Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings: A Commentary*, 172–82.

occur as a result of YHWH's negligence or inability to defend the nation as promised. Rather, the Deuteronomistic History explains the destruction of northern Israel as the result of the failure of its kings and people to observe YHWH's commandments. Such a portrayal would then protect YHWH's reputation as G-d of Judah and guarantor of the covenant and thereby provide an incentive for the people to observe YHWH's commandments.

The Jacob narratives provide no hint that the sanctuary at Bethel is in any way a site for idolatrous worship. According to Gen 28:10–22, Jacob's experience at Bethel is entirely positive. He stops for the night and has a vision of YHWH, who promises him descendants, blessings, and land in keeping with the promises made to Abraham and Isaac.[17] Jacob thereby vows allegiance to YHWH and founds the site as a sanctuary that functions as YHWH's house, naming it Bethel, "House of G-d." Genesis 35:6–15 functions along much the same lines. Jacob's experience at Bethel again is entirely positive: he erects an altar at the site, calling it El-Bethel, and YHWH blesses him with descendants, land in keeping with the covenant with Abraham and Isaac, and the new name, Israel. Genesis 35:6, 9–13a, and 15 are generally viewed as P-stratum material.[18] Such a portrayal suggests that P endorses the site as well, but readers must recognize that the final P form of the Jacob narratives would not associate the golden calves or idolatry with Bethel during Jacob's lifetime. In P's view, Jacob would have founded the Bethel sanctuary long before the time of Jeroboam ben Nebat and his alleged idolatrous practice. The Genesis narrative provides no critique of Bethel and no hint of its future sordid reputation. Indeed, such a portrayal indicates that the Bethel foundation narrative in Gen 28:10–22 serves the interests of all Israel in the P stratum. But when read in relation to a northern Israelite worldview, the Bethel narratives would have served northern Israel's interests.

Second is the portrayal of the twelve sons of Jacob as the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. Interpreters presuppose that Judah's inclusion in the birth order is a sign of a unified and ideal conceptualization

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17. The present form of the references to the promises to the ancestors is likely the product of the later redaction of the ancestral narratives that tied Jacob (and Joseph) to Abraham; see, e.g., Blum, *Die Komposition des Vätergeschichte*, 8, 290–93. We must nevertheless recognize that it is impossible to tell whether these promises were the result of redactional insertion or redactional rewriting of an earlier underlying text.

18. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 33; cf. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, 35–65.

of the twelve tribes of Israel in all pentateuchal strata.[19] But such a conceptualization must be understood in relation to the northern Israelite worldview. Judah is the fourth of the sons of Jacob, born to his first wife, Leah. The sons born to Leah are all marginalized figures. Reuben, located in the Transjordan, is ultimately lost to Moab in the mid-eighth century BCE. Simeon, located along the borders of Judah and Philistia, disappears during the monarchic period. Levi is the priestly tribe and never has a land of its own. Judah is in the southern Judean hill country, away from the central tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Zebulun and Issachar are in the north beyond the Jezreel Valley in the region of the Galilee and Phoenicia. The sons born to the handmaidens are also marginal tribes. Bilhah's sons, Dan and Naphtali, are located first along the coastal plain in the case of Dan and later in the far north for both Dan and Naphtali. The sons of Zilpah, Gad and Asher, are located in the Transjordan to the north of Reuben in the case of Gad and along the borders of Phoenicia in the case of Asher. The sons born to Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel, are Joseph and Benjamin. They go on to become the ancestors of the most important tribes of northern Israel. Joseph becomes the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, the two tribes located in the northern Israelite hill country, which serves as the central core of the Northern Kingdom. Benjamin, located to the south of Ephraim, becomes Israel's first royal tribe and produces Saul ben Kish, the first king of Israel, who rules the northern tribes but is never very successful in bringing David and Judah under his control.

Judah is a marginal tribe when viewed from the north. Many interpreters presume that the period of the divided kingdoms is precisely that, a time when northern Israel and southern Judah lived as autonomous kingdoms, but such a view is inaccurate. Although Judah maintained its independence during the reign of Rehoboam ben Solomon and some of his successors, by the time of the reign of the Judean king Jehoshaphat ben Asa, Judah had become a vassal to northern Israel and remained tied to northern Israel as a vassal throughout the reigns of both the Omride (876–842 BCE) and Jehu dynasties (842–746 BCE).[20] Jehoshaphat accom-

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19. E.g., Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984–1986), 2:472–73.

20. For treatment of the regnal accounts of the kings of the house of Omri and the house of Jehu and their Judean counterparts from the house of David, see Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 202–369. For a historical analysis of the Jehu dynasty, see Shu-

panied Ahab ben Omri in battle at Ramoth-gilead, and he accompanied
Jehoram ben Ahab on his campaign against Mesha of Moab because he
was allied with the house of Omri (1 Kgs 22; 2 Kgs 3). Jehoshaphat's son,
Joram, was married to Athaliah, described both as the daughter of Omri
(2 Kgs 8:26) and as the daughter of Ahab (2 Kgs 8:18), indicating that the
alliance was sealed by a royal marriage between the house of David and
the house of Omri. Even under the Jehu dynasty, the alliance held. When
the Judean king Amaziah ben Joash defeated the Edomites, he sent envoys
to the Israelite king Jehoash ben Jehoahaz and demanded a confrontation
so that he might break free of the control of the Jehu dynasty. But Jehoash
defeated Amaziah at Beth-shemesh, captured Amaziah, and went on to
Jerusalem, where he breached the city's walls and plundered the city (2
Kgs 14:1–22). In the aftermath of this defeat, Amaziah was assassinated
and replaced by his son Azariah/Uzziah. Judah did not become free of
northern Israelite control until the Syro-Ephraimite War of 735–732 BCE,
when King Pekah of Israel revolted against Assyria, whereas Kings Joram
ben Uzziah and Ahaz ben Joram remained loyal to the Assyrians. Pekah
was assassinated for his trouble, but Ahaz retained his life and his throne,
even though he continued as a vassal to Assyria. Up until this time, Judah
had been a vassal of northern Israel, and its status is reflected in Judah's
place among the sons of Leah, all of whom are marginal from a northern
Israelite perspective.

Third is the identification of Jacob with northern Israelite and Ara-
maean sites, except for the framework material in Gen 26 and 35:21–29,
where he is located with his father, Isaac, who resides in Philistia and
Judah. The early narratives concerning Jacob's birth in Gen 25:20–26,
his receipt of Esau's birthright in 25:27–34, and his receipt of the bless-
ing of the firstborn in 27:1–45 do not identify Jacob's (or Isaac's) location.
Isaac's locations in these narratives appear only in the accounts of Isaac's
and Rebekah's sojourning in the Philistine territories southwest of Judah.
Isaac's location aids in confirming widespread scholarly recognition that
this chapter is a redactional insert into the Jacob narratives due to its focus
on the wife-sister motif. Otherwise, Jacob appears in Luz, which is renamed
Bethel, when he leaves his parents to find a wife in Haran. As noted above,
Bethel becomes the royal sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.[21]

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ichi Hasegawa, *Aram and Israel during the Jehuite Dynasty*, BZAW 434 (Berlin: de
Gruyter, 2012).

21. Archaeological evidence indicates that Bethel was inhabited during the Late

Once he departs from Haran/Paddan-aram with his wives and children, he continues to appear in northern Israelite sites, especially in the Transjordan as he flees from Laban and prepares for his encounter with Esau. His first stop is in the Gilead, which defines the border between Aram and Israel in the Transjordan, as he reconciles with Laban and sets boundaries in Gen 31:1–54. His next stop is Mahanaim, where he divides his family into camps (*maḥănāyim*) as he prepares to meet Esau. Mahanaim is a key northern Israelite city in the Transjordan, which served as one of Solomon's district capitals (1 Kgs 4:14); Ish-bosheth's capital for Israel following the death of his father, Saul (2 Sam 2:8); and David's place of refuge during Absalom's failed revolt (2 Sam 17:24–29, 19:33, 1 Kgs 2:8). Jacob's wrestling with the man takes place at Penuel, located along the banks of the Wadi Jabbok, which served as the boundary between Israel and Ammon (Num 21:24, Deut 2:37) as well as between Gad and Manasseh (Deut 3:16) and later served as a district capital that was fortified by Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12:25). Jacob next goes to Sukkot to meet Esau (Gen 33:1–17). Sukkot is Deir ʿAlla, situated close to the confluence between the Wadi Jabbok and the River Jordan. Finally, he arrives at Shechem, where his daughter Dinah is raped (Gen 34). Shechem is one of the key cities of northern Israel, situated along the border of Ephraim and Manasseh and known as a place for making covenants.[22] It also served as a place for the gatherings of the tribes of Israel under Moses (Deut 27) and Joshua (Josh 24), the city where Abimelech hoped to establish his claims for kingship over all Israel (Judg 9), and finally where the northern tribes decided to break free from Davidic control to found the Northern Kingdom once again (1 Kgs 12). Finally, Jacob proceeds to Bethel, where YHWH reiterates the promise of the covenant and the change of his name to Israel. Jacob is consistently identified with important northern Israelite sites. Apart from his association with Isaac, he does not appear in Judean or Philistine locales.

Bronze II and Early Iron I periods but that the site was abandoned during the Iron IIA period, roughly 1050–1000 BCE. The Late Iron IIB period, beginning in the mid- to late ninth century BCE, saw renewed activity prior to a period in which Bethel flourished in the eighth century BCE. For discussion, see Israel Finkelstein and Lily Singer-Avitz, "Reevaluating Bethel," *ZDPV* 125 (2009): 133–48. For discussion of traditions associated with Bethel, see Jules F. Gomes, *The Sanctuary of Bethel and the Configuration of Israelite Identity*, BZAW 368 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006); Melanie Kohlmoos, *Bet-El: Erinnerungen an eine Stadt; Perspectiven der alttestamentlichen Bet-El-Überlieferung*, FAT 49 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

22. Edward J. Campbell, "Shechem," *NEAEHL* 4:1345–54.

Fourth is the degree to which the Jacob narratives constitute a mythologized form of northern Israel's history, particularly its relationships with Aram and Edom in the late ninth through early eighth centuries BCE. It is well known that Laban functions as the eponymous ancestor of Aram, as indicated by his name, which is still preserved in the name of the Lebanon mountain range, and that Esau is the eponymous ancestor of Edom, as indicated by his reddish complexion, ʾadmônî, which signals the name Edom, and his hairy appearance, śēʿār, which signals the name Seir as a regional name for Edom (Gen 25:25, 30), just as Jacob functions as the eponymous ancestor of Israel. Jacob's relationship with Laban includes a twenty-year period of servitude in payment for his two wives and the sheep necessary to support his family, and his relationship with Esau entails Esau's service to Jacob until he breaks free from his younger brother's control.

Jacob's service to Laban and his subsequent release from that service are modeled on Israel's alliance with Aram in the ninth–eighth centuries BCE together with Israel's ultimately successful attempts to free itself by turning to the Assyrian Empire. Biblical literature recounts the power of the house of Omri in 1 Kgs 16:15–34, insofar as it recognizes Omri's role in establishing a new capital at Samaria and his son Ahab's role in establishing Israel's alliance with Phoenicia. But it does not note Ahab's alliance with Hadadezer/Ben-haddad, who led a coalition that attempted to stop the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III from crossing the Euphrates River into Aram in 853 BCE.[23] Although Shalmaneser claimed a great victory, he was not able to advance into Aram and led his army elsewhere until he was able to try again in subsequent years. Hadadezer/Ben-haddad led a large coalition of nations headed by his own twelve hundred chariots, twelve hundred cavalry, and twenty thousand foot soldiers, but readers must note that the army of Ahab of Israel included a very powerful force of two thousand chariots and ten thousand soldiers.[24] Two

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23. *ANET*, 278–79. For an account of the reign of Shalmaneser III, see Albert K. Grayson, "Shalmaneser III," in *The Prehistory of the Balkans, and the Middle East*, 2nd rev. and enl. ed., CAH 3.1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 259–69. For discussion of the failure by Kings to portray Assyria's role in Israel's history, especially during the Omride and Jehu dynasties, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Portrayal of Assyria in the Book of Kings," in *The Bible as a Human Witness to Divine Revelation: Hearing the Word of G-d through Historically Dissimilar Traditions*, ed. Randall Heskett and Brian Irwin, LHBOTS 469 (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 274–84.

24. We cannot be certain of the accuracy of the numbers presented here by Shalmaneser III, as they likely served his own propagandist agenda. Nevertheless, the

important features must be noted here. The first is that Ahab was fighting with Hadadezer along the northern Aramaean border defined by the Euphrates, which means that Ahab was part of Hadadezer's coalition. Hadadezer's coalition could be either a parity alliance or a suzerain-vassal alliance. The second is Ahab's exceptionally large chariot force, which suggests a very powerful army. But we must also note that such a force represents considerable power and investment in the acquisition of chariots and horses and the training of the soldiers who would use them. The use of such a force entails considerable losses of men, horses, and materiel that could not be easily replaced. It seems that Ahab puts his own larger chariot force at considerable risk to support his ally, Hadadezer, in defending his own territory, whereas Hadadezer commits more troops but fewer chariots. Ahab's exposure to considerable loss in this operation suggests that he is indeed a vassal of Hadadezer, and, if not, that he would eventually have to reconsider his commitment, as Shalmaneser III attempted to invade Aram repeatedly in 849, 848, and 845 BCE. The cost of his commitment must have prompted Ahab to reconsider his alliance with Hadadezer/Ben-haddad after losing so many hard-to-replace soldiers and their expensive equipment. Such considerations would explain Ben-haddad's attack against Ahab at Ramoth-gilead in 1 Kgs 22, in which Ahab was killed, and the continuing pressure exerted by the Arameans against Israel under Ahab's son, Jehoram. The losses at Ramoth-gilead ultimately prompted a coup d'état in which Jehu, a general in the Israelite army, assassinated Jehoram ben Ahab of Israel and his counterpart, Joram ben Jehoshaphat of Judah, to found the new Jehu dynasty in Israel. Jehu's move did not free Israel from Aramaean control; indeed, Aram subdued Israel under Jehu, and it was not until the reign of Jehu's great-grandson Joash that Israel was finally able to free itself from the Aramaean threat and settle its borders with Aram much as Jacob had done with Laban. The result was that Jehu's great-great-grandson Jeroboam ben Joash could rule a kingdom that rivaled Solomon's in peace.

We must also consider, however, how Israel freed itself from Aramaean control. The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III indicates that Jehu submitted himself to the Assyrian monarch early in his reign.[25] The Black Obelisk pictures Jehu bowing at the feet of Shalmaneser III in the only known pic-

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relative numbers of chariots and troops give interpreters an idea of the forces from each nation.

25. *ANEP*, 351, 355.

torial representation of an Israelite king. Such a move makes sense for both Jehu and Shalmaneser. Jehu needed a powerful ally to help free him from Aramaean control, and Shalmaneser needed an ally along Aram's southern borders to help him pressure Aram and force its submission. Aram's collapse did not happen automatically. Israel did not prevail until the reign of Joash, and a key to his success appears in the tribute list of the Assyrian monarch Adad-nirari III, in which Joash of Israel is one of his tributaries.[26] The conclusion is clear: Joash overcame Aram with Assyrian support. Further, we must examine Israel's relationship with Edom during the late ninth through early eighth centuries BCE, especially since Esau functions as the eponymous ancestor of Edom in the Jacob narratives. With Aram's subjugation of Israel in the aftermath of the Jehu revolt, Israel lost control of the Transjordan (2 Kgs 10:32–33). The Tel Dan inscription claims that the assassin was Aramaean, which might suggest that Jehu was backed by the Aramaeans.[27] The Deir ʿAlla inscription indicates that Balaam's prophecy was published as a means of celebrating Aram's seizure of the Transjordan, and the Mesha inscription celebrated Moab's claim to Israelite territory following Israel's defeat.[28] This would be the context for Edom's efforts to break away from Israelite/Judean control. According to 2 Sam 8:13–14, Israel subjugated Edom as early as David's reign and maintained control during Solomon's reign despite Edomite attempts to break free. Although Judah controlled Edom, the fact that Judah was later an Israelite vassal indicates that Edom was ultimately subjugated to Israel. Edom remained under Judean control during the reign of Jehoshaphat (1 Kgs 22:47, 2 Kgs 3:9–12), but, according to 2 Kgs 8:20–22, Edom broke away from Israelite/Judean control during the reign of Joram ben Jehoshaphat. Amaziah ben Joash of Judah later defeated Edom but failed to reassert control (2 Kgs 14:7–10).

Taken together, the Jacob narratives appear not simply to depict all Israel in the final P form of the Pentateuch; rather, they appear to recount northern Israel's relations with Aram and Edom during the late ninth and early eighth centuries BCE. As noted above, this period corresponds to the

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26. Page, "Stela of Adad Nirari III."

27. For text, translation, and discussion of the Tel Dan stela, see Biran and Naveh, "Aramaic Stele Fragment"; Biran and Naveh, "Tel Dan Inscription."

28. See Meindert Dijkstra, "Is Balaam Also among the Prophets?," *JBL* 114 (1995): 43–64; and esp. Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 21–36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 4A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 241–75. For the Mesha Inscription, see *ANET*, 320–21.

resettlement of Bethel during the mid- to late ninth century BCE and its flourishing during the eighth century BCE, which would provide the setting for the composition of an early form of the Jacob narratives. Although Jacob displays an initially flawed or arrogant character in relation to Esau, his love for Rachel and his experience with Laban humble him and prompt him to adopt a far more deferential stance by the latter portions of the narrative. When read in relation to northern Israel's subjugation of Judah and its conflicts with Aram and Edom during the late ninth and early eighth centuries BCE, such a portrayal indicates an effort to reflect on and learn from some of northern Israel's experiences with Aram and Edom during this period. Jacob's character flaws would symbolize northern Israel's perceived self-deficiencies and would therefore serve as the basis for critical self-reflection on the part of the Northern Kingdom.

3.

Interpreters must also recognize that the projected northern Jacob narratives are also redactionally framed by narratives that place Jacob in Philistia and Judah together with his father and that defame Shechem, thereby serving Judean interests. The earlier synchronic analysis of the present form of the Pentateuch and the Jacob narratives within it provides the basis from which such conclusions are drawn.

The early narratives concerning the births of Jacob and Esau, Esau's granting Jacob his birthright in return for some lentils, and Isaac's giving Jacob the blessing of the firstborn do not mention the location of Isaac and his family. The only narratives that do so are those of Gen 26, which place Isaac in Gerar, Philistia (vv. 1–16 and 17–22), and later in Beersheba, Judah (vv. 23–33). But Gen 26 is widely viewed as a J text because of its associations with Judah and because it establishes continuity with the Abraham and Sarah narratives.[29] Genesis 26 must also be recognized as a redactional narrative, insofar as it presents the third instance of the endangered matriarch or wife-sister motif in which a foreign king, in this case Abimelech of Philistia, wants to marry a matriarch, in this case, Rebekah, but fails to do so when he realizes that the matriarch is already married. Many interpreters focus only on the wife-sister motif texts in Gen 12, 20, and 26 as examples of the motif, but other examples include the rape of

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29. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 108–10.

Dinah in Gen 34 and the narrative concerning Tamar and Judah in Gen
38.[30] These narratives play a role in tying the Genesis accounts together
insofar as they signal concern with the threat posed to Israel's identity
should the ancestors intermarry into Egyptian, Philistine, or Canaanite
culture. In the present instance, Gen 26 forms part of the J stratum that
edits and brackets the northern lsraelite Ephraimite or E-source Jacob nar-
ratives. It would have been included in the EJ stratum when P edited and
composed the present form of the Pentateuch.

A second J-stratum narrative appears in Gen 34, which presents an
account of the rape of Dinah.[31] Scholars have long recognized Gen 34
as a J-stratum narrative, although the chapter must also be recognized
as an example of an endangered matriarch narrative.[32] Unlike the earlier
narratives, however, the matriarch, Jacob's daughter Dinah, is not saved
from an intruding Canaanite man. Her brothers Simeon and Levi kill
her rapist-turned-suitor, Shechem ben Hamor, and the other men of the
city of Shechem. Dinah does not go on to become a mother in Israel.
The importance of Gen 34 as a redactional framework narrative lies in
the attempt to discredit the city of Shechem, the patriarch Jacob, and the
brothers Simeon and Levi, all of which serve Judean interests. Shechem
is the major gathering point of the northern tribes of Israel. The site of
Shechem is located along the Manassite-Ephraimite border, indicat-
ing its importance in joining these two key tribes together to form the
basis of the northern Israelite confederation. Moses gathers the people
at Shechem in Deut 27 for a ritual of blessings and curses related to the
covenant. Joshua gathers the people at Shechem, where he is later buried,
to remind them of their obligations in the covenant with YHWH after
they have taken possession of the land of Canaan (Josh 24). Abimelech
ben Gideon attempts to claim kingship over all Israel at Shechem in Judg
9. The northern tribes meet with Rehoboam ben Solomon at Shechem in
1 Kgs 12 to decide whether to accept him as their king. When they decide
against Rehoboam, they appoint Jeroboam ben Nebat as their king. But
Gen 34 polemicizes against Shechem, demonstrating that it is a place of

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30. Sweeney, "Form Criticism: The Question of the Endangered Matriarchs."

31. For a full study of Gen 34, see Ellen van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies:
When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context* (Winona Lake, IN:
Eisenbrauns, 2009), 269–353.

32. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 118–19; Sweeney, "Form
Criticism: The Question of the Endangered Matriarchs."

shame for Israel, where a man like Shechem rapes Dinah with impunity and then has the gall to propose marriage. Jacob acts shamefully in the narrative, showing more concern for his own reputation than for the welfare of his daughter. And Simeon and Levi shame their father by killing the men of Shechem after they have submitted to circumcision. As a result, they are eliminated from their positions of leadership as numbers two and three among Jacob's sons. On the whole, Genesis paints a poor picture of Shechem, Jacob, and Simeon and Levi, thereby serving Judah's interests by undermining northern Israel's politically important city, the northern patriarch Jacob, and two sons that stand in the way of Judah's leadership among the sons of Jacob. Although Shechem is a key city in northern Israel, the attempt to discredit Shechem, Jacob, Simeon, and Levi points to its origins as a Judean narrative that has been employed in the late monarchic-period J stratum to frame the northern Israelite Jacob narratives. Again, the J-stratum Shechem narrative would have been picked up by P together with the E-source Jacob narratives in the final P edition of the Pentateuch.

Finally, interpreters must also consider Gen 35:16–29 as containing examples of J- and P-stratum texts that contextualize the northern Israelite Jacob narratives by placing Jacob in Judah and thereby tying him into the larger ancestral narrative of Genesis.[33] The first element is the narrative concerning the death of Jacob's beloved Rachel and the birth of Benjamin in Gen 35:16–21. This sorrowful event is portrayed as taking place on the road from Bethel in Ephraim to Ephrath/Bethlehem in Judah, which facilitates Jacob's relationship to Judah. It appears to be at least partly the result of J redaction, as indicated by the location of Rachel's tomb in Judah, like the other ancestors who are buried in Hebron, whereas 2 Sam 10:2 places her tomb in the tribal territory of Benjamin. The account of Reuben's affair with his father's concubine Bilhah then follows in Gen 35:22a, thereby eliminating Reuben as a contender for recognition as Jacob's firstborn son and opening the way for Judah. Following the accounting of Jacob's sons in Gen 35:22b–26, Gen 35:27–29 relates Isaac's death and burial by Jacob and Esau in Kiriath-arba, now known as Hebron, where the other ancestors are buried, in the tribal territory of Judah. Overall, the redactional placements of Gen 26, 34, and 35:16–29 indicate a clear effort to set the northern Israelite Ephraimite or E Jacob narratives initially in a

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33. See Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 33, 119, 174–75.

late monarchic J stratum and later in an early Persian-period P framework, each of which ties him to his ancestors, Abraham and Sarah and Isaac and Rebekah. Jacob's flawed character in relation to Esau is clear, and it is reinforced by his questionable character in relation to the rape of his daughter, Dinah. Such character traits would initially serve northern Israelite interests in promoting critical self-reflection concerning relations with Aram and Edom during the late ninth and early eighth centuries BCE, but in the respective EJ and P editions of the work they portray Jacob as a somewhat flawed character who would ultimately need the aid of Judean leadership and the cultic services of the Levitical priesthood.

<div align="center">4.</div>

The preceding study attempts to demonstrate the foundational northern Israelite or Ephraimite character of the Jacob narratives and the successive roles of the J and P strata in redacting the narratives for their present place and role in the larger pentateuchal narrative. In doing so, it also attempts to demonstrate that the primary means of identifying a northern Israelite stratum is not simply the use of the divine designation, ʾĕlôhîm, "G-d." Instead, a focus on northern Israelite sites and institutions must also play a major role in identifying E narratives. Such conclusions point to the experience of the Northern Kingdom of Israel with its neighbors, Aram and Edom, during the late ninth through the early eighth centuries BCE as the instigation for the initial composition of these narratives. The E-source Jacob narratives thereby function as a means for northern Israel to reflect on its experience with Aram and Edom and to learn from that experience during the reigns of the later monarchs of the Jehu dynasty, Joash and Jeroboam, when Israel had recovered from its reverses. In the aftermath of the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 722–721 BCE, the E-source Jacob narratives would have been brought south to Judah, where they were edited and rewritten by Judean scribes to form an EJ stratum of the proto-Pentateuch and again in the early Persian period, when the Pentateuch achieved its final form at the hands of the P redaction.[34] Such a process points to Israelite/Judean concern with learn-

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34. See Nadav Naʾaman, "When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City? The Rise of Jerusalem as Judah's Premier City in the Eighth–Seventh Centuries B.C.E.," *BASOR* 347 (2007): 21–56. He traces the growth of Jerusalem from the ninth through the seventh centuries BCE with a special emphasis on the late eighth through sev-

ing from the writings of the past in order to address the needs of the nation in the present and the future.

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enth centuries BCE. Such growth would provide the social context for the rewriting of northern proto-pentateuchal narratives in the southern kingdom of Judah following the collapse of northern Israel. See also Fleming, *Legacy of Israel.*

13
Form Criticism:
The Question of the Endangered Matriarchs in Genesis

Form criticism is a foundational, dynamic, and continually evolving exegetical method employed in modern critical interpretation of biblical texts.[1] It analyzes the formal features of a text, including its unique syntactical and semantic form or literary structure and its typical linguistic genres that give shape to the text and function within it to facilitate its expression. Form criticism functions both synchronically to analyze the present literary form of the text and diachronically to ascertain and examine its compositional history in relation to its postulated written and oral stages. It works in tandem with other critical methodologies, such as rhetorical criticism, redaction criticism, tradition-historical criticism,

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1. The theoretical portions of this paper are adapted and revised from my "Form Criticism," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 227–41. For additional discussion of form-critical theory, see Sweeney, "Form Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, repr. as ch. 2 in this volume; Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi, eds., *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Martin J. Buss, *Biblical Form Criticism in Its Context*, JSOTSup 274 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999); John H. Hayes, ed., *Old Testament Form Criticism* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1974); Knierim, "Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered"; Knierim, "Criticism of Literary Features"; Klaus Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form-Critical Method*, trans. Susan M. Cupitt (New York: Scribner, 1969); Koch, *Was Ist Formgeschichte? Methoden der Bibelexegese* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974); Gene M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

textual criticism, canonical criticism, newer literary criticisms, social-scientific analysis, and linguistics in the interpretation of biblical texts. Form criticism is intimately concerned with the societal, historical, literary, and conceptual settings in which the biblical texts function, in which they were produced, and in which they are read.

The purpose of this paper is to (1) describe contemporary form-critical theory and (2) apply contemporary form-critical theory to a reading of the endangered matriarch texts in Gen 12, 20, 26, 34, and 38. David Petersen was among the first scholars to expand form-critical analysis beyond its standard preoccupation with structure, genre, setting, and intent to include theme and motif as well.[2] This paper builds on Petersen's analysis to consider the formal, thematic, and motivic functions of these texts in relation to the broader literary context of Genesis. It argues that the endangered matriarch narratives cannot be limited to the so-called wife-sister texts in Gen 12, 20, and 26 but must include the Dinah and Tamar texts in Gen 34 and 38 as well. The proposed reading of these narratives demonstrates Genesis's preoccupation with the question of ancient Judah's national and ethnic self-understanding.

1. Introduction to Form-Critical Theory

A full understanding of the technical terminology employed in contemporary form-critical theory is essential. *Form* (German *Form*) refers to the unique formulation of an individual text or communication, whereas *genre* (German *Gattung*) refers to the typical conventions of expression or language that appear within a text. Genre does not constitute form, as many early form critics presupposed;[3] rather, it functions within the unique form of a given text. Other key terms include *Sitz im Leben*, "setting in life" or "societal setting"; *Sitz im Literatur*, "setting in literature" or "literary setting"; *Formkritik*, "form criticism" or the analytical study of the formal features of a text; and *Formgeschichte*, "the history of form," which refers to the historical development and function of forms and genres in texts.

Each text is uniquely formulated and constitutes a singular event of communication in relation to the language in which the text is written or

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2. David L. Petersen, "A Thrice-Told Tale: Genre, Theme, and Motif," *BR* 18 (1973): 30–43.

3. See, e.g., Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*.

translated.[4] Like all language systems, Biblical Hebrew employs a combination of typical semantic, syntactic, and generic linguistic features and elements that are combined to produce its unique textual expressions.[5] Thus, analysis of the formal literary structure of a biblical text requires a full understanding of the semantic and syntactical dimensions of Biblical Hebrew in order to enable the interpreter to grasp the means by which a text organizes and presents its contents. Such formal literary structure appears in the seven-day creation pattern in Gen 1:1–2:3, in which six days are devoted to creative acts and the seventh day is reserved for the Sabbath as a day of rest and renewal in all creation. It also appears in the sequence of *tôlədôt* (i.e., "generations") formulae that define the literary structure of Genesis and the Pentateuch at large, which traces the emergence of the people of Israel, including the Levitical priesthood, from among all the nations of creation.

Although each text is unique, it employs typical linguistic patterns or genres that function within a specific social, literary, or historical context to facilitate the presentation of its contents and ideas. An example of a modern genre is the contemporary novel, which employs typical elements, including a lengthy narration, well-developed plot lines and characterizations, and some challenge that must be addressed by the fictional or semifictional characters in an effort to entertain, stimulate, and influence the reader. Alternatively, the ubiquitous credit card or loan offer, which emphasizes favorable interest rates, low monthly payments, and easy acceptance, is a well-known standard form or genre in contemporary American society. Biblical texts likewise employ typical genres that were easily recognized by ancient readers. The etiological legend, in which the origins and significance of a contemporary practice, social identity, or institutional structure is explained, is well-known in biblical narrative (see, e.g., Gen 28, which explains the origins of the Bethel sanctuary).[6] Likewise the vision report, in which a character experiences a vision (usually from the divine realm) that discloses otherwise hidden knowledge that

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4. For discussion of the communicative and rhetorical functions of biblical texts, see esp. Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*; Patricia K. Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," in McKenzie and Haynes, *To Each Its Own Meaning*, 156–80.

5. For discussion of the linguistic character of Biblical Hebrew texts, see esp. Schweizer, *Metaphorische Grammatik*.

6. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Legend," *NIDB* 3:631–33; see also Coats, *Genesis*, 206–9, 318.

enables the character to face the challenges of the present or future (see Abram's vision of the future of his descendants in Gen 15 or Jacob's vision of YHWH's promise of covenant and descendants again in Gen 28).[7] Each of these examples employs typical patterns of linguistic expression, but each is a unique formulation that conveys specific contents in relation to the social, literary, and historical settings in which it functions.

Early form critics focused especially on the analysis of short, self-contained texts, identification of their typical structural elements or generic characteristics, and their societal function or *Sitz im Leben*, "setting in life," but the development of form criticism over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has prompted interpreters to recognize a variety of contexts in which a text is produced and in which it functions. Thus, the societal, historical, and literary settings of a text are key factors in influencing both the composition of a text and its function or interpretation in the contexts in which it is employed and read.

Societal setting is frequently a very challenging aspect of form-critical research, insofar as the early literary and historical settings of a text must be reconstructed as part of the larger effort of reconstructing societal setting. The use of creation narratives to explain the origins, structures, and presuppositions of present-day social and political orders is well-known in the ancient Near Eastern world.[8] Examples such as the Enuma Elish (the Babylonian creation epic) or the Ugaritic Baal Cycle explain the origins of the major cultic institutions, societal structure, and political roles in the world of Babylon and Ugarit, respectively, and each myth functioned as part of a larger cultic liturgy and an educational system that celebrated and reinforced the worldviews articulated therein. Pentateuchal narrative displays similar patterns of reflection on creation to explain the origins and early history of the nation Israel, its civil and religious laws, and its institutional cultic structure. Yet modern interpreters do not possess sufficient knowledge of the specific liturgical or educational means that were employed to impart such knowledge and worldview to the people or its leaders.[9]

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7. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 542.

8. See esp. Van Seters, *Prologue to History*, 1–103. See also John Van Seters, *The Life of Moses: The Y-hwist as Historian in Exodus–Numbers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994).

9. See David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), who lays the groundwork for such study.

The historical setting of a text is a crucial aspect of composition. The Wellhausenian paradigm of four foundational sources or strata for reading the Pentateuch—J (the Y-hwist), E (the Elohist), D (the Deuteronomist), and P (the Priestly source)—played a dominant role in modern readings of the Pentateuch throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[10] But recognition of the role that Wellhausen's anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic theological biases have played in the construction of his system, coupled with recognition of Assyrian or Babylonian influence in the J stratum, has prompted interpreters to reconsider past historical paradigms for reading pentateuchal texts. Such reconsideration has major implications for reconsidering the purportedly monolithic reading of P; interpreters have come to recognize that monarchic-period elements may well appear within the P literary stratum, pointing to a much longer and a far more reflective process of Priestly engagement, interpretation, and composition within the pentateuchal narratives.[11] Such reconsideration also points to the emerging consensus concerning the dating of the J stratum to the late monarchic period as well, which has important implications for the reading of the pentateuchal narratives.[12] The identification of Abraham and Sarah as the founding ancestors of Israel and the placement of their narratives prior to those concerning Jacob and Joseph points to the Judean character of the so-called JE narrative and indeed of the pentateuchal narrative at large. The presentation of Abraham is especially informed by Davidic interests from the late monarchic period, such as the concerns for the continuity of the dynasty, its association with Hebron in Judah, the definition of its role in relation to Assyrian or even Babylonian patterns of expression, and its role in ruling over all of the tribes of Israel. Likewise, the presentation of Jacob and Joseph, including all of their flaws, points to an underlying E tradition that addressed problems faced by the northern monarchies in relation to their Aramaean and Edomite neighbors and in relation to tensions within the internal tribal structure or balance of power in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE. Such an E stratum that focused on the

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10. For contemporary discussion of pentateuchal research, see Nicholson, *Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century*; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1992); Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch*; Dozeman and Schmid, *Farewell to the Y-hwist?*

11. E.g., Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

12. See esp. the work of Van Seters, *Prologue to History*; *Life of Moses*.

key eponymous ancestors of Israel, namely, Jacob and Joseph, would have been taken up and edited in Judah following the collapse of the Northern Kingdom in 722/721 BCE in an effort to demonstrate Judean priority by focusing on Abraham as the ideal and founding ancestor of all Israel.

The literary setting of a text also plays a key role in interpretation.[13] Modern interpreters are accustomed to read the pentateuchal narratives according to the standard Wellhausenian pattern of sources or strata—J, E, D, and P—which frequently results in a fragmented reading of the pentateuchal text. But contemporary concerns with broader synchronic literary patterns (e.g., concern with plot analysis and narrative poetics) and rethinking of the standard historical paradigms for the reading of the Wellhausenian sources or strata has prompted interpreters to recognize the larger narrative patterns and concerns that inform the present form of the pentateuchal narrative rather than a narrow focus on reading, dating, and interpreting individual narratives.[14] Examples include the questions of divine fidelity, especially with regard to the birth and well-being of Sarah's son, Isaac, that inform the Abraham-Sarah narratives in Gen 11–25; Jacob's identity as the eponymous ancestor of Israel and his struggles with his likewise eponymous neighbors and relatives, Esau/Edom and Laban/Aram, to define his own national integrity in Gen 25–35;[15] and Joseph's process of challenge and maturation as he transforms from a self-absorbed adolescent to a worthy leader for his brothers, eponymously representing the tribes of Israel in Gen 37–50.

2. Endangered Matriarchs in Genesis

In order to illustrate the application of contemporary form-critical theory to the interpretation of biblical texts, this paper focuses on the endangered matriarch narratives in Gen 12, 20, and 26 as well as the associated narratives concerning the rape of Dinah in Gen 34 and the Tamar narrative in Gen 38.[16] This choice is made for three reasons: (1) Petersen's own form-

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13. For discussion of the impact of the *Sitz im Literatur* in form-critical research, see esp. Richter, *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft*.

14. See, e.g., Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*.

15. See Sweeney, "Puns, Politics, and *Perushim*."

16. For major commentaries, see Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997); von Rad, *Genesis*; Westermann, *Genesis*, vols. 2–3; Coats, *Genesis*.

critical work on these texts, which emphasizes the need to consider the intrinsic literary character of the narratives in relation to the form-critical enterprise;[17] (2) the interrelations between the similarly formulated wife-sister texts, which are so frequently discussed in relation to one another, and the very different texts concerning Dinah and Tamar, which are generally treated in isolation; and (3) the general inability or unwillingness of interpreters to examine the interrelationships between these texts and their larger literary context, viewing them instead as isolated narratives that contribute little to the development or hermeneutical outlook of the ancestral narratives in Genesis.

From the work of Gunkel on, interpreters have treated the three wife-sister narratives in Gen 12, 20, and 26 as a sui generis group of narratives that must be interrelated with one another but have little to do with their larger literary context. But despite the obvious perception of commonality among these narratives, interpreters have had a very difficult time in classifying these narratives according to a common generic character. Thus, Gunkel classifies Gen 12 as *Sage* (legend), which is concerned with the exemplary or etiological portrayal of persons or events; Gen 20 as *Legende*, which glorifies YHWH and divine assistance; and Gen 26 as a narrative without clear generic characteristics.[18] Koch claims to follow Gunkel in arguing that all three represent the *ethnologische Sage* (ethnological legend) but suggests that the unique characteristics of Gen 20 indicate its origins in prophetic circles.[19] Westermann argues that all three are variants of the same narrative but notes that each is unique insofar as Gen 20 is a reflection on Gen 12 and Gen 26 takes up elements of both of its predecessors.[20] Von Rad and Noth likewise consider the three to be variants of the same narrative but note the reflective character of Gen 20 while positing that the

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17. Petersen, "Thrice-Told Tale."

18. On Gen 12, see Gunkel, *Genesis* (1977), 168–69, 225–26; see also the English edition of Gunkel, *Genesis* (1997), 168, 223–25, which translates German *Sage* as "legend." On the problems of these terms, see Sweeney, "Legend"; Sweeney, "Saga," *NIDB* 5:37. For discussion of saga, see also Coats, *Genesis*, 319. On Gen 20, see Gunkel, *Genesis* (1977), 220, where he labels Gen 20 a *Sage*, but cf. 226, where he labels it a *Legende*; see also Gunkel, *Genesis* (1997), 218. For discussion of legend, see also Coats, *Genesis*, 318. On Gen 26, see Gunkel, *Genesis* (1997), 224, 293–94.

19. Koch, *Growth of the Biblical Tradition*, 120; Koch, *Was Ist Formgeschichte*, 145–49.

20. Westermann, *Genesis* 2:161–62.

disparate character of Gen 26 marks it as the oldest of the three.[21] George
Coats maintains that all three are tales but follows Koch in positing that
Gen 20 gravitates toward prophetic legend.[22]

Although his paper was published prior to the commentaries by Wes-
termann and Coats, Petersen's work must be considered in relation to this
discussion because he points to problems in employing genre classification
to interpret this literature.[23] He recognizes that the generic classifications
presuppose distinct societal settings—*Sage* represents style characteris-
tics of nomadic life, whereas *Legende* represents those of the monarchic
period—which has the effect of highlighting the social background of the
narratives more than the literature itself. In proposing a focus on theme
and motif, Petersen aims to achieve greater understanding of each narra-
tive as literature. In his analysis, Gen 12, 20, and 26 must be considered as
episodes in the patriarchal saga (i.e., legend), and each narrative episode
has a unique set of concerns. Genesis 12:10–13:1 employs the wife-sister
motif to demonstrate how Abraham's plan in 12:10–16 saved his life but
left Sarah in jeopardy, whereas YHWH's plan in 12:17–20 resolved the
issue of Sarah by visiting plagues on Pharaoh in order to elicit his under-
standing of proper behavior. Genesis 20 employs the wife-sister motif to
portray recognition of divine moral authority or "fear of G-d" on the part
of the Philistine monarch Abimelech. Genesis 26 employs the wife-sister
motif to emphasize Gerarite envy of Isaac, who becomes wealthy under
the protection of Abimelech.

Petersen's analysis is especially useful in developing a deeper under-
standing of the interrelationship between the common or typical elements
of each narrative and their unique formulations and concerns. His obser-
vations highlight the contemporary debate on genre: To what degree do
the typical elements of generic entities function within a text to facilitate
the uniquely formulated expression of its concerns and worldview? But
questions still remain, particularly since the field has developed since the
publication of Petersen's study. To what extent does the typical motif of
the endangered matriarch necessarily depend on the four-part wife-sister
motivic pattern identified by Petersen in these texts: (1) travel to the place
in which the husband and wife are unknown, (2) a claim that the man's

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21. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 167–68, 226, 269–70; Noth, *History of Pentateuchal Tradi-
tions*, 22–23.

22. Coats, *Genesis*, 109–13.

23. Petersen, "Thrice-Told Tale."

wife is his sister, (3) discovery of the ruse, and (4) resolution of the situation created by the false identity? It seems that the question of danger to the matriarch is lost to a degree in the development of another set of concerns: the question of the patriarch's deceptive act in asking the matriarch to identify herself as his sister rather than as his wife. To what extent must the motif of danger to the matriarch be differentiated from the wife-sister motif with its focus on the patriarch's deception in these narratives?

One may further ask: To what degree is the motif of danger to the matriarch necessarily dependent on the wife-sister motif? After all, Dinah faces very clear danger when she is raped in Shechem in Gen 34. Tamar faces danger as well insofar as her status in the family of Judah—and indeed the future of the tribe of Judah itself—is brought into question when she remains barren following the deaths of her husband Er and his brother Onan and failure of Judah to marry her to Shelah. As a barren woman, she could be sent back to her father's family, where she would have a very questionable future. Unlike Sarah (or Rachel or Leah, for that matter), Tamar is not able to protect herself by offering a handmaiden to her husband because her husband is dead and no levirate substitute is forthcoming. Indeed, the question of the endangered matriarch is a question of her progeny, insofar as each matriarch—Sarah twice; Rachel, Dinah, and Tamar once each—is placed in a situation of sexual compromise that has implications for the identities of their respective progeny (or lack thereof) as well as implications for the future of the people Israel/Judah. Insofar as each instance of the endangered matriarch, including both the three wife-sister narratives as well as those concerned with Dinah and Tamar, raises question concerning the identity of the matriarch's progeny, the interrelationship of these narratives with the larger context of the ancestral narratives must also be considered. Petersen's observation that these narratives must be viewed as episodes within the larger ancestral saga demands further consideration.

In order to facilitate such consideration, two fundamental issues must be addressed. The first is the formal literary structure of the larger Genesis or pentateuchal narrative in which the endangered matriarch texts appear, and the second is the place and function of each narrative within that larger literary framework. Each narrative, Gen 12:10–20; 20; 26; 34; and 38, will be considered in sequence. Three essential questions will guide the discussion: (1) What is the nature of the danger in which each matriarch is placed? That is, to what degree does the narrative display an interplay between typical generic elements and unique narrative concerns? (2)

What implications does the danger in which each matriarch is placed have for the larger narrative context in which each episode appears? In other words, why is each narrative placed in the larger narrative context? And (3) What implications do the observations made on the basis of the first two questions have for the interpretation of the ancestral narratives at large? Contemporary interpreters are beginning to recognize that the formal literary structure of Genesis or even the Pentateuch at large cannot be based on broad thematic concerns, such as the primeval history in Gen 1–11; the ancestral narratives with their constituent foci on Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph in Gen 12–50; the exodus and wilderness traditions in Exodus–Numbers; and Moses's last speeches to Israel in Deuteronomy. Such broad strokes do not account adequately for concerns with minor figures such as Isaac, Esau, Dinah, and Tamar, on the one hand, and the complicated questions of the interrelationships between the exodus, wilderness, and Deuteronomy narratives, on the other. Instead, interpreters are paying closer attention to the formal literary features of the text, particularly the so-called *tôlǝdôt* formulas: *ʾēlleh tôlǝdôt* PN, "these are the generations of PN," that appear throughout Genesis in 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1; 37:2 and in Num 3:1 as introductions to narrative blocks that recount the histories of the descendants of the party named in the *tôlǝdôt* formula.[24] Of less concern for the present discussion is the related focus on the so-called itinerary formulas in Exodus–Numbers that recount the movement of Israel by stages from Egypt through the wilderness and on to the border of the land of Israel in Moab and that play an important role in discerning the formal literary structure of Exodus–Deuteronomy. When the structural role of the *tôlǝdôt* formula is taken into consideration, the formal literary structure of Genesis and the Pentateuch at large emerges as a history that traces the early history of Israel/Judah and its Levitical priesthood in twelve major segments from the time of creation and within the larger context of the history of humankind. The progressively focused narrative begins with Adam and Eve as the descendants of the creation of heaven and earth (see Gen 2:4), and it continues with the descendants of Adam (Gen 5:1), Noah (6:9), the sons of Noah (10:1), Shem (11:10), Terah (11:27), Ishmael (25:12), Isaac (25:19), Esau (36:1), Jacob (37:2), and Aaron and Moses (Num 3:1). By culminating with

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24. See, e.g., Cross, "Priestly Work"; Thomas, "These Are the Generations"; Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*.

the descendants of Aaron and Moses, the pentateuchal narrative points to the emergence of YHWH's sanctuary and priesthood within Israel—and thus within humankind—as the holy center of the creation that is first described in Gen 1:1–2:3. The pentateuchal narrative at large must therefore be recognized generically as a saga, insofar as it constitutes a long prose narrative with an episodic structure developed around stereotyped themes or objects. Insofar as those themes or objects include the formation of the people of Israel around YHWH's sanctuary within the context of creation, the pentateuchal narrative might best be termed a saga or history of creation focused on the formation of the people of Israel. The following diagram illustrates the resulting literary structure of Genesis and the Pentateuch at large, and it takes account of the itinerary formulae in the substructure of Exodus–Deuteronomy:[25]

Synchronic Literary Structure of the Pentateuch:
Saga/History of Formation; Formation of the People Israel

IX. The Generations of Isaac: history of Jacob   25:19–35:29
    A. Introduction: genealogy   25:19
    B. Marriage and birth of children   25:20–26
        1. Marriage and age at marriage   25:20
        2. Birth of children   25:21–26
        3. Age at birth: 60 years   25:26b
    C. Differentiation of Jacob and Esau   25:27–34
        1. Differentiation proper   25:27–28
        2. Illustration of differentiation: Esau forfeits birthright   25:29–34
    D. Account of Isaac and Rebekah   26:1–33
        1. Isaac and Rebekah in Gerar   26:1–16
        2. Isaac and Rebekah in the Wadi Gerar   26:17–22
        3. Isaac and Rebekah in Beersheba   26:23–33
    E. Jacob becomes the patriarch   26:34–35:15
        1. Distress to Isaac and Rebekah: Esau's marriages to   26:34–35
           Hittite women
           a. Marriage account proper   26:34
           b. Consequence: distress   26:35
        2. Jacob takes blessing of father from Esau   27:1–45

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25. Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible.*

When the formal literary character of the Pentateuch is taken into consideration, it is clear that the endangered matriarch narratives appear within a much broader literary context concerned with the formation of Israel. In order to determine the function of each narrative within that broader context, discussion must turn to the analysis of each narrative.

Genesis 12:9–20 appears within the context of 11:27–25:11, which recounts the history of the descendants of Terah: Abraham and his wife Sarah. Although many interpreters define the unit as Gen 12:10–13:1, this definition is based on a diachronic construction of the narrative as an element of the J stratum. Although such a view is likely correct, synchronic analysis points to Gen 12:9 as the introduction to the present episode and 13:1 as the introduction to the following episode insofar as both verses signal the movement of the ancestral figures from the land of Israel to Egypt and back again.

Genesis 12:9–20 constitutes an episode that focuses on the question of the endangered matriarch in Egypt. Following Coats, the narrative may be classified generically as a tale, insofar as it displays a relatively short and simple plot based on a tension and its resolution. The formal literary structure of the narrative begins with an introduction Gen 12:9, which signals Abram and Sarai's travel in the Negev. The second major subunit of the narrative then turns to the exposition of tension in three parts: Gen 12:10 recounts famine in the land of Canaan, which prompts Abram and Sarai to move to Egypt; Gen 12:11–13 recounts Abram's fear of the Egyptians and his request to Sarai that she identify herself as his sister rather than as his wife so that his life will be spared; and Gen 12:14–16 recounts the actions of the Egyptians in taking Sarai for Pharaoh's harem and in rewarding Abram handsomely for his new status in relation to the royal court. The third major subunit of the narrative in Gen 12:17–20 focuses on resolution of the tensions, when Pharaoh, responding to the plagues unleashed against Egypt by YHWH, questions Abram and learns Sarai's true status as

Abram's wife and then expels both of them from Egypt together with their possessions under military escort.

Several features of this narrative must be considered. First, the initial threat comes from YHWH, and it is directed to Abram and Sarai in the form of a famine in the land of Israel that calls into question all of YHWH's promises in the preceding episode (Gen 12:1–8) that Abram will become a great nation. If they die of starvation, there will be no great nation. Second, the next threat comes from the Egyptians. Whether justified or not, Abram clearly believes that the Egyptians will kill him to take his wife and concocts the ruse that she is his sister because of his perception of that threat. Third, the threat to Sarai does not include any possibility of bodily harm. As part of Pharaoh's harem, she is in the safest possible place for her in the world. When viewed from the perspective of a patriarchal society, Abram has sacrificed his own interests and honor to protect his wife. The danger to Sarai does not lie in the potential for bodily harm. Rather, it lies in the potential identity of her descendants as Egyptian sons of Pharaoh and the implications such births would have for the promises made by YHWH to Abram and Sarai in Gen 12:1–8. Although many interpreters charge Abram with acting churlishly to place his wife in danger so that he might become rich, there is no indication that he acts to enrich himself. His statement to Sarai in verse 13 that she should identify herself as his sister so that "it may go well with me because of you" immediately precedes his statement "and that I may remain alive because of you." Abram fears for his life, first from YHWH and now from Pharaoh. With Sarai safely placed in the royal harem, Abram now turns to the question of survival. Even if he dies, Sarai will remain safe, but if he lives, he might still have a chance to recover her. In the end, he does so through divine intervention.

But the major result of the resolution of the tensions in this narrative must be recognized. Sarai's children will not be Egyptian but Israelite. Indeed, the literary context makes the importance of this outcome clear. The narrative has already noted Sarai's barrenness (Gen 11:30) immediately before articulating YHWH's promises to Abram that he will become a great nation in 12:1–8. The narrative will continue with Abram's vision of Israel's subjugation to Egypt and YHWH's deliverance in 15:13–16, again in the context of YHWH's promises of descendants and land. Genesis 16 and 21 will again raise the question of Abram's descendants, insofar as his first son, Ishmael, is born to him by the Egyptian handmaiden Hagar before his son Isaac is finally born to him by Sarah. Throughout the Abraham and Sarah narratives, the question of the identity of their descendants

is paramount: Will they have descendants? And will their descendants be Egyptian, whether born to Sarah or to Abraham? The narrative in Gen 12:9–20 plays an important role in raising questions concerning the character of Abraham's and Sarah's descendants—and indeed YHWH's promise that they will become a great nation—in the broader context of Gen 11:27–25:11.

When considered diachronically, Gen 12:9–20 (or 12:10–13:1) must be placed in the historical setting of the late monarchic period of the seventh century BCE, when Egypt emerged as the major threat to Judah following the decline of the Assyrian Empire.

Genesis 20:1–18 likewise appears as an episode in the larger narrative block concerning the descendants of Terah in 11:27–25:11, although it appears much later in the narrative sequence. The setting for the encounter has shifted from Egypt to Gerar, presumed to be located in the western Negev near Philistine Gaza, and the identity of the foreign monarch has shifted from the pharaoh of Egypt to King Abimelech of Gerar. Again, the narrative may be characterized generically as a tale, although it is ascribed to the E stratum of the Pentateuch, and many interpreters note the presence of prophetic influence. The formal literary structure of the narrative begins with the introduction in Gen 20:1, which notes Abraham's journey to Gerar in the Negev. The tension of the narrative emerges in the second major unit in 20:2, when Abraham instructs Sarah without any explanation to identify herself as his sister, prompting Abimelech to send for her, presumably so that he might marry her. The third major unit appears in 20:3–18, which resolves the narrative tension in three subunits: 20:3–7, in which G-d appears to Abimelech to inform him that Sarah is Abraham's wife before Abimelech has the opportunity to touch her; 20:8–13, in which Abimelech demands an explanation from Abraham, who only then expresses his fear of death at the hands of a nation that does not fear G-d; and 20:14–18, in which Abimelech restores Sarah to Abraham and grants him wealth and land, prompting Abraham to pray to G-d on Abimelech's and Gerar's behalf to restore the birth of children to the land.

Interpreters tend to focus on the interpretative aspects of this narrative, insofar as it explains Abraham's deception in Gen 12:9–20 by pointing out that Sarah is actually his half-sister. Nevertheless, the reconsideration of the dating of the pentateuchal strata suggests that Gen 20:1–18 might actually be the oldest narrative and that 12:9–20 might have been deliberately composed to raise narrative tension to highlight questions concerning YHWH's promises to Abraham. As for Gen 20, the questions

of Abraham's fear and Sarah's descendants remain paramount. Genesis 20 makes it clear that Abraham's fears are unfounded: Abimelech and the people of Gerar fear G-d, much as Pharaoh proves to do in Gen 12:9–20. Again, Sarah would be protected as a woman in the royal harem, but the identity of her descendants again comes into question. Following on the Sodom-Gomorrah narratives in Gen 18–19, Gen 20 raises the question of Sarah's descendants immediately after YHWH has reiterated intentions to grant her a son even though she is an old woman. Finally, of course, Gen 20 appears immediately prior to Gen 21, in which Isaac is finally born. Like Gen 12:9–20, Gen 20 provokes narrative tension over the question as to whether YHWH will fulfill promises to grant Abraham and Sarah a son and thereby to fulfill the promise to make them a great nation.

As for the diachronic dimensions of this narrative, Gen 20 appears to reflect tensions on the borders of Israel/Judah and Philistia in the late ninth and early eighth centuries BCE, when Libnah (and Edom) revolted against Judah during the reign of Joram ben Jehoshaphat (2 Kgs 8:22), and Hazael of Aram captured Gath, which would prompt the Philistines to free themselves from Judean control, prior to his attack against Jerusalem during the reign of Jehoash ben Amaziah (2 Kgs 12:18–19). In both cases, the Judean kings were vassals of Israel at the time.

Genesis 26 appears as an episode within the context of the account of the generations of Isaac in 25:19–35:29. This block of material concludes with the death of Isaac, but it focuses especially on Isaac's sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob, of course, becomes the dominant figure for the future of Israel, whereas Esau will marry Hittite women and become the ancestor of Edom. The endangered matriarch and wife-sister motif narrative appears as part of a larger narrative framework that examines the tensions in Isaac's relations with the Philistines and his role in founding major Judean cities in the Negev, such as Beersheba, Esek, Sitnah, and Rehoboth. The narrative may again be classified generically as a tale, although the tensions and resolutions of this unit encompass far more than only the endangered matriarch or wife-sister motif. The formal literary structure of the text is determined by the movement of its major characters. Genesis 26:1–17 discusses Isaac's move to Gerar in 26:1–5 and his continued sojourn there in 26:6–17; his move to the Wadi of Gerar in 26:18–21; his move to Rehoboth in 26:22; his move to Beersheba in 26:23–33; and the concluding notice of Esau's marriage to two Hittite women.

Noteworthy concerns in Gen 26:1–17 include YHWH's reiteration of the promises to make Isaac into a great nation and the jealousy of the Phi-

listines over Isaac's success, which would provoke the water disputes that appear throughout the balance of the narrative. The subunit concerning the endangered matriarch or wife-sister motif in 26:6–11 never actually places Rebekah in danger, although the narrative does emphasize Isaac's fears as the motivation for his action. His fears prove to be unfounded when Abimelech recognizes that Rebekah is Isaac's wife and decrees that Isaac and Rebekah are not to be molested, but royal decree ultimately proves to be a major factor in the Philistines' jealousy of Isaac. When Isaac prospers as a result of YHWH's promises and Abimelech's protection, the Philistines stop up the wells, which prompts Isaac to leave. The subsequent units of the narrative focus on the tensions between Isaac and the Philistines as he moves from place to place to escape their efforts to thwart his success by stopping up his wells until Abimelech comes to him to settle the matter. As part of the resolution of their relationship, Abimelech affirms YHWH's blessing as a factor in Isaac's success.

Although Rebekah is never taken as wife by Abimelech or the other Philistines, the threat of such an outcome underlies the narrative. Because the narrative appears immediately after Gen 25:19–34, which discusses the birth of her sons, Esau and Jacob, the identity of her children does not come into question. Thus, the question of the identity of Rebekah's children becomes a more distant question, but one that is nevertheless present in the narrative. The placement of the brief notice concerning Esau's marriages to Hittite women at the conclusion of the narrative signals a larger concern with the identity of the progeny of Isaac. Indeed, the tensions between Esau and Jacob are at least temporarily resolved in the following narratives when Rebekah sends Jacob to Haran in order to find a wife from his extended family instead of from the Hittite women, as Esau had done (see Gen 27:46). The question of Isaac's and Rebekah's progeny through Jacob is ultimately resolved in a satisfactory matter, but the larger narrative makes it clear that the question of their progeny through Esau is not.

The diachronic background of this J narrative, which is clearly aware of Gen 12:9–20 (see 26:1), would lie in the movement of the Judean population away from Philistia and into the Negev in the seventh century BCE, when Judah began to build up major Negev sites, such as Beersheba, Tel Ira, Tell Masos, and others.

The narrative concerning the rape of Dinah in Gen 34 differs markedly from the wife-sister narratives already considered insofar as Dinah is the first matriarchal figure actually to suffer harm when she is raped by Shechem son of Hamor. The narrative may be classified once again

as a tale, although Coats notes the presence of other generic elements.[26] The literary structure of the narrative focuses on the initial tension: the rape of Dinah and Shechem's proposal to marry her in 34:1–3; continued tension in expressed throughout 34:4–24, when Hamor and Shechem come to negotiate the terms of the marriage; the resolution of the issue in 34:25–29, when Simeon and Levi kill the Shechemites for the outrage committed against their sister; and the introduction of a new source of tension, when Jacob upbraids his sons for their action. The wife-sister motif is not explicit, although readers should note the emphasis placed on her identity as the sister of Simeon and Levi, who ultimately kill the Shechemites and take their property for the crime perpetrated against their sister. Readers should also note the emphasis placed on Shechem's desire to marry Dinah following the rape and thus the potential that she might become a wife. Thus, the question of Dinah's progeny and of her potential marriage to a Canaanite man remain of paramount concern throughout the narrative. This concern appears together with the immoral character of the Canaanites who would allow such an outrage to take place and the possibility that such a people would become a part of Israel by circumcising themselves so that a marriage could take place.

But a key element is Jacob's silence throughout the narrative in the face of his daughter's rape. As the patriarchal figure and father of Dinah, he is responsible for her welfare and protection. Traditional Jewish commentators have noted his failure to supervise his daughter when she went out to visit the daughters of the land, leaving her in a position in which the rape could take place.[27] Jacob's silence following the rape and his at least implied acquiescence to a marriage with the perpetrator also raises questions about his exercise of paternal authority and his concern for the welfare of his own daughter. The narrative does not mention Dinah again, so readers never learn whether she ever married or had children. But this narrative appears immediately prior to the narratives concerning Jacob's return to Bethel, YHWH's reiteration of the covenant promises to him, and the death of his beloved wife, Rachel, while giving birth to Benjamin. It also notes Reuben's act of lying with Bilhah, his father's concubine, to illustrate that there are continued problems within the family of Jacob. Indeed, these problems will

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26. Coats, *Genesis*, 235.

27. See Sarna, who makes similar observations but does not cite the traditional sources (*Genesis*, 233).

emerge once again in the narrative block of Gen 37:2–Num 2:34, in which the Joseph narratives of Gen 37:2–50:26 will figure so prominently.

Genesis 34 is a J narrative, which indicates that its diachronic background may be found in Judean critiques of northern Israel, which would focus on Jacob as the patriarchal figure most closely associated with the north, during the late monarchic period. Jacob is an inadequate father, and this has consequences for the future of his children.

The narrative concerning Tamar in Gen 38 appears within the context of the account of the generations of Jacob in Gen 37:2–Num 2:34, within the segment in Gen 37:2–50:26 devoted to Joseph. Commentators have struggled to ascertain why this narrative appears in its present position, immediately following the introductory exposition of Joseph's character and his strained relationship with his brothers in Gen 37:2–36, who were ultimately responsible for his sale into Egyptian slavery. But interpreters note that Judah's efforts to talk his brothers out of their original plan to kill Joseph (Gen 37:25–27) might justify the focus on Judah in the Tamar narrative. Indeed, Judah's efforts to save Benjamin from Joseph later in the Joseph narrative would also play a role.

Again, Gen 38 is not the typical endangered matriarch or wife-sister narrative seen above in Gen 12, 20, and 26. Nevertheless, Tamar is a matriarch who is placed in danger, although the danger is somewhat more subtle. Tamar is married to Er son of Judah, who was born of a Canaanite mother. When Er dies, Tamar is given to his brother Onan, also born of the Canaanite mother, who dies after refusing fully to consummate the levirate marriage with Tamar. Although Tamar is to be married to Shelah, the third son of Judah and Shua, when he grows up, Tamar sees that Judah does not follow through in arranging the levirate marriage, prompting her to take action on her own. In order to see to the proper disposition of the levirate marriage, she disguises herself as a prostitute, has relations with Judah, and ultimately gives birth to a son.

Coats describes the genre of the narrative as a novella, apparently under the influence of his decision to label the entire Joseph narrative a novella,[28] but the relatively limited scope of the Tamar narrative indicates that it is simply another tale. Its formal literary structure includes an introduction in 38:1–5, which describe the births of Judah's sons to Shua, a Canaanite woman; 38:6–11, which describes tension in the nar-

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28. Coats, *Genesis*, 274–77.

rative when Judah's sons die before having a son with Tamar; 38:12–23, in which Tamar resolves the issue by disguising herself so that she might have relations with Judah to produce a son; 38:24–26, in which the situation is resolved when Judah recognizes Tamar's righteousness and his own failure to act properly in the matter; and the conclusion in 38:27–30, which relate the births of Tamar's twin sons to Judah. The significance of this narrative in relation to the narrative context of Genesis becomes evident when the identities of Judah's sons are compared to those of Joseph much later in the narrative. Although Tamar's ethnicity is never named, the Canaanite identity of Shua, Judah's first wife, is made clear. Judah's sons are therefore born of a Canaanite woman, making YHWH's displeasure with Er and Onan's despicable actions clear in the minds of Israelite or Judean readers. The failure to mention Tamar's identity suggests that she is Israelite/Judean, insofar as she presents no problem. Following the deaths of Judah's half-Canaanite sons, Tamar's actions ensure that Judah has Israelite/Judean progeny.

The identities of Judah's sons through Tamar stand in striking contrast to those of Joseph. Interpreters rightly focus on Joseph's efforts to overcome the challenging circumstances in which he is placed and his maturation from the self-centered adolescent of Gen 37 into the judicious leader of Egypt and of his brothers in the subsequent development of the narrative. But as part of Joseph's "success story," he marries an Egyptian woman, Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, which would make his sons Manasseh and Ephraim half-Egyptian (Gen 41:45, 46:20). The narrative recognizes the problem and attempts to resolve the issue by portraying Jacob's adoption of Joseph's sons prior to his death (48:8–20).

Although Jacob's adoption of Joseph's half-Egyptian sons would seemingly resolve any problems associated with their identity, readers must recognize that Joseph and Jacob, the leading patriarchal figures of their time, have now done what Abraham and Sarah and Isaac and Rebekah avoided despite the repeated threats of marriage into the Egyptian and Philistine royal families: Joseph marries into an Egyptian priestly family at the behest of Pharaoh, and his sons are formally accepted by Jacob, who adopts them as his own.

But the matter is not one of simple family relations. Joseph (as well as Jacob) is the eponymous ancestor of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which was built around the central tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Judah is the eponymous ancestor of the tribe of Judah and thus of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, which becomes the central component of the nation

of Israel after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom. Judah's descendants ultimately survive as the Southern Kingdom of Judah even beyond the Babylonian exile; Joseph's descendants, who become the core of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, do not survive in any meaningful or recognizable form beyond the Assyrian destruction.

When the diachronic character of Gen 38 is considered, the issue is even more pronounced. As a J narrative, Gen 38 constitutes an element of the J redaction of the underlying E Joseph novella in the late monarchic period. The redaction highlights Judah's leadership role both when he faces Reuben in attempting to save Joseph from death at the hands of his brothers and against Simeon when he acts as guardian and protector of Benjamin during the audience with Joseph. The placement of the Tamar narrative in the Joseph novella makes an important polemical point: Joseph, or the Northern Kingdom of Israel, is compromised by the Egyptian identity of the core sons/tribes, which underlies the syncretistic character of northern Israel as portrayed in biblical sources. Judah, although threatened with similar tendencies as exemplified by Judah's first marriage, is saved from such compromise and can emerge as the heir to the covenant with Abraham and Sarah (and Isaac and Rebekah), who for their own part avoided such compromise despite the many challenges that they faced.

4. Conclusion

As this case study shows, contemporary form-critical theory differs markedly from early expressions of the methodology in the early through mid-twentieth century. Whereas earlier form critics such as Gunkel tended to focus on short, self-contained texts in an effort to reconstruct the earliest oral stages of the development of a text, the influence of literary studies and text linguistics in particular have prompted form-critical analyses to take account of a much broader textual purview: the place and function of individual texts in their larger literary context. While past form critics struggled to discern the place and function of the so-called endangered matriarch or wife-sister texts in Genesis, contemporary form-critical theory enables interpreters to recognize that the endangered matriarch motif includes texts beyond the three wife-sister narratives in Gen 12, 20, and 26 to include the rape of Dinah in Gen 34 and the Tamar-Judah narrative in Gen 38 as well. The method also enables interpreters to discern the function of these texts in their larger literary setting: they

function to highlight the question of the social, religious, and ethnic identities of the progeny of the ancestors in relation to YHWH's promises that the descendants of the ancestors will become a great nation in relation to YHWH. Furthermore, the analysis highlights a polemical factor. The ancestors and their descendants through Judah, which eventually formed the core of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, were able to protect the identity of the people by avoiding intermarriage with the Egyptians, Philistines, and other Canaanite peoples, whereas the descendants through Joseph, who would eventually form the core of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, were descended from Egyptians, with consequences for the religious integrity of the northern Israelite kingdom in later times.

14

The Literary-Historical Dimensions of
Intertextuality in Exodus–Numbers

1.

The exodus and wilderness narratives in the books of Exodus and Num-
bers are among the most important foundational narratives in the Hebrew
Bible. They present an account of the formative experience of the nations
of ancient Israel and Judah under the leadership of Moses, including the
enslavement of Israel by the Egyptians, YHWH's confrontation with the
Egyptian pharaoh, and the journey from Egypt through the wilderness
to Mount Sinai and on to the borders of the promised land of Israel. In
so doing, they also provide an etiological account of the origins and sig-
nificance of the Israelite-Judean festival system, including especially the
observance of Pesach or Passover as well as the festivals of Shavuot and
Sukkot. With regard to Passover, the narrative includes the motifs of the
blood of the Passover lamb, which serves as the main offering of the fes-
tival; the making of matzot or unleavened bread, which is eaten during
the festival; and the deliverance of the firstborn of Israel in contrast to the
deaths of the firstborn of Egypt.

Although the roles of the Passover lamb and the matzot are clear in
relation to Passover, the deliverance of the firstborn of Israel is not. The
instruction account concerning the treatment of the firstborn in Exod
13:1–16 and the legal materials in Exod 34:19–20 are both J-stratum texts
that call for the consecration or transference of the firstborn, including
animals and humans, to YHWH.[1] Both appear to quote or presuppose

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the earlier text from the Covenant Code in Exod 22:28–29, which calls on the people of Israel to give their firstborn sons, cattle, and flocks to YHWH. Whereas the function of the firstborn animals is clear, namely, they are to be offered at the temple altar to YHWH on Passover, the function of the firstborn human males is not. They are to be redeemed, but the purpose for which they are to be redeemed is never stated. Hints as to the function of the firstborn males appear in three instances in the book of Numbers in which YHWH speaks to Moses about the consecration of the Levites, namely, Num 3:11–13; 3:40–43, 40–51; and 8:13–19. Numbers 3:11–13 states,

> And YHWH spoke to Moses saying, "I indeed have taken the Levites from the midst of the Israelites in place of all the firstborn that break the womb from the Israelites, and the Levites shall be mine. For all the firstborn are mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for myself all the firstborn of Israel, including humans and animals. They shall be mine. I am YHWH."

This quote and the others like it suggest that the original function of the firstborn was to serve in a priestly role alongside the sons of Aaron, but the text makes clear YHWH's intention to consecrate the Levites for this role in place of the firstborn. The book of Numbers is especially concerned with the consecration of the Levites for their sacred role. Other texts, such as 1 Sam 1–3, support this view, insofar as it portrays Samuel, the firstborn son of his mother, Hannah, and his Ephraimite father, Elkanah, who is taken to the Shiloh sanctuary and raised to serve as a priest under the tutelage of Eli.

These considerations indicate that the role and function of the firstborn sons of Israel may well be clarified by intertextual study of the exodus and wilderness narratives. In order to proceed, we must first clarify what we mean by intertextual method and then apply it both to the study of the exodus wilderness narrative both in relation to itself and in relation to other narratives. Such study demonstrates that the exodus and wilderness

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1. Noth, *History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 269, 271.

narrative once understood the firstborn sons of Israel to serve together with the sons of Aaron as priests in Israel, but the Levites were later consecrated for this role in place of the firstborn of Israel.

<div align="center">2.</div>

Intertextuality is the study of texts in relation to their literary contexts, including the citation of or allusion to other literary works, the placement and interpretation of a text in relation to its immediate literary context(s), and the interpretation of a text in relation to other literary compositions.

Current methodological overviews of intertextual interpretation indicate that it developed out of earlier diachronic or author-centered modes of exegesis, such as redaction criticism and innerbiblical exegesis, during the course of the twentieth century.[2] Such editing and citation was viewed as the product of later tradents or redactors of an earlier text who deliberately expanded and reworked earlier texts in an effort to reinterpret them to serve their own later interests.

Examples of such work from the latter twentieth century appear in efforts to define the various redactions of the Pentateuch from the early identification of the classical sources J, E, D, and P as conceived by Wellhausen through contemporary attempts to reconstruct the compositional history of the Pentateuch based on a later dating of the J material to the late monarchic or early exilic period and the earlier dating of selected P materials to the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah and his successors. Such work calls for the interpreter to reconstruct the authors of the texts and their particular viewpoints in relation to their posited historical contexts based on a combination of formal, lexical, and hermeneutical criteria.[3] In the case of the Pentateuch, such criteria would include (1) the presence of a literary context in which one text would have access to another, such as Deuteronomy's rendition of events from the wilderness period in relation to those of Exodus–Numbers; (2) a lexical or motific correspondence between a posited later text and a posited earlier text, such as the development of the laws of the Holiness Code in Lev 17–26 or those of Deut

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2. Sommer, *Prophet Reads Scripture*, 6–31; Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality"; Newsom, *Book of Job*, 3–31; Carleen R. Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of Lamentations*, SemeiaSt 58 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 1–28.

3. Stackert, *Rewriting the Torah*, 18–29.

12–26 from the laws of the so-called Covenant Code of Exod 20–24; and (3) a hermeneutical perspective in one text that demonstrates an attempt to interpret another text in relation to concerns expressed in the first text, such as the presentation of events concerning the exodus from Egypt in Hos 12.

But current intertextual work is also rooted in contemporary synchronic models of literary criticism, particularly the recognition of the role played by readers in the construction and interpretation of a text. With the rise of reader-response criticism and the subsequent development of synchronic literary perspectives in biblical exegesis, interpreters have come to recognize the role that the reader plays in the construction of texts, whether biblical or not. Such work posits that texts are entities in and of themselves that stand independently of the author or authors who produced them and the historical contexts in which they worked.[4] With only the text as evidence, it is impossible to know the mind of the author, either on the part of the interpreter of the text or even of the author who wrote it. Interpreters construct an image of the author based on their own subjective worldviews, which in turn influence their readings of texts and thereby give expression to their own concerns.

Wellhausen's identification of J as the earliest of the sources is a case in point.[5] He maintained that the anthropomorphic portrayal of YHWH and YHWH's relationship with human beings pointed to a primitive world view that had to be assigned to the earliest periods of Israel's history. Given the state of the field of mythology at the time, Wellhausen followed most scholars, who viewed mythological motifs as primitive expressions of a preliterate society. More recent study of mythology indicates that it continues to exist and function in relation to modern societies as well as ancient,[6] as contemporary interests in Star Trek and superheroes would indicate. Indeed, Wellhausen's views were heavily influenced by the Protestant Christian interest in prophecy as an authentic and early example of human-divine interaction. Wellhausen sought to define such a face-to-face or prophetic model as the foundation for the composition

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4. John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 140–236; Morgan with Barton, *Biblical Interpretation*, 203–68.

5. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs*.

6. William E. Paden, *Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 1994).

of the Pentateuch, whereas priestly models of human interrelation with the divine were considered as a later and less desirable or less authentic, both because they represented a more developed and literate society and because of Protestant Christianity's opposition to the Roman Catholic Church. But one must observe that the priesthood existed and functioned as the central religious institution of the nation throughout all stages of Israelite and Judean history, which raises questions concerning Wellhausen's decision to employ a prophetic model as the foundational feature for his earliest pentateuchal source.

Contemporary theorists, based especially in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, posit that authors and interpreters draw on the larger world of language and text which they inhabit, often subconsciously, so that it is impossible to know whether an intertextual association is the deliberate work of an original author or the observation of a reader who reads her or his own ideas into the text at hand.[7] In such a view, texts do not necessarily convey the meanings intended by their authors, as it is impossible to know what an author intended, either by the interpreters or even by the author him- or herself. Meaning is thereby ascribed to texts by their readers, and the validity of the interpretation is decided by the numbers of other readers willing to accept it. And so we must ask whether it is possible to account for such subjectivity in assessing potential intertextual relationships between and among texts.

Although the field is often polarized by author- and reader-centered theorists who deny the validity of the others' work, contemporary interpreters must recognize that textual interpretation calls for a synthesis of these views. Texts are indeed the products of authors who wrote them in specific historical contexts with a specific set of intentions that readers may or may not recognize and correctly reconstruct. At the same time, texts are read by readers who bring their own worldviews to bear in their interpretation—and therefore construction—of the texts at hand. But the extent to which later readers correctly discern the presumed intentions of a text's author must be judged in relation to the criteria presented above.

In keeping with the concerns and goals of the new Society of Biblical Literature program unit on Intertextuality, this paper turns to the study of an important but not fully understood motif in the exodus and wilderness

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7. Barbara Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction*, SemeiaSt 38 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000).

narratives, namely, the role and function of the redemption of the first-born sons of Israel.

<div align="center">3.</div>

We may begin by observing examples of the first type of intertextuality, namely, the citation, expansion, and reworking of earlier texts. Exodus 13:1–16 presents a set of divine instructions concerning the significance of the redemption of the firstborn of Israel during the exodus.[8] Although Noth considers it to be a Deuteronomistic supplement to J in the penta-teuchal text, the contemporary redating of J to the late monarchic period enables us to conclude that it is a J-stratum text that has drawn on earlier D-stratum texts.[9] This text appears immediately following the notice that YHWH had brought out the Israelites from the land of Egypt in Exod 12:51 and prior to the account of Israel's journey from Egypt through the wilderness to the Red Sea in Exod 13:17–22. It is not unusual for instruc-tional material concerning the observance of Passover to appear in the midst of the account of the exodus. Exodus 12:43–50 presents an account of YHWH's instructions concerning the treatment of the Passover offer-ing in verses 53–49 followed by a notice of Israel's compliance with those instructions in verse 50. Exodus 12:1–28 likewise presents instruction concerning the preparation and eating of the Passover offering immedi-ately following the account of YHWH's announcement of the tenth plague in Exod 11:1–10. Such features indicate that the Exodus narrative is indeed an instruction account concerning the observance of Passover in ancient Israel and Judah that blends instruction together with the account of the event itself.[10]

Exodus 13:1 begins with a report of YHWH's instruction (Heb. *kol bəkôr peṭer kol reḥem*), "And YHWH spoke to Moses saying, 'Consecrate

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8. Contra George W. Coats, *Exodus 1–18*, FOTL 2A (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 94–96. He considers Exod 13:1–16 as a "Story of Cultic Origins." See now Thomas B. Dozeman, *Exodus*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 286–98. He characterizes Exod 13:1–2 and 13:3–16 as divine or Mosaic instruction concerning the firstborn and the Feast of Unleavened Bread and recognizes the agenda to substitute the Levites for the firstborn as priests in Israel.

9. Noth, *History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 30 n. 106; see also 269; cf. William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, AB 3 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 373–80.

10. Cf. Coats, *Exodus 1–18*, 3–20, who identifies the exodus narratives as a saga.

to me every firstborn which opens every womb among the sons of Israel, including human and animal. It is mine [Heb. *lî hû'*].'" Exodus 13:2–16 then follows with a report of Moses's instructions to the people to remember this day in verses 2aα5–5, to observe it by eating matzot for seven days and to explain it to your children in verses 6–8, to observe it by wearing tefillin as a sign on your head in verses 9–10, to set aside the firstborn animals for an offering and the firstborn sons for redemption and to explain it to your children in verses 11–15, and a concluding instruction to wear the tefillin as a sign on your hand in verse 16.

YHWH's instruction to consecrate the firstborn in verse 2 employs some of the same language that appears in the legal instruction concerning the treatment of the firstborn in Exod 34:19–20, "All that opens the womb is mine [Heb. *kol peṭer reḥem lî*], as well as all your cattle that drop a male as a firstling, whether cattle or sheep. And the firstborn of an ass you shall redeem with a sheep, and if you do not redeem it, you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of your sons you shall redeem." Indeed, the phraseology of Exod 34:19–20 appears to be quite similar to that of Exod 13:2 insofar as it includes the instruction concerning treatment of the firstborn together with instruction concerning the observance of Passover and the other festivals in Exod 34:18–26. Indeed, the legal material in Exod 34:10–27 appears to be derived from earlier legal instruction in Deut 7:1–7, Exod 23:14–19, and Exod 22:28–29.[11] In the aftermath of the golden calf episode, Exod 34:1–28 presents YHWH's instructions to Moses to carve a new set of covenant tablets to replace the originals that were broken when Moses descended from Sinai to find Israel worshiping the golden calf. The new set of legal materials begins in verses 10–16 with material derived from Deut 7:1–7 concerning the prohibition of intermarriage with the Canaanite nations so as to prevent them from leading Israel astray with their foreign gods. It continues in Exod 34:17 with a prohibition against the manufacture of molten gods to take account of the golden calf. It concludes with an expanded version of the legal instruction concerning observance of Passover and the other holidays from Exod 23:14–19, to which the statements concerning the treatment of the firstborn from Exod 22:28–29 have been added.

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11. See Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Wilderness Traditions of the Pentateuch: A Reassessment of Their Function and Intent in Relation to Exodus 32–34," in *SBL 1989 Seminar Papers*, ed. David Lull (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 291–99, repr. as ch. 15 in this volume.

We may now turn to Exod 23:14–19 and 22:28–29. Both texts are part of the so-called Covenant Code, a northern Israelite law code that is cited by Amos 2:6–16. Although some contemporary scholars would date the Covenant Code to the period of the Babylonian exile in the sixth century BCE,[12] such a view is mistaken. The citations of the Covenant Code in Amos 2:6–16 indicate that the Covenant Code is known in Israel prior to the mid-eighth century BCE when the prophet was active.[13] With the growing recognition that J must be dated to the late monarchic period and that it functions as a redactional text that reworked an underlying E or northern Israelite narrative, the instructions concerning the sanctification of the firstborn in Exod 23:14–19 and Exod 22:28–29 then emerge as part of the underlying E-stratum text that serves as the basis for the references to the redemption of the first-born in Exod 13:1–16 and 34:10–27.[14] Although the J-stratum texts in Exod 13:1–16 and 34:1–28 combined the concerns of the two E-stratum Covenant Code texts with the observance of Passover and the other holidays in Exod 23:14–19 and the sanctification of the firstborn in Exod 22:28–29, neither set of texts adds any clarity to understanding the function or purpose of the firstborn human beings. They are dedicated to YHWH, but for what purpose?

<p style="text-align:center">4.</p>

We may now turn to the second type of intertextuality, namely, the inter-relationship between texts within their broader literary contexts. The above-noted texts in Num 3:11–13, 40–43, 44–51; and 8:13–19 each refer to YHWH's decision to take the Levites from Israel in place of the firstborn, the first issue of the tribes of Israel. All three of the texts are P-stratum texts that function as part of P's concluding narratives for the Sinai periscope in Num 1:1–10:10, but each also has a unique function.

The first in Num 3:11–13 simply states the principle that YHWH has decided to take the Levites in the place of the firstborn. This text appears as part of a sequence of statements by YHWH to Moses concerning the status of the Levites in the book of Numbers. Numbers 3:1–4 begins the text with an instance of the *tôlǝdôt* formula, "and these are the generations of

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12. Wright, *Inventing G-d's Law*; cf. Van Seters, *Law Book for the Diaspora*.

13. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:214–18.

14. See Yoreh, *First Book of G-d*; see now Sweeney, *Pentateuch*.

Aaron and Moses on the day that YHWH spoke with Moses at Mt. Sinai," which introduces the major structural components of the Pentateuch. In the present instance, Num 3:1–4 signals the narrative interest in the status of the priesthood, beginning with Aaron and his sons. Numbers 3:5–10 relates YHWH's statement to Moses that the latter is to bring near the tribe of Levi so that the Levites might serve Aaron and his sons in their priestly duties at the *mishkan* or tabernacle. Numbers 3:11–13 then follows with its statement:

> And YHWH spoke to Moses, saying, "And I hereby take the Levites from the midst of the sons of Israel in place of the firstborn, which open the womb, from the sons of Israel, and they shall be Levites for me. For all the firstborn are mine on the day that I struck down all the firstborn of the land of Egypt. I have sanctified for myself all the firstborn in Israel, including humans and animals. They are mine. I am YHWH."

Numbers 3:11–13 clearly draws on the language concerning the firstborn that we have previously seen in the Covenant Code and the J-stratum texts, but the immediate text does not make clear the purpose or function of the firstborn, only that the Levites will replace them. But insofar as the prior text in Num 3:5–10 makes it clear that the Levites are to function as priestly assistants to the sons of Aaron, it would seem that the firstborn were understood to serve in a similar capacity.

Following a lengthy speech in Num 3:14–39 in which YHWH instructs Moses to take a census of the Levites, Num 3:40–43 and 44–51 present two speeches by YHWH in which YHWH once again addresses the issue of the firstborn of Israel. The first, in Num 3:40–43, presents YHWH's instructions to Moses to record all the firstborn of Israel just as the prior speech instructed Moses to record the Levites. YHWH's speech in verses 40–43 continues as before with instructions to Moses to take the Levites in place of the firstborn. The second speech, in Num 3:44–51, instructs Moses once again with the principle that he should take the Levites in place of the firstborn. But YHWH specifies the instruction by including the cattle of the Levites. But insofar as the firstborn in Israel outnumbered the Levites by 273, YHWH specifies that a redemption price be leveled on the excess numbers of firstborn at the rate of five shekels per head, for a total of 1,365 shekels to be paid to Aaron and his sons for the redemption of the firstborn. Such a calculation thereby specifies the general statements in Exod 13:13 and 34:20 that the firstborn human beings are to be redeemed.

Exodus 22:28–29, however, did not mention the redemption of the first-born human beings.

The third and final text in the series is Num 8:13–19, which appears within a larger narrative in Num 8:5–22 in which Moses, Aaron, and the people of Israel comply with YHWH's instructions to Moses to consecrate the Levites as an elevation offering, Hebrew *tənûpâ*, from the people of Israel for Aaron and his sons. A *tənûpâ* or elevation offering is a portion from the offerings of the people of Israel that is dedicated for the support of the priesthood, specifically the Aaronide priests (Exod 29:22–28, Lev 7:28–34, 8:22–29). Numbers 8:13–19 makes that role clear, and it specifies once again with language much like that of the earlier texts from Numbers that the Levites are taken by YHWH in place of the firstborn in Israel.

The three Numbers passages in 3:11–13, 40–43, 44–51; and 8:13–19 make it clear that YHWH's choice of the Levites in place of the first-born of Israel was intended to provide Aaron and his sons with priestly assistance in their duties at the tabernacle and later at the temple. Such a role suggests that the firstborn once had an obligation to serve as priests alongside the sons of Aaron in the temples of Israel. It is also clear that such service could be redeemed by the payment of a specified price. Each text has a specific function. Numbers 3:11–13 states the principle, immediately following Num 3:5–10, which states that the Levites are to serve alongside Aaron and his sons in the tabernacle. Numbers 3:30–43, 44–51 specifies the redemption price to be paid on behalf of the excess firstborn sons to Aaron and his sons. Numbers 8:13–19 states that the Levites will function as a *tĕnûpâ* offering in place of the firstborn for Aaron and his sons.

5.

Finally, we may turn to the third type of intertextuality, namely, the interrelationship between a text and the larger literary world beyond its immediate literary context. Although some might be inclined to see the role of the firstborn strictly as a monetary transaction to support the Levites, at least one text indicates that the firstborn sons did indeed serve as priests in the temples of early Israel. First Samuel 1–3 indicates that the priest and prophet Samuel was indeed a firstborn Ephraimite who was placed in the temple at Shiloh following his birth, where he was raised and educated to serve as a priest in ancient Israel.

First Samuel 1–3 illustrates the role of firstborn sons as priests in the early history of Israel.[15] Samuel's father is identified in 1 Sam 1:1 as Elkanah ben Jeruham ben Elihu ben Tohu ben Zuph of the tribe of Ephraim. He is from Ramathaim of the Zuphites in the territory of Benjamin. His mother is identified as Hannah, although her ancestry is not specified. Samuel is her firstborn son. Elkanah has a second wife as well, named Peninah. Although Hannah initially has no children, Peninah has many. This issue leads to rivalry between the two women and narrative tension that provides the basis for plot development. When Hannah finally does give birth to Samuel, Hannah places him in the Shiloh temple after she weans him, where he will be raised by the high priest Eli to serve as a priest in Israel. The vision account in 1 Sam 3 in which YHWH summons the young Samuel apparently serves as his vocation account to serve as both a prophet and a priest.

The portrayal of Samuel serving as a priest on the basis of his status as the firstborn son of Hannah and his Ephraimite father, Elkanah, is consistent with what we know about the priesthood in northern Israel. Figures such as the prophets Elijah and Elisha perform priestly functions. Elijah builds an altar for the observance of Sukkot in 1 Kgs 18, and Elisha performs music as part of his oracular performance in 2 Kgs 3. Neither is ever identified as a Levite or as a priest. Indeed, Jeroboam ben Nebat, the first king of northern Israel, is criticized for allowing non-Levites to serve as priests in 1 Kgs 12:25–33, and he officiates at the Bethel altar in 1 Kgs 13 when he has his confrontation with the man of G-d from Judah.[16] Northern Israel apparently did not rely on Levites to serve as priests in the manner of southern Judah. Firstborn sons apparently filled this role in northern Israel, at least to a certain extent.

6.

In conclusion, this analysis points to a development in the conceptualization of the priesthood in the Pentateuch. Our intertextual considerations point to a process in which initial statements concerning the dedication

15. See Marvin A. Sweeney, "Samuel's Institutional Identity in the Deuteronomistic History," in *Constructs of Prophets in the Former and Latter Prophets and Other Texts*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Martti Nissinen, ANEM 4 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 165–74.

16. Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 172–82.

of the firstborn sons of human beings and animals of the flock and herd in Exod 22:28–29 and the observance of Passover and the other festivals in Exod 23:14–19 stand at the basis of the evolution of ancient Israel's priesthood. Insofar as these texts derive from the Covenant Code, a ninth-through eighth-century E-stratum law code from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, they form the earliest basis for discerning the process of development. These texts are then revised an expanded in the J-stratum narrative of Exod 13:1–16 and the legal instruction of Exod 34:18–26 to conceptualize the dedication of the firstborn sons and animals of Israel to YHWH as part of the Passover narrative concerning the slaying of the firstborn of Egypt and their redemption of the firstborn of Israel as foundational components to the observance of Passover. Finally, the P-stratum texts in Num 3:11–13, 40–43, 44–51; and 8:13–19 point to further development in which the Levites will replace the firstborn sons of Israel as the priests who serve together with the sons of Aaron in the tabernacle or temple of Israel according to Num 3:11–13. Numbers 3:40–43, 44–51 makes it clear that the Levites will serve as a *tənûpâ* or elevation offering from among the tribes of Israel to support the work of the Aaronide priests. And Num 8:13–19 calculates the amount of funds necessary to pay for the full redemption of the firstborn of Israel to the Aaronide priests. Altogether, such an analysis points to the original obligation of the firstborn sons of Israel to serve together with the sons of Aaron as priests in the sanctuary of YHWH, based on the model of Samuel, the prophet and priest, who was the first-born son of his mother, Hannah, and her Ephraimite husband, Elkanah. Such considerations point to the motif of the slaying of the firstborn in the Passover narrative as an etiological account of how the firstborn came to serve in such a sacred role, certainly in the late monarchic J-stratum text and potentially in the earlier E-stratum text of the Pentateuch from the ninth–eighth centuries BCE.

The Wilderness Traditions of the Pentateuch:
A Reassessment of Their Function and
Intent in Relation to Exodus 32–34

In his tradition-historical investigation of the wilderness murmuring motif in the Hebrew Bible, Coats identifies a clear anti-Ephraimite bias in key texts pertaining to the tradition, particularly the spy narrative in Num 11–14.[1] The wilderness generation's rejection of YHWH's promise of the land of Canaan, based on the people's acceptance of the reports of the strength of Canaan's inhabitants by the ten faithless spies, serves as a paradigm for the rebellion of the northern tribes of Israel against the house of David and their rejection of the Jerusalem temple. On this basis, he argues that the murmuring tradition originated in a Judean polemic against the Northern Kingdom that dates to the early period of the divided monarchy.[2]

Subsequent research has identified problems with this understanding in that the wilderness traditions also emphasize the inclusiveness of the twelve tribes and their reconstitution at the end of the wilderness period. For example, the presence of Joshua, of the tribe of Ephraim, together

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1. George Coats, *Rebellion in the Wilderness: The Murmuring Motif in the Wilderness Traditions of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), esp. 137–56.

2. Although details of Coats's analysis and tradition-historical reconstruction have been challenged, the anti-Ephraimite focus continues to play an influential role in scholarly interpretation of the tradition. See Simon De Vries, "The Origin of the Murmuring Tradition," *JBL* 87 (1968): 51–58. He argues that the tradition originated in an attempt to harmonize an original Judean conquest tradition with that of an all-Israelite conquest. In his view, the tradition was later employed as a polemic against the Northern Kingdom.

with Caleb, of the tribe of Judah, as the two faithful spies in this narrative undermines its antinorthern character.[3] The portrayal of Israel's unity is likewise supported by Dennis Olson, whose analysis of the final form of Numbers demonstrates that the spy narrative functions within the editorial framework of the book, which emphasizes the reconstitution and inclusiveness of the people prior to entering the land.[4] When considered in relation to the anti-Ephraimite bias, these factors indicate the need to clarify the interrelationship of the anti-Ephraimite and inclusivist concerns of the wilderness traditions.[5]

An important aspect of this issue is the relationship of Exod 32–34 to the wilderness rebellion tradition.[6] This narrative is often excluded from

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3. De Vries explains Joshua's presence in the spy narrative, together with the rebellion motif and its forty years' punishment of wilderness wandering, in tradition-historical terms as an expansion of an original Caleb tradition by later tradents intended to harmonize a southern conquest tradition with an overall view of a limited conquest by the twelve tribes of Israel ("Origin of the Murmuring Tradition," 56–58).

4. Dennis T. Olson, *The Death of the Old and the Birth of the New: The Framework of the Book of Numbers and the Pentateuch*, BJS 71 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), esp. 129–52.

5. Although both Olson and De Vries point to an overall interest in the unity of the tribes in this narrative, neither fully examines the interrelationship of the anti-Ephraimite polemic and the inclusivist concerns or the motivation for the combination of these motifs. Olson merely identifies the "death of the old/birth of the new" as a paradigm for YHWH's wrestling with Israel found throughout the Hebrew Bible (*Death of the Old*, 179–98). Because of his exclusive interest in the final form of Numbers, he does not pursue the question of the editor/author's motivation for combing the motifs. De Vries maintains that the rebellion motif is a secondary addition meant to rationalize the delay of the conquest and harmonize it with the eastern conquest tradition associated with Joshua ("Origin of the Murmuring Tradition," 56–58). Yet Olson's study indicates that the final editors/authors of this tradition are not so much interested in simply delaying the conquest as they are in examining the process of punishment and reconstitution in the wilderness period. Certainly, the pervasive nature of the rebellion motif throughout the wilderness tradition indicates that the author/ editors were not motivated solely by the desire to preserve an ancient tradition. As Olson's study demonstrates, the rebellion motif serves a purpose in the overall framework of the narrative that must be considered in relation to the interest in presenting a reconstituted and inclusive Israel.

6. For studies that analyze the literary coherence and meaning of these chapters as a block, see Herbert C. Brichto, "The Worship of the Golden Calf: A Literary Analysis of a Fable on Idolatry," *HUCA* 54 (1983): 1–44; Robert W. L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of G-d: Story and Theology in Exodus 32–34*, JSOTSup 22 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983).

the discussion because of its Deuteronomistic editorial influence and the perception that its origin was independent from that of the rest of the wilderness traditions.[7] It is apparent, however, that in the present form of the Pentateuch, Exod 32–34 has clear links with the wilderness tradition, especially the spy narrative in Num 13–14. Not only does it share an anti-northern perspective, as indicated by its focus on the golden calf and its links to the narratives concerning Jeroboam's calves, but it also focuses on Moses's intercession on behalf of the people to dissuade YHWH from destroying them altogether and creating a new people from Moses's descendants (Exod 32:7–14).[8] As in Num 13–14, Exod 32–34 emphasizes the destruction and reconstitution of the people following their lack of faith in YHWH.

Exodus 32–34 plays a key role in relation to the structure of the wilderness traditions in particular and that of the Pentateuch in general. Brevard Childs has shown that Exod 32–34 constitutes a major transition in the pentateuchal wilderness tradition in that the wilderness narratives focus on YHWH's aid in overcoming genuine needs of the people prior to the golden calf incident, but emphasize illegitimate rebellion against YHWH following the golden calf incident.[9] Furthermore, Knierim's analysis of the structure of the Sinai pericope demonstrates that Exod 32–34 appears at a crucial point in the general pentateuchal narrative as well, immediately following YHWH's instructions concerning the building of the tabernacle in Exod 25–31 and the compliance report in Exod 35–40, which establishes the tabernacle as the holy center for YHWH's presence among the people.[10] Obviously, any conclusions concerning the function and intent

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7. Cf. Coats, *Rebellion in the Wilderness*, 184–91. On the Deuteronomistic character of this narrative, see now Jacques Vermeylen, "L'affaire du veau d'or (Ex 32–34). Une clé pour la 'question deutéronomiste'?," *ZAW* 97 (1985): 1–23.

8. Both traditions also emphasize a similar liturgical statement of YHWH's mercy and justice (Exod 34:5–8; Num 14:18). See below.

9. Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical Theological Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 256, 258.

10. Rolf Knierim, "The Composition of the Pentateuch," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1985 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent H. Richards (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 393–415, esp. 404–6. Knierim's analysis demonstrates that the initial goal of the narrative is the establishment of the tabernacle as the sanctuary or locus for YHWH's revelation to the people. Revelation from the mountain in Exod 19–40 was the necessary preliminary to the decisive revelation from the tabernacle in Lev 1:1–Num 10:10, the essential core of the Sinai revelation, which establishes Israel as a holy community.

of the wilderness traditions, including the interaction of rebellion and restoration, must include consideration of Exod 32–34.

It is also important to note that previous studies have identified close links between various components of Exod 32–34 and other biblical texts, which include not only the spy narratives in Num 13–14 but also Jeroboam's erection of the calves at Bethel and Dan in 1 Kgs 12–13, YHWH's self-revelation to Elijah in 1 Kgs 19, the laws forbidding covenants with the Canaanites in Deut 7:1–6, and the regulations in the cultic calendar in Exod 23:10–19. In most cases, they have concluded either that they represent parallel traditions or that Exod 32–34 is the earlier narrative on which the corresponding tradition is dependent. There are good reasons, however, to maintain that in each case, the writer of Exod 32–34 has drawn on other traditions in order to provide essential elements of this narrative. The purpose of the writer in employing these traditions in the present context is to constitute the disruption and restoration of the people as an essential component of the pentateuchal narrative.

Scholars have long noted the connections between the traditions concerning Jeroboam's calves at Bethel and Dan in 1 Kgs 12:28–13:34 and the golden calf narrative in Exod 32. Moses Aberbach and Leviv Smolar present the most extensive list of parallels between the two traditions, which includes thirteen separate items.[11] On the basis of these parallels, they

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Exodus 32–34 therefore appears at a crucial juncture in this narrative in that it presents the last obstacle, and its resolution, to the establishment of YHWH's central locus of revelation in the Sinai pericope. Furthermore, Knierim's analysis demonstrates that Exod 32–34 not only disrupts the covenant between YHWH and Israel in this narrative; it also disrupts the ascent-descent pattern that constitutes the basic structure of this Sinai pericope. The position of this narrative between the covenant narrative in Exod 19–24 and the instructions for building the tabernacle in Exod 25–31, on the one hand, and the compliance report concerning the completion of the tabernacle in Exod 35–40, on the other, indicates the importance of this disruption in the editorial scheme of the narrative. In addition, it suggests that Exod 32–34, or elements thereof, may well be a secondary intrusion into the primary narrative.

11. Moses Aberbach and Leivy Smolar, "Aaron, Jeroboam, and the Golden Calves," *JBL* 86 (1967): 129–40. Among the more important parallels are the golden calves themselves; the parallel statements, "[Behold/These are] your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt," by Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12:28) and Aaron (Exod 32:4); the altar feast declared at the completion of the calves in both traditions; the non-Levitic priests employed in both traditions; the similar manner in which the golden calf is destroyed by Aaron (Exod 32:20) and Jeroboam's altar is destroyed by Josiah (2 Kgs 23:15). The most telling piece of evidence for the paral-

maintain that Jeroboam modeled his cult reform on an earlier form of Israelite worship, but that the present narrative reflects a Judean polemic against Jeroboam following the revolt of the northern tribes. This presupposes that the Jeroboam narrative is modeled on that concerning Aaron and the golden calf. It seems more likely, however, that Aaron's golden calf narrative is modeled on that of Jeroboam. Because the other parallels offer little evidence of the direction of dependency, the key consideration is Aaron's statement, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt," in Exod 32:4.[12] The use of the plural forms ʾēlleh and heʾĕlûkā in this passage is paradoxical in a context that refers to a single calf image and can only be understood as a reflex of, and conscious reference to, Jeroboam's statement in 1 Kgs 12:28, where the plural reference is entirely appropriate.[13]

Scholars have also noted the connections between the presentation of Moses in the pentateuchal traditions and that of Elijah in the Deuteronomistic History to the extent that Elijah is often referred to as a "second Moses."[14] Of particular interest here is the parallel between YHWH's self-revelation

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lel, however, is the similarity between the names of Aaron's two older sons, Nadab and Abihu, and Jeroboam's two recorded sons, Nadab and Abijah, and their deaths in the prime of life because of their association with idolatry. Aaron's sons are punished with death because they offer a "strange fire before the L-rd," an idolatrous act (Lev 10:1–7). Jeroboam's sons die as a consequence of his burning incense on the altar at Beth-El (1 Kgs 13, esp. vv. 33–34). Abijah dies of illness in conjunction with his father's condemnation (1 Kgs 14:1–20), and Nadab is assassinated by a usurper who fulfills the prophetic promise that Jeroboam's house would be destroyed (1 Kgs 15:25–32).

12. It seems unlikely that Jeroboam would name his sons after the sons of Aaron in a conscious attempt to imitate the founder of an earlier form of Israelite worship, particularly when there is no record of the continuity of their lines. It is likely, however, that the writer of the pentateuchal narratives could create two sons of Aaron, whose lines are eradicated because of their sin, in an attempt to draw a parallel between Aaron and Jeroboam.

13. Cf. Neh 9:18, which employs singular forms for the same statement, "This [zeh] is your god who brought you up [heʾĕlûkā] out of Egypt." As Childs remarks, "The issue is exegetical rather than grammatical" (Exodus, 556).

14. Cf. esp. Robert P. Carroll, "The Elijah-Elisha Sagas: Some Remarks on Prophetic Succession in Ancient Israel," VT 19 (1969): 400–415; Robert Wilson, Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 197–98; Burke O. Long, 1 Kings, with an Introduction to Historical Literature, FOTL 9 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 201.

to Moses in Exod 33:12–34:8 and that to Elijah in 1 Kgs 19.[15] A natural conclusion from these parallels might be that the Elijah narrative is some-how dependent on the Mosaic account.[16] Yet, there are indications that the Mosaic account is dependent on that of Elijah. The Elijah revelation functions smoothly in its context as the means for YHWH to inform the prophet of his future course of action in a time of crisis when his own life is at stake. In its present form, the Moses revelation narrative plays a key role in Exod 32–34 in that it provides the transition and therefore links the narratives concerning the breaking of the covenant through the golden calf and its restoration through the second set of tablets. Childs has noted tensions in this narrative, however, in that it shifts its emphasis from a visual revelation to one that focuses on YHWH's *acts* of mercy on behalf of the people. It also shifts its emphasis from an individual revelation to Moses to one that serves as the basis for restoring the covenant broken by the golden calf incident.[17] The need for this individual revelation to Moses is somewhat unusual in a context where YHWH has already revealed himself (Exod 6:2–9, 20:2) and reiterated his commitment to the people despite the golden calf episode (Exod 33:1–3). Obviously, the self-revelation account has its origins outside the context of the present narrative. The remaining tensions indicate a deliberate attempt by the writer of Exod 32–34 to incorporate an originally independent narrative into the present context. As to the original form of this narrative, the lack of hard evidence for an original Moses tradition raises the possibility that the Elijah traditions serves the model for the Moses narrative.

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15. There are a number of points of contact, including the location of the revelation at Mount Horeb (= Mount Sinai) for Elijah and Mount Sinai for Moses; Elijah's forty-day fast prior to the revelation at Mount Horeb (1 Kgs 19:4–8) and Moses's forty-day fast while writing a second set of tablets on Mount Sinai (Exod 34:28); Elijah's finding shelter in a cave on the mountain, which serves as the specific site of the revelation (1 Kgs 19:9, 13), and Moses's being placed in a cleft of rock (Exod 33:21–23); and Elijah's hiding his face in his mantle as YHWH "passed by" (1 Kgs 19:13; cf. v. 11) and YHWH's protection of Moses by placing his hand over Moses while he "passed by" (Exod 33:21–23, 34:6). See Wilson, who emphasizes that the Elijah narrative is linked to a *specific* incident in Moses's career (*Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, 198). He also emphasizes that the crisis in Elijah's time is the result of illicit worship of bovine cult images.

16. Cf. John Robinson, *The First Book of Kings*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 220–21. He maintains that the editor of 1 Kgs 19 added selected passages to emphasize the parallel with the Mosaic account.

17. Childs, *Exodus*, 595–97.

A further consideration concerns the form of YHWH's revelation to Moses, which centers around the proclamation in Exod 34:6b–7, "[YHWH,][18] YHWH, a G-d compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; yet he does not remit all punishment but visits the iniquity of the parents upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations." As parallels from the first part of this statement (v. 6b) indicate, it is apparently based on a liturgical confession (cf. Pss 86:15, 103:8, Joel 2:13, Jon 4:2, Nah 1:3, Neh 9:17).[19] If the Elijah narrative is dependent on the Mosaic account, it is somewhat surprising that such a well-known liturgical statement has no influence on Elijah's revelation. The only other occurrence of the full version of this formula, including both verse 6b and the expansion in verse 7, appears in Num 14:18,[20] albeit in a slightly shortened form. Although the appearance of this formula in the context of the spy narrative is generally considered as a quotation of Exod 34:6b–7,[21] it is unlikely that the author of this narrative would have deliberately eliminated elements of a well-known liturgical formula. It is more likely that the author of Exod 32–34 would have expanded the formula found in Num 14:18. The introduction of this formula enabled the author to establish YHWH's mercy and fidelity together with his justice. In the context of Exod 32–34, this provides the core of YHWH's self-revelation and the grounds for reestablishing the covenant in Exod 34.[22] It also suggests that the author of Exod

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18. It is possible that the first "YHWH" is the subject of the preceding verb, *wayyiqrāʾ*.

19. For a discussion of the liturgical character of Exod 34:6b–7 and its literary connections, see Robert C. Denton, "The Literary Affinities of Exodus XXXIV 6f," *VT* 13 (1963): 34–51.

20. Cf. Nah 1:3, where elements of both halves appear to be associated together, but not in a well-defined formulaic context.

21. George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1903), 157; Martin Noth, *Numbers: A Commentary*, trans. James D. Martin, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 109; Norman H. Snaith, *Leviticus and Numbers*, NCB (Greenwood, SC: Attic, 1967), 244; John Sturdy, *Numbers*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 103.

22. NB: Exodus 34:6b–7 includes references to YHWH as "G-d merciful and gracious" and adds the qualities of "faithfulness" and "keeping steadfast love for thousands," which is lacking Num 14:18. In Num 14:18, the formula merely provides the basis for YHWH's decision not to destroy the people immediately but to allow them to wander for forty years only to die in the wilderness before reaching the promised

32–34 was dependent on both 1 Kgs 19 and Num 14:18 in constructing the episode of YHWH's revelation to Moses in Exod 33:12–34:8.

Finally, scholars have recognized the complex literary character of the narrative concerning the reconstitution of the covenant in Exod 34. Two features of this section are particularly important for the present discussion. The first is the Deuteronomic character of the framework narrative in verses 11–16, 27–28, and the second is the relationship between the festival law code in verses 17–26 and the parallel code in Exod 23:10–19. Despite the frequently verbatim parallels between the two codes, scholars have been reluctant to argue that one code is dependent on the other.[23] There is evidence, however, that the narrative in Exod 34 represents a reformulation of the Exod 23 in relation to Deuteronomic traditions, which is designed to address the concerns of the larger literary context of Exod 32–34.

A comparison of the narratives concerning the two codes indicates that Exod 34 contains several elements that are absent from Exod 23 and some that appear in a different location in the two narratives. In each case, the additions or changes in Exod 34 relate to either Deuteronomic tradition, the literary context of Exod 32–34, or both.

The first concerns the ban against covenants with the Canaanites in Exod 34:10–16. This concern also appears in Exod 23:23–33, which lists the same six Canaanite nations (Exod 34:11, 23:23) together with similar commands to break down their pillars (Exod 34:13, 23:24). Exodus 34 contains several additional elements, including a ban against intermarriage with these peoples (34:16), a command to destroy their altars and *asherim* as well as their pillars (34:13), and a reference to YHWH's jealousy (34:14). Moreover, each of these additions has parallels that indicate a relationship to Deuteronomic literature. The first two relate directly to Deut 7:1–6. Although Deut 7:1–6 includes a seventh Canaanite nation, it contains a similar ban on covenants with the Canaanites, which emphasizes a prohibition against intermarriage (Deut 7:3), and a command to

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land. The initial focus on Caleb alone (Num 14:20–25) and on Caleb and Joshua (Num 14:26–38) indicates a localized tradition in that the lack of concern with the continuity of the people as a whole stands in contrast to the overall concerns of the Numbers narrative in reconstituting the people following the punishment of the wilderness generation. The presence of the theme of reconstituting the covenant in Exod 32–34 corresponds to the larger concerns of the pentateuchal narrative and thus indicates the priority of the Num 14 example.

23. See Childs, *Exodus*, 604–10, for a summary of the discussion.

destroy their altars, *asherim*, and graven images as well as their pillars (Deut 7:5). Furthermore, the reference to YHWH's jealousy in Exod 34:14 employs the formula ʾel qannā, which appears elsewhere only in Deuteronomic literature (Deut 4:24, 5:9 [= Exod 20:5], 6:15).[24]

The second case concerns the prohibition against molten gods (ʾĕlōhê massēkâ) in Exod 34:17. This verse stands at the beginning of the legal corpus in Exod 34 but is otherwise absent from Exod 23, which begins with a command to observe the Sabbath in 23:10. The placement of this command at the beginning of the law code relates directly to the concerns of the golden calf narrative in Exod 32, which employs similar language (ʾegel massēkâ) to describe the calf.[25] Although discussion of this verse's parallels generally relates to the prohibition against graven images (pesel) in Exod 20:4 // Deut 5:8, scholars have overlooked its relationship to Deut 7:5, which commands the destruction of Canaanite graven images (pəsîlêhem) together with the altars, *asherim*, and pillars mentioned above. The relationship of Exod 34:15 to Deut 7:5 would therefore complete the aniconic concerns of Deut 7:1–6 and demonstrate further influence of this passage on the code in Exod 34.

A related issue concerns the movement of the Sabbath law from the beginning of the code in Exod 23:12 to a position following the Passover commands in Exod 34:21, thus interrupting the laws concerning the three festivals (Exod 34:18–20, 22–26; cf. Exod 23:14–19). Although the placement of the Sabbath law in Exod 34 has frequently puzzled scholars, Noth has observed that the primary intent of this law relates not to the Sabbath per se but to planting and harvest.[26] The placement of this law in relation to the three festivals therefore provides for a better-ordered presentation of the temple agricultural festivals and appears to be motivated by the reference to a seven-day Passover pattern in Exod 34:18. Most importantly for the purposes of this study, the movement of the Sabbath command allows for the introduction of the prohibition against molten images at the beginning of the law code, thereby emphasizing the relation of this code to the golden calf episode of Exod 32.[27]

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24. The appearance of this formula in Exod 20:5 likewise establishes a relationship to the larger literary context of Exodus.

25. Moberly, *At the Mountain of G-d*, 99–100.

26. Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary*, trans. John S. Bowden, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 264.

27. Note also that the Sabbath law relates to the command to observe the Sabbath in Exod 20:8–11 // Deut 5:12–15. This and the introduction of the laws concerning the

The third case relates to the angel (*malʾāk*) that YHWH will send to lead the people and drive out the Canaanites. This angel is mentioned in the concluding exhortation of the Covenant Code in Exod 23:20–33, where it functions as an agent of YHWH's guarantee of protection for the people. It plays an entirely different role in Exod 32–34, however, where it has been removed from its context in relation to the festival law code and placed in Exod 33:1–6 at the beginning of the narrative concerning the reestablishment of the covenant following the golden calf episode. Instead of functioning as a symbol of security, its functions as a symbol of YHWH's dissatisfaction with the people. The people's subsequent mourning prompts Moses's face-to-face meeting with YHWH, which results in the revelation of a new law code in Exod 34 and an enhanced role for Moses as mediator between the people and YHWH (see Exod 34:29–35). In short, the motif of YHWH's angel now becomes the catalyst for renewing the covenant between the people and YHWH, thereby restoring the relationship disrupted by the golden calf episode.

These considerations demonstrate that the narrative concerning the renewal of the covenant with the festival code in Exod 34 is a reformulation of the festival code in Exod 23. It employs Deuteronomic traditions, especially the ban against covenant with Canaanites in Deut 7:1–6 and other elements from the larger exodus tradition, to create a narrative that relates specifically to the concerns of Exod 32–34. The result is a code that gives greater emphasis to the ban on covenants and relationships with the Canaanites.

The use of Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic traditions in Exod 32–34 has a number of implications for understanding the composition of this narrative and defining its intent in relation to the wilderness traditions of the Pentateuch. It is quite clear that the Deuteronomistic traditions employed in the composition of Exod 32–34 indicate an antinorthern emphasis. The author of Exod 32–34 focuses on key traditions pertaining to the faithlessness of the Northern Kingdom, such as Jeroboam's establishing the calf sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan, and Elijah's conflicts with the syncretistic monarch Ahab and his pagan wife, Jezebel, and associates them with Deuteronomic traditions prohibiting Canaanite syncretism to portray the faithlessness of the Mosaic wilderness generation.

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firstborn in Exod 34:19–aa–20, which appears in Exod 13:11–13 but is absent in Exod 23:14–aa–19, establishes the relationship of this code to the larger literary context of Exodus.

But Exod 32–34 also emphasizes the restoration of the covenant following the golden calf episode. This is somewhat striking given the antinorthern character of the narrative, but the reason for such an attitude becomes clear when the Deuteronomistic context of the composition is considered. As studies of the Deuteronomistic history have demonstrated, the early form of the history was produced during the reign of King Josiah of Judah and emphasized Josiah's role in restoring the unity of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms under Davidic rule following the Northern Kingdom's rebellion and ultimate destruction by Assyria.[28] This has implications for considering the relationship of Exod 32–34 to the wilderness traditions of the Pentateuch. Given the anti-Ephraimite emphasis of Exod 32–34 and its concern with restoring the covenant, several features of the wilderness traditions become clear in relation to Josianic concerns. These include the wilderness tradition's emphasis on the centralization of the wilderness tabernacle in the midst of the people (Num 1–10) and Josiah's cult centralization, the defense of Moses's authority against the north, faithfulness to YHWH as the criterion for possessing the land (Num 13–14) and Josiah's concern to reunite the land, the priority of the Aaronic priests over other Levitic families (Num 16–18) and Josiah's policies concerning priests and Levites, the purge of syncretistic elements from the people (Num 25) and Josiah's cult purification, and the interest in reconstructing Israel following the purge of the rebellious wilderness generation (Num 22–24, 26)[29] and Josiah's general unification program. Of course, the golden calf symbolizes the sanctuary at Bethel, the central focus of Josiah's attempts to shut down rival sanctuaries to the Jerusalem temple (see 2 Kgs 23:15–20).[30]

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28. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 274–89; Nelson, *Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*; Richard D. Friedman, *The Exile and Biblical Narrative: The Formation of the Deuteronomistic and Priestly Works*, HSM 22 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981). Note also that recent work on Isaiah points to a Josianic redaction, which likewise emphasizes the restoration of the Northern Kingdom together with the Southern Kingdom. See Hermann Barth, *Die Jesaja-Worte in der Josiazeit*, WMANT 48 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977); Ronald E. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); Jacques Vermeylen, *Du prophète Isaïe à l'apocalyptique*, 2 vols., EBib (Paris: Gabalda, 1977–1978).

29. Olson emphasizes that the census list in Num 26 represents the reconstituted Israelite people following the purging of the wilderness generation (*Death of the Old*, 43–127).

30. Note that 1 Kgs 13:1–2 emphasizes that Jeroboam's sanctuary at Bethel would

This issue will require further study and discussion. However, if they are substantiated, these considerations have implications for pentateuchal studies in general in that they suggest a need to reconsider the role of the Deuteronomistic tradition, particularly in its Josianic manifestation, in the composition of the Pentateuch.[31]

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be destroyed in the days of Josiah. Of special note for the context of Exod 32–34 is Josiah's renewal of the Passover celebration (2 Kgs 23:21–23). Note also that through the time of Josiah, prophetic traditions view the wilderness period as an ideal time in the relationship between YHWH and Israel (Hos 2:14–23; Jer 2:2–3). Later prophetic traditions emphasize Israel's rebellion in the wilderness (e.g., Ezek 20).

31. For discussions of Deuteronomistic influence in the composition of the Pentateuch, see Schmid, *Der sogenannte J-hwist*; Rolf Rendtorff, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtlice Problem des Pentateuch*, BZAW 147 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977); Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, 362–419.

16

Creation as Sacred Space in the Exodus Narratives

1.

In the 1967 English edition of his commentary on Exodus and again in the 1973–1975 English edition of his collected papers on *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, Umberto Cassuto observes that the account of the splitting of the Red Sea in Exod 14–15 serves as a creation text within the larger exodus narrative in the Pentateuch.[1] This is not to say that the exodus narrative is a unified text, as Cassuto understood the pentateuchal narrative to be a unified composition dating to the tenth century BCE. But the defeat of Pharaoh's army with the emergence of dry land in the midst of the Red Sea recapitulates the initial creation by the emergence of dry land in the midst of the sea in Gen 1:1–2:3, which functions as the introductory creation text in the Pentateuch. Such an observation suggests that the concern with creation functions as an ongoing process in the pentateuchal narrative insofar as YHWH's creation of the universe is not completed in Gen 1:1–2:3, but it continues to unfold in subsequent episodes in relation to the role of the emergence of features of the natural world of creation in YHWH's acts on behalf of humanity at large and Israel in particular.

In this vein, readers may recognize that creation also serves as sacred space in the exodus narratives, insofar as YHWH's revelation to Moses in Exod 3 presents a narrative in which YHWH employs an element of creation, that is, the *rubus sanctus*, identified as the burning bush in Exod 3, as an agent of divine revelation during which YHWH instructs Moses to

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1. Umberto Cassuto, "The Israelite Epic," in *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975), 2:80–99; Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), 177–82.

remove his shoes as he is standing on holy ground.[2] Indeed, the exodus and wilderness narratives throughout Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy indicate that YHWH's revelation to Israel and humanity employs elements in creation, such as the snakes that emerge from the rods of Moses and Aaron, the first nine plagues of the exodus narrative, the production of water and manna in the wilderness, Mount Sinai in the wilderness, and others, as vehicles for the revelation of YHWH's efforts to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage and guide them to the promised land of Israel. When read in relation to these motifs, readers may recognize that the concluding narratives concerning the construction of the tabernacle in Exod 25–40 also recognize the realm of creation as holy insofar as the tabernacle signifies YHWH's presence in the world of creation for the duration of the exodus narrative and beyond.

It is therefore the purpose of this paper to suggest that the exodus and wilderness narratives as a whole function as a creation narrative within the Pentateuch. Creation is here not understood as the original act of creation in Gen 1:1–2:3, but as ongoing acts of creation in which additional elements of the natural world of creation emerge in relation to YHWH's efforts to deliver Israel and enable it to serve as a holy nation in the midst of creation.[3] In this respect, creation serves as sacred space in which Israel is formed as a distinctive, holy nation in the midst of humanity in the exodus and wilderness narratives. The paper considers the role of the various elements of creation, including the burning bush, Aaron's rod that becomes a snake, the first nine plagues, the production of manna and water in the wilderness, and the construction of the wilderness tabernacle as signifiers of creation as sacred space in the exodus narrative.

<div align="center">2.</div>

The narrative concerning YHWH's call of Moses in Exod 3:1–7:7 is generally read as an expanded form of the prophetic call narrative by scholars in the field.[4] This is all well and good, because Moses begins as a prophet

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2. Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 14; cf. Michael Zohary, *Plants of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 140–41.

3. See Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence*.

4. Coats, *Exodus 1–18*, 34–60; Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 180–286; Dozeman, *Exodus*, 94–175.

of YHWH in the pentateuchal narrative and only later is recognized as a Levitical priest, following YHWH's selection of Aaron and the tribe of Levi to serve as YHWH's priests in Israel in Num 17–18.[5] Otherwise, interpreters have spent a great deal of effort attempting to locate Mount Sinai, where Moses's encounter with YHWH allegedly took place.

But there is another dimension of this narrative to consider, namely, its role as a creation narrative. YHWH's self-revelation to Moses takes place in relation to a burning bush that appears to burn, but it is never consumed by the fire. This is a standard motif in texts concerned with YHWH's revelation or theophany, insofar as the imagery of light and fire, often expressed in the form of lightning (e.g., Exod 19), seraphim (Isa 6), and gleaming bronze cherubim (Ezek 1) often accompany YHWH to indicate the interplay between YHWH's intangible and yet tangible character in such texts. Such imagery has led some to suggest that YHWH has an actual body, but such suggestions overlook the metaphorical character of light and fire as an expression of YHWH's divine presence.[6]

Interpreters have concluded that the burning bush in the passage is based in a very real bush well known in the Sinai wilderness, the *rubus ulmifolius* or *rubus sanctus*.[7] The *rubus sanctus* is more of a bramble that blossoms with bright red flowers in the spring that make the plant appear to be aflame when it is viewed from a distance. Of course, it is not actually aflame, but it serves as an appropriate metaphorical expression of YHWH's presence on Mount Sinai. It also serves as a means to associate the divine presence of YHWH with natural features of the Sinai wilderness and Egypt, motifs that permeate the exodus and wilderness narratives. Insofar as the *rubus sanctus* does not appear elsewhere in the exodus and wilderness narrative, it functions as a natural feature of creation that serves such a purpose. It adds a new dimension to the portrayal of the natural world of creation in the Bible insofar as it identifies sacred space for the divine pres-

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5. For discussion of the role of Moses as prophet in the earliest levels of the pentateuchal narratives, see Jeffrey Stackert, *A Prophet Like Moses: Prophecy, Law, and Israelite Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

6. E.g., Sommer, *Bodies of G-d*; Esther J. Hamori, *"When Gods Were Men": The Embodied G-d in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature*, BZAW 384 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008). For discussion of the use of temporal imagery metaphorically to depict the presence of G-d in a finite world, particularly in relation to Exod 19, Isa 6, and Ezek 1, see Sweeney, *Jewish Mysticism*, esp. 73–77, 129–37, 148–56.

7. See note 2 above.

ence of YHWH in the world analogous to YHWH's later presence in the
wilderness tabernacle and the various temples of Israel and Judah. Such a
function suggests an effort to define creation as sacred in order to allow
for the interaction between YHWH and human beings, as is evident from
the outset of the pentateuchal narrative, beginning in Gen 1. Although
YHWH may be viewed as a transcendent deity by many, YHWH also
functions as an immanent deity, insofar as YHWH is revealed through the
natural features of the realm of creation.

A closely related motif in the burning bush narrative is that of Moses's
rod—and also Aaron's rod—that will turn into a snake when thrown on
the ground.[8] This element appears when Moses asks YHWH, "What if they
do not believe me and they do not listen to me?" when YHWH instructs
Moses to appear before Pharaoh to demand the release of the Israelite
people from slavery. YHWH instructs Moses to throw his rod onto the
ground. When he does so, it transforms into a snake, a well-known fea-
ture of ancient and modern Egyptian culture in which snake charming
plays a prominent role. Such a motif is an important element in this nar-
rative because it demonstrates that YHWH—and not Pharaoh or any of
the Egyptian gods—is the true creator of the natural world in the exodus
narrative. Although the Egyptians would have viewed the snake and snake
charming as a quintessential Egyptian symbol and skill, YHWH's ability
to control the snake in the hands of Moses and Aaron functions as means
to inform the reader that YHWH is the true source of this characteristic
Egyptian symbol and skill. Once again, a characteristic feature of creation
is the product of YHWH's creative efforts, and the realm of creation itself
becomes sacred space insofar as it reveals YHWH's presence and power
to the reader.

By the end of the narrative in Exod 6:1–7:7, YHWH is finally ready to
reveal the divine name to Moses. Whereas YHWH had previously identi-
fied the divine self as "I am who I am," employing an example of the idem
per idem rhetorical device to conceal the divine identity, YHWH now
self-identifies in Exod 6:1–13, "I am YHWH, and I appeared to Abraham,
Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, but I did not make my name known to
them." When Moses had asked about the divine name earlier in the nar-
rative, YHWH's use of the idem per idem was intended to put Moses on
notice that YHWH was not like the Egyptian gods, whose names would be

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8. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 227–29.

used by humans in execration texts and elsewhere to curse or bless others at will. It was only after YHWH had demonstrated to Moses and Aaron that YHWH was a unique and powerful deity, who was not only responsible for the creation of the natural world but also for the establishment and protection of Israel, that YHWH would then reveal the divine name to Moses.

<div align="center">3.</div>

The plague narratives in Exod 7–13 constitute another major section of the exodus narratives in which creation plays a major role in facilitating the manifestation of divine action, thereby rendering creation as sacred space.[9] As the following considerations show, each of the first nine plagues represents a known facet of creation in the Egyptian or Canaanite landscape, whereas the tenth plague, the slaying of the firstborn, gets to the point of the narrative in explaining why ancient Israel initially employed firstborn sons to the mother as a priestly class that assisted the sons of Aaron.

The first plague, in which the Nile River is allegedly turned to blood, is the first example of a reference to the Egyptian ecosystem in Exod 7:14–25. Every spring, the headwaters of the Nile River in Ethiopia, the Sudan, and ultimately Uganda are flooded by the melting snows that fill the White Nile by Lake Victoria in Uganda and the reddish-brown mud and silt that flow into them by means of the Blue Nile originating in Ethiopia. When combined in Sudan, the waters overflow their banks all the way down to the Mediterranean, where they spread the fertile mud and silt on the shores of the river to create the basis for agricultural growth in Egypt. Although this is a natural phenomenon, the reddish-brown cast of the spring waters gives the impression of blood. Consequently, the plague is portrayed as YHWH's act of turning the waters of the Nile to blood.

The second plague, frogs, in Exod 8:1–15, is a natural consequence of the spring floodwaters of the Nile. The water will carry a multitude of river life, frogs being predominant among them, although plenty of other river creatures would also be spread over the land. Although such inundation by frogs and other creatures might seem objectionable, it also contributes

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9. See esp. Coats, *Exodus 1–18*, 60–96; Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 286–461; Dozeman, *Exodus*, 176–298.

to the ecosystem by providing further fertilization when the frogs die as the water recedes and their corpses decompose.

Indeed, the decomposition of the bodies of the frogs leads to the third and fourth plagues, namely, gnats and flies, in Exod 8:16–19 and 8:20–32. Gnats will first emerge with the decomposition of the amphibian bodies, but they will soon enough grow into flies. Gnats and flies are pests that spend much of their time biting either corpses or live bodies to gain sustenance, and this leads to plagues five and six, cattle disease and boils, in Exod 9:1–7 and 9:8–12. As the gnats and flies bite the carcasses of frogs and the like and then bite the living bodies of cattle and humans, they transfer the germs that they have picked up from the rotting corpses that then infect the living bodies of cattle and humans, causing cattle disease and boils or lesions on human bodies.

The hail and thunder that would follow as the seventh plague in Exod 9:13–25 would not be a part of the Nile's own ecosystem of flooding and fertilizing, but they were nevertheless part of the natural landscape that would manifest in relation to the rainy season in Egypt during December–February, thereby stimulating the flooding of the Nile in the spring.

The eighth plague, locusts, in Exod 10:1–20, appear in Egypt during the late spring or summer after the floodwaters have made it possible for their larvae to grow. When they come to birth, they will swarm the land in search of food, just in time to devour the crops that would grow in Egypt following the spring floods.

Finally, the ninth plague, darkness, in Exod 10:21–29, is a natural phenomenon in a Mediterranean climate, such as that of Egypt, Israel, or Southern California.[10] Sirocco winds are formed when high-pressure areas form over the deserts located to the east of the territory in question, namely, the Arabian Desert in the case of Egypt and Israel, or the Mojave Desert in the case of Southern California. The weight of the desert high-pressure system then forces air to move from east to west, opposite its natural flow from west to east, thereby creating high-powered winds such as the *sharav* (Hebrew), the *ḥamsin* (Arabic), or the Santa Ana (American Spanish).[11] A major feature of these winds is that they carry a great deal of dust and dirt in the skies that often blocks out the sun or renders the moon as red, thereby bringing darkness on the land.

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10. Aloysius Fitzgerald, FSC, *The L-rd of the East Wind*, CBQMS 34 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2002).

11. Leo Picard, "Israel, Land of (Geographical Survey)," *EncJud* 9:189–90.

The final plague, the death of the firstborn, is a motif that is not connected to the natural world, but instead addresses the early Israelite practice of using firstborn sons (to mothers) as a class of priests to assist the sons of Aaron, a practice that the narrative is intended to explain.[12] The practice is illustrated by the example of Samuel, the son of Elkanah, a man of Ephraim, and the firstborn son of his wife Hannah, in 1 Sam 1–3, who is weaned and raised in the Shiloh sanctuary under the supervision of the high priest Eli to become a priest himself. In 1 Chr 6:12–13, Elkanah and Samuel are identified as Levites.

Altogether, the first nine plagues take up natural features of creation that are known in the world of ancient Egypt as a means to demonstrate YHWH's divine presence, mastery over the world of creation, and manifestation in human events that thereby renders creation as sacred space in the exodus narratives. The tenth plague, the death of the firstborn, confirms the role of creation as sacred space insofar as it portrays the basis for the creation of this priestly class in the exodus narratives. Although the firstborn sons initially serve as the assistants to the sons of Aaron in the pentateuchal narratives, YHWH replaces them with the tribe of Levi as narrated in Num 3:5–16, 40–51; 8:5–22 (see also Exod 34:19–20).

4.

The account of the crossing of the Red Sea—or, more properly, the Sea of Reeds in the MT—introduces the account of the wilderness wandering that extends from Exod 14–15 until Josh 3–4 in the larger biblical narrative of Genesis–Kings. Indeed, the account of the crossing of the Jordan River in Josh 3–4 employs the same motif as Exod 14–15, the emergence of dry land in the midst of the waters that allows the people of Israel to cross the body of water dry shod. As Coats and others observe, this is a creation motif that functions as a literary bracket at the outset and the close of the period of wilderness wandering in Exod 14–15 and Josh 3–4.[13] The use of this motif at the beginning and the end of the wilderness narratives signifies this period

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12. Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Literary-Historical Dimensions of Intertextuality in Exodus–Numbers," in *Second Wave Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Marianne Grohmann and Hyun C. P. Kim, RBS 93 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 41–52, repr. as ch. 14 in this volume; Sweeney, "Samuel's Institutional Identity."

13. Coats, *Exodus 1–18*, 99–106; cf. Dozeman, *Exodus*, 300–305, who cites other scholars as well.

as a time of creation for the people of Israel insofar as their journey from
Egypt to the promised land of Israel forms them as a nation with a set of
laws and experience that gives them the basis for their identity as a just and
holy nation under YHWH.

Several features of the wilderness narrative support such an under-
standing. First are the early narratives concerning the provision of water
in the wilderness in Exod 15:22–27 and 17:1–7 and the provision of food
in the wilderness in the form of manna and quail in Exod 16:1–36. The
holy dimensions of space in these narratives are evident in two major
dimensions. Each location functions as the locus for divine revelation to
the people of Israel and to the readers of the narrative. And in the case of
the provision of food, the timing of such provision is determined by the
weekly Shabbat cycle in the narrative, insofar as the people are instructed
to gather food every day, but not on the Shabbat. In such a case, a double
portion of food is provided on the sixth day so that the people will have
ample food for the Shabbat on the seventh. Such a motif is signaled in
Gen 1:1–2:3 as an inherent feature of creation, thereby ensuring the
recognition of the holy character of creation at large in the overall pen-
tateuchal narrative.

Second is the so-called Sinai pericope in Exod 19:1–Num 10:10, a
diachronically recognized narrative that presents the account of the rev-
elation at Sinai and concludes with Israel's departure from Sinai for the
land of Israel. The initial account of YHWH's theophany at Sinai sets the
tone of sanctity in the narrative insofar as not only is Sinai the holy locus
of divine manifestation, but it also serves as model for understanding
the theophany or appearances of YHWH at the Israelite temple in gen-
eral, most notably the Jerusalem temple, but also including the temples at
Shiloh, Bethel, Dan, Gilgal, Beersheba Arad, and others.[14] The elements
of YHWH's theophany, that is, the depiction of the divine presence with
fire or lightning, cloud or incense smoke, and thunder or the rumbling of
the heavy temple doors as they open, signify Sinai as holy space in cre-
ation just as they signify each temple as holy space in the religious lives
of Israel and Judah. Furthermore, the sanctity of the divine revelation is
enhanced by the holy dimensions of the laws revealed by YHWH to Moses
and Israel at Sinai, for example, the use of the Shabbat principle for defin-
ing the terms of service for debt slavery as six years of service and release

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14. See Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*.

in the seventh year in Exod 21:1–11, Deut 15:1–18; the planning of fields for six years, but requiring that they lie fallow for every seventh year to provide food for the poor in Exod 23:10–11; and the provision for observance of the Shabbat in Exod 20:8–11, 23:12, and Deut 5:12–15.[15] Other laws of holiness, such as the treatment of blood in Lev 16–26 and the various commandments concerning the offerings in the Holiness Code, the Priestly Code, the laws of Numbers, and the laws of Deuteronomy, may also be considered together with the laws of justice throughout the narrative that are designed to enable Israel and Judah to become just and holy societies within the world of YHWH's creation.

Finally, readers may note the role of the account of the construction of the wilderness tabernacle in Exod 25–30 and 35–40, which culminates in the account of how the divine presence of YHWH settles in to the tabernacle in Exod 40. The tabernacle thereby functions both as a manifestation of divine presence among the people of Israel in the wilderness and in the larger world of creation and as a guide for Israel as it travels through the wilderness on its journey to the promised land of Israel.[16] Of course, the tabernacle constitutes the pattern for the construction of holy sanctuaries in Israel once the nation is settled in the land as well as the source for holy instruction from YHWH in the life of the nation, thereby rendering not only the temple as holy but even creation itself as the people are expected to complete the sanctity of creation by their observance of divine expectations. The construction of a temple for the creator god is a typical feature of ancient Near Eastern creation narratives, such as the Babylonian Enuma Elish and the Ugaritic Baal Cycle. Israel/Judah is no exception to this norm.

<div style="text-align:center">5.</div>

In conclusion, let me observe that we modern scholars have been somewhat limited in our understanding of the correlation between creation and sacred space in reading the Pentateuch, largely because we tend to limit our understanding of creation to Gen 1:1–2:3 and Gen 2:4–4:26 or perhaps even the so-called Primeval History in Gen 1–11. But creation is conceived as an ongoing process in the Pentateuch insofar as it envisions

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15. Sweeney, "Shabbat."

16. William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 19–40*, AB 2A (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 310–722; Dozeman, *Exodus*, 569–766.

the nation of Israel/Judah as a nation of priests. As part of that creation, Israel and Judah are tasked with the responsibility to observe divine expectations that will enable them to create a just and holy society in the world. But we must also recognize that our understanding of YHWH is limited. We have tended to consider YHWH to be a transcendent G-d, which is well and good, but we must also recognize YHWH as an immanent G-d who works from within creation to achieve its sanctification as well.

Moses's Encounter with G-d and G-d's Encounter with Moses: A Reading of the Moses Narratives in Conversation with Emmanuel Levinas

1.

Emmanuel Levinas has emerged as a major figure in the fields of philosophy and literary criticism in the later years of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first.[1] Building on the work of Edmund Husserl, Buber, Rosenzweig, and others, Levinas presents a phenomenologist philosophy in *Totality and Infinity* and his other works that challenges the drive toward unity in Western philosophy, particularly in the work of Martin Heidigger and Immanuel Kant, that prompted the emergence of totalitarian and imperialist political and social systems in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe and beyond.[2] Instead, Levinas maintains that the key task in human life is the encounter with the Other, that is, an encounter with another being that denies the drive toward unity and demands recognition that the self is not alone in the world. Indeed,

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1. For an overview of the work of Emmanuel Levinas and how it pertains to biblical theology, see Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, "Introduction—Facing the Text as Other: Some Implications of Levinas's Work for Biblical Studies," in *Levinas and Biblical Studies*, ed. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, John Edward Philips, and David Jobling, SemeiaSt 43 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 1–16. For discussion of Jewish biblical theology, see Sweeney, *Tanak*.

2. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969); see also Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Sean Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

recognition of the Other entails the moral obligation to recognize the Other as an Other and to establish relationship with the Other in order to advance the world toward an infinity that would constitute ideal existence. A self so formed by recognition of the face of the Other is prepared to realize the ideals that existence in the world can offer.

Although primarily a philosopher, Levinas contributed greatly to the field of Jewish studies in particular by positing that encounter with the Other took place in the study of the Talmud and other major texts of Jewish tradition. Because of the impact of his ideas in Jewish studies, the purpose of this paper is to explore the relevance of Levinas's ideas for the study of biblical theology, that is, to what degree does study of the Bible, that is, the Tanak or the Jewish Bible, likewise entail a Levinasian encounter with the Other that will form and mature the self, prompting it to engage in the task of *tikkun olam*, namely, repair, completion, or sanctification of the world?

In order to explore the relevance of Levinas's work for biblical theology, this paper presents a reading of the Moses narratives of the Pentateuch in conversation with Levinas.[3] Its purpose is to examine the encounter with the Other on the part of both of the major characters of the pentateuchal narrative, namely, Moses and G-d, insofar as each is revealed to the Other during the course of the narrative and each is transformed as a result of their interaction while maintaining and developing their individual identities. This examination both affirms and tests Levinas's understanding of love or beneficence on the part of the Other by pointing both to the constructive aspects of Moses's and G-d's interrelationship and to the tensions that emerge between them and the consequences that result. Overall, the paper argues that Levinas's understanding of encounter with the Other provides an appropriate hermeneutical standpoint from which to read biblical literature, but that his understanding of the beneficence of such encounter must be modified, particularly in relation to the concepts of the divine taught by Lurianic kabbalah, to account for the tensions and conflicts that emerge. Topics to be treated include Moses's encounter with G-d in the exodus narratives, including the burning bush episode (Exod 3) and the confrontation with Pharaoh (Exod 5–15), as well as the conflict that develops between Moses and G-d in the wilderness narratives, including the golden calf episode (Exod 32–34); the spy narratives (Num 13–14);

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3. For an overview of the Moses narratives, see Sweeney, *Tanak*, 85–167; Sweeney, *Pentateuch*, 29–114.

and the call for water from the rock at Meribah (Num 20), resulting in G-d's barring Moses from the land of Israel (Deut 34).

<div align="center">2.</div>

Moses's encounter with YHWH—and YHWH's encounter with Moses— begins in the classical exodus narrative of Exod 1–15. Although modern critical scholarship typically reads this narrative from a diachronic perspective with special attention to its constituent sources, a synchronic reading of this text enables readers better to understand its full literary and theological perspectives.[4] The encounter is set against the backdrop of a conflict between YHWH and Pharaoh for recognition as the true deity who reigns over the realm of creation. Although the exodus narrative never explicitly concedes Pharaoh's divine status, it nevertheless presupposes his identity as the Egyptian deity, known generally to Egyptologists as Horus son of Re, who rules over Egypt and creation at large, while attempting to demonstrate that he is nothing more than a mere mortal who is helpless before the power of YHWH, the true G-d of creation.[5] Of course, such a claim builds on the initial narrative of the Pentateuch in Gen 1:1–2:3, which portrays YHWH as creator of the universe.

For our purposes, Moses's encounter with YHWH is striking because YHWH is revealed to Moses, Pharaoh, Israel, Egypt, and the reading audience through metaphors based on the images of the very creation that YHWH has brought into being. The narrative is careful to assert that, unlike Egyptian and other ancient Near Eastern gods, YHWH is never identified with or subsumed under creation at large or any particular element within it. Rather, YHWH is also depicted as the Other, namely, the sovereign power that stands behind and within creation and exercises supreme control over it. Likewise, neither creation nor the human

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4. For an overview of Exodus–Deuteronomy in classical source-critical perspective, see esp. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*. By focusing on a synchronic or holistic reading of the text, this paper does not intend to dismiss the credibility of source criticism or diachronic analysis. It simply does not see the compositional history of the text as the key issue in a Levinasian reading of the encounter between Moses and YHWH. For those concerned with my views on the compositional history of the Pentateuch, see Sweeney, *Pentateuch*.

5. For discussion of the divine character of the Egyptian pharaoh, see Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, trans. Ann Kemp (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973).

characters of the narrative are ever subsumed under YHWH; all retain their autonomy before YHWH, with the possible exception of Pharaoh, who loses his autonomy when his heart is hardened by YHWH.

Moses's initial encounter with YHWH occurs in the burning bush episode of Exod 3. Here Moses witnesses a seemingly miraculous occurrence, namely, a bush that is burning but not consumed by the fire. Interpreters have long recognized that the bush depicted in the narrative is a genus commonly found in the Sinai Desert, namely, the *rubus sanctus* or the *cassia senna*, both of which produce a red flower that appears to be burning when viewed from a distance.[6] The imagery of fire is key here; like wind and water, fire is simultaneously substantive and amorphous, and it thereby provides a perfect metaphor by which to portray the divine presence YHWH before Moses. Thus creation provides the very metaphor necessary to depict the substantive yet amorphous presence of the autonomous Other, YHWH.

YHWH maintains an autonomous sense of otherness throughout the encounter. When Moses approaches the burning bush, YHWH instructs him to remove his shoes because he stands on holy ground. When Moses asks YHWH's name, YHWH replies with an elliptical response that is designed to conceal as much as it reveals, namely, ʾehyeh ʾăšer ʾehyeh, "I am who/what I am" or "I will be who/what I will be." YHWH's response is an example of the rhetorical device idem per idem, "the same through the same," that is, a thing that is defined in relation to itself.[7] Such a response conveys a sense of substantive reality while simultaneously refusing to divulge any information about the thing in questions. It also leaves open the possibility of what or who YHWH will be. The Hebrew actually constitutes an interpretation of the divine name employing the verb *hāyâ*, "to be," namely, the Hebrew word ʾehyeh, "I am," is a conjugation of the verb *hâyâ* that plays on the form of the divine name, *yhwh*, which resembles the

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6. Nahum Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1986) 39; Sarna, *Exodus*, 14; contra Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 222, who believes it signals a change in YHWH's relationship with creation. Dozeman focuses on the imagery of the messenger of YHWH and the sacred character of the site (*Exodus*, 21–136).

7. See Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 224–26; Dozeman, *Exodus*, 134. Carol Meyers simply notes the assonance of the Hebrew word sǝneh, "bush," with Sinai and focuses instead on the messenger. See Meyers, *Exodus*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

third-person imperfect conjugation of the verb, namely, *yihyeh*, "he is." By employing this form, YHWH's response protects YHWH from any sense of finite definition.[8] YHWH remains completely Other and undefined to both Moses and the reader. In the world of ancient Egypt, the Egyptian execration texts demonstrate that Egyptian priests could harness the power of a deity by the correct liturgical pronunciation of a divine name. Exodus 3 maintains that no such power is granted to Moses. On this basis, YHWH commands Moses to appear before Pharaoh to demand the release of the Israelite slaves so that they might go out into the wilderness to worship YHWH.

When Moses and his brother Aaron appear before Pharaoh in Exod 5, the narrative highlights the conflict between Pharaoh and YHWH by having Pharaoh state in Exod 5:2, "Who is YHWH that I should listen to his voice to release Israel? I do not know YHWH and also I will not release Israel." The balance of the exodus narrative is designed to answer Pharaoh's question by demonstrating YHWH's identity as sovereign of creation and YHWH's power to achieve Israel's release. Indeed, elements of creation continue to function as the means by which YHWH is revealed to Moses, Pharaoh, Israel, and Egypt and the means employed by YHWH to achieve Israel's release.

Nevertheless, Pharaoh's refusal to release the people of Israel provides the means to heighten the tension of the confrontation between YHWH and Pharaoh. Pharaoh orders an increased workload on the Israelite slaves, and YHWH must now prepare for a demonstration of power over against Pharaoh and Egypt to achieve the release of the Israelite slaves. Ironically, Pharaoh's question to Moses and Aaron, "Who is YHWH that I should listen to his voice to release Israel?" prompts YHWH to reveal the divine identity to Moses in Exod 6:2, "I am YHWH. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, but I did not make Myself known to them by name YHWH." Although most scholars view this passage as a P narrative,[9] a synchronic reading of the text indicates that the revelation of the divine

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8. Exodus 3 is generally considered by scholars to be an example of the J stratum of the Pentateuch because it deals with the divine name (see Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 93–94), even though its use of the metaphorical imagery of the burning bush is more characteristic of the E stratum. Indeed, Exod 3 signals the shift in E to recognition of the divine name. The P counterpart to this text in Exod 6, which explicitly states the divine name, functions in a similar fashion in the Priestly stratum (Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 36–37). For further discussion, see Sweeney, *Pentateuch*, 36–38.

9. See the preceding note.

name to Moses at this point serves the purpose of establishing YHWH's presence as the Other before Moses. In the burning bush narrative of Exod 3, YHWH's refusal to reveal the divine name served a similar purpose by ensuring that Moses would acquire no control or power over YHWH and thereby ensuring YHWH's distinct otherness before Moses. In the present instance, the revelation of the divine name expressly identifies YHWH as the Other, the deity who has guided Israelite history from the outset, granting the covenant to the ancestors of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, granting the land of Israel to them as part of that covenant, and declaring the intention to redeem Israel from Egyptian bondage on the basis of that covenant. YHWH's earlier identity as El Shaddai, "G-d Almighty," evokes YHWH's role as creator, insofar as the name El was also employed in Canaanite culture to identify the deity who initially created the universe.[10] By adopting the name El Shaddai, YHWH is identified with the classical creator deity of Canaan but in the form of a new identity that encompasses both the creator of the universe and the G-d of Israel in one. In Levinasian understanding, YHWH is the Other and always remains as such, but chooses to enter into a relationship with Israel in general and Moses in particular.

YHWH demonstrates the character of the Other by employing elements of creation in the ensuing confrontation with Pharaoh. The initial phase is the encounter in the royal court of Pharaoh in which Aaron's rod is transformed into a snake to demonstrate YHWH's power over creation. Snake charming is, of course, a well-known Egyptian cultural feature from antiquity, and YHWH's use of this particular demonstration is intended to demonstrate YHWH's power over one element of creation, the snake, that has become such a distinctive feature of ancient Egyptian power and culture. Pharaoh responds by having his own magicians perform the same feat to demonstrate his own power as a deity, but when Aaron's snake/rod swallows the Egyptian snakes, YHWH's power over creation and identity as the Other are ensured.

YHWH's power over creation is further demonstrated in the plague narratives of Exod 7–13.[11] YHWH employs ten plagues against Egypt that are designed to demonstrate YHWH's power and to ensure that the Israelite slaves are set free. Moses is appointed by YHWH to act on G-d's

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10. Marvin Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, VTSup 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1955). For discussion of El Shaddai, see Propp, *Exodus 19–40*, 758–61.

11. The plague narratives are generally read as a combination of J and P material in the Pentateuch (Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 37–40, 136–43).

behalf in Exod 7:2, "See, I have made you like G-d to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet." A further dimension of this episode is YHWH's hardening of the heart of Pharaoh to ensure that Pharaoh will continue his resistance so that all Egypt, all Israel, and all readers of the narrative will witness YHWH's power. Such an act raises moral questions about YHWH, insofar as it denies Pharaoh the opportunity to repent and thereby to avoid the judgment against himself and his nation. Nevertheless, the narrative does not dwell on the problems presented by this decision and instead focuses on demonstrating YHWH's power over creation.

Each of the first nine plagues employs an element of the created world as a means to punish Egypt.[12] Indeed, the narrative functions as an etiological narrative that explains the origins of these natural phenomena in relation to YHWH's actions at the time of the exodus. The first plague is turning the water of the Nile River to blood. The Nile River is the central artery that makes Egyptian civilization possible by supplying the water necessary to support the nation. During the spring and summer, the Nile rises as water runs off from its sources in Ethiopia and the Sudan, and it carries with it the red soil and sediment from these regions, spreading the sediment over the land of Egypt as the Nile overflows its banks. This is a natural phenomenon in Egypt, but the reddish color of the water makes it appear as blood and thereby supplies the metaphorical basis for the first plague. The second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth plagues, frogs, gnats, flies, cattle disease, and boils, are natural consequences of the Nile's overflow. The Nile brings frogs and other creatures that inundate the land as the river overflows its banks. When the water recedes and the frogs and other creatures begin to die, gnats and flies feast on their corpses and in turn bite cattle and humans, thereby spreading disease and ailments throughout Egypt. Again, the origins of these natural phenomena are tied to the exodus. The seventh and eighth plagues, thunder and hail followed by locusts, are known natural phenomena in Egypt as well. The ninth plague, darkness over the land of Egypt, is again explained by natural phenomena. Some hold that it is an eclipse of the sun. Others maintain that it is the scirocco or dry desert wind known in the Middle East as the Hamsin in Arabic or Sharav in Hebrew—and in the southwestern United States as the Santa Ana winds. The Sharav appears at times of seasonal change when

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12. For discussion of the plague narratives, see Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 63–80; Sarna, *Exodus*, 38–53; Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 286–354; Dozeman, *Exodus*, 176–281; Meyers, *Exodus*, 71–101.

the hot air suspended over the desert reverses its normal easterly course to bring the desert heat westward to the coastal areas. The Sharav blows in a great deal of dust and debris as well that blocks the sun and makes the sky appear dark during daytime and the moon red at night. The tenth plague, the slaying of the firstborn, differs from the previous nine, as it is not a natural phenomenon. Instead, it signals a motif that leads to the selection of the Israelite firstborn as an early form of priesthood in Israel. The task of the firstborn Israelite priests would be to sanctify the holiday of Passover to commemorate YHWH's deliverance of the Israelite slaves from Egypt. The narrative thus functions as an etiology for the creation of the Israelite priesthood and the celebration of the Passover holiday.

The culminating act of YHWH's confrontation with Pharaoh again employs elements from the world of creation to demonstrate YHWH's mastery over the created world, namely, the parting of the Red Sea.[13] Scholars have long recognized that the parting of the Red Sea is in fact based on the mythological portrayal of YHWH's act of creation itself, that is, dry land emerges in the midst of the deep, just as it does in Gen 1, to allow the Israelites to escape from the pursuing Egyptian chariots. When the Egyptians attempt to pursue, the water closes over them, thereby destroying Pharaoh's army. The revelatory and liturgical interests of the narrative are served by the portrayal of Moses and Miriam leading Israel in hymns of praise for YHWH's power, statements that YHWH will lead the people to YHWH's holy sanctuary, and statements that the various nations of the world have witnessed YHWH's power over creation and Egypt. Indeed, the narrative presents YHWH as a holy/wholly Other who exercises supreme power over all creation and the Egyptian pharaoh in a successful effort to redeem Israel from Egyptian bondage.

Throughout the narrative Moses encounters YHWH as the Other, but when Israel enters the wilderness, YHWH will encounter Moses as Other.

3.

When Israel enters the wilderness following YHWH's defeat of Egypt at the Red Sea, the narrative in Exod 15:22–Num 36/Deut 34 undergoes a shift that will turn its interests from Moses's encounter with YHWH to YHWH's encounter

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13. For discussion, see Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 461–572; Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 103–29; Dozeman, *Exodus*, 318–41.

with Moses. The covenant relationship between YHWH and Israel will remain in place as YHWH reveals the torah to Israel at Mount Sinai through Moses and ultimately guides Israel through the wilderness on its way to the promised land of Israel. And so Levinas's understanding of the encounter with the Other as an encounter that points to the beneficence of infinity remains intact—at least to a degree. But the tensions that arise between Israel and YHWH—and ultimately between Moses and Israel as well as between Moses and YHWH—demonstrate a need to account for the reality of difference, conflict, and suffering as part of the encounter with the Other. The conflicts between Israel and YHWH and between Moses and YHWH in the wilderness display Levinas's interests in heteronomy insofar as each party brings its viewpoint to the table and challenges those of the others. But in this conflict, YHWH encounters both Moses and Israel as the Other. Although interpreters think of Israel as the party that must adapt an ethical response to the encounter with YHWH as Other, so YHWH must adapt an ethical response as well to the encounter with Moses. Indeed, it is Moses who reminds YHWH that YHWH cannot kill all Israel in the wilderness and raise up a new people from Moses and his descendants. The eternal covenant with Israel, beginning with Abraham in Gen 17 (see also Exod 31), precludes such a move on YHWH's part. All parties come away wounded from the encounter: Israel suffers the loss of an entire generation in the wilderness; Moses is never allowed to enter the promised land; and YHWH must live with the reality that Moses and the entire generation of the exodus had to die in the wilderness at YHWH's own hand. Not only do Moses and Israel have to learn the responsibilities of the covenant relationship with YHWH—observance of divine torah and fidelity to YHWH, the G-d of Israel—but YHWH must also learn the responsibilities of the covenant relationship with Moses and Israel—ensuring not only the integrity of the nation Israel, but the continuity of Israel and the covenant between them as well despite the challenges that arise in that relationship.

The tension between Israel and YHWH emerges immediately following the passage through the Red Sea. Upon entering the wilderness beginning in Exod 15:22, the people complain to Moses in Exod 16–17 that they lack drinkable water in the wilderness and that they wished that they had died in Egypt at the hand of YHWH because they are starving for lack of food in the wilderness.[14] Forgetting that they were once slaves, the people complain

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14. For the source-critical identification of the wilderness narratives as P, J, and some E texts, see Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*. For critical discus-

that they miss the abundant meat and bread that they enjoyed in Egypt. Such a claim seems preposterous on the part of former slaves, but YHWH responds by providing water, manna, and quail for the people. Here, the motif of YHWH's use of creation appears once again. The water of the Sinai wilderness is characteristically bitter as a result of the various minerals that pollute it in the mountainous wilderness. YHWH instructs Moses on how to purify the water of the Sinai using filtering techniques that have been employed by the Bedouin for centuries. Manna is a honey-like secretion from a tamarisk bush native to the Sinai wilderness that is eaten by the Bedouin in the wilderness. The quail appear as a result of migration patterns that take the birds from central Europe to Africa in the spring and back again in the fall. The quail stop to rest in the Sinai region, where they are easily caught by the Bedouin for food. But even the provision of water does not stop the people from complaining. When they lack water again in Exod 17, they demand water from Moses, who feels threatened and in turn demands it from YHWH. YHWH provides the water, of course, and protection from the Amalekites who threaten Israel in the wilderness. But the tension in the relationship is only just beginning to grow.

The revelation of torah at Sinai is a constitutive narrative in which YHWH provides Israel with the laws that it will need to form a just and holy society in the land of Israel and indeed throughout Jewish history. The revelation of torah at Sinai also provides the foundations that enabled Judaism to return to the land and rebuild Jewish life following the Babylonian exile and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. It likewise provides the foundations for the rabbinic system of halakah that has given Judaism its distinctive identity from the time of the destruction of the Second Temple and the exile of Jews throughout the world until the present day. But Judaism's experience of the destruction of both of the temples and exile from the land of Israel points to another dimension of its encounter with YHWH as the Other, namely, judgment is understood to come from YHWH. Although it is interpreted as punishment for the failure of Jews to observe the divine will, such judgment threatens the relationship between Israel and YHWH that stands at the foundation of Judaism. And the theme of judgment is expressed in the Sinai and wilderness narratives as well.

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sion of Exod 15:22–27, see Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 582–622; Dozeman, *Exodus*, 305–98; Meyers, *Exodus*, 111–23.

The golden calf episode in Exod 32–34 is perhaps the best known narrative concerning YHWH's judgment against Israel in the Sinai narrative.[15] While Moses is on Mount Sinai for forty days and nights receiving the dictation of the Torah from YHWH, the people waiting below are restless and begin to complain that Moses has abandoned them in the wilderness. They demand that Moses's brother, Aaron, build them a golden calf, which they then worship as their own G-d. When YHWH and Moses observe the idolatry of the people, Moses unleashes a judgment against them on YHWH's behalf by calling on the tribe of Levi to act as zealots for YHWH in killing some three thousand of the people who were accused of apostasy against YHWH. Although Moses destroys the original tablets of the covenant written by G-d, a new set of tablets is written and the relationship is preserved.

Several dimensions of this narrative are especially important for a Levinasian reading of the Moses narratives. First is the examination of the character of YHWH. In the aftermath of the punishment, Moses stands in a cave while YHWH passes before him, uttering the statement in Exod 34:6, "YHWH, YHWH, a G-d merciful and gracious, long of patience and great in fidelity and truth, extending fidelity to thousands, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin, but he surely does not remit the punishment of the guilty; he brings the punishment of the parents on the children and upon their children to the third and fourth generations." This statement is the subject of much debate elsewhere in the pentateuchal narrative and among the prophets, but it points to a fundamental fact concerning YHWH, namely, YHWH shows mercy to Israel and YHWH is also capable of bringing judgment when Israel is purportedly guilty. Although readers may presume with the Pentateuch YHWH's righteousness in bringing punishment, the modern experience of the Shoah—and indeed the ancient experience of exile and the destruction of the temples—has raised questions about YHWH's justice. Did six million perish in the Shoah because they had sinned? A host of Jewish—and Christian—thinkers have grappled with that question in the aftermath of the Shoah.[16] And within the

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15. See Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, 52–57; Propp, *Exodus 19–40*, 539–623; Dozeman, *Exodus*, 679–756; Meyers, *Exodus*, 253–67. For the classical reading of Exod 32–34 as a combination of J E and nonsource texts, see Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 146–49, 189–90, 199.

16. In addition to my *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, see esp. Braiterman, *(G-d) after Auschwitz*, for overviews of the discussion.

pentateuchal narratives, YHWH has an eternal covenant with Israel that precludes Israel's destruction and replacement with a new nation based on Moses or anyone else (see Gen 17, Exod 31).

The problem may be illustrated by the second dimension of the golden calf narrative to be considered here, namely, the imagery of the golden calf itself. The intertextual relationships between the golden calf narrative in Exod 32–34 and the condemnation of King Jeroboam ben Nebat, the first monarch of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, in 1 Kgs 12, demonstrate that the image of the golden calf is based on the images of the golden calf installed by Jeroboam in the sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan for the people of the Northern Kingdom to worship.[17] Indeed, Jeroboam's alleged sin in prompting northern Israel to abandon YHWH by worshiping the golden calves is the primary reason given in 2 Kgs 17 for the destruction of northern Israel by the Assyrian Empire in 722/721 BCE. Although many readers understand the destruction to be an act of YHWH's justice against a sinful kingdom, several factors call for another view. First, the book of Kings is written by Judean authors who were anxious to condemn Israel as a means to protect their understanding of divine power and justice, namely, YHWH was not powerless to protect Israel or unjust or even absent; rather, YHWH was the one who brought the judgment against Israel for allegedly abandoning YHWH to worship other gods. Second, the golden calf was never really an idol representing YHWH, but functioned instead as a divine mount or throne—much like the Judean ark of the covenant—on which YHWH was understood invisibly to be seated or enthroned. And third, northern Israel was not destroyed because of the golden calves of Jeroboam; it was destroyed for breaking its treaty with the Assyrian Empire that had guaranteed Israel's protection as long as it submitted to Assyrian power.

This brings readers to the third dimension of the golden calf narrative to be considered, namely, Moses's argument with YHWH over YHWH's proposal to destroy all Israel and to build a new nation from Moses and his descendants. Moses stands up to YHWH in Exod 32:7–14 and tells YHWH that this proposal is immoral. He states two reasons, both of which raise questions concerning YHWH's integrity and credibility: first, the Egyptians will claim that YHWH released the slaves and brought them to the

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17. For discussion of the portrayal of Jeroboam ben Nebat in 1 Kgs 12, see Sweeney, *1 and 2*, 172–78.

wilderness with evil intent; second, he demands that YHWH remember
the promises that made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to make them into
a great nation and to grant them the land of Israel. YHWH might punish
Israel for apostasy, but YHWH may not destroy Israel and create a new
nation. In short, Moses challenges YHWH's integrity, and YHWH is com-
pelled to take notice. In the end, YHWH learns responsibility from this
encounter with Moses and renounces the decision to destroy Israel. For
YHWH, Moses functions as the Other in the golden calf narrative.

A second key episode in the wilderness narratives is the account of
the spies in Num 13–14.[18] Upon arriving at the wilderness of Paran along
the southern borders of the land of Canaan, Moses sent twelve spies, one
from each of the tribes of Israel, to scout out the land in preparation for
an attempt to take possession of the land of Canaan from the south. When
the spies returned from their expedition, ten of them expressed fear of the
Canaanites, declaring that the land of Canaan was filled with great giants
and the people of Israel would never be able to overcome them. They
therefore declared that YHWH had brought them to the land of Canaan
only to see them die by the sword and that they should return posthaste to
Egypt to resume their lives as slaves. Of the spies, only two expressed con-
fidence in YHWH's promises that Israel would be able to take possession
of Canaan, Caleb ben Jepphunneh of the tribe of Judah and Hoshea ben
Nun, later known as Joshua ben Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim.

YHWH's response to the people's rebellion is ferocious. As in the
golden calf episode, YHWH proposes to kill the entire nation of Israel in
the wilderness and to raise up a new nation from Moses and his descen-
dants. Such an act, of course, would being to an end the alleged eternal
covenant between YHWH and Israel. Once again, Moses must intercede
and remind YHWH of YHWH's own responsibilities in relation to the
people. Moses raises three issues. First, when the Egyptians see what
YHWH proposes to do, they will tell the entire world, and YHWH's repu-
tation as creator and sovereign of the world will suffer. Second, such a
move will show that YHWH is powerless to bring the people to the land
that YHWH had promised them. Third, Moses begs that YHWH pardon
the people as he reminds YHWH of the attributes of mercy that were

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18. See Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, 57–62; Jacob L. Milgrom, *Numbers*,
JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 99–117. For
the critical assessment of these narratives as a combination of P and J texts, see Camp-
bell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 80–82, 143.

revealed to him while he was in the cave on Sinai following the golden calf episode. In the end, YHWH does pardon the people, but YHWH also decrees that all Israelites of the generation that had known slavery would die in the wilderness. Only those who had been born free of slavery would survive the wilderness journey to enter the promised land.

Again, Moses had to be the voice of reason and morality in the narrative to remind YHWH of YHWH's own obligations and relationship to the people. Once again, YHWH had encountered Moses as the Other in the Torah narrative.

The final episode to consider is Num 20, the narrative concerning the waters of Meribah, in which YHWH judges Moses by denying him the right ever to enter the promised land of Israel.[19] This narrative has puzzled interpreters for centuries; to date, there is no satisfactory explanation for YHWH's decision to deny Moses and Aaron entry into the promised land.[20] The narrative begins in verse 1 with a notice of Miriam's death and burial in the wilderness of Zin followed by another notice in verse 2 of the people's demands for water. Upon consulting YHWH at the tent of meeting, YHWH instructs them to take the Levitical rod to bring out water from the rock so that the people might drink. When Moses stands before the rock, he states, "Listen, you rebels, shall water come forth from this rock for you?" After raising the rod and striking the rock twice, water pours out of the rock for the people. But when the incident comes to a conclusion, YHWH tells Moses and Aaron, "because you did not have faith in Me to sanctify Me before the people of Israel, you shall not bring this people into the land which I have given to them." Aaron dies by the end of the chapter and never enters the land of Israel, although his descendants will serve as priests in Israel. Moses leads the people to the land of Moab, just across the Jordan River from Israel, but he too never enters the land of Israel when he dies in Moab at the end of the pentateuchal narrative.

Interpreters have offered a number of potential solutions over the centuries, for example, Moses struck the rock twice out of doubt in YHWH's promise, Moses's question as to whether water would come out of the rock indicated his failure to trust in YHWH, Moses chose the wrong

19. Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, 44–52; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 163–71. For the critical assessment of Num 20 as a combination of P and E texts, see Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 86–87, 190.

20. Milgrom, *Numbers*, 448–56.

rock, Moses ignored the people's needs while mourning for Miriam, calling Israel rebels and claiming that he and Aaron would bring the water out when in fact it was YHWH. But another solution must be considered. Numbers 20 must be read synchronically in relation to the larger literary context of Num 15–20 and Lev 21. Moses and Aaron were impure after having buried their sister, Miriam. Priestly law in Lev 21 forbids priests to come into contact with the dead, unless the dead person is a blood relative, that is, a parent, sibling, or child. Priests are holy and death is the ultimate negation of holiness. Indeed, the previous narrative in Num 19 lays out the laws of purification when a person comes into contact with the dead. Numbers 15–16 had specified mortal punishment for those who engaged in improper worship of YHWH, and Num 17–18 had seen Aaron, Moses, and the rest of the tribe of Levi ordained as priests to serve before YHWH, the holy G-d of Israel. Having been newly ordained as priests, Moses and Aaron bury their dead sister Miriam, but there is no indication that they underwent the required process of purification before appearing before YHWH to bring water from the rock. When priests such as Moses and Aaron fail to carry out their holy charge, they suffer punishment as a result. The narrative in Num 20 demonstrates the importance of this concern in that it applies to everyone in Israel, even if they are Moses and Aaron.

This episode constitutes the final example of YHWH's encounter with Moses in this paper. Whatever the reason, Moses falls short of YHWH's expectations and suffers the ultimate punishment of death before entering the promised land of Israel. Indeed, YHWH appears as the Other once again to Moses, but there is now a history to the relationship, namely, YHWH's reemergence as the Other to Moses comes in the aftermath of Moses's appearance as the Other to YHWH. Both will continue to their common goal, namely, to bring the people of Israel to the promised land. But whereas YHWH will continue to relate to Israel eternally as the Other, Moses's relationship is qualified. Moses will die, and he will never enter the promised land of Israel. For Moses the primary human character in the Pentateuch, there is no infinity in his relationship with YHWH. Indeed, he is mortal and could expect to die in any case. But the nature of his death and the condemnation that leads to it mark the final disruption in the relationship between YHWH and Moses. Israel may carry on after the time of Moses to enter the promised land, but Moses and his line come to an effective end when Moses dies in Moab to be buried by YHWH in an unmarked grave.

4.

A number of conclusions emerge from this reading of Moses's encounter with YHWH and YHWH's encounter with Moses in the pentateuchal narrative. The encounter with the Other is not simply a one-way street in which Moses encounters YHWH as the Other. Rather, it is a two-way relationship in which YHWH encounters Moses. Just as YHWH provides a future for Moses that demands the integrity of his relationship with YHWH, so YHWH's encounter with Moses makes moral demands on YHWH. Moses refuses the opportunity to become the ancestor of a great people; Moses demands that YHWH consider the viewpoint of Egypt and the other nations of the world; and Moses demands that YHWH have the integrity to show fidelity to the covenant. Levinas's understanding of the interrelationship with the Other must therefore be modified insofar as YHWH is just as susceptible to such an encounter as Moses or any other human being. YHWH emerges as a vulnerable figure in this encounter just as Moses is vulnerable.[21]

Readers must also consider Levinas's view of eschatology, infinity, or possibility that emerges from such an encounter. Surely, the benefits are clear. Israel emerges from Egyptian bondage to become the chosen people of YHWH who will go on to inhabit the land of Israel and ultimately become the people of Judaism based on the eternal covenant with YHWH. YHWH will be recognized as G-d, and Moses will be recognized as the chief teacher of divine torah throughout eternity. But such benefits also come with a price. Moses is ultimately called to task by YHWH and dies before entering the promised land. Although he has sons, readers never hear of a future for his own line. Moses's future is realized only through the future of Israel/Judaism. But YHWH is also called to task by Moses and suffers the potential loss of trust by Moses and Israel as a result of the encounter with the Other in Moses. Although YHWH does bring Israel to the promised land, the failure to bring Moses and the wilderness generation into the land of Israel raises questions about YHWH's ability to remain true to the covenant. As the modern world's—and Levinas's—recent experience with the Shoah demonstrates, the eschatological or eternal future is not always realized by Jews who encounter YHWH as the Other. And one must ask, How often and how long will YHWH hide the

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21. Cf. Heschel, *Prophets*; Heschel, *G-d in Search of Man*.

divine face from Israel in a time of threat? How many generations of Jews have and will die in the wilderness like the original wilderness generation? And to what extent will YHWH act to save them—or even to shed a tear for them, as Heschel imagines? Indeed, like Moses, YHWH is vulnerable; YHWH must be called to task; and YHWH suffers loss as well.

In the end, readers must recognize that Levinas's contributions have much to offer in understanding the human encounter with G-d, but they also need to develop beyond Levinas's own articulation of his ideas. Levinas was a Lithuanian Talmudist and philosopher only somewhat influenced by kabbalistic notions that the encounter between the human and the divine runs in both directions. He is little inclined to recognize the kabbalistic notions of the relativity and interplay of the opposites or ideals of good and evil in the moral realm, dynamism and stability in the material realm, and theory and practice in the mental realm. Such concerns are particularly important in reassessing the moral integrity of G-d and the interrelationship between the human and the divine in Lurianic kabbalah.[22] Levinasian eschatology, infinity, and possibility give expression to Levinas's own optimism in the ultimate or teleological outcome of such relationship, but such an outcome comes at an ontological cost as so many are barred from entering the promised land until the ideals of eschatology, infinity, and possibility are realized.

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22. See Scholem, *Major Tends in Jewish Mysticism*, 244–86; cf. Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, 228–41.

Why Moses Was Barred from the Land of Israel:
A Reassessment of Numbers 20 in Literary Context

1.

Samuel E. Balentine's study *The Torah's Vision of Worship* presents a very insightful examination of key pentateuchal texts relevant to the study of worship in ancient Israel and Judah.[1] It does much to call scholarly attention to the study of worship and liturgy in the Bible, which is particularly important given the decline in interest in the topic evident in the field prior to the publication of his book. With a focus on Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, Balentine covers key texts that have been in the forefront of pentateuchal study, that is, Exod 19–24, 25–40, Lev 17–26, and Deuteronomy at large. But he pays relatively little attention to Numbers, like many in the field, only noting the concentric circles of holiness with the Levites and the holy tabernacle in the center as the people journeyed through the wilderness to the promised land of Israel.[2] Biblical scholars have struggled to understand Numbers, although recent advances have been made in the field with commentaries by Baruch Levine, Jacob Milgrom, and Knierim

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1. Samuel E. Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

2. Balentine, *Torah's Vision of Worship*, 177–78.

and Coats as well as studies by Won Lee, Adriane Leveen, and Angela Roskop, among others.[3]

A particularly insightful proposal appears in a recent Claremont dissertation by Thomas, "These Are the Generations," who builds on earlier work by Cross and others to recognize that the *tôlᵊdôt* formulae that play a key role in the formal structure of Genesis also appear in Num 3:1, "And these are the generations of Aaron and Moses, on the day that YHWH spoke with Moses on Mt. Sinai," which extends the formal structure of Genesis to encompass the entire text of the Pentateuch.[4] Within the formal structure of Num 3–Deut 34, it becomes clear that the Numbers narrative focuses on Aaron and Moses in an effort to highlight the role of the Levites in ancient Israel. YHWH states to Moses three times in Num 3:11–13, 44–51; and 8:13–19 that the Levites will replace the firstborn sons of Israel to assist the sons of Aaron in the holy service of the sanctuary.[5] The Levites are consecrated for such service in Num 8, and they are confirmed for holy service in Num 17–18. It is therefore striking that apart from Lev 25:32, 33, which refer to their property rights, the Levites are not mentioned in the book of Leviticus. Leviticus focuses instead on Aaron and his sons, but the Levites appear constantly in Numbers.[6]

Insofar as Numbers is especially concerned with the Levites and their role in ancient Israelite and Judean worship, it is appropriate to examine Numbers for insight into the Torah's vision of worship. It would be impossible to include the purview of the entire book of Numbers on worship within the space of a brief Festschrift paper, but a focus on the account of YHWH's decision to bar Moses and Aaron would be an appropriate place to begin, particularly because the divine decision is based in large measure

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3. Milgrom, *Numbers*; Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1–20*, AB 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1993); Levine, *Numbers 21–36*; Rolf P. Knierim and George W. Coats, *Numbers*, FOTL 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); Won W. Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness in Israel's Migratory Campaign* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Adriane Leveen, *Memory and Tradition in the Book of Numbers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Angela R. Roskop, *The Wilderness Itineraries: Genre, Geography, and the Growth of Torah*, HACL 3 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011). See also Dozeman, *Pentateuch*, 417–73; Sweeney, *Pentateuch*, 71–91.

4. Thomas, *These Are the Generations*; Cross, "Priestly Work"; cf. Sweeney, *Pentateuch*, xvii–xxix.

5. See Sweeney, "Literary-Historical Dimensions," repr. as ch. 14 in this volume.

6. Gerhard Lisowky, *Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Würtembergische Bibelanstalt, 1966), 1635.

on considerations relevant to worship. The passage has presented major difficulties to interpreters from the very outset of biblical interpretation, but Balentine's focus on worship provides a perspective that might help to understand the reasons for YHWH's decision.

Numbers 20:1–13 describes YHWH's decision to bar Moses and Aaron from the promised land of Israel. YHWH's decision is a consequence of their actions before YHWH in supplying the people of Israel with water while encamped at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin during their journey from Egypt to the promised land of Israel. When the people complain to Moses and Aaron, they turn to YHWH, who instructs them to take the rod, assemble the people, and strike the rock before them to produce water for the people to drink. When they do so, Moses says to the people, "Hear now, you rebels, shall water come out for you from this rock?" (v. 10). He then strikes the rock two times, and water comes out for the people. But in the aftermath of Moses's action, YHWH informs Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me to sanctify me before the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given to them" (v. 12). Aaron dies later, in Num 20, at Mount Hor, and Moses dies in Moab in Deut 34, immediately prior to Israel's entry into the promised land of Israel.

Jacob Milgrom in his Jewish Publication Society commentary on the book of Numbers describes YHWH's decision to forbid Moses entry into the promised land of Israel as one of the Gordian knots of biblical exegesis.[7] He arranges the numerous attempts to explain why YHWH forbade Moses to enter Israel under three aspects: (1) Moses's improper actions in striking the rock, (2) deficiencies in Moses's character, and (3) deficiencies in Moses's words before striking the rock, suggesting that somehow Moses had misrepresented G-d. Milgrom's survey of these various attempts demonstrates that none constitutes an adequate explanation. But his own attempt to explain YHWH's decision by claiming that Moses did not keep silent as expected of priests while serving before YHWH also is inadequate, largely because Moses speaks before YHWH and before the people frequently throughout the exodus and wilderness narratives. Most notably, YHWH commands Moses and Aaron to speak to the rock in Num 20:8.

But Milgrom and other interpreters have overlooked one major factor, namely, Miriam's death in Num 20:1 and her burial immediately prior to

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7. Milgrom, *Numbers*, 448–56.

the incident at the rock. Moses and Aaron are Miriam's closest relatives, and they would have been responsible for her burial. They are also priests, and priests are required to purify themselves prior to engaging in holy service before YHWH. But Moses and Aaron did not do so. Their impurity in standing before YHWH as priests then would explain YHWH's judgment. This paper therefore examines the literary context of the narrative concerning the rock in Num 20:1–13 in an effort to demonstrate that Moses's and Aaron's burial of Miriam prior to the incident at the rock rendered them impure, thereby disqualifying them to serve before YHWH until they repurified themselves. This paper treats several aspects of the issue, including Aaron's designation by YHWH as Moses's mouthpiece in Exod 3, the early role of firstborn sons as priests in the Pentateuch, YHWH's choice of Aaron and the tribe of Levi as priests for holy service before YHWH in Num 17–18, the laws of purification from the pollution of death in Num 19, and the culminating role of YHWH's decision to bar Moses and Aaron from the land of Israel in Num 20.

<center>2.</center>

The status of Moses and Aaron as priests must first be qualified. From the outset of the exodus narrative, the status of Moses and Aaron as Levites is very clear. Exodus 2 relates how Moses was born to a man of the house of Levi and his wife, who was also a Levite. The narrative describes the birth of Moses and the need to protect him as Pharaoh had decreed that sons born to a Hebrew mother would be put to death in an effort to protect Egypt from the deliverer promised to the Hebrews by YHWH. So, baby Moses was placed in an ark, sealed with bitumen, and set adrift on the Nile River under the watchful eyes of his older sister, Miriam. Ironically, Moses was discovered by the daughter of Pharaoh, whose servants fished baby Moses from the water so that she might raise him in the house of her father as her own son. Equally ironic is that Moses's mother was engaged as a wet nurse for baby Moses. Although Exod 2 has generally been recognized as a J narrative in the past, the recent redating of J to the late monarchic period and the recognition of E as the foundational source of the Pentateuch from the ninth–eighth centuries BCE indicate that the accounts of the birth of Moses are relatively early.[8] The later P material in

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8. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 92–93; see also the essays in

Exod 6:20 identifies Moses's father as Amran, his mother as Jocheved, and his brother as Aaron.

When we turn to the narrative concerning the burning bush in Exod 3–4, we see an account that is typically analyzed as a combined E and J narrative.[9] The narrative depicts Moses's encounter with YHWH on Mount Horeb, here identified as the mountain of G-d, a clear indication of the E provenance of this account, a typical prophetic call narrative. Moses sees a vision of a bush that burns but is not consumed. Such a bush is known in the Sinai wilderness as the *rubus sanctus*, which blossoms in the spring with red flowers that make the bush appear aflame when viewed from a distance.[10] Such a motif aids in building the case that YHWH is the true G-d of creation as well as the G-d of Israel and all the nations of the world. In the present instance, Moses approaches the bush and hears the voice of G-d instructing him to remove his shoes as he is standing on holy ground. The narrative goes on with YHWH's self-identification as the G-d of Moses's ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; YHWH's account to Moses of Israel's suffering under Egyptian oppression; and YHWH's commission to Moses to return to Pharaoh to demand that Israel be freed from Egyptian control. When Moses asks YHWH who is sending him so that he may identify YHWH to the people, YHWH responds with the idem per idem rhetorical device, "I am who I am." The response delays announcing YHWH's name because it is holy. The response also presents a pun that suggests that YHWH's name means "he is/he exists" and that demonstrates YHWH's intention to be free from human control.[11]

As scholars have long recognized, the burning bush episode represents the well-known prophetic call narrative or vocation account, which includes a number of typical elements, namely, a divine confrontation, an introductory word, a commission, an objection by the prophet, a reassurance, and a sign.[12] All of these elements are apparent in Exod 3–4. Analogous accounts of prophetic commissioning appear in Judg 6, Jer 1, and Ezek 2–3. Indeed, Moses appears to act as an oracular prophet who

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Dozeman and Schmid, *Farewell to the Y-hwist?*; Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Jacob Narratives: An Ephraimitic Text?," *CBQ* 78 (2016): 236–55, repr. as ch. 12 in this volume; Sweeney, *Pentateuch*.

9. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 132–35, 184–85.
10. Sarna, *Exodus*, 14.
11. Dozeman, *Exodus*, 134–36.
12. Coats, *Exodus 1–18*, 34–42.

serves as a mouthpiece for YHWH. Aaron also is included in the narrative, where he is assigned by YHWH to interpret YHWH's words through Moses and announce them to the audience at hand. In this respect, Aaron might be considered to function in priestly terms, although it is not clear that he has direct access to YHWH.

Jeffrey Stackert has noted that Moses functions throughout the exodus narratives as an oracular spokesman for YHWH.[13] YHWH speaks directly to him, and Moses, sometimes with the aid of Aaron and sometimes not, communicates YHWH's instructions to the people of Israel, Pharaoh, and anyone else who needs to be addressed. It is not clear that his status as prophet is dependent on his Levitical identity.

As for Aaron, his quasipriestly status also does not appear to be dependent on his Levitical identity. Throughout the narrative, Exodus stresses that an important element of the exodus is not only the redemption of the people of Israel but the redemption of the firstborn of the flock, herd, asses, and human beings as well. But whereas animals born to the flock or herd are designated for offerings at the altar, the firstborn of asses and of human beings are to be redeemed for sacred service to G-d. This provision is made clear in Exod 13:2, "Consecrate to Me every firstborn, who breaks the womb among the sons of Israel, among humans and animals." This instruction is further clarified in Exod 34:19–20: "All that break the womb are mine including all your cattle that produce a male as the first-born among cattle and sheep. The firstborn of an ass you shall redeem with a sheep, and if you do not redeem it, you shall break its neck. All the first-born of your sons, you shall redeem." Although Exodus does not specify that consecration of the firstborn is for holy service as priests, the following material in the book of Numbers makes this clear.

3.

Most interpreters read the introductory material of the book of Numbers in Num 1:1–10:10 diachronically as the P conclusion to the Sinai narrative in Exod 19–Num 10:10.[14] As such, it is considered to focus on preparations for the journey through the wilderness to the promised land of Israel. But there is a very telling concern in the first chapters of Numbers that appears

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13. Stackert, *Prophet Like Moses*.
14. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 67–80.

in YHWH's speeches to Moses in Num 3:11, 40–51; and 8:5–19, namely, the consecration of the Levites to serve as priests in place of the firstborn sons of Israel. Although the reason for YHWH's decision is not made clear in these texts, it appears to be based on the zeal for YHWH shown by the Levites in the golden calf episode of Exod 32–34. YHWH refers repeatedly to the previous practice of employing the firstborn sons of Israel as priests, but YHWH instructs Moses to consecrate the Levites for holy service as priests before YHWH. Indeed, Num 8 presents a lengthy instruction as to how the Levites are to be consecrated for priestly service much like Aaron and his sons in Exod 29 and Lev 8. Insofar as Aaron is the firstborn son of Amram and Jochebed, he served as a priest in this capacity. But Aaron is also a Levite, and so his priestly status is reinforced by YHWH's decision to appoint the Levites as consecrated priests.

Thus, a major agenda of the book of Numbers is to justify the appointment of the tribe of Levi as holy priests for YHWH in place of the firstborn sons of Israel, who had previously served in this capacity. As for Moses, his status as a prophet is now augmented by his newly recognized status as a Levitical priest. The recognition of Numbers' interest in consecrating the Levites for holy service as priests before YHWH aids in understanding YHWH's decision to bar Moses and Aaron from the land of Israel.

When read in its final, synchronic literary form, the notice of Miriam's death and burial in the wilderness of Zin in Num 20:1 is not a random notice. The notice includes no indication that Moses and Aaron purified themselves in any way following the burial of Miriam and their subsequent appearance before YHWH to bring water from the rock. Although some might object that the notice includes no direct statement that Moses and Aaron actually performed the burial, particularly since all Israel is noted as arriving at the wilderness of Zin and could presumably have performed the burial, Moses and Aaron must be recognized as the likely candidates for those who would have buried Miriam. Miriam is the older sister of Aaron and Moses, and there is no account of her marriage or her giving birth to any children. Because Aaron and Moses are her brothers, they are her closest relatives and would therefore have borne primary responsibility for her burial at the wilderness of Zin.

In his analysis of the instructional character of Lev 1:1–9, Knierim notes that the instructions concerning the preparation of the ʿōlâ, or whole burnt offering, do not include detailed accounts of what to do at every point in the procedure. Rather, they only present the conceptualization of the prescribed procedure and outline the key points, leaving those that are

presumably obvious unstated.[15] The same principle applies here, that is, because Aaron and Moses are Miriam's closest relatives, they bear primary responsibility for her burial, including the preparation of her body for burial and their role in any service that might take place. Leviticus 21:1–4 makes it clear that priests may not defile themselves for the dead with the exception of their closest blood relatives, including a parent, a child, or a sibling. In the case of a sister, the text stipulates that she would be a virgin sister who has never married a man (v. 3). Miriam is presumably a virgin sister who has never married, and therefore her brothers—but not her nephews or nieces—would have been able to perform her burial despite the fact that they are Levitical priests.

It is therefore noteworthy that the notice of Miriam's burial is deliberately placed before the account of the episode of water from the rock in Num 20:2–13 in order to signal the reason why Moses and Aaron were barred from the land of Israel. The underlying reason for their ban was that they became impure due to contact with the dead, and they failed to purify themselves prior to serving before YHWH and the people as Levitical priests.

The literary context of the passage in Num 17–18, which recounts YHWH's selection of Aaron and the tribe of Levi to serve as holy priests before YHWH, and Num 19, which specifies the means by which one is purified from corpse contamination, makes this clear. Both of these texts are generally assigned to the P stratum of the Pentateuch, much like Num 20:1–13.[16]

Numbers 17–18 follows immediately on the account of the punishment of Korah and his supporters in Num 16, in which they had attempted to revolt against the leadership of Moses and Aaron by improperly offering incense before YHWH. Korah and his supporters were punished with death for their attempt to offer incense before YHWH even though they were not authorized to do so. Numbers 16–18 recounts how YHWH commanded Moses to instruct Eleazar ben Aaron to remove the firepans used by Korah and company because they had become sacred to YHWH due to their use in the attempted offering. The removal was to remind the people that no one who was not a descendant of Aaron was authorized to offer incense

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15. Knierim, *Text and Concept in Leviticus 1:1–9*, esp. 17–22.

16. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 84–87, although Num 19 is often seen as a nonsource text due to its legal character (*Sources of the Pentateuch*, 200).

before YHWH. When the people objected to such removal, arguing that Moses and Aaron had brought death on the people for their transgression of sacred boundaries, YHWH announced the intention to kill the people for their transgression, but Moses ordered Aaron to make expiation for the people in an effort to save their lives. To protect the people, Aaron stood between the living and the dead to demarcate the sacred boundary between the presence of YHWH and the people of Israel.[17]

YHWH then commanded Moses to gather the chieftains of the twelve tribes of Israel together with their staffs. Moses deposited the staffs before YHWH in the tent of the pact. In the morning, Moses found that the staff of Aaron, chieftain of the tribe of Levi, had blossomed and produced almonds, indicating that Aaron and the tribe of Levi had been chosen by YHWH for holy service. Moses announced to them their charge, namely, Aaron and the tribe of Levi have been designated to bear the sin of the sanctuary. The Levites are attached (Heb. *nilwû*, derived from the root *lwh/lwy*) to Aaron for holy service before YHWH, namely, they are chosen to serve as Levitical priests alongside Aaron and his sons. The Levites are assigned to do the work of the tent of meeting, whereas Aaron and his sons are assigned to perform the priestly duties of the altar and the holy of holies of the sanctuary, which are hidden behind the curtain.

YHWH then instructs Aaron in the gifts that he and his Levitical tribesmen are to receive for their sacred service. Aaron and his sons are assigned the *minḥâ* (grain), the *ḥaṭṭāʾt* (sin), and *ʾāšhām* (guilt) offerings of the people as well as the *tərûmâ* (gift) offering of the *tənûpâ* (elevation) offerings of the people in return for their sacred service (Num 18:9, 11). Also included are the firstfruits of the oil, wine, and grain offerings as well as the firstborn of the womb, although firstborn human beings and non-kosher animals are redeemed and exempted from the offerings given to Aaron and his sons (vv. 12–17). These gifts are designated by YHWH as an everlasting covenant of salt for the support of the priesthood. The Levites are then granted tithes of Israel in return for their sacred service, although they are restricted from service in the tent of meeting. The Levitical gift is then designated as an eternal statute for all generations. Nevertheless, the Levites are required to present an offering of one-tenth of their gifts to YHWH to support the priesthood.

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17. See James D. Findlay, *From Prophet to Priest: The Characterization of Aaron in the Pentateuch*, CBET 76 (Leuven: Peeters, 2017).

Here we must note that, although Aaron had already been performing priestly functions in the pentateuchal narratives, Moses—as a Levite—was just designated for sacred service in the temple together with the rest of his Levitical tribesmen. Moses the prophet was just designated as a Levitical priest.

Numbers 19 then follows with a presentation of laws pertaining to purification for the tent of meeting and persons subject to corpse contamination. These laws are frequently read separately from their literary context in modern scholarship because laws and narratives are considered to come from different sources.[18] But given the role of the priests in the purification of the sanctuary just mentioned in Num 18 and the circumstances of Moses's and Aaron's burial of their dead sister, Miriam, purification becomes a matter of paramount importance in the Numbers narrative.

The first law in Num 19:2–10 presents the law of the red heifer and its use in purifying the tent of meeting and later the sanctuary. The red heifer must be an ideal animal that has only red hair with no trace of white hair whatsoever, no yoke laid on it, and no blemish or defect. It is brought to Eleazar the priest, who takes it outside the camp for slaughter. Eleazar uses his finger to take blood from the slaughtered red heifer to sprinkle the front of the tent of meeting. Afterwards, the heifer is burned in its entirety with cedar wood, hyssop, and crimson. Eleazar, the man performing the slaughter, and the man gathering the ashes of the red heifer shall then bathe in water, although they will remain impure until evening. The ashes are to be deposited in a clean place for use by the people to purify themselves. This law becomes an eternal statute in Israel.

Numbers 19:11–22 then follows with instruction concerning the purification of a person who suffers corpse contamination due to contact with a dead body. The person will remain unclean for seven days, although he must cleanse himself with the water of lustration on the third and seventh days following his contact with the corpse. The waters of lustration are made by mixing ashes from the fire of cleansing with water and hyssop to be sprinkled on the defiled person on the third and seventh days. He then washes himself and his clothing so that at nightfall he will be considered clean. This is an eternal statute for the purification of those rendered impure due to contact with the dead. Such a ritual is of utmost importance for anyone who has had to prepare a body for burial.

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18. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 200.

The placement of the laws of purification, particularly from corpse contamination, prior to the notice of the death and burial of Miriam in Num 20:1 and the incident concerning water at the rock in Num 20:2–13 must be considered a deliberate move to explain why Moses and Aaron are barred from the promised land of Israel. They were banned for appearing before YHWH without having purified themselves as required.

<p style="text-align:center">4.</p>

The above considerations indicate that YHWH's decision to ban Moses and Aaron from the promised land of Israel was due to their failure to purify themselves from corpse contamination caused by their handling of the corpse of their sister, Miriam, for burial prior to their appearance before YHWH in the account of YHWH's bringing water from the rock in Num 20:2–13. As the laws of purification in Num 19 make clear immediately prior to the account of Miriam's death and burial in Num 20:1 and the account of the incident at the rock in Num 20:2–13, Moses and Aaron were required to purify themselves from corpse contamination due to the burial of their sister, Miriam, before undertaking any holy service before YHWH. The purpose of the account in Num 20:2–13 would have been to make clear that such a failure must be taken seriously and to remind its audience that this provision applies to all, including figures as highly placed as Moses and Aaron, who led Israel out of Egypt. Despite their celebrated status, even Moses and Aaron, the leaders of the nation of Israel in the wilderness period, nevertheless could not ignore or set aside their priestly identities and the sacred obligation that their holy identities entailed. As a result of their failure, both Moses and Aaron were barred from entering the land of Israel. Aaron reportedly dies in Num 20:22–29 at the border of the land of Edom. Moses continues to lead the people through the wilderness to Moab and the Jordan River, but the account in Deut 34 makes it clear that he dies and is buried in Moab before Israel crosses the Jordan to enter the promised land.

19

Balaam in Intertextual Perspective

1.

The 1967 discovery of the Balaam inscription constitutes the first instance of an ancient Near Eastern text attributed to a prophet mentioned in the Bible.[1] The inscription was discovered during the excavation of the site of Deir ʿAlla, located along the Wadi Jabbok, now known as the Zerka River, in Jordan at a site often identified with biblical Sukkot. The inscription was discovered inside the ruins of a building dating to the late ninth or early eighth century BCE. It was written in red and black ink on plaster that had once been attached to an inside wall of the building but had collapsed and shattered into many pieces. Although the inscription was originally identified as an Aramaic text, subsequent research has determined that the text is written in an indigenous Semitic Canaanite language and script that has affinities with Aramaic and Ammonite. The date of the inscription continues to be debated, but most scholars place it in the early to mid-eighth century BCE.[2]

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1. See Jacob Hoftijzer and Gerrit van der Kooij, eds., *Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla* (Leiden: Brill, 1976).

2. For subsequent discussion see esp. Levine, *Numbers 21–36*, 241–75; see also P. Kyle McCarter Jr., "The Balaam Texts from Deir ʿAlla: The First Combination," *BASOR* 239 (1980): 49–60; Jo Ann Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAlla*, HSM 31 (Chico, CA; Scholars Press, 1980); Émile Puech, "Le texte ʿammonite' de Deir ʿAlla: Les Admonitions des Balaam (première partie)," in *La Vie de la Parole de l'Ancien Testament au Nouveau Testament (offèrts à Pierre Grelot)* (Paris: Desclée, 1987), 13–30; Jacob Hoftijzer and Gerrit van der Kooij, eds., *The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAlla Reevaluated* (Leiden: Brill, 1991); Dijkstra, "Is Balaam Also."

Scholars have been able to assemble two major combinations of text totaling some fifty-five lines. The first combination, of circa nineteen lines, begins with references to the visionary Balaam bar Beor and his oracular vision of a divine council in which the goddess Shagar and Ishtar is instructed to sew the heavens shut in order to plunge the land into chaos. The second combination depicts a sojourn into the underworld by the god El, which again entails chaos in the world.

Most scholars recognize that there must be a clear relationship between the visions of chaos in the Balaam inscription from Deir ʿAlla and the account in Num 22–24 of Balaam ben Beor's blessings of Israel, but thus far, they have been at a loss to explain that relationship. With the rise of intertextual literary methodology that posits dialogical relationships between texts and the recognition that Num 22–24 originates as part of the eighth-century BCE foundational E or Ephraimitic stratum of the Pentateuch, it become possible to explain Num 22–24 as a response to the Balaam inscription of Deir ʿAlla in the Transjordan. Whereas the Balaam inscription was written to celebrate the collapse of Israelite rule in the Transjordan in the aftermath of the late ninth-century defeat of Israel by Aram, Num 22–24 was written to celebrate Israel's recovery of the Transjordan during the reigns of the Jehu monarchs Joash and Jeroboam II during the early to mid-eighth century BCE.

This paper proceeds with studies of combination I and II of the Balaam inscription that are designed to explain their generic character and the intent of their depictions of chaos. It then turns a form-critical study of Num 22–24 designed to establish its own purpose and function as a response to the Balaam inscription in the aftermath of Israel's recovery of the Transjordan due in large measure to its relationship with the Assyrian Empire.

<center>2.</center>

The following reconstruction and translation of Deir ʿAlla inscription combination I is based largely on the work of Levine as presented in his recent Num 21–36 commentary:[3]

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3. Levine, *Numbers 21–36*, 241–63.

Transcription

1 *ysry* [.] *spr.blʾm.b*[*rb*ʾ]*r.ʾš.ḥzh.ʾlhn.h*ʾ[.]
2 *wyʾtw.ʾlwh.ʾlhnblylh*[.*w*]*yḥz.mḥzh.kmśʾ.ʾl.*
3 *wyʾmrw lb*[*lʾ*]*m.brbʾr*
4 *kh.pʾl blʾ.ʾḥrʾh.*
5 *ʾš.lr*[ʾ]*h.mh.šmʾt*
6 *wyqm.blʾm.mḥr.hn* [ ]*lt*
7 *zmn.r*[ʾ*šy qhl*[.ʾ]*lwh.*
8 *wlym*[*yn.yṣ*]*m.wbkh.ybkh.*
9 *wyʾlʾmhʾlwh.wyʾm*[*rw.*] *lbʾlm.brbʾr.*
10 *lm.tṣm.wlm.tbkh*
11 *wyʾmr lhm.*
12 *šbwʾḥwkm.mh.šdyn.ḥ*[*sbw.*]
13 *wlkw.rʾw.pʾwlt.ʾlhn.*
14 *ʾl*[*h*]*n.ʾtyḥdw.wnṣbw.šdyn.mwʾd.*
15 *wʾmrw.lš*[*gr.*
16 *tpry.skry.šmyn.bʾb.*
17 *ky.šm.ḥsk.wʾl.ngh.ʾṭm.wʾl.smr*
18 *ky.thby.ḥtt*[.*bʾ*]*b.ḥšk.*
19 *wʾl.thgyʾdʾlm.*
20 *ky ssʾr.ḥrpt.nšr.*
21 *wqn*[.]*rḥmn.yʾnh.*
22 *ḥ*[*sdh.*]*bny.nṣṣ.wṣdh.*
23 *ʿprḥyʾnph.drr.nšr.*
24 *ywn.wṣpr*[. ʿ*p bš*]*myn*
25 *w*[*yḥsl. b*]*qr.mṭh.bʾšr.rḥln.yybl.ḥtr.*
26 *ʿrnbnʾklw.yḥd.*
27 *ḥpš*[*y*----]*m*[.]*ḥyt*[.*śd*]*h*
28 *w*[---]*n. štyw.ḥmr.wqbʾn.*
29 *šmʾw.mwsr.gry. š*[*gr.wʾštr*]
30 [*ḥ*]*km.*
31 *lḥkmn.yqḥk.wʾnyh rqḥt.mr.wkhnh.*
32 [ ] *mtpgr.*[…] *wb*[*šm*]*n.yzt.yt*[*mšḥ*]
33 *lnšʾ.ʾzr.qm.ḥšb.wḥšb.*
34 *ḥ*[*šb*]*.ʾtntq.mn*[.]*ḥbr*[*wh.*]
35 [*w*]*ḥbṣn.hlkw.bt*[…]
36 *wšmʾw ḥršn.mn.rḥq*[.]
37 [ ]

38 *w*[y]*ptḥ.lḥly.d*[…] *wkl.ḥzw.qqn.*
39 *šgr.w'štr.l*[
40 [ ] *nmr.ḥnṣ.*
41 *hqrqrt.bn* [
42 [ ] *mšn 'zm.*
43 *w'yn*

Translation

1   The admonitions of the book of Balaam the son of Beor, who is a
    visionary of the gods.[4]
2   And the gods came to him in the night, and he saw a vision accord-
    ing to the pronouncement of El.
3   And they said to Balaam the son of Beor,
4   "Thus shall it be done, with none afterward.
5   No man has ever seen what you have heard."
6   And Balaam arose on the next day. Behold!
7   He summoned the heads of the assembly to him,
8   And for two days he fasted and he wept out loud,
9   And his people came up to him, and they said to Balaam the son
    of Beor,
10 "Why do you fast, and why do you weep?"
11 And he said to them,
12 "Sit, and I will tell you what the Shadayin have planned.
13 And go, see the act of the gods.
14 The gods have assembled, and the Shaddayin have established a
    council.
15 And they said to (the goddess) Shagar,
16 'Sew up, close up the heavens with cloud,
17 So that darkness is there and not light, obscurity and not clarity,
18 So that you will instill dread in a dark cloud,
19 And you will not utter again a sound.
20 For the swift bird shames the eagle,
21 And a nest of vultures answers.
22 The stork, the sons of the falcon, and the owl,
23 the chicks of the heron, sparrow, and cluster of eagles,

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4. The following translation is mine, although it follows Levine.

24 Pigeons, and birds, and fowl of the heavens,
25 And a rod shall flay the cattle. To the place of the ewes a staff shall be brought.
26 Hares! Eat together!
27 Freely feed, o animals of the field!
28 And freely drink, o asses and hyenas!
29 Hear the admonition, O enemies of Shagar and Ishtar!
30 the wise
31 to the wise he will take you, to a diviner, a perfumer of myrrh, and a priestess,
32 who covers his body with oil, and rubs himself with olive oil,
33 to one bearing an offering in a horn, an augurer, and another, and another.
34 An augurer broke away from his colleagues,
35 And the striking force went away.
36 And they heard incantations from afar
37
38 And disease was unleashed … and all saw acts of distress
39 Shagar and Ishtar
40 the leopard, the pig chased away
41 And the chased away the young of the
42 double offerings'"
43 And he eyed/beheld.

Deir ʿAlla combination I appears in the form of a vision account in which the seer Balaam bar Beor recounts his vision of the prophetic announcement of judgment from the council of the gods assembled by El, the chief god of the Canaanite pantheon. The literary form of the work appears as follows:

The Admonitions of the Book of
Balaam bar Beor, the Seer of the Gods (1:1–43)

I.   Superscription: The admonitions of the book of Balaam, the seer of   1:1
     the gods
II. Account of Balaam's vision   1:2–43
     A. Narrative introduction: account of visionary experience   1:2–5
         1. Introduction proper   1:2

(c) Release of disease and distress 1:38

(d) Undetermined act by Shagar weIshtar 1:39

(e) Reversal of order, e.g., piglets drive away 1:40–42
leopard

(f) Report of undetermined sighting 1:43

The generic character of the text is signaled by its opening line 1, "the admonitions of the book of Balaam bar Beor, who is a visionary of the gods." Line 1 thereby functions as a superscription for the following material. It identifies the character of the work as a presentation of admonitions, based on the reconstruction of the text by Émile Puech as *ysry*, which signals anticipation of judgment in the following material.[5] Interpreters should note that the term *ysry*, akin to Hebrew *mûsār* (cf. *mwsr* in line 29), entails a connotation of discipline, which implies that the affected parties are intended to learn something from the experience of judgment or discipline. The term *spr*, "book, account," suggests that the following material might be excerpted from a previously known work, but we have no such work at hand other than the biblical account of Balaam ben Beor in Num 22–24.[6] Much like the superscriptions of prophetic books of the Bible, line 1 identifies Balaam's occupation, labeling him as "a visionary of the gods."

Lines 2–43 follow the superscription and constitute the account of Balaam's vision in two parts. The first is the narrative introduction to the account of Balaam's visionary experience in lines 2–5, and the second is the report of Balaam's account of his vision in lines 6–43. The fragmentary character of the inscription and the absence of text following line 43 precludes further definition of the text.

Lines 2–5 constitute the narrative introduction to the account of Balaam's visionary experience. Line 2 constitutes the introduction proper, which further defines the generic character of the work as an "account" of Balaam's admonitions, insofar as it introduces the account of Balaam's experience of his vision, "And the gods came to him in the night, and he saw a vision according to the pronouncement of El."

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5. Puech, "Le text 'ammonite,'" 15, 26–27.

6. The possibility of such a work might be indicated by the fact that later rabbinic tradition identifies the account of Balaam in Num 22–24 as "the book [*seper*] of Balaam ben Beor" (b. B. Bat. 14b–15a).

Lines 3–5 constitute the first element of Balaam's vision account. This subunit begins with the speech formula in line 3, "And they said to Balaam the son of Beor," which introduces the statement to him by the gods in lines 4–5, "Thus shall it be done, with none afterward. No man has ever seen what you have heard." The purpose of this statement is to serve the narrative character of this text by building tension among both the readers of the text and the human characters portrayed therein by pointing to the unique nature of Balaam's vision. It thereby provides the pretext for Balaam's gathering of the assembly to hear about the vision that he has already heard during the night.

Lines 6–43 then present the report of Balaam's account of his own vision in three parts: Balaam's summons of the heads of the assembly in lines 6–8, the response of the heads of the assembly in lines 9–10, and Balaam's account proper of his vision in lines 6–43.

Lines 6–8 presents Balaam's summons of the heads of the assembly. This segment further develops the plot and its narrative tension by relating how Balaam gathered the heads of the assembly so they might hear his vision. It includes three elements. The first is the account of Balaam's arising the next morning following the vision in line 6, "And Balaam arose on the next day. Behold!" The second reports his summons of the heads of the assembly to him in line 7. And the third is the account of his fasting and weeping for two days in line 8.

Lines 9–10 report the response of the heads of the assembly to Balaam's summons: a question to Balaam concerning the reasons for his mourning over what he has just experienced. Line 9 introduces the narrative account of their question to him with an expanded speech formula, "And his people came up to him, and they said to Balaam the son of Beor," and line 10 relates the question per se, "Why do you fast, and why do you weep?"

Lines 11–43 then relate Balaam's response, beginning in line 11 with the narrative introduction to his speech, "And he said to them." Balaam's speech, which relates the vision account, then follows in lines 12–43. Lines 12–13 constitute the introduction to his speech, in which he addresses his audience with a call-to-attention formula, asking them to sit and hear about his account of what his vision has told him that the gods plan to do. The reference to the Shadayin (*šdyn*) in line 12 relates to the Hebrew term El Shaddai (*šadday*), generally understood to mean, "G-d Almighty" or the like. In the Deir ʿAlla inscription, it apparently functions as a parallel to the term *ʾlhn*, "gods," in line 13, indicating that the Shaddayin are a class of gods.

Lines 14–43 constitute Balaam's report of the assembly of the gods. Line 14 reports the assembly, and lines 15–33 constitutes the first element of Balaam's speech with his accounts of the commands to Shagar weIshtar and to her enemies. Line 15 introduces the speech of the gods. The first element is their address in lines 16–28 to Shagar (also identified as Shagar and Ishtar in line 29), which suggests that she is counted among the Shaddayin and is instructed to act on their behalf. Although her name, Shagar weIshtar, might refer to two deities, there is little evidence in the text of two goddesses. Rather, the name might be taken as parallel to the combined name, for example, Kothar waKhasis from Ugaritic literature, to indicate two aspects of the goddess's character. The command proper to her in lines 16–17 to "sew up, close up the heavens with cloud," metaphorically indicates activity that would normally be ascribed to women, but it portends the introduction of chaos into the land. The elaboration on the results of the darkness in lines 18–28 portrays chaos in the land in reference to birds and animals. But the chaos is not due to the absence of life; rather, it is due to the reversal of expected roles. Swift birds are related to hummingbirds; although they are fast, they would not be expected to challenge the majestic eagle as the dominant bird of the heavens. Likewise, vultures, baby ones at that, would hardly be in a position to answer or challenge the eagle. The list of birds in lines 22–24 completes the list of birds that would seek to challenge and perhaps supplant the eagle as the dominant bird of the heavens as depicted in Balaam's vision of chaos. Likewise, the introduction of the rod and staff in line 25 to strike the cattle and ewes is a portrayal of danger to these animals; a shepherd would normally use a staff to guide the animals and to protect them, but here these instruments provide the means to harm and likely kill them (see Isa 10:20–26). Lines 26–28 portray the pastures normally used for grazing the flocks left abandoned to the wild animals of the field. Such reversals of creation are not only typical of the portrayals of judgment in the prophetic texts of the Bible (e.g., Isa 24); they are also typical of Egyptian admonition texts, such as the Admonitions of Ipu-Wer and the Prophecy of Neferti.[7]

Lines 29–33 are much more fragmentary, but they appear to be a command to the enemies of Shagar weIshtar to heed the admonition as it overtakes them. The opening command in line 29, "Hear the admonition [*mwsr*], O enemies of Shagar and Ishtar!" indicates danger to those enemies

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7. *ANET*, 441–44, 444–46.

as a result of those actions that she is commanded to undertake. Although difficult to reconstruct, lines 30–33 appear to indicate the calamities to be suffered by those enemies, who would consult wise figures, described in lines 31–33 as diviners, perfumers of myrrh, and a priestess, who would relieve them of the calamities initiated by Shagar and Ishtar's actions.

Lines 34–43 then turn to the results of the darkness brought about by Shagar weIshtar as chaos ensues. The text seems to suggest panic and flight by augurers and armies in lines 34–35, a report of distant incantation that threatens the enemies in lines 36–37, and the unleashing of disease in line 38. Interpreters must remember that Resheph, the Canaanite god of disease and plague, often leads the charge in mythological depictions of divine punishment and attack in the Bible (e.g., Deut 32:23–24, Ps 78:48, Hab 3:5).[8] The sequence continues with reference to an act by Shagar weIshtar that must remain unknown due to the fragmentary state of the text in line 39, a portrayal of the reversal of order in lines 40–42, and a report of an undetermined sighting, again due to the fragmentary state of the text in line 43.

Altogether, Deir ʿAlla combination I appears designed to depict and to celebrate the defeat of an enemy, here described as the enemies of Shagar weIshtar, perhaps herself a member of the Shaddayin.

3.

Deir ʿAlla Combination II is much more difficult to decipher due to its fragmentary state. Again, we follow Levine's reconstruction and translation.

Transcription

A:

[*ddn*] 6 *yrwy. ʿl.*
wy'bd ʿl.byt.'lmn.
By[*t*]
[*byt*]
7 *byt. Ly'l. hlk.*
Wly'l. ḥtn. šm

_____

8. Paolo Xella, "Resheph," *DDD*, 700–703; Thomas W. Mann, *Divine Presence and Guidance in Israelite Traditions: The Typology of Exaltation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 176–77.

B:

> 8 *rmn. Mn. Gdš*
> *Mn. pḫzy. Bny. 'š.*
> *Wmn. Šqy.* [*bny. 'dm*]

C:

> 9 [ ] *ly.*
> *Hl'ṣh. bk. Lyt'ṣ.*
> *'w lmlkh. Lytmlk.*

D:

> 10 [*m*]*m.mškb.mtksn.lbš.ḥd.*
> *Hn.tšn'n.y'nš.*
> *Hn.t*[

E:

> 11] *'šm*[.]
> [*rmḥ*] *tḥt. r'šk.*
> *Tškb.mškby. 'lmyk.*
> *lḥlq .l*[

F:

> 12]*h blbbm*
> *N'nḥ.nqr.blbbh.*
> *N'nḥ* [.

G:

> 13]*bt*
> *Šmh.mlkn.yḫzw* [ ]
> *Lyš.bm.yqḥ. 'l.rḥm.*
> *W'l*[.]
> 14 *'l* [.
> *Šmh*[.] *kb*[ ]*h*[.] *ykn.*
> *Lbb.nqr.šhh.*
> *Ky. 'th.l* [*š'l*]
> [ ]
> 15 *lqṣh š*['*l*]'*h*
> *Wzl.mgdr.ṭš*[
> *Š'lt.mlk.ssh.*
> *Ws*['*]l*[*t*].

H:

> [ ] 16 *h*
> [*ḥzn*
> *rḥq*[*t.*] *mk.š'ltk.*

I:

17 *ld't.spr.dbr.l'mh.*
'l.lšn.lk.nšpṭ.
Wmlqb'mr.

Translation

A:

El satisfied himself with [lovemaking]
Then El built an eternal house.
A hou[se]
[A house]
A house where no traveler enters,
Nor does a bridegroom enter there.

B:

Worm rot from a grave.
From the reckless affairs with men,
And from the lustful desires [of humans].

C:

[ ] for me?
If it is for counsel, no one will consult you.
Or for his advice, no one will take counsel.

D:

From the bed, they cover themselves with a wrap.
If you hate him, he will become mortally ill.
If [

E:

] punishment?
; Worm rot] is under your head.
You shall lie on your eternal bedding.
To pass away to [

F:

] in their heart.
The corpse moans in his heart.
He moans [

G:

] a daughter?
There, kings shall behold [ ]
He is absent (?) when death seizes a suckling of the womb.

And a suckling [ ]
There [ ] shall be.
The heart of the corpse is desolate.
As he approaches [Sheol].
[ ]
To the edge of She[ol],
And the shadow of the hedge [of]
The quest of the king is moth rot.
And the quest of [

H:

] seers.
Your quest has become distant from you.

I:

To know how to deliver a (divine) word to his people.
You have been condemned for your speech,
And [banned] from pronouncing a word of execration.

The extremely fragmentary state of Deir ʿAlla combination II precludes any serious attempt at structural analysis. From the extant fragments, it seems clear that the motif of the text is a portrayal of El's construction of the netherworld. Furthermore, it lacks any clear reference to Balaam bar Beor. Most interpreters nevertheless recognize it as a continuation of combination I even if the connection is not entirely clear.

Although the motif of the netherworld in combination II appears to be distinct from those of combination I, it actually stands in continuity with the preceding text. Combination I portrays the onset of darkness, chaos, and death in the land, and combination II continues that concern with the portrayal of El's building of the house of death and conditions within that house of the dead.

Section A:6–7 begins with a statement that some construe as a portrayal of El's lovemaking; the lovemaking motif is not so clear, as it is derived primarily from other texts that describe El in this fashion. The verb *yrwy* suggests saturation, which may be related to lovemaking, but it would seem that the cessation of rain would be more appropriate. It is clear that El builds an eternal house. Although much text is missing, line 7 indicates that travelers and bridegrooms do not enter this house, which begins the portrayal of the house as an abode of the dead.

Section B:8 continues the portrayal of the abode of the dead with a reference to the worm rot that afflicts of the inhabitants of this house. The

latter part of this section appears to describe the once normal activities of reckless affairs and lust from which the inhabitants are now barred.

Section C:9 continues the focus on what the inhabitants of the house of the dead may no longer do, such as take counsel from anyone who might offer it.

Section D:10 portrays the inhabitants of the house of the dead lying in a bed covered by a wrap. Although the second statement is unclear, it appears to refer to the illness and death of the house's inhabitants.

Section E:11 returns to the motif of the bed of the dead and the worm rot under the inmate's head that would serve as a pillow.

Section F:12 refers simply to the misery of the moaning corpse.

Section G:13–15 continues to refer to the misery of the dead by portraying the death of infants, perhaps his own children whom he is unable to protect, leaving his heart desolate as he approaches Sheol, the abode of the dead. Although the portrayed inmate may have been a king, he can do no more than turn to the moth rot that will cover his bed for eternity.

Section H:16 merely emphasizes that the former quests or business of the dead is no longer possible.

Section I:17 emphasizes that the dead king no longer has the power to deliver a word, for example, command his people, nor is he able to curse his enemies.

The text appears to have affinities with Isa 14:3–23, which in the present form of the text portrays the descent of the Babylonian king to the underworld, where his bed is prepared and where the other dead kings of the world await him. Most interpreters maintain that the text originally portrayed the descent of the Assyrian monarch Sargon II following his death in battle in 705 BCE, especially due to the reference in verse 19 to his corpse being left unburied.[9] Altogether, the text emphasizes his inability to exercise his once great power now that he is dead, which corresponds to the concern articulated in Deir ʿAlla combination II.

Whereas combination I presents the defeat and downfall of an enemy of the gods, including El, the Elohin, the Shaddayin, and Shagar weIshtar, combination II portrays the downfall, death, and descent into the Netherworld of a monarch who presumably led the enemy who was the object of concern in combination I. The enemy is clearly opposed to the Canaanite gods. Insofar as the setting of the site of Deir ʿAlla and the Deir ʿAlla

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9. See my treatment of Isa 13–14 in Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 218–39.

inscription appears to be the late ninth through the mid-eighth centuries BCE, the enemy would presumably be the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the king would be a member of the ruling house of Omri. Israel was defeated by the Aramaeans during the late ninth through the early eighth centuries BCE, and two Omride kings, Ahaz ben Omri and Jehoram ben Ahaz, were assassinated during the course of the war that led to Israel's defeat and loss of the Transjordan. Other inscriptions also commemorate this event. The Mesha inscription or Moabite stone, likewise dated to the late ninth through early eighth centuries BCE, describes the defeat of Israel by Mesha, the king of Moab (cf. 2 Kgs 3), who claims to have retaken his territory from King Ahab of Israel and killed the men of Gad who had lived there.[10] Likewise, the Tel Dan inscription presents the words of an Aramaean king who assassinated the kings of Israel and Judah just as Jehu of Israel had done according to 2 Kgs 9–10.[11] Although Jehu appears to be an Israelite, his actions in overthrowing the house of Omri might suggest an Aramaean connection. Alternatively, the Aramaean king who would have benefited from Jehu's actions may have claimed credit for the job.

In any case, Deir ʿAlla combinations I and II appear to celebrate the overthrow of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the Transjordan during the late ninth through the early eighth centuries BCE. Balaam bar Beor is the seer of the gods who foresees such an occurrence and relates it through his vision of the gods in the Deir ʿAlla inscription.

4.

Deir ʿAlla 1–2 presents an account of the vision of the seer Balaam bar Beor in which he sees how the gods plan to overthrow an enemy in the Transjordan, Israel according to the above analysis. Numbers 22–24, however, presents a very different account of the visions of Balaam ben Beor, in which he is hired by King Balak ben Zippor to curse Israel in the Transjordan. Because he can say only what YHWH puts into his mouth, he instead blesses the people of Israel repeatedly.[12]

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10. *ANET*, 320–21. For discussion of the Moabite stone, see esp. Kent P. Jackson, "The Language of the Mesha Inscription," in *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab*, ed. J. Andrew Dearman (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 97–130.

11. Biran and Naveh, "Aramaic Stele Fragment"; Biran and Naveh, "Tel Dan Inscription."

12. For discussion of Num 22–24, see esp. Michael S. Moore, *The Balaam Tradi-*

Most modern scholars deem Num 22–24 to be a self-contained literary unit. It begins with an itinerary formula in Num 22:1, which introduces the following narrative, and it concludes with a statement in Num 24:25 that reports the departure of both Balaam and Balak as they go their separate ways. Classical source critics view the Balaam narrative as a J composition with E expansions. But with the redating of J to the late monarchic or exilic period, the Balaam narrative must be viewed as a fundamentally E or Ephraim stratum from the mid-eighth century BCE that has been edited by the J or Judean stratum in the late monarchic period.[13]

Following the introductory itinerary formula in Num 22:1, the formal literary structure of the narrative proceeds on an episodic basis, signaled by the actions of the major characters of the narrative, namely, Balak and Balaam. Six episodes then follow in the narrative.

The first appears in Num 22:3–4a, which recounts Balak's observation of what Israel had done to his Amorite colleagues Sihon and Og in Num 21:21–25 and Moab's fear of Israel because they had become so numerous.

The second episode appears in Num 22:4b–20, which recounts Balak's entreaties to Balaam ben Beor of the city of Pethor to travel to Moab so that he might curse Israel. Balaam is portrayed as a visionary prophet throughout the narrative who is able to discern the will of YHWH and relay YHWH's words. Although Balaam initially resists Balak's offers, he finally accedes when G-d came to him in the night to grant him permission to travel to Moab. Nevertheless, G-d warns him that he may do only what G-d commands him. G-d's instruction to Balaam becomes the leitmotif of the narrative.

The third episode, in Num 22:21–35, recounts Balaam's journey to Moab to accept and carry out Balak's commission. This episode caricaturizes Balaam as a seer who cannot even see what his ass sees because he is so fully under the control of YHWH. YHWH is angry at Balaam's decision to travel and posts an angel of YHWH to block his journey. YHWH's anger is somewhat perplexing insofar as G-d had just given permission to Balaam to travel—albeit under the condition that he do only what G-d says he may do. Many see it as a sign of source division, although in the synchronic literary form of the narrative, it serves the purpose of demon-

tions: *Their Character and Development*, SBLDS 113 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); Levine, *Numbers 1–20*; Levine, *Numbers 21–36*; Milgrom, *Numbers*; Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*.

13. See Sweeney, *Pentateuch*.

strating that Balaam is entirely under YHWH's control. Although Balaam does not see the angel, his ass does, and the ass swerves from the road to avoid a confrontation. After several such instances, Balaam beats the ass until the ass opens her mouth and protests to Balaam that she has done nothing wrong and cannot understand why he is beating her. Only then does YHWH open Balaam's eyes so that he can see the angel. After making the point, YHWH tells Balaam that he may continue his journey, but he can say nothing except what YHWH tells him.

The fourth episode, in Num 22:36–40, relates Balak's reception of Balaam, who reiterates that he may speak only what G-d puts into his mouth.

The fifth and culminating episode appears in Num 22:41–24:44, which recounts Balaam's four failed attempts to curse Israel in Num 22:21–23:10; 23:11–24; 23:25–24:9; and 24:10–24. The first, in Num 22:21–23:10, includes an account of Balaam's ritual preparation, G-d's appearance to Balaam with instructions as to what he should say, and Balaam's oracle, which blesses Israel. The second, in Num 23:11–24, recounts Balak's frustration with Balaam, a second set of ritual preparations, a second appearance of YHWH with words for Balaam, and a second oracular account of Balaam's blessing of Israel. The third, in Num 23:25–24:9, includes another account of Balak's frustration together with Balaam's insistence that he can say only what G-d puts in his mouth, a third account of ritual preparation, and a third blessing of Israel by Balaam. The fourth, in Num 24:10–24, relates another account of Balak's frustration together with Balaam's insistence that he can only speak what YHWH permits and a final account of Balaam's blessing of Israel, including statements concerning the rise of a new king in Israel and the defeat of Moab, Seth, Edom, Amalek and the Kenites together with a portrayal of Assyria's subjugation of the region.

Finally, Num 24:45 relates the departure of Balak and Balaam.

The formal structure of the narrative appears as follows:[14]

The Account of Balaam's Blessing of Israel (Num 22:2–24:45)

I.	Itinerary formula that places Israel in Moab	22:2
II.	Concern of Balak ben Zippor and Moab over Israel	22:3–4a
III.	Balak's entreaties to Balaam ben Beor to curse Israel	22:4b–20

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14. Cf. Knierim and Coats, *Numbers*, 246–63.

Several dimensions of the presentation of Balaam ben Beor in Num 22–24 require closer examination.

First, Balaam in Num 22–24 appears to act as a typical Mesopotamian *baru* priest. *Baru* priests were professional oracle diviners who were trained to speak on behalf of the gods by engaging in a ritual that would prepare them for such action and by reading signs that would indicate the will of the gods.[15] Balaam's ritual actions in Num 22–24, the preparation of seven altars, the formal incantational character of his introductory comments for each oracle, and the formulaic language associated with oracular divination are all typical of Mesopotamian *baru* priests. The presentation of Balaam bar Beor in the Deir ʿAlla inscription portrays Balaam's revelation as a dream report, but dream reports are part of the repertoires of Mesopotamian *baru* priests. At least one Judean prophet, Jeremiah, views dreams as a lesser form of revelation (Jer 23:9–40), but it nevertheless remains as a valid practice in Mesopotamia. Finally, we may observe that Balaam's oracles, especially the fourth oracle, in Num 24:10–24, are based on the observation of the natural lushness and fertility of the Jordan River Valley as it pours into the Dead Sea, which apparently provides the basis for portrayal of the blessings bestowed on Israel. Such observations provide the signs that Balaam would read as a *baru* priest to discern the will of the gods, or in this case, YHWH, the G-d of Israel.

Second, Num 22–24 presents a caricature of Balaam ben Beor in an effort to demonstrate that he is entirely dependent on YHWH to determine what he will speak. Of course, *baru* priests and other types of prophets are

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15. Frederick H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and Its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-historical Investigation*, JSOTSup 142 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994).

allegedly dependent on their patron deities, but the biblical text makes it clear that Balaam's dependence on YHWH makes it impossible for him to act on his own initiative or to fulfill the contract he has made with Balak to curse Israel. Balaam's power and professional standing are entirely irrelevant to the narrative as he is unable to act or speak without divine authorization. The narrative reiterates the point repeatedly, and the initial episodes concerning Balaam's journey to Moab go so far as to show that Balaam, the great seer, cannot even see what his ass can see unless YHWH makes it possible for him to do so. Indeed, the narrative ridicules Balaam to make its point. Such a caricature works to undermine the impact of the Deir 'Alla inscription, which had been publicly displayed in the Transjordan in a building that was easily visible from northern Israel. By undermining the character of Balaam and demonstrating the dominance of YHWH, the Numbers narrative ensures that readers understand that the Balaam bar Beor character of the Deir 'Alla inscription has no independent standing to curse Israel. Likewise, Balaam bar Beor's dependence on El, Shagar weIshtar, the Shadayin, and the other gods of the assembly is essentially irrelevant because his words do not come from YHWH.

Third, the settings of the Deir 'Alla inscription and the Num 22–24 narrative are crucial for understanding their intertextual interrelationship. The Deir 'Alla inscription is dated to the period from the late ninth through the early eighth centuries BCE, which corresponds to the period following Israel's defeat at the hands of the Aramaeans, the overthrow of the Omride dynasty, and the loss of Israel's control over its Transjordanian territories where the tribes of half-Manasseh, Gad, and Reuben lived.[16] These events are signaled by the defeat of Israel and the death of King Ahab ben Omri at Ramot Gilead in 1 Kgs 22 and by the assassination of King Jehoram ben Ahab and the overthrow of the house of Omri by Jehu in 2 Kgs 9–10.[17] Indeed, other inscriptions from the period reinforce the portrayal of Israel's vulnerability during this period. The well-known Moabite stone or Mesha inscription, dated to the same period, portrays Mesha's defeat of Israel, led by King Ahab, and his defeat of the men of Gad as he seizes Israelite territory in the Transjordan that will now be subject to his rule. Apparently, Mesha of Moab functioned as an ally of Aram and gained Israelite territory as a result. Likewise, the Tel Dan inscription,

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16. See now Hasegawa, *Aram and Israel*.

17. For discussion of the Kings texts, see Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*.

again dated to the late ninth through the early eighth centuries BCE, portrays the assassination of the kings of Israel and Judah in keeping with the portrayal of 2 Kgs 9–10. The Tel Dan inscription is problematic insofar as the author is presented as an Aramaean, although it may be that Jehu, an Israelite military commander of the Omride army, was viewed as an Aramaean client or subject in the view of the author of the inscription. The Deir ʿAlla inscription, which portrays the defeat or overthrow of the enemies of the gods, apparently presupposes the Aramaean victory over Israel as well.

Numbers 22–24 has long been recognized as a composite JE composition in which the J and E elements have been very clearly differentiated. But older views of this text upheld Wellhausen's and von Rad's view that the J source was the earliest of the pentateuchal sources, whereas E was generally considered an appendix of J.[18] But with recent scholarly recognition that the J stratum actually dates to the late monarchic or exilic periods, a reevaluation of E results.[19] The E or Ephraimitic stratum, then, emerges as the foundational document of the pentateuchal narrative, and the J or Judean stratum then emerges as a redactional stratum that Judeanized the northern Ephraimitic narrative after it was brought south in the aftermath of the collapse of the northern Israelite kingdom in 722/721 BCE. The E stratum continues to be dated to the mid-eighth century BCE, when King Jeroboam ben Joash reigned over a peaceful kingdom that extended from Lebo-Hamath in the north to the Sea of the Aravah in the south. Indeed, Jeroboam's peaceful kingdom resulted from the efforts of his father, Joash, to push Damascus back from the Transjordan so that he might restore Israelite sovereignty following a period of Aramaean domination.

But interpreters must recognize the basis for Joash's actions in the Jehu alliance with the Assyrian Empire. King Jehu, the founder of the Jehu dynasty, is known for his own submission to King Shalmaneser III of Assyria, as portrayed in the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser.[20] Jehu's alliance was strategically important because it provided the means to contain Aram by Israelite power to the south and Assyrian power to the north. It

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18. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuch*; von Rad, "Form-Critical Problem."

19. Carr, "Changes in Pentateuchal Criticism"; Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz, eds., *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*, FAT 78 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

20. *ANEP*, 351, 355.

is not clear that this strategy was initially successful; Israel was too weak for years following the rise of the house of Jehu to free itself of Aramaean control even with Assyria's support. But by the reign of King Joash ben Jehoahaz, the balance of power had shifted, again with Assyrian support, as Joash is listed as a tributary of King Adad-nirari III of Assyria.[21]

The Jehu alliance with Assyria is especially important for understanding the references to a new king who will arise in Israel and the role of the Assyrians in Num 22–24, especially the fourth and culminating oracle in Num 24:10–24. The new Israelite king, described metaphorically as the rise of a star from Jacob and a scepter from Israel in Num 24:17, emerges as a reference to the resurgent Jehu kings, namely, Joash and his son Jeroboam, who restored Israel's power in the Transjordan and a kingdom that would have rivaled that of David and Solomon. Likewise, the references to the Assyrians, aka the Kittim, in the latter part of the oracle points to Assyrian moves in support of their Israelite allies and thereby provides the basis for understanding Israel's resurgence.

<center>5.</center>

Altogether, Num 22–24 is designed to respond to the publicly visible Deir ʿAlla inscription just across the Jordan River from the hill country of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It shares the portrayal of Balaam bar/ben Beor as a Mesopotamian *baru* priest who speaks concerning the will of the gods for Israel. Whereas Balaam in the Deir ʿAlla inscription foresees the downfall of Israel as the result of the will of the gods, including El, Shagar weIshtar, and the Shadayin, Num 22–24 portrays a strong, powerful, and vibrant Israel blessed by G-d/YHWH. It caricaturizes Balaam as a prophet so thoroughly dependent on YHWH that he cannot even see the angel of YHWH sent to block him that even his ass can see. It also points to the rise of a new Israelite king, presumably either Joash or Jeroboam, and the role of the Assyrians or Kittim, who made the resurgence of the Israelite monarchy possible in the mid-eighth century BCE.

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21. Page, "Stela of Adad Nirari III."

Davidic Polemics in the Book of Judges

1.

A major shift is now taking place in the study of the book of Judges as scholars have come to recognize that the book must no longer be read simply as a historical source that reflects the historical and social realities of premonarchic Israel. Judges must also be read as a literary work that presents a specific sociopolitical and religious understanding of Israel in the premonarchic period in keeping with the historiographical interests of its composers.[1] An important dimension of this discussion is the recognition that Judges presents a polemical view of early Israelite history that promotes the interests of the tribe of Judah and the Davidic dynasty by pointing to the inadequacies of the judges from the northern tribes

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1. For a recent review of research on the book of Judges, see Andrew D. H. Mayes, *Judges* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1985). Recent literary studies include Robert Polzin, *Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges*, part 1 of *Moses and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980); Barry Webb, *The Book of Judges: An Integrated Approach* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987); Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Lilian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988); J. Cheryl Exum, "The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 410–31; Uwe Becker, *Richterzeit und Königtum: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Studien zum Richterbuch*, BZAW 192 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990); Robert H. O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges*, VTSup 63 (Leiden: Brill, 1996). See also the essays in Gale A. Yee, ed., *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

of Israel. Studies by Marc Brettler and Robert O'Connell are especially important in this regard in that they point clearly to an effort on the part of the book's composers to contrast the accomplishments of the tribe of Judah over against the failures of the northern tribes in order to demonstrate the benefits of Judean or Davidic rule.[2] But these attempts to define the polemical outlook of Judges note tension in that the beginning and concluding sections of Judges focus especially on a critique of Benjamin and the house of Saul, whereas the central section focuses more generally on a critique of the northern tribes. This article argues that the current discussion presupposes a scholarly consensus that identifies three component parts in the structure of the book of Judges, but that this consensus is unduly influenced by redaction-critical criteria. Based on a synchronically oriented reexamination of the formal features of the present form of the Judges narrative, this article argues that Judges comprises two basic structural components, Judg 1–2 and 3–21, and that this structure highlights the theme of intermarriage with the pagan nations as the basis for a critique of the northern tribes that focuses especially on Ephraim and Bethel. This provides the basis for a more integrated reading of Judges in and of itself and in relation to the larger context of the Deuteronomistic History.

<div align="center">2.</div>

There is a general consensus among scholars that Judges comprises three major structural components: Judg 1:1–2:5 (or 1:1–2:10), which portrays Israel's failure to drive the Canaanites out of the land and YHWH's subsequent decision that they would serve as a "snare" for Israel; Judg 2:6–16:31 (or 2:11–16:31), which presents the individual judges; and Judg 17–18 and 19–21, two appendixes concerning the establishment of the sanctuary at Dan and the war against Benjamin.[3] This assessment of the structure of

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2. Marc Brettler, "The Book of Judges: Literature as Politics," *JBL* 108 (1989): 395–418; O'Connell, *Rhetoric of the Book*.

3. On the three major structural components of Judges, see Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 256–61. An alternative three-part structure appears in Robert G. Boling, "Judges, Book of," *ABD* 3:1107–17, as Judg 1:1–3:6; 3:7–15:20; 16–21. Cf. Robert G. Boling, *Judges* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 29–38. On Judg 1:1–2:5, see Weinfeld, "Judges 1.1–2.5." For full treatment of the polemics against Bethel in Judg 17–18, see Yairah Amit, "Hidden Polemic in the Conquest of Dan: Judges xvii–xviii," *VT* 40 (1990): 4–20. For her treatment of the polemics against Saul in Judg 19–21, see Amit, "Lit-

Judges, however, raises various problems. First, it is chronologically inconsistent in that Joshua is reported to have died at the beginning of the book (Judg 1:1), but he is alive at the beginning of the report of his death in Judg 2:6–10. Second, Judg 2:10–23 (or 2:6–23) is widely recognized as a Deuteronomistic introduction to Judges that lays out the basic pattern of apostasy, punishment, repentance, and deliverance that governs the presentation of each of the major judges throughout Judg 3:7–16:31. Third, the function of the two "appendixes" in Judg 17–18 and 19–21 is unclear in that they clearly do not deal with individual judges and appear to disrupt the general chronological and formal patterns of the book.

The overall result is a fragmented reading of Judges in which the interrelationship of its component parts is not entirely clear. And yet it is apparent that redaction-critical or source-critical concerns have unduly influenced this view of Judges' structure. Judg 1:1–2:5 is frequently viewed as a later insertion that is designed to "correct" the view of complete conquest of Canaan presented in Joshua with a more nuanced presentation that points to the continued presence of the Canaanites.[4] Judges 2:6–3:6 is generally considered as the introduction to 3:7–16:31 because both passages employ similar Deuteronomistic formulations to set the standard

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erature in the Service of Politics: Studies in Judges 19–21," in *Politics and Theopolitics in the Bible and Postbiblical Literature*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and Benjamin Uffenheimer (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 28–40.

4. Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1957), 6–10 (ET, *Deuteronomistic History*, 7–9). Cf. Marc Brettler, "Judg. 1,1–2,10: From Appendix to Prologue," *ZAW* 101 (1989): 433–35, who argues that Judg 1:1–2:10 originally constituted an appendix to the book of Joshua that was moved to become the introduction to the book of Judges. Brettler's analysis notes the similarities between this material and Joshua as a partial basis for his contention. He fails to note, however, that Judg 1:1–2:10 employs some material from Joshua but also makes changes that highlight the failure of the Israelite tribes to drive the Canaanites out of the land. See Wolfgang Richter, *Die Bearbeitungen des "Retterbuches" in der deuteronomistischen Epoche* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1964), 26–50, esp. 44–49. He points to the parallels between Judg 2:6–10 and Josh 24:28–31 in order to argue that Judg 2:6–10 represents later redactional work from the monarchic period. Judges 1:1–2:10 cannot have been originally a conclusion to the book of Joshua. Rather, it was designed as a modified summary of Joshua that serves the historiographical interests apparent in the book of Judges (cf. Becker, *Richterzeit und Königtum*, who also considers the parallels to Judg 1:1–2:5, in an effort to define the historiographical interests of the composers of Judges).

pattern of apostasy, oppression, repentance, and deliverance that appears throughout the presentation of the Judges.[5] Judges 17–18 and 19–21 are grouped together as appendixes because they fall outside the standard patterns in Judg 2:6–16:31 and because they share variations of the formula "there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25).[6]

Although this consensus may well be true in relation to the literary history of the book, it does not provide adequate criteria to establish the literary structure of the present form of the text in that it does not account for specific literary features and structural signals of the text as it is presently constituted.[7] Three major features stand out in this regard. The first is the report of the death of Joshua in 2:6–10, which appears to disrupt the chronological perspective of the introductory chapters, which begin with a notice of his death in Judg 1:1. The second is the unique formulation of Judg 3:1–6, which disrupts the overall *waw*-consecutive narrative form of Judges. The third is the interrelationship of Judg 17–21, which is generally considered appendixes, to the preceding material in Judges.

The report of the death of Joshua in Judg 2:6–10 is particularly problematic in that scholars are divided as to whether it belongs with Judg 1:1–2:5, which reports the failure of the tribes to expel the Canaanites from the land, or Judg 2:11–23/3:6, which relates the consequences of this failure by pointing to the repetitive pattern of apostasy, punishment, repentance, and deliverance for the subsequent period of the judges. On the one hand, Judg 2:6–10 builds on the report in Judg 2:1–5 that the angel of YHWH declares the continued presence of the Canaanites to be a snare to Israel by relating that the generation subsequent to that of Joshua's did not know YHWH or what YHWH did for the people during the time of Joshua. On the other hand, the notice of Joshua's dismissal of the people

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5. For discussion of the redaction-critical issues pertaining to Judg 1:1–3:6, see Richter, *Die Bearbeitungen des "Retterbuches,"* passim; Boling, *Judges*, 29–38; J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary*, trans. John Bowden, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 17–44.

6. On the character of Judg 17–21 as appendixes, see Martin Noth, "The Background of Judges 17–18," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (London: SCM, 1962), 68–85.

7. On this methodological point, see Knierim, "Criticism of Literary Features," esp. 150–53, 156–57; Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 45–60; Sweeney, "Formation and Form," esp. 113–16.

chronologically precedes the notice of his death in Judg 1:1–2:5 and pre-pares the reader for the cycle of apostasy, punishment, repentance, and deliverance by stating that the following generation did not know YHWH or YHWH's work.

In fact, the construal of the problem in this fashion demonstrates that scholars have overlooked the role that Judg 2:6–10 plays in linking both Judg 1:1–2:5 and 2:11–23/3:6 in the present form of the text. The con-fusion is caused by the formulation of Judg 2:6, "when Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take pos-session of the land," which is nearly identical with the statement in Josh 24:28 that precedes the notice of Joshua's death, "so Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance." Because Josh 24 reports Joshua's final assembly of the people at Shechem immediately prior to his death, schol-ars have concluded that the notice of Joshua's death in Judg 2:6–10 must be read in relation to the assembly at Shechem.[8] But this view is based on a redaction-critical decision that overlooks the present form of the narrative in Judges, in which the notice of Joshua's dismissal of the people follows immediately from the statement that the people sacrificed at Bochim, that is, Bethel, in response to the angel's declaration. Although Judg 2:6–10 may originally have had the assembly at Shechem as its referent, in the present form of the text Joshua dismisses the people from Bochim. So far as the notice of Joshua's death also provides the premise for Judg 2:11–23, this points to Judg 2:6–10 as a text that links 1:1–2:5 and 2:11–23 together.[9]

This calls for a reconsideration of the structure of this text. Overall, the literary form of Judg 1:1–2:23 is governed by a *waw*-consecutive imperfect narrative form that introduces the narratives concerning the attempts by the tribes to drive out the Canaanites in 1:1–36 and that constitutes the whole of the material in 2:1–23. It is only with Judg 3:1–6, which begins with the statement, "and these are the nations that YHWH caused to remain by which to test Israel," that the *waw*-consecutive form is disrupted. Several observations are necessary. First, Judg 1:1–36 constitutes a single unit that relates the attempts of the tribes to expel the Canaanites. Many scholars have noted that Judg 1 draws on related material in Josh 13–19 concerning the distribution of land to the tribes but reworks the material already found in Josh 13–19 to emphasize the failure of the tribes entirely

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8. Boling, *Judges*, 72; Soggin, *Judges*, 40–41.

9. Cf. Richter, *Die Bearbeitungen des "Retterbuches,"* 44–49, who notes this role in relation to his discussion of the parallels between Judg 2:6–10 and Josh 24:28–31.

to drive out the Canaanites.[10] Second, Judg 2:1–23 likewise constitutes a single structural unit that is consistently formulated in *waw*-consecutive narrative style. This material also draws on earlier material in Joshua to present a combination of retrospective views of the past and prospective views of the future that provides the overall program of the book of Judges. The notice in Judg 2:1–5 concerning the movement of the angel of YHWH from Gilgal to Bochim takes the reader back to the past literary setting of Josh 5:13–15, where the angel last appeared to Joshua while Israel was encamped by Gilgal. By referring to Israel's covenants with the Canaanites made in violation of their covenant with YHWH, Judg 2:1–5 calls to mind the Israelites' agreements to let Canaanites dwell in their midst, that is, the family of Rahab from Jericho (Josh 6:22–25) and the people of Gibeon (Josh 9:3–27; cf. 11:19–20). This retrospective view of Israel's agreements with Canaanites then provides the premise for the notice in Judg 2:6–10 of Joshua's dismissal of the people and his subsequent death. Again, the perspective is fixed initially on the past period of Joshua, but it shifts to the future period of the Judges by pointing to the following generation that did not know Joshua or the works of YHWH. In this manner, the narrative leads the reader into Judg 2:11–23, which lays out the basic pattern of apostasy, punishment, repentance, and deliverance that appears in the individual narratives of the Judges. The passage concludes with the repeated notice of YHWH's statement that the nations would be left to test Israel because the people violated their covenant (2:20–23). In this manner, the narrative returns to the initial theme of Judg 2:1–5 and provides a chronological overview of the causes for the continued presence of the Canaanites in the land from the period of Joshua through that of the Judges. It thereby encompasses the narrative concerning the tribes' failure to expel the Canaanites in Judg 1, and it provides the premise for the balance of the book. The common identification of Bochim with Bethel[11] is noteworthy in that it associates the later sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom of Israel with YHWH's decision to punish Israel by causing the nations to remain in the land as a snare. The narrative thereby serves Judean/Davidic polemics in that Bochim/Bethel becomes the site associated with YHWH's testing or punishment of the people.

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10. E.g., A. Graeme Auld, "Judges I and History. A Reconsideration," *VT* 25 (1975): 261–85; Boling, *Judges*, 53–67; Soggin, *Judges*, 25–33; Becker, *Richterzeit und Königtum*, 21–63.

11. Boling, *Judges*, 62.

Judges 3:1–6 is also particularly problematic in discussion concerning the structure and outlook of Judges. It is generally considered to be part of the Deuteronomistic introduction that begins in Judg 2:6 because it continues the theme of the continued presence of the Canaanites in the land as a means to test the people of Israel, as articulated in Judg 2:11–23.[12] But although it relates thematically to the preceding material, it is distinguished formally by the introductory phrase, "and these are the nations that YHWH left, by which to test Israel, i.e., all who did not know all the wars of Canaan." Because of its introductory phrase, *wə'ēlleh haggôyîm*, "and these are the nations," Judg 3:1–6 disrupts the normal *waw*-consecutive narrative formulation that governs Judg 2:1–23 and thereby points to the structural significance of 3:1–6. Although it was undoubtedly composed in relation to 2:6–23, Judg 3:1–6 is syntactically distinguished in the present form of the text from what proceeds. Furthermore, the *waw*-consecutive formulation of Judg 3:7, *wayyaʿăśû bənê-yiśrā'ēl 'et-hāraʿ bəʿênê yhwh*, "and the children of Israel did what was evil in the eyes of YHWH," establishes a syntactical relationship between Judg 3:1–6 and 3:7–16:31 that has implications for establishing the structure of the book as a whole. Not only does Judg 3:1–6 identify the nations that YHWH leaves in the land; it states that the people of Israel intermarry with them and serve their gods. This premise introduces the individual judges narratives, which address precisely this issue in their portrayal of the dissolution of Israel.

Many note the Deuteronomic injunction against marriages with the Canaanite nations in Judg 3:1–6,[13] but few note that the presentation of the judges in 3:7–16:31 culminates in the story of Samson, who intermarries with the Philistines and as a result enables the Philistines to displace the tribe of Dan from its tribal inheritance. The judges narrative hints at this issue prior to Samson. Abimelech is the son of Gideon by a concubine from the city of Shechem, where a deity with a Canaanite name, Baal-Berith, is worshiped. Jephthah is the son of Gilead and a harlot of uncertain Israelite status, and his decision to sacrifice the first person to meet him after defeating the Ammonites certainly smacks of Canaanite or Moabite practice. Although the marriages of Gideon and Gilead raise questions, Samson is the first judge who unambiguously marries a woman from the nations mentioned in Judg 3:1–6.

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12. Boling, *Judges*, 78–79; Soggin, *Judges*, 40–44.
13. Boling, *Judges*, 78; Soggin, *Judges*, 225–59.

The theme of intermarriage coincides with the gradual deterioration of the tribes in Judg 3:7–16:31. The structure of this section is determined by the various manifestations of the formula *wayyaʿăśû bənê-yiśrāʾēl ʾet-hāraʿ bəʿênê yhwh*, "and the children of Israel did evil in the eyes of YHWH," which introduces the narrative pertaining to each major judge. The Judean Othniel leads his people in a model defeat of an outside enemy, Cushan-Rishathaim, in Judg 3:7–11.[14] The Benjaminite Ehud is forced to use deception in Judg 3:12–30 to expel the Moabite ruler Eglon, who controlled Jericho for eighteen years.[15] Deborah, from the hill country of Ephraim, is able again to defeat Jabin of Hazor (cf. Josh 11) and his general Sisera in Judg 4–5. Nevertheless, she is unable to muster a unified Israel, and Sisera is killed by a Kenite woman, Jael, again by deception. Gideon defeats the Ammonites in Judg 6–8, but he must fend off an attempt by Ephraim to take control of the action, which nearly results in civil war among the tribes. Furthermore, he displays Canaanite qualities, as indicated by his Canaanite name, Jerubbaal, and his building of an idolatrous ephod following his victory. His son Abimelech actually does plunge the country into civil war by his attempts to gain kingship over the tribes. Jephthah defeats the Ammonites, but is forced to war against Ephraim when the Ephraimites seek revenge for not being called to lead the war. Furthermore, Jephthah's vow to sacrifice the first person he sees if granted victory, his daughter, as it turns out, reflects practices ascribed to the Canaanites or Moabites in the Hebrew Bible. Finally, Samson's marriage to a Philistine woman leads to his demise and the displacement of the tribe of Dan. Throughout this section, judges from Benjamin and Ephraim are portrayed as less than effective leaders, and the tribe of Ephraim is directly responsible for attempted or actual civil war among the people. Likewise, the people are portrayed as increasingly Canaanized throughout. Again, this portrayal serves Judean/Davidic interests; the Judean Othniel is a model judge; the northerners are incompetent, vindictive, and increasingly compromised by the presence of Canaanites in the land.

This, of course, points not only to a relationship between Judg 3:1–6 and 3:7–16:31, on the one hand, but to a relationship between Judg 3:7–16:31 and the so-called appendixes in Judg 17–21. As noted above, Judg

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14. Cf. O'Connell, *Rhetoric of the Book*, 81–84, esp. 83 nn. 34 and 35. He notes the ideal portrayal of Othniel as a deliverer who lacks any fault.

15. On the use of deception in the Ehud narrative, see O'Connell, *Rhetoric of the Book*, 91–92.

17–21 is held together by its common use of the formula, "there was no king in Israel, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes." But as the preceding discussion demonstrates, Samson's intermarriage with a Philistine woman and his consequent capture by the Philistines leads to the displacement of the tribe of Dan that appears in Judg 18. This calls for reconsideration of the structural relationship between Judg 17–21 and the preceding material. Several factors are relevant. First is the syntactical formulation of Judg 17:1, *wayəhî-ʾîš mēhar ʾeprāyîm ûšəmô mîkāyəhû*, "and there was a man from the hill country of Ephraim and his name was Micaiah." This narrative does not begin with the characteristic formulation at the beginning of the individual judge's narrative, "and the people of Israel did what was evil in the eyes of YHWH," but the *waw*-consecutive formulation, which, together with the later treatment of the displaced tribe of Dan, establishes continuity with the preceding judges' narratives.

Second, the internal structure of Judg 17–21 must be reevaluated. Most scholars employ thematic grounds to divide the narrative into two parts: the narrative concerning the establishment of the sanctuary at Dan in Judg 17–18 and the narrative concerning the war with Benjamin in Judg 19–21.[16] But the syntactical and formulaic indicators in the narrative point to a different understanding. The syntactically independent formula *bayyāmîm hāhēm ʾên melek bəyiśrāʾēl*, "in those days there was no king in Israel," appears only in Judg 17:6 and 18:1. The formulation *bayyāmîm hāhēm* has been recognized elsewhere as the introduction to a discrete structural literary unit;[17] in the present case, it introduces Judg 17:6–13, which relates Micaiah's appointment of a Levitical priest in his house, and Judg 18:1–31, which relates the Danites' establishment of Micaiah's priest in an idolatrous sanctuary at Dan. The narrative in Judg 19–21 concerning the war with Benjamin then follows, but the *waw*-consecutive formulation of its introductory statement, *bayyāmîm hāhēm ʾên melek bəyiśrāʾēl*, "and it came to pass in those days that there was no king in Israel," establishes a relationship with the preceding narrative in Judg 18 concerning the foundation of an idolatrous sanctuary at Dan. The significance of this structural relationship must not be missed. Both

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16. So Noth, "Background of Judges," 68–71.

17. Cf. Simon J. De Vries, *From Old Revelation to New: A Tradition-Historical and Redaction-Critical Study of Temporal Transitions in Prophetic Prediction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 64–74.

Judg 19–21 and Judg 18 present situations in which a Levite is somehow compromised by northern tribes who act in a non-YHWHistic fashion; the Levite in Judg 18 becomes the priest of an idolatrous sanctuary, and the concubine of the Levite in Judg 19–21 is raped and murdered.[18] In the latter case, the rape of the Levite's concubine leads to internal war, the near destruction of Benjamin by the other Israelite tribes, and a marriage ritual for Benjamin that smacks of Canaanite fertility rites and borders on rape.

The structure of Judg 17–21 thereby establishes the following sequence: Judg 17:1–5 introduces the entire narrative by relating how Micaiah, a man from the hill country of Ephraim, creates an idol from silver that he stole from his mother; Judg 17:6–13 relates how he acquires the services of a Levitical priest from Bethlehem; Judg 18:1–21:25 relates first that the priest is taken to Dan, where he presides over an idolatrous sanctuary, and second that the Benjaminites are nearly destroyed for their abuse of another Levite's concubine (from Bethlehem) and reduced to a questionable status among the tribes of Israel in that they cannot properly contract marriages with other tribes. Yairah Amit has already identified a hidden polemic against Bethel in Judg 17–18, identified by references to the "hill country of Ephraim," "the house of G-d," "the molten/graven image," the association with Dan, and so on.[19] It should also be noted that in Judg 19–21 the tribes initially gathered at Mizpah to demand that Benjamin turn over the culprits, but it was only after they gathered at Bethel that they decided to destroy Benjamin. Furthermore, although the rite by which the men of Benjamin acquire their wives is situated at Shiloh, the narrative takes pains to place Shiloh in the vicinity of Bethel. Overall, a very clear polemic against Bethel (and Ephraim) appears to be hidden within Judg 17–21, together with the more overt polemics against Dan and Benjamin. As in Judg 2:1–5, Bethel is the source of misfortune for Israel: the idolatry of Dan and the corruption and near destruction of Benjamin. These narratives provide the structural capstone to Judg 3:7–16:31 by pointing to the ultimate consequences of Israel's intermarriage with the nations that were not driven out of the land.

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18. Cf. Gale A. Yee, "Ideological Criticism: Judges 17–21 and the Dismembered Body," in *Judges and Method*, 146–70, esp. 158–67. She argues that Judg 17–18 points to cultic chaos in Israel and Judg 19–21 points to social chaos.

19. Amit, "Hidden Polemic."

3.

The preceding discussion demonstrates that the Davidic polemic in the book of Judges cannot be read in relation to the standard three-part structural scheme in that it is based on redaction-critical criteria and results in a fragmented reading of the book. Attention to the literary signals evident in the present form of Judges points to a two-part structure that enables the reader to recognize more fully the interrelationship of both the book's component parts and the elements of a Davidic/Judean polemic against the northern tribes. The entire narrative comprises a historical account of the degeneration of Israel in the premonarchic period. Judges 1–2 constitutes the introduction to the entire work that lays out the background to the problem in reference to the period of Joshua, that is, Israel failed to expel the Canaanites from the land and the continued presence of the Canaanites became the basic cause of Israel's deterioration in the premonarchic period. Judges 1 describes the failed attempts to expel the Canaanites, and Judg 2 provides an overview of the issue from the period of Joshua to the time of the Judges as a means to articulate the seriousness of this problem and its consequences. Whereas Judah expels Canaanites from its allotment and aids other tribes in this endeavor, the northern tribes are unable to do so without deceit. Judges 3–21 constitutes the body of the work that provides an account of the deterioration and increasing Canaanization of the tribes of Israel. Judges 3:1–6 outlines the basic problem of Israel's intermarriage with the Canaanite nations that remained in the land and their apostasy in following foreign gods. Judges 3:7–16:31 provides the accounts of the individual judges, which outlines the mounting problems of ineffective leadership and Israelite identity and behavior within the tribes to the point of Samson's intermarriage with a Philistine woman and his resulting defeat by the Philistines. Judges 17–21 describes the consequences of this situation; an idolatrous sanctuary is established at Dan, the men of Gibeah in Benjamin rape and murder the Levite's concubine and are nearly destroyed by the other tribes when they refuse to turn over the culprits for justice, and the men of Benjamin are reduced to kidnapping their wives at Shiloh because the other tribes vow not to contract marriages with them. Throughout the narrative, the tribe of Ephraim and the sanctuary at Bethel are portrayed as culprits in the deterioration of Israel. Ephraim and Bethel are the source of tension and conflict among the tribes as Deborah is unable to unite the tribes against a common enemy, Abimelech plunges the country into civil war at Shechem in his quest for kingship,

Ephraim threatens war against Gideon and carries out the threat against Jephthah when each judge chooses not to give the tribe a leading role in war, Ephraim/Bethel is the source of the idolatrous sanctuary at Dan, and Bethel is the site where the tribes choose to attack Benjamin. Although the polemic against Benjamin is clear in Judges at several selected points in the narrative, the underlying polemic against Ephraim and Bethel permeates the entire book.

Overall, the polemic against Benjamin is limited in Judges and in relation to the Deuteronomistic History; it provides an introduction to the Saul and David traditions in 1–2 Samuel, but it does not extend through the entire Deuteronomistic History.[20] The polemic against Ephraim/Bethel, on the other hand, is pervasive in Judges, and it points to the role of Judges in relation to the Deuteronomistic History as a whole. Brettler has already pointed to the analogy between Judg 2:11–23, which outlines the pattern of apostasy and deliverance for Israel in the period of the judges, and 2 Kgs 17, which points to the same causes for the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians in the Deuteronomistic History.[21] Furthermore, the introductory formula for the account of each major judge, "and the people of Israel did evil in the eyes of YHWH," is analogous to the formula employed by the Deuteronomistic History to characterize the reigns of the northern Israelite monarchs, and the wicked Judean monarchs, throughout the books of Kings.[22] But most importantly, Judges points to the role that Ephraim and Bethel play in the Canaanization of Israel. As a result of Israel's failure to expel the Canaanites, Ephraim becomes a particularly problematic tribe in its attempts to dominate the others, and Bethel becomes a source of idolatry and dissension among the tribes. By identifying Ephraim and Bethel as the source for much of Israel's problems in the period of the Judges, the book of Judges lays the groundwork for the role that Ephraim and Bethel will play in the later history of

20. Cf. O'Connell, *Rhetoric of the Book*, esp. 305–44. He employs these motifs as part of an argument to place the composition of Judges in relation to the situation posited in 2 Sam 1–4, which attempts to justify King David's accession to the throne over against the inadequate Saul.

21. Brettler, "Judg. 1,1–2,10," 417. Cf. Frederick E. Greenspahn, "The Theology of the Framework of Judges," *VT* 36 (1986): 385–96, whom Brettler cites at this point. For Brettler's treatment of 2 Kgs 17, see Marc Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London: Routledge, 1995), 112–34, 208–17.

22. Cf. O'Connell, *Rhetoric of the Book*, 19–57, who examines the Deuteronomistic elements of these formulae.

the people of Israel. The polemic against Ephraim and Bethel in the book of Judges thereby serves the interests of the tribe of Judah and the house of David in the Deuteronomistic History, in that it portrays the core tribe and sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom as causes for the dissolution of the Deuteronomic ideal in the Deuteronomistic History. By contrast, Judah is portrayed in ideal terms and emerges as the tribe best able to achieve the Deuteronomic ideal for Israel.

Appendix: The Book of Judges, Structure Outline

Narrative Presentation of Israel's Degeneration/Canaanization in the Premonarchic Period (Judg 1–21)

Rethinking Samuel

1.

Most scholars agree that the book of Samuel presents an account of the origins of kingship—and especially the royal of house of David—in ancient Israel and Judah, whether they judge that account to be largely historical or largely literary.[1] It is difficult to disagree, prima facie, with such an

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1. For current scholarship on Samuel, see especially Walter Dietrich and Thomas Naumann, *Die Samuelbücher*, EdF 287 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995); A. Graeme Auld, *1 and 2 Samuel: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011); Walter Dietrich, *Samuel*, BKAT 8.1–3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011–2019); David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Antony F. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, FOTL 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Campbell, *2 Samuel*, FOTL 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *1 Samuel*, AB 8 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980); McCarter, *2 Samuel*, AB 9 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984); Jan P. Fokkelman, *King David (2 Sam. 9–20 and 1 Kgs 1–2)*, vol. 1 of *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981); Fokkelman, *The Crossing Fates (1 Sam. 13–31 and 2 Sam. 1)*, vol. 2 of *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Book of Samuel* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1986); Fokkelman, *Throne and City (2 Sam. 2–8 and 21–24)*, vol. 3 of *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990); Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire*, vol. 4 of *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993); Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*; Robert Polzin, *1 Samuel*, part 2 of *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Polzin, *2 Samuel*, part 3 of *Samuel and the Deuteronomist* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); McKenzie, *King David: A Bibliography*; Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*; Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 93–124; Sweeney, *Tanak*, 207–33; Sweeney, "Eli, a High Priest," repr. as ch. 22 in this volume; Serge Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle: 1 Samuel 1–8 in Synchronic and Diachronic Perspective*, BZAW 342 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004); April D. Westbrook, *And He Will Take Your Daughters … Woman Story and the Ethical Evaluation of Monarchy in the David Narrative*, LHBOTS

assessment. But the book of Samuel is an example of ancient Israelite—
or better, Judean—historiography, and whether it is historical or not, the
interpreter must press the question, What purpose does the portrayal of
the origins of kingship and the royal house of David serve? Is it simply a
matter of explaining these issues so that the reader knows how kingship
and the house of David originated? Or is there a deeper agenda evident in
the book?

Interpreters have noted the seriously flawed character of Saul ben
Kish, the first king of Israel. His flawed character is an essential element
that leads to the emergence of the house of David as the ruling dynasty of
Israel and Judah.[2] When readers turn to David, however, they first see a
rising star who can do no wrong in 1 Sam 16–2 Sam 8, even as rivals and
opponents conveniently drop dead around him, and everyone, including
Saul's children Jonathan and Michal, loves him.[3] But then, in 2 Sam 9–24
and 1 Kgs 1–2, readers see a very different David, a lousy father who fails
properly to discipline his sons, which leads to utter chaos in the house of
David and the destruction of the Hebron-based branch of the royal house
as a Jerusalem-based branch, based on Solomon, emerges to define the
future of the dynasty.

Interpreters are compelled to ask, Why are two such different views
of David presented in the same book of Samuel? A recent study by Moshe
Halbertal and Stephen Holmes argues that the book of Samuel is fun-
damentally concerned with the exercise of power. How does the proper
exercise of power, including violence, advance political ambition? How
does the corrosive grip on power undermine those who exercise it?[4]
Indeed, such an argument points to a previously unrecognized dimension
of the book of Samuel, namely, Samuel presents the origins of the Israelite

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610 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011); Mark Leuchter, *Samuel and the Shaping
of Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Jacob L. Wright, *David, King of
Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014);
Barbara Green, *David's Capacity for Compassion: A Literary-Hermeneutical Study of
1 and 2 Samuel*, LHBOTS 641 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017).

2. E.g., Barbara Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen? A Dialogical Study of King Saul
in 1 Samuel*, JSOTSup 365 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003).

3. Grønbaek, *Die Geschichte des Aufstieg Davids*.

4. Moshe Halbertal and Stephen Holmes, *The Beginning of Politics: Power in the
Biblical Book of Samuel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); see also Robyn
Holtmyer Taylor, "*Ha Nāgîd*: A Machiavellian Reading of King David in the Deuter-
onomistic History," *RevExp* 112 (2015): 451–60.

monarchy and the house of David in order to train readers in the exercise of power. What qualities must a leader possess or develop to exercise power effectively and to achieve the leader's goals? And what flaws must a leader recognize and overcome in order to avoid obstacles and even death in the attainment and exercise of power?

Such an agenda enables interpreters to recognize Samuel as a form of didactic or wisdom literature, somewhat along the lines that R. Norman Whybray proposed for the so-called Succession Narrative some fifty years ago.[5] Samuel has a certain affinity with works of world literature, such as the ancient Egyptian Instruction of Ptah-Hotep, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, and others, that have been influential in training readers in the proper exercise of power and leadership in their respective times and cultures.[6]

Examination of three major narratives in the book of Samuel demonstrates this agenda. The presentation of Saul in 1 Sam 8–15 presents a figure, allegedly chosen by G-d, who ultimately fails in his role as king by his inability to instill confidence in him on the part of his subjects, his autocratic disdain for the fundamental divisions of power in Israelite governance, and his failure as a military commander to defend his people against the Philistines. The initial presentation of David in 1 Sam 16–2 Sam 8 presents a figure who understands the need and value of building political relationships, particularly through political marriages; the need to eliminate enemies without taking the blame for their deaths; and the importance of instilling his subjects with the confidence that he is YHWH's chosen monarch, who will ensure the welfare and future of the nation. The presentation of David in 2 Sam 9–24 (and 1 Kgs 1–2) presents David as a failed father who does not properly discipline his sons or train them for future roles as leaders. Such lapses on David's part ensure chaos in the royal house that nearly results in his overthrow by his own disaffected son. Ultimately, David's failure as a father leads to the destruction of his Hebron-based family and the emergence of a Jerusalem-based branch that defines the future of the royal house.

5. Whybray, *Succession Narrative*.

6. *ANET*, 412–14; Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Sun Tzu, *Art of War*, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

2.

Scholars are familiar with the redaction-critical model developed by Noth and others for the study of 1 Sam 8–12, understood to present the Deuteronomistic view concerning the origins of Israelite kingship.[7] The model recognizes two positive narratives concerning Saul, that is, 1 Sam 9:1–10:16, which presents a fairy-tale model of Saul's divine selection as king while searching for his father's lost asses, and 1 Sam 11, which presents Saul as the hero who saves Jabesh-Gilead, both of which appear to be set and circulated during Saul's reign. But these positive narratives concerning Saul are placed in a redactional framework that is quite critical of Israelite kingship in general and Saul in particular. It includes the introductory narrative in 1 Sam 8, in which the people demand a king like other nations, but YHWH has to convince Samuel that the people have not rejected Samuel. Instead, they have rejected YHWH, which stands as a critique of kingship in principle. In 1 Sam 10:17–27 Saul is selected as king by lot but fails to show leadership potential by hiding in the baggage rather than coming forward to accept his nomination. And 1 Sam 12 presents Samuel's farewell speech, in which he enjoins the people to observe YHWH's commandments in true Deuteronomistic History fashion, even though readers know that they will not. The redactional reformulation of the earlier positive narratives concerning Saul's selection as king turns them into a critique of kingship in principle and a critique of Saul as king of Israel.

But interpreters must recognize that the hypothesis of a critique of kingship does not exhaust the interpretative possibilities of this narrative. There is an underlying theological issue, namely, did YHWH make a mistake in selecting Saul as king? The portrayal of Saul in 1 Sam 10:17–27 indicates that Saul is a poor choice at the very outset. Saul's act of hiding in the baggage at the time that he is selected to be Israel's first king is designed to demonstrate that he is not properly qualified for the role in that he is unable to instill confidence in his rule among his subjects. What kind of a leader fails to step forward when the moment of greatest need becomes evident? And if the reader somehow overlooks the point, the narrative in 1 Sam 10:27 shows dissension among the people when two sons of Belial,

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7. See Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 47–53; Hans Jochen Boecker, *Die Beurteilung der Anfänge des Königstums in den deuteronomistischen Abschnitte des 1. Samuelbuches*, WMANT 31 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969).

that is, two allegedly worthless men, ask, "How will this one deliver us?" They despise Saul and did not bring him a gift offering, but Saul remains silent in reaction to this apparent insult. One might posit that Saul answers their question when he saves Jabesh-Gilead in the following narrative in 1 Sam 11. But King Nahash of the Ammonites appears to be a relatively minor figure who is neither very smart nor well-organized, enabling Saul to defeat him with relatively little effort. Nevertheless, 1 Sam 10:17–27 demonstrates a problem in Saul's ability to convince his subjects that he is a worthy king.

Although 1 Sam 8–12 raises the question of Saul's competence as a leader, most interpreters continue to see the character of kingship in general as the primary issue addressed by these chapters. There is good reason for such a view, as the following chapters on Saul's exercise of kingship in 1 Sam 13–14 and 1 Sam 15 show. In both narratives, Saul disobeys YHWH's instructions through the priest and prophet Samuel. In the account of Saul's battle against the Philistines at Michmas in 1 Sam 13–14, Saul ignores Samuel's orders to delay action until Samuel is able to arrive and perform the sacred offerings necessary for success in holy war. When Samuel fails to show up in a timely manner, Saul disobeys Samuel and makes the offerings himself, leading to Samuel's condemnation of Saul and the judgment that his dynasty will not last forever as YHWH will choose someone else to be king. Likewise, in the account of Saul's action against King Agag of the Amalekites in the wilderness of Shur in 1 Sam 15, Saul again disobeys Samuel's orders and leaves Agag and the Amalekite flocks alive. When Samuel arrives on the scene, he reprimands Saul, declaring that YHWH has rejected Saul as king for his rejection of YHWH's word, and kills Agag before departing for home.

Saul's disobedience of YHWH's commands appears to be a primary concern in both 1 Sam 13–14 and 1 Sam 15, particularly because these narratives follow immediately on the account of Samuel's farewell speech in 1 Sam 12, in which Samuel enjoins the people to observe YHWH's expectations. Saul is obviously a disobedient monarch as portrayed in these narratives. But there is more to the issue than simple obedience. Both narratives illustrate problems with Saul beyond pure obedience that demonstrate his inability to serve effectively as king of Israel.

The account of Saul's battle against the Philistines at Michmas illustrates two major problems, namely, Saul's refusal to accept the fundamental structure and roles of ancient Israelite leadership in his time and his incompetence and lack of initiative as a military commander. In the first

instance, Saul's refusal to recognize the structure and division of power in Israel becomes evident when he oversteps his bounds and acts as a priest in offering sacrifice prior to the battle. The narrative reports that as Israel and Philistia gathered for battle near Michmas in the central Benjaminite hill country by Bethel, Saul starts the fight by having his son kill the Philistine prefect in Gibeah, Saul's capital, but he appears unprepared for the Philistine response. As the Philistine forces gather with thirty thousand (or just three thousand) chariots and six thousand horsemen, the Israelites begin to realize that they are outnumbered and begin to desert for fear of defeat. After seven days have passed and Samuel has still not shown up to make the offerings that will consecrate the army, Saul fears his men will all desert, and so he takes matters into his own hands by offering the sacrifices himself so that the battle might begin.

By doing so, Saul violated the principle of separation of power in Israelite government. Like many nations at the time, Israelite government was based on a bipolar structure of power, including the king, who dealt with administrative, military, and economic issues in the kingdom, and the priesthood, which dealt with sacred matters, such as worship, revenue collection, and the judiciary, thereby presumably ensuring the support of the deity. The monarch and the priesthood were interdependent in that the king supported the deity, the priesthood, and the temple, whereas the deity, the priesthood, and the temple authorized the monarchy, thereby providing a balance of power between the two major organs of government. Saul's move, even in an emergency, was unwarranted insofar as it concentrated too much power into his own hands and thereby threatened a fundamental principle of stable government in the ancient world, not to mention his disregard for the holiness of YHWH and YHWH's priests. Of course, Samuel arrived at just the right moment to condemn Saul for his autocratic seizure of power.

The second issue raised in 1 Sam 13–14 is Saul's competence as a military commander.[8] Unlike Nahash and the Ammonites, the Philistines are not a pushover. As a coalition of five cities that are deliberately allied to work together in battle and in other endeavors, they are numerous, powerful, and well-organized, and they already possess the strategic advantage insofar as they had appointed a prefect in Gibeah, Saul's capital, to oversee Israel and keep it under control. As noted, Saul started the revolt by

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8. See esp. McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 224–57, who provides maps as well as discussion.

having his son Jonathan assassinate the prefect as the opening move in an Israelite revolt against Philistia. Saul moved his six-hundred-man army up from Gilgal to Gibeah, but he remained there to wait for a Philistine attack. Insofar as Saul is seriously outnumbered and out-armed by Philistia's thirty thousand—or more likely three thousand—chariots and six thousand horsemen, even if the numbers are exaggerated, this is not a particularly sound move.[9] As the smaller force in the hill country of Israel, Saul is better advised to launch guerrilla attacks against the Philistines to overcome them by undermining their morale with countless surprise attacks that raise the body count. But Saul waits as three Philistine columns march out from Michmas to attack him. Perhaps he had planned an ambush, but the likelihood of a head-on confrontation between his outnumbered and ill-equipped men against three separate Philistine columns is unlikely. It is left to Jonathan to take the initiative as he and his armor bearer come out of hiding, let the Philistines see them, and then launch their own two-man attack, killing some twenty Philistines and striking fear among the Philistine soldiers.

After delaying for some time, Saul finally observes the confusion in the Philistine camp and orders an attack that will eventually win the day for Israel. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that this was Saul's plan coordinated with Jonathan; rather, Jonathan acted on his own initiative and enabled his father to win a victory. But Saul makes the further mistake of impetuously announcing that anyone who tastes food before the victory is won will face execution. When it is pointed out to him that Jonathan had done so, Saul orders Jonathan's execution, a move that would punish the very man who gave him the victory and the heir to his own throne! But the men of Israel defend Jonathan as the man who had won the victory for Israel and thereby save his life. With a monarch like Saul, who needs enemies?

Finally, the account of Saul's failure to kill King Agag of the Amalekites in 1 Sam 15 does indeed appear to be a matter of Saul's inability to follow YHWH's instructions. Amalek is the people who treacherously attempted to destroy Israel in the wilderness trek from Egypt to Canaan in Exod 17:8–16 by attacking from behind, and they are cursed for their treachery insofar as they are an unrelenting enemy that must be destroyed

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9. For discussion of the numbers in Saul's army, see Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 338–39.

to protect Israel. As noted, Saul fails to follow orders, and Samuel condemns him for this failure. But this is not the only issue in the narrative. Samuel confronts Saul, and Saul insists that he did fulfill the command even though it is evident that he did not. Once condemned, Saul demands the chance to be pardoned by YHWH and further demands that Samuel accompany him before the people as he futilely attempts to do so. Once Samuel and Saul have parted ways following this incident, it is clear in 1 Sam 16:2 that Samuel fears that Saul will kill him. Such a threat by Saul indicates a potentially murderous character as once again he displays his willful disregard of Samuel as priest and even lies about his fulfillment of YHWH's commands.

As these examples show, Saul's actions raise questions about his competence as a monarch, his respect for the division of power in ancient Israel, his integrity, and ultimately his capacity to serve as Israel's king. The lesson to be learned here is that a monarch who acts in this fashion will fail to inspire confidence in his subjects, such as David of Judah, who will ultimately refuse to submit to Saul's rule and eventually go over to the Philistine side. In the end, Saul demonstrates to readers how not to exercise royal power.

3.

The narrative account of David's rise to kingship in 1 Sam 16–2 Sam 8 is generally viewed as a discrete literary layer with its own compositional history within the book of Samuel by diachronically oriented scholars, although it also functions as an element in synchronic readings of the book.[10] It presents David as the rising monarch of Israel, chosen by YHWH, who enjoys YHWH's favor as he does no wrong in his rise to the throne of Israel even as enemies fall all around him. Although there is still fertile ground for diachronic scholarship, a synchronic, literary reading of this narratives demonstrates that there is much to learn from David's example on how to acquire and wield political power on the part of a minor tribal leader surrounded by larger and more powerful enemies. Key issues in David's rise to power include the need to project an image of divine favor, personal integrity, and military and administrative competence; the need to build alliances, often through political marriages, that provides a pro-

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10. Grønbaek, *Die Geschichte des Aufstieg Davids*.

spective leader with the allies necessary to overcome more powerful rivals; and the need to play off one's allies and rivals against each other and even kill them when necessary without taking the blame for having done so.

The ability to project an ideal image of divine favor, personal integrity, military and administrative competence, and diplomatic and sexual attractiveness is evident at the outset of the narrative concerning David's rise to power. The narrative begins in 1 Sam 16:1–13 with an account of Samuel's journey to Bethlehem, apparently clandestine due to his fear of retaliation from an increasingly dangerous Saul, to choose a new king to replace Saul on the throne. In Bethlehem, Jesse's first seven sons appear before Samuel as YHWH rejects every one. When Samuel asks whether there are any more, David, the youngest of Jesse's sons, appears before the prophet, and YHWH declares that he is the one. The element of divine choice is therefore obvious from the outset, but other elements of David's characterization indicate that other factors also come into play. One is David's status as the youngest son of Jesse, which plays into a common motif in Israelite literature that the younger or the lesser will overcome the older or the greater, illustrated by Jacob's dominance over his older fraternal twin brother, Esau, and Israel's dominance over the earlier Canaanite society that had inhabited the land of Israel prior to Israel's arrival.[11] But David is also portrayed as a young shepherd boy, armed with a sling that he uses to protect his flock from lions and other wild beasts that might threaten them. The image of the shepherd is a common motif for portraying a monarch in ancient Near Eastern and biblical literature and art insofar as the shepherd is the one who organizes, feeds, and protects his flock much as a king organizes, feeds, and protects his subjects.[12] Although modern Americans—and perhaps Canadians—might view David's sling as a child's toy wielded by the likes of Dennis the Menace or Bart Simpson, the sling was a lethal weapon of war that appears in Assyrian battle reliefs, such as the depiction of the siege of Lachish in Sennacherib's palace and even in the narrative of David's defeat of the Philistine giant, Goliath.[13]

Other images in the narratives concerning David's rise to kingship portray David's qualities as a king. Whereas Saul appears to suffer from a severe manic-depressive personality disorder in 1 Sam 16:14–23, David's

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11. Frederick E. Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together: The Preeminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

12. *ANEP*, 182, 184.

13. *ANEP*, 372, 373.

skill as a musician enables him to relieve Saul's depression. David is single-handedly able to defeat the Philistine giant, Goliath, with his sling in 1 Sam 17:1–58, in contrast with Saul, the king of Israel, his own brothers, and all the men of Israel, who were too afraid to go out and confront the Philistine. The propagandistic character of this achievement become more apparent when readers note 2 Sam 21:19, which states that Elhanan ben Jaareoregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite, sparking speculation that David changed his name or that he took credit for the deed of one of his own warriors.[14] The portrayal of the love of Saul's own children for David, particularly Jonathan, Saul's presumed heir, and Michal, Saul's younger daughter, is noteworthy, especially because both had much to lose if David were ever to supplant their father on the throne. The chants of the women, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," in 1 Sam 18:7 and 21:12 point to his rising popularity over that of Saul. The portrayal of David's refusal to kill Saul, even as Saul pursued David, in the cave at Ein Gedi in 1 Sam 24 and in the wilderness of Ziph in 1 Sam 26 testifies to David's loyalty and exemplary character in relation to the king. David's public and loud mourning over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sam 1 following the Philistine defeat of Israel at Mount Gilboa in 1 Sam 31 points to a keen interest in portraying David's attractive profile. His decision in 2 Sam 6 to locate his capital in Jerusalem, on the border between the northern tribes of Israel and his own southern tribe of Judah, to assuage any jealousy between the two parts of his kingdom points his administrative and political acumen over the two political units that had fought each other during his initial reign over Judah alone. Finally, YHWH's promise in 2 Sam 7 of an eternal dynasty announced by the prophet Nathan once again points to the motif of divine favor and chosenness.[15] There is little doubt among scholars that these propagandistic portrayals came from the house of David to present him as the ideal, future king of Israel.

But interpreters must also consider David's brilliant ability to forge alliances, even when his prospective allies have been or will become his enemies. Tribal leadership and dynastic kingship in the ancient world were generally based in family relationships, and political alliances in

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14. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 177; McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 291.

15. See esp. Donald F. Murray, *Divine Prerogative and Royal Pretension: Pragmatics, Poetics and Polemics in a Narrative Sequence about David (2 Samuel 5.17–7.29)*, JSOTSup 264 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998).

that world generally entailed a marriage between the two families.[16] Saul's father, Kish, appears to be a prominent man in Benjamin, and David's father, Jesse, appears to be a prominent man in Bethlehem. Following David's killing of the Philistine giant, Goliath, Saul's son Jonathan takes him into his service, and Saul places David in command his soldiers, moves that meet with great approval. David's request of Saul to marry his daughter Meirav, an honor promised to the man who would kill Goliath in 1 Sam 17:25 (and also in 1 Sam 18:17), must be understood in its political context, namely, David would then become a member of the house of Saul, and David's family in Bethlehem would also have a connection to the royal family in alliance with Saul. Such a move demonstrates political ambition on David's behalf, which Saul recognizes and legitimately mistrusts given David's growing reputation. Although Saul first reneges on his promise, he finally accedes on the condition that David pay a bride price of one hundred Philistine foreskins—knowing full well that the Philistines will not give them up very easily. He assumes that David will be killed, but when David produces two hundred Philistine foreskins, his popularity rises even more.

When Saul marries Meirav to another man, Adriel the Meholathite, David persists, and Saul gives him his younger daughter, Michal, who loves David, thinking that she might somehow become a snare for David against the Philistines. When Saul continues in his attempts to kill David, David flees and during his attempts to escape Saul's pursuit marries Abigail, the widow of Nabal the Calebite of Maon in Judah. This is a key marriage for David in that he is now married into the Calebite family, which served as the ruling family of the tribe of Judah and eventually enabled him to become king of Judah. Other marriages include Ahinoam of Jezreel, perhaps the widow of Saul, but this is uncertain. Her domicile in Jezreel provides David with family allies along the northern border of the Israelite hill country and along the southern borders of the Galil, a key strategic position for controlling northern Israel. David's marriage to Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur, an Aramaean kingdom located along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, gives David an ally who will further secure his power over the Galil and also give him reach

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16. For the political importance of David's marriages, see esp. Jon D. Levenson and Baruch Halpern, "The Political Import of David's Marriages," *JBL* 99 (1980): 507–18.

into the Transjordanian region of the Golan, which enables David to control the other half of Manasseh as well as Gad.

Other wives included Haggith, Abital, and Eglah, whose pedigrees are not made known, but each would have given David a key ally that would have extended his influence and given him support in ruling the kingdom and fending off revolt. His marriage to Bath-Sheba, daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah the Hittite, raises questions concerning David's character due to his adultery with her and his role in her husband's murder. But his marriage to Bath-Sheba, from Jerusalem, gives him a family connection to the new capital that facilitates his control over the city. Other alliances include Hanun ben Nahash of Ammon, the son of one of Saul's key foes, which enables David to control the southern Transjordan, and Achish ben Maoch of Gath, who gave him protection from Saul. When Achish gives him Ziklag to rule, David is able to use his position to deceive the Philistines and to build a constituency in Judah that aids him in his rise to kingship over Judah. Finally, David's ability to forge alliances with Abner, the disaffected military commander under Saul and later Saul's son Ish-Bosheth, and the city of Gibeon, once one of Saul's allies, enable David to rise to the throne of Israel as well following the deaths of Abner and Ish-Bosheth. David emerges in these narratives not simply as a lecherous skirt chaser but as a diplomatic genius.

Finally, interpreters must consider David's ability to eliminate his rivals—or at least to capitalize on their deaths by other causes. The first and most important rival is King Saul himself and his family. There is no evidence in Samuel that David had a hand in Saul's death, although it is very clear that David would benefit from his father-in-law's demise. At the same time, he is not a particularly good son-in-law. Although the narratives indicate that Saul wanted to kill him, interpreters do not and will not know whether that was actually Saul's intent or whether it is the product of Davidic propaganda. It is clear, however, that David does not submit to Saul and that David's star is rising while Saul's is in decline. It is also clear that David's refusal to submit to Saul weakens Saul and Israel and leaves them vulnerable to the Philistines. Nevertheless, Saul's death—and those of Jonathan and Saul's other sons—opens the door for David to assume kingship. Furthermore, David systematically eliminates most of the other members of the house of Saul. He hands over the seven sons and grandsons of Saul as part of his deal to ally with Gibeon, which as a former ally of the house of Saul also prepares his way to assume kingship in Israel. He refuses to have marital relations with his wife Michal bat Saul, which

ensures that no Saulide blood will enter his own family line.[17] He goes to war against Ish-Bosheth, aka Eshbaal, the son and successor of Saul on the throne of Israel. Ish-Bosheth is assassinated by two Gibeonite army officers. Although there is no clear evidence of David's hand in the matter, David's defeat of Israel at Gibeon and the shift in Gibeon's alliance would have signaled a change in the power dynamics of the region that would have impelled the Gibeonites to carry out the assassination even if David was not directly involved.[18]

David's alliance with King Achish of Gath and the Philistines in general also demands consideration. David joined the Philistines to escape from Saul and was a Philistine ally when they defeated Israel at Mount Gilboa, where Saul committed suicide. The narrative clears David's name, but his alliance with Philistia gives him the cover he needs to build a constituency in Judah, to assume the throne in Judah as a vassal of Philistia, and ultimately to become king of Israel, again as a Philistine vassal. It is only when David takes Jerusalem as king of both Israel and Judah that David has the power base that enables him to turn the tables on the Philistines, defeat them twice, and force them to become his vassals.

Overall, the account of David's rise to power presents to readers a brilliant political strategist and operator, who maneuvers with and against his various rivals, opponents, and allies to become the major power figure in the land of Israel and beyond.

4.

Finally, there is the account of David's failures as a father and as a king in 2 Sam 9–24, which presents a narrative about how a king might lose his power by neglecting his responsibilities as both.[19] The account begins with a show of David's fidelity to his late brother-in-law Jonathan ben

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17. For discussion of Michal, see the essays in David J. A. Clines and Tamara C. Eskenazi, eds., *Telling Queen Michal's Story: An Experiment in Comparative Interpretation*, JSOTSup 119 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991).

18. For discussion of the political significance of David's victory at Gibeon, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Gibeon and Israel: The Role of Gibeon and the Gibeonites in the Political and Religious History of Early Israel*, SOTSMS 2 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 84–97.

19. Leonhard Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David* (Sheffield: Almond, 1982); Gillean Keys, *The Wages of Sin: A Reappraisal of the Succession Narrative*, JSOTSup 221 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996).

Saul, insofar as David looked after Jonathan's son Mephibosheth, aka Meribaal, by letting him eat at the king's table. In fact, this is a means for David to keep an eye on the heir to the house of Saul, which points to an advisable strategy. But immediately following is the account in 2 Sam 10–12 of David's adultery with Bath-Sheba and his role in the murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite, followed ultimately by the birth of their son, Solomon, ultimately the heir to David's throne. David repents for his wrongdoing, but nevertheless, the narrative presents the subsequent chaos in the royal house as a consequence of David's poor showing as a role model for his sons and his refusal to discipline them even when they commit the most heinous crimes. In the end, his Hebron-based house is destroyed and replaced by the Jerusalem-based maternal line of Bath-Sheba and her son, Solomon. Altogether, the narrative portrays David's negligence of his responsibilities as both king and father as a near-fatal factor in the future of his family and monarchy.

The account of David's adultery with Bath-Sheba and murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite, is frequently misunderstood. Many interpreters contend that Bath-Sheba was out to seduce David by bathing on the rooftop of her house, where David could see her. But David was an aging warrior and monarch who had been compelled to remain home while his army went out to war against the Ammonites. Apparently feeling the need to make his own conquest, he sees Bath-Sheba, sends for her, impregnates her, and then murders her husband in an attempt to cover up his crime. In assessing Bath-Sheba's actions, one must consider where a woman would bathe in the crowded urban environment of ancient Jerusalem. Ancient Judean city houses were frequently two-storied structures in which animals, supplies, cooking areas, and so on were placed on the ground floor, whereas the family, generally including many children and perhaps others, lived on the second story.[20] The rooftop of the house was the place where one might find some privacy. But the city of David was built on a downward-sloping hill with the royal palace placed at the top of the hill, thereby giving a bored and lecherous monarch the opportunity to look out over his city to see what action it might provide. Bath-Sheba was in no position to refuse David's summons; he was the king. As for the murder of Uriah the Hittite, the narrative makes his loyalty to the king and his comrades very

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20. See Israel Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1988), 237–59.

clear as he declines David's suggestion to go home to his wife and instead sleeps on the doorstep of the palace before he carries David's message back to Rabbath Ammon, where Joab follows David's orders to ensure Uriah's death.[21] David's actions are a stunning display of betrayal, insofar as adultery is punishable by death in Deut 22:22 and because Uriah places his life on the line for his king only to be murdered by his king after he had taken his wife and impregnated her. David's actions are sure to prompt questions as to why any of his supporters should follow him.

The account of the rape of David's daughter, Tamar, by his oldest son and presumed heir, Amnon, follows immediately in 2 Sam 13, thereby suggesting that this crime results from David's own wrongdoing.[22] Amnon is the son of David's wife Ahinoam of Jezreel, who may or may not be the widow of Saul. Insofar as the account of the rape of the Levite's concubine and its consequences in Judg 19–21 is placed in Gibeah, Saul's capital, his possible connection to the house of Saul might account for his actions.[23] Nevertheless, the narrative is careful to identify David's nephew Jonadab ben Shimah as the so-called wise man who advised Amnon on how to carry out the rape by feigning illness to get her into his private quarters, where he could overpower and force her. Amnon's despicable character continues to show when he detests her and expels her from his room after the deed is done. Tamar is the daughter of David's wife Maacah, and her brother is Absalom, who provides her with a home for the rest of her life because she can no longer marry. But when David does absolutely nothing to punish Amnon or to care for Tamar, Absalom's anger grows, and the consequences for David's house are overwhelming. Absalom bides his time and ultimately murders Amnon at a sheep-shearing festival, forcing Absalom to flee to his maternal grandfather's home in Geshur, on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee.

The account of Absalom's revolt against David in 2 Sam 14–19 demonstrates clearly how David's failures as a father and a monarch nearly cost him his kingdom and his life. Despite the rape of his daughter, Tamar,

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21. For an insightful study of the characterization of Joab, David's military commander and hatchet man, see Sophia Katharina Bietenhard, *Des Königs General. Die Heerführertraditionen in der vorstaatlichen und frühen staatlichen Zeit und die Joabgestalt in 2 Sam 2–20; 1 Kön 1–2*, OBO 163 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

22. See esp. Westbrook, *He Will Take Your Daughters*, 143–65.

23. See Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 110–24.

and the murder of his son Amnon, David does absolutely nothing to discipline his son Abshalom and even pines away during the course of his
Abshalom's three-year absence from Jerusalem. Seeing the effect of Abshalom's absence, Joab concocts a plan to bring Abshalom back to Jerusalem
to soothe David's depression. Although David is relieved to have his son
home, Abshalom's anger against his father has grown pathological during
his three-year absence and the two-year period before he appears before
the king. Abshalom hates his father for what he failed to do in the matter
of Tamar and prepares a revolt to overthrow David and take control of the
kingdom. Indeed, Abshalom's revolt is facilitated by the fact that David has
neglected to see to the interests of the two major components of his kingdom, the northern tribes of Israel and the southern tribe of Judah, while
he remains isolated and philandering in Jerusalem. The revolt succeeds
initially as David is compelled to flee Jerusalem for the Transjordan, and
Abshalom takes control of the city and David's own harem. Nevertheless,
both David and Joab show their political and military acumen by leaving
Hushai the Archite to convince Abshalom to delay his pursuit of David.
The delay enables David and Joab to consolidate their forces and ultimately to defeat Abshalom's army in battle in the Transjordan. But David
continues in his refusal to discipline his son and gives orders that no one
should harm Abshalom. Joab, who fully understands the consequences of
leaving Abshalom alive, kills him anyway and even reprimands David for
mourning Abshalom before the very men who had fought and bled for
him. Joab's killing of Abshalom will ultimately cost Joab his own life when
David gives final instructions to Solomon before he dies. Altogether, the
account of Abshalom's revolt against David demonstrates precisely all of
David's errors in handling the situation and the consequences for his failure to act properly.

The narratives in 2 Sam 20–24 display further problems in David's
rule, including the unsuccessful revolt of Israel led by the Benjaminite
Sheba ben Bichri, David's handing over the sons of Saul to Gibeon for execution, and David's failed attempt to unify his kingdom, as illustrated by
the account of the census. A final episode appears in 1 Kgs 1–2, in which
David's son Adonijah by his wife Haggith presumes that he will succeed
his father on the throne without having authorization to do so. Adonijah
is also portrayed as a spoiled prince whom David never reprimands. His
witlessness and his sense of self-entitlement ultimately get him killed after
David's death when he goes to Bath-Sheba to demand David's concubine
Abishag, a sure sign of his intent to claim the throne.

In the end, the narratives in 2 Sam 9–24 and 1 Kgs 1–2 portray the destruction and displacement of David's Hebron-based house as all of his Hebron-based sons, wives, and supporters, such as Joab the military commander, Abiathar the priest, and Gad the prophet, die or disappear. In their place, a new maternal line based in Jerusalem comes to power with Bath-Sheba and Solomon, including figures such as Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the military commander, who emerge as power figures. Altogether, these narratives portray a coup within the house of David that results from David's failures as a father and king.

<div align="center">5.</div>

This survey of the narratives in the book of Samuel attempts to demonstrate that the book serves as a form of wisdom instruction. Samuel is not intended simply as a presentation of the historical origins of the Israelite and Judean monarchy; it functions as a didactic narrative that instructs its readers in both the effective and the ineffective exercise of political power. The account of Saul's reign in 1 Sam 8–15 demonstrates an interest in pointing to some of the positive aspects of Saul's reign, but it is clearly organized to display Saul's shortcomings as a man and a monarch that ultimately lead to his downfall and that of his family. Particularly striking are the distinctive presentations of David's rise to power in 1 Sam 16–2 Sam 8, where David appears to do nothing wrong even as his enemies fall dead around him, and the presentation of David's failures as monarch and father in 2 Sam 9–20—and even 1 Kgs 1–2—where David appears to do little that is right in disciplining his sons and thereby securing his family and his kingdom. Even without 1 Kgs 1–2, these interests are clear. It is time, therefore, to think of Samuel not simply as a historical presentation, but as a form of wisdom instruction that is designed to teach its readers the outcomes of the proper exercise of power as well as the consequences prompted by the failure to exercise power properly. Such a view suggests that Samuel functions as a book that would instruct future leaders in Israel and Judah in the opportunities and pitfalls to be encountered in the exercise of political power.

Eli, a High Priest Thrown under the
Wheels of the Ox Cart

1.

One of the major scholarly issues in the modern, critical study of the book of Samuel is the differentiation between those who call for largely diachronic historical study of the book and those who call for largely synchronic literary study. Historical scholars, such as Kyle McCarter, Steven McKenzie, Baruch Halpern, David Tsumura, Walter Dietrich, Graeme Auld, and Jacob Wright, emphasize Samuel's historicity, historical context, compositional history, and textual character, whereas literary scholars, such as Jan Fokkelman, Robert Polzin, Robert Alter, Meir Sternberg, David Gunn, and Kurt Noll, emphasize its narrative formulation, plot development, and characterization.[1] Others, such as Antony Campbell, present a synchronic analysis of the book of Samuel even though the analysis is rooted in deep engagement with diachronic scholarship.[2] Serge Frolov

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1. McCarter, *1 Samuel*; McCarter, *2 Samuel*; McKenzie, *King David: A Biography*; Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*; Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*; Dietrich, *Samuel*; Auld, *1 and 2 Samuel*; Wright, *David, King of Israel*; David M. Gunn, *The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978); Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*; Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire*; Polzin, *1 Samuel*; Kurt L. Noll, *The Faces of David* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997); Robert Alter, *The David Story: Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: Norton, 2000). Although one might expect character and plot analysis from David Jobling, his analysis focuses primarily on governmental issues. See Jobling, *1 Samuel*, BerOl (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998).

2. Campbell, *1 Samuel*; Campbell, *2 Samuel*.

combines a detailed formal analysis with valuable insights concerning characterization and plot development.[3] Although the diachronic and synchronic concerns can intersect at times, they remain largely independent of each other in most scholarly discourse, particularly in an environment when so many are anxious to deny or downplay the early history of the Israelite monarchy as an ideological or theological construction based in the interests of later historical periods. These interests range from ancient times, such as the late monarchy, the Persian period, or the Hellenistic period, through modern times and concerns, such as those of contemporary American evangelicalism or modern Jewish Zionism.[4]

But such differentiation is unnecessary and in the end counterproductive. History is known to modern interpreters in large measure through the works of writers who constantly display their ideological or theological perspectives in the written works that they produce. We may consider the contemporary assessment of Abraham Lincoln, arguably one of the greatest of the American presidents. Lincoln's reputation is based especially on his role in freeing African and African-descended slaves in the southern United States and on defending the Union during the American Civil War. But Lincoln was pilloried in the American press—both North and South—during the war, both because of doubts about his background as an unknown and self-educated lawyer from what was then the Illinois frontier and because of the staggering casualties and destruction caused by waging a war with modern lethal weapons and outdated military tactics.[5] Even one of Lincoln's generals, George B. McClellan, ran against him as a Democratic candidate in the 1864 presidential election in a bid to end the war by a negotiated settlement. Indeed, McClellan nearly won the election. But we must also recognize the role played by other factors, especially Lincoln's assassination shortly following Lee's surrender at Appomattox and William H. Herndon's biographical portrayal of Lincoln, which facilitated the idolization of the sixteenth president. Although Herndon, Lincoln's friend and law partner from Springfield, Illinois, sought to portray Lincoln as a man, his adulatory approach to Lincoln did much to create the image of Lincoln as a great man and American hero who overcame adversity to

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3. Frolov, *Turn of the Cycle*.

4. See, e.g., Joel Baden, *King David: The Real Life of an Invented Hero* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2013).

5. For an up-to-date biography of Lincoln, see David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

abolish slavery and to save the United States from dissolution.[6] Much of Herndon's account is anecdotal and the product of his own very favorable and biased view of Lincoln, but it nevertheless gives perspective on one of the most important leaders in American history. An analogous laudatory account of David's rise to power appears in 1 Sam 16–2 Sam 8, in which David seemingly does no wrong, but readers must also note a highly critical account of David's actions in 2 Sam 9–24, in which David emerges as an incredibly flawed character. In each case, the general biases of the narrative (and narrator) toward David are clear even as they include clues for a much more nuanced account.

Most interpreters recognize that Samuel is a book about David. But Samuel is a book that presents a very biased account of David's life and rise to power as well as the lives of those who played key roles in his life, his rise to power, and his exercise of power throughout his reign. The book of Samuel begins with a portrayal of Eli, the high priest of the Shiloh sanctuary, who would take in young Samuel ben Elkanah and raise him to become a priest, prophet, judge, and military leader of Israel—much on the model of Moses. Samuel would facilitate the transition of Israelite leadership from judge to king and therefore pave the way for the foundation of the ruling house of David in ancient Israel and Judah.

The presentation of Eli is biased, because David's rise to power also entails the rise of his youngest son, Solomon, who actually founds the dynasty and redefines Israel's presiding priesthood from the house of Eli and his descendant, Abiathar, to the house of Zadok, which would preside in the Jerusalem temple throughout the duration of Davidic rule. First Samuel 1–3, 4 characterizes Eli as an incompetent priest who is not fit to preside in YHWH's holy sanctuary and who loses his life and the right of his family to serve as Israel's priesthood because of his own alleged incompetence. First Samuel 1–3, 4 therefore anticipates the account of Solomon's expulsion of Abiathar as high priest in Jerusalem in favor of Zadok, all on the advice of David shortly before his death, as portrayed in 1 Kgs 1–2. Indeed, the account of Solomon's expulsion of Abiathar in favor of Zadok appears to drive the placement of the Eli narratives at the beginning of the book of Samuel; to a certain extent, this account also drives the composition and presentation of the Eli narratives.

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6. William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, *Herndon's Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life* (Chicago: Belford, Clarke, 1889).

The balance of this chapter therefore focuses on the characterization of Eli as a means to justify the removal of his family from the high priesthood and its replacement by the house of Zadok at the outset of the reign of King Solomon ben David. First Samuel 1–3, 4 characterizes Eli as an incompetent priest and father whose priestly line must be pushed aside to ensure a secure future for Israel. It focuses on four major episodes, including the portrayal of Eli as an incompetent priest who does not recognize a woman at prayer in 1 Sam 1, an incompetent father who cannot properly discipline his sons in 1 Sam 2, an incompetent priest once again who cannot recognize the visionary experience of YHWH by Samuel before the ark of the covenant in 1 Sam 3, and an incompetent and even blind father once again who does not recognize the coming demise of his sons and his people when they carry to ark into battle against the Philistines based on their belief that YHWH would protect them in 1 Sam 4. Eli's characterization provides background for the massacre of his priestly line by Saul in 1 Sam 22 and the expulsion of his presumed descendant, Abiathar, from Jerusalem by Solomon in 1 Kgs 2.

<center>2.</center>

Campbell identifies 1 Sam 1–16 as the first major subunit of the book of Samuel concerned with the preparations for David's emergence as the king to be.[7] Within that text, 1 Sam 1:1–4:1a constitutes a subunit that takes up the preparations for David's emergence by focusing on the arrival of Samuel on the national scene.[8] First Samuel 1:1–2:11 then concentrates on the origins of Samuel.[9]

First Samuel's characterization of major figures in the narrative lacks any attempt to identify the major priestly characters of the narrative, such as Samuel and his father, Elkanah, and Eli himself, as Levites as might be found in Chronicles (e.g., 1 Chr 9). Samuel was apparently written in a time or sociopolitical context prior to that of Chronicles, that is, during the early periods of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which apparently made use of non-Levitical priests.[10] But when considered from a synchronic perspective, the absence

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7. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 23–33.
8. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 34–59.
9. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 34–46.
10. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Israelite and Judean Religions," in *From the Bronze Age through the Hellenistic Age*, vol. 1 of *The Cambridge History of Religions in the Ancient*

of full Levitical identification of these characters suggests to later readers that something is lacking in their characters that would therefore justify the replacement of the priestly house of Eli with the priestly house of Zadok.

First Samuel 1 begins with the identification of Samuel's father as Elkanah ben Jeroham ben Elihu ben Tohu ben Zuph, an Ephraimite from Ramathaim of the Zuphites. Samuel is therefore not a Levite. His mother is Hannah, who is one of Elkanah's two wives, the other being Peninnah. Although Peninnah had children, Hannah did not, and this circumstance set the stage for the birth of Samuel, who would be instrumental in founding the early Israelite monarchic houses of Saul and David. The inability of Hannah to bear children signals a typical motif in early Israelite literature, namely, the birth of a major figure in Israel's history to a woman who remained barren even as a rival bore children to her husband. Hannah must deal with taunting by Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah. Other examples of such maternal wifely rivalry include Hagar's bearing a son to Abraham while Sarah remained barren until eventually she gave birth to Isaac, the heir to the covenant (see Gen 16, 21); Leah's bearing sons to Jacob until such time as the barren Rachel gave birth to Joseph, the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, the ancestors of the two key tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and later to Benjamin, the ancestor of Saul, Israel's first king (see Gen 31, 35).

Elkanah's identity as an Ephraimite proves to be troublesome insofar as Samuel will be raised to serve as a priest. Although 1 Chr 6:1–15 includes Elkanah, Samuel, and Samuel's sons in the Levitical genealogy, Samuel appears to be an example of a non-Levitical firstborn son (to the mother) who is dedicated to priestly service in Israelite sanctuaries, apparently a typical practice in northern Israel;[11] indeed, YHWH tells Moses in Num 3 and 8 that the Levites will ultimately replace the firstborn sons of Israel as the priestly tribe.[12] Although Samuel may have become a priest historically by virtue of his status as a firstborn son of his mother sent to

World, ed. Michele Salzman and Marvin A. Sweeney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 151–73.

11. Cf. Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1–9*, AB 12 (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 421; Ralph Klein, *1 Chronicles*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 182; Japhet, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 155–56.

12. Sweeney, "Samuel's Institutional Identity"; cf. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Prophets and Priests in the Deuteronomistic History: Elijah and Elisha," in *Israelite Prophecy and the Deuteronomistic History: Portrait, Reality, and the Formation of History*, ed. Mignon R. Jacobs and Raymond F. Person Jr., AIL 14 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 35–49, repr. as ch. 27 in this volume.

Shiloh for training, the larger canonical context would understand him as
a priest of the line of Aaron. But Samuel does not share this understanding.

Eli is the high priest of the Shiloh temple, although the text of Samuel
provides no genealogy for him. Based on Chronicles, he is apparently
understood to be a descendant of Aaron through Aaron's son Ithamar. This
identification is established through Abiathar, who is identified as the son
of Ahimelech and grandson of Ahitub in 1 Sam 22:20. Ahitub is identified
as the brother of Ichabod, the son of Phineas and therefore the grandson
of Eli in 1 Sam 14:3, and Ahimelech is identified as among the sons of
Ithamar in 1 Chr 24:1–3. These identities might have been constructed by
the Chronicler, and so the identity of Eli as a descendant of Aaron through
Aaron's son Ithamar may not be historical. Nevertheless, in the larger con-
text of the biblical canon, they would have been understood as a legitimate
characterization of Eli as a high priest of the line of Aaron at Shiloh.

The lack of a Levitical genealogy for Eli (and Samuel) may raise ques-
tions concerning their fitness to serve as priests in the view of later readers
who would expect Israel's early priests to be Levites. But regardless of the
question of Levitical genealogy, the presentation of Eli's actions in relation
to Hannah in 1 Sam 1:1–2:11 makes it clear that Eli is an incompetent
priest and therefore not fit to hold the office of high priest of the Shiloh
sanctuary of early Israel.

The first episode of the narrative in 1 Sam 1:1–2:11 makes it clear
that Elkanah's wife Hannah is in distress because of her failure to bear a
child. Insofar as Elkanah has another wife, Peninnah, who bears him many
children, the text emphasizes Peninnah's taunting of Hannah as a major
factor in her misery. Indeed, the Code of Hammurabi and the narratives
in Gen 16, 29–30 stipulate that a wife who does not bear children may be
divorced, but the wife may protect herself by providing her husband with
a maidservant with whom he may have children who would be considered
legally the children of his wife.[13] Sarah's provision of Hagar to Abraham
(Gen 16, 21) and Rachel's and Leah's provision of Bilhah and Zilpah to
Jacob (Gen 29–30) constitute examples of such practice.

Hannah makes no move to provide Elkanah with a maidservant, but
instead she concentrates on appeals to YHWH every year when she and
her family travel to Shiloh to attend the annual observance of a sacrifice.

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13. For the Coe of Hammurabi, see *ANET*, 163–80, secs. 144–47. For treatment of
Gen 16, 29–30 in relation to the practice of providing a handmaiden to bear children
on behalf of the wife, see Speiser, *Genesis*, 116–21, 224–33.

The text does not specify which sacrifice this might be; Sukkot, Pesach, Shavuot are all possibilities, but no specific observance is named. The narrative maintains that because of Peninnah's taunting her at the festival one year, she was so upset that she would not eat or drink at the festival meal. She wept and prayed to YHWH to give her a son in the presence of Eli, who was sitting in his customary place by the entrance to the Shiloh sanctuary. Eli watched as she prayed and saw that her lips moved but no sound emerged from her mouth. As a result of his observations, Eli concluded that Hannah was drunk, so he reprimanded her, demanding to know how long she intended to engage in drunken behavior and ordering that she cease her drinking immediately. Hannah responded by denying Eli's accusations, insisting that she had no alcohol, nor had she drunk anything alcoholic, but stated instead that she was in distress and pouring out her heart to YHWH. Upon hearing Hannah's response, Eli pronounced a blessing over her and told her to go in peace. Hannah's dismay was gone, and she returned home to become pregnant by her husband. She vowed to send her baby son, Samuel, to be raised as a priest once he was weaned, thereby illustrating a common Israelite practice of dedicating the firstborn son of a woman for service as a priest in YHWH's sanctuary as stipulated in Exod 34:19–20.[14] Upon weaning young Samuel, Hannah did as she had vowed and took Samuel to Shiloh together with the appropriate offerings to have her young son raised at the sanctuary to become a priest in Israel. The passage concludes with Hannah's song of praise to YHWH and a brief notice that she and her family returned home.

The narrative concerning Eli's encounter with Hannah at Shiloh is a remarkable window revealing the character of Eli, the high priest at Shiloh. As high priest, Eli would supervise the sanctity and activities of the Shiloh sanctuary and all that took place within it. Eli would preside over the sacrifices offered at the Shiloh sanctuary and all affairs of holiness that took place within. It is noteworthy that although ancient Israelite sacrifice functions as the central event of Israelite worship, that sacrifice is always accompanied by prayers to YHWH. The account of Solomon's speech before the nation at the dedication of the Jerusalem temple in 1 Kgs 8 is an illustration of this principle. But Eli is the high priest. He would be expected to understand something about prayer, and so it is remarkable

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14. For discussion of the Israelite practice of using firstborn sons as priests, see Sweeney, "Samuel's Institutional Identity"; Sweeney, *Pentateuch*, 40–41, 77–79, 84.

that he does not recognize that Hannah is praying and concludes instead that she is drunk. It is not unheard of that people might drink to excess at Israelite festivals, but a high priest might be expected to recognize prayer when he sees it; it is not so hard to realize that many might pray silently to themselves in the sanctuary.

The narrative suggests that Eli is not so familiar with prayer, but he does seem to know something of drunkenness. Such a portrayal might prompt a reader to conclude that Eli has more familiarity with drunkenness than prayer, leading readers to conclude that Eli is an incompetent high priest.

3.

Campbell identifies 1 Sam 2:12–26, which portrays the contrasting behavior of Samuel and the Elides, as the second major subunit of 1 Sam 1–3.[15] His conclusions must be modified, however, insofar as 1 Sam 2:27–36, which presents the condemnation of the house of Eli by an anonymous man of G-d, must be included in the subunit as well. First Samuel 2:27–36 is linked syntactically to 1 Sam 2:12–26 by a *waw*-consecutive verbal formation, *wayyābôʾ*, "and he (the man of G-d) came," which indicates that this segment presents a consequence of the improper behavior of the Elides as presented in the preceding text. By contrast, 1 Sam 2:12–26 begins with a conjunctive noun formation, *ûbənê ʿēlî*, "and the sons of Eli," which indicates a break in the narrative action and the introduction of a new topic. Likewise, 1 Sam 3:1 begins with a similar conjunctive noun formation, *wəhannaʿar šəmûʾēl*, "and the boy, Samuel," which indicates another break in narrative sequence and the introduction of a new topic. First Samuel 2:18 begins with the conjunctive noun formation *ûšmûʾēl*, "and Samuel," which introduces a segment concerned with Samuel, and 1 Sam 2:22 begins with another conjunctive noun formation, *wəʿēlî*, "and Eli," which introduces the segment in 1 Sam 2:12–36 concerned with the condemnation of Eli's house. Thus, the subunits should include 1 Sam 2:12–17, which focuses on the behavior of Eli's sons; 1 Sam 2:18–21, which focuses on the behavior of Samuel; 1 Sam 2:22–36, which focuses on the condemnation of the house of Eli; and 1 Sam 3:1–4:1, which focuses on Samuel's visionary experience of YHWH. For the present, discussion will focus on 1 Sam 2:12–17, 18–21;

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15. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 46–51.

and 2:22–36, which work together to portray the inadequacies and condemnation of the house of Eli. Overall, the inadequacies of Eli's sons point to the inadequacies of Eli himself and therefore to his characterization as an incompetent priest in need of replacement.

First Samuel 2:12–17 focuses on the unacceptable behavior of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas, in their capacities as priests of the house of Eli at the Israelite sanctuary at Shiloh. They are accused of a number of abuses in their exercise of priestly office. They are accused of not knowing YHWH, which serves as a general statement concerning their inadequate characters. Specific charges include taking unauthorized portions of the people's meat offerings from the boiling pots, taking uncooked meat from the people's offerings even before the meat was burned on the altar, and threats to take meat from the offerings by force in cases when the people would object at this abusive behavior. Altogether, the text indicates that such behavior constitutes abuse of their holy office that is entirely unacceptable for a priest dedicated to the holy service of YHWH's sanctuary. Although Eli may appear quite aged in this text and potentially exercises little influence over the actions of his sons, he is nevertheless their father and mentor as priests. Eli is therefore responsible for their upbringing and understanding of their roles as priests in ancient Israel.

First Samuel 2:17–21 focuses on little Samuel. The passage says little concerning Samuel's behavior since he is simply a small boy acting as an attendant for the priests. Rather, it focuses on Hannah's love for her son, insofar as she makes him a little tunic each year and brings it to him at the time of the annual sacrifice. As a result, Eli would bless Elkanah and his family so that YHWH would take note of Hannah and grant her five more children, namely, three boys and two daughters. Such blessing from YHWH indicates YHWH's satisfaction with Samuel, Hannah, and the rest of the family. In the current literary context, it presents a contrast between Samuel and the sons of Eli.

First Samuel 2:22–36 begins with a portrayal of Eli's unsuccessful attempts to discipline his sons in verses 22–26 as a prelude to the account of the condemnation of Eli's house by the anonymous man of G-d. Verses 22–26 state that Eli was very old when he heard about the conduct of his sons. The statement includes a reference to all that they had done, which looks back to the previously stated account of their excesses in verses 12–17, but the account adds that Hophni and Phineas were laying with the women who served in the sanctuary. First, it is noteworthy that women served in northern Israelite sanctuaries, but it

is unlikely that they were serving as cultic prostitutes or the like, as some biblical texts allege. Indeed, there is evidence that women played a role in the activities of northern Israelite sanctuaries, although they appear to have played no major role in southern Judean sanctuaries.[16] Second, the charge that Hophni and Phineas were laying with them entails improper conduct as the women would presumably be married to other men, and priests are to marry women who are virgins or widows of other priests. Eli reprimands his sons in 1 Sam 2:23–25 by declaring that a wrong done to another man could be forgiven, but that wrong done to G-d can presumably not be forgiven, according to Eli's statement. The latter postulate is not true, as demonstrated by YHWH's forgiveness of David for his adultery with Bath-Sheba and his role in the murder of Uriah the Hittite, even though the sins were against both the human characters and YHWH (2 Sam 12:20–25; 1 Kgs 15:5; cf. Lev 4, which prescribes the sin offering that accompanies repentance for violating in error the commandments of YHWH), indicating once again that the aging Eli is incompetent as a priest. But he also proves incapable of controlling his sons, who refuse to listen to him and continue in their abusive behavior. Altogether, these verses demonstrate that Eli is an incompetent father as well as an incompetent priest. Insofar as it is his duty to instruct his sons correctly in their obligations as holy priests of YHWH, he is once again characterized as an incompetent priest who is not fit to serve in YHWH's holy sanctuary.

First Samuel 2:27–36 then follows with an account of a prophetic judgment speech against the priestly house of Eli delivered by an anonymous man of G-d to Eli himself.[17] Campbell considers this text to be part of an early prophetic record, a northern Israelite document written in the late ninth century BCE as a prophetic critique of the early Israelite monarchies. The use of the title "man of G-d" for the prophet is typical

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16. For discussion of this point, see Sweeney, "Israelite and Judean Religions," esp. 169–70.

17. See esp. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 51–59; cf. Antony F. Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings: A Late-Ninth Century Document (1 Samuel 1—2 Kings 10)*, CBQMS 17 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1986); Antony F. Campbell, SJ, and Mark A. O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History: Origins, Upgrades, Present Text* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 24–32. For a revision of the prophetic record hypothesis to a proposal for the Jehu dynastic history, see Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 26–30.

designation within Campbell's proposed prophetic record, insofar as it is also used for the prophets Elijah and Elisha, whose narratives in 1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 13 also appear as part of the prophetic record. In the present form of the text, this passage anticipates the account of Solomon's expulsion of the high priest Abiathar, the major surviving member of the priestly house of Eli, and his replacement by Zadok, the founder of the priestly house of Zadok, in 1 Kgs 2. The account itself presents the major elements of the prophetic judgment speech form, including the account of the reproach or grounds for punishment in verses 27–29 and the announcement of punishment in verses 30–36. The grounds for punishment in verses 27–29, introduced by the prophetic messenger formula in verse 27b, are the previously reported abuses of the sacrificial offerings made by the people in the Shiloh sanctuary. The announcement of punishment, introduced by the particle *lākēn*, "therefore," and the oracular formula, "utterance of YHWH, G-d of Israel," announces YHWH's intention to replace the priestly house of Eli with another unnamed priestly house, leaving the house of Eli to beg for holy work from the so-called faithful priest, who will serve in the place of the house of Eli before YHWH's anointed king.

This narrative concerning the condemnation of the house of Eli also serves as a means to characterize Eli himself. One of the responsibilities of the priesthood in ancient Israel and Judah is to instruct the people concerning what is holy and profane and what is clean and unclean. Although this principle is articulated in Lev 10:10–11, which most interpreters view as a late Priestly-stratum text, it nevertheless expresses the expectations of the duties of the priesthood throughout the entire history of ancient Israel and Judah. As the preceding narratives make clear, Eli's sons abuse their priestly offices, which entails that they do not carry out their task of instructing the people in holy matters properly. Their abusive behavior therefore entails the failure of Eli, their father as well as the senior priest in charge of the Shiloh sanctuary, to instruct his own sons in such holy matters, much less the people. Although the narrative portrays him as a father who attempts to instruct his sons properly, they ignore him, perhaps because of his advanced age. Nevertheless, Eli fails to carry out the training of his own sons as one of the basic expectations of the priesthood. There narrative therefore portrays him as an incompetent priest and an incompetent father. Such characterization thereby justifies the replacement of his priestly house in the larger narrative ranging from 1 Sam 1–3 through 1 Kgs 1–2.

4.

Although Campbell groups 1 Sam 3:1–4:1a with the preceding narratives in his assessment of the formal structure of 1 Sam 1–3,[18] the introductory conjunctive noun clause *wəhannaʿar šəmûʾēl*, "and the lad, Samuel," instead of a *waw*-consecutive clause, indicates that this narrative is a discrete structural subunit rather than a sequential subunit within the larger formal structure of the text. It concludes with 1 Sam 3:19–4:1a, which narrates how Samuel grew up to become a trustworthy prophet to YHWH, how YHWH continued to appear at Shiloh, and how the word of YHWH continued to come to Samuel. The account of the capture of the ark of G-d beginning in 1 Sam 4:1b begins another narrative within the larger formal structure of the book of Samuel.

First Samuel 3:1–4:1a is formulated as a vision account concerning young Samuel's first visionary encounter with YHWH.[19] As a result of this encounter, Samuel become a prophet of G-d, but in the context of priestly identity and practice in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, he also would have become a priest at the Shiloh sanctuary due to his status as a firstborn son of his mother and his training under the tutelage of Eli. The narrative is silent about his priestly status at this point, but later narratives, such as 1 Sam 13–14, concerning the war with the Philistines, make it clear that Samuel serves as a priest who would offer sacrifice to YHWH. Although Samuel becomes a prophet as a result of his encounter with YHWH in 1 Sam 3:1–4:1a, scholars do not classify this text as a prophetic call narrative because it does not include the classic elements of the genre.

First Samuel nevertheless must be recognized as a vision account. It is noteworthy that Samuel encounters YHWH while sleeping in the sanctuary near the ark of G-d. This would suggest that the setting for the vision is in the holy of holies of the Shiloh sanctuary, where the ark of G-d would presumably reside. Such a setting suggests that Samuel's visionary experience would serve as the means by which he was consecrated as a priest in ancient Israel, recognizing that firstborn sons were also eligible to serve as priests during the early years of the Northern Kingdom of Israel even though such practice does not appear to have been recognized

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18. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 34–36, 51–59.

19. See esp. Robert Karl Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany of Samuel: Its Structure in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Dreams and Its Theological Significance* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

in Judah. It is also noteworthy that Samuel's vision of YHWH begins with audial elements as YHWH initially speaks to Samuel in verses 3–9 and only appears visually to Samuel in verse 10, where YHWH stands in the sanctuary and calls to Samuel once again. Interpreters must recognize that the Hebrew verb *ḥzh*, "to envision," which does not appear in this narrative, is generally translated in visual terms, but the verb nevertheless entails audial experience as well. In general, the verb is best translated as "to perceive" or something analogous that would convey both visual and auditory experience.[20] Such a visionary experience would be typical of the ordination of priests in ancient Israel and Judah. Exodus 29, Lev 8, and Num 8 all portray the ordination of priests and Levites in ancient Israel. In all cases, prospective priests and Levites are incubated in the temple before the ark of the covenant for a period of seven days, presumably during the Festival of Sukkot, when the temple altar is typically dedicated. During the period of their incubation before the ark, prospective priests or Levites presumably have some visionary experience of YHWH. At the conclusion of their seven-day incubation, they are then qualified to serve as priests in YHWH's temple and to make the offerings to YHWH required on the various festivals and observances of the ancient Israelite (or Judean) holy calendar.

First Samuel 3:1–4:1a is also formulated to characterize Eli and to demonstrate once again his incompetence to serve as the high priest of the Shiloh sanctuary. It therefore serves the literary purpose of anticipating Solomon's expulsion of Abiathar and his replacement by Zadok in 1 Kgs 2. In depicting Samuel's inaugural visionary experience of YHWH, 1 Sam 3:1–4:1 deliberately portrays Eli's initial inability to recognize that YHWH was speaking with young Samuel. Indeed, at the outset of the narrative in 1 Sam 3:2, the text emphasizes Eli's failing eyesight as a means to introduce him as a character in the narrative who is unable to see. That notice serves as background for the following events in which Eli will fail to see that YHWH is attempting to communicate with Samuel. As young Samuel sleeps in the sanctuary before the ark of G-d, he hears a voice calling to him, "Samuel! Samuel!" Thinking that it is Eli, who is sleeping elsewhere, in his usual place, who calls him, he awakens Eli to see what he wants. Eli responds by rebuking Samuel for waking him and sends him back to bed. YHWH makes two more attempts to call Samuel with similar results. It is

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20. Alfred Jepsen, "חָזָה," *TDOT* 4:280–90.

only with YHWH's third attempt to call Samuel that Eli finally recognizes what is actually happening, namely, YHWH is attempting to call Samuel. Eli instructs Samuel to go back to bed, and if he hears YHWH once again, he is to respond, "Speak, YHWH," in answer to YHWH's call. Samuel does so, and YHWH then tells young Samuel about the divine plans to punish the house of Eli, as earlier reported by the anonymous man of G-d. Samuel later reports YHWH's words at Eli's insistence. Although the narrative does not specify that Samuel became a prophet or a priest as a result of this experience, it is clear that this is precisely what happened.

From the foregoing, it should be clear that 1 Sam 3:1–4:1 portrays Eli as an incompetent priest. It is the duty of the priesthood to recognize the presence of YHWH and to communicate that presence and the appropriate response to YHWH's presence to the people of Israel at large. And yet here, the narrative makes it clear that it takes some three attempts by YHWH to communicate with Samuel before Eli finally recognizes that Samuel is experiencing a vision of YHWH's holy presence. Such a failure to recognize a revelation or vision of YHWH at the outset of the experience would serve as convincing evidence that Eli is an incompetent and therefore unqualified to serve as high priest of the Shiloh sanctuary.[21] As a result, 1 Sam 3:1–4:1 provides further justification for Solomon's removal of the house of Eli and its replacement by the priestly house of Zadok at the outset of Solomon's reign as related in 1 Kgs 2.

5.

The next and last episode in which readers see Eli is 1 Sam 4:1b–22, in which the Philistines defeat Israel in battle at Aphek along the border between the hill country of Israel and coastal plain dominated by the Philistines. As a result of the battle, Eli's sons Hophni and Phineas are killed, the ark of G-d is captured by the Philistines, Eli drops dead when he hears the bad news, and Phineas's wife dies while giving birth to a son

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21. Moberly argues that it is Eli who ultimately recognizes that YHWH is calling Samuel, thereby enabling Samuel to recognize YHWH's call as well. See Robert W. L. Moberly, "To Hear the Master's Voice: Revelation and Spiritual Discernment in the Call of Samuel," *SJT* 48 (1995): 443–68. Nevertheless, Eli's failure to recognize YHWH's call from the outset raises questions concerning his competence as high priest as he is aging and therefore slow to respond to even when confronted by the presence of YHWH.

named Ichabod, "No glory," when she hears the news of the death of her husband and her father-in-law.

Interpreters normally consider 1 Sam 4 to be the introductory episode of the so-called ark narrative in 1 Sam 4–6, 2 Sam 6, which recounts the journeys of the ark of the covenant from the time when it is captured in battle by the Philistines, paraded around the Philistine cities, placed in Kiriath-jearim when it proves to be too dangerous to Philistine temples and gods, and finally is brought by David to Jerusalem to serve as the central shrine for all Israel. It was initially identified by Leonhard Rost as a discrete diachronic element in the book of Samuel, but Campbell places it in the early history of Israel as a narrative that anticipates the rise of the house of David in Jerusalem and later sees it as a synchronic literary element of Samuel.[22]

First Samuel 4:1b–22 is formulated as an account of Israel's loss in battle to the Philistines at Aphek, located to the west of the territory of Benjamin along the juncture of the Israelite hill country and the Philistine coastal plain. The battle was apparently fought as Israel and Philistia fought for control of the land of Canaan. Israel's loss at Aphek meant that the Philistines gained an important toehold in their struggle to surround the Israelite hill country, contain and dominate Israel, and thereby ensure that Israel could not threaten Philistia or interfere with its activities. Within the larger Samuel narrative, 1 Sam 4 sets the stage for the rise of the Israelite monarchies, particularly the house of David, which makes Jerusalem Israel's capital and holy city, and it also anticipates Solomon's expulsion of Abiathar of the house of Eli and his replacement with Zadok, the founder of the house of Zadok.

The action of the narrative begins with an initial engagement between the Israelites and the Philistines at Aphek, in which the Israelites are defeated. In order to regain the initiative, they decide to bring the ark of G-d, carried by Eli's sons Hophni and Phineas to the battle. When the Philistines see the ark, they believe themselves to be hopelessly outmatched due to the presence of YHWH. They therefore resolve to renew their efforts in battle since they believe themselves to be doomed, and they end up killing Hophni and Phineas, capturing the ark of G-d, and defeating the Israelites. In the aftermath of the defeat, a Benjaminite man flees to

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22. Rost, *Succession to the Throne*; Antony F. Campbell, SJ, *The Ark Narrative (1 Sam 4–6; 2 Sam 6): A Form-Critical and Traditio-Historical Study*, SBLDS 16 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975); Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 60–70.

Shiloh, where he finds the aged Eli sitting in his customary seat. Eli is described as an old man of ninety-eight whose eyesight is failing as he ages. Indeed, Eli's blindness has been mentioned before, and it emphasizes that our priest cannot even see anymore. When he asks for news about the battle, the Benjaminites informs him of Israel's defeat, the deaths of his sons, and the capture of the ark. Upon hearing this news, Eli falls from his seat, breaks his neck because he is an old man, and dies. His pregnant daughter-in-law, the wife of his son Phineas, then gives birth to a son and dies. But before she dies, she names the baby Ichabod, which means, "No glory" or "The glory is gone," to symbolize the absence of the divine presence from Israel to symbolize the magnitude of the defeat.

Two major features of this narrative are important for characterizing Eli. First, his blindness is a key element insofar as the narrative portrays him as a high priest who remains unaware of the religious controversies around him. This in itself makes Eli an incompetent priest because he is unaware of what YHWH does in the world. The second major issue is Eli's inability to maintain oversight over the people, the ark of G-d, and his sons and family. As a priest and a father, Eli would be expected to reserve final authority and responsibility for all of them. Having seen in the narrative the condemnation of his house, a reader might expect him to object to Israel going into the battle in the first place; Deut 20:1–4 indicates that the priest has the authority to supervise Israel in times of war, and Samuel later leads Israel in battle in 1 Sam 7. But Eli also could have objected to bringing the ark of G-d out to the battle and thereby jeopardizing the safety of the ark and the presence of YHWH. But Eli does none of this, and the result is an absolute catastrophe for Israel and for his family.

Once again, Eli is characterized as an incompetent father and as an incompetent priest. Overall, the reader of the book of Samuel would have to conclude that the house of Eli does need to be replaced because of the lack of responsibility and oversight on the part of the high priest Eli and the associated house of Eli.

6.

In the end, the narratives in 1 Sam 1–3, 4 present Eli, the high priest of the nation of Israel at large, as an incompetent high priest. He is frequently portrayed as blind, insensitive, and completely unaware of his responsibilities or even of his strengths. Such a characterization builds the case in the larger narrative of Samuel and Kings that the house of Eli had run

its course, and so Solomon, on David's advice in 1 Kgs 1–2, replaces Eli's descendant, Abiathar, who had rendered loyal service to the king, and the house of Eli with Zadok, the founder of the priestly house of Zadok, who would exercise authority and responsibility to maintain the sanctity of YHWH's temple at Jerusalem. It is striking that the critique of Eli also foreshadows the critique of David, especially in 2 Sam 9–24, and raises questions concerning the role played by David's inadequacies as father and monarch for the ultimate demise of the house of David at the conclusion of the book of Kings.[23]

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23. See my comments on the significance of Jehioachin's eating at the table of the Babylonian monarch, Evil-Merodach (Amel Marduk), for the future of the house of David (Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 464–65, 469–70).

Samuel's Institutional Identity in the Deuteronomistic History

1.

Samuel is well-recognized in the Deuteronomistic History as the primary leader of Israel during its transition from the period of the judges to the period of the early monarchy. Nevertheless, his institutional identity is unclear, insofar as he functions as a visionary prophet, priest, and judge in the narratives of 1 Samuel. In this respect, he is very much like Moses, who embodies a similar set of roles in Exodus–Numbers and Deuteronomy, and he resembles to a degree Elijah and Elisha, who are identified as prophets and yet carry out priestly functions in the narratives devoted to their activities in 1–2 Kings. Although 1 Chr 6 includes Samuel and his father, Elkanah, in the Levitical genealogies, the narratives in 1 Samuel make it quite clear that Elkanah is an Ephraimite and that Samuel is the firstborn son to Elkanah's wife Hannah. Most scholars identify Samuel as a prophet or judge and explain his priestly actions by arguing that he lived in a time when the Levitical priesthood had not been fully institutionalized.[1]

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1. For overview discussions concerning Samuel's institutional identity, see Aelred Cody, A *History of Old Testament Priesthood*, AnBib 35 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 72–80; George W. Ramsey, "Samuel," *ABD* 5:954–57; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel*, LAI (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995); Lester L. Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages: A Socio-historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 44, 67–68, 122–23.

This paper examines the question of Samuel's institutional identity and argues he represents a model of priest known in northern Israel but not in Jerusalem and perhaps southern Judah, where the Levitical priesthood was dominant. Insofar as the Deuteronomistic History was committed both to the notion of a Levitical priesthood as YHWH's cultic representatives in the temple and to prophets as YHWH's mouthpieces to Israel, it constructs Samuel as a prophet so that he might function as one of the spokespersons of YHWH who play such key roles throughout its presentation of Israelite history.[2] Insofar as statements by YHWH in Num 3 indicate that the first-born sons of Israel originally served as priests before being replaced by the Levites, it would seem that Samuel represents an early example of such a priest, firstborn to his mother and deposited in the Shiloh sanctuary to be raised as a priest.

2.

The first task is to examine Samuel's identity as a prophet as presented in 1 Samuel. First Samuel and the Deuteronomistic History always refer to Samuel as a prophet, but never refer to him as a priest, judge, king, or other institutional identity, although he functions in all of these capacities.

A key text is 1 Sam 3:20–21, which identifies Samuel as a prophet for YHWH, "And all Israel from Dan to Beer Sheba knew that Samuel was truly a prophet for YHWH [*ne'ĕmān šəmû'ēl lənābî' lyhwh*], and YHWH again appeared in Shiloh, for YHWH was revealed to Samuel in Shiloh by means of the word of YHWH." This text is crucial for several reasons. First, it employs the standard Hebrew term for a prophet, *nābî'*, to identify Samuel's institutional identity. Second, it associates Samuel's identity as a prophet with the experience of a vision in the narrative of 1 Sam 3 that inaugurates his career as a prophet of YHWH. Third, this narrative begins in 1 Sam 3:1 with a notice that "The boy Samuel was serving YHWH before Eli, and the word of YHWH was rare [precious] in those days; visionary

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2. For the roles of prophets as mouthpieces of YHWH in the DtrH and its underlying works, see Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*; Walter Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk*, FRLANT 108 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972); Dietrich, *David, Saul und die Propheten: Das Verhältnis von Religion und Politik nach den prophetischen Überlieferungen vom frühesten Königtum in Israel*, BWANT 122 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1992); McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 18–23; Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*.

experience [*ḥāzôn*] was not widespread." When read in relation to 1 Sam 3:20–21, the notice in 1 Sam 3:1 forms a literary enclosure that presents the means by which the dearth of prophecy in the land was resolved by Samuel's visionary experience of YHWH.

Subsequent narratives in 1 Samuel either explicitly or implicitly identify Samuel as a prophet. Indeed, the following introduction in 1 Sam 4:1 to the ark narrative of 1 Sam 4–6 states, "and the word of Samuel was to all Israel," signaling that Samuel's identity as a prophet will underlie all of the following material.

The narrative in 1 Sam 8 concerning YHWH's decision to grant the people's request for a king indicates that Samuel consulted YHWH on the matter and reported all of YHWH's words to the people. Other scholars have noted that Samuel's role in designating Saul as king is analogous to the roles of other prophets, such as Nathan, Ahijah, Elijah, and Elisha, who designate David, Jeroboam, and Jehu.[3]

The narrative in 1 Sam 9:1–10:16 concerning Samuel's designation of Saul as king identifies Samuel as a "man of G-d" (*ʾîš hāʾĕlōhîm*) and as a "seer" (*rōʾeh*) throughout. Both terms are commonly employed to designate a prophet in the Hebrew Bible,[4] and 1 Sam 9:9 explains, "Formerly in Israel thus said a man when he went to inquire of G-d, 'come, and let us go to the seer [*rōʾeh*],' for today's prophet [*nābîʾ*] was formerly called a seer."

The narrative in 1 Sam 10:17–27 concerning the selection of Saul as king by lot likewise presents Samuel as a prophet when he summons the people to Mizpah and begins his speech to them with a version of the classical prophetic messenger formula, "Thus says YHWH, G-d of Israel" (*kōh ʾāmar yhwh elōhê yiśrāʾēl*).

Both narratives concerning YHWH's rejection of Saul as king in 1 Sam 13–14 and 15 likewise present Samuel as a prophet. In 1 Sam 13:13–14 Samuel delivers a classical prophetic word of judgment against Saul and lays out both the basis for divine judgment and the proclamation of judgment itself by charging that because Saul has failed to observe the commandments of YHWH, his dynasty will not endure. First Samuel 15 begins with Samuel's prophetic word of judgment against Amalek in verse 2, which again begins with an example of the prophetic messenger formula, "Thus says YHWH of Hosts, I am punishing what Amalek did

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3. See Ramsey, "Samuel," 955; Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*.

4. See David L. Petersen, *The Roles of Israel's Prophets*, JSOTSup 17 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 35–50.

to Israel when he [Amalek] attacked him [Israel] on the road when he [Israel] went up from Egypt." Later, 1 Sam 15:10–11 employs the classical prophetic word formula, "and the word of YHWH came to Samuel, saying …" (*wayəhî dəbar-yhwh ʾel šəmûʾl lēʾmōr*), to introduce YHWH's instructions to Samuel concerning Saul. And 1 Sam 15:17–19, 20–23, 28–29 presents Samuel's condemnation of Saul in the form of a classical prophetic judgment speech.

The narrative concerning Saul's inquiry of the dead Samuel by means of the witch of Endor once again presents Samuel's condemnation of Saul in the form of a prophetic judgment speech in verses 17–19.

Finally, although 1 Chr 6:7–13 identifies Samuel as a Levite, 1 Chr 9:22, 26:28, and 29:29 follow 1 Sam 9:1–10:16 in identifying Samuel as a seer (*rōʾeh*), and 2 Chr 35:18 follows 1 Sam 3:20–21 by identifying him as a prophet (*nābîʾ*).

All of these cases point to Samuel's role as a prophet of YHWH, but there is ample evidence of Samuel's roles as judge and priest as well. The presentation of Samuel as judge of Israel appears in 1 Sam 7:2–17 and 8:1–3. The term *šōpēṭ*, "judge," is never applied to Samuel, but the verb *wayyišpōṭ*, "and he judged," is twice applied to Samuel's " judging" Israel in 1 Sam 7:6, 15, and *šāpaṭ*, " he judged," is employed in 1 Sam 7:17. Both senses of the term, that is, "to rule" and " to decide judicial cases," are applied to Samuel in this section insofar as he presides over Israel in its conflict with the Philistines and hears legal cases. When he is old, he appoints his sons as judges, Hebrew *šōpəṭîm*, according to 1 Sam 8:1–3, but they are inadequate for the task.

Although many scholars argue that Samuel's basic identity is that of a judge as in the book of Judges,[5] we must observe that his judgeship has priestly dimensions. When Samuel leads Israel against the Philistines, the narrative does not portray him as participating directly in battle; rather, he officiates over the offerings that are made to YHWH and makes appeals to YHWH on the people's behalf before they actually go to battle. We may observe that Eli, Hophni, and Phineas did not accompany Israel to battle initially against the Philistines in 1 Sam 4, and Hophni and Phineas only joined Israel later to carry the ark of the covenant in a failed effort to rally the Israelites after initial setbacks. We may also observe that Deut 20:1–4 presents the priest's role in war as a figure who exhorts the soldiers prior

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5. Ramsey, "Samuel," 955.

to the battle, but does not lead them in actual combat. Moses, the Levite, plays a similar role in battle against Amalek in Exod 17:8–16 when his extended rod aids Israel in overcoming the Amalekites, and he later builds an altar to mark the victory. We may observe that judicial functions are part of the purview of the priests, although not exclusively so, according to Deut 16:18–17:13, in which the Levitical priests serve as the chief magistrates of Israel. We may note also that Moses the Levite establishes and oversees judges in Israel according to Jethro's advice in Exod 18. With these considerations in mind, it appears that Samuel's functions as judge coincide with his identity and functions as a priest.

When we turn to Samuel's functions as priest, we see ample attestation to his priestly role. He is never labeled as *kōhēn* or as *lēwî* in the 1 Samuel narratives, but his actions are frequently those of a priest. The most obvious indicator of priestly identity for Samuel is the role that he plays in offering sacrifices to YHWH. Although there are instances in which non-priests offer sacrifice in the Bible, such an act is generally reserved for the priesthood. We have already observed Samuel's actions as a priest in conjunction with his role as judge. When he gathers the people at Mizpah for war against the Philistines in 1 Sam 7:2–17, libation offerings are made before YHWH in verse 6 as the people fast and confess their sins. Nevertheless, Samuel's role in presenting the libation offerings is not made clear, although the text suggests that he presided over the ceremony. In verses 9–10, however, the text makes it quite clear that Samuel made an *ʿōlâ*, that is, a whole burnt offering, to YHWH. The *ʿōlâ* is the basic offering made to YHWH in the temple each day by the priests, and it frequently serves as the basic offering outside the temple as well.[6] A second instance of Samuel's association with sacrifice appears in 1 Sam 9:1–10:16, when he presides over the *zebaḥ*, "sacrifice," in Ramah as Saul and his servant enter the city. The *zebaḥ* would likely refer to the *zebaḥ šəlāmîm*, the so-called peace offering or sacrifice of well-being, that was generally offered in addition to the *ʿōlâ* to implore YHWH to ensure the well-being of the community or individual making the offering.[7] Samuel's role is to bless the *zebaḥ* of the city, according to 1 Sam 9:13, which allows the people to eat it. Furthermore, Samuel seats Saul at the head of table and gives Saul the *sôq* or thigh portion of the *zebaḥ*, which is the *šôq hattərûmâ* or the thigh

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6. Gary A. Anderson, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (OT)," *ABD* 5:870–86, esp. 877–78.

7. Anderson, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings," 878–79.

of consecration normally granted to the priests and their families (Exod 29:27, Lev 7:34, 10:14–15, Num 6:20).[8] Such an act on Samuel's part presumes priestly authority. Later in the same narrative, Samuel instructs Saul to wait for him at Gilgal, where he (Samuel) will offer ʿōlôt, whole burnt offerings, and zibḥê šəlāmim, sacrifices of well-being, before Israel goes to battle against the Philistines. Again, the narrative presumes Samuel's priestly authority. Instead, when Samuel finally arrives at Gilgal in 1 Sam 13:8–14, he condemns Saul for having offered the ʿōlâ without having waited for him (Samuel) to arrive so that he might officiate. Saul also intended to offer the zebaḥ šəlāmîm, again, a priestly prerogative. Saul's failure to observe YHWH's commands, not simply to wait for Samuel to arrive but to allow him to perform the priestly functions of sacrifice, cost him his throne in this passage. Finally, 1 Sam 16:15 portrays Samuel's role as officiant over sacrifice when he travels to Bethlehem to anoint David ben Jesse as the next king of Israel. The narrative employs the verb zbḥ to describe Samuel's intended actions, which suggests that he intended to offer the zebaḥ šəlāmîm, in which the priests and people share in eating the sacrifice, in Bethlehem. All of these instances presume Samuel's right to officiate or offer sacrifice on behalf of Israel. Such prerogative is normally reserved for a priest in ancient Israel.

But there is one more indicator of Samuel's priestly status, namely, his role as a visionary. Visionary experience is hardly confined to the priesthood. Indeed, clearly nonpriestly figures such as Jacob ben Isaac (Gen 28), Amos of Tekoa (Arnos 7–9), and Isaiah ben Amoz (Isa 6) have visionary experiences, although all are associated with temples. Likewise, figures identified as both priests and prophets, such as Moses ben Amran (Exod 33), Jeremiah ben Hilkiah (Jer 1, 24), Ezekiel ben Buzi (Ezek 1–3, 8–10, 40–48), Zechariah ben Berechiah ben Iddo (Zech 1–6), and possibly Habakkuk (Hab 2–3), all engage in visionary experience. But we must note that visionary experience is not associated exclusively with prophets. It is part of the priestly purview as well, as indicated in Lev 16:2, which states that the high priest may not enter the holy of holies of the temple, where YHWH appears at will. Rather, he comes only to make expiation for the people on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when he presents the various offerings before YHWH. The priest is the only person allowed to enter

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8. See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, AB 3 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1991), 473–81.

the holy of holies, and visionary experience of YHWH is therefore possible for him there as well.

Indeed, such revelatory experience of YHWH plays a role in defining the holy garments of the high priest. He is to wear an ephod or breastplate inlaid with twelve precious stones to represent the tribes of Israel. Insofar as the background of the ephod is to be found in oracular inquiry of YHWH,[9] it also points to the priest's revelatory experience of YHWH and his role in communicating the will of YHWH based on that experience to the people. We may observe that the ephod appears in different forms, such as a linen ephod, and that it is employed by persons who are not explicitly identified as priests, such as Gideon (Judg 8) and David (2 Sam 6), but it does point to the capacity of the priests for revelatory or visionary experience.

It is at this point that we must note the setting of Samuel's initial visionary or revelatory experience of YHWH in 1 Sam 3, that is, his initial visionary experience occurs while he is sleeping in the Shiloh temple, where the ark of the covenant is located. We may also note that Samuel is described as serving YHWH (*məšārēt ʾet-yhwh*) before Eli in the temple at the time of his vision. The expression *məšārēt ʾet-yhwh* is normally, although not exclusively, reserved for priestly service,[10] and access to the temple and the ark of the covenant is normally reserved for priests. Although we must observe that nonpriests might have had access to the temple and the ark at this early time in Israel's history and that the literary framework of the present form of the narrative clear portrays Samuel's experience to inaugurate his role as a prophet (*nābîʾ*), Samuel's priestly associations are clear.

One makes similar observations about Samuel's visionary experience in 1 Sam 9:1–10:16, that is, Samuel is clearly in communication with YHWH throughout the account of his encounter with Saul, but he does so as a figure who officiates over sacrifice in Ramah and assigns to Saul the *šôq hattərûmâ* normally reserved for priests.

When taken together with our earlier observations concerning the priestly associations of Samuel's actions in his role as judge, we must come to a conclusion, namely, although the 1 Samuel narratives clearly identify Samuel as a prophet, seer, and man of G-d, he also very clearly

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9. Raphael I. Panetz, "Ephod," *ABD* 2:550–51.
10. Cody, *History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 74.

functions as a priest even though he is never labeled as such. Indeed, the
Chronicler appears to have faced this question as well and resolved the
issue by labeling Samuel as both prophet and seer, as we noted above,
but the Chronicler also makes sure to work Samuel and his family line
into the genealogy of the Levites in 1 Chr 6:7–13. In essence, the Chroni-
cler resolved the issue by identifying Samuel as both prophet and Levite.[11]
Indeed, traditional Jewish exegetes, such as Radak and Rashi, accept the
Chronicler's decision and interpret the identification of Samuel's father,
Elkanah, as an Ephraimite in 1 Sam 1:1 as an indication of his residence,
not of his tribal identity.[12]

3.

These observations demand that we press the question further, that is, Why
does 1 Samuel identify Samuel only as a prophet when it is so clear that he
functions as a priest as well? Three major considerations come into play.

First, we may observe that northern traditions frequently ascribe
prophetic identity to leading authority figures. The patriarchs Abraham
and Jacob are both credited with visionary experiences in the EJ accounts
of Gen 15 and 28 respectively even though neither is ever identified as a
prophet. The elders of Israel are granted prophetic status in Num 11 even
though the function of the elders is to play a role in the governance of
Israel rather than to act as prophets. Even in the Samuel traditions, Saul is
credited with prophetic experience even though he is not a prophet. And
Elijah and Elisha are identified as prophets, even though many of their
own actions are those of priests, for example, offering sacrifice at Mount
Carmel, experiencing divine revelation on Mount Horeb much like the
priest in the holy of holies, and playing music while delivering an oracle
much like the later prophets identified as Levitical temple singers.

Second, we must observe that although many if not all of Samuel's
priestly actions identified above are ascribed to the Levitical priesthood in
the Priestly portions of the Pentateuch, the P portions of the Pentateuch
themselves are aware that the Levites were not always the priesthood of
ancient Israel. The books of Exodus and especially Numbers emphasize the
means by which the Levites emerged as YHWH's divinely chosen priestly

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11. See Japhet, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 155–56.

12. For the commentaries of Radak (R. David Kimhi) and Rashi (R. Solomon ben
Isaac), see any standard edition of the Mikraot Gedolot.

tribe during Israel's sojourn in the wilderness. But statements made by YHWH in Num 3:11–13 and 3:40–51 clearly indicate that the firstborn sons of Israel served as priests for YHWH before the tribe of Levi was chosen for this role; for example:

> YHWH spoke to Moses, saying, "And I, behold, I, have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel in place of all the firstborn, the first issue of the womb is Mine. At the time that I struck the firstborn of the land of Egypt, I consecrated every firstborn in Israel, human and animal, to Myself to be Mine, YHWH's." (Num 3:11–13)

And

> And YHWH said to Moses, "Record every firstborn male of the people of Israel from the age of one month up, and make lists of their names, and take the Levites for Me, YHWH, in place of every firstborn among the people of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites in place of every first-born among the cattle of the people of Israel." (Num 3:40–41)

Indeed, vestiges of the practice of dedicating firstborn sons (firstborn to the mother) appear elsewhere in the Bible as well. Exodus 34:19–21 indicates that every first issue of the womb belongs to YHWH, including all the firstborn of cattle and sheep. The legal paragraph goes on to declare that every firstborn ass and human being must be redeemed, that is, the owner or parent must present some sort of an offering at the temple in place of firstborn ass or human being. Such a conception stands behind the Akedah narrative in Gen 22, in which Isaac, firstborn to his mother Sarah, is redeemed from sacrifice by a ram that is sacrificed in his place. Exodus 34:19–21 appears also to be an elaboration on Exod 22:28–29, which requires Israelites not to put off the skimming of their vats, to give their firstborn sons to YHWH, and also to give the firstborn of cattle and flocks to YHWH.

Most interpreters presuppose that the command to give the firstborn sons to YHWH entails their sacrifice, as illustrated by the Akedah narrative and the analogy of giving firstborn cattle and sheep to YHWH as offerings.[13] But can we presuppose the practice of child sacrifice in ancient

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13. But see Propp, *Exodus 19–40*, 263–72; Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, esp. 4–17.

Israel— even at an early period— when biblical tradition is adamant that the sacrifice of children is abhorrent to YHWH? Perhaps the tradition reacts against a time when child sacrifice was practiced in Canaan or the surrounding regions by Israel's ancestors or predecessors, but such an act is considered foreign to Israel's self-understanding—and the texts cited here aid in making sure that Israel does not engage in such practice.

But YHWH's statements to Moses in Num 3:11–13 and 3:40–51 suggest another possibility, namely, that Israel's earliest priesthood was constituted by the dedication of firstborn sons to the service of YHWH, but whereas firstborn cattle and sheep were sacrificed to YHWH, the firstborn sons served as priests to offer sacrifices and serve in other holy capacities instead of serving as sacrifices themselves. Only later did the Levitical priesthood develop as a priestly, hereditary tribe or caste to undertake such functions, especially in Jerusalem and perhaps in Judah as well. Such a development might well explain the condemnation of Jeroboam ben Nebat, the first king of northern Israel, for his practice of appointing anyone to be a priest rather than Levites. Perhaps his practice represents an earlier Israelite practice of designating the firstborn sons as priests, whereas the Judean-oriented Deuteronomistic History affirmed the role of the Levites as YHWH's priesthood and condemned other practices as antithetical to the true will of YHWH for holy service in Israel's and Judah's temples.

Samuel's circumstances certainly appear to fit this model. He is the firstborn son of his mother, Hannah, and his Ephraimite father, Elkanah. He is deposited in the Shiloh sanctuary to be raised for priestly service by the high priest Eli. He develops into a visionary prophet and oracle divine who speaks on behalf of YHWH, much like other Levites or priests, such as Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and perhaps others. And when he offers sacrifice or engages in other priestly functions, no objection is made because his right to do so is unquestioned.

Such considerations return us to the issue addressed at the outset of this paper, that is, the institutional identify of Samuel in the Deuteronomistic History. Clearly, the Deuteronomistic History affirms Samuel's identity as a prophet (*nābîʾ*), but it never refers to him as a Levite or priest, as it does with Eli and his sons Hophni and Phineas. But we have also noted how 1 Sam 9:9 explains that Samuel's role as a seer (*rōʾeh*) would be understood in contemporary times (of the author of the narratives) as a prophet (*nābîʾ*). Given the commitment to the temple and the Levitical priesthood evident throughout the Deuteronomistic History, the Deuter-

onomistic History editors must have edited the earlier underlying Samuel narrative to characterize him as a prophet, *nābîʾ*, rather than as an earlier form of priest by virtue of his status as a firstborn son dedicated to divine service in the presentation of the institutional identity of Samuel. For its own part, Chronicles corrects a problem that it perceives in the Deuteronomistic History by identifying Samuel as a Levite as well as a prophet.

<div align="center">4.</div>

In sum, then, we may note several conclusions or implications: (1) historically speaking, Samuel was an early type of Israelite priest by virtue of his identity as a firstborn son to his mother who was dedicated for holy service to the Shiloh temple; (2) Samuel's holy service as a priest included both his role as visionary prophet and his role in presiding over the offering of sacrifices to YHWH; (3) the Deuteronomistic History, given its commitment to the holy temple and its Levitical priesthood, made sure to identify Samuel as a prophet, *nābîʾ*, to conform to its sense of sacred propriety while condemning northern Israel for its use of non-Levitical priests; and (4) the Chronicler resolved a problem perceived in the Deuteronomistic History by designating Samuel as a Levite and providing a Levitical genealogy for his family.

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The Critique of Solomon in the
Josianic Edition of the Deuteronomistic History

1.

The publication of Noth's *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* marks an important milestone in the history of modem biblical scholarship in that it has prompted a continuing debate on the character and composition of one of the most important examples of ancient Israelite and Judean history writing.[1] According to Noth's hypothesis, the books of Deuteronomy,

1. Martin Noth, *Uberlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien: Die sammelden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1967), 1–110; ET, *Deuteronomistic History*. For surveys and evaluations of the current debate on the DtrH, see McKenzie, "Deuteronomistic History"; Steven L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Books of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History*, VTSup 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 1–19; Mark A. O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment*, OBO 92 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 3–23; Horst D. Preuss, "Zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk," *TRu* 58 (1993): 229–64, 341–95; Gary N. Knoppers, *The Reign of Solomon and the Rise of Jeroboam*, vol. 1 of *Two Nations under G-d: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies*, HSM 52 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 1–56.

Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, and 1–2 Kings constitute a continuous historical work that presents the history of Israel and Judah from the time of the conquest of the land of Canaan to the period of the Babylonian exile. Noth argues that this so-called Deuteronomistic History was the product of a single author working in the exilic period, who presented Israel's and Judah's history in light of the theological principles laid down in Deuteronomy in order to explain the tragedy of Babylonian exile as a failure of the people, and especially their monarchs, to live according to the requirements of the Mosaic covenant. Although scholars generally accept Noth's basic hypothesis, subsequent discussion identifies various alternative models for the character and composition of the Deuteronomistic History. One very influential model is that of Rudolf Smend, Dietrich, and Timo Veijola, which posits three major exilic redactions of the work, including "the basic history" or *Grundschrift* (DtrG), a "prophetic redaction" (DtrP), and a legally oriented or "Nomistic" redaction (DtrN).[2] A second highly influential model is that of Cross and Richard D. Nelson, which maintains that a late seventh-century edition of the history, composed to support King Josiah's reform, preceded the final exilic edition of the work.[3] Many scholars, such as Ernest W. Nicholson, Moshe Weinfeld, Helga Weippert, Andrew D. H. Mayes, and Campbell, maintain that pre-Deuteronomistic materials from the Northern Kingdom of Israel are incorporated into the work.[4] Others, such as Norbert Lohfink, Robert E. Friedman, Iain Provan, Mark A. O'Brien, McKenzie, Halpern and David S. Vanderhooft, and Gary

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2. Rudolf Smend, "Das Gesetz und die Volker: Ein Beitrag zur deuteronomistischen Redaktionsgeschichte," in *Probleme biblischer Theologie*, ed. Hans W. Wolff (Munich: Kaiser, 1971), 494–509; Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte*; Timo Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung*, AASF B 193 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1975); Veijola, *Das Konigtum in der Beurteilung der deuteronomistischen Historiographie: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, AASF B 199 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1977).

3. Cross, "Themes of the Book of Kings"; Nelson, *Double Redaction*.

4. Ernest W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967); Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972); Helga Weippert, "Die 'deuteronomistischen' Beurteilung der Könige von Israel und Juda und das Problem der Redaktion der Königsbücher," *Bib* 53 (1972): 301–39; Andrew D. H. Mayes, *The Story of Israel between Settlement and Exile: A Redactional Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (London: SCM, 1983); Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*.

Knoppers, attempt to combine elements of the positions outlined above to demonstrate Josianic and exilic editions of the work.[5] Hans-Detlef Hoffmann, Brian Peckham, and John Van Seters continue to maintain that the Deuteronomistic History is the product of a single author or composer.[6]

This paper addresses the problem of defining the character and composition of the Deuteronomistic History by examining the critique of Solomon that appears within the Deuteronomistic History. It maintains that the critique of Solomon is a previously misunderstood central motif of the Deuteronomistic History that plays a major role in defining its outlook on the history of Israel and Judah and the setting of its composition. On the basis of this examination, it argues that the critique of Solomon constitutes a primary element of the Josianic edition of the Deuteronomistic History, which presents Solomon as a foil to Josiah, insofar as Solomon causes the fundamental problems within the kingdoms of Israel and Judah that Josiah attempts to set aright. The paper therefore concludes that Josiah, not Solomon or David, is the intended ideal monarch of the Deuteronomistic History.

2.

The critique of Solomon in 1 Kgs 1–11 presents a fundamental problem that is bound up with the interpretation of the Deuteronomistic History

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5. Norbert Lohfink, "Kerygmata des Deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks," in *Die Botschaft und die Boten*, ed. Jörg Jeremias and Lothar Perlitt (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 87–100; Friedman, *Exile and Biblical Narrative*; Robert E. Friedman, "From Egypt to Egypt: Dtr1 and Dtr2," in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith; Essays Presented to Frank Moore Cross, Jr.*, ed. Baruch Halpern and Jon D. Levenson (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 167–92; Iain Provan, *Hezekiah and the Book of Kings*, BZAW 172 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988); O'Brien, *Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis*; McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*; Baruch Halpern and David S. Vanderhooft, "The Editions of Kings in the Seventh–Sixth Centuries B.C.E.," *HUCA* 62 (1991): 179–244; Knoppers, *Reign of Solomon and the Rise of Jeroboam*; Knoppers, *The Reign of Jeroboam, the Fall of Israel, and the Reign of Josiah*, vol. 2 of *Two Nations under G-d: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies*, HSM 53 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994).

6. Hans-Detlef Hoffmann, *Reform und Reformen: Untersuchungen zu einem Grundthema der deuteronomistischen Geschichtsschreibung*, ATANT 66 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980); Brian Peckham, *The Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*, HSM 35 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985); John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

as a whole. It must be understood in relation to the overall attitude of the Deuteronomistic History to kingship in general and the Davidic dynasty in particular.[7] Noth follows Wellhausen in maintaining that the Deuteronomistic History is antimonarchic in that it holds the kings of Israel and Judah to be ultimately responsible for the collapse of both states.[8] But von Rad notes that the Deuteronomistic History continually emphasizes the importance of the Davidic dynasty to its theology of Israel's history and holds out the hope of a future restoration based on the promise to the house of David.[9] Much of the subsequent discussion of the character and composition of the Deuteronomistic History stems from this observation in that it points to contrasting attitudes toward kingship in the Deuteronomistic History. On the one hand, the Deuteronomistic History supports the Davidic dynasty; on the other, it is highly critical of the monarchs of Israel and Judah, including many of the Davidic line beginning with Solomon. This issue prompts many scholars to argue that the Deuteronomistic History is the product of two or more redactions, and it serves as the foundation for those who argue for the existence of a pro-Davidic Josianic redaction of the Deuteronomistic History prior to an antimonarchic exilic edition.[10]

This issue is particularly pertinent in relation to the interpretation of the critique of Solomon in the Deuteronomistic History. According to 1 Kgs 11, Solomon is responsible for the establishment of an independent Northern Kingdom opposed to Davidic rule and worship in the Jerusalem temple; his marriage to foreign women and his willingness to accommodate their pagan worship practices lead directly to the revolt of the northern tribes against the house of David that splits the people of Israel. In the view of the Deuteronomistic History, this illustrates the fundamental problem in the history of Israel and Judah in that it points to the people's disobedience to YHWH's commands, particularly those pertain-

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7. See now Gerald E. Gerbrandt, *Kingship according to the Deuteronomistic History*, SBLDS 87 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

8. Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 63–74; cf. Gerbrandt, *Kingship*, 18–23.

9. Gerhard von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy* (London: SCM, 1953), 74–91. Cf. Dennis J. McCarthy, "II Samuel 7 and the Structure of the Deuteronomic History," *JBL* 84 (1965): 131–38. McCarthy demonstrates that 2 Sam 7, which narrates Nathan's prophecy to David of YHWH's eternal guarantee to maintain the rule of the Davidic dynasty in Jerusalem, is a central element in the overall structure and outlook of the DtrH.

10. E.g., Cross, "Themes of the Book," 278–85.

ing to the worship of foreign gods, rejection of the one place chosen for the worship of YHWH, and intermarriage with pagan peoples. Ultimately, these factors lead to the destruction of both Israel and Judah in the historical presentation of the Deuteronomistic History.

On the other hand, the Deuteronomistic History idealizes Solomon to a large extent in that it presents him as the wisest and most powerful of all the monarchs in Israel's and Judah's history.[11] The importance of his idealization in the Deuteronomistic History is further highlighted by two essential factors. First, he is the first monarch to succeed David, the founder of the Davidic line, and therefore his accession to the throne truly establishes the dynastic succession of the house of David. Second, he is the monarch who builds the temple in Jerusalem, which constitutes the central religious institution of Israel in the eyes of the Deuteronomistic History insofar as the monarchs are judged in large measure according to their support of the temple and opposition to alternative worship sites.[12] Scholars frequently focus on the importance of obedience to the Mosaic commandments as the basis for the relationship between YHWH and the people, but it also centers on the promise to the royal house of David and on worship exclusively at the temple in Jerusalem.[13]

According to the Deuteronomistic History, Solomon thereby establishes two constitutive elements in the relationship between YHWH and the people of Israel. Why then should he be charged with the most fundamental disobedience to the commandments of YHWH and held responsible for one of the most serious problems in the history of Israel: the division of the people into two kingdoms and the subsequent rejection of the one legitimate temple of YHWH by the Northern Kingdom? The seriousness of this charge is compounded by the fact that the Deuteronomistic History in 2 Kgs 17 explains the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians as a judgment by YHWH brought about by its rejection of YHWH and the Jerusalem temple.

The usual explanation is that the Deuteronomistic critique of Solomon stems from pre-Deuteronomistic material that was originally written in

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11. See Gerbrandt, *Kingship*, 174–77; Helen A. Kenik, *Design for Kingship: The Deuteronomistic Narrative Technique in 1 Kings 3:4–15*, SBLDS 69 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983); Knoppers, *Reign of Solomon and the Rise of Jeroboam*, 57–134.

12. See Cross, "Themes of the Book," 278–85.

13. See von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*; Cross, "Themes of the Book."

the north to justify the revolt against the house of David and the establish-
ment of an independent monarchy.[14] With the collapse of the Northern
Kingdom in 722/721 BCE, this material was brought south and eventually
found its way into the Deuteronomistic literary works that provided the
basis for attempts to reform the Davidic monarchy and Jerusalem temple
worship in the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah. The rationale for such an
explanation is that reformers in the Southern Kingdom sought to bring
the kingdom into conformity with the requirements of YHWH, and they
thereby sought to avoid a fate similar to that of the Northern Kingdom.

But this explanation is hardly satisfactory. The Deuteronomistic
History is fundamentally a Judean historical work with special interests
in asserting the legitimacy and centrality of the Davidic monarchy and
the Jerusalem temple. Why then would it include northern criticism of
the very monarch who established the existence of these fundamental
Judean institutions? And furthermore, why would Judah be motivated
to adopt northern ideological perspectives in an attempt to reform these
two institutions? In the wake of the collapse of the Northern Kingdom,
the legitimacy of Judean institutions and ideology would be confirmed.
Whereas the Northern Kingdom, which rejected the house of David
and the Jerusalem temple, was destroyed, the Southern Kingdom, which
relied on YHWH's eternal promise to the house of David, survived intact,
despite the odds that were stacked against it during the Syro-Ephraimitic
War in 735–732 BCE, the Assyrian invasion of Israel in 724–720 BCE, and
the Judean revolt against Assyria in 705–701 BCE. To be sure, Judah suf-
fered from these experiences, but it survived. In light of the failure of the
Northern Kingdom and its ideology, it would have been very easy to blame
the northern monarchs, beginning with Jeroboam I, for the tragedy, and
this perspective certainly appears in the Deuteronomistic History, which
condemns the northern monarchs for following in the sins of Jeroboam.
Solomon, on the other hand, founded the very institutions that expressed
YHWH's guarantee of survival to the kingdom of Judah, and that guaran-
tee held firm despite the Assyrian onslaught.

The problem is compounded by the fact that the so-called torah of
the king in Deut 17:14–20 presupposes Solomon as the royal antitype or
the model of royal misbehavior. Although this identification is disputed,[15]

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14. E.g., Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*, esp. 58–82.

15. E.g., Andrew D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,
1979), 272; for a survey of research on this law, see Félix Garcia López, "Le roi d'Israel:

the royal excesses outlined in Deut 17:14–20—the multiplication of wives, the pursuit of silver and gold, the potential for royal apostasy, and so on—correspond best to elements in the critique of Solomon in the Deuteronomistic History. Again, this raises the question as to why Solomon should be considered the model for royal misbehavior in a Judean work when northern monarchs, such as Jeroboam I or Ahab, would provide adequate or even more suitable figures. Deuteronomy does after all require the exclusive worship of YHWH at the one place where YHWH chooses to cause the divine name to dwell. Jeroboam I actually established alternative temples at Dan and Bethel, and Ahab officially sanctioned the worship of the Phoenician deity Baal Shamem[16] in the Northern Kingdom. Solomon, on the other hand, established the one sanctuary required in Deuteronomy.

A further complicating factor is the idealization of Josiah in the Deuteronomistic History. Second Kings 22–23 presents Josiah as the righteous monarch who implements all of the commands of YHWH and lauds him with the statement in 23:25, "Before him there was no king like him, who turned to YHWH with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Torah of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him." Despite Josiah's exemplary righteousness, however, the Deuteronomistic History maintains that YHWH decides to proceed with plans to destroy Judah because of the sins of Manasseh (2 Kgs 23:26). Various studies have noted that the idealization of Josiah extends beyond the account of his reign in 2 Kings. Nelson notes, for example, that the image of Joshua in the book of Joshua is built on the image of the righteous Josiah who attempts to extend his rule over a reunited people throughout the entire land of Israel and to expel Canaanite influence from that land.[17] Likewise, Hoffmann notes that the prophetically inspired Josiah embodies the Deuteronomic ideal of leadership as expressed in the images of both Samuel and Moses.[18] This idealization of Josiah conflicts with the assertion of many scholars that David is the ideal monarch of the Deuteronomistic

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Dt 17,14–20," in *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft*, ed. Norbert Lohfink, BETL 68 (Leuven: Peeters and Leuven University Press, 1985), 277–97, esp. 277–82.

16. On the identification of the deity as Baal Shamem, see John Day, "Baal (Deity)," *ABD* 1:548.

17. Richard D. Nelson, "Josiah in the Book of Joshua," *JBL* 100 (1981): 531–40.

18. Hoffmann, *Reform und Reformen*, 264–70, 291–92, 312–13.

History,[19] but this assertion falters when one considers David's actions in his affair with Bath-Sheba. David is hardly ideal in the Deuteronomistic History; he commits both adultery and murder in his pursuit of Bath-Sheba, and the ultimate result of his actions is the birth of Solomon and Solomon's accession to the throne in the context of some rather suspicious activities that lead to the death or expulsion of all major figures who might oppose his rule. Furthermore, just as Solomon is born as the result of David's lust for Bath-Sheba, so Solomon fails in the eyes of the Deuteronomistic History as a result of his own lust for foreign women. Josiah, on the other hand, displays none of these failures, and his destruction of the altar at Bethel puts to an end the division within the people of Israel that is begun by Solomon's marriage to foreign women and his support of their pagan religious practices. Neither David nor Solomon is the ideal monarch of the Deuteronomistic History; Josiah is, and the contrast between his actions and those of Solomon suggests that the critique of Solomon in the Deuteronomistic History must be weighed against the idealized portrayal of Josiah.[20]

<div style="text-align:center">3.</div>

These considerations demonstrate a need to reassess the presentation of the critique of Solomon in the Deuteronomistic History. It is therefore necessary to reexamine the pertinent texts, including 1 Kgs 3–11, which presents Solomon's reign; Deut 17:14–20, the "torah of the king," which presupposes Solomon as the model of the royal antitype; the Succession Narrative in 2 Sam 9–20 and 1 Kgs 1–2, which presents David's affair with Bath-Sheba and Solomon's accession to the throne; and 2 Kgs 22–23, which presents the reign of King Josiah.

The Deuteronomistic History narrative concerning Solomon's reign appears in 1 Kgs 3–11, where it follows the narrative concerning David's death and Solomon's accession to the throne in 1 Kgs 1–2 and precedes that concerning the revolt of the northern tribes in 1 Kgs 12. A cursory reading of the narrative makes it clear that a major purpose of the author is to point to Solomon's reign as the ultimate cause of the revolt of the northern tribes

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19. E.g., Gerbrandt, *Kingship*, 173.

20. See Knoppers, *Reign of Solomon and the Rise of Jeroboam*, 135–68; Knoppers, *Reign of Jeroboam, the Fall of Israel, and the Reign of Josiah*, 229–54; O'Brien, *Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis*, 34–44.

against the house of David. It is noteworthy that the narrative identifies two fundamental causes of the revolt: Solomon's apostasy, resulting from his marriages to foreign pagan women, and his treatment of the northern tribes within the context of his overall building activities and economic setbacks.

Although many studies treat the account of Solomon's apostasy due to his foreign wives in 1 Kgs 11 as a separate element in the narrative concerning his reign,[21] it is clear that this theme permeates 1 Kgs 3–11. Elements of the theme appear in the framework of the narrative, which suggests that it represents the perspective of the Deuteronomistic History writer. The narrative begins with the notice in 1 Kgs 3:1 that "Solomon betrothed himself to Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and he took the daughter of Pharaoh and he brought her unto the city of David until he completed building his house and the House of YHWH and the wall of Jerusalem round about." Scholars have noted that this statement appears to be a somewhat awkwardly placed editorial comment that is designed to establish a coherent chronology.[22] In fact, it is placed here deliberately to highlight the concern of the Deuteronomistic History with Solomon's marriages as a cause for the split in the kingdom. This is indicated by the recapitulation of the theme throughout the narrative in 1 Kgs 7:8; 9:16, 24, which makes various references to Solomon's marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh, and at the end of the narrative in 1 Kgs 11:1, where it introduces the discussion of Solomon's marriages to foreign women as the cause of his apostasy.[23]

In light of this emphasis on Solomon's marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh at the beginning, middle, and end of the narrative, it is noteworthy that Jeroboam, the primary instigator of the revolt of the northern tribes, is given sanctuary by the Egyptian pharaoh after he is forced to leave Israel for sedition and attempted revolt against Solomon (1 Kgs 11:40).[24] In this manner, the Deuteronomistic History writer employs the

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21. E.g., Knoppers, *Reign of Solomon and the Rise of Jeroboam*, 134–68.

22. See John Gray, *I and II Kings: A Commentary*, 2nd ed., OTL (London: SCM, 1970), 117–18; James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings*, ICC (Edinburgh: Clark, 1951), 102; Martin Noth, *Könige*, BKAT 9.1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968), 48.

23. For a treatment of Solomon's marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh in the DtrH account of his reign, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Solomon and the Daughter of Pharaoh: Intermarriage, Conversion, and the Impurity of Women," *JANES* 16–17 (1984–1985): 23–37.

24. See 1 Kgs 11:14–22, which indicates that Pharaoh likewise gave sanctuary to Hadad the Edomite, who also attempted revolt against Solomon.

theme of Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter as a means to portray his failure as a monarch; Solomon marries the daughter of Pharaoh and thereby apostatizes against YHWH, and Pharaoh then becomes an agent in fomenting revolt against Solomon and the house of David. In the context of the Deuteronomistic History as a whole, the prohibition against marriage to foreign women and the apostasy that results from such intermarriage is a violation of one of the fundamental commandments of Deuteronomic law (Deut 7:1–6),[25] and such apostasy is the basis for criticism throughout the Deuteronomistic History, where it is the foreign nations who carry out YHWH's punishment. Clearly, the concern with Solomon's marriages to foreign women stems from the Deuteronomistic History writer who composed the present form of the narrative concerning Solomon's reign.

This conclusion is confirmed by the nature of the presentation of the other major cause of the northern revolt in the Deuteronomistic History: Solomon's mistreatment of the northern tribes. References to such mistreatment are scattered throughout the middle of the narrative. First Kings 4:7–19 points out that the northern tribes paid a disproportionate share of the revenues that supported Solomon's court in that eleven of the tax districts were from the northern tribes, whereas only one was from Judah. Insofar as Solomon's kingdom was a federation of two major constituencies, the southern tribe of Judah and the northern tribes of Israel (1 Kgs 11:20; cf. 2 Sam 5:1–5),[26] the northern tribes were required to pay a far greater share of support than their political representation in the structure of the monarchy would justify. First Kings 5:27–32 reports that Solomon raised a forced levy from all Israel to carry out his construction of the temple. The phrase "all Israel" in 1 Kgs 5:27 appears to include the tribe of Judah; nevertheless, the employment of the corvée in Lebanon would suggest that, for logistical reasons, the majority of the laborers came from the northern tribes.[27] Finally, 1 Kgs 9:10–14 reports that Solomon ceded

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25. See 1 Kgs 11:2, which alludes to Deut 7:1–6. Although Deut 7:1–6 prohibits marriage only to the women of the seven Canaanite nations, the author of 1 Kgs 11:1–2 clearly understands this as a prohibition of marriage to foreign women in general.

26. See Alt, "Monarchy in the Kingdoms."

27. The use of the term *kol yiśrāʾēl*, "all Israel," in 1 Kgs 1:20 in relation to Solomon's accession to the throne demonstrates that the expression refers to all the tribes of Israel, including Judah. See 1 Kgs 3:28; 4:1, 7; 11:42. Note that Jeroboam, who instigated the revolt of the northern tribes, was in charge of the forced labor of the house of

twenty Galilean cities to Hiram, king of Tyre, when he was unable to pay Hiram for his services in building the Jerusalem temple and the royal palace. Again, the northern tribes, but not Judah, were forced to pay for Solomon's miscalculations.[28]

Solomon's unfair treatment of the northern tribes clearly plays an important role in their decision to revolt against the house of David, but their placement in the midst of the narrative of Solomon's reign indicates that the Deuteronomistic History writer chose not to emphasize them as the primary cause of the revolt. As noted above, the Deuteronomistic History emphasizes Solomon's intermarriage with foreign women and his subsequent apostasy as the primary cause. The motif of Solomon's mistreatment of the northern tribes plays a role in the Deuteronomistic History presentation, but the relative lack of attention to this motif in relation to that of Solomon's marriages suggests that the former may well have appeared in preexisting material available to the Deuteronomistic History writer, whereas the latter is a Deuteronomistic History creation. The Deuteronomistic History presentation of Solomon's reign and the reasons for the revolt of the northern tribes highlight several features of the "torah of the king" in Deut 17:14–20, including the problem of the multiplication of wives who turn his heart away from YHWH and returning the people to Egypt. Some have argued that Deut 17:14–20 stems from a northern milieu because of a supposed interest in charismatic, nondynastic kingship and an interest in restricting the power of the king.[29] But verse 20 clearly presupposes a dynastic principle, and the

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Joseph (1 Kgs 11:28). Jeroboam's Ephraimite background and the northern character of the designation "house of Joseph" suggest that the corvée was a major cause of dissatisfaction among the northern tribes. Note that the primary demand of Rehoboam made by the northern tribes was that he lighten the yoke laid on them by Solomon. When Rehoboam refused this concession, the northern tribes, who were otherwise willing to accept Davidic rule according to the narrative, revolted.

28. Knoppers correctly attempts to portray Solomon's actions in relation to DtrH's emphasis on Solomon's wealth and power in order to idealize him (*Reign of Solomon and the Rise of Jeroboam*, 57–134), but he does not pay sufficient attention to the deleterious effects of these actions on the northern tribes.

29. E.g., Kurt Galling, "Das Königsgesetz im Deuteronomium," *TLZ* 76 (1951): 133–38; Albrecht Alt, "Die Heimat des Deuteronomiums," in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (Munich: Beck, 1953), 2:250–75, esp. 263–75; Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, OTL (London: SCM, 1966) 118–20; Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*, 49–50.

law merely defines the means by which royal authority is exercised; it does not restrict the power of the king to rule.[30] A southern setting for this law is hardly precluded.

Indeed, Deut 17:14–20 expresses the Deuteronomic attitude toward kingship in general, but in doing so it presupposes Solomon as the archetypical model of an errant king in that the issues addressed in the law best correspond to problems that emerged during the course of his reign as presented in the Deuteronomistic History.[31] As noted above, 1 Kgs 11:1–8 stresses that Solomon's apostasy was due to his efforts to accommodate the pagan religious practice of his many wives. Deuteronomy 17:17a expressly

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30. See Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 270; Gerbrandt, *Kingship*, 108–16. Note that Deut 16:18–18:22 constitutes a block of laws that distributes official power among various officeholders, including judges and officers, Levitical priests, the king, and prophets. For studies of this block, see Norbert Lohfink, "Die Sicherung des Wirksamkeit des G-tteswortes durch das Prinzip der Schriftlichkeit der Tora und durch das Prinzip der Gewaltenteilung nach den Amtergesetzen des Buches Deuteronomium [Dt 16,18–18,22]," in *Testimonium Veritati*, ed. Hans Wolter, FTS 7 (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1971), 143–55; Udo Rüterswörden, *Von der politischen Gemeinschaft zur Gemeinde: Studien zu Dt 16,18–18,22*, BBB 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Athenaium, 1987). In contrast to those who see this distribution of powers as a means to circumscribe the powers of the king, Moshe Weinfeld points out that "judges" (*šōpaṭîm*) and "officers" (*šōṭarîm*) are titles for royal functionaries who administer justice on behalf of the king. See Weinfeld, "Judge and Officer in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East," *IOS* 7 (1977): 65–88, esp. 84. That the king is required to read from his own copy of the Torah in making decisions hardly circumscribes his power (Deut 17:19–20). As the account of Josiah's reforms shows, the scroll of the Torah gives him the authority to exercise wide-ranging power to enact reform measures throughout the land (cf. 2 Kgs 22–23).

31. Contra Baruch Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel*, HSM 25 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 225–32. Halpern denies that the "Torah of the King" was written with Solomon in mind and argues instead that Deut 17:14–20 was written at the inception of the monarchy. He ignores the anti-Solomonic material in DtrH (apart from 1 Kgs 11:1–10) because it also appears in Chronicles, which is pro-Solomonic, but this is unjustified in that it fails to consider the role of this material in the Chronicler's presentation. Halpern's statement that Josiah would not saddle himself with the restrictions laid down in Deut 17:14–20 fails to account for the propagandistic value of condemning Solomon in relation to a policy that was designed to attract the people of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel back to Davidic rule. Furthermore, his arguments for an early date for the composition of Deut 17:14–20 are circular in that they are based on the relationship of this text to 1 Sam 8:11–17, which is also Deuteronomistic, and the outlook of the text in Deut 17:14–20, which is written as if it anticipates, rather than presupposes, problems in the monarchy. Such an outlook can hardly stand as a criterion for establishing an early date for the composition of the text.

prohibits the king from multiplying wives because they will turn his heart away from YHWH. Likewise, 1 Kgs 10:26–29 emphasizes Solomon's many chariots and horsemen and notes that he engaged in trade with both Egypt and Kue in order to obtain horses and chariots and, in turn, exported them to Syria and Mesopotamia. Deuteronomy 17:16 expressly forbids the king from multiplying horses for himself and returning the people to Egypt for this purpose. Undoubtedly, Solomon's marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh must be viewed in relation to this lucrative trading arrangement. The Deuteronomistic History narrative in 1 Kgs 10:27 also emphasizes Solomon's great wealth by noting the great quantity of silver and cedar that Solomon brought into Jerusalem. This notice appears in the same context as that concerning his trade with Egypt in horses, which suggests that his Egyptian horse trade led to his great wealth. In addition, 1 Kgs 10:1–25 stresses Solomon's great wealth, especially gold and silver, which he obtained in trade with foreign nations. Deuteronomy 17:17b expressly prohibits the king from multiplying silver and gold for himself. Note also that Solomon's great wealth played a role in prompting him to undertake his building projects, which in turn led to his exploitation of the northern tribes and financial difficulties that forced him to cede twenty Galilean cities. Interestingly, the ceding of twenty cities to Hiram of Tyre placed Israelites under the rule of a foreign monarch, a situation that is expressly forbidden by Deut 17:15, which prohibits the people from choosing a foreigner as monarch.

This last point is particularly important in understanding the relation of the "torah of the king" to the narrative concerning Solomon in the Deuteronomistic History. Indeed, the present form of the narrative concerning Solomon's reign appears to be an ideologically charged presentation that is coordinated with Deut 17:14–20 in order to demonstrate that Solomon failed to live up to the requirements of righteous kingship. This is confirmed by the Deuteronomistic History presentation of his accession to the throne. Deuteronomy 17:14–15 envisions a situation in which the people decide to choose a king for themselves, and it requires them to choose one of their own brothers—that is, an Israelite, rather than a foreigner. Questions might be raised about Solomon's ancestry, insofar as his mother Bath-Sheba was married to Uriah the Hittite prior to her marriage to David, but there is little evidence to conclude that she was a foreigner.[32]

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32. Bath-Sheba's lineage is somewhat uncertain, although most scholars seem to accept that her father, Eliam (2 Sam 11:3), may well be the son of Ahitophel (2 Sam 23:34). See McCarter, *2 Samuel*, 285.

Rather, the issue seems to turn on the concern that the people will choose the king. Unlike David (2 Sam 2:4, 5:1–5), Solomon was chosen to be king not by the people but by the aged David, who in turn was under the influence of Bath-Sheba and Nathan (1 Kgs 1–2). Insofar as this constitutes a deviation from the Deuteronomistic History understanding of the proper means to select the monarch, the circumstances of Solomon's accession to the throne, and his birth, therefore require examination.[33]

The narrative concerning Solomon's birth and accession to the throne of Israel appears in the so-called Succession Narrative in 2 Sam 9–20, 1 Kgs 1–2. Since Rost's initial study of the work, scholars have generally agreed that the purpose of the Succession Narrative is to legitimize Solomon's accession to the throne of David in place of his many older brothers.[34] But if the purpose of the Succession Narrative is indeed to legitimize Solomon's rule, it does so in a manner that raises many questions about the character of Solomon and the means by which he came to the throne.[35] It thereby raises questions about the Davidic dynasty.

Although it is true that the Succession Narrative identifies David as the one who chose Solomon to be his successor, he does so only as an aged and possibly senile man who is easily manipulated by Bath-Sheba, the mother of Solomon, and the prophet Nathan (1 Kgs 1). Likewise, although

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33. For a discussion of problems pertaining to Solomon's accession to the throne, see Ishida, *Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, 151–82.

34. The Succession Narrative was first defined and studied by Leonhard Rost, *Die Uberlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids*, BWANT 42 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1926); ET, *Succession to the Throne*. For a history of scholarship since Rost's study, see McCarter, *2 Samuel*, 9–11.

35. For an analysis of Solomon's accession to the throne that views the Succession Narrative as pro-Solomonic, see Tomoo Ishida, "Solomon's Succession to the Throne of David—A Political Analysis," in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, ed. Tomoo Ishida (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1982), 175–87. In arguing that Solomon's killing of Adonijah and Joab was based on a charge of conspiracy, Ishida's analysis misses the point that the conspiracy is reported to Solomon by Bath-Sheba (1 Kgs 2:13–25), the same figure who manipulates David at the expense of others throughout the Succession Narrative. To base such action on the testimony of Bath-Sheba hardly demonstrates the author's intent to justify the killing of Adonijah and Joab. For a contrasting view, see Lienhard Delekat, "Tendenz und Theologie der David-Salomo-Erzihlung," in *Das ferne und nahe Wort*, BZAW 105 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967), 26–36; cf. Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 277–91, who maintains that the Succession Narrative is a secondary addition to the DtrH that attacks the Davidic house.

the narrative presents David as the one who sanctioned the ensuing blood-bath against Solomon's rival, Adonijah, and his supporters (1 Kgs 2), the politically motivated killings of Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei on trumped-up charges and the expulsion of the high priest Abiathar hardly do credit to Solomon's reputation for justice and wisdom as presented in 1 Kgs 3.

The problem is compounded by the circumstances of Solomon's birth as portrayed in the Succession Narrative in that Solomon is born as the result of an adulterous affair between David and Bath-Sheba that leads to David's murder of Bath-Sheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite, in a botched attempt to cover up her first pregnancy by David (2 Sam 11–12). Although Solomon is born only after the death of the first infant and the marriage of his parents, this account of his birth is hardly intended to engender respect or admiration for the new monarch in its readers. Furthermore, the narrative continues to raise questions about the circumstances of Solomon's accession to the throne in that it portrays the ensuing turmoil within the house of David as the result of David's sin with Bath-Sheba. Ironically, this turmoil results from sexual misconduct when Amnon rapes his half-sister, Tamar, and it leads to Amnon's murder by Tamar's brother Absalom, Absalom's revolt against David and the taking of his concubines, the death of Absalom, and the revolt of Sheba. Furthermore, the deaths of Amnon and Absalom help to clear the way for Solomon's accession to the throne. Throughout this narrative, David is revealed as a weak father figure who, despite his political success, is unable to guide his personal life and his household properly. Again, this raises questions about the character of David, who ultimately designates Solomon as his successor.

In order to understand the reasons why such questions would be raised, it is instructive to note the substantive changes that take place in the key personnel of the Davidic court as a result of Solomon's accession to the throne. Obviously, Solomon comes to the throne in place of his older brothers, who were born in Hebron, David's first capital: Amnon, Chileab, Absalom, Adonijah, Shephatiah, and Ithream (2 Sam 3:2–5). Likewise, Bath-Sheba becomes queen mother in place of David's earlier wives from his days in Hebron: Ahinoam, Abigail, Maacah, Haggith, Abital, and Eglah. In addition, David's military commander from his Hebron days, Joab, is replaced by Benaiah; the high priest Abiathar is ultimately replaced by Zadok following a period during which they serve together (see 2 Sam 8:17, 20:23–26); and the prophet Gad disappears without explanation, whereas the prophet Nathan appears on the

scene.[36] A clear pattern emerges in that elements of the Davidic house and its supporters from David's reign in Hebron are eliminated and replaced by a faction of the family led by Bath-Sheba and her supporters that appears only after the Davidic house moves to Jerusalem.

Although attempts to identify this faction as a Jebusite group that gained control of the house of David cannot be sustained,[37] it is very clear that the Deuteronomistic History portrays a substantive change in the dynasty that sees the elimination of the entire Hebron-based Davidic house. The significance of this observation becomes clear when one observes the means by which David becomes king over both Judah and Israel during his reign at Hebron. According to 2 Sam 2:1–4, the "men of Judah" anoint David as their king when he moves to Hebron. Likewise, 2 Sam 5:1–5 reports that "all the tribes of Israel" came to David at Hebron and requested that he become their king; the "elders of Israel" acted on their behalf to conclude a covenant with David and to anoint him king over Israel in Hebron. David shifted his rule to Jerusalem only after he was anointed king over all the tribes of Israel and Judah. Solomon is never designated king by the people; he is designated only by David and announces to the people that he rules as a result of YHWH's promise to establish the Davidic house (see 1 Kgs 8:1–66, esp. vv. 14–26; cf. 1 Kgs 9:1–9). Interestingly, the revolt of the northern tribes against the house of David took place when "all Israel" came to Shechem to make Rehoboam king, and Rehoboam refused to abide by their demands to lighten the burden that Solomon forced them to bear (1 Kgs 12, esp. v. 1). The Deuteronomistic History presents popular approval as an important element in the legitimate selection of the kings of Israel. Solomon's designation by David disrupts this pattern.

The significance of this disruption is best understood in relation to Josiah's idealization in 2 Kgs 22–23 and elsewhere in the Deuteronomistic History. He is described with unqualified praise as a monarch: "And he did what was right in the eyes of YHWH, and he walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn right or left" (2 Kgs 22:2). The Deuteronomistic History employs this language elsewhere only for

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36. On Benaiah, see 2 Sam 8:18, 20:23, 23:20–23. According to Alexander Zeron, Benaiah was apparently included in the list of David's officials in 2 Sam 23:20–23 during the reign of Solomon. See Zeron, "Der Platz Benajahus in der Heldenliste Davids [II Sam 23,20–23]," *ZAW* 90 (1978): 20–28. Note that Nathan may in fact be a son of David himself (2 Sam 5:14). For Gad, see 1 Sam 22:5, 2 Sam 24:1–25.

37. Gwilym H. Jones, *The Nathan Narrative*, JSOTSup 80 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990).

Joshua, the ideal model for Josiah in the Deuteronomistic History (Josh 1:7); for the ideal king in the "torah of the king" (Deut 17:20); and in Moses's and Joshua's exhortations to the people to abide by the covenant (Deut 5:30, 28:14, Josh 23:6; cf. Deut 17:11); it is never employed for another monarch in the Deuteronomistic History. This unparalleled praise appears again in the concluding evaluation of his reign in 2 Kgs 23:25: "And before him there was no king like him who turned to YHWH with all his heart and with all his might according to all the Torah of Moses, and after him there was none like him."[38] This language likewise is never employed for another monarch in the Deuteronomistic History, but it does appear in the primary Mosaic exhortation to the people to obey YHWH in Deut 6:5. In addition, Josiah sets right many of the wrongs that appear throughout the Deuteronomistic History. As part of his efforts to reestablish the covenant like that of Moses and Joshua (2 Kgs 23:1–3), Josiah campaigns against idolatry and illegitimate worship sites, pulls down the altars on the roof of the chamber of Ahaz that the kings of Judah made and those made by Manasseh (2 Kgs 23:12), defiles the high places made by Solomon (2 Kgs 23:13), breaks down the altar at Bethel (2 Kgs 23:15–20), and reinstitutes the Passover celebration that had not been conducted since the time of Joshua (2 Kgs 23:21–23).[39] Most importantly, he attempts to resolve the major problem of the Deuteronomistic History, the division within the people that resulted from Solomon's mistreatment of the northern tribes, by reuniting the people around the worship of YHWH at the one place where YHWH's name is manifested: the temple in Jerusalem.

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38. See Gary N. Knoppers, "'There Was None Like Him': Incomparability in the Books of Kings," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 411–31. He argues that the incomparability formula applied to Josiah in 2 Kgs 23:25, Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 18:5, and Solomon in 1 Kgs 3:12 is a superlative that highlights the ideal qualities of each of these monarchs.

39. Note that 2 Kgs 23:13 specifies the altars built by Solomon for Ashtoreth and Chemosh. Gray notes that the only examples of the singular form of Ashtoreth appear here and in 1 Kgs 11:5, which describes Solomon's building of the altars for Ashtoreth and Chemosh (*I and II Kings*, 275). Normally, the term appears as a plural form, *ashtoroth*. This indicates a unique link between the narrative of Josiah's reform and that concerning Solomon's apostasy. Note the link to the narrative concerning the establishment of the altar at Bethel in 1 Kgs 13. According to 1 Kgs 13:2, the anonymous man of G-d who condemned Jeroboam's actions predicted that the altar would be pulled down by Josiah. On Passover, see Josh 5:10–12, which describes the last Passover to be celebrated in the DtrH prior to the narrative concerning Josiah's reforms.

It is noteworthy that he is brought to the throne by "the people of the land" (ʿam hāʾāreṣ) following the assassination of his father, Amon (2 Kgs 21:23–24). The ʿam hāʾāreṣ generally acts in times of crisis to install a Davidic monarch on the throne following the assassination of his predecessor.[40] Although the people act in times of crisis, this observation obscures the fact that popular legitimation of the monarch appears to be an important element in the Deuteronomistic History conception of ideal kingship. As noted above, David was anointed by the people at both Hebron (2 Sam 2:1–4) and Shechem (2 Sam 5:1–5), whereas Rehoboam was rejected by the people at Shechem (1 Kgs 12:1–24). The northern tribes are condemned not for their rejection of the house of David but for their rejection of YHWH's temple in Jerusalem (see 1 Kgs 12:25–14:20; 2 Kgs 17). Although kings prior to Josiah had been legitimized by the people, ideal kingship did not follow. Both Joash and his son Ahaziah were assassinated in attempted coups (2 Kgs 12:19–21, 14:17–22), and Azariah's kingship was impaired by his leprosy. In the eyes of the Deuteronomistic History, any potential gains made by these monarchs were negated by Ahaz's acceptance of Assyrian patronage and his building of a foreign altar in the Jerusalem temple (2 Kgs 16:10–20). In short, although David serves as the model against whom the righteousness of the Judean kings is measured, Josiah is the ideal monarch of the Deuteronomistic History who institutes leadership like that of Moses and Joshua.[41] He is

40. See the narrative concerning the installation of Joash following the assassination of Ahaziah (2 Kgs 11:17–20); the installation of Azariah/Uzziah following the assassination of Amaziah (2 Kgs 14:21); and the installation of Jehoahaz following the death of Josiah at the hands of Pharaoh Neco (2 Kgs 23:30). On the role of the people of the land in the selection of the monarch, see Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Judaean 'Am ha'Ares' in Historical Perspective," in *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies: Papers* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1967), 1:71–76; Hayim Tadmor, "'The People' and the Kingship in Ancient Israel: The Role of Political Institutions in the Biblical Period," *CHM* 11 (1968): 3–23; Tomoo Ishida, "'The People of the Land' and the Political Crises in Judah," *AJBI* 1 (1975): 23–38; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings*, ConBOT 8 (Lund: Gleerup, 1976), 111–50, esp. 124–29; Christopher R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah*, BZAW 176 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 42–65.

41. See O'Brien, *Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis*, 140–42. He discusses attempts to exonerate the character of David as presented in the Succession Narrative. David's acceptance of Nathan's criticism in 2 Sam 12:13 and the statement concerning YHWH's favor for David in 2 Sam 12:24 indicate that the integrity of David's character is preserved. Nevertheless, the actions that require forgiveness continue to color the

legitimized by the people, and his reform corrects the problems manifested throughout Israel's history in the eyes of the Deuteronomistic History, especially the division of the people of Israel caused by Solomon's abuse of royal power.

As many scholars have noted, Josiah's early death at the hands of Pharaoh Neco cut short his attempts to restore the united kingdom of Israel under Davidic rule and forced the revision of the Deuteronomistic History from the account of the reign of Manasseh through the Babylonian exile.[42] Had Josiah lived to see the full impact of his policies, the account of his reign would have constituted the capstone of the Deuteronomistic History presentation of the history of the people of Israel. The critique of Solomon in the Deuteronomistic History plays an important role in the idealization of Josiah; Solomon is presented as the foil for Josiah and the antithesis of ideal kingship in the Deuteronomistic History. When measured against Solomon, Josiah emerges as the ideal monarch who corrects the problems caused by Solomon's abuse of power. In this regard, the importance of Nathan's statements to David in the dynastic promise of 2 Sam 7:12–16 becomes clear; YHWH will punish the son of David but not take steadfast love away from him. Solomon provided the occasion for YHWH's punishment, but Josiah provided the means to demonstrate YHWH's eternal promise to the house of David.

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In conclusion, the recognition that the idealization of Josiah in the Deuteronomistic History is achieved in relation to the critique of Solomon has important implications for understanding the composition of the Deuter-

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presentation of the history and influence the evaluation of Solomon. Although David is forgiven, his actions lay the foundations for the moral difficulties inherent in the narrative concerning Solomon's accession to the throne and the character of his rule.

42. E.g., Cross, "Themes of the Book"; Nelson, *Double Redaction*; McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*. Note that Provan's conclusion that a Josianic edition of the DtrH ended with the narrative concerning Hezekiah's reign does not take proper account of the literary shift that takes place in the presentation of the *bāmôt* formulae and the understanding of the Davidic theme (*Hezekiah and the Books*). The differences evident beginning with the reign of Manasseh indicate merely that the exilic DtrH writer began with a revision only in 2 Kgs 21. The exilic DtrH writer was thereby able to assert that the Babylonian exile was a result of Manasseh's policies and that Josiah's righteousness could not change YHWH's decision (2 Kgs 21:10–15, 23:26–27).

onomistic History. It supports the argument that a preexilic edition of
the Deuteronomistic History was composed during the reign of Josiah to
idealize him as the monarch who reunited the people of Israel around the
temple in Jerusalem. But it also demonstrates that the critique of Solo-
mon may not be attributed exclusively to northern sources. Although the
initial impulse for such a critique may well have come from the north, its
present form must be understood in direct relation to the presentation of
Josiah in the Deuteronomistic History. Any attempts to posit pre–Deu-
teronomistic History source material from the north[43] must take these
conclusions into account when reconstructing the literary history of the
Deuteronomistic History.

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43. E.g., Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*; Campbell, *Of Prophets and
Kings*; O'Brien, *Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis*.

Synchronic and Diachronic Considerations in the Deuteronomistic History Portrayal of the Demise of Solomon's Kingdom

1. Survey of the Research

Recent discussion concerning the portrayal of Solomon in 1 Kgs 1–11 correctly notes tremendous tension in the evaluation of a towering figure, who must be recognized as the true founder of the ruling house of David and the Jerusalem temple. On the one hand, Solomon is lauded as a powerful and wise monarch, who turned Israel from an insignificant tribal chiefdom into a powerful state that dominated the trade routes of southwestern Asia. On the other hand, Solomon is castigated for his love of foreign women and support for their gods, which ultimately prompted YHWH to designate Jeroboam ben Nebat king of northern Israel.

Scholars are divided in their assessment of 1 Kgs 1–11, however, insofar as they differ in their understandings of the literary structure of the presentation of Solomon and in their assessments of the compositional history by which these chapters reached their present form. Most early scholars maintain that the unfavorable portrayal of Solomon appears only in chapter 11, purportedly the product of Deuteronomistic redaction, at the conclusion of a favorable portrayal of the monarch in chapters 1–10.[1]

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1. See Marc Brettler, "The Structure of 1 Kings 1–11," *JSOT* 49 (1991): 87–97 (see 87 n. 1 for a summation of major contributions to the discussion). See, more recently,

Noth's famous study of the Deuteronomistic History broadly maintains that chapters 1–8 narrate Solomon's accomplishments, whereas chapters 9–11 narrate his apostasy.[2] Kim Parker insists that interpretation of 1–11 has been unduly influenced by redaction-critical models and calls for a holistic interpretation of the text that emphasizes a favorable portrayal of Solomon in 1 Kgs 3–8 and an unfavorable portrayal of the monarch in 9:1–11:13.[3]

Brettler challenges Noth's and Parker's reliance on purportedly vague thematic criteria, that is, the parallel accounts of Solomon's visions of YHWH in 3:1–15 and 9:1–10a, to argue that the unfavorable portrayal of Solomon actually begins in 9:24–25 (which stands parallel with 3:1–2) by noting Solomon's marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh (but he dismisses 9:6–9 as a late addition).[4] Amos Frisch's proposal for a concentric narrative structure built around the construction of the temple in 6:1–9:9 calls for inclusion of the narrative concerning northern Israel's revolt against Rehoboam in 12:1–24 to account for the fulfillment of Ahijah's prophecy to Jeroboam in 11:26–40.[5]

My 1995 study of the critique of Solomon in the Deuteronomistic History emphasizes that the critique begins at the outset of Solomon's reign with the portrayal of the machinations by Nathan and Bath-Sheba to bring Solomon to the throne in 1 Kgs 1–2 (see also 2 Sam 10–12), the emphasis on his marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh from the initial account of his reign in 1 Kgs 3:1 (cf. 7:8; 9:16, 24), and the accounts of Solomon's mistreatment of the northern Israelite tribes (4:7–19, 5:27–32), which influence the reading of Solomon's tremendous accomplishments.[6] David

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Knoppers, *Two Nations under G-d*, 1:57–168; Gary N. Knoppers, "Solomon's Fall and Deuteronomy," in *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium*, ed. Lowell K. Handy (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 392–410.

2. Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*.

3. Kim Ian Parker, "Repetition as a Structuring Device in 1 Kings 1–11," *JSOT* 42 (1988): 19–27.

4. See Brettler, "Structure of 1 Kings 1–11."

5. Amos Frisch, "Structure and Its Significance: The Narrative of Solomon's Reign (1 Kings 1–12.24)," *JSOT* 51 (1991): 3–14; contra Kim I. Parker, "The Limits to Solomon's Reign: A Response to Amos Frisch," *JSOT* 51 (1991): 15–21; cf. Amos Frisch, "The Narrative of Solomon's Reign: A Rejoinder," *JSOT* 51 (1991): 22–24, who defends his decision.

6. Sweeney, "Critique of Solomon," repr. as ch. 24 in this volume; Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 93–109.

Glatt-Gilad objects to this reading by arguing that one must distinguish between historical and editorial compositions and that scattered notices hardly constitute evidence for a historiographical agenda.[7]

David Williams objects to the redaction-critical presuppositions that have influenced discussion of structure and calls for consideration of linguistic indicators that point to a synthesis of the proposals by Parker and Frisch.[8] He observes strong parallels between 1 Kgs 3:1–15 and 9:1–9 that point to the initiation of the critique in 9:1–9 together with parallels between 1 Kgs 6–8 and 9:1–9 as well as between 3:1–15 and 11:1–13 that account for concerns with apostasy and foreign women. John Olley attempts to refine Williams's proposal with a chiastic structure for chapters 1–11 centered on the construction of the temple that calls for greater attention to the role of Pharaoh's daughter throughout the narrative as a signal for problems in Solomon's reign.[9]

This survey indicates considerable disagreement in the assessment of the presentation of Solomon in 1 Kings. Several scholars pointedly note that diachronic or redaction-critical considerations play an inordinate role in attempts to assess the synchronic literary form or structure of the presentation of Solomon. Diachronic considerations have prompted some to emphasize only the demonstrably Deuteronomistic History account in 1 Kgs 11 as the basis for the critique of Solomon (Knoppers) or to dismiss from consideration other portions of text deemed to be later (Brettler) or earlier (Glatt-Gilad) in assessment of the synchronic literary form of the text. These diachronic considerations tend to skew a full literary assessment of the narrative; indeed, even the synchronically oriented studies (Parker, Williams, Walsh, Olley) noted above tend to overlook Frisch's observation concerning the significance of the literary link with the account of the revolt of northern Israel in 12:1–24, because it must be originally independent.

The diachronic dimensions of the narrative also require assessment; indeed, scholars are correct in maintaining that the present narrative

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7. David Glatt-Gilad, "The Deuteronomic Critique of Solomon: A Response to Marvin A. Sweeney," *JBL* 116 (1997): 700–703.

8. David S. Williams, "Once Again: The Structure of the Narrative of Solomon's Reign," *JSOT* 86 (1999): 49–66; cf. Jerome Walsh, "Symmetry and the Sin of Solomon," *Shofar* 12 (1993): 11–27.

9. John W. Olley, "Pharaoh's Daughter, Solomon's Palace, and the Temple: Another Look at the Structure of 1 Kings 1–11," *JSOT* 27 (1993): 355–69.

appears clearly to be the redactional reworking of an earlier layer in which
a laudatory account of Solomon's reign was revised to emphasize his short-
comings and thereby to account for the revolt of the northern tribes of
Israel. But limitations in redaction-critical theory have prompted scholars
to treat only the texts that are demonstrably redactional in their assess-
ments of the editorial reworking of texts. This view fails to account for the
fact that a redacted text comes to us in its entirety from the final redaction,
which is responsible for the addition of later text(s) as well as the selection,
organization, and rewriting, where applicable, of earlier texts that appear
as part of the final product.[10]

Although earlier texts are employed in redactionally formulated com-
positions, they no longer serve exclusively the purposes of the authors
who composed them. Instead, they also must be assessed in relation to
the historiographical concerns expressed in the final redaction of the text.
Assessment of this sort of text necessarily calls first for the synchronic
evaluation of the text at large, including its overall structure, modes of
expression, and hermeneutical outlook, as the basis for diachronic assess-
ment of its compositional history and the potential shifts in perspective
that would occur as an earlier text was edited into its present form.

It is with these considerations in mind that the present essay considers
the synchronic dimensions of the presentation of Solomon in 1 Kgs 1–14
prior to a diachronic consideration of the same narrative block. It argues
that concern with the critique of Solomon permeates the entire narrative
complex in 1:1–14:20. The editor of the narrative has employed a consider-
able amount of material that would otherwise portray Solomon favorably,
were it read outside the present literary context. But when read in relation
to the scathing critique of Solomon in chapter 11, these materials take on
new significance in relation to an effort to castigate Solomon for his rela-
tions with foreign monarchs, which in turn prompts his relationships with
foreign women and his support of their gods.

2. Synchronic Analysis

Synchronic analysis begins with the observation that the account of Sol-
omon's reign opens in 1 Kgs 1:1 with the nominally formulated notice

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10. For the methodological underpinnings of this essay, see Knierim, "Criticism
of Literary Features"; Sweeney, "Form Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, repr. as
ch. 2 in this volume.

of David's advanced age. Statements of this sort are characteristically employed in the Solomon narratives to signal a shift in the major character and topic of concern. Following the account in 1:1–2:11 of Nathan's and Bath-Sheba's efforts to convince the aged David that he had indeed promised that Solomon would succeed him, 2:12 begins with another nominally formulated statement that introduces the narrative in 2:12–46a concerning Solomon's consolidation of power by eliminating potential rivals and opponents. A third nominally formulated statement in 2:46b marks the beginning of the unit in 2:46b–4:19 that emphasizes Solomon's wisdom at the outset of his reign. A fourth nominally formulated statement in 4:20 emphasizes the happiness and great numbers of Israel and Judah as an introduction to the main account of Solomon's reign and its consequences in 4:20–14:20.

First Kings 4:20–14:20 employs two initial nominal statements to emphasize shifts in narrative movement. The first, in 4:20, states the initial premise of this section, the happiness and great numbers of Israel and Judah, to characterize Solomon's kingdom at the outset of his rule. The second appears in the nominal statement concerning Solomon's rule in 5:1, which introduces a lengthy narrative sequence in 5:1–14:20 that accounts for the major achievements of his reign: his power and wisdom in 5:1–32, his building of the temple and palace and his dedication of the temple in 6:1–8:66, and the decline of his kingdom in 9:1–14:20. This latter subunit begins in 9:1–9 with an initial statement concerning the completion of Solomon's building projects (see 9:10) and continues with an account of his second vision from YHWH, who exhorts him to observe divine expectations. It is evident that a shift begins to emerge in 9:1–9 that signals the potential loss of the two major institutions founded by Solomon, the temple and the monarchy. Although Solomon's downfall is signaled by ambiguous assertions found in earlier narrative units— the questionable means by which he came to power, his marriage to an Egyptian princess, and his unfair treatment of the northern tribes—1 Kgs 9:1–9 points clearly to the very real possibility that Solomon's accomplishments might be undone. Many view 9:1–9 as a later composition that presupposes the Babylonian exile,[11] but it merely serves as a warning in the synchronic form of the text of the consequences should Solomon fail to abide by YHWH's expectations.

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11. Following Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 60.

The ironic portrayal of Solomon as an oppressive monarch in 1 Kgs 9:10–14:20, much like the pharaoh of Egypt, dominates the presentation and plays a major role in explaining the revolt of the northern tribes.[12] This section begins in 9:10 with a statement regarding the completion of Solomon's building projects that echoes the earlier statement in 9:1. Each successive subunit begins with a nominal sentence concerning a major character or topic of concern. The first subunit begins with the portrayal of Hiram's partnership with Solomon. The various subunits within this text work together to demonstrate Solomon's dependence on both Hiram and his father-in-law, the pharaoh of Egypt, as he cedes territory to Hiram (9:11–14), imposes a corvée (9:15), accepts cities in the land of Israel granted to him by Pharaoh (9:16–19), turns his people into a nation of taskmasters much like the Egyptians of exodus times (9:20–23), moves the daughter of Pharaoh into the newly constructed royal palace next to the temple (9:24), makes sacrifice at the temple next to the daughter of Pharaoh (9:25), and sponsors a fleet of ships together with Hiram that will take his sailors back across the Red Sea (9:26–28). This account is particularly remarkable in that it demonstrates that Hiram's assistance enhances Solomon's power, but it also notes that Solomon turns his back on the very exodus traditions that Israel recounted as the raison d'être for its existence in the land of Israel.

Indeed, Solomon even emulates the pharaoh who figured so prominently as the oppressor of Israel in the exodus tradition. Solomon must cede Israelite cities—an integral part of the land promised to Israel in Joshua—to the Phoenician/Canaanite monarch Hiram, a move that would raise eyebrows for individuals concerned with Israel's relationship with the seven Canaanite nations mentioned in Deut 7:1–6. The narrative notes that Solomon must impose the corvée to carry out his projects, which ironically casts him in the role of the Egyptian pharaoh. It notes that Solomon accepts cities in the land of Israel as a gift from Pharaoh, which again will cause concern for adherents of a tradition that identifies Pharaoh as the oppressor of Israel in the exodus tradition. It notes that Canaanites remain in the land, although they are enslaved, and again points to Solomon's pharaonic role. It notes that the daughter of Pharaoh moves into Solomon's new palace next to the temple precincts, a remarkable role for

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12. See Pekka Särkiö, *Die Weisheit und Macht Salomos in der Israelitischen Historiographie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994).

a princess of the nation that figures so ominously in Israel's foundational tradition. It notes that Solomon sent his own men on ships back across the Red Sea to acquire gold in a stunning reversal of the exodus tradition.

Successive units, each introduced once again with an initial personal name or noun phrase to signal a new character or topic, follow the account of Solomon's relationship with Hiram and Pharaoh. First Kings 10:1–29 depicts Solomon's relationship with the queen of Sheba. This account likewise notes Solomon's wisdom and the expansion of his trade relations, but it also introduces the possibility of his relationships with foreign women, his amassing of gold and silver in the kingdom, and his amassing of chariots, all of which are forbidden in the Deuteronomistic Torah regarding the king (Deut 17:14–20). First Kings 11:1–25 depicts Solomon's love of foreign women and his apostasy as a consequence of that love. First Kings 11:26–40 depicts the rise of Jeroboam ben Nebat, himself a taskmaster over the house of Joseph, and other opponents. Jeroboam's role as taskmaster is a particular irony in the present narrative context, insofar as it demonstrates a very real and pointed critique of Solomon's emulation of Pharaoh. The succeeding presentation of Solomon's regnal résumé in 11:41–43 followed by the account of Jeroboam's reign in 12:1–14:20 concludes the account of Solomon's reign.

Although 1 Kgs 12:1–14:20 clearly presents a discrete narrative concerning the revolt of the northern Israelite tribes (12:1–24) and Jeroboam's apostate reign over northern Israel (12:25–14:20), the initial *waw*-consecutive formation of the initial statement in 12:1 and the lack of any formal regnal introduction for either Rehoboam ben Solomon (but see 1 Kgs 14:21) or Jeroboam ben Nebat demonstrate that this section is meant to be read together with Solomon's regnal résumé.

In this matter, the structure of the narrative highlights the consequences of Solomon's action in the revolt of the northern tribes and their apostasy under the leadership of Jeroboam. This narrative technique stands in striking contrast to the presentations of subsequent monarchs in the Deuteronomistic History that focus directly on the king in question with a noun clause that states his age or the year in which his reign began (e.g., 1 Kgs 14:21, 15:1).[13] By tying the account of Jeroboam's reign

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13. A major exception is the account of Jehu's reign in 2 Kgs 9:1–10:35, which likewise lacks an introductory regnal statement because Jehu comes to the throne as a result of his assassination of Jehoram ben Ahab of Israel (2 Kgs 3:1–8:15) and Ahaziah ben Joram of Judah (2 Kgs 9:25–29).

so closely to the reign of Solomon, the narrative also signals its interest in the question, repeatedly raised in relation to Solomon, of the continuity of the Davidic line (see 9:1–9; see also 2:4, 3:10–14, 8:22–26). Because Jeroboam is ultimately condemned as well, it likewise addresses the related question of the continuity of Israel in the land, which appears in relation to Solomon (9:1–9; cf. 8:27–53) and dominates the balance of the Deuteronomistic History.[14]

The literary structure of Solomon's regnal account may be portrayed as follows:

Account of Solomon's Reign and Its Consequences:
The Division of Israel (1 Kgs 1:1–14:20)

I.   Designation of Solomon as king   1:1–2:11
II. Solomon secures the throne   2:12–46a
III. Beginning of Solomon's reign: wisdom from YHWH   2:46b–4:19
IV. Solomon's reign and its consequences   4:20–14:20
    A. Initial premise: Judah and Israel are numerous and happy   4:20
    B. Solomon's power, wisdom, and building: results in revolt   5:1–14:20
       and apostasy
       1. Power and wisdom   5:1–32
       2. Building: temple and palace   6:1–8:66
          a. Temple and palace   6:1–7:51
          b. Temple dedication   8:1–66
       3. Decline of Solomon's kingdom leading to revolt of north   9:1–14:20
          a. Vision from YHWH: exhortation/warning   9:1–9
          b. Account of Solomon's relations leading to revolt   9:10–14:20
             (1) Introductory statement concerning completion   9:10
                of building
             (2) Relations with Hiram of Tyre   9:11–28
                (a) Loss of Asher to Hiram   9:11–14
                (b) Initial statement of tax/corvée imposed in   9:15
                    Israel
                (c) Solomon's cities: gift from Pharaoh   9:16–19
                (d) Corvée labor: Canaanites supervised by Isra-   9:20–23
                    elite taskmasters

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14. For discussion of the role of Jeroboam in the DtrH, see Cross, "Themes of the Books."

3. Ambiguity and Diachronic Analysis

Although Solomon's regnal account clearly contains a great deal of laudatory material, the above analysis of the synchronic literary form of 1 Kgs 1:1–14:20 demonstrates that an interest in criticizing Solomon's reign appears throughout the narrative. Nevertheless, the account displays a great deal of ambiguity in the presentation of Solomon and the consequences of his reign. An unambiguously critical presentation of Solomon appears only in chapter 11 (and by association, 12:1–14:20), with its charges that Solomon's love for foreign women prompted his apostasy and the consequent division of his kingdom. Prior to chapter 11, the account presents various aspects of Solomon's reign that suggest either a laudatory or a critical assessment of Solomon, depending on the context or perspective by which it is read. This ambiguity is key to a diachronic analysis of this material.

An example of the ambiguity appears in the repeated emphasis on Solomon's marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh and his relationship with his father-in-law (1 Kgs 3:1; 7:8; 9:16, 24; 11:1). This relationship demonstrates Solomon's power and status among the nations, insofar as he is the son-in-law of the ruler of one of the world's major superpowers of the time. But when criticism of Solomon's marriages to foreign women as a

cause for YHWH's judgment against his dynasty appears in chapter 11, it prompts the reader to reconsider the significance of earlier statements that might have been understood to be laudatory. Indeed, the surrounding literary context must be considered.

The initial comment in 1 Kgs 3:1 concerning Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter appears immediately prior to 3:2–3, which notes the continued worship at illegitimate high places by both the people and Solomon. The reference to Solomon's construction of a palace for the daughter of Pharaoh suggests the wealth and power of a monarch who is able to provide sumptuously for a high-profile wife, but the placement of Pharaoh's daughter next to the temple raises questions, particularly for readers of the Kings narrative, who recall the role of Pharaoh in the exodus tradition—or more pointedly in the Deuteronomic tradition that undergirds the Deuteronomistic History presentation in Kings. Similar observations may be made about the references to Pharaoh and his daughter in 9:16 and 24. Why should a powerful monarch like Solomon accept a wedding present of Gezer from the Pharaoh? On the one hand, it serves as testimony to Solomon's high status, but the appearance of this notice in the context of statements concerning his debts to Hiram of Tyre and his building projects (which incidentally prompt Solomon's indebtedness) raise questions about Solomon's fiscal management of his kingdom as well as his dependence on foreign monarchs. The fact that one of them is the Egyptian Pharaoh, a past oppressor of Israel, only intensifies the reader's questions about the character and abilities of this great monarch. The reference to Pharaoh's daughter moving into the palace—next to the temple—only reinforces the perspectives raised in relation to 7:8.

These questions prompt some reconsideration of the presentation of Solomon in 1 Kgs 1–10. Although much of this material appears to be laudatory, the strategic placement of comments concerning Solomon's relationship with the pharaoh of Egypt and their association with potentially damaging comments concerning his wisdom and intentions suggest that these chapters have been redacted with an eye to preparing the reader for the explicit critique of Solomon in chapter 11. An overview of the major components of chapters 1–10/11–14 indicates that this is indeed the case.

The narrative concerning the designation of Solomon as king in 1 Kgs 1:1–2:11 includes no overtly critical presentation of Solomon; he is not even a major character in the plot. The plot instead focuses on the efforts of Nathan and Bath-Sheba to manipulate the aged David into believing that he did indeed designate Solomon—and not Adonijah—as his heir to

the throne.[15] Furthermore, it indicates that Solomon's subsequent actions to eliminate potential opponents (that is, Joab and Shimei) were prompted by David's very clear advice to his son. Any critical view of the matter must come from the extended literary context: Bath-Sheba, who has much to gain by Solomon's accession to the throne, is earlier portrayed as an adulteress who acquiesces to the murder of her former husband, Uriah the Hittite, by David in 2 Sam 10–12. Given that Nathan condemned David for the act, his involvement in the plan to convince David that he had indeed designated Solomon raises some question as well. But in the end, the hypothesis that 2 Sam 10–12 represents the redactional work of an editor who sought to discredit David and Bath-Sheba provides the only clear indication of an attempt to discredit Solomon by casting aspersions on his parents and the circumstances of his birth.

Much the same must be said with regard to 1 Kgs 2:12–46a, which narrates Solomon's actions to secure the throne. His execution of Adonijah is justified by the claim to the throne implicit in the request for David's concubine Abishag, although the reader should note that the request takes place in an audience with Bath-Sheba, who in turn communicates it to her son. Bath-Sheba thereby plays a rather suspicious role in ensuring the execution of the one man capable of challenging the rule of her son. Otherwise, Solomon's actions against his opponents are taken on the advice of David or because of demonstrated support for Adonijah. Solomon takes action against those who would threaten him, although the reader must ask whether Adonijah's request was real or whether it was fabricated by Bath-Sheba. Bath-Sheba's questionable history raises questions about Solomon, but his actions otherwise represent a monarch who understands and acts on the principles of realpolitik.

First Kings 2:46b–4:19 explains Solomon's wisdom at the beginning of his reign and is largely laudatory, in that it demonstrates YHWH's favor for Solomon by granting him wisdom. Likewise, the overview of Solomon's administration clearly illustrates the wisdom of a monarch who knows the importance of delegating responsibility for the governance of a large kingdom to leaders capable of exercising it. Nevertheless, two elements suggest critique of Solomon. First is the abovementioned reference to his relationship with the pharaoh of Egypt. As noted above, this would be an indication of his high status and wisdom in the world of international

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15. Notably, the narrative nowhere indicates whom David had designated.

politics, although the context of Israelite tradition and the upcoming commentary in 1 Kgs 11 concerning the problem of his relationships with foreign women, beginning with the daughter of Pharaoh, clearly cast this comment in a critical light.

The following statements concerning Solomon's worship at high places only reinforce this critical perception. Ironically, these comments introduce the narrative concerning Solomon's dream at Gibeon, in which YHWH grants him wisdom. Although this narrative is laudatory at first glance, the larger context of the Deuteronomistic History raises questions concerning Solomon's worship (even in a dream) at a high place in the midst of a people explicitly identified as Canaanite (see Josh 9–10). Solomon's nocturnal worship at a Canaanite high place presages his penchant for supporting the pagan religious inclinations of his foreign wives in 1 Kgs 11:1–25. The current arrangement of this material, which places the reference to the marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh at the outset, suggests a redactional presentation of this text that is not overtly critical but that nevertheless prepares the reader for the overt criticism of Solomon in 11:1–25.

One might also note Solomon's organization of the kingdom into twelve districts in 1 Kgs 4:1–19, each of which supports the royal household for one month of the year. At first glance, the arrangement indicates Solomon's administrative genius and a presumably fair distribution of the burdens of royal support throughout the kingdom. It is only when one considers that Solomon's kingdom was built on the basis of a two-part federation of Judah and the northern tribes, not on the basis of a twelve-part tribal structure, that one observes an unfair distribution of responsibility in the kingdom that fell far more heavily on the northern tribes than on Solomon's home tribe of Judah. Although there is no overt criticism at this point, this arrangement helps the reader to understand the basis for the revolt of the northern tribes in 12:1–24.

The lengthy account of Solomon's reign and its consequences in 1 Kgs 4:20–14:20 provides ample illustration of the ambiguity in the presentation of Solomon's reign that allows for both a laudatory and a critical assessment of his rule. The statement in 4:20 of the initial premise for the presentation of his reign, that Israel and Judah were happy and numerous, points to both the benefits of Solomon's rule and the fundamental division of his kingdom following his death. The presentation of his power, wisdom, and building that results in the revolt of the North likewise represents a double-edged account in which the seeds for the explicit criticism in the

later chapters appear somewhat unexpectedly in the earlier subunits. The account of Solomon's power and wisdom in 5:1–32, for example, emphasizes the great quantities of tribute, wealth, and foodstuffs brought in to support Solomon's kingdom, in an overtly laudatory account that surreptitiously calls to mind once again the disproportionate burdens imposed on the northern tribes in the context of a two-part federation.

Solomon's relationship with Hiram likewise testifies to his importance and power (compare David's relationship with Hiram; 2 Sam 5:11–12). But readers of the Deuteronomistic History will wonder why a pagan Canaanite or Phoenician monarch would play such an important role in designing and building the temple for YHWH in Jerusalem, particularly when Deut 7:1–6 warns against relationships with the Canaanite nations. The imposition of forced labor on Israel testifies once again to Solomon's organizational capacities, but it does so in a manner that will be exploited later to compare him with the pharaoh of the exodus traditions.

The accounts of the building of the temple and palace in 1 Kgs 6–7 and of the temple dedication ceremony in 1 Kgs 8 likewise testify to Solomon's power and piety, although leaders of the Deuteronomistic History will note that YHWH explicitly denied any need or desire for such a "house" in 2 Sam 7:4–7. The critical evaluation of Solomon begins to appear in 1 Kgs 9, and it becomes quite explicit in chapter 11. Interestingly, the redactional formation of chapter 9 and the clear critical agenda in chapter 11 play key roles in rereading traditions that would otherwise be laudatory of Solomon as traditions that suggest critique. The account of Solomon's second vision in 9:1–9 provides the opportunity for YHWH to warn Solomon of the consequences of failure to observe YHWH's commands. It eliminates any lingering doubts about YHWH's support for Solomon, but it lays out a scenario by which the house of David and the temple might be swept away. As noted above, many scholars argue that this text must date to the exilic or postexilic period, but it is only a warning of what might be. It could easily have been written in the monarchic period, for example, during the reigns of Hezekiah or Josiah, to raise support for their respective efforts at religious reform and national reconstitution.

The account of Solomon's relationship with Hiram in 1 Kgs 9:11–28 is especially noteworthy, as indicated above, because of the manner in which it depicts Solomon's dependence on a Canaanite monarch and intersperses this account with references to his relationship with the pharaoh of Egypt and his marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh. The references to the Egyptian pharaoh and princess appear to be largely

irrelevant to Solomon's relationship with Hiram. It seems that they are placed redactionally into the present context to highlight Solomon's betrayal of Israelite tradition as a result of his dependence on the Phoenician (and pagan) monarch. The narrative begins in verses 11–14 with a statement of Solomon's ceding of twenty cities in the Galilee to pay his debts to Hiram for services and supplies rendered for Solomon's building projects. The ceding of twenty cities of the land of Israel cannot be taken lightly in a tradition that emphasizes YHWH's grant of the land to Israel in return for observance of YHWH's commands.

The following notice of the corvée in verse 15 provides the context for the payment of Solomon's debt, but it also reminds the reader of Solomon's willingness to impose state slavery to carry out his building projects, although verses 16–19, 20–23 indicate that only Canaanites served as slaves and that Israelites supervised them. But one must ask why the Canaanites are present in the land in the first place, and further one must observe that Solomon has turned his people into taskmasters much like the Egyptians of the exodus tradition.

The seemingly intrusive reference to the move of Pharaoh's daughter into the palace next to the temple clearly reinforces the comparison and raises questions why the daughter of Israel's traditional oppressor should be placed so close to the temple that served as the goal for Israel's journey from Egypt to the promised land. The notices of Solomon's sacrifices at the temple are laudatory enough, until one notes the context in which they appear—immediately following the notice concerning the move of Pharaoh's daughter and prior to the reference in verses 26–28 to Solomon's sending his people in ships back across the Red Sea. Israel escaped from Egyptian bondage by crossing the Red Sea, and Solomon sends them back. The portrayal has obvious consequences for a monarch who depends so much on a Phoenician king (at great cost to Israel) and imposes state slavery on his own people.

Although the account in 1 Kgs 10:1–29 concerning Solomon's relationship with the queen of Sheba is clearly designed to highlight his wisdom and power, its placement immediately following 9:11–28 contextualizes the narrative in such a way that it suggests to the reader that Solomon has somehow gained this relationship by turning his back on his own national tradition. The succeeding account of Solomon's love for foreign women in 11:1–25 certainly continues to raise questions about his otherwise laudatory relationship with the queen of Sheba. The balance of the narrative, including the account the rise of Jeroboam in 11:26–40 and the regnal

summary with its account of the revolt and Jeroboam's rule of the North in 11:41–14:20, clearly indicates an anti-Solomonic perspective.

4. Conclusion

The preceding observations suggest that a largely laudatory account of King Solomon's reign has been heavily reworked to present the reader with a substantial critique of his rule. Although Solomon is lauded for his wisdom, power, and building projects, the redactional placement of references to aspects of his marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh in 1 Kgs 3:1; 7:8; 9:16, 24; and 11:1 plays an important role in depicting Solomon as a monarch who ultimately betrayed his own national tradition to emulate Pharaoh in his management of the kingdom and his treatment of his own people. Although the question of the dating of this redaction is yet to be settled definitively, it clearly points to an interest in explaining the revolt of the northern tribes of Israel against the house of David. This interest points to the monarchic period, in either the reign of Hezekiah or the reign of Josiah, when concern for the reunification of North and South under the rule of a Davidic monarch will be paramount.

A Reassessment of the Masoretic and Septuagint Versions of the Jeroboam Narratives in 1 Kings/3 Kingdoms 11–14

1.

Scholars have long noted the three differing accounts of Jeroboam's rise to power in the MT and LXX versions of 1 Kgs 11–14.[1] The MT and the

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1. The basic LXX version of this narrative appears in Codex Vaticanus Greek 1209 (fourth century CE; generally designated in text-critical discussion as MS B), which contains both the so-called LXX[A] account of the narrative in 3 Kgdms 11:1–14:21 (NB: 14:1–20 is lacking) and the LXX[B] account in 3 Kgdms 12:24a–z. The LXX[A] and LXX[B] accounts appear together in one other majuscule manuscript (the eighth-century CE Codex Venetus, MS V, which forms the first part of a complete copy of the Greek OT together with Codex Basiliano Vaticanus, i.e., MS N; see Swete) and sixteen miniscule manuscripts. See Henry Barclay Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (New York: Ktav, 1968), 131–32. The fifth-century CE Codex Alexandrinus (MS A) contains the LXX[A] version of the text, but it lacks the LXX[B] version altogether (although the manuscript lacks 3 Kgdms 12:18–14:9 due to a missing leaf; see Swete, *Introduction*, 125). The LXX[B] account is lacking in the other manuscripts that exhibit the Hexaplaric recension of the LXX. The LXX[B] account also appears in the so-called Lucianic miniscule manuscripts designated as boc2e2, which are generally identified with the fourth-century CE Lucianic revision of the Greek text. MS c2 lacks the account of the visit of Jeroboam's wife to Ahijah in 3 Kgdms 12:24g–n (cf. 14:1–2), and miniscule MSS d and p lack 3 Kgdms 12:24g–z. For brief overviews of the manuscript witnesses, see Jörg Debus, *Die Sünde Jerobeams. Studien zur Darstellung Jerobeams und der Geschichte des Nordreichs in der deuteronomistischen Geschichtsschreibung*, FRLANT 93 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 55–56; James Donald Shenkel, *Recensional Development in the Greek Text of Kings*, HSM 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 32–33. The text employed in this study

so-called OG (often designated as the LXX[A] account)[2] accounts of the
Jeroboam narrative in 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 11:1–14:21 differ in some details,
but generally agree on the basic outlines of the story, that is, Jeroboam was
an officer of Solomon in charge of forced labor for the house of Joseph;
he revolted against Solomon; Ahijah the prophet named him as YHWH's
choice to become king over the northern tribes; he fled to Egypt after Solo-
mon sought to kill him; he returned to Israel at the time of the revolt by the
northern tribes against Rehoboam; he emerged as king in the aftermath of
Israel's revolt against Solomon; and so on.[3] The so-called alternative story
of Jeroboam (LXX[B] account),[4] which appears in 3 Kgdms 12:24a–z, appar-
ently as an insert in the LXX[A] narrative, differs markedly from the MT and
LXX[A] accounts in that it is much shorter and varies significantly in both the
details and plot sequence. For the most part, scholars attempt to explain the
differences between the MT, LXX[A], and LXX[B] versions on a combination
of text-critical and redaction-critical grounds; for example, scholars such
as Heinrich Hrozný, Jörg Debus, Julio Trebolle Barrera, Gottfried Vanoni,
Adrian Schenker, and others argue that the shorter length of the LXX[B]
text, its appearance in Codex Vaticanus and in the Lucianic manuscripts of
the Greek text, the purported general literary and historical intelligibility
of the narrative, and the absence of so-called Deuteronomistic statements
in the text establish that the LXX[B] account is the earliest extant version
of the narrative.[5] Based on the fundamental agreement between the MT

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appears in Alan England Brooke, Norman McLean, and Henry St John Thackeray, *The
Later Historical Books: 1 and II Kings*, vol. 2.2 of *The Old Testament in Greek* (London:
Cambridge University Press, 1930), 252–66; cf. Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart:
Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935), 1:656–69.

2. Not to be confused with A, which designates Codex Alexandrinus.

3. The MT and LXX[A] accounts differ substantively, however, in that the account
of Ahijah's condemnation of the house of Jeroboam in 1 Kgs 14:1–18 and the conclud-
ing regnal formula for Jeroboam's reign in 1 Kgs 14:19–20 are lacking in the LXX[A]
version of the narrative. The former appears instead as part of the LXX[B] account, and
the notice of Jeroboam's sins in 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 13:33–34 stands as the conclusion
of the LXX[A] account of Jeroboam's reign. For discussion of the significance of this
observation, see below.

4. Not to be confused with B, which designates Codex Vaticanus. See Zipora Tal-
shir, *The Alternative Story: 3 Kingdoms 12:24 A–Z*, JBS 6 (Jerusalem: Simor, 1993), for
the use of the designation "alternative story of Jeroboam" for 3 Kgdms 12:24a–z.

5. Heinrich Hrozný, *Die Abweichungen des Codex Vaticanus vom hebräischen
Texte in den Königsbüchern* (Leipzig: Drugulin, 1909); Debus, *Die Sünde Jerobeams*;
Julio C. Trebolle Barrera, *Salomon y Jeroboan: Historia de la recensión y redacción de*

and LXX[A] versions and a variety of textual, intertextual, and hermeneutical considerations that suggest the dependence of the LXX[B] version on the presumed *Vorlagen* of the MT and LXX[A] versions, a smaller group of scholars, such as David Gooding, Robert Gordon, McKenzie, Zipora Talshir, and others,[6] argue that the *Vorlage* of the LXX[B] account is indeed

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1 Reyes 2–12, 14 (Valencia: Institución San Jerónimo, 1980); Gottfried Vanoni, *Literarkritik und Grammatik: Untersuchung der Wiederholungen und Spannungen in 1 Kön 11–12*, ATSAT 21 (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1984); Adrian Schenker, "Jéroboam et la division du royaume dans la septante ancienne. LXX 1 R 12,24 a–z, TM 11–12; 14 et l'histoire deutéronomiste," in *Israël construit son histoire: L'historiographie deutéronomiste à la lumière des recherches récentes*, ed. Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Macchi, MdB 34 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1996), 193–236; see also Schenker, "Un cas de critique narrative au service de la critique textuelle (1 Rois 11,43–12,2–3.20)," *Bib* 77 (1996): 219–26. For a full discussion of research through the mid-1960s, see Debus, *Die Sünde Jerobeams*, 68–80; cf. Montgomery *Kings*, 252–53. For more recent discussions of research, see McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*, 27–29; Schenker, "Jéroboam," 193–97. See esp. Hrozný, *Die Abweichungen*, 30–41, for an early formulation of each of these three fundamental arguments. Note that a number of scholars identify the LXX[B] (and LXX[A]) narrative as part of the early, OG recension of the LXX (Shenkel, Olmstead), but this argument only indicates that the LXX[B] account was incorporated into the narrative at an early point in the development of the LXX text. E.g., Shenkel, *Recensional Development*, 32–33; cf. A. T. Olmstead, "Source Study and the Biblical Text," *AJSL* 30 (1913): 1–35. Although it appears in the fourth-century CE Codex Vaticanus 1209 (and apart from v. 24g–n in the Lucianic manuscripts), it disappears from the later LXX manuscript tradition that attempts to correct the Greek text in relation to the Hebrew (e.g., Codex Alexandrinus, the Syro-Hexapla, and the Armenian version; see Swete, *Introduction*, 248–49; Hrozný, *Die Abweichungen*, 7–9; Shenkel, *Recensional Development*, 32–33).

6. David W. Gooding, "The Septuagint's Rival Versions of Jeroboam's Rise to Power," *VT* 17 (1967): 173–89; see also Gooding, "Problems of Text and Midrash in the Third Book of Reigns," *Textus* 7 (1969): 1–29; Gooding, "Jeroboam's Rise to Power: A Rejoinder," *JBL* 91 (1972): 529–33; Gooding, *Relics of Ancient Exegesis: A Study of the Miscellanies in 3 Reigns 2*, SOTSMS 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Robert P. Gordon, "The Second Septuagint Account of Jeroboam: History or Midrash?," *VT* 25 (1975): 368–93; see also Gordon, "Source Study in 1 Kings 12:24a–z (LXX)," *TGUOS* 25 (1976): 59–70; McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*; Talshir, "Alternative Story"; Zipora Talshir, "Is the Alternate Tradition of the Division of the Kingdom (3 Kgdms 12:24a–z) Non-Deuteronomistic?," in *Septuagint, Scrolls and Cognate Writings: Papers Presented to the International Symposium on the Septuagint and Its Relations to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Writings (Manchester, 1990)*, ed. George J. Brooke and Barnabas Lindars, SSF, SCS 33 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 599–621. Other scholars include, e.g., David A. Glatt, *Chronological Displacement in Biblical and*

a derivative, perhaps rewritten or midrashic, version of the earlier MT and LXX[A] *Vorlagen*. Discussion is currently at an impasse as both positions have difficulties. Each of the three arguments brought forward by those who argue for the literary-historical priority of the LXX[B] narrative can be answered, that is, a midrashic or more properly interpretative form of the narrative need not be inherently expansive, as such work can also result in a conflated form of the text;[7] the general literary and historical intelligibility of the narrative may easily be the result of efforts to clarify the narrative or to resolve problems within it; and the absence of Deuteronomistic language at key points in the LXX[B] narrative need not indicate the priority of the LXX[B] narrative since such language would be deleted to avoid the problem of promising an eternal dynasty like that of David to a man who would clearly never attain such an ideal. Likewise, the contentions of those who maintain that the LXX[B] version constitutes a midrashic reworking of the MT or LXX[A] versions suffer from charges that *midrash* refers to a specialized form of rabbinic interpretation.[8] More importantly, the proponents of this approach have thus far failed to explain the interpretative agenda and sociohistorical context for such a midrashic rewriting of the text other than rather vague attempts to characterize efforts to "whitewash" Jeroboam in the LXX[A] account or to criticize him in the LXX[B] account, to fill in missing elements (e.g., the story of Jeroboam's sick son) and to embellish aspects of the LXX[A] account, or to produce a better literary composition.[9]

Although efforts to justify the midrashic interpretation of the LXX[B] narrative are promising, such an agenda necessarily entails consideration

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Related Literatures, SBLDS 139 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 100–109. He arrives at similar conclusions but focuses his study on 1 Kgs 14:1–18.

7. See, e.g., the Temple Scroll (11Q19) from the Judean wilderness, which presents an extensively revised version of Deuteronomy by conflating various texts on a given halakic issue and rewriting to present the whole as the words of YHWH to Moses. See my discussions of the composition of the Sefire texts and the so-called torah of the king. See Marvin A. Sweeney, "Sefirah at Qumran: Aspects of the Counting Formulas for the First-Fruits Festivals in the Temple Scroll," *BASOR* 251 (Summer 1983): 61–66; Sweeney, "Midrashic Perspective in the Torat ham-Melek of the Temple Scroll," *HS* 28 (1987): 51–66.

8. See esp. Debus, *Sünde*, 80.

9. See, e.g., Gooding, "Jeroboam's Rise to Power"; Gooding, "Problems of Text," 10–13; Gordon, "Second Septuagint Account"; McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*, 39–40; Talshir, *Alternative Story*, 279–91.

of the literary character and narrative coherence of each version. The MT, LXX[A], and LXX[B] accounts may not be treated piecemeal as collections of textual variants; rather, their full literary characters, including their portrayals of plot and characterization, must be considered in order to establish narrative purpose in their respective portrayals of Jeroboam ben Nebat.[10] Several key narrative elements in the LXX[B] account, for example, have been noted by those who uphold the midrashic characterization of the LXX[B] text, for example, the characterization of Rehoboam as an immature sixteen-year-old who is descended from the impetuous Ammonite king Hanun ben Nahash; Jeroboam's marriage to Ano, the sister-in-law of the Egyptian Pharaoh Sousakim/Shishaq with whom Jeroboam resided prior to the revolt of the northern tribes against Rehoboam; the clear placement of Jeroboam in Israel prior to the revolt of the northern tribes;[11] and the identification of Shemaiah (the Elamite/Enlamite) rather than Ahijah as the prophet who delivered the dynastic oracle to Jeroboam. Each of these elements is key to the reading of the LXX[B] narrative and to defining its midrashic character in relation to the MT and LXX[A] accounts. These elements cannot be read as indications of lost historical data. The identification of Shemaiah the Elamite/Enlamite is particularly important in this respect because it points to the deliberate use of the false prophet identified in Jer 29:24–32 as the prophet who promised Jeroboam an eternal dynasty like that of David.[12] The LXX[B] narrative thereby avoids the

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10. See McKenzie, who considers "simplistic" earlier studies that view the LXX[B] account as a "midrashic" work (*Trouble with Kings*, 28). He did not have the opportunity to consider Talshir's study (*Alternative Story*). Although her work is far more sensitive to the literary characteristics of the narrative, it nevertheless does not explain all the variations in the LXX[B] narrative, nor does it provide a specific context that would motivate such work (see esp. Schenker's evaluation of her work, "Jéroboam," 196–97 et passim).

11. Note the equivocal placement of Jeroboam in Israel in the LXX[A] account. See below. Note also that Hanun injudiciously humiliated David's emissaries and thereby provoked an unnecessary war with Israel (2 Sam 10:1–19; 12:26–31). In this regard, Hanun is presented in terms analogous to his father, who attacked Jabesh Gilead and then foolishly squandered his victory by allowing the inhabitants of the city to appeal to Saul for help (1 Sam 11:1–15). Note also that at the time of Absalom's revolt against David, Shobi ben Nahash, apparently the brother of Hanun, appears to be the principal figure in the Ammonite kingdom who aids David (2 Sam 17:27–29). The narrative might suggest that Shobi had replaced his brother on the throne, but this is uncertain.

12. Talshir recognizes this identification but does not draw out its significance in

problem of divine righteousness that arises in relation to both the MT and LXX[A] versions of the narrative, which portray Ahijah, an authentic prophet of YHWH, as the figure who promises Jeroboam eternal kingship. Although the promises are qualified by Deuteronomistic language that calls on Jeroboam to observe YHWH's commands, the attempt to promise a secure dynasty to a figure who proves to be so quintessentially flawed raises questions about YHWH's or Ahijah's judgment or intentions in choosing such a man. By placing Jeroboam's dynastic promise in the mouth of a demonstrably false prophet (who lives some three hundred years later, no less!), the LXX[B] account avoids these moral questions. The use of an exilic-period figure to deliver a clearly false prophecy to a man who will fail to achieve eternal kingship indicates that the LXX[B] account cannot constitute the earliest version of the narrative; instead, it points to the midrashic character of the narrative.

A second element generally overlooked by interpreters must be noted. Although the LXX[A] version is formulated to emphasize Jeroboam's culpability in fomenting revolt against the house of David, it lacks the account of Ahijah's condemnation of the house of Jeroboam found in MT 1 Kgs 14:1–20. This narrative episode appears instead, albeit in modified form, as part of the LXX[B] account in 3 Kgdms 12:24g–n. Many interpreters tend to focus on the earlier parts of the narrative concerned with Jeroboam's role in instigating revolt against Solomon and Rehoboam, but the absence of the narrative concerning Ahijah's condemnation of the house of Jeroboam indicates that the present form of the LXX[A] account in Codex Vaticanus and other manuscripts is dependent in their present literary settings on the LXX[B] account for a justification of the later demise of northern Israel's first ruling dynasty.[13] This has serious implications for understanding the interrelationship between the two Greek accounts, especially since scholars treat them as two entirely independent or discrete compositions. Although they may have been composed separately and for very different reasons, they must be read together in the present form of the LXX text in Codex Vaticanus and elsewhere.

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relation to the characterization of YHWH and Ahijah in the larger narrative framework (*Alternative Story*, 105, 228–32).

13. See now the discussions of this narrative by McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*, 29–31; Talshir, *Alternative Story*, 74–102, 212–23; Glatt, *Chronological Displacement*, 100–109.

The issue is further compounded when one notes that there is a key difference between the MT and the combined LXX[A]/LXX[B] accounts in Vaticanus concerning the reasons for the condemnation of the house of Jeroboam. Ahijah's condemnation follows Jeroboam's establishment of idolatrous sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan in the MT version of the narrative insofar as 1 Kgs 14:1–20 follows the notices in 1 Kgs 12:25–13:34 concerning the establishment of Bethel and Dan together with other cultic wrongdoing. By contrast, the notice of Ahijah's condemnation of the house of Jeroboam in 3 Kgdms 12:24g–n appears prior to the notices of Jeroboam's cultic wrongdoing (and even prior to the account of the revolt against Rehoboam in 3 Kgdms 12:24p–z) in the combined LXX[A]/LXX[B] version of the narrative, and it appears immediately following the notices of his preparations for revolt against Solomon and his marriage into the Egyptian royal family in 3 Kgdms 12:24b–f. This suggests that he is condemned not for his cultic abuses in the LXX[A]/LXX[B] versions, but for his efforts to revolt against Solomon and his relationship with the Egyptian royal house. Such a shift has important ramifications for the interpretation of these narratives.

Despite the many observations concerning the interrelationship between textual criticism and literary criticism throughout the history of the discussion of these narratives,[14] no full literary analysis of the three versions of this account has yet been offered that would explain fully both the literary interrelationships between the three versions and the specific hermeneutical agendas that each is designed to pursue. The primary reason for this lack is that scholars have tended to conceive of literary criticism in strictly diachronic, particularly source-critical or redaction-critical, terms. Yet more recent advances in form-critical literary research emphasize the need to engage in synchronic literary analysis, including discussion of literary structure, plot development, characterization, and so on, as the necessary precondition for diachronic analysis.[15] This paper therefore examines elements of literary structure, plot development, characterization, and textual interrelationships in each of the three narratives in an effort to argue synchronically that the LXX[A] and LXX[B] narratives must be read in relation to each other in the present form of the Greek text

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14. See especially Talshir, *Alternative Story*; Schenker, "Jéroboam."

15. See Sweeney, "Form Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, repr. as ch. 2 in this volume; Rolf Knierim, "Form Criticism Reconsidered," *Int* 27 (1973): 435–68; Knierim, "Criticism of Literary Features."

and to argue diachronically that the LXX[B] narrative is indeed an interpretative derivation of the earlier *Vorlage* of the MT and LXX[A] accounts.[16] Specifically, it argues that the LXX[B] narrative is designed to address problems posed by the *Vorlage* of the MT and LXX[A] narratives, for example, the question of Rehoboam's character and his own responsibility for sparking the revolt; the question of Jeroboam's activities in Egypt and his relationship to Pharaoh Shishaq, who later invaded and subjugated Israel and Judah after the revolt; the question of Jeroboam's role in instigating the revolt; the question of YHWH's approval of Jeroboam, who ultimately became the paradigmatic idolater of northern Israelite history, through the dynastic oracle of Ahijah; and finally, the reason for the condemnation of the house of Jeroboam by the prophet Ahijah. LXX[B] resolves each of these questions by positing that Rehoboam is an immature sixteen-year-old who is descended from Hanun ben Nahash, the Ammonite king who foolishly humiliated David's ambassadors; that Jeroboam married into the Egyptian royal house and thereby bound himself to Pharaoh Shishaq, who would later take advantage of the division of the kingdom; that Jeroboam acted deliberately to instigate the revolt against Rehoboam; that Jeroboam received his dynastic oracle from the false prophet Shemaiah the Nehelamite (cf. Jer 29:24–32); and that Jeroboam was condemned for his efforts to revolt against Solomon and for his marriage-alliance with the Egyptian royal house that later turned against Jerusalem. These factors suggest a deliberate attempt now represented in the combined LXX[A]/LXX[B] account to reflect on the causes of the northern Israelite revolt against Rehoboam by portraying Rehoboam as an immature fool and Jeroboam as a far more culpable figure. The paper concludes by arguing that the socio-historical setting for such reflection and composition or reformulation lies in an effort to address questions concerning the potential abuse of royal power during the reign of the Hasmonean dynasty in the second–first centuries BCE.

<div align="center">2.</div>

An assessment of the Masoretic account of Jeroboam ben Nebat must begin with the observation that the Jeroboam narratives are subsumed

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16. For examples of the application of such literary methodology to LXX texts, see van der Kooij, *Oracle of Tyre*; De Troyer, *End of the Alpha Text*.

structurally to the account of Solomon's reign and its consequences in 1 Kgs 1–14. The narrative introduces Jeroboam while Solomon is still alive by portraying him in 1 Kgs 11:26–40 as one of Solomon's opponents, whom YHWH raised against the king as punishment for Solomon's love of foreign women and his support of his foreign wives' pagan gods. The MT presents Jeroboam as an officer of Solomon in charge of the forced labor of the house of Joseph at the time that Solomon built the Millo and closed the breaches in the defenses of the city of David. Jeroboam is an Ephraimite from the town of Zeredah, and he revolts against Solomon following his encounter with the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite, who promises Jeroboam that YHWH will establish him as king over the ten tribes of northern Israel. First Kings 11:26–40 concludes with the notice that Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam and that Jeroboam fled for protection to Pharaoh Shishaq of Egypt, where he remained until Solomon's death. Although Solomon's regnal summation, which marks the formal conclusion to the account of Solomon's reign, appears in 1 Kgs 11:41–43, the following material in 1 Kgs 12–14 concerning the account of Jeroboam's reign lacks the standard formulaic introduction to his reign characteristic of nearly all monarchs in 1–2 Kings.[17] Indeed, Solomon's concluding regnal summation in 1 Kgs 11:41–43 introduces the accounts of Jeroboam's rise to power and his reign in 1 Kgs 12–14 insofar as the notice that "Rehoboam his son ruled in his place" (v. 43b) provides the basis for demonstrating how Solomon's treatment of the northern tribes and Rehoboam's poor judgment led directly to northern Israel's revolt and Jeroboam's kingship.

The account of Jeroboam's designation as king and his rule over northern Israel appears as part of the narrative portrayal in 1 Kgs 12:1–24 of the consequences of Solomon's reign in the revolt of the northern tribes against Solomon's son Rehoboam at the city of Shechem. According to the MT, Jeroboam was still in Egypt at the time that the northern tribes gath-

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17. A similar phenomenon may be observed in the interrelationship between the regnal accounts of Jehoram of Israel and Jehu of Israel (1 Kgs 3:1–10:36). Although the account of Jehoram's reign appears in 2 Kgs 9:14–26, it includes no regnal resume, nor does the account of Jehu's reign include an introductory regnal formula. Like Jeroboam, Jehu came to the throne as a result of a revolt against the ruling house. The circumstances under which both Jeroboam and Jehu came to power apparently preclude the use of introductory regnal formulae, perhaps because such formulae signal orderly transition in the monarchy. See the relevant sections of Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*. For discussion of the regnal resume, see Long, *1 Kings*, 130–31; cf. 120–22, 259.

ered at Shechem to appoint Rehoboam as king (12:2). Jeroboam returned to Shechem after hearing that the assembly had commenced, and he ultimately led the people of Israel in their inquiry of Rehoboam concerning his intended treatment of his Israelite subjects. First Kings 12:20 makes it clear that the people of Israel designated Jeroboam as king only after they had rejected Rehoboam as their king. The balance of the narrative then presents the following sequence of episodes: 1 Kgs 12:21–24 concludes the account of Israel's revolt against Rehoboam with a notice that the prophet Shemaiah delivered an oracle from YHWH to Rehoboam that dissuaded him from going to war with Israel in an attempt to force the northern tribes to accept his rule; 1 Kgs 12:25–13:34 presents the account of Jeroboam's apostasy by establishing idolatrous sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan; 1 Kgs 14:1–18 presents the condemnation of the house of Jeroboam by the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite, which explicitly points to his foundation of the golden calves at Dan and Bethel as the reason for his condemnation; 1 Kgs 14:19–20 presents the formulaic regnal summary of Jeroboam's reign.

Several noteworthy issues appear in the MT presentation of Jeroboam. First, the structural relationship between the accounts of the revolt of the northern tribes against Rehoboam and Jeroboam's rise to kingship demonstrate that both events are the direct results of Solomon's failings as a monarch, although Rehoboam's immature response to the question posed to him by the Israelites concerning the nature of his rule provided the immediate cause for the revolt. First Kings 1–11 contains a great deal of laudatory material concerning the wise king who built the temple of YHWH in Jerusalem, but it places the account of Solomon's reign in a narrative framework that raises questions about the king and points to the reasons why YHWH raised adversaries against him,[18] that is, Nathan and Bath-Sheba manipulated the aged David to designate Solomon as king over against his older brother Adonijah; Solomon killed or removed key figures who were associated with David from his days in Hebron; Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, the traditional oppressor of Israel from the exodus tradition; Solomon dreamed that he worshiped YHWH at Gibeon, identified elsewhere as a Canaanite town within Israel (see Josh 9–10); Solomon imposed forced labor on the tribes of Israel at the time that he was accepting gifts from his father-in-law Pharaoh and moving his

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18. See Sweeney, "Critique of Solomon," repr. as ch. 24 in this volume; Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 93–109.

Egyptian wife into the palace next to the temple; Solomon sent Israelite ships back across the Red Sea in his attempts to open trade relations with the queen of Sheba; and Solomon married foreign women and supported their pagan gods by building worship sites for them in and around Jerusalem. Jeroboam's revolt appears as part of a sequence of opponents raised by YHWH against Solomon, that is, Hadad the Edomite, who fled to Egypt, where he married Takhpenes, the sister of Pharaoh Shishaq, and Rezon ben Eliada, who established himself as king over Aram in Damascus. Overall, Jeroboam is not a culpable figure in the MT narrative; his actions are prompted by YHWH as a means to punish Solomon for his actions.[19]

Second, the prophetic designation of Jeroboam as king over the ten tribes of Israel by the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite reinforces the portrayal of Jeroboam as a figure who acts at YHWH's behest. The narrative employs typical Deuteronomistic language to make it clear that Jeroboam's designation as king is intended to grant him a secure dynasty (*bayit neʾĕmān*) like that of David:

> And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says YHWH, G-d of Israel, 'Behold, I am tearing the kingdom from the hand Solomon, and I will give to you ten tribes. And one tribe will be for him for the sake of my servant, David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, because they/he[20] abandoned me and they/he[21] worshiped Ashtoret, god of the Sidonians, Chemosh, god of Moab, and Milcom, god of the Ammonites, and they/he[22] did not follow my way to do what is right in my eyes, and my statutes, and my laws like David his father. And I will not take all the kingdom from his hand, but I will appoint him prince all the days of his life for the sake of David, my servant, whom I chose, who observed my commandments and my statutes. And I will take the kingdom from

19. Contra Gooding, who maintains that the MT account stands somewhere in between the LXX[A] version's attempts to "whitewash" Jeroboam's character and the LXX[B] version's attempt to vilify him ("Rival Versions," 187–88).

20. The Hebrew term ʿǎzābûnî, "they abandoned me," is plural, apparently in reference to the tribes of Israel mentioned at the end of 1 Kgs 11:32. The context, however, appears to call for a singular reference to Solomon, in keeping with the reference to "David, his father," at the end of 1 Kgs 11:33.

21. Hebrew wayyištaḥăwû, "and they worshiped, prostrated themselves," is plural, although the context may call for a singular formulation.

22. Hebrew hālǝkû, "they walked, followed," is plural, but the context seems to call for a singular formulation.

the hand of his son, and I will give it to you, ten tribes. And to his son I will give one tribe to be a possession for David, my servant, for all time before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for myself to place my name. And you I will take, and you will rule as you desire, and you will be king over all Israel. And if you listen to all that I command you, and you follow in my path and you do what is right in my eyes to observe my statutes and my commandments just as David, my servant, did, then I shall be with you and I shall build you a secure house just as I built for David, and I shall give you Israel. And I shall afflict the seed of David because of this, but not for all time.'" (1 Kgs 11:31–39)

Although YHWH's promise of a secure dynasty to Jeroboam is conditioned on his observance of YHWH's commands, it still comes as somewhat of a surprise that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite must also deliver the oracle that condemns the house of Jeroboam for its founder's apostasy in 1 Kgs 14:1–18. Such a turn of events raises questions in the mind of the reader, that is, Was YHWH or Ahijah wrong in initially designating Jeroboam as king? Why would YHWH grant Jeroboam a secure dynasty when the subsequent narratives indicate that Jeroboam will immediately abandon YHWH's commands (see 1 Kgs 12:25–33) and thereby necessitate Ahijah's condemnation? One must conclude that YHWH (and Ahijah) exercised poor judgment or that they acted in a morally questionable manner by deliberately setting up Jeroboam to fail. One might further speculate that YHWH is ultimately responsible for the establishment of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan insofar as YHWH authorized Jeroboam's kingship.

Third, although Jeroboam had already revolted against Solomon, he appears to play no role in instigating the revolt against Rehoboam in MT 1 Kgs 12. The narrative makes it very clear that he was still in Egypt when the assembly at Shechem began, that the revolt was prompted by Rehoboam's ill-considered response that he would treat Israel far more harshly than did his father, and that Jeroboam was designated as king of Israel only after the revolt had taken place, when all Israel heard that he had returned from Egypt. The effort to point to Rehoboam's ill-considered actions as the immediate cause of the revolt fits well with the MT's agenda to identify Solomon as the party ultimately responsible for the revolt. The reader might still question Rehoboam's actions, that is, how could he be so foolish? Nevertheless, the reader is still left with questions about Jeroboam, particularly since 1 Kgs 11:26 explicitly states that he revolted against Solomon. Did he give up his plans to revolt against Solomon while in Egypt?

Did his relationship with Egypt play some role in Pharaoh Shishaq's decision to attack Jerusalem in 1 Kgs 14:25–28?

Fourth, despite the MT's favorable portrayal of Jeroboam through the revolt against Rehoboam, Jeroboam's actions beginning in 1 Kgs 12:25, namely, the establishment of the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan, mark him as the most evil of Israel's monarchs and as the man responsible for leading Israel into sin and ultimately destruction by the Assyrians. Indeed, 2 Kgs 17 lays the blame squarely at his feet, and the accounts of the northern kings make it clear that each of them followed in the sins of Jeroboam.[23] Insofar as Jeroboam sets the pattern for northern Israelite idolatry and subsequent destruction in the Deuteronomistic History, such a role raises questions once again about YHWH, that is, did YHWH deliberately set up the Northern Kingdom of Israel for failure by designating Jeroboam as its king? YHWH would consequently bear a certain measure of culpability for the Northern Kingdom's demise as presented in the Deuteronomistic History.

The MT leaves some open questions concerning YHWH's and Ahijah's moral character and judgment, Jeroboam's motivations and intentions in relation to the revolt and his later apostasy, and even Rehoboam's foolish response to the question posed to him by the northern tribes.

<center>3.</center>

Consideration of the LXX[A] account points to an effort by the translator/composer to address some of the issues raised by the portrayal of Jeroboam now extant in the MT, but the LXX[A] account is ultimately incomplete without the LXX[B] version of the narrative. Scholars note that, in contrast to LXX[B], the LXX[A] account follows the MT rather closely, with only minor textual variation (except, of course, in its omission of Ahijah's condemnation of the house of Jeroboam). Although some argue that the variations presuppose a Hebrew *Vorlage* that predates that of the MT, Gooding demonstrates that the LXX[A] text is an interpretive rendition of the Hebrew text now presented in the MT.[24] Gooding's analysis, however, suffers from

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23. For discussion of Jeroboam's role in the DtrH, see the classic study by Cross, "Themes of the Books."

24. Gooding, "Jeroboam's Rise to Power." For scholars who argue that the variations presuppose a Hebrew *Vorlage* that predates that of the MT, see, e.g., Gray, *I and II Kings*, 271–74, 299–301; Montgomery, *Kings*, 231–59; Trebolle Barrera, *Salomon*

a failure to read the Jeroboam accounts in relation those concerned with Solomon. His conclusion that the LXX^A account whitewashes Jeroboam must therefore be rejected in that a full analysis of the narrative, including those portions of 3 Kgdms 11 devoted to the portrayal of Solomon, demonstrates an effort to whitewash Solomon as part of a larger agenda to wrestle with the problem of Jeroboam's complicity in the revolt.[25] Indeed, consideration of the variations between LXX^A and MT indicates that the LXX^A account places Jeroboam back in Israel at the time of the revolt, which suggests that he would have played a more active role than that portrayed in the MT. But it also indicates that LXX^A provides no full basis for the condemnation of the house of Jeroboam. It depends on the LXX^B account to provide such a rationale.

The first set of variations pertains to the portrayal of Solomon in 3 Kgdms 11:1–13, insofar as the LXX^A text softens the criticism of Solomon by rearranging and embellishing the account of his relationships with foreign women. The LXX^A account of Solomon's many wives begins with a statement that combines elements of MT verses 1 and 3a:

3 Kgdms 11:1: καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Σαλωμων ἦν φιλογύναιος καὶ ἦσαν αὐτῷ ἄρχουσαι ἑπτακόσιαι καὶ παλλακαὶ τριακόσιαι καὶ ἔλαβεν γυναῖκας ἀλλοτρίας καὶ τὴν θυγατέρα Φαραω Μωαβίτιδας Αμμανίτιδας Σύρας καὶ Ιδουμαίας Χετταίας καὶ Αμορραίας.
And King Solomon was a lover of women, and he had seven hundred royal wives and three hundred concubines, and he took gentile women and the daughter of Pharaoh, Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians and Idumeans, Hittites and Amorites.

1 Kgs 11:1, 3a: *Wəhammelek šəlōmōh ʾāhab nāšîm nŏkrîyôt rabbôt wəʾet-bat-parʿōh môʾăbîyôt ʿammānîyôt ʾădāīyōt ṣēdənîōt ḥittîyōt.… Wayəhî-lô nāšîm śārôt šəbaʿ mēʾôt ûpilagšîm šəlōš mēʾôt.*

y Jeroboan; McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*, 41–51; Timothy M. Wills, "The Text of 1 Kings 11:43–12:3," *CBQ* 53 (1991): 37–44.

25. To a certain extent, this argument is forced insofar as Gooding employs a hair-splitting argument, i.e., Ahijah's prophecy only called for Jeroboam to assume kingship after Solomon's son had come to the throne; therefore the notice that Jeroboam raised his hand against the king could not refer to any overt act of rebellion against Solomon. He offers this argument in support of his contention that the notice of Jeroboam's rebellion against the king in 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 11:27 referred originally to Jeroboam's role in the revolt against Rehoboam at Shechem (see Gooding, "Jeroboam's Rise to Power," 183–85).

> And King Solomon loved many foreign women, and the daughter of Pharaoh, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, Hittites.… And he had seven hundred royal wives and three hundred concubines.

At first glance, the LXX[A] rendition of this text might seem strictly stylistic, particularly since it reorganizes the text to include reference to Solomon's seven hundred royal wives and three hundred concubines at the outset and because it resolves the problematic syntax of the reference to the daughter of Pharaoh.[26] Nevertheless, the interpretative significance of the LXX[A] rendition of this text indicates that its *Vorlage* does not differ substantially from that of the MT. Instead, one observes an effort to reread the apparently common *Vorlage* of the present MT and LXX[A] texts to correct or modify its statements in order to pursue an interpretative agenda. The national identities of Solomon's wives and concubines presuppose interpretative efforts, that is, Hebrew ʾădāîyōt, "Edomites," is read as ʾărāîyōt, "Aramaeans/Syrians,"[27] and Hebrew ṣēdᵊnîōt, "Sidonians," is read as "Idumeans/Edomites" based on the root of the noun ṣyd/ṣod, "hunting," which is associated with Esau, the ancestor of the Edomites (Gen 25:28; 27:3). "Amorites" is then added to the text, perhaps based in part in the similarity between the Hebrew terms for Edomites and Aramaeans, but more importantly so that there will be a total of seven nations in keeping with the Deuteronomistic injunction against marrying women from the seven Canaanite nations in Deut 7:1–6.[28]

Furthermore, the movement of material from verse 3 to verse 1 does not account for the entirety of verse 3 in that the Hebrew statement of verse 3b, *wayyaṭṭû nāšāyw ʾet-libbô*, "and they [the foreign women] turned his heart," was not moved to verse 1. Instead, this statement is embellished to read the foreign women as the subject of the statement and their gods as the object of the statement, that is, καὶ ἐξέκλιναν αἱ γυναῖκες αἱ ἀλλότριαι

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26. For discussion of the difficulties prompted by the reference to "the daughter of Pharaoh" in 1 Kgs 11:1, see now Martin J. Mulder, *1 Kings 1–11*, vol. 1 of *1 Kings*, trans. John Vriend, HCOT (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 549–50.

27. Cf. Montgomery, *Kings*, 245, Noth, *Könige*, 241; Gray, *Kings*, 272, who take the references to Syrians and Idumeans as an attempt to read both ʾădāîyōt, "Edomites," and ʾărāîyōt, "Aramaeans/Syrians," into the text based on the similarities between the letters *d* and *r* in the otherwise consonantally identical terms. But this proposal does not explain the absence of the reference to ṣēdᵊnîōt, "Sidonians," in the Greek text.

28. See Mulder, *1 Kings*, 546–48, who discusses the present passage in relation to the Dtr injunction against marrying foreign women in Deut 7:1–6.

τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ ὀπίσω θεῶν αὐτῶν, "and the gentile women turned his heart back after their gods." The statement is then placed immediately after verse 4, which states that Solomon's heart was not complete with YHWH at the time of his old age. Such a change is not merely stylistic; it specifies that Solomon's apostasy took place only in his old age, whereas the MT reading of this statement prior to verse 4 indicates that it took place all of his life.

Finally, the LXX[A] reading of verses 5–8 shifts the order of the verses significantly to verses 7, 5, 8, and 6 and varies the readings within:[29]

> 3 Kgdms 11:5–8 [MT vv. 7, 5]: Then Solomon built a high place to Chemosh, the idol of Moab and to their king, the idol of the sons of Ammon [MT v. 5], and to Astarte, the abomination of the Sidonians [MT v. 8], and so he did for all of his gentile wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods [MT v. 6]. And Solomon did evil before the L-rd; he did not go after the L-rd like David his father.
> 1 Kgs 11:5–8: [5] And Solomon followed after Ashtoret, god of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites. [6] And Solomon did evil in the eyes of YHWH, and he did not fulfill after YHWH like David his father. [7] Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the sons of Ammon. [8] And so he did for all of his foreign wives, who were burning incense and sacrificing to their gods.

In reformulating the apparent *Vorlage*, the LXX[A] account reorganizes the text to reduce the redundancies and inconsistencies now found in the MT version. Like MT, it indicates that Solomon built high places for the gods of his wives, but it eliminates the very strong statement of MT verse 5, "and Solomon went after Ashtoret, goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites." The elimination of this statement is crucial in that it is the only statement in the MT version of the text that charges Solomon with engaging in the worship of foreign gods himself. According to the LXX[A] narrative, Solomon sinned by building installations for the gods of his forbidden gentile wives, but he did not worship these gods himself.

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29. See Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta Studien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1904–1911), 3:215–16, on the change in verse sequence and minor textual adjustments.

The softened portrayal of Solomon paves the way for a heightened presentation of Jeroboam's culpability in the LXX[A] rendition of this narrative. In contrast to the MT, LXX[A] does not claim that Jeroboam arrived in Shechem only after Israel's meeting with Rehoboam was underway. Indeed, LXX[A] omits 1 Kgs 12:2 from its account of Rehoboam's meeting with the people of northern Israel at Shechem in 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 12, "And it came to pass when Jeroboam ben Nebat heard—and he was still in Egypt where he had fled from before King Solomon—and Jeroboam remained in Egypt," to indicate that Jeroboam remained in Egypt until after the meeting began. Instead, LXX[A] reworks 1 Kgs 11:43, which simply notes Solomon's death and burial together with the accession of his son Rehoboam, so that it also reports that Jeroboam returned to Israel prior to the meeting at Shechem:

> 3 Kgdms 11:43: And Solomon slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David his father. And it came to pass when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard—and he was still in the land of Egypt where he fled from before Solomon, and he remained in Egypt—he went straight to his city in the land of Sarira[30] in the hills of Ephraim. And king Solomon slept with his fathers, and Rehoboam his son ruled in his stead.

The LXX[A] narrative harmonizes the two contradictory readings of Jeroboam's whereabouts in 1 Kgs 12:2, which states, *wayyēšeb yārŏbʿām bĕmiṣrāyim*, "and Jeroboam remained in Egypt," and the corresponding statement in the Chronicler's version of this text in 2 Chr 10:2, *wayyāšob yārŏbʿām mimmiṣrāyim*, "and Jeroboam returned from Egypt." The consonantal forms of the two statements are identical except for the preposition *bə*, "in [Egypt]," in 1 Kgs 12:2 and the preposition *min*, "from [Egypt]," in 2 Chr 10:2.[31] Indeed, the LXX[A] account in 3 Kgdms 11:43 has Jeroboam both staying in Egypt at the time that he heard the report of Solomon's

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30. NB: Greek, Σαριρα, but MT identifies Jeroboam's home city as *ṣrdh* in 1 Kgs 11:26. Most scholars claim that the difference stems from the similarities of the *r* and the *d*, which so frequently influence the readings of LXX texts, but see the discussion of the significance of this name in the LXX[B] account below.

31. Many scholars presuppose that the Chronicler found this reading in its *Vorlage* (e.g., McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*, 49) or that these references are later glosses to the *Vorlage* of the Kings text from Chronicles based on their absence in the LXX[A] text. See Montgomery, *Kings*, 248–49; Ralph W. Klein, "Jeroboam's Rise to Power," *JBL* 89 (1970): 217–18; see further Gooding, "Jeroboam's Rise to Power"; Klein, "Once More: Jeroboam's Rise to Power," *JBL* 92 (1973): 582–84. But the influence of both 1 Kgs 11:2–3 and 2 Chr 10:2–3 on 3 Kgdms 11:43 indicates that the LXX[A] version attempted

death and returning from Egypt immediately afterwards. The LXX[A] account has clearly conflated the readings of the Kings and Chronicler's account of Jeroboam's movement, and thereby resolved a major discrepancy in the biblical traditions' accounts of the matter. Because the matter is addressed in 3 Kgdms 11:43, LXX[A] is able to drop the problematic text in 3 Kgdms 12:2–3. This also has implications for reading 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 12:20, which state that Israel made Jeroboam king when they heard that he had returned: "And it came to pass when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and they made him king over all Israel." Although the LXX[A] account does not explicitly claim that Jeroboam had a hand in planning the revolt, it implies that he did so by placing him back in Israel in his hometown of Sarira immediately prior to the outbreak of the revolt.

Finally, the LXX[A] account lacks the narrative concerning the visit to Ahijah the prophet by Jeroboam's wife at the time of their son's illness and Ahijah's condemnation of the house of Jeroboam in 1 Kgs 14:1–18. Indeed, the LXX[A] narrative simply skips from the end of the Bethel narrative in 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 13:1–34 to the introductory regnal formula for Rehoboam in 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 14:21. It thereby omits the concluding regnal formula for Jeroboam in 1 Kgs 14:19–20, but it leaves 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 13:33–34 to serve as a concluding statement that dwells on the significance of the sin of Jeroboam. The omission of 1 Kgs 14:1–18 leaves the LXX[A] narrative without an account of the condemnation of the house of Jeroboam if it is considered strictly in isolation from the LXX[B] account. Jeroboam's son Nadab is later overthrown by Baasha ben Ahijah (no relation to the prophet) in 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 15:25–32, and this narrative explicitly cites the prophet Ahijah's oracle as justification for the assassination. This suggests that the LXX[A] narrative presupposes some account of the oracle. One would presume that it presupposes 1 Kgs 14:1–18 and that this text appeared in the *Vorlage* of the LXX[A] narrative, but of course no such narrative appears in the present form of the LXX[A] account. The problem is resolved when one considers the LXX[B] account, which does contain a narrative rendition of the visit by Jeroboam's wife to Ahijah and his oracle condemning the house of Jeroboam. The reference in 3 Kgdms 15:29 to Ahijah's oracle can only refer to the LXX[B] version of this episode in 3 Kgdms 12:24g–n in

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to reconcile the two divergent readings in Kings and Chronicles (for discussion, see below; cf. esp. Gooding, "Jeroboam's Rise to Power," 175–79).

the present form of the LXX narrative, and it demonstrates that the LXX[B] version of the oracle must therefore be read in relation to LXX[A]. And yet the placement of this oracle in the LXX[B] account changes the terms by which Jeroboam is condemned. The LXX[B] version of the oracle omits the so-called Deuteronomistic language of 1 Kgs 14:7–9, which explicitly mentions the images that Jeroboam established for the people to worship as the reason for his condemnation.[32] The LXX[B] version of the oracle lacks any mention of the specific cause, but depends instead on the literary context to provide the reason for Jeroboam's condemnation. Insofar as Jeroboam established the golden calves at Bethel and Dan only after Ahijah's oracle in the combined LXX[A]/LXX[B] version of the narrative, another cause must be sought. As noted above, the LXX[A] suggests Jeroboam's culpability in instigating revolt against Solomon, and LXX[B] clearly portrays both Jeroboam's efforts to revolt against Solomon and his marriage into the Egyptian royal house. When read together, the combined LXX[A]/LXX[B] account points to Jeroboam's very active role in revolting against Solomon and Jeroboam's marriage into the Egyptian royal house as the causes for Ahijah's condemnation of the house of Jeroboam.[33]

The LXX[A] account therefore represents a subtle shift in the presentation of both Solomon and Jeroboam. Whereas the MT account emphasizes Solomon's lifelong apostasy as a cause for the revolt of the northern tribes against Rehoboam and states that Jeroboam was still in Egypt at the beginning of the meeting between Rehoboam and the northern Israelite tribes, the LXX[A] account protects Solomon by indicating that his heart was turned by his wives only in his old age and that he never worshiped their pagan gods himself. Such a shift allows for greater latitude in suggesting culpability on the part of Jeroboam, both because the narrative in 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 11 states that he revolted against Solomon during the last years of the monarch's reign and because there is conflict in the tradition

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32. For full consideration of the means by which the LXX[B] narrative adapts this episode into its current narrative context, see esp. Talshir, *Alternative Story*, 212–23; cf. Glatt, *Chronological Displacement*, 100–109; McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*, 29–31.

33. Note that the LXX[B] account of the visit by Jeroboam's wife to Ahijah explicitly names her "Ano" (see 3 Kgdms 12:24g), which is the name of his Egyptian wife in 3 Kgdms 12:24de, who bears his son Abia/Abijah. The MT version of the narrative lacks any reference to Jeroboam's marriage to the sister-in-law of Pharaoh since it attributes this act to Hadad the Edomite (1 Kgs 11:14–22), whose unnamed wife, also the sister-in-law of Pharaoh, bears him a son named Genubat. For discussion of the LXX[B] narrative, see below.

as to whether Jeroboam returned to Israel from Egypt before or after the meeting between Rehoboam and the northern tribes commenced. While respecting the conflicting readings of both the Kings and Chronicles texts on this matter, the LXX^A narrative states that Jeroboam returned prior to the meeting. Of course, such a reading suggests a greater degree of culpability for Jeroboam in instigating the revolt that led to his selection as Israel's king. Furthermore, the LXX^A narrative cannot stand alone, insofar as it lacks an account of Ahijah's condemnation of the monarch. The LXX^A version must be read in relation to the LXX^B narrative to provide an account of this oracle, which thereby establishes the cause for the demise of Jeroboam's dynasty.

<div align="center">4.</div>

Whereas the LXX^A account is equivocal in its attempts to suggest Jeroboam's culpability in the revolt against Rehoboam, the LXX^B account in 3 Kgdms 12:24a–z is quite explicit in its portrayal of Jeroboam as the party primarily responsible for the catastrophe. As indicated at the outset of this paper, scholars note that the LXX^B account shares a great deal of material with the MT and LXX^A versions of the narrative, but many argue that the shorter form of the narrative in the LXX^B account must be the original. Nevertheless, a variety of its features indicate that it is in fact derived from the common *Vorlage* of the MT and the LXX^A versions insofar as it attempts to correct or clarify many of the tensions and ambiguities evident in both the MT and LXX^A texts, that is, the LXX^B account answers the questions left open in the earlier versions and thereby completes the LXX^A version of the narrative. The LXX^B account portrays Jeroboam as an instigator of the revolt from the outset, and it maintains that neither YHWH nor Ahijah the Shilonite ever promised him a dynasty; that promise came from Shemaiah the Nehelemite, a false prophet. Jeroboam is not condemned for idolatry; instead, he is condemned as a traitor.

Of course, the LXX^B account does not reserve all of the blame for Jeroboam. It heightens the portrayal of Rehoboam's immature character in verse 24a by explicitly stating that he was only sixteen years old at the time of the revolt and by stating that his mother was Naanah/Naamah the daughter of Anan/Hanun, son of Nahas, king of Ammon. This specification of Rehoboam's age conflicts with the notice in 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 14:21 that he was forty-one years old at the time of his accession to the throne. Nevertheless, the portrayal of Rehoboam as a sixteen-year-old better

reflects his immature actions in responding to queries of the northern Israelites by following the foolish advice given to him by "the boys with whom he grew up" (1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 12:8; Heb. *hayyəlādîm ʾăšer gādəlû ʾittô*; Greek τῶν παιδαρίων τῶν συνεκτραφέντων μετ' αὐτοῦ). His sophomoric behavior, with its crude allusions and bullying posture, seems unlikely from a forty-one-year-old, but it could be considered characteristic of some sixteen-year-olds. Such a portrayal builds on the characterization of David's treatment of his own son Adonijah, insofar as 1 Kgs 1:6 indicates that David never disciplined him,[34] that is, Rehoboam's behavior seems to reflect the undisciplined upbringing that was characteristic of the Davidic family in earlier times. But the LXX[B] account does not rely simply on the statement of Rehoboam's age or the upbringing of sons in the house of David. The specification of Rehoboam's ancestry also plays an important role in signaling the character of the young man to the reader. First Kings/3 Kgdms 14:21 later identifies Rehoboam's mother as Naamah the Ammonite, but the specification of her ancestry in 3 Kgdms 12:24a reinforces the characterization of Rehoboam as an impetuous and reckless monarch, who endangered his throne and his people by his ill-advised behavior. Naamah's father, Hanun ben Nahash, was the Ammonite king who foolishly humiliated David's emissaries in 2 Sam 10 by sending them home with half-shaved beards and garments cut off from the waist down, and thereby instigated a war with David that Ammon would eventually lose.[35] Rehoboam's actions at Shechem also owe much to the influence of his maternal grandfather in the LXX[B] rendition of the narrative.

The LXX[B] account of Jeroboam's activities begins in 3 Kgdms 12:24b, which identifies Jeroboam in much the same terms as MT 1 Kgs 11:26, except that it identifies his mother as a harlot named Sarira. By contrast MT identifies his mother as Seruaah, a widow, and his home city as Zeredah. LXX[A] identifies his mother as an anonymous widow and his home city as Sarira.[36] Both of these changes are significant for the characteriza-

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34. See also the portrayal of David's relationship with his sons Amnon and Absalom in 2 Sam 13–19, in which he likewise does little to control them.

35. NB: the Samuel narrative suggests that Hanun may have been deposed; see 2 Sam 17:27–29, which indicates that Hanun's brother, Shobi ben Nahash, who presumably replaced him on the throne, supported David at the time of Absalom's revolt.

36. Zeredah is generally identified with the site of the ʿAin Seridah, adjacent to Deir Ghassaneh, about fifteen miles southwest of Shechem in the tribal territory of Ephraim. See Henry O. Thompson, "Zeredah," *ABD* 6:1082.

tion of Jeroboam and the interpretation of the narrative. Whereas Hebrew Zeredah (haṣṣərēdâ) is associated with the Aramaic noun ṣərādā, "coarse web, rough cloth," which calls to mind Ahijah's tearing of his new garment to illustrate his dynastic oracle to Jeroboam, the Greek Sarira may represent a common tendency to confuse the similar-looking *r* and *d*. But the term calls to mind the noun ṣərîrâ, "bundle, distress, hostility, enemy," which in turn is based on the root ṣrr, "to bundle, cause distress, show hostility." The identification of his mother in the MT as Zeru'ah (ṣərûrâ), a name based on the root ṣrʿ, associated with leprosy or a humble state, emphasizes Jeroboam's humble origins; indeed, interpreters express doubt as to whether this would actually be her name.[37] Her identification as Sarira[38] in LXX[A] and LXX[B] may well address this problem, although the meaning of Sarira as "distress, enemy" indicates Jeroboam's problematic nature as expressed in both 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 11:26 and 3 Kgdms 12:24b–z. Likewise, her identification in LXX[B] as a harlot instead of as a widow reinforces Jeroboam's problematic character in the eyes of the reader.[39]

Jeroboam's problematic character is illustrated in LXX[B] verse 24b, which states that Jeroboam built the city of Sarira for Solomon in the hills of Ephraim, that he had three hundred chariots of horses, that he built the citadel with the men of the house of Ephraim, that he enclosed the city of David, and that he was exalted over the kingdom. Interpreters tend to understand these actions in relation to the benign aspects of the portrayal of Jeroboam's service to Solomon in 1 Kgs 11:26–28.[40] And yet the notice that Jeroboam had three hundred chariots raises suspicions, particularly since 2 Sam 5:1 indicates that Absalom equipped himself with a chariot and runners as he began to prepare for his revolt against David. First Kings

37. See, e.g., Noth, *Könige*, 256; Gwilym H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 1:242; Mulder, *1 Kings*, 582.

38. MS Vaticanus 1209 identifies her as Σαρεισά in 3 Kgdms 12:24b, which may represent some confusion with the city names Zeredah (ṣərēdâ) in the Jeroboam narratives and Zeredathah (ṣərādātâ), the Transjordanian city where Solomon cast bronze fixtures for the temple in 2 Chr 4:17 (NB: the *-th* suffix may be simply a directional suffix; cf. 1 Kgs 7:46, which reads the name as "Zarethan," ṣārətān, and Judg 7:22, which reads it as "Zererah," ṣərērâ; see Thompson, "Zeredah").

39. See Talshir's discussion of Jeroboam's depredation in the LXX[B] text, *Alternative Story*, 194–98.

40. See esp. Talshir, *Alternative Story*, 52–60, 200–205; Gordon, "Second Septuagint Account," 280–84, for discussion of this issue, including the potential for reading the Greek text as indicating Jeroboam's culpability.

1:5 makes a similar claim for Adonijah when he attempted to take the throne. Other aspects of this report raise suspicions. Although Jeroboam built Sarira for Solomon, verses 24–25 indicates that Jeroboam fortified Sarira, presumably as a base for his own efforts to secure the throne, after he returned from Egypt. The notice that Jeroboam "enclosed" the city of David with the Greek verb συνεκλεισαν might also suggest that he enclosed or shut up the city of David with his own forces, whereas the earlier LXX[A] use of this term in 3 Kgdms 11:27 expressly stated that he "enclosed the wall of the city of David," that is, he enclosed the breach in the wall and thereby completed the fortifications of the city. The matter is complicated by the change in the syntax of this statement in the MT and LXX[A] versions of 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 11:27, that is, MT reads, "And this is the matter in which he raised his hand against the king [*bammelek*, with an *atnach* to indicate disjunction]. Solomon built [*šəlōmōh bānâ*] the Millo," whereas LXX[A] reads, "And this was the matter whereby he raised a hand against King Solomon [ἐπὶ βασιλέα Σαλωμων, with a disjunction following, which presupposes a construct relationship between the Hebrew words *bammelek* and *šəlōmōh*]. He built the citadel [ᾠκοδόμησεν τὴν ἄκραν]." By shifting the break in the verse, LXX[A] suggests that Jeroboam is the one who carried out these actions instead of the MT's portrayal of Solomon as the party responsible for these actions. Jeroboam's culpability remains ambiguous in the LXX[A] text, both at this point and in the account as a whole, but the LXX[B] account makes it explicit. These statements do not necessarily indicate overtly hostile actions on Jeroboam's part, but they do portray him as a man who builds a power base that might appear to threaten Solomon. In any case, it serves him in the future revolt against Rehoboam. The following statement in verse 24c that Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam for these activities and that Jeroboam fled to King Sousakim/Shishaq of Egypt confirms this understanding.

The LXX[B] account of Jeroboam's activities in Egypt appears in verses 24def, which continue to portray Jeroboam's culpability. Whereas the MT and LXX[A] accounts in 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 11:40 simply report that Jeroboam fled to Shishaq/Sousakim in Egypt, the LXX[B] narrative draws on the MT/LXX[A] account of Hadad the Edomite in 1 Kgs 11:14–22 to portray Jeroboam's close relationship with Pharaoh and his efforts to convince Pharaoh to let him return to Israel following Solomon's death.[41] Sousakim/

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41. See the discussion of this issue in Gordon, "Second Septuagint Account," 384–88; Talshir, *Alternative Story*, 61–73.

Shishaq does not immediately grant Jeroboam's request, but he does give him Ano, the oldest sister of his wife Thekeminas, in marriage. Although the MT and LXX[A] accounts indicate only that an anonymous sister of Tahpenes is given to Hadad, the LXX[B] identification of the woman as Ano is based on the Greek adjective ανο, "high, above," apparently to indicate her exalted status in the Egyptian court.[42] Such an identification of Jeroboam as the brother-in-law of Pharaoh Sousakim/Shishaq only reinforces his identification with Israel's traditional oppressor and helps to explain how Pharaoh Shishaq/Sousakim was able to invade and subdue Israel and Judah in the aftermath of northern Israel's revolt against the house of David (1 Kgs 14:25–28). Whereas the MT/LXX[A] accounts indicate that Pharaoh refused to allow Hadad to return to Edom, the LXX[B] account indicates that Pharaoh did allow Jeroboam to return. Verse 24f states that Jeroboam returned to Sarira, gathered the tribe of Ephraim there, and built fortifications, all of which indicate hostile intent and preparations for the revolt.

The following material in LXX[B] 3 Kgdms 12:24g–n presents the narrative from MT 1 Kgs 14:1–18, in which the prophet Ahijah condemns the house of Jeroboam when Jeroboam's wife visits the prophet in an effort to seek a cure for her sick son.[43] The LXX[B] account names Jeroboam's wife as Ano and indicates that Ahijah is sixty years old. The reference to Ahijah's age perhaps presupposes his identification with Ahijah ben Ahitub ben Phineas ben Eli of Shiloh in 1 Sam 14:3, 18, although such an identification would require even greater age given the eighty-year period of rule attributed to David and Solomon by the Deuteronomistic History. The primary significance of this narrative, however, lies in its placement prior to the delivery of the dynastic oracle to Jeroboam in verse 24o, that is, Jeroboam is condemned by Ahijah before he is ever promised kingship in the LXX[B] narrative. Furthermore, the portrayal of Jeroboam's dynastic oracle in verse 24o differs markedly from the MT and LXX[A] accounts in 1 Kgs 11:29–39. The prophet Ahijah does not deliver the oracle in the LXX[B] account. Instead, the prophet is identified as Σαμαίας τὸν Ελαμὶ, "Shemaiah the Elamite." Shemaiah is generally presupposed to be the prophet who advises Rehoboam not to march his army north in an effort

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42. See Talshir, *Alternative Story*, 68, who supposes that it might be an Egyptian name. This might be the case, but the Egyptian name would have little meaning to a Greek-, Hebrew-, and Aramaic-speaking audience, whereas the Greek name would be readily understandable, at least to those who understood Greek.

43. See esp. Talshir, *Alternative Story*, 74–102, 212–23, for discussion.

to put down the Israelite revolt in 1 Kgs 12:22–24, but the designation of Shemaiah as "the Elamite" raises questions. Indeed, interpreters are at a loss to explain why he should be identified as an Elamite. The matter is resolved, however, when one notes that several LXX manuscripts, including Vaticanus 1209, the fourth-century CE manuscript on which editions of the LXX are based, identify him as Σαμαίας τὸν Ενλαμεὶ, "Shemaiah the Enlamite." The Greek term Ενλαμεὶ derives from a transliteration of the name Shemayahu ha-Nehelami (šĕmaʿyāhû hanneḥĕlāmî), "Shemaiah the Nehelemite," in Jer 29:24–32, where he is identified as a false prophet. Although τὸν Ενλαμεὶ would have been the original designation in Greek, τὸν Ελαμὶ would have emerged as scribes recognized that Σαμαίας τὸν Ενλαμεὶ is the historically problematic figure from Jer 29.

Such an identification indicates that the LXX^B account deliberately attributes Jeroboam's dynastic oracle to a known false prophet (from a later period no less) and thereby undermines his claims to legitimacy.[44] Such an identification has implications for the claim that the absence of characteristic Deuteronomistic language in this oracle and the earlier LXX^B account of Ahijah's condemnation of the house of Jeroboam indicates an early pre-Masoretic and pre-Deuteronomistic edition of the text.[45] The absence of the characteristic Deuteronomistic language is explained first of all by the fact that this oracle does not condemn Jeroboam for building molten idols for the people to worship, as does the MT version of the oracle. As noted above, Jeroboam's establishment of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan (3 Kgdms 12:25–13:34) takes place after Ahijah delivered his oracle in the combined LXX^A/LXX^B version of the narrative. This change is instrumental in shifting the cause for Jeroboam's condemnation in the LXX version from idolatry to treason. The absence of Deuteronomistic language in the LXX^B account would also be explained by Shemaiah's identity as a false prophet, that is, one would hardly expect a false prophet to be concerned with YHWH's choice of Jerusalem or the house of David or with Jeroboam's observance of YHWH's statutes and laws, particularly when Shemaiah the Nehelemite is identified as a false prophet by Jeremiah. Shemaiah is labeled as a false prophet in the book of Jeremiah, which presents Jeremiah as a figure who stands squarely in the Deuteronomistic tradition of observance of divine commandments by

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44. See Talshir, *Alternative Story*, 105, 228–32.

45. E.g., Hrozný, *Die Abweichungen*, 30–41; Trebolle Barrera, *Salomon*, 143–67; McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*, 28–29.

both the people and a righteous Davidic monarch.[46] The Deuteronomistic language in the MT account of the visit by Jeroboam's wife to Ahijah and Ahijah's condemnation of the house of Jeroboam (see esp. 1 Kgs 14:7–9) indicates that YHWH and Ahijah initially made Jeroboam king, but such a contention in lacking in the LXX[B] account (3 Kgdms 12:24g–n). The presence of such a claim in the MT account (and in the LXX[A] rendition of Ahijah's dynastic oracle to Jeroboam in 3 Kgdms 11:29–39) presents precisely the theological problem of YHWH/Ahijah's righteousness or good judgment that the LXX[B] account attempts to address. By eliminating such language, the LXX[B] account resolves the problem apparent in the MT and LXX[A] versions of the narrative, which suggest that YHWH or Ahijah were somehow mistaken in granting Jeroboam kingship.

The balance of the LXX[B] narrative in verses 24p–z then proceeds with the account of northern Israel's revolt against Rehoboam much as it appears in 1 Kgs/3 Kgdms 12:3b–24. Although this narrative differs only in minor details from the MT and LXX[A] accounts, the preceding material portrays Jeroboam as a figure who is the son of a harlot named Sarira, "rebellion," from the city of Sarira, "rebellion," who prepared for revolt against Solomon, who gained the support of the Egyptians and married the sister of Pharaoh's wife, who gathered the tribe of Ephraim and built fortifications in his home city of Sarira prior to the revolt, who was condemned by the prophet Ahijah prior to the revolt, and who received a dynastic oracle from the false prophet Shemaiah the Nehelemite prior to the revolt. In sum, the LXX[B] account identifies Jeroboam as a problematic and culpable figure, who instigated revolt against the house of David and who lacked any divine legitimacy in his efforts to do so.[47] Insofar as the LXX[B] portrayal of Jeroboam in 3 Kgdms 12:24a–z draws on, rearranges, and frequently rereads or reinterprets the common *Vorlage* of the MT/LXX[A] versions of the narrative, and draws on an entirely different text in Jer 29:24–32 to characterize the prophet who delivered Jeroboam's dynastic oracle as a false prophet, it appears that the LXX[B] account is hardly an earlier edition of this text. Instead, it is an interpretative reworking of this text designed to resolve problems and ambiguities in the common

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46. For discussion of the Dtr character of the book of Jeremiah, see Siegfried Herrmann, *Jeremia. Der Prophet und das Buch*, EdF 271 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buch Gesellschaft, 1990), 53–181; Walter Gross, ed., *Jeremia und die "deuteronomistische Bewegung,"* BBB 98 (Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995).

47. See the discussion by Talshir, *Alternative Story*, 108–43, 224–41.

Vorlage of the MT/LXX^A accounts by pointing to Jeroboam's culpability in instigating the revolt against Rehoboam. By rewriting the narrative in this fashion, the author of the LXX^B account attempts to emphasize Rehoboam's immature character and to resolve the problem of YHWH's or Ahijah's culpability in designating Jeroboam as king. It further emphasizes Jeroboam's relationship to Pharaoh Sousakim/Shishaq and thereby prepares the reader for the notice in 1 Kgs 14:25–28 that Pharaoh Sousakim/Shishaq invaded Jerusalem following the division of the kingdom. This suggests that Sousakim/Shishaq played some role in the revolt as well by prompting his Israelite brother-in-law to lead a revolt that would divide and weaken Israel and thereby enable Egypt to take control of Israel.

<div align="center">5.</div>

Both the LXX^A and LXX^B versions of the Jeroboam narrative in Vaticanus appear to be interpretative attempts to recast the narrative and to emphasize Jeroboam's culpability in the revolt against the house of David. They also must be read in relation to each other insofar as the LXX^A account requires the LXX^B version, with its rendition of Ahijah's oracle announcing the death of Jeroboam's son and the condemnation of his house, in order to explain the cause for judgment against Jeroboam. The LXX^A narrative recasts Solomon's apostasy so that his heart begins to turn only in his old age, and even then he only builds cultic installations for the gods of his foreign wives, but he does not worship them himself. The softened portrayal of Solomon provides the platform on which the LXX^A begins to recast the portrayal of Jeroboam. His early rebellion against Solomon and his return to Israel prior to Israel's meeting with Rehoboam at Shechem, with its intimations that he played a far more active role in the revolt against Rehoboam than the MT would suggest, emerge as the reason for his condemnation rather than his erection of the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Indeed, the LXX^A account lacks its own portrayal of Ahijah's condemnation of Jeroboam (see MT 1 Kgs 14:1–18), and therefore requires the presentation of Ahijah's oracle to Jeroboam's wife in 3 Kgdms 12:24g–n, in order to justify the destruction of Jeroboam's family. For its own part, the LXX^B builds on the account now found in LXX^A, that is, it develops, rereads, and makes explicit the intimations in LXX^A that Jeroboam was a no-account traitor. In addition to portraying him as a son of a harlot who betrayed the very king who granted him status and position, he married into the family of the Egyptian pharaoh who would ultimately attack

Jerusalem, he returned to Israel, fortified his home city of Sarira, gathered men of Ephraim to himself there, and he was present at Shechem from the outset of the meeting in which he emerged as the leader of the revolt and as northern Israel's first king. His dynastic promises were worthless, having been given to him immediately following Ahijah's condemnation of his family by the false prophet Shemaiah the Nehelemite. Although the LXX[A] account preserves the account of his erection of golden calves at Dan and Bethel together with the story of the condemnation of the Bethel altar, Jeroboam's guilt and fate had been determined well before he led his country into apostasy against YHWH. Indeed, the combined LXX[A]/LXX[B] account makes it clear that Jeroboam was condemned because he was a traitor; the cultic apostasy was therefore the natural outcome of a man who had long before abandoned his people by marrying into the family of the Egyptian royal house, the traditional oppressor of Israel from the time of Moses and the exodus from Egypt.

Interpreters must ask what motivates such a dramatic shift in the portrayal of Jeroboam and the cause for the demise of his dynasty. Although the LXX[A] is clearly based on a Hebrew Vorlage like that of the MT, and the LXX[B] account may well presuppose a Hebrew *Vorlage* as well, the narrative charges of treason and betrayal against Jeroboam and Egypt provide little basis for a claim that this account originates in the monarchic, Babylonian, or Persian period. Although Egypt was the country that was ultimately responsible for the early death of King Josiah and the renewed subjugation of Judah in 609 BCE, there is no basis by which to associate the portrayal of Jeroboam in this narrative with Jehoiakim ben Josiah, who was placed on the Judean throne by Pharaoh Neco following the removal of his pro-Babylonian brother, Jehoahaz (see 2 Kgs 23:31–35, 23:36–24:7). Jeroboam ben Nebat was vilified in the Josianic edition of the Deuteronomistic History as the monarch whose idolatry brought northern Israel to destruction due to his cultic apostasy—which Josiah would attempt to correct—but he is not charged with treason by virtue of his relationship to Egypt in the Deuteronomistic History in either the account of his reign in 1 Kgs 11–14 or the account of the fall of northern Israel in 2 Kgs 17.[48] That is left

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48. See esp. Cross, "Themes of the Books"; Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 33–177, esp. 77–92. For discussion of political opposition to Jehoiakim's pro-Egyptian policy, see esp. Jay Wilcoxen, "The Political Background of Jeremiah's Temple Sermon," in *Scripture in History and Theology*, ed. Arthur L. Merrill and Thomas W. Overholt (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1977), 151–66.

to Hadad the Edomite. Although Jehoiakim was known for suppressing dissent against his rule and for his alliance with Egypt (see Jer 7, 26, 36), there is no indication that he revolted against another Judean monarch or turned against his own people. The exilic and Persian periods would hardly provide the context for the development of such reflection on the kingship of Jeroboam ben Nebat and the charge of treason by virtue of his relationship with Egypt. Judea lacked autonomy during these periods, and the major enemies or obstacles to independence were not Egyptian; they were Babylonian and then Persian.[49]

Instead, one must look to a time when the question of proper Jewish kingship becomes paramount once again, and the question of the king's relationship to Egypt becomes a potential reality. The Hasmonean period (mid-second through mid-first centuries BCE), immediately following the third century BCE, to which the origins of the LXX tradition are generally traced, must come into consideration.[50] Prior to the Hasmonean revolt, Judea had been ruled by Ptolemaic Egypt from the end of the Diadochi wars in the late fourth/early third centuries BCE through the defeat of Egypt by the Seleucid Syrian monarch Antiochus III in 198 BCE.[51] The Hasmoneans appear to have had little to do with the Egyptians throughout most of their history, but the claim to kingship by the Hasmonean rulers would have prompted reflection on the nature of proper Jewish kingship, particularly since the Hasmoneans were a priestly family that had no known connection to the traditional ruling house of David.

Although Aristobulus I (104–103 BCE) may be the first Hasmonean ruler to have claimed the title of king,[52] his rule was too short to have pro-

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49. Contra Mordechai Coogan, *I Kings*, AB 10 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 356, who contends that the story reflects strife between Jews in Jerusalem and the Samaritans.

50. See Sweeney, who argues that the Temple Scroll's presentation of Deut 17:14–20, with its extensive expansion on the topic of the proper conduct of the king, addresses this issue at the outset of the Hasmonean period ("Torat ham-Melek").

51. For discussion of this period, see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973), 1:125–242; Martin Hengel, "The Political and Social History of Palestine from Alexander to Antiochus III," in *The Hellenistic Age*, ed. William D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein, CHJ 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 35–78; Jonathan A. Goldstein, "The Hasmonean Revolt and the Hasmonean Dynasty," in Davies and Finkelstein, *The Hellenistic Age*, 292–351.

52. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People* 1:216–17; Goldstein, "Hasmonean

voked much reaction or reflection on the matter. However, the rule of his brother, Alexander Jannaeus/Yannai (103–76 BCE) is a different matter altogether.[53] From the time that he came to the throne as a result of his levirate marriage to his brother's widow, Alexandra Salome, Yannai was involved in war, both against foreign nations and against elements of his own population throughout his reign. He was able to expand Judea well beyond the boundaries established by his father, John Hyrcanus, but his claims to both the high priesthood and the kingship apparently aroused considerable dissent against his rule. The well-known account from Josephus and rabbinic literature of the people pelting Yannai with citrons as he officiated before the temple altar at the festival of Sukkot indicates the depth of opposition; in putting down this revolt, his foreign mercenaries killed some six thousand of his own people (Josephus, *A.J.* 13.13.5, *B.J.* 1.4.3, b. Sukkah 48b, b. Yoma 26b). A later revolt saw Yannai unleash his mercenaries against his own people once again in a six-year war that saw the deaths of some fifty thousand Jews (Josephus, *A.J.* 13.13.5, *B.J.* 1.4.4). Josephus's accounts indicate that he dined with his concubines while watching the crucifixion of some eight hundred Pharisees opposed to his reign (*A.J.* 13.14.2).

Yannai was well known as a monarch capable of turning against his own people, but he was also known for his relationship with Egypt. Indeed, his intrigues with the Egyptians early in his reign were a key factor in his securing his kingship in Judah (Josephus, *A.J.* 13.12.2–4, 13.13.1–3).[54] When he attacked the city of Ptolemais shortly after he initially rose to power, the people of Ptolemais appealed to Ptolemy Lathyrus for assistance. Lathyrus had been expelled from Egypt to Cypress by his mother, Cleopatra III, who continued to rule Egypt in the absence of her son. Yannai negotiated a treaty with Lathyrus, but secretly made overtures to Cleopatra as well. When Lathyrus learned of this betrayal, he renewed hostilities against Yannai and defeated his army by Asophon on the Jordan River. In order to counter her son and support her new Judean ally, Cleopatra sent an army to Judea that forced Lathyrus to retreat and ultimately to withdraw

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Revolt," 322 (see Josephus, *A.J.* 13.11.1, *B.J.* 1.3.1.70), who note that Josephus's claim is disputed.

53. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People* 1:219–28; Goldstein, "Hasmonean Revolt," 334–44.

54. See Schürer, *History of the Jewish People* 1:220–21; Goldstein, "Hasmonean Revolt," 337.

back to Cypress. At the urging of her Jewish general Ananias, himself a descendant of the last Zadokite high priest, Onias IV, Cleopatra concluded a treaty with Yannai that allowed him to retain his throne and exercise sovereignty in Judea. The very bloody history of his reign, including his attacks against elements of his own people, then ensued. Although there is little evidence that the Egyptians controlled Yannai for very long, his reign was made possible by his relationship with Cleopatra III of Egypt.

It would seem then that the reign of the Hasmonean monarch Alexander Jannaeus provides a very likely context for the composition of the LXX[B] narrative concerning Jeroboam ben Nebat, its incorporation into the larger biblical narrative now represented in the LXX[A] account of his revolt and reign, and the revisions now apparent in the LXX[A] narrative that would have facilitated the incorporation of LXX[B]. In this respect, the LXX[B] narrative joins the various traditions in Josephus and the rabbinical literature noted above that are critical of Jannaeus's rule as well as other literature from the Judean desert scrolls that raises questions concerning the Hasmonean dynasty in general.

Prophets and Priests in the Deuteronomistic History:
Elijah and Elisha

1. Introduction

King Jeroboam ben Nebat of Israel is roundly condemned in the Former Prophets, or Deuteronomistic History, for a number of alleged sins, such as his rejection of the Jerusalem temple, his promotion of the golden calves for worship at Bethel and Dan, his changes to the liturgical calendar of Israel, and his appointment of non-Levites to the priesthood, among others.

Nevertheless, it is striking that Jeroboam's actions are largely defensible. The Jerusalem temple is the house of David's royal sanctuary; the golden calves function as a mount for YHWH much as the ark of the covenant does in the south; Num 9 allows for the celebration of Passover a month later for those who are away from the land at the time of the holiday; and certain recognized priests in the north, such as Samuel ben Elkanah, do not seem to be Levites.[1] Indeed, a number of other northern prophetic figures in the Former Prophets, such as Ahijah, Elijah, Elisha, and others, also appear to act as priests. Samuel serves as a priest at the sanctuary at Shiloh despite his Ephraimite background. Ahijah is consulted on the potential healing of Jeroboam's sick son Abijah. Elijah presides over sacrifice at Mount Carmel although he is never identified as a priest. And Elisha sets his oracles to music much as the later Levitical singers would do in the Jerusalem temple.

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1. For discussion of the Jeroboam narratives, see Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 161–86; Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, 67–72.

Past interpreters argued that such features represent later Priestly redaction of the narratives concerning these figures, redaction attempting to impose priestly identity and ideology on them.[2] Such a model might pertain, for example, to the Chronicler's presentation of Samuel in 1 Chr 6:13, but evidence for a Priestly redaction of 1 Samuel designed to turn the prophet into a priest is lacking. Furthermore, such efforts presuppose inherent conflict between priests and prophets based on the later model of Protestant conflict with the Roman Catholic Church. They also ignore two important dimensions of ancient Israelite and Judean religion. First, the religions of both Israel and Judah were temple-based, and both nations established priesthoods to officiate at their respective temples throughout their respective histories. Second, although Israel and Judah were allied with each other at various points in their histories and shared some common traditions, they were two autonomous kingdoms throughout most of their histories. As such, they employed different perspectives and practices in their religious establishments, as the examples pertaining to Jeroboam ben Nebat noted above indicate. Indeed, one striking difference between northern Israelite and southern Judean practice appears to be their respective constructions of the priesthood. Northern practice identified the firstborn sons of mothers, such as Samuel ben Elkanah and Hannah, as potential priests, whereas southern Judah employed the tribe of Levi to serve as a priestly dynasty.[3]

With such distinctions in mind, this paper examines the prophetic figures of Elijah and Elisha as presented in the book of Kings in an effort to demonstrate their priestly functions and perhaps identities. Several important aspects of their presentation are treated, including Elijah's role in presiding over sacrifice at Mount Carmel, YHWH's revelation to Elijah in the cave at Mount Horeb, Elijah's reception of the military units sent to fetch him at the time of King Ahaziah ben Ahab's illness, Elijah's ascent to heaven in a fiery chariot and his transference of power to Elisha, Elisha's use of music when presenting his oracles, and the motifs of creation, drought, and restored life in both the Elijah and Elisha narratives. On the basis of this examination, this paper argues that Elijah and Elisha appear to function as priests as well as prophets. Such potential priestly function must be considered in any attempt to posit a distinctive construction of

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2. E.g., Georg Fohrer, *Elia*, ATANT 53 (Zürich: Zwingli, 1968); McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*.

3. See Sweeney, "Samuel's Institutional Identity."

priesthood in northern Israel. The implications of this observation for our understanding of the differences between Israelite and Judean religion are considered.

2. First Kings 18: Elijah at Carmel

The narrative concerning the contest between Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal in 1 Kgs 18 is perhaps one of the most celebrated stories in the Elijah tradition.[4] It presupposes a time of drought in northern Israel when no rain had fallen on the land, as well as a general persecution of the prophets of YHWH by King Ahab ben Omri of Israel and his queen, Jezebel bat Ethbaal of Sidon. The narrative is clearly designed for polemical and dramatic purposes, insofar as it pits Elijah alone against 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah, pointedly identified as eating at the king's table, in an effort to demonstrate that YHWH and not Baal is the true G-d of Israel, capable of bringing rain to the land. This point is particularly important because Baal is the Canaanite storm god, whose chief task is to bring rain to the land so that creation and people might thrive. The contest entails the construction of two altars, each prepared with a bull for an offering, firewood, and everything else necessary for an offering to the respective deities to prompt them to bring about rain. Of course, the prophets of Baal are unable to evoke any response from their god, but Elijah is able to prompt a response by calling on the name of YHWH. The result is a lightning strike that ignites Elijah's altar, consuming the offering in its entirety, followed by a torrent of rain that brings the drought to an end and enables Elijah to execute the 450 prophets of Baal. Obviously, YHWH is the true G-d of Israel in this narrative.

Although the major contestants, Elijah and the prophets of Baal, are identified as prophets and not priests, their respective altar preparations and rituals indicate the professional actions of a priesthood dedicated to carrying out the sacred procedures of a sacrifice. Indeed, the absence of rain and other features of the sacrifice indicates that the offerings here are constructed as offerings required for the observance of Sukkot, which marks the end of the dry summer and the beginning of the rainy season in ancient (and modern) Israel.

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4. For discussion of 1 Kgs 18, see Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 216–30.

Elijah's preparations include several features that mark his sacrifice as a Sukkot ʿôlâ, or whole burnt offering, required to observe the holiday. The offering of one bull is a portion of the required ʿôlâ, for the eighth day of the festival, which would normally call for one bull, one ram, seven lambs, grain offerings, and libations offerings, according to Num 29:35–38. Elijah's digging of a trench around the altar and then pouring water over the offering prior to calling on YHWH are also features of his offering. Although some have speculated that Elijah was surreptitiously pouring naphtha or some other flammable substance on the altar to facilitate ignition,[5] such a contention completely misses the significance of Elijah's acts. First, the digging of the trench is a required feature of Israelite altars, intended to mark the holy boundaries of the altar site and to provide a place for the blood of the sacrifice to drain back into the earth in the manner prescribed by YHWH for the treatment of blood (see Deut 12:16, 23–24; 15:23; Lev 17:12–13; cf. 1 Sam 14:31–35). Second, the pouring of water on the altar is an essential feature of the Sukkot offering, in which libation offerings are made to symbolize the anticipated onset of rain that the offering is meant to symbolize and bring about (see m. Sukkah 4:9, 5:1–3).[6] Third, Elijah's calling on the name of YHWH emulates the role of the priest who officiates over the sacrifice in Israelite or Judean temples. Indeed, Elijah acts as a priest throughout this narrative.

Much the same might be said of the prophets of Baal, who despite the polemics of the narrative actually function as legitimate priests themselves. They prepare the altar and the bull as prescribed, and call on their deity's name in much the same manner as Elijah. Their ritual includes two unique features, (1) the "hopping" or "limping" dance, and (2) the gashing and drawing of blood. The so-called hopping or limping dance, based on the Hebrew verb pasēaḥ, would express the halting procession that would accompany the 3/2 beat ʾîinā' or lamentation meter that would have been employed at celebrations of Sukkot to mourn for the dead Baal who was about to be brought back to life by Anath or another goddess, thereby ending the dry summer season and inaugurating the fall rainy season.[7] The self-inflicted gashing and drawing of blood would represent a form of sympathetic ritual for mourning in which the prophets would

5. E.g., Ferdinand Hitzig, cited in Gray, *I and II Kings*, 401.

6. See Alan Unterman, "Sukkot," *EncJud* 15:495–502.

7. See the mythology pertaining to Ishtar's and Inanna's descent to the underworld, in which the goddess descends to recover the dead male fertility god Tammuz,

emulate the suffering of both themselves and the dead Baal in an effort to facilitate the return of the dead god to life. Like Elijah, the prophets of Baal are also acting as priests in a presumably Canaanite analog to the Israelite Sukkot festival designed to celebrate and bring about the onset of the fall rainy season.

In both cases, our major actants in the narrative are identified as prophets, but in fact both Elijah and the prophets of Baal are carrying out the sacrificial ritual of Sukkot in the manner expected of priests. Insofar as the priestly features of this narrative are not dependent on P texts from the Pentateuch such as Num 28–29, 1 Kgs 18 can hardly be the product of late Priestly composition.

3. First Kings 19: Elijah at Horeb

The narrative concerning YHWH's revelation to Elijah in the cave on Mount Horeb in 1 Kgs 19 is perhaps just as well known as the preceding narrative concerning the contest on Mount Carmel.[8] Chapter 19 continues the plot of 1 Kgs 18 by portraying the attempt by Jezebel and Ahab to kill Elijah as a result of his actions at Mount Carmel. Elijah flees to the wilderness with divine assistance and eventually finds himself at Mount Horeb, the alternative name for Mount Sinai in Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic tradition. As I have shown in an earlier study, 1 Kgs 19 is one of the intertextual foundations for the composition of the golden calf narrative in Exod 32–34, which similarly portrays YHWH's revelation to Moses in a cave on Mount Sinai.[9] Insofar as Exod 32–34 is generally considered an EJ narrative, even with Priestly editing, 1 Kgs 19 predates the P stratum of the Pentateuch.

The ritual features of 1 Kgs 19 are not as apparent as those of the Mount Carmel narrative. Nevertheless, the revelation of YHWH to Elijah in the cave merits attention. Mount Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai, is one of the quintessential sites of revelation in biblical literature. As Levenson has demonstrated, Mount Sinai/Horeb is constructed as an analog to Mount Zion, the site of the Jerusalem temple, in biblical literature. That is to say, Mount Sinai/Horeb becomes a sacred site for the revelation of

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or Dumuzi, in order to restore rain and fertility to the land at the onset of the fall rainy season (*ANET*, 138–41, 106–9, 52–59, 149–55).

8. For discussion, see Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 230–34.

9. Sweeney, "Wilderness Traditions of the Pentateuch."

the divine presence and divine Torah in the wilderness traditions of the Pentateuch in much the same way that the Jerusalem temple serves such a role in the narratives concerning Israel's and Judah's life in the land of Israel.[10] Although the Jerusalem temple is a complex structure with its courts, altar for sacrificial offerings, and the three-room structure of the temple building itself, the focal point for divine revelation lies in the *dəbîr*, or holy of holies, of the temple, where the ark of the covenant resides, symbolizing the divine presence in the temple. The *dəbîr* functions as the temple's sacred center. It is demarcated by the curtain embroidered with a cherub to symbolize the cherub who prevents Adam and Eve and their descendants from reentering the garden of Eden following their expulsion. Here, YHWH resides in the Araphel or "deep darkness," akin to the theophanic imagery of smoke and cloud over Mount Sinai and other instances of divine manifestation in the world. It is noteworthy, then, that human entry into the *dəbîr* occurs at only one time during the year, at Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when the high priest of the Jerusalem temple enters the holy of holies to address YHWH by name in a bid for atonement on behalf of the entire nation. According to Lev 16:3, this sacred precinct is where YHWH states, "in the cloud, I appear over the curtain." Having no tangible form, YHWH's appearance as seen by the high priest is left to the imagination. Examples of such visualization appear in Num 24, Isa 6, Ezek 1–3, Dan 7, the Heikhalot literature, and other instances in biblical and subsequent Jewish tradition.

The intangible nature of the divine appearance then becomes one of the issues addressed in the vision account in 1 Kgs 19:11–13. Elijah is shown three apparitions, each of which might have been understood as a vision of YHWH, but each proves inadequate. The three visions include a great and mighty wind that splits mountains and shatters rocks, an earthquake, and a fire. Insofar as each of these visions has some degree of tangibility, none proves to be adequate to express fully the presence of YHWH as conceived in this narrative. Only when he hears the *qôl dəmāmâ daqqâ* (often translated as "the still small voice," but better translated as "the sound of absolute silence") does Elijah recognizes the vision of YHWH, on account of its complete lack of tangibility.

At this point, we may recognize a Priestly element in the portrayal of Elijah. The revelation of YHWH to Elijah is not the decisive factor; after

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10. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*.

all, revelation of YHWH is characteristic of prophets as well as priests. The manner of the revelation is what is decisive, insofar as the revelation is modeled on the encounter of the high priest with YHWH in the holy of holies of the Jerusalem temple. To be sure, such revelatory experience is not limited to the Jerusalem temple but may be applied to other Israelite temples as well, such as Shiloh, where Samuel's vision of YHWH took place in the holy of holies, where the ark of the covenant resided in 1 Sam 3. Like Samuel, Elijah the prophet begins to look like Elijah the priest.

4. Second Kings 1: Elijah and the King's Soldiers

The account in 2 Kgs 1 of Elijah's reception of the military units sent to fetch him at the time of the injury of King Ahaziah ben Ahab of Israel also comes into consideration.[11] The narrative begins with an account of Ahaziah's injury resulting from his fall through an upper-story window of the royal palace in Samaria. In the aftermath of the king's injury, he sends messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to determine whether or not he will heal. These messengers are confronted by Elijah, who condemns Ahaziah to death after demanding to know whether there is no G-d in Israel. When military units comprising fifty men are sent to summon Elijah, who is sitting atop a mountain, to appear before the king, fire from heaven kills the first two units. The third unit is spared when its captain appeals to Elijah for mercy, unlike his two predecessors, who simply order the prophet to come down from the mountain and appear before the king. At the behest of the third captain, Elijah comes down from the mountain, appears before the king, and promptly condemns him to death for his apostasy in inquiring of Baal-Zebub instead of YHWH.

At first glance, this narrative simply takes up the power dynamics between Elijah the prophet and YHWH on the one hand and King Ahaziah and his soldiers on the other. But several factors signal that the power dynamics of the temple and priesthood also inform the roles of the primary characters, Elijah and the three military officers, as well as their interactions. The holiness of the temple and the need for a proper approach to the deity in the temple by human beings is a key factor here. Human beings do not approach the holy lightly in the Hebrew Bible. Boundaries are set at the foot of Mount Sinai in Exod 19 to prevent the people from approaching YHWH;

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11. For discussion, see Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 263–75.

any who might cross the boundary to touch the sacred precinct would be put to death. Uzzah dies as a result of touching the ark of the covenant as it is transported to Jerusalem in 2 Sam 6. When Solomon builds and dedicates the temple in 1 Kgs 6 and 8, only the priests and Levites are allowed to enter to bring in the ark of the covenant; the people of Israel remain in the courtyard before the temple throughout the entire dedication ceremony. As Lev 16, noted above, indicates, only the high priest would subsequently enter the holy of holies, and then only on Yom Kippur, lest he die. And Lev 10 portrays the deaths of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, when they approach YHWH at an unauthorized time, compromising YHWH's holiness. A similar fate befalls Korah and his supporters in Num 15 when they offer strange incense before YHWH in an attempt to challenge Aaron's and Moses' authority to serve as priests before YHWH's holy presence.

The dynamics of temple holiness appear to inform the character of Elijah in this narrative. Throughout the narrative, Elijah is addressed by the military commanders as "man of G-d," a term that conveys Elijah's and Elisha's roles as representatives and even embodiments of divine power and presence. Elijah is situated atop a mountain when the commanders approach. Although the identity of the mountain is never given—it could be Mount Horeb again, or it could be anywhere—the mountain setting evokes the settings of sanctuaries in ancient Israel, which are typically conceived as atop mountains to represent the presumed residence of the deity. The address of the first two captains to Elijah, "Man of G-d, thus says the king, come down [immediately]!" employs the cohortative imperative verb, *rēdāh*, "come down!" to convey the nature of the command presented to the prophet. There is no sense of honor or respect conveyed. Following the commands of the first two officers, fire comes down (*tēred*, corresponding to the officers' commands) from heaven in a manner reminiscent of the fire that ignited Elijah's altar at Mount Carmel. Only when the third officer approaches him, kneels before him in a manner befitting an approach to G-d, and begs him for mercy does Elijah finally agree to come down from the mountain to appear before the king.

Here we see a somewhat different dynamic from our earlier narratives. Elijah does not appear to function as a priest per se. Instead, he appears to take on the role of G-d, who is approached by the priests in the temple itself.

5. Second Kings 2: Elijah's Ascent to Heaven

The narrative in 2 Kgs 2:1–18 concerning Elijah's transference of power to Elisha and his ascent to heaven in a fiery chariot again evokes images of priestly practice and temple imagery.[12] The narrative begins with the premise that G-d is about to take Elijah to heaven in a whirlwind. It builds on 1 Kgs 19, in which Elijah appointed Elisha as his successor, by portraying Elisha's refusal to abandon his master as he is about to meet his fate. While traveling on to the Jordan to meet his fate, Elijah parts the waters of the river by striking them with his rolled-up mantle, and Elisha requests a double portion of Elijah's power when he will succeed his master. Shortly thereafter, a fiery chariot and horses appear to take Elijah to heaven. When Elisha picks up Elijah's fallen mantle, he finds he can part the waters of the Jordan much as Elijah had done, and his disciples recognize that the spirit of Elijah has now settled on Elisha. Throughout the subsequent narratives, Elisha functions as a man of G-d much like his master, but his powers appear to surpass those of Elijah.

Again, we may observe indications of priestly roles and imagery in the portrayal of Elijah and Elisha. The first pertains to the transference of power from Elijah to Elisha. As interpreters have long noted, there are tremendous parallels with the transference of power from Moses to Joshua ben Nun in Num 27:12–23 and Deut 31:16–21. Here, the priestly connotations remain ambiguous, due in large measure to the ambiguity of Moses's identity as a Levite in Exodus–Numbers and as a prophet in Deuteronomy. We may note that Moses employs his Levitical rod to split the waters of the Red Sea, but Joshua does not bear a Levitical rod, and the waters of the Jordan split only when the priests bearing the ark of the covenant set foot in the waters. By contrast, Elijah employs his rolled-up mantle to split the waters of the Jordan, and Elisha employs the mantle to perform the same act. Although Joshua is not formally designated as a priest, he does take on priestly roles, including his exhortations to the people to observe divine torah as they take possession of the land of Israel in Josh 1 and again near the close of his life in Josh 23. Joshua also plays the key role in presiding over covenant ceremonies in Josh 8:30–33 and 24:1–28, although most interpreters see him fulfilling a royal function much like Josiah during Josiah's reforms. Although

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12. For discussion, see Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 263–75.

Elisha's succession of Elijah is suggestive of a potential priestly role, the evidence is not decisive.

But Elijah's ascent to heaven takes on a different character. Chariot motifs appear throughout the Elijah-Elisha narratives, sometimes in relation to the human combatants in the narratives and sometimes in relation to the heavenly army brought by YHWH to defeat the Aramaeans. We may also note that chariot imagery is a frequent means to portray YHWH's traversing of the heavens in hymnic literature such as Hab 3 or Pss 68 and 18 (= 2 Sam 22). But perhaps the most important aspect of this imagery for our purposes is the analogy it creates with the ʿôlâ or the whole burnt offering, the standard form of sacrifice to YHWH in Israelite and Judean worship. To a certain extent, Elijah's ascent to heaven is portrayed in terms analogous to an ʿôlâ offering, in which he is conveyed to heaven as a presumably pleasing presence to YHWH. And, of course, Elijah's ascent to heaven without burial in a grave establishes another analogy with Moses, whose grave is likewise unknown to anyone but G-d.

6. 2 Kings 3: Elisha and Music

A little-noticed aspect of Elisha's role in 2 Kgs 3, which recounts the failed campaign against Moab carried out by King Jehoram ben Ahab of Israel and his allies, is his use of music to accompany his prophecy.[13] Elisha accompanies King Jehoram of Israel, King Jehoshaphat of Judah, and the unnamed king of Edom on a campaign to subdue King Mesha of Moab, who has refused to pay further tribute to Israel following the death of King Ahab ben Omri. When the allies find that they lack water for their animals while traveling around the southern end of the Dead Sea to attack Moab, King Jehoshaphat proposes that they consult Elisha ben Shaphat in an effort to determine the potential success or failure of their campaign. Despite obvious tension with the king of Israel, Elisha agrees to deliver an oracle, but demands a musician to accompany him as he speaks. Once the musician begins playing, Elisha delivers an oracle that promises abundant water and victory over Moab to the allies. Although Israel and its allies have a clear advantage in the ensuing battle, they withdraw from action upon seeing Mesha sacrifice his own son on the walls of his city. Hence, the failure of the campaign is not due to any failing on the part of G-d or

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13. For discussion, see Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 276–84.

Elisha but is due to the unwillingness of Israel to pursue the battle upon seeing such an objectionable act.

Two key features of this narrative address the concerns of this paper. The first is the depiction of Elisha's role as an oracular prophet who speaks as a result of an oracular inquiry. Although Elisha's action is clearly prophetic, readers must bear in mind the context in which oracular inquiry was made in the ancient world. It was fundamentally a ritual act in which the oracular figure would engage in a ritual of offering as a prelude to delivery of the oracle. An important example of such action is the portrayal of Balaam's oracles against Israel in Num 22–24. Balaam commissions seven incense altars and lights them in a ritual act of oracular inquiry. Such action illustrates the oracular delivery of the *baru* priests of ancient Mesopotamia and Aram, who engaged in such rituals to provide the basis on which an oracle might be discerned.[14] Such bases might include readings of smoke patterns from the incense altars, patterns of oil deposited into water, and other possibilities. That such oracular inquiry is a priestly function should come as no surprise. Even the Israelite high priests wear the Urim and Thummim as a breast piece, indicating that oracular inquiry is a recognized element of priestly identity. One sees such action also in the portrayal of Moses, who enters the tent of meeting to consult with YHWH. Aaron interprets for him when he emerges from his face-to-face conversation with G-d.

The second is the playing of music to accompany the oracular presentation. Musical accompaniment is not only a feature of oracular delivery; it is also a feature of temple worship. Indeed, the book of Chronicles portrays the Levitical singers as prophetic figures who sing the temple liturgy.[15] Heman, the king's seer, is identified as the ancestor of a line of temple-based Levitical singers who are identified as prophets in 1 Chr 25. Furthermore, there seems to be a development from the Deuteronomistic History to the Chronicler's History insofar as the Deuteronomistic History will refer to the priests and the prophets who were present at Josiah's reading of the Torah in 2 Kgs 23:2, whereas 2 Chr 34:30 identifies them as priests and Levites. Although we know little concerning the conduct of Judean liturgy, the portrayal of David's bringing the ark of the

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14. For discussion of *baru* priests in ancient Mesopotamia, see Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*.

15. See David L. Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy: Studies in Deutero-Prophetic Literature and in Chronicles*, SBLMS 23 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 55–96.

covenant into Jerusalem in 1 Chr 16 portrays the Levites singing psalms as the foundation of the liturgy to celebrate the occasion. We may also note that prophetic books frequently include liturgical psalms, such as Isa 12, Hab 3, and Joel 1–2. Jeremiah, identified as priest and prophet, composes lamentation psalms to express the difficulties in his relationship with YHWH and his fellow priests.[16]

Altogether, Elisha's actions are those of an oracular prophet—and indeed, the professional guild of the sons of the prophets that he leads appears to be devoted to oracular divination. Such activity appears to have a setting in temple and Levitical practice as well, particularly when we move to the later periods of Judean history.

7. The Well-Being of Creation

The final feature of the Elijah-Elisha narratives to consider is the focus on the well-being of creation, particularly in relation to the motif of drought that appears throughout the narratives, together with the well-being of individual human beings and the role of Elijah and Elisha in healing them and restoring them to life.[17]

The well-being of creation plays an important and pervasive role throughout the Elijah-Elisha narratives. We see the concern with creation at the outset of the Elijah narrative in 1 Kgs 17, when Elijah is commanded by YHWH to live in the Wadi Cherith, where he will be supported by the waters of the wadi and the food that the ravens bring him. That is to say, he will be supported by creation. We see it again in his encounter with the woman from Zarephath, a Canaanite/Phoenician city, who is starving to death because creation can no longer sustain her and her son. Scholars rightly see this as a jab against Baal, the Canaanite/Phoenician god of fertility whose role it is to sustain creation by bringing rain and fertility to the land. Obviously, as is portrayed throughout the narrative, Baal has failed in this essential task. The narrative claims this role for YHWH instead by portraying Elijah as YHWH's agent, who ensures that the woman and her son have enough to eat and who brings the woman's son back to life after he nearly succumbs to starvation and illness. The motifs of the well-being of creation, drought, starvation, and recovery from near-fatal illness appear

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16. On the relationship between Psalms and prophecy, see William H. Bellinger Jr., *Psalmody and Prophecy*, JSOTSup 27 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984).

17. For discussion of the texts taken up here, see Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, ad loc.

repeatedly. We have seen the motif of drought in the Carmel episode, the motif of illness in the Ahaziah episode, and even power over creation in Elijah's splitting of the waters of the Jordan River. Other examples include the drought that permeates the Elisha narratives, the recovery of Naaman from leprosy, and the birth and recovery of the Shunammite woman's son, among others.

The importance of the motif of creation and the sustenance of life in the Elijah-Elisha narratives cannot be underestimated in relation to the question of the role that these narratives play in relation to the conceptualization of priesthood and temple. The Jerusalem temple—like temples throughout the ancient Near East at large—is conceived as the holy center of creation.[18] Insofar as the temple functions properly as a source for divine revelation and teaching in the world, so creation will function smoothly. If the temple is disrupted, then creation will be disrupted, and vice versa; if creation is disrupted, then something must be awry in the temple. This points to a basic motif of the Elijah-Elisha narratives: the introduction of Baal worship to the land of Israel.[19] Such apostasy on the part of Ahab and Jezebel constitutes a fundamental rejection of YHWH's role as creator and G-d of Israel. As such, it constitutes a fundamental rejection of the covenant with YHWH who grants the land of Canaan to Israel as the foundation of the covenant between G-d and people. As a result, creation suffers as drought emerges, starvation and illness ensue, enemies invade, and people die. Elijah and Elisha are engaged in a battle throughout the narratives on behalf of YHWH, which culminates in the overthrow of the house of Omri, the overthrow of Baal and his supporters, and the destruction of Baal's temple. When YHWH is acknowledged as the true G-d of creation and of Israel, creation returns to its normal state of equilibrium, in which the rains come, food grows, enemies are defeated, and people live.

Altogether, this concern for the proper acknowledgement of YHWH as G-d of creation and of Israel points to the fundamental concern of the Elijah-Elisha narratives. Restoration of the worship of YHWH entails the restoration of creation and the welfare of the people. Such restoration entails the restoration of YHWH's temple and priesthood as well.

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18. Levenson, "Temple and the World."

19. For discussion of the pervasive role of Baal and Canaanite religion in the Elijah and Elisha narratives, see Leah L. Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha as Polemics against Baal Worship*, POS 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1968).

8. Conclusion

Our discussion of priestly and temple motifs in the Elijah and Elisha narratives points to several important features. First, Elijah acts as a priest in preparing a Sukkot ʿôlâ offering for YHWH as part of his confrontation of the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Second, Elijah's experience of YHWH's revelation on Mount Horeb is constructed as an analogy to the high priest's experience of YHWH in the holy of holies of the temple. Third, Elijah's encounter with the three military officers sent to fetch him portrays the prophet and the mountain on which he resides in terms analogous to a holy temple site. Fourth, Elijah's ascent to heaven employs the imagery of an ʿôlâ offering, and it presents a pattern of succession for Elijah and Elisha that is analogous to that of Moses and Joshua. Fifth, Elisha's use of music to accompany his oracular presentation employs a pattern known in the Jerusalem temple, where the Levitical singers are also known as prophets. Sixth, the overriding concern with the proper worship of YHWH as G-d of creation and Israel signals the role played by the temple in ensuring the integrity of creation and its ability to provide food for its inhabitants.

When taken together, these motifs signal significant priestly association for Elijah and Elisha as portrayed in the book of Kings. Nevertheless, neither is ever identified as a Levite or even as a firstborn son. We cannot conclude with confidence that they are in fact bona fide priests. But their priestly associations point to the possibility that they may have functioned in some priestly capacity in northern Israel, much as an Ephraimite figure such as Samuel could be recognized as a priest in Shiloh, or as oracle diviners, such as the Mesopotamian *baru* priests functioned in a priestly capacity in their own cultures. Insofar as Israel and Judah were two autonomous kingdoms throughout their histories, we must reckon with the possibilities that they employed some very different conceptualizations of religious belief and practice, including constructions of their respective priesthoods that must be considered in any assessment of religion in northern Israel.

Part 5
Latter Prophets

28

Revelation as Empirical Observation of Nature in the Prophets

1.

Modern biblical interpreters have become accustomed to regard revelation in the Bible as an expression of divine intervention in human history, either in the form of visionary experience directed to a prophet, priest, or another individual, or in the form of divine direction of historical events.[1] Such a view of course is dependent on the worldview of the Western European Enlightenment, which posits a fundamental distinction between the heavenly realm of the divine and the earthly realm of humanity combined with notions of human progression through history from primitive superstition to an ideal of enlightened reason and moral action.[2] A major component of this worldview is the capacity of human beings to employ a combination of empirical observation and human reason to achieve increasingly higher levels of knowledge and awareness as they strive to achieve their ultimate potential.

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1. For orientation to the question of revelation in biblical literature, see Charles F. D. Moule, "Revelation," *IDB* 4:54–58; see also James Barr, "Revelation in History," *IDBSup*, 746–49; Jacob Joshua Ross, "Revelation," *EncJud* 14:117–26, esp. 117–19; cf. Leo G. Perdue, "Revelation and the Problem of the Hidden G-d in Second Temple Wisdom Literature," in *Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Right? Studies on the Nature of G-d in Tribute to James L. Crenshaw*, ed. David Penchasky and Paul L. Redditt (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 201–22.

2. See Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 10–27; Hayes and Frederick, *Old Testament Theology*, 35–71.

Although the principle of empirical observation must include a focus on the natural world of creation as much as the historical world of human events, the decline of natural theology and the prevailing association of nature with paganism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries contributed much to an emphasis on revelation as observation and interpretation of human historical events.[3] One sees such historical emphases in the Old Testament theology of von Rad, the New Testament theology of Bultmann, and the systematic-theological work of Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg as mid-twentieth century interpreters sought to come to terms with the disruption of Western notions of historical progress brought about by the wrenching experiences of World Wars I and II, the Shoah/Holocaust and other genocides, the advent of nuclear war, and the threat that human technological progress poses to the natural world.[4] Insofar as the world of nature was associated with pagan religiosity and the rise of totalitarian governments that so frequently justified their rule by appeals to the natural order of creation, interest in observation of the natural world as a mode of divine revelation tended to be pushed aside as interpreters sought to reexamine and recover our lost sense of human progress.[5]

One major casualty of such reexamination is the notion of human historical progress itself. The challenging events of the twentieth century demonstrate that historical development, change, and dynamism do not inevitably lead to the realization of an ideal of human reason and moral action. Quite the opposite might well be the case as the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries increasingly highlight the dangers that human civilizations—whether Western or Eastern—face in an unstable world. Such reexamination calls for reconsideration of the world of nature as a source for divine revelation in biblical theology, particularly since the created order of nature functions as a symbol for stability in the world and

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3. Barr, *Concept of Biblical Theology*, 146–71; Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology: The Gifford Lectures; Edinburgh 1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

4. Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*; Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 31 vols. (London: T&T Clark, 2009); Wolfhart Pannenberg, ed., *Revelation as History* (New York: Macmillan, 1968); for discussion, see Henning Graf Reventlow, *Problems of Old Testament Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 51–124, esp. 71–87; Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 115–38.

5. See now Perdue, *Collapse of History*.

serves as a means for disclosing divine purpose and action. Indeed, the interaction of the stability of the natural world of creation and the dynamism of human historical events may well lead to a new understanding of the nature of divine revelation in the Bible.[6]

It is with these considerations in mind that the present paper reexamines the notion of the empirical observation of nature in biblical literature as a basis for understanding revelation of divine will and purpose in the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible. It focuses on Amos and Isaiah, which employ wisdom perspectives in the interpretation of historical events. The paper attempts to demonstrate that empirical observation of nature must stand together with observation of historical events in the Bible's delineation of divine revelation. Such a conclusion has the potential for examining the interrelationship between the Bible and other classical literatures, such as the Chinese Tao Te Ching and the Confucian classics that likewise employ observation of nature as a means to discern divine purpose and order in the world.

<div align="center">2.</div>

When we turn to the prophets, we encounter a type of biblical literature that normally presents direct divine revelation to individual prophets in the form of oracular and visionary communication. Recent research, however, demonstrates that a number of the prophets, such as Amos, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Joel, and others, display tremendous influence from the sphere of wisdom, including the capacity to discern divine revelation from the observation of natural phenomena.[7] This should come as no surprise since studies of ancient Near Eastern oracular prophecy and divination indicate that such prophets generally rely on the observation of smoke, oil patterns, sacrificial animals, animal behavior, and so on, in the formulation of their oracular statements.[8] Nevertheless, interpreters have not taken full account of such modes of revelation in Israelite and Judean prophecy. We will therefore consider two prophets, Amos and Isaiah, who

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6. For reexamination of the wisdom literature, see Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of the Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994); for a reassessment of the concept of creation in the Bible, see Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence*.

7. For discussion of these books, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*; Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*.

8. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*.

are especially prominent in discussion of the interrelationship between wisdom and prophecy.

The book of Amos identifies him as a Judean shepherd and dresser of sycamore trees who delivered an oracular condemnation of the northern Israelite sanctuary at Bethel in the mid-eighth century BCE.[9] Amos denies that he is a prophet in Amos 7:10–17, but tradition recognizes him as such, apparently because of his emphasis on social justice and the view that his oracles of judgment were fulfilled with the Assyrian destruction of northern Israel in 722/721 BCE and the Babylonian destruction of Judah in 588/587 BCE. Hans Walter Wolff and Samuel Terrien have been especially instrumental in pointing to Amos's wisdom background.[10] They especially note his use of typical wisdom speech forms together with prophetic forms and typical antithetical words pairs and concepts, such as the contrast between good and evil, in his prophetic oracles.

Nevertheless, one aspect of Amos's wisdom background, his use of empirical observation, demands greater attention. Although it is quite clear that he is a keen observer of historical, political, and social events, as his oracles concerning the nations in Amos 1–2 and Israel in Amos 3–6 demonstrate, he is also able to observe the mundane as a means to discern divine intent. His statement of G-d's oracle against Israel, based on the prophet's observation of a cart loaded down with sheaves of grain, illustrates the point: "Behold, I am pressing you down, just as the cart presses down when it is filled with grain" (Amos 2:13). Here Amos employs an analogy from his own world as a Judean farmer hauling grain to the Bethel sanctuary for presentation at the altar as a means to define YHWH's will.

He does not limit himself to observations from his own everyday life, but also draws on observations from the animal world, as illustrated by his use of analogical reasoning in Amos 3:3–8:

> Do two go together without having met?
> Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?
> Does a lion growl from his den without having captured?

9. For detailed discussion of Amos, see Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:191–276.

10. Hans Walter Wolff, *Amos the Prophet: The Man and His Background* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973); cf. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*; Samuel Terrien, "Amos and Wisdom," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (London: SCM, 1962), 108–15.

Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when the trap has not sprung?
Does a trap spring up from the ground without having caught something?
When the shofar is sounded in the city, are the people not afraid?
When disaster comes upon a city, does not YHWH cause it?
For my lord, YHWH, does nothing unless He reveals His purpose
　　to His servants the prophets.
A lion roars, who will not be afraid?
My lord, YHWH, has spoken, who will not prophesy?

Here Amos draws on a combination of observations from both the natural and the social world to make his point, that is, that cause and effect must be considered together. Just as a lion roars only when it has prey, just as the shofar blows only when danger approaches, so prophets prophesy only when YHWH is about to act. In Amos's case, his prophecy warns that YHWH is about to bring disaster against northern Israel as a result of its oppressive treatment of poor Judean farmers such as himself.

Finally, we may note the role that empirical observation of both the natural and the social world plays in Amos's vision sequence in Amos 7–9. Interpreters have long recognized that the five visions articulated therein constitute the foundational revelation for Amos's oracular statements against the Bethel sanctuary. Indeed, each observation prompts an oracular statement by YHWH that Amos then announces as part of his efforts to condemn Bethel and with it the northern Israelite monarchy.

The first vision in Amos 7:1–3 illustrates the form and the rhetorical technique:

This is what my lord YHWH showed me: behold, he was forming a plague of locusts at the beginning of the time when the late-sown crops come up—the late-sown crops after the king's mowing—Behold, when the locusts had finished devouring the crops on the ground, I said, "O lord, YHWH, please pardon, how will Jacob stand? He is too small?" YHWH repented concerning this, "It shall not be," said YHWH.

Upon observing the locust plague that devours the crops of the Judean farmers after the harvest devoted to the king had already been completed, Amos queries YHWH, asking how the people could survive such a natural disaster. Of course, his observation of locusts recalls an all-too-familiar event in the world of nature, namely, swarms of locusts that plague the land every seven years. It is Amos's observation that prompts his question to YHWH and YHWH's subsequent response that he will show mercy.

A similar exchange takes place in the second vision of the sequence, in Amos 7:4–6, in which Amos views fire devouring the land. Again, Amos calls on YHWH to cease the affliction, and YHWH responds in kind. Although the image of fire draws on mythological images of fire consuming the great deep, the image ultimately derives from the annual occurrence of fire at the dry season of the year in the land of Israel, much like the fires that break out in late August and early September in Southern California. Once again, Amos draws on his observation of an event in nature to make his point.

The third vision in the sequence appears in Amos 7:7–9, in which the prophet views YHWH standing beside a wall with a plumb line, that is, a measuring line, in his hand. This observation prompts YHWH's statement that he will employ a plumb line to measure Israel, destroy its sanctuaries, and judge its monarch. In this case, the plumb line is hardly an observation of nature; instead, it is a common measuring tool that is designed to gauge the straightness of a stone wall to ensure that it will not collapse under its own weight when completed. Although the plumb line is not an element of nature, Amos's observation draws on the everyday life of ancient Judeans, who would have built their own houses and other structures and would have employed plumb lines to ensure that they were built correctly. Again, the analogy from everyday life makes the prophet's point concerning divine action.

The fourth vision, in Amos 8:1–3, is based on Amos's observation of a basket of summer fruit, which prompts YHWH's statement that the end has come upon Israel. Readers must recognize that this oracle depends on a pun in Hebrew, namely, the basket of summer fruit, *qāyiṣ*, prompts YHWH's response that the end, *qēṣ*, has come. In addition to the pun, the reader must recognize that the vision is based on the presentation of the late summer fruit harvest at the Bethel altar. Once again, Amos's observation of the presentation of an offering at the temple altar prompts an oracle concerning the impending downfall of Israel.

The fifth vision, in Amos 9:1–4, portrays YHWH standing by the altar at the Bethel temple and calling for its destruction. Although such a vision might seem to entail only an oracle of judgment, the reader must recognize the significance of the observation of the Bethel altar as the basis for this vision. When it is in use, a sacrificial altar is a vision of destruction in and of itself. An animal is killed, cut up, and placed on the altar as the blood drains away from its butchered and severed parts. It is set afire, and the smoke rises from the altar as the corpse is consumed

by the flames. Amos's vision appears to be based on his observation of the Bethel altar in operation, namely, its images of destruction provide the foundation for the prophet's oracular statement of YHWH's call for Bethel's destruction.

In each case, an observation from the natural or the social world of everyday Israelite/Judean life underlies Amos's visions of YHWH's oracular statements. Although the visions emphasize the impending destruction of Israel, we should note the role that the observation of natural imagery plays in the prophet's scenario of restoration for Israel once the punishment is complete:

> "Behold, the days are coming," says YHWH, "when the plowman shall overtake the one who reaps, and the one who treads grapes shall overtake the one who sows seed, and the mountains shall drip with new wine, and the hills will wave with grain. I will restore My people, Israel, and they shall rebuild ruined cities and live in them, and they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make garden and eat their fruit. I shall plant them upon their land, and they shall not be uprooted again from their land which I have given to them," says YHWH, your G-d. (Amos 9:13–15)

The point is not made in Amos, but the following consideration of Isaiah's observation of nature indicates that he views restoration as a natural outcome following judgment.

3.

When we turn to the book of Isaiah, we find a presentation of a prophet who is well known for his use of natural imagery, particularly that of trees and vineyards, to express divine intent to act in historical events.[11] Indeed, examination of Isaiah's use of such metaphors indicates that the prophet sees the cyclical demise and regrowth of vineyards and trees as an expression of YHWH's actions in bringing judgment against Israel and Judah followed by subsequent restoration in the aftermath of the punishment.

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11. For detailed discussion of texts, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*; for discussion of the metaphor of the tree in the book of Isaiah, see esp. Kirsten Nielsen, *There Is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah*, JSOTSup 65 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989).

Such natural phenomena thereby function as a means for revealing divine action in the human sphere.[12]

Although the book of Isaiah stands as a coherent literary whole, it includes the works of eighth-century prophet Isaiah ben Amoz as well as the works of anonymous prophets from the times of the Babylonian exile and the early Persian period. We will focus on Isaiah ben Amoz and his attempts to portray the threats posed to Israel and Judah in the late eighth century BCE by the Assyrian Empire in relation to divine intent and action in the world.

One of the best-known passages in Isaiah is the prophet's inaugural vision in Isa 6, in which YHWH, surrounded by a heavenly court in the temple that calls out, "Holy, holy, holy is the L-rd of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory," commissions Isaiah to speak a message of judgment and restoration. Although YHWH's statements to Isaiah emphasize the prophet's role in ensuring the realization of divine judgment, verses 12–13 employ the metaphor of a burnt tree stump to announce the eventual restoration of the remnant of the people: "For YHWH will banish the population and multiply deserted sites in the midst of the land. But while a tenth part of the people remain in it, it shall repent. It shall be burned like the terebinth and the oak of which stumps are left after they are felled. Its stump shall be holy seed" (Isa 6:12–13). Many interpreters overlook these verses because of the mistaken claim that they are later additions, but the literary coherence of the passage and the relation of concern with the remnant of Judah to Isaiah's clearly authentic oracles undermine such claims.[13] It is therefore noteworthy that the prophet's message of restoration is rooted in the natural phenomenon of a felled tree. Isaiah contends that some one-tenth of the population will survive the coming judgment, but like a tree stump that continues to extend its roots to grow after the tree is cut down, the people will restore themselves in the land. In this case, a typical phenomenon from nature functions as the basis from which

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12. For discussion of the influence of wisdom categories in the oracles of Isaiah ben Amoz, see esp. Johannes Fichtner, "Jesaja unter den Weisen," *TLZ* 74 (1949): 75–80; J. William Whedbee, *Isaiah and Wisdom* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971). Although both studies tend to emphasize formal literary features derived from wisdom and the general role of YHWH's counsel in Isaiah, my late colleague Whedbee was one of the first to recognize Isaiah's use of empirical observation in Isaiah's oracles.

13. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 138–39; cf. Nielsen, *There Is Hope*, 144–58.

Isaiah proclaims YHWH's intent to restore the remnant of the people fol-
lowing the disaster of foreign invasion and exile.

Indeed, the proclamation of divine judgment against Israel and Judah
finds expression in the use of the vineyard parable in Isa 5:1–7.[14] Here
the prophet sings a song on behalf of his beloved friend, who describes
his efforts to plant, tend, and protect his vineyard in the expectation of
producing suitable grapes. Unfortunately, the vineyard produced unus-
able grapes, and the prophet's friend declares his intention to remove the
walls that protected the vineyard and leave it exposed to the elements,
thorns and briars, wild animals, and so on. By the end of the parable, it
becomes clear that Isaiah's friend is actually YHWH and that the vineyard
and its plantings are the people of Israel and Judah, who have failed to
do what is right and just. The parable becomes a metaphor for YHWH's
intention to bring punishment on Israel and Judah, and it depends on an
all-too-common experience with vineyards, namely, despite the efforts of
the vintner, sometimes vineyards fail to produce the desired result. In this
case, an observation from the natural world becomes the stimulus for Isa-
iah's oracle of judgment against Israel and Judah.

The metaphor of the vineyard may also be applied to a prophetic
announcement concerning the restoration of Israel/Judah. Isaiah 27:2–6,
often viewed as a late addition to the book, expresses the new vineyard
song of restoration:

> In that day, they shall sing of it, Vineyard of Delight!
> I, YHWH, watch over it; every moment I water it lest harm come to it.
> Night and day I guard it; I am not angry.
> If someone brings thorns and thistles, I will march out against them in
> war;
> I will set them on fire together.
> But if he holds fast to my refuge, he will make peace with me;
> Peace shall he make with me.
> In times to come, Jacob will strike root; Israel will sprout and blossom,
> and they will fill the face of the earth with fruit. (Isa 27:2–6)

Experience with vineyards indicates that grape vines appear dead and use-
less following the annual grape harvest, but they blossom in all their glory

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14. For discussion of the vineyard parables in Isa 5:1–7 and 27:2–6, see Nielsen,
There Is Hope, 87–123, in addition to my *Isaiah 1–39*.

once again as the annual cycle repeats itself. From the standpoint of the book of Isaiah, one need only observe this natural phenomenon to discern divine intent concerning Israel and Judah, namely, like the grape vine, the people will wither, but also like the grape vine, they will sprout once again when the time of judgment has passed.

Such metaphors may be applied to the enemies of Israel and Judah as well. Isaiah 10:5–34 presents an oracle directed against the arrogant king of Assyria, portrayed as the rod of YHWH's anger to punish Israel, who then stands on Har ha-Zophim to shake his fist at Jerusalem and YHWH. Although interpreters tend to interpret the use of the rod in this oracle, first by Assyria against Israel and then by YHWH against Assyria, as a reference to the rod of Moses in the exodus tradition, it must also be viewed in relation to a natural, agricultural phenomenon, namely, the harvest of olive trees. The metaphor first comes to expression in the prophet's rhetorical questions posed to the arrogant Assyrian king:

> Does the ax boast over him who hews with it?
> Or does a saw magnify itself over him who wields it?
> As though the rod raised him who lifts it,
> As though the staff lifted the man who is not wood! (Isa 10:15)

The oracle continues in verses 16–19 with a scenario of fire that is applied to a forested thicket to express YHWH's intention to punish the Assyrian monarch.[15]

The key element, however, in the description of YHWH's punishment of the Assyrian king is the image of the beating rod. Although the rod is first applied to Israel in verse 24, it is next turned against Assyrian king in verses 25–26. The image continues with the portrayal of the Assyrian king as a tree whose branches are hacked away in verses 33–34: "Behold, the lord YHWH Sebaoth will cut off the crown of the tree with an ax; The tall ones shall be felled; the thickets of the forest will be hacked down with iron; And the trees of Lebanon shall fall in their majesty." Although modern, urban readers may miss the significance of these images, ancient Judeans who live by agriculture would not. The oracle relies on two major images from the natural world, namely, the harvest of olive trees and the felling of trees. Olive trees are harvested by using rods to beat the branches when they are full of olives, which of course causes the olives to fall so that

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15. See Nielsen, *There Is Hope*, 187–201.

they are easily gathered. The imagery of felled trees is far more common to the modern reader, but we must also recall the efforts made by Assyrian and later Babylonian kings to fell trees in Lebanon so that they might be used to decorate their royal palaces in Nineveh and Babylon. Both metaphors serve as images of reversal, namely, just as Assyria oppressed Israel with rods and just as the Assyrian kings cut down Lebanese trees for their own aggrandizement, so the Assyrian king, here portrayed as a tree, will suffer the same fate.

The image is not limited to the fall of Assyria. Immediately following the oracle against the Assyrian king in Isa 10:5–34, another oracle concerning the rise of a new, righteous Davidic monarch appears in Isa 11:1–16. Although many interpreters consider this oracle to be late, its portrayal of the rise of the new king with the imagery of a newly sprouted tree stump recalls the earlier image of Isa 6:12–13: "And a twig shall grow out from the stump of Jesse, and a shoot shall sprout from its roots. And the spirit of YHWH shall fall upon him; a spirit of wisdom and understanding; A spirit of counsel and power; a spirit of knowledge and the fear of YHWH" (Isa 11:1–2). The passage goes on to describe the wisdom and piety of the new monarch and the inauguration of an age when Israel and Judah will be restored under the new king's rule, when their enemies will be defeated, and when those exiled to Assyria and Egypt shall return to their homes. Again, the typical phenomenon of trees, which suffer when they are cut down but soon strike root to grow once again, provides the basis for Isaiah's prophecies of punishment against Assyria and restoration for Israel and Judah.

Finally, the image of the beating rod appears also in Isa 28:23–29, the prophet's parable concerning the beating of cumin.[16] This passage has frequently been considered late due to its wisdom associations, but it too constitutes an instance in which the world of nature discloses divine intent in the book of Isaiah. The passage begins with a call-to-attention formula, which appears typically in wisdom and prophetic texts, and it calls on the reader to consider the actions of a farmer who plows his land, plants cumin, wheat, barley, and emmer according to divine instruction. The prophet observes that, unlike grain, which is crushed under a threshing sledge, cumin is beaten with a stick in order separate it from its chaff. The concluding statement of the oracle indicates that this action is ordered by

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16. See Whedbee, *Isaiah and Wisdom*, 51–68, 143–44.

YHWH's wisdom. Although somewhat obscure due to its lack of explicit explanation, this oracle provides rationale for the preceding oracles that portray Israel beaten with a rod, that is, in order to produce a beneficial result, the rod is applied (a typical motif in the wisdom literature); the use of the rod is for discipline, but it does not crush. Again, the prophetic message is disclosed by an observation from the natural world of agriculture.

<div align="center">4.</div>

Although the examples presented in this paper are hardly exhaustive, they suffice to demonstrate the role that empirical observation of the natural (and social) world plays in the metaphorical expression of prophetic oracles in Amos and Isaiah. Although empirical observation hardly supplants the primary role of direct divine communication in the revelation of divine will to the prophets, consideration of the texts discussed here points to the need to consider such observation as a component of revelation in the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible. This has implications not only for the study of the Hebrew Bible itself, but also for the comparative study of Chinese classical literature that also depends on observation of the natural world, such as the Tao Te Ching and elements of the Confucian literature. Such considerations have the potential to reshape our thinking concerning the nature and substance of biblical theology and the potential for dialogue between biblical and indigenous Chinese traditions.

Swords into Plowshares or Plowshares into Swords? Isaiah and the Twelve in Intertextual Perspective on Zion

1.

Scholarly discussion of the synchronic and diachronic formation of the book of Isaiah and the Book of the Twelve Prophets has begun to recognize the intertextual relationships between these two major prophetic books. Indeed, Erich Bosshard-Nepustil's 1997 study *Rezeptionen von Jesaja 1–39 im Zwölfprophetenbuch* demonstrated that the Book of the Twelve Prophets appears to be formulated in part as a response to the book of Isaiah.[1] But like many disciples of the late and lamented Odil Hannes Steck, Bosshard-Nepustil's study focuses especially on correlating the redaction-critical formation of both the book of Isaiah and the Book of the Twelve Prophets.[2] Although Steck and his disciples have provided many valuable

1. Erich Bosshard-Nepustil, *Rezeptionen von Jesaja 1–39 im Zwölfprophetenbuch*, OBO 154 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997).

2. E.g., Odil Hannes Steck, *The Prophetic Books and Their Theological Witness* (Saint Louis: Chalice, 2000); Steck, *Studien zu Tritojesaja*, BZAW 203 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991); James Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 217 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993); Nogalski, *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 218 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993); Aaron Schart, *Die Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuchs*, BZAW 260 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998); Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart, eds., *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 325 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003); Jakob Wöhrle, *Die frühen Samlungen des Zwölfprophetenbuches:*

insights into the redactional formation of the book of Isaiah, their work on the Twelve Prophets has been less useful because they fail to understand the independent compositional histories of the twelve discrete books that form the Book of the Twelve.[3] As the versional evidence, particularly the MT, LXX, and at least one Qumran text, demonstrates, the order of books in the Book of the Twelve Prophets is quite fluid, which belies attempts to argue for redactional stages based on the MT form of the Book of the Twelve.[4] A more cogent redaction-critical approach would be to examine the individual compositional histories of each constituent book and then inquire into the process by which they were assembled into a whole, including the order in which they were assembled.[5]

But examination of the current form of the Book of the Twelve, focusing on the order of its books in either the MT or LXX forms of the book, shows little correlation with the current form of the book of Isaiah. Isaiah is organized around the concern to portray Jerusalem in relation to YHWH's plans to be recognized as the sovereign of creation and the nations.[6] To this end, the motif of a new exodus and return to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile is foundational to the formation of the book. Although the MT form of the Book of the Twelve is concerned with Jerusalem, the Steck

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Entstehung und Komposition, BZAW 360 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006); Wöhrle, *Der Abschluss des Zwölfprophetenbuches: Buchübergreifende Redaktionsprozesse in den späten Sammlungen*, BZAW 389 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008); Rainer Albertz, James Nogalski, and Jakob Wöhrle, eds., *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 433 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012); Jason T. LeCureux, *The Thematic Unity of the Book of the Twelve*, HBM 41 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2012).

3. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns in Reading the Book of the Twelve Prophets," in Albertz, Nogalski, and Wöhrle, *Perspectives on the Formation*, 21–33, repr. as ch. 36 in this volume.

4. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Sequence and Interpretation in the Book of the Twelve," in *Form and Intertextuality*, 175–88; cf. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets* 1:xv–xlii; cf. Barry Jones, *The Formation of the Book of the Twelve: A Study in Text and Canon*, SBLDS 149 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1995); Ehud Ben Zvi, "Twelve Prophetic Books or the Twelve? A Few Preliminary Consideration," in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts*, ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House, JSOTSup 235 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 125–56.

5. See, e.g., Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*; cf. Knierim, "Criticism of Literary Features." Knierim argues that critical assessment of the final form of the biblical text is a necessary prelude to redaction-critical work in order to demonstrate whether or not evidence to justify redaction-critical analysis is present.

6. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*; Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*.

school has focused especially on the day of YHWH as an important element in binding the book together. Although both Isaiah and the Twelve employ the motif of the day of YHWH, there seems to be little evidence that the motif was consistently employed as a redactional device to form either book. Rather, the day of YHWH motif functions within the book of Isaiah (Isa 2, 13, 22, 34) and within individual prophetic compositions of the Book of the Twelve, such as Joel (Joel 1–4), Amos (Amos 5:18–20), Obadiah (Obad 15), Zephaniah (Zeph 1:2–2:3), Zechariah (Zech 14), and Malachi (Mal 3:23), to address issues relevant to the specific context of each prophetic composition. But the Book of the Twelve makes noteworthy use of the famous swords-into-plowshares passage from Isa 2:2–4; it is explicitly cited in Joel 4:9–13, Micah 4:1–5, and Zech 8:20–23 in terms that differ markedly from its presentation in Isaiah.

This paper therefore examines the intertextual relationship between Isaiah and the Book of the Twelve by focusing on the famous swords-into-plowshares passages on Zion in Isaiah 2:2–4, Micah 4:1–5, Joel 4:9–13, and Zech 8:20–23 in relation to the expectations of future judgment and restoration in their respective books. Although intertextuality in past scholarship has been limited to diachronic forms of textual citation and interpretation or reinterpretation in the later literary context, contemporary intertextuality recognizes the dialogical relationships between texts based especially on the work of Bakhtin and others.[7] Such dialogically oriented readings attempt to account for authorial intention in texts as well as the reader's understanding of those texts as they are read in relation to each other.

This paper presupposes my detailed exegetical work in my prior commentaries on Isa 1–39, Isa 40–66, and the Book of the Twelve Prophets.[8] Consideration of these passages demonstrates an important debate between Isaiah and the Twelve on the issue of the future of world peace and

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7. For discussion of contemporary intertextuality, see Sommer, *Prophet Reads Scripture*, 6–31; Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality"; Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*; Newsom, *Book of Job*, 3–31; Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back*, 1–28; Marvin A. Sweeney, "Isaiah 60–62 in Intertextual Perspective," in *Subtle Citation, Allusion, and Translation in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Ziony Zevit (Sheffield: Equinox, 2017), 131–42, esp. 132–34, repr. as ch. 32 in this volume. Although Sommer's work is more diachronically and author-oriented, the other examples demonstrate increasing interest in the synchronic relationships between texts that enable readers to understand them in dialogue with each other.

8. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*; Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*; Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*.

the political constitution of Israel. The book of Isaiah envisions a process
whereby the ideals of the swords-into-plowshares passage will be realized
when both the nations and Israel suffer judgment on the day of YHWH.
The book of Isaiah envisions the passing of Davidic kingship as Israel at
large is granted the eternal covenant, King Cyrus of Persia is selected as
G-d's messiah and temple builder, and ultimately YHWH is recognized as
the true king at the end of the book. The Book of the Twelve envisions a
process whereby the ideals of the "swords into plowshares" passage con-
cerning Zion are realized when a new Davidic king rises to defeat the
nations that threaten Israel and then ultimately recognize YHWH by the
end of the book.

<div style="text-align:center">2.</div>

Diachronic research has focused on a three- or four-stage process to
explain the compositional history of the book of Isaiah. The process
extends from the time of late eighth-century prophet Isaiah ben Amoz;
through the late seventh-century Josianic or Assyrian redaction of Isaiah's
oracles; through the late-sixth century composition of the anonymous
prophet, Deutero-Isaiah, and the subsequent redaction of a sixth-century
edition; to the early Persian-period work of the prophets collectively
known as Trito-Isaiah and the fifth- through fourth-century redaction
of the book as a whole in the time of Nehemiah and Ezra.[9] But the dia-
chronic interests of redaction critics frequently influence their view of
the book as a whole, making it difficult to discern the interpretation of
the final form of the book when their views are so informed by their
understandings of purportedly earlier material.[10] Consequently, I argue
for the necessity of synchronic literary analysis of a biblical book prior
to engaging in diachronically based redaction-critical analysis.[11] Such a
methodological view guards against allowing diachronic considerations
to prejudge the interpretation of the final form of the book and the com-
position of its redactional history.

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9. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*; Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*. For a recent history of research,
see Jacob Stromberg, *An Introduction to the Study of Isaiah* (London: T&T Clark,
2011).

10. See Knierim, "Criticism of Literary Features."

11. Knierim, "Criticism of Literary Features"; Sweeney, "Form Criticism," in *To
Each Its Own Meaning*, repr. as ch. 2 in this volume.

My prior work on the book of Isaiah argues that the book comprises two—not three or four—fundamental synchronic structural components that focus on YHWH's intention to be recognized as the sovereign of all creation and humankind.[12] The first portion of the book, in Isa 1–33, focuses especially on the judgment rendered by YHWH against Jerusalem and Judah as well as the expectation of restoration to follow, which anticipates the recognition of YHWH's sovereignty from Jerusalem. The second portion of the book, in Isa 34–66, focuses especially on the anticipated restoration of Jerusalem and Judah in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile, including the exhortations to trust in YHWH and to return to Jerusalem as well as the need to observe YHWH's covenant, beginning with observance of the Shabbat as a fundamental principle of creation. Insofar as the conclusion of the book posits a continuing judgment against the wicked and restoration for the righteous, the book of Isaiah has yet to realize its goals.

The synchronic literary form of the book of Isaiah appears as follows:

The Vision of Isaiah ben Amoz:
Prophetic Exhortation to Jerusalem/Judah to
Adhere to YHWH (Isa 1–66)

I.   Concerning YHWH's plans for worldwide sovereignty at Zion   1–33

   A.   Prologue to the book of Isaiah: introductory paraenesis concerning YHWH's intention to purify Jerusalem   1

   B.   Prophetic instruction concerning YHWH's projected plans to establish worldwide sovereignty at Zion: announcement of the day of YHWH   2–33

      1.   Prophetic announcement concerning the preparation of Zion for its role as the center for YHWH's world rule   2—4

      2.   Prophetic instruction concerning the significance of Assyrian judgment against Jacob/Israel: restoration of Davidic rule   5–12

      3.   Prophetic announcement concerning the preparation of the nations for YHWH's world rule   13–27

         a.   Pronouncements concerning the nations   13–23

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12. For detailed discussion of the following, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 31–62; Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, 1–40.

When we turn to the substructure of the first part of the book of Isaiah,
we see that the swords-into-plowshares passage in Isa 2:2–4 appears near
the outset of the book.[13] It portrays the nations streaming to Zion to learn

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13. For detailed discussion of the following, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 63–433, ad loc.

YHWH's Torah and consequently to give up war to enjoy an unprecedented peace in the world. Jacob/Israel is invited to join them in Isa 2:5, and then the famed day of YHWH passage in Isa 2:6–21 follows to explain why this idyllic vision of peace is not yet realized. Isaiah 2 then signals a collage of important motifs that extend throughout the first half of the book and into the second. First is that punishment on the day of YHWH must ensue against all the arrogant of the world, both among the nations and among Israel, before the idyllic peace of Isa 2:2–4 might be achieved. The day of YHWH is signaled against Babylon in Isa 13–14, but it is not mentioned explicitly against Israel, Judah, or Jerusalem. Only reference to "that day" appears to signal both punishment and restoration for Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem. Instead, the motif of the streaming to Jerusalem takes precedent, including references to the return of exiled Jews from Egypt and Assyria in Isa 11:1–16 and 27:2–13 to indicate the restoration that will follow the period of punishment. Nevertheless, these texts do not signal world peace, nor do they signal the nations' streaming to YHWH. Instead, we see a righteous Davidic monarch who is identified as the prince of peace in Isa 9:1–6, the wise shoot of Jesse who will unite Israel and Judah to defeat their enemies among the nations in Isa 11:1–16; and the righteous king whose appearance will open the sealed eyes, ears, and minds in Isa 32:1–7.

When we turn to the second half of the book of Isaiah, in Isa 34–66, we begin with the day of YHWH as a day of judgment against Edom and the rest of the nations in Isa 34.[14] We see a new exodus that will return exiled Jews to Jerusalem in Isa 35 and a continued interest in a new exodus throughout Isa 40–66, especially in Isa 40:1–11; 43:1–21; 48:20–22; 49:7–23; 54:1–17; 60–62; and 66:18–22. We note the role that the nations will play in facilitating the return of the Jewish exiles in many of these passages as well as the interest in the conversion of people from among the nations to Judaism, as exemplified by observance of the Shabbat and the covenant at large in Isa 56:1–6. Although some have tried to argue that some among the nations will be selected by YHWH for priests and prophets, this is a misreading of a passage that indicates some from among the returning

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14. For discussion of the following, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 434–511, ad loc; Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, 41–385, ad loc; cf. Claire R. Mathews, *Defending Zion: Edom's Desolation and Jacob's Destruction (Isaiah 34–35) in Context*, BZAW 236 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), which appeared too late to be included in my *Isaiah 1–39*.

exiles will be selected for priests and prophets.[15] Nevertheless, the nations play the key role in bringing the exiles home. But we must also note the fundamental political change, that is, although Isa 1–33 places heavy emphasis on a new and ideal Davidic monarch, especially in Isa 9:1–6, 11:1–16, and 32:1–20, a synchronic and sequential reading of the book indicates that there is no longer a Davidic monarch, ideal or not, anticipated in Isa 34–66. King Cyrus of Persia is selected as YHWH's anointed monarch and temple builder in Isa 44:28 and 45:1, and the eternal Davidic covenant is now assigned to Israel at large rather than to the house of David in Isa 55. By the end of the book, in Isa 66, YHWH is identified as the true king of Israel in Jerusalem.[16]

Altogether, the final form of the book of Isaiah envisions a process in which both the nations and the people of Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem will be punished as a result of the day of YHWH. The idyllic peace envisioned by Isa 2:2–4 will be achieved when both the nations and Jacob/Israel recognize YHWH at Mount Zion and travel there together to learn YHWH's torah. YHWH's sovereignty and the peace that ensues therefrom is identified with the emergence of the Persian Empire under King Cyrus. Submission to YHWH's royal representative, Cyrus, and presumably his successors, is key to the realization of the ideals of the book.

My earlier redaction-critical work on Isa 1–39 is heavily dependent on Steck's arguments for a sixth-century redaction of the book that joined Proto-Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah into a single composition.[17] The resulting sixth-century edition of Isaiah emphasized the motif of a new exodus that would see the return of the exiles from Babylonia to Jerusalem. I identified Isa 2:2–4 as part of that redaction as well as other texts that envisioned a new exodus, such as Isa 35 and 60–62. But the day of YHWH material displays no consistency of viewpoint for formulation that would allow for identifying it as the basis for an overarching redaction of the book of Isaiah.

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15. Brooks Schramm, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah: Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration*, JSOTSup 193 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995); Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, 357–85.

16. Marvin A. Sweeney, "On Multiple Settings in the Book of Isaiah," in *Form and Intertextuality*, 28–35; Sweeney, "Reconceptualization of the Davidic Covenant in Isaiah"; Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, 108–57, 235–48, 357–85.

17. E.g., Odil Hannes Steck, *Bereitete Heimkehr. Jesaja 35 als redaktionelle Brück zwischen dem ersten und dem zweiten Jesaia*, SBS 121 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1985).

The day of YHWH passage in Isa 2:6–21 ultimately derives from Isaiah ben Amoz himself, but the oracle concerning Babylon in Isa 13:1–14:27 was a sixth-century reworking of an older Isaian anti-Assyrian oracle that highlights the motif of the Day of YHWH, indicating that the later redaction reflected on the motif of the day of YHWH from Isaiah's oracles and applied it to Babylon.[18]

The day of YHWH oracle against Edom and the nations at large in Isa 34, however, must be identified with the final fifth- through fourth-century edition of the book of Isaiah.[19] The basis for this decision includes the characteristic concern with judgment against Edom in the late fifth-/early fourth-century work of Trito-Isaiah as illustrated by Isa 63:1–6 and the effort to shape Isa 1 and Isa 34 as parallel texts to form the openings for the two major subunits of Isaiah in the final form of the book. Insofar as the Trito-Isaian material in Isa 56–59 and 63–66 also takes up a concern with differentiating the righteous from the wicked among Israel and the nations that is absent in Deutero-Isaiah, the concluding portrayal of the nations returning the righteous among the exiles to Jerusalem in Isa 66:18–24 must also date to the final late fifth-/early fourth-century edition of the book of Isaiah.[20] Continuing concern with the day of YHWH and the new exodus therefore also emerges as a feature of the final fifth-through fourth-century redaction of the book.

3.

When we turn to the Book of the Twelve Prophets, we see that both the swords-into-plowshares passage and the day of YHWH motif play roles within the book.[21] The swords-into-plowshares passage appears in Joel, Micah, and Zechariah. The day of YHWH motif appears in Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:4; 4:14; Amos 5:18–20; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14, 18; 2:3; Zech 14:1; and Mal 3:23. But the Book of the Twelve Prophets presents two very different sets of issues from Isaiah in both the synchronic forms of the book and its diachronic formation.

The first issue is that the Book of the Twelve Prophets appears in two very distinct forms, based on differing orders of presentation of the

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18. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 100–104, 218–39.
19. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 434–54.
20. Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, 231–96, 331–85.
21. Sweeney, "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns."

twelve individual prophetic books that comprise the whole.[22] The MT
Hebrew form of the book presents the Twelve in order, namely, Hosea,
Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah,
Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The basic LXX Greek form of the
work presents the sequence Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah,
Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Other
orders are extant, both among the Greek and the Qumran manuscripts,
but these two orders point to a very different reality for understanding
both the synchronic and diachronic forms of the book. First, the order
of the books is not simply an arbitrary decision; rather, the books are
arranged intentionally to convey an understanding of their collective sig-
nificance. As I have argued elsewhere, the LXX form of the book, also
apparently known in the Talmud, focuses on the fate of the Northern
Kingdom of Israel in Hosea, Amos, and Micah as a paradigm for under-
standing the parallel fate of Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom of
Judah.[23] The MT form of the book, however, highlights concern with
Jerusalem throughout by placing Joel, with its focus on a threat to Jeru-
salem, in the second position behind Hosea and before Amos; Obadiah,
with its focus on Edom's role in Jerusalem's fall, in the fourth position
behind Amos and before Jonah; and Micah, with its interest in correlat-
ing Samaria/Israel and Jerusalem/Judah, in the sixth position after Jonah
and before Nahum.

When considered diachronically, the LXX form of the Book of the
Twelve appears to be the earlier form. The concern with correlating the fate
of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, destroyed by Assyria in the late eighth
century BCE, with that of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, destroyed by
Babylonia in the early sixth century BCE, would find its origins in the late
monarchic period and beyond, when King Josiah of Judah began his pro-
gram of religious reform and national restoration in an effort to prevent
Jerusalem and Judah from succumbing to the fate suffered by its northern
neighbors. Such a concern would have continued into the early Persian
period, when the returning exiles considered the potential for a restora-
tion of Israel and Judah around the newly constructed Second Temple. The
MT form of the Book of the Twelve, with its focus on Jerusalem, would

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22. Sweeney, "Sequence and Interpretation."
23. For detailed discussion of the significance of the different orders of the Book
of the Twelve, see Sweeney, "Sequence and Interpretation"; Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*,
xv–xlii.

have emerged in relation to the restoration of Jerusalem as the holy center of Judah and creation at large in relation to the restoration led by Nehemiah and Ezra in the late fifth and early fourth centuries BCE. The focus on Jerusalem would also have played a role in the rabbinic decision to include the proto-MT form of the Book of the Twelve in the Tanak in the aftermath of the Roman destruction of the city and temple in 70 CE and the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt in 135 CE.

But the fluidity of the sequence of the individual prophetic books that comprise the Book of the Twelve also points to another diachronic dimension, namely, the individual books that comprise the Twelve function as self-contained wholes that may be arranged without modification in the two synchronic forms of the book discussed here as well as the other forms that are not. Indeed, the fluidity of the sequence and the integrity of its twelve individual components would have played a key role in prompting Christianity to read the Twelve as twelve discrete minor prophets rather than as a single Book of the Twelve comprising twelve elements, as was done in rabbinic Judaism. Both traditions recognize the twelve discrete components of the Book of the Twelve and its status as a single book even though they choose to read from their distinctive perspectives.

But the fluidity of the twelve books within the Twelve Prophets also points to an important redactional consideration, namely, the reading of the twelve books is not dependent on an overarching redaction that saw the expansion of some or all of the constituent forms of the book that comprise the whole. Rather, the redaction of the Book of the Twelve Prophets takes place only in relation to the arrangement of the self-contained formulation of its constituent twelve books. There is no overarching uniformity in the individual superscriptions of the books, no single motif, whether the day of YHWH motif, the appearance of some form of the swords-into-plowshares oracle, a common and consistent historical sequence or eschatological perspective, or any other feature that unites the Twelve. Any features that do emerge from the Book of the Twelve do so only from selected books that display differing literary and conceptual characteristics from one another.

The day of YHWH motif in the Book of the Twelve shows no consistent perspective that enables it to be identified as a redactional principle introduced into the individual twelve books that would unite them into one. Hosea does not take up the motif; Joel understands the day of YHWH to be a day of judgment against those who threaten Jerusalem; Amos understands it as a day of judgment against those in Israel who defy YHWH's

expectations for social justice; Obadiah understands it as a day of judgment against the nations, beginning with Edom, that destroyed Jerusalem; Jonah does not take up the motif; Micah does not take up the motif; Nahum does not take up the motif; Habakkuk does not take up the motif; Zephaniah understands it as a day of judgment against those in Jerusalem and Judah who abandon YHWH's expectations; Haggai does not take up the motif; Zechariah understands it as a day of judgment against the nations; and Malachi understands it as a day of judgment against those in Judah who reject YHWH's torah and a day of restoration for those who observe it. In each case, the day of YHWH motif is tailored to the particular concerns of the individual books in which it appears. A fuller, general picture of judgment against the nations and those who reject YHWH appears only when the individual pieces are put together—and they do not arise from all of the books of the Twelve.

A greater degree of consistency arises when we consider the swords-into-plowshares passages within the Book of the Twelve, although we must recognize that the motif appears in only three of the twelve constituent books. In all cases, the appearance of the motif represents a different understanding from that of Isaiah, in which the nations stream to Zion to learn YHWH's torah, thereby to inaugurate an era of world peace in which swords are turned into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks so that nations will learn war no more. Jacob/Israel is invited to join them, and both the nations and Israel suffer judgment of the arrogant before the ideal is achieved. In Joel 4:9–21, the first instance of the motif in the MT form of the Book of the Twelve, the nations are commanded to beat their plowshares into swords and their pruning hooks into spears so that they can face defeat by YHWH in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.[24] In Mic 4–5, my prior research demonstrates that a form of the oracle quite similar to that of Isa 2:2–4 introduces a larger unit in Mic 4–5 in which a Davidic messiah will arise to defeat the nations that oppress Israel, thereby leading to the promised era of peace, in which each nation follows its own god.[25] Insofar as Micah would be the first instance of the motif in the LXX form of the Book of the Twelve, the near replication of Isaiah's oracle in Micah might support the contention that the LXX form of the book is earlier than

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24. For detailed treatment of Joel, see Sweeney, "Place and Function of Joel"; Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 181–85.

25. Sweeney, "Micah's Debate with Isaiah"; Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 376–93.

the MT form.[26] The final appearance of the oracle in Zech 8:20–23 portrays members of the nations grabbing hold of Jews by the corner of their garments so that they might follow them to Zion to entreat the favor of YHWH.[27] Although Zech 8:20–23 does not include the language of swords turned into plowshares and the like, the portrayal of peoples and inhabitants of many cities stating, "Let us go on to entreat the favor of YHWH and to seek YHWH of Hosts. I will go, even I," points to an attempt to portray the scenario of nations streaming to Zion in Isa 2:2–4 and Mic 4:1–5. Likewise, the formulation of the verb "let us go" (Heb. *nēləkâ*) plays on the language of the nations as they propose, "come, let us go up [Heb. *ləkû wənaʿăleh*] unto the Mountain of YHWH," and so on, and the reference in Zech 8:23 to ten men from the nations who will take hold of one Jew to journey to the mountain likewise alludes to Isa 2:2–4, as does the statement of their motivation, "for G-d is with you," which recalls the name of the child, Immanuel, "G-d is with us," noted in Isa 7:14. Indeed, Zech 8:20–23 plays a role in introducing Zech 9–14, which portrays YHWH's apocalyptic war against the nations, led by the house of David, that will ultimately result in their recognition of YHWH at Zion on Sukkot, thereby bringing about the idyllic oracle of peace.

When read in their respective literary contexts, the swords-into-plowshares oracles in the Book of the Twelve demonstrate that, unlike Isaiah, the nations will be defeated after they have oppressed Jerusalem and Judah and that YHWH's forces will be led by a Davidic monarch. The Book of the Twelve envisions no submission to the Persian monarch and no demise of the royal house of David or reassignment of the Davidic covenant to the people of Israel at large. While eschewing the swords-into-plowshares passage, other books among the Twelve hold out for a Davidic monarch, namely, Hosea (Hos 3:5), Amos (Amos 9:11), and Haggai (Hag 2:20–23).

But the conclusion of the Book of the Twelve in Malachi (Mal 3:22–24) demonstrates one common element, namely, the people of Israel will observe YHWH's torah as both Isaiah and the Twelve envision. And just as Hosea opens the sequence with a portrayal of divorce between Hosea/

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26. Although many presume that the "swords into plowshares" oracles in Isa 2:1–4 and Mic 4:1–5 are identical, they actually display minor variations from each other that have prevented scholars from determining which form is earlier. For detailed discussion of Isa 2:1–4, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 97–100. For detailed discussion of Mic 4:1–5, see Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 377–81.

27. Sweeney, "Zechariah's Debate with Isaiah"; Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 654–56.

Gomer and YHWH/Israel, so Malachi ends with YHWH's statement reject-
ing divorce, thereby affirming the continuity of the relationship with Israel.

<div align="center">5.</div>

In sum, then, it seems clear that that the Book of the Twelve Prophets
indeed functions as an intertextual response to the book of Isaiah. Both
Isaiah and the Twelve envision a scenario in which the nations of the world
will recognize YHWH at Zion and stream to Zion to learn YHWH's torah,
thereby resulting in an era of peace in which swords will be turned into
plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. But the path to such an idyl-
lic peace differs between the two books. In Isaiah both the nations and
Israel will suffer judgment for arrogance on the day of YHWH; Israel will
ultimately give up its Davidic monarch when it submits to King Cyrus of
Persia; the Davidic covenant is ultimately granted to the people of Israel
at large; and the nations will play a key role in returning the exiles of
Israel to Jerusalem so that the era of peace might begin once the wicked
are destroyed. In the Book of the Twelve Prophets, a different scenario
achieves the idyllic vision of peace. The day of YHWH will see the pun-
ishment of both the nations and Israel/Jerusalem. But when the nations
threaten Jerusalem, a Davidic monarch acting on behalf of YHWH will
arise to defeat them, resulting ultimately in their recognition of YHWH
at Jerusalem. There will be no submission to Persia and no redefinition of
the Davidic covenant. And in the end, both books envision that Israel will
observe YHWH's torah.

At the same time, the redactional processes by which Isaiah and the
Book of the Twelve achieved their final forms differ markedly. Isaiah is the
product of a some four hundred years of redactional growth, beginning
with the prophecies of eighth-century BCE prophet Isaiah ben Amoz, con-
tinued with the seventh-century BCE Josianic redaction, a sixth-century
BCE redaction that joined the works of Isaiah ben Amoz and Deutero-
Isaiah together in relation to the restoration of the Second Temple, and a
late fifth-/early fourth-century redaction that produced the final form of
the book in relation to the reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra. The Book of the
Twelve Prophets achieved its final form through a redactional process that
would have differed markedly from that of Isaiah, insofar as it was formed
by the arrangement in sequence of the twelve books that formed both
the LXX and MT forms of the book, each with its own unique sequence
and set of concerns. Such a process does not preclude earlier stages in

the assemblage and arrangement of earlier forms of the book, such as the proposal for an early form of the book based on Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah, as Aaron Schart has proposed, but it does preclude an intentional redactional process that saw the expansion of the constituent books by the addition of texts concerned with the day of YHWH or other motifs, as other scholars have proposed.[28]

In the end, interpreters must recognize that the book of Isaiah and the Book of the Twelve Prophets engage in a form of intertextual dialogue that may well serve as a model for considering the dialogue evident among other books of the Bible as well.

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28. Schart, *Die Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuchs*; Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*; Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*.

30

Isaiah and Theodicy after the Shoah

Isaiah is generally recognized as one of the most progressive books of the prophetic corpus. It portrays YHWH's worldwide sovereignty and calls on the nations to join Israel at Zion in order to inaugurate an age of universal peace in which YHWH's torah would be taught to all.[1] Both Judaism and Christianity see in Isaiah an affirmation of some of the most positive and cherished aspects of their respective worldviews. Christianity sees in Isaiah a prophet who points to an age when all the world will recognize Jesus Christ as the suffering servant who brings about an age of universal salvation.[2] Judaism views Isaiah as a book of comfort that points to the centrality of Jerusalem and torah as the basis for cosmic order and peace.[3] Both traditions clearly view Isaiah as a representation of an ideal world.

Nevertheless, Isaiah presents some very troubling aspects of divine sovereignty that challenge fundamental notions of YHWH's righteousness, particularly in the aftermath of the Shoah. The book presents a

1. For a full analysis of the book of Isaiah, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*.
2. For example, James A. Sanders, "Isaiah in Luke," *Int* 36 (1982): 144–55.
3. Thus b. Bat. 14b, which states that Isaiah speaks entirely of comfort. See further Sweeney, "Book of Isaiah as Prophetic Torah."

scenario of judgment against Israel in which YHWH calls on nations to act as agents of divine punishment. Although the punishment is presented as a corrective measure intended to lead to the universal peace presented at the beginning of the book, Isaiah makes it very clear that YHWH allows no repentance for those who are to be punished. Throughout the book, YHWH identifies with the imperial conqueror and consigns Israel to a punishment from which it is unable to escape. By identifying Israel's sin as a refusal to recognize YHWH, Isaiah blames the victims of conquest for their suffering. Even at the end of the book, the inaugural vision is not realized as YHWH continues to call for punishment of the wicked.

This issue is particularly important in light of recent critical discussion that calls for a unified reading of the final form of Isaiah.[4] Whereas past scholarship could ignore or overlook this issue by arguing that selected texts need not be considered, as they were later additions, a unified reading of the book places the question of theodicy at the forefront. Indeed, the final form of Isaiah must be considered as a deliberate presentation of the issue. This article therefore treats three major dimensions of the question of theodicy in Isaiah: YHWH's identification with the conqueror, YHWH's decree of judgment against Israel without the possibility of repentance, and the failure of YHWH's program to be realized by the end of the book. I argue that Isaiah does indeed recognize the problem of theodicy and offers a critique of YHWH's sovereignty that calls on the reader to challenge both YHWH and herself/himself to take responsibility for doing justice.

1.

The book of Isaiah consistently identifies YHWH with the nations that conquered Israel throughout the eighth–sixth centuries BCE, that is, Assyria, Babylonia and Persia. YHWH's identification with the imperial conqueror is especially clear in Isa 40–55, in which Deutero-Isaiah names Cyrus as YHWH's anointed monarch or messiah:

> Thus says YHWH to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and ungird the loins of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed:

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4. For a survey of recent critical discussion on Isaiah, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Book of Isaiah in Recent Research," *CurBR* 1 (1993): 141–62.

"I will go before you and level the mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut asunder the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, YHWH, the G-d of Israel, who call you by your name." (Isa 45:1–3)

Cyrus is well known as the king of Persia (ruling 550–530 BCE) who conquered Babylon peacefully in 539 BCE after securing the support of the priests of Marduk.[5] He is likewise known as the benevolent ruler who decreed that Jews be allowed to return to their homeland from Babylonian exile and to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Cyrus was recognized as king of Babylonia when he participated in the Babylonian Akitu or New Year Festival, in which the gods of the cities and nations that comprise the Babylonian Empire and the king processed around the city to the ziggurat Etamenanki to recognize Marduk's sovereignty over creation and the nations of the world and to reaffirm the king's right to rule as the human agent of Marduk's will.[6] During the ceremony, the king "seized the hand of Marduk" as a sign of his submission to the deity and received a royal oracle and the "tablets of destiny," which enabled him to rule. Indeed, these features appear in Deutero-Isaiah's oracles, which refer to Cyrus as YHWH's "shepherd" and "anointed," YHWH's grasping the hand of Cyrus to subdue nations, and the granting of the "treasures of darkness."

It is clear that the Babylonian Akitu festival has greatly influenced Deutero-Isaiah's presentation of YHWH and that the prophet has melded motifs from the Akitu festival with those drawn from Israelite tradition.[7] Deutero-Isaiah clearly articulates YHWH's role as the creator who puts the world in order by defeating the sea dragon Rahab, much as the Babylonian epic Enuma Elish portrays Marduk as the creator who slays Tiamat, the chaos dragon of the sea (see Isa 51).[8] Deutero-Isaiah portrays the submission of the nations to YHWH as they come in supplication to Israel and await YHWH's justice and law, much as the gods in the Akitu festival acknowledge Marduk and accept the sovereignty of the Babylonian king. The polemical aspects are clear as the Babylonian gods are

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5. For discussion of Cyrus and the Persian empire, see Pierre Briant, "Persian Empire," *ABD* 5:236–44.

6. See Jacob Klein, "Akitu," *ABD* 1:138–40.

7. For Deutero-Isaiah's use of motifs from the Akitu festival see, e.g., Isa 46, and the comments by Roger N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 113–18.

8. For a translation of the Enuma Elish, see *ANET*, 60–72.

portrayed in procession, bowing under the weight of their burdens, in contrast to YHWH, who calls on Cyrus to rule them.[9] Throughout Deutero-Isaiah, YHWH announces the coming of Cyrus and the restoration of Jerusalem as divine acts that demonstrate YHWH's sovereignty over all creation. In short, Deutero-Isaiah identifies YHWH with the imperial power of Persia.

Until recently, Deutero-Isaiah has been read by critical scholars in isolation from the rest of the book as they correctly claim that Isa 40–55 represent the distinctive work of an anonymous exilic prophet.[10] Deutero-Isaiah's portrayal of YHWH's sovereignty and Israel's redemption is generally understood as the triumph of good over evil as the oppression of Babylon comes to an end. Although Isa 1–39 and 56–66 appear to derive largely from the eighth-century prophet Isaiah ben Amoz and the anonymous sixth- and fifth-century writings referred to as Trito-Isaiah, they, too, presuppose the identification of YHWH with the Persian Empire in their present form. Both Isa 2:2–4 and 60–62 portray the nations streaming to Zion in order to recognize YHWH's sovereignty and to receive YHWH's justice and law, and correspond well to the identification of YHWH's sovereignty with the rise of the Persian Empire.

The oracles concerning the nations in Isa 13–23 likewise point to the identification of YHWH's sovereignty with the Persian Empire.[11] Many interpreters mistakenly identify the prophetic oracles concerning the nations with an eschatological portrayal of worldwide judgment, but the nations represented in Isa 13–23 do not constitute a universal portrayal of all the nations of the world. Persia is notably missing, and the nations that are represented—Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Aram and Israel, Ethiopia and Egypt, the Wilderness of the Sea (i.e., Babylon), Dumah (Edom), Arabia, the Valley of Vision (Jerusalem), and Tyre—are all nations or territories that were conquered and incorporated into the Persian Empire. Indeed, Isa 21:2 presents Elam and Media, two components of the larger Persian empire, as the nations that lay siege to Babylon. YHWH's treatment of the nations constitutes a fundamental theme of the book that must be considered together with YHWH's treatment of Israel. Both constitute aspects of YHWH's identification with the imperial power of Persia.

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9. Contrast Isa 46 with Isa 44–45.

10. For discussion, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 31–62.

11. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 212–17.

2.

The second major dimension of theodicy in Isaiah, YHWH's decree of judgment against Israel without any possibility of repentance, is a key element in the first half of the book, whereas the second half of Isaiah presupposes that the punishment has been realized and the time of restoration is at hand. The grounds for judgment are clearly articulated throughout chapters 1–33: Israel and Judah have arrogantly failed to recognize YHWH as the sovereign who determines world events, have abused the rights of the poor, have turned to foreign gods and nations for assistance in times of crisis, and so on.

The key text concerning the theme of YHWH's judgment is Isa 6, in which the prophet sees a vision of YHWH enthroned in the temple and surrounded by seraphim, who announce YHWH's holy presence throughout the world.[12] The setting is the holy of holies in the Jerusalem temple, where the ark of the covenant resides under the protection of the cherubim as a symbol of YHWH's sovereignty. The imagery is clearly royal. The seraphim, a representation of the cherubim in the holy of holies, constitute the royal entourage. Indeed, the ark is conceived as the throne of YHWH or the footstool of the throne (Ps 99:1, 1 Sam 4:4, 2 Sam 6:2, 2 Kgs 19:15, Isa 37:6, 1 Chr 13:6; cf. Ps 132:7, Isa 66:1). The theme of judgment suggests that the occasion for the passage is the observance of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when the high priest appears before YHWH in the holy of holies to atone for the sins of the people (Lev 16). Overall, the presentation of YHWH is modeled on that of the Davidic king seated on his throne passing judgment on his subjects (1 Kgs 3:16–28; cf. 2 Sam 12:1–15).

When the deity asks, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah responds that he will go. YHWH commissions him to speak a message of irrevocable judgment:

Go and say to this people:
"Hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see but do not perceive."
Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes;
lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed.

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12. For discussion, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 132–42.

When Isaiah asks how long this situation will last, YHWH responds:

> Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people,
> and the land is utterly desolate, and YHWH removes people far away,
> and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.
> And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth
> or an oak,
> whose stump remains standing when it is felled.
> The holy seed is its stump.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the message is YHWH's pronounce-ment that the prophet is to make sure that they do not understand the message so that they will not repent and thereby avoid the punishment. This stands in stunning contrast to other passages that call on the people to change their ways (e.g., Isa 1:10–17); indeed, a major thrust of Isaiah's message is to make known YHWH's intention to bring punishment. One would have to conclude that Isaiah either deliberately refused to carry out his commission or that he tried to do so and failed. Scholars generally maintain that the passage is a later composition, either by the prophet or by a later writer, that reflects on the significance of Israel's experience in light of the prophet's message.

It is instructive in this regard to examine Isa 7, the narrative concerning Isaiah's confrontation with King Ahaz at the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic War, as this chapter constitutes a primary illustration in Isaiah as to why this decree of punishment must take place.[13] The historical setting of this encounter is "in the days of Ahaz," when Arum and Israel attacked Judah for its refusal to join the Syro-Ephraimitic coalition against Assyria. The chapter notes Ahaz's fear in this situation—he has no allies to turn to for protection—and portrays him inspecting his water system, the key to the defenses of Jerusalem, when Isaiah meets him together with his son Shear-Yashub, that is, "a remnant shall return." The boy's name symbolizes the survival of a portion of the people in the face of the Syro-Ephraimitic attack and underlies the prophet's message that Ahaz should rely solely on YHWH to deliver him in this time of crisis. The prophet concludes his remarks with the statement, "If you do not believe, surely you will not be established," which conveys the ideology of YHWH's faithful promise of security to the faithful David.

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13. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 143–64.

Apparently, the young king has some doubts about a promise of protection that requires him to do nothing while his people are decimated. The prophet calls on Ahaz to "ask a sign of YHWH your G-d; let it be as deep as Sheol or high as heaven." Ahaz declines to test YHWH and responds, "I will not ask, and I will not put YHWH to the test." Interpreters tend to understand Ahaz's response to Isaiah as an indication of his lack of faith in YHWH's promise of protection.[14] This understanding is reinforced not only by the prophet's reaction in the Isaiah narrative, but by the account of Ahaz's reign in 2 Kgs 16, which relates his request for assistance to Tiglath-pileser III and his forced submission to Assyria after the Assyrians rescued Judah by defeating Israel and Aram. Ahaz's actions stand in contrast to those of his son Hezekiah later in the book: whereas Ahaz refused YHWH's protection and saw his country punished by the Assyrians as a result, Hezekiah turns to YHWH in Isa 36–37 at the time of Sennacherib's invasion and sees YHWH's miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem. Hezekiah is the model of piety in Isaiah, but Ahaz is the faithless goat who richly deserves his punishment.[15]

Nevertheless, several aspects of this presentation are quite disturbing in relation to the issue of theodicy. First is the prophet's proposal that Ahaz should accept the decimation of his people. Why should Ahaz's faith in YHWH require that his people die?

Second, Ahaz's response to Isaiah actually is a model of piety: "I will not ask, and I will not put YHWH to the test." Ahaz refuses to question YHWH and thereby to express doubts about his G-d. In all fairness to Ahaz, he probably considered his strategy of appealing to Assyria for assistance as consistent with his faith in YHWH's protection. Ahaz's assessment would turn out to be wrong, but there is no evidence that Ahaz intended to do evil or lacked faith in YHWH; he simply understood it differently than did Isaiah.

Finally, the presentation of Hezekiah in Isa 36–39 raises serious questions. In contrast to Ahaz, Hezekiah is generally understood to present a model of piety in the book of Isaiah that aids in introducing

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14. See, for example, the discussion by Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp, CC (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 302–18.

15. For an insightful comparison and contrast between the presentations of the two kings in Isaiah, see especially Peter Ackroyd, "Isaiah 36–39: Structure and Function," in *Studies in the Religious Tradition of the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1987), 105–20, 274–78.

the message of salvation in the second part of the book.[16] Like Ahaz, Hezekiah suffers the invasion of his own country and the siege of Jerusalem, resulting in the loss of many thousands of Judean lives. But unlike Ahaz, Hezekiah recognizes his error in trying to oppose the Assyrians and turns to YHWH for help. He receives YHWH's response through the prophet Isaiah that YHWH will defeat the Assyrians for their arrogance and deliver Hezekiah and Jerusalem. It would seem that Hezekiah's repentance constitutes what YHWH requires in the book of Isaiah, but Hezekiah is ultimately unable to deliver his people as well. The narrative concerning Sennacherib's siege in Isa 36–37 is part of a larger block in Isa 36–39 that relates two other events that took place prior to the siege: Hezekiah's sickness in Isa 38 and the Babylonian embassy to Jerusalem in Isa 39. Hezekiah demonstrates his faith in YHWH in Isa 38, but in Isa 39 Hezekiah receives the ambassadors of the Babylonian prince, Merodach-baladan, who is apparently his ally in revolt against Sennacherib. When Isaiah hears that Hezekiah has received the Babylonians and shown them his storehouses, he condemns Hezekiah and tells him that his wealth and his sons will someday be carried off to Babylon, an apparent reference to future Babylonian exile. Isaiah 39 indicates that Judah and Hezekiah are already condemned. Although Hezekiah wins respite for the surviving remnant of Sennacherib's siege, his people will ultimately suffer the Babylonian exile. Hezekiah's piety does not deliver Israel from punishment.[17]

In sum, Isaiah makes it very clear that YHWH's judgment against Israel is irrevocable. Israel is set up to fail so that its experience may demonstrate YHWH's sovereignty.

<div align="center">3.</div>

The third major aspect of theodicy in Isaiah, the failure to realize the initial portrayal of world peace, once again raises questions concerning YHWH's sovereignty, power, and righteousness. The problem is signaled at the outset of Deutero-Isaiah's writings: "Comfort, comfort my people, says

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16. See Peter Ackroyd, "An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile: A Study of II Kings 20 and Isaiah 38–39," in *Studies in the Religious Tradition*, 152–71, 282–85; Christopher R. Seitz, "The Divine Council: Temporal Transition and New Prophecy in the Book of Isaiah," *JBL* 109 (1990): 229–47.

17. According to b. Sanh. 94a, G-d wished to appoint Hezekiah as the messiah, but the Attribute of Justice protested that David was more entitled.

your G-d. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from YHWH's hand double for all her sins" (Isa 40:1–2). This statement indicates that the punishment of Jerusalem's sin is complete. Indeed, the reference to receiving double for all her sins recalls the punishment for theft in Exod 21:37, that is, a thief is required to pay double for what is stolen. The writings of Deutero-Isaiah presuppose throughout that the punishment of Israel is over. As a result, Israel is to be restored to Jerusalem, and the nations will recognize YHWH's sovereignty. Isaiah 55 applies the eternal covenant of David to Israel at large and commissions Israel to serve as a witness to YHWH's sovereignty:

> Incline your ear and come to me; hear that your soul may live;
> and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
> my steadfast, sure love for David.
> Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander
> to the peoples.
> Behold, you shall call nations that you know not,
> and nations that knew you not shall run to you
> because of YHWH your G-d, and the Holy One of Israel,
> for he has glorified you. (Isa 55:3–5)

The balance of the passage calls on the reader to seek YHWH, and the material in Trito-Isaiah defines the means by which foreigners may join YHWH prior to the presentation of the nations streaming to Zion to restore the exiles in Isa 60–62. Obviously, this material functions in the present form of the book to point to the realization of the initial vision of world peace.

But as the reader moves through Isa 56–66, it becomes increasingly evident that there are obstacles to this realization. These chapters portray the righteous who perish and the frustration of YHWH's intentions to forgive as the wicked continue in their sins. They announce the transgression of the people and portray YHWH preparing to slaughter the wicked among both the nations and Israel. By the end of the book, YHWH impotently states, "I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, 'Here I am, here I am,' to a nation that did not call on my name" (Isa 65:1). The concluding verse of the book makes it clear that the punishment is not yet complete:

> And they shall go forth and look on the dead bodies
> of the men that have rebelled against me;

for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched,
and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh. (Isa 66:24)

One may legitimately ask, "What happened?" The end of the Babylonian exile and the accession of Cyrus to the Babylonian throne was supposed to signal YHWH's sovereignty. Historically, one might cite the turmoil of the Persian Empire during the late sixth and fifth centuries, when Darius I and later monarchs were faced with continued warfare that belied the expectations of world peace during the reign of Cyrus.[18] Just as YHWH is identified with the successes and downfalls of previous conquerors, so YHWH is identified with the difficulties faced by the Persians during these years. It is the price of linking YHWH too closely to the vagaries of world empires and events. When the empire fails, so does YHWH. One might argue theologically that in fact Israel's sin and that of the nations was not complete and that further punishment was necessary to purify the world for the manifestation of YHWH' s sovereignty.[19] But this requires the conclusion that YHWH was mistaken in the statements of Deutero-Isaiah.

These considerations reveal a disturbing facet of YHWH's sovereignty in Isaiah, namely, YHWH failed to achieve the aims set out at the beginning of the book. YHWH's identification with the imperial power of the conqueror is too constraining. It limits YHWH to the success or failure of empire and renders YHWH wrong when the empire fails. The book attempts to meet this challenge by pointing to the future realization of the promise, but it can only do so by positing the continuous sin of the people. In the end, Isaiah blames the victims for their victimization.[20]

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One might conclude from this discussion that Isaiah's presentation of YHWH's interaction with Israel is a theology of failure, but this leads us to

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18. See Briant, "Persian Empire."

19. See, e.g., Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 161–86. He reads this passage in relation to a larger conflict between hypothesized visionary and priestly parties who charged each other with evil as they attempted to control postexilic Judaism.

20. See Rubenstein, who argues that traditional Jewish and Christian concepts of a moral G-d must be abandoned in the aftermath of the Shoah in part because such theologies lead to the conclusion that suffering is caused by moral failing (*After Auschwitz*).

a further aspect of the book's theology, namely, the success of the program outlined in the book of Isaiah requires that human beings serve as responsible partners with YHWH. From the perspective of Isaiah, human beings did not accept that responsibility.[21] At the outset, one might claim that this failure is evident in the refusal to recognize YHWH's sovereignty; after all, this is a constant theme of the book. But one must ask why Israel does not recognize YHWH. The answer seems clear: YHWH is identified with the imperial conqueror throughout the book, and as each empire fails, so does YHWH. This might suggest a great deal of frustration on the part of Isaiah's various writers as they point to the continued rejection of YHWH, but perhaps they or we misconstrue an essential aspect of the book. What does constitute responsible human action in the book of Isaiah?

Ahaz and Isaiah present two very instructive cases. As noted above, Ahaz responds to Isaiah's demand that he test YHWH with the statement, "I will not ask, and I will not put YHWH to the test." Ahaz appears to know full well that Isaiah's or YHWH's proposal will cost many Judean lives. It is striking, however, that Ahaz does not challenge Isaiah or protest, but simply mouths empty piety. Other figures in the Bible do not seem to have this problem. Amos asks that YHWH spare Jacob (Amos 7:1–3, 4–6), Job challenges YHWH when injustice is visited on him (Job 31), Moses challenges G-d when G-d proposes to destroy Israel in the wilderness (Exod 33, Num 14), and Abraham demands that the judge of all the earth do justice when he thinks that YHWH is willing to kill righteous and wicked alike (Gen 18). Not only was Ahaz wrong because his course of action led to Assyrian hegemony over Judah, but he was wrong because he failed to confront blatant injustice. The reader of Isaiah will never know what might have happened if Ahaz said no, but it is very clear what happened when he declined to do so.

Much the same may be said of Isaiah. When he stood before YHWH and heard YHWH's decree that he was to prevent the people from understanding their sin and repenting, his only response was "How long?" He does not protest YHWH's decision or ask that YHWH change it. Again, Abraham, Amos, and Job challenged YHWH when they thought that YHWH was wrong, and each received what they sought: reprieve for the righteous, respite for Jacob, and YHWH's response. The results for Isaiah

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21. For discussion of the notion that the Shoah was the result of the failure by human beings to exercise full responsibility for the world of creation, see Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust*.

are not so promising; by the end of the book, YHWH's program of judg-ment still has not succeeded in attaining its goals. One may only speculate as to what the outcome of a challenge might have been.

In conclusion, it appears that the book of Isaiah deliberately posits the problem of theodicy in order to elicit a human response. It presents YHWH as an imperial monarch who unjustly decrees judgment without the pos-sibility of repentance, and who subsequently fails to realize the goals for world peace and absolute sovereignty set out at the beginning of the book. By presenting major figures whose piety prevents them from challenging YHWH's decree, the book of Isaiah presents a critique of the conception of YHWH as absolute monarch and the uncritical acceptance of divine (or human) royal authority. YHWH's demands for justice throughout the book of Isaiah include the obligation to demand justice, like Abraham in Gen 18, from YHWH.[22]

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22. See Blumenthal, *Facing the Abusing G-d*. He argues that G-d must be viewed as an abusive parent whom the victims of abuse must learn to confront and ultimately to forgive.

31
Sargon's Threat against Jerusalem in Isaiah 10:27–32

1.

Isaiah 10:27–32 continues to be a particularly difficult passage for interpreters of the book of Isaiah. The passage describes the invasion route followed by an anonymous enemy army approaching Jerusalem from the north, and it makes specific reference to a number of Judean sites, including the enigmatic *šemen*,[1] Aiath, Migron, Michmash, Geba, Ramah, Gibeah, Gallim, Laishah, Anathoth, Madmenah, Gebim, and Nob. Although not

1. See *BHS* note. Cf. Bernard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 103. Despite the many attempts lo emend this text to a place name, the reading *mippənê šemen* must stand with the MT. The reference to "oil" in this passage apparently contributes to the portrayal of Assyria as an overripe olive tree in Isa 10:33–34, ready to be harvested by beating with a rod. See "Olive," *EncJud* 12:1364–66. For a full discussion of this text and the imagery employed therein, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "Jesse's New Shoot in Isaiah 11: A Josianic Reading of the Prophet Isaiah," in *A Gift of God in Due Season: Essays on Scripture and Community in Honor of James A. Sanders*, ed. Richard D. Weis and David M. Carr, JSOTSup 225 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 103–18.

all of these sites can be identified positively, scholars are reasonably certain that the invading army deviated from the main highway to Jerusalem from Bethel in order to avoid the Judean fortress at Mizpah while still approaching Jerusalem from the north.[2]

The major problem in the interpretation or Isa 10:27–32 is its historical background. Although Judah suffered invasion by foreign armies on several occasions during the late eighth century, scholars have been unable to agree on the identity of the invader or the specific historical situation presupposed in this passage. Several proposals have been put forward, including Sennacherib's invasion of 701 BCE, Sargon II's campaigns against the Philistines in 716 and 712–711, and the attack against Jerusalem made by the Syro-Ephraimitic coalition in 735.[3] Each of these proposals is beset by difficulties, however, prompting others to argue that the passage simply represents the prophet's visionary attempt to project a

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2. For reviews of research on this issue, see Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja l–12*, BKAT 10.1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), 423–35; Duane L. Christensen, "The March of Conquest in Isaiah X 27c–34," *VT* 26 (1976): 385–99.

3. For Sennacherib's invasion of 701 BCE, see W. F. Birch, "Sennacherib's Catastrophe at Nob, Isaiah x, 28–34," *PEFQS* (1891): 314–19; Birch, "Sennacherib's Catastrophe at Nob, Isaiah x, 28–32," *PEFQS* (1902): 197–98; A. Jirku, "Die Zwölfzahl der Städte in Jes 10,28–32," *ZAW* 48 (1930): 230; Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Burns and Oates, 1979) 393–394; cf. Georg Fohrer, *Das Buch Jesaja*, ZB (Zürich: Zwingli, 1966), 162–63; Paul Auvray, *Isaïe 1–39*, SB (Paris: Gabalda, 1972), 1:138–41; Otto Kaiser, *Das Buch des Propheten Jesaja Kapitel 1–12*, 5th ed., ATD 17 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 233–38. For Sargon II's campaign against the Philistines in 716 and 712–711, see Otto Procksch, *Jesaja I*, KAT 9/1 (Leipzig: Deitschertsche, 1930), 175; Wildberger, *Jesaja 1–12*, 427; cf. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 117–19; Vermeylen, *Du prophète Isaïe*, 267 n. 1. For a discussion of problems pertaining to the date of Sargon's 712 campaign against Philistia, see Hayim Tadmor, "The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study," *JCS* 12 (1958): 22–40, 77–100, esp. 92–94. For the attack against Jerusalem made by the Syro-Ephraimitic coalition in 735, see Herbert Donner, *Israel unter den Völkern*, VTSup 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 30–38; Donner, "Der Feind aus dem Norden. Topographische und archäologische Erwägungen zu Jes. I0,27b–34," *ZDPV* 84 (1968): 46–54; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, SBT 3 (London: SCM, 1967), 62; G. Ernest Wright, *Isaiah*, LBC 11 (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1964), 49; Arthur S. Herbert, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah 1–39*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 88; John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah, the Eighth Century Prophet: His Times and Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 207–10; Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis*, SBLDS 123 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 274–79.

coming invasion.[4] Following a review of the proposed solutions to the historical setting of Isa 10:27–32 and the problems posed by these attempts, this paper proposes a new solution to the problem. Based on observations concerning the relation of Isa 10:27–32 to its literary context and Assyrian historical records pertaining to the reign of Sargon II, it argues that the historical background for Isa 10:27–32 may be found in Sargon II's western campaign of 720 BCE, in which he put down the revolt of a Syro-Palestinian coalition led by Yau-bi'di (Ilu-bidi) of Hamath and defeated the Egyptians at Raphia, thereby forcing the capitulation of Hannun of Gaza. In the course of his campaign, Sargon made a show of force against Jerusalem, thereby keeping Judah out of the conflict. Sargon's threats against Jerusalem on this occasion earned him the condemnation of the prophet Isaiah in Isa 10:5–34.

<p style="text-align:center">2.</p>

One of the more common solutions to the problem of the historical background of Isa 10:27–32 is to identify the invasion described in this passage as that of Sennacherib in 701. This position is adopted by W. F. Birch, A. Jirku, Yohanan Aharoni, Georg Fohrer, and Otto Kaiser.[5] Although the invader is not identified in verses 27–32, the literary context of these verses in Isa 10:5–34 comprises a condemnation of Assyria for overstepping its bounds in punishing nations on YHWH's behalf. A major feature of Assyria's arrogance appears in verses 8–11 and 13–14, where the Assyrian king boasts about his power to overthrow cities and their gods,[6] such as Hamath and Arpad, threatening to do the same to Jerusalem and YHWH,

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4. L. Federlin, "A propos d'Isaïe x, 29–31," *RB* 3 (1906): 266; Gustaf Dalman, "Palästinische Wege und die Bedrohung Jerusalems nach Jesaja 10," *PJB* 12 (1916): 37–57; William F. Albright, "The Assyrian March on Jerusalem, Isa. X,28–32," *AASOR* 4 (1922–1923): 134–40; George B. Gray, *Isaiah 1–XXVII*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 206–7; John Skinner, *Isaiah I–XXXIX*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), 92–93; Ernst Jenni, *Die politischen Voraussagen der Propheten*, ATANT 29 (Zürich: Zwingli, 1956), 18 n. 13; Christensen, "March of Conquest," 389–90, 395–99; Barth, *Die Josia-Worte*, 65–66.

5. See note 3 above.

6. For a discussion of Sargon's claims in relation to the speeches of Isaiah ben Amoz, see Peter Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah," *JAOS* 103 (1983): 719–37, esp. 734–35. There he discusses the issue of Sargon's hybris in relation to Isaiah. Cf. Chaim Cohen, "Neo-Assyrian Elements in the First Speech of the

whom he equates with idols. This of course corresponds to the boasts made by the Rabshakeh speaking on behalf of Sennacherib at the siege of Jerusalem in Isa 36–37 // 2 Kgs 18:13–19:37 (esp. Isa 36:13–20/2 Kgs 18:28–35; Isa 37:8–13 // 2 Kgs 19:8–13). The major problem with this solution, however, is that Sennacherib did not approach Jerusalem from the north, as described in Isa 10:27–32, but from the southwest. According to Sennacherib's own account of the campaign,[7] he led his army down the eastern Mediterranean coast from Phoenicia to Philistia. After defeating the Egyptians in the plain of Eltekeh, Sennacherib took Eltekeh, Timnah, and Ekron, prior to advancing against the cities of Judah by way of the Shephelah. This corresponds to the notices in Isa 36:2, 8; 2 Kgs 18:14, 17; 19:8 that place Sennacherib in Lachish and Libnah during the siege of Jerusalem. Likewise, Sennacherib's palace inscription portrays him reviewing the booty at Lachish.[8] Paul Auvray, Fohrer, and Kaiser attempt to sidestep this problem by claiming that Isa 10:27–32 represents Isaiah's prediction of Sennacherib's attack, but Herbert Donner demonstrates convincingly that the specific movements portrayed in this passage represent an actual attack, not a prophetic prediction.[9] Consequently, Isa 10:27–32 cannot be connected to Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701.

A second major attempt at establishing the historical background of Isa 10:27–32 centers on Sargon's campaigns in Philistia during the years 716–711, especially against the revolt of Ashdod in 712–711. This position is adopted by Otto Procksch, Hans Wildberger, Ronald Clements, and Jacques Vermeylen.[10] It is based on the presence of the Assyrian army in the region during these years and the possibility that it would have passed through Judah on its way to Philistia. Unfortunately, there is no evidence from Assyrian or other sources that an Assyrian army advanced against Jerusalem or passed through Judah at this time. Other considerations further undermine this hypothesis. The first campaign in 716 does not seem to have been directed against a revolt by the Philistines or any other subject territory at the time. Rather, the aims of the campaign were

Biblical RAB-SAQE," *IOS* 9 (1979): 32–48, esp. 44–45, who cites Lie *Sar* 42.269–279, in which Sargon claims that he was chosen by Marduk to conquer Babylon.

7. For translations of this text, see A. Leo Oppenheim, *ANET*, 287–88; *ARAB* 2.239–40.

8. *ANET*, 288; *ARAB* 2.489.

9. Donner, *Israel unter den Völkern*, 32–33.

10. See note 3 above.

commercial in that Sargon intended only to consolidate his hold on the region and in order to open trade relations with Egypt.[11] To this end, he established a trading post "on the border of the city of the brook of Egypt" under the supervision of the sheikh of Laban.[12] It is unlikely that Sargon would have threatened Jerusalem at this time, as no revolt was in progress. The city of Ashdod did revolt against Sargon in 714–713, when Ahimetu, whom Sargon had placed on the throne of Ashdod in favor of his anti-Assyrian brother Azuri, was deposed by an anti-Assyrian commoner named Yamani.[13] The Assyrian army was hastily dispatched to put down this revolt. Although Yamani escaped to Egypt before the Assyrians arrived, the Egyptians handed him over to the Assyrians. Three Philistine cities, Ashdod, Gath, and Ashdod-Yam, were besieged during this campaign and their populations exiled.[14] Afterwards, Ashdod was rebuilt, resettled, and organized into an Assyrian province. Although this could provide an acceptable setting for Isa l0:27–32, insofar as Yamani attempted to persuade Judah, Moab, and Edom to join an anti-Assyrian coalition,[15] two major considerations speak against it. First, Assyrian records make no mention of a campaign through Judah. Second, Hayim Tadmor demonstrates on the basis of the Assyrian Eponym List that Sargon did not participate in this campaign at all, but sent his general or *turtanu* to direct the campaign while he remained behind to supervise construction on his palace at Dur-Shurukin.[16] This would correspond to the notice given in Isa

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11. Albrecht Alt, "Neue Assyrische Nachrichten über Palestina," in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israels II* (München: Beck, 1953), 226–41; Gerald L. Mattingly, "An Archeological Analysis of Sargon's 712 Campaign against Ashdod," *NEASB* 17 (1981): 47–64, esp. 47–48; cf. Tadmor, "Campaigns of Sargon II," esp. 77–78; Hayim Tadmor, "Philistia under Assyrian Rule," *BA* 29 (1966): 86–102, esp. 91–92; Anthony Spalinger, "The Year 712 B.C. and Its Implications for Egyptian History," *JARCE* 10 (1973): 95–101; Moshe Elat, "The Economic Relations of the Neo-Assyrian Empire with Egypt," *JAOS* 98 (1978): 20–34, esp. 28–30; Nadav Na'aman, "The Brook of Egypt and Assyrian Policy on the Border of Egypt," *TA* 6 (1979): 68–90.

12. Mattingly, "Sargon's 712 Campaign," 47–48; Tadmor, "Campaigns of Sargon II," 78; Tadmor, "Philistia under Assyrian Rule," 91–92; Na'aman, "Brook of Egypt," 71; Elat, "Economic Relations," 28–30.

13. Alt, "Neue Assyrische Nachrichten," 234–41; Tadmor, "Campaigns of Sargon II," 79–80; Tadmor, "Philistia under Assyrian Rule," 94–95; Na'aman, "Brook of Egypt," 71.

14. See Mattingly, "Sargon's 712 Campaign," 47–64, for a review of the evidence.

15. See *ANET*, 287; *ARAB* 2.193–95.

16. Tadmor, "Campaigns of Sargon II," 92–94, 95–96.

20:1 that Sargon sent his *tartān* to conduct the campaign against Ashdod.[17] These problems obviously undermine the position of those who would maintain that Sargon's Philistine campaign of 712 provides the historical background for Isa 10:27–32.

A third proposal attempts to argue that the attack against Jerusalem in 734 by the Syro-Ephraimitic coalition constitutes the historical background of Isa 10:27–32. This argument is advanced by Donner, Childs, Ernest Wright, Arthur Herbert, John Hayes and Stuart Irvine, and most recently by Irvine.[18] It is predicated on the fact that the Syro-Ephraimitic attempt to besiege Jerusalem is the only documented invasion of Judah from the north in the late eighth century. But this proposed solution suffers from the absence of any internal evidence in this passage that the Syro-Ephraimitic coalition is the intended subject here. Furthermore, the literary context in Isa 10:5–34 explicitly identifies the Assyrian king as the party responsible for threatening Jerusalem. This proposal clearly depends on regarding Isa 10:27–32 as an independent textual fragment. Although there may be some grounds to question the literary integrity of Isa 10:5–34,[19] the primary basis for viewing Isa 10:27–32 as an independent fragment appears to be the inability of scholars to identify an Assyrian advance against Jerusalem from the north.

A final attempt at solution maintains that Isa 10:27–32 does not describe an actual invasion of Judah by a foreign army, but merely represents a prophetic vision of a projected invasion. This solution is advocated by L. Federlin, Gustaf Dalman, George Gray, William F. Albright, John Skinner, Ernst Jenni, Duane Christensen, and Hermann Barth.[20] It clearly presupposes the inability of these scholars to identify a specific historical setting for the passage. But, as Donner points out, the detailed description of the army's movements and the use of perfect verbs in the text point to a description of an actual invasion of Judah by a very real army.[21]

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17. Isaiah 10:5–19 can therefore not be associated with the Ashdod campaign. The portrayal of the Assyrian monarch's boasts in this passage would conflict with the fact that Sargon remained in Assyria during this campaign.

18. See note 3 above.

19. For full discussion of the problems in Isa 10:5–34, see Barth, *Die Josia-Worte*, 17–76; Vermeylen, *Du prophète Isaïe*, 251–68; and the relevant sections of Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*.

20. See note 4 above.

21. Donner, *Israel unter den Völkern*, 32–33.

In sum, each of the proposed solutions for the identification of the historical background of Isa 10:27–32 presents serious difficulties. It is therefore necessary to reexamine the issue in order to present a new solution for the problem.

<center>3.</center>

The key question therefore is whether it is possible to identify an enemy advance against Jerusalem from the north as the historical setting of Isa 10:27–32. A number of possibilities are rejected above, including an invasion by the Syro-Ephraimitic coalition in 734, Sargon's western campaigns in 716 and 712–711, and Sennacherib's invasion in 701. Likewise, there is no indication that either Tiglath-pileser III or Shalmanezer V ever invaded Judah. Only one major possibility remains: Sargon's western campaign of 720. A number of factors indicate that this campaign provides the historical setting for Isa 10:27–32.[22]

According to Sargon's Khorsabad Annals, the new monarch was faced with widespread revolt in the west during the second year of his reign, that is, 720 BCE.[23] Resistance in Syria centered on Yau-bi'di (Ilu-bidi) of Hamath, who gathered the cities of Arpad, Simirra, Damascus, and Samaria together to face Sargon in battle at Qarqar. After Sargon defeated the coalition and restored order in the region, he then moved south to face the Egyptian who supported the rebellious Hannun (Hanno) of Gaza. Sargon reports that he defeated the Egyptians under Re'u (= Sib'u),[24] captured Hannun and took him as a prisoner to Assur in chains, and destroyed

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22. For a reconstruction of Sargon's campaigns based on the annals and other texts, see Tadmor, "Campaigns of Sargon II"; cf. Julian E. Reade, "Sargon's Campaigns of 720, 716, and 715 B.C.: Evidence from the Sculptures," *JNES* 35 (1976): 95–104. For recent discussion of the impact of Assyria's campaigns on Israel and Judah during this period, see now Nadav Na'aman, "The Historical Background to the Conquest of Samaria (720 B.C.)," *Bib* 71 (1990): 206–25; John H. Hayes and Jeffrey Kuan, "The Final Years of Samaria," *Bib* 72 (1991): 153–81. For a general overview of Sargon's reign with full bibliography, see Albert K. Grayson, "Assyria: Tiglath-Pileser III to Sargon II (744–705 B.C.)," *The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries BC*, 2nd rev. and enl. ed., CAH 3.2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 86–102, 762–64.

23. For translations of the Akkadian text, see *ARAB*, 2.5; *ANET*, 285.

24. The old reading, "Sib'u," is correctly read as "Re'u." See Rykle Borger, "Das Ende des Ägyptischen Feldherrn Sib'e = אוס," *JNES* 19 (1960): 49–53.

the city of Raphia on the Egyptian border, carrying off 9,033 captives. Scholars generally agree that this was Sargon's first western campaign. Furthermore, Sargon appears to have begun the resettlement of Samaria at this time, not during the first year of his reign as he claims in his annals.[25]

The itinerary of the invading army portrayed in Isa 10:27–32 may best be explained against the background of this campaign. The passage lists Aiath, Migron, Michmash, a pass generally identified as the Wadi es-Suwenit, Geba, Ramah, Gibeah, Bat-Gallim, Laishah, Anathoth, Madmenah, Gebim, and Nob as the areas affected by the enemy advance. Although not all of the sites can be identified positively, scholars agree that the approaching army comes from the territory of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and that it deviates from the main Bethel to Jerusalem road in order to bypass the Judean fortress at Mizpah.[26] This indicates that the enemy commander wished to avoid a protracted siege of Mizpah in order to approach Jerusalem with all due haste. Although many scholars assume that the passage describes a siege of Jerusalem, the passage merely indicates that the enemy force threatened Jerusalem from Nob with no indication of preparations for a sustained siege. Nob, present-day Mount Scopus, provides a commanding overview of Jerusalem and presents an enemy commander with the opportunity to display the full might of his army to the city's inhabitants.

These factors indicate a commander whose interests did not center on the conquest of either Judah or only Jerusalem; rather, they indicate a commander who wished to demonstrate his power to do so in order to intimidate the people and king of Jerusalem/Judah.[27] Such interests correspond to those of Sargon during his western campaign of 720. Following his defeat of the Syrian coalition at Qarqar, he would have to march south in order to deal with Hannun of Gaza and his Egyptian supporters. Most scholars assume that, like Sennacherib in 701, Sargon

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25. Tadmor, "Campaigns of Sargon II," 26–39; Na'aman, "Historical Background," 218; Hayes and Kuan, "Final Years of Samaria," 170. More recently, see Bob Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study*, SHANE 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1992). He supports Tadmor's argument that Samaria was conquered twice, first by Shalmanezer V in 723 BCE and second by Sargon II in 720 BCE.

26. For discussion of the location of these sites, see Dalman, "Palästinische Wege," 37–57; Donner, "Der Feind aus dem Norden," 46–54; Wildberger, *Jesaja 1–12*, 429–430.

27. Cf. Wildberger, who provides a similar interpretation but in relation to Sargon's campaign against Ashdod (*Jesaja 1–12*, 428).

traveled by the coastal highway, which would provide the quickest and most direct route to Philistia,[28] but several factors speak against such a move. First, it would be too risky for Sargon to move his troops through the narrow passes along the coast just north of the Carmel range or by the city of Megiddo. In a situation of general western revolt, an opposing force could easily bottle up his troops at either point,[29] thereby giving the initiative to the rebels and prompting other uncommitted countries, such as Judah, Moab, Edom, and Ammon, to join the revolt. Sargon was apparently a usurper and rose to the Assyrian throne against considerable internal opposition.[30] Second, after having just defeated a Syrian coalition that included Damascus and Samaria, it would be in Sargon's interests to pass through both cities in order to secure his mastery over them and to replenish his forces.[31] Third, with the prospect of facing the Egyptians, Sargon could not afford to leave his rear exposed to a potentially hostile Judah, which might be prepared to press claims over the territory of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel.[32] It would therefore be in Sargon's interests to pass through Judah before advancing against Gaza in order to keep Jerusalem out of the conflict. Although Sargon needed to move quickly against the Egyptians and Philistines, he could not afford to confront them without first securing his hold over Damascus, Samaria, and Jerusalem. This would be especially true following his failure to overcome the Elamites at Der immediately prior

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28. E.g., Hayes and Kuan, "Final Years of Samaria," 178.

29. See Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 50–52.

30. See Grayson, "Assyria: Tiglath-Pileser III," 87–88, for a review of the evidence pertaining to Sargon's accession to the Assyrian throne. The so-called Ashur Charter provides an account of Sargon's accession that indicates extensive opposition to his rule. See *ARAB* 2.132–35; Henry W. F. Saggs, "Historical Texts and Fragments of Sargon II of Assyria. The 'Assur Charter,'" *Iraq* 37 (1975): 11–20.

31. See Sargon's display inscription, where he lists the chariots, horses, and soldiers taken from the rebels in Samaria, Shinuhtu, and Hamath during the western campaign that followed his battle against the Elamites at Der (*ARAB* 2.55). For a discussion of Sargon's incorporation of foreign military units into his army, see Stephanie Dalley, "Foreign Chariotry and Cavalry in the Armies of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II," *Iraq* 47 (1985): 31–48.

32. See Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis*, passim. He maintains that Ahaz was interested in asserting Davidic claims over the territory of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel. Cf. Marvin A. Sweeney, "A Philological and Form-Critical Reevaluation of Isaiah 8:16–9:6," *HAR* 14 (1994): 215–31.

to his western campaign.[33] At this point, Sargon was still a new and not entirely legitimate king; his subjects and enemies were watching carefully to see whether he could maintain his hold on power.

Two major problems must be explained before this reconstruction can be accepted. The first is the Assyrian king's reference to the subjugation of Carchemish in Isa 10:8–11. This text is frequently read in conjunction with Isa 10:27–32 and presents a plausible basis for establishing a setting. Here, the Assyrian king mentions six cities that stand under his authority, including Carchemish, Calno, Arpad, Hamath, Damascus, and Samaria. Clearly, they serve as examples that illustrate his plans to subjugate Jerusalem as well. Four of the cities, Arpad, Hamath, Damascus, and Samaria, were subjugated by Sargon during his western campaign of 720.[34] Sargon does not mention the conquest of Carchemish until the fifth year of his reign, that is, 717 BCE, at which time he deported its monarch, Pisiri, and settled a contingent of Assyrians in the city for its attempt to ally with Mita of the land of Muski against Assyria.[35] If Carchemish was only conquered in 717, this obviously presents problems for an attempt to identify Sargon's campaign of 720 as the historical setting of Isa 10:27–32, if Isa 10:5–19 is read together with this text. The proximity of Carchemish and Calno to Arpad suggests that they could have been involved in the Syrian revolt of 720 and submitted to Sargon after the defeat at Qarqar, but hard evidence for such a view is lacking. In this regard, it is noteworthy that Sargon never mentions a conquest of Calno anywhere in his records. Although Arpad, Hamath, Damascus, and Samaria had recently been defeated by Sargon and had submitted to him, Calno and Carchemish had long been subject to the Assyrian throne, having paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser III as early

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33. Tadmor, "Campaigns of Sargon II," 38; Hayes and Kuan, "Final Years of Samaria," 170–71. Such a move would also prevent Moab and Edom from entering the conflict on the side of Philistia. Moab and Edom became border territories at some time during the late eighth century. See Wayne Horowitz, "Moab and Edom in the Sargon Geography," *IEJ* 43 (1993): 151–56. He argues that the appearance of Moab and Edom in this text reflects the perceived border of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in the eighth–seventh centuries BCE. Both paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser Ill (see *ANET*, 282; *ARAB* 1.801) and might have seen participation in the Philistine revolt as a means to rid themselves of a potential Assyrian threat. By removing Judah from the conflict, Sargon would discourage Moabite and Edomite support for Philistia and enable himself to act freely without fear for the security of his eastern flanks.

34. *ARAB* 2.5.

35. *ARAB* 2.8.

as the third year of his reign, in 742.[36] This suggests that the governing principle for the choice of cities listed in Isa 10:8–11 was not that they were conquered by Sargon; rather, they were subject to him. That the Assyrian king in Isa 10:8 refers to their kings as "my commanders" (*śāray*) supports such a view.

The second and decisive major problem is the documentation for Sargon's move against Jerusalem at this time. Although Sargon's annals and the display inscription say nothing about a confrontation with Judah during this period, Sargon describes himself in the Nimrud inscription as the "Subduer of the land of Judah [*musaknis {matu} Jaudu*], which lies far away."[37] The Akkadian term *mušaknis*, "subdue," a standard causative participle form from *kanasu*, is generally used in reference to the imposition of Assyrian authority over a city, but it does not necessarily refer to military conquest.[38] This reference is second in a list of Sargon's accomplishments that preceded his restoration of Assurnasirpal's palace at Nimrud, including his supposed defeat of Humbanigash of Elam at Der; the subduing of the land of Judah; the conquest of Hamath and its king, Yaubi'di; and victories over Kakme, the Manneans, Pisiris of Carchemish, Shinuhtu and Kiaki of Tabal, Muski, the Manneans (again), Karaliu and Paddiri, and the

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36. Tiglath-pileser III's annals refer to his subjugation of all of the cities or countries mentioned in Isa 10:8–11 beginning in the third year of his reign (742 BCE). See *ARAB* 1.769, which includes Carchemish, Aram (Damascus), and Arpad; *ARAB* 1.770, which includes Judah (Jerusalem), Kullani (= Calno), and Hamath; *ARAB* 1.772, which includes Aram (Damascus), Samerina (= Samaria), Carchemish, and Hamath.

37. *ARAB* 2.137. A translation of the entire text appears in *ARAB* 2.136–38. For a transliteration of the Akkadian text and a translation into German, see Hugo Winckler, *Die Keilschrifttexte Sargons. Band I. Historisch-sachliche Einleitung, Umschrift und Übersetzung, Worderverzeichnis* (Leipzig, 1889), 168–73. Felix E. Peiser's transcription and German translation of the Akkadian text appears in Eberhard Schrader, ed., *Sammlung von assyrischen und babylonischen Texten* (Berlin, 1890), 2:34–39. For a complete translation of the text of the annals, see *ARAB* 2.3–51. For the display inscription, see *ARAB* 2.52–75.

38. See "*kanasu* 7," *CAD* 8:147; cf. Tadmor, "Campaigns of Sargon II," 38 n. 146; Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 55. See also the text of ND 3411, line 24, in which Sargon describes himself as the "subduer of the distant Medes" (*mušknis [mat]madaa ruqūti*). See Cyril J. Gadd, "Inscribed Prisms of Sargon II from Nimrud," *Iraq* 16 (1954): 173–201, esp. 200. There is no indication of a battle between Sargon and the Medes. In keeping with Tadmor's understanding of the term, it likely refers to the imposition or collection of tribute.

Medes. The list appears to be in a rough chronological order in that the annals record these events as follows:

Year 1: defeat of Humbanigash of Elam at Der;
Year 2: defeat of Ilu-bidi (= Yaubi'di) of Hamath at Qarqar;
Year 3: campaign against the Manneans and their allies;
Year 4: defeat of Kiakki of Tabal at Shinuhtu (vicinity of Muski);
Year 5: defeat of Pisiris of Carchemish and rebels in the land of Kakme;
Year 6: defeat of the Manneans (vicinity of Paddiri), Assur-li'u of Kar-
    alla, tribute from the Medes;
Year 7: defeat of rebels in the Mannean land, subjugation of the Medes;
Year 8: campaigns against the Manneans and Medes.

The order of events differs somewhat from that of the Nimrud inscription, in that the defeat of Kiakki of Tabal precedes that of Pisiris of Carchemish. Likewise, the annals do not mention the subjugation of the land of Muski, although it is in the vicinity of Tabal, nor do they mention the conquest of Paddiri, although it was located in the vicinity of the Manneans. Despite these discrepancies, it is nevertheless clear that the list of Sargon's accomplishments follows a rough chronological order. It would appear likely that Sargon's subduing of the land of Judah would have taken place relatively early in his reign, between the first and second year. This would support the reconstruction put forward above, that Sargon advanced against Judah during the course of his western campaign of 720 against the Syrian coalition led by Yaubi'di of Hamath and the Egyptian Philistine alliance centered on Hannun of Gaza. Such an advance would constitute a show of force, intended to threaten and intimidate Judah, but it would not necessarily require a full siege.[39]

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In conclusion, it appears that the historical setting of the enemy threat against Jerusalem described in Isa 10:27–32 may be found in Sargon's

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39. See Tadmor, "Campaigns of Sargon II," 38 n. 146, who likewise argues that the reference to Sargon as "subduer of the land of Judah" in the Nimrud inscription must presuppose an advance against Judah in 720 BCE. Cf. Albert K. Grayson, "Sargon," *ABD* 5:984–98. He maintains that the Assyrian army marched through Israel and Judah on its way to Gaza in 720 BCE.

western campaign of 720 BCE. Following the defeat of the Syrian rebels at Qarqar, it would be necessary for Sargon to secure his hold over the Syro-Palestinian corridor prior to confronting the Egyptians and Philistines at Raphia. This provided an opportunity for the new king to demonstrate his authority over the land of Judah, which would be especially important following the defeat of Samaria and its incorporation into the Assyrian Empire. A threat against Jerusalem at this time would be especially significant for defining the perspective of the prophet Isaiah. Although the prophet viewed the Assyrian army as an instrument employed by YHWH to punish Israel (see Isa 5:8–30, 9:7–10:4), Sargon's threats against Jerusalem, the city of YHWH's temple and the Davidic dynasty, would prompt him to condemn the Assyrian monarch for overstepping his bounds and for failing to recognize YHWH as the source of his victories (see Isa l0:5–9, 33–34). Insofar as recent research demonstrates Isaiah s generally positive evaluation of Ahaz and the Davidic dynasty,[40] such a move would deny the Davidic monarch the opportunity to demonstrate authority over the former Northern Kingdom of Israel. Although Isaiah had argued that the Assyrians represented YHWH's instrument of punishment against northern Israel, Sargon's treatment of Judah as a vassal rather than as a partner provided the basis for Isaiah's condemnation of the Assyrian monarch in Isa 10.

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40. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis*; Jesper Høgenhaven, *G-tt und Volk bei Jesaja: Eine Untersuchung zur biblischen Theologie*, ATD 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1988).

32
Isaiah 60–62 in Intertextual Perspective

1.

Isaiah 60–62 is a well-known *crux interpretum* in discussion of the compositional history of the book of Isaiah. Although this text is included in the chapters assigned to Trito-Isaiah, its affinities with Deutero-Isaiah, including the so-called Servant Songs, have prompted scholars to present a number of hypotheses concerning its compositional setting and function. Many note the affinities of these chapters with Deutero-Isaiah while arguing that they constitute the core of Trito-Isaiah; others argue that there is no Trito-Isaiah and that Isa 56–66 as a whole must be considered as an extension of Isa 40–55; and still others argue that Isa 60–62 constitutes part of a redactional stratum that edited Proto- and Deutero-Isaiah into a sixth-century edition of the book.[1]

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1. For the argument that these chapters constitute the core of Trito-Isaiah, see Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 296–308; Childs, *Isaiah*, 493–96; Paul A. Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah: The Structure, Growth and Authorship of Isaiah 56–66*, VTSup 62 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 22–49; Jacob Stromberg, *Isaiah after Exile: The Author of Third Isaiah as Reader and Redactor of the Book*, OTM (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11–13, 27–30. For the argument that there is no Trito-Isaiah and that Isa 56–66 as a whole must be considered as an extension of Isa 40–55, see Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40–66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012); Sommer, *Prophet Reads Scripture*. For the argument that Isa 60–62 constitutes part of a redactional stratum that edited Proto- and Deutero-Isaiah into a sixth-century edition of the book, see Steck, *Studien zu*

This paper contends that intertextual considerations aid in addressing the debate. It considers the current state of intertextual studies, including both its synchronic and diachronic dimensions, such as the degree to which intertextual relationships may be the result of intentional authorial citation or allusion or the result of reader-oriented association. A formal overview of Isa 60–62 then establishes the literary coherence of this text and provides the basis for considering its intertextual relationships with its various contexts, including Trito-Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, and Proto-Isaiah, as well as works beyond Isaiah, such as Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra-Nehemiah. As a result of these considerations, the paper argues that Isa 60–62 deliberately cites and reconceptualizes earlier Proto- and Deutero-Isaian texts. Isaiah 60–62 presents a servant figure who is neither a king, nor a prophet, nor Israel, but who is instead is a priest from the Jerusalem temple. Isaiah 60–62 thereby gives expression to the concerns of the late sixth-century edition of the book of Isaiah as well as its final late fifth-century form.

<div style="text-align:center">2.</div>

Intertextuality is the study of texts in relation to their literary contexts, including the citation of or allusion to other literary works, the placement of a text in relation to its immediate literary context(s), and the interpretation of a text in relation to other literary compositions.

Current methodological overviews of intertextual interpretation indicate that its roots lie in earlier diachronic or author-centered conceptions of redaction criticism and inner-biblical exegesis employed throughout much of the twentieth century.[2] Such work was considered to be the product of later tradents or redactors of an earlier text who deliberately added their own comments in an effort to reinterpret earlier narratives or prophetic oracles to serve their own later interests. Examples of such work from the latter twentieth century appear in efforts to define an Assyrian or Josianic edition of the book of Isaiah by scholars such as Clements (1980), Barth (1977), Vermeylen (1977–78), and Sweeney (1996), based on the

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Tritojesaja, 1–166; cf. Seizo Sekine, *Die tritojesajanische Sammlung (Jes 56–66) redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersucht*, BZAW 175 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989).

2. Sommer, *Prophet Reads Scripture*, 6–31; Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality"; Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*; Newsom, *Book of Job*, 3–31; Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back*, 1–28.

observation of texts in Isa 1–39 designed to condemn the Assyrian Empire and posit a Judean restoration following the projected Assyrian downfall.[3] Such work remains valid, but it places the onus on the interpreter to reconstruct the authors of the texts and their particular viewpoints based on a combination of formal, lexical, and hermeneutical criteria.[4] In the case of Isaiah, such criteria would include (1) the presence of a literary context in which a later text would have access to an earlier text, for example, later Isaian texts such as Trito-Isaiah appear as part of the larger book of Isaiah, which includes earlier materials in Proto- and Deutero-Isaiah; (2) a lexical correspondence between the later text and the earlier text, for example, later Isaian texts such as Trito-Isaiah cite words and phrases that appear in Proto- or Deutero-Isaiah; and (3) a hermeneutical perspective in the later text that demonstrates an attempt to interpret the earlier citations in relation to the concerns expressed in the later text, for example, later Isaian texts such as Trito-Isaiah demonstrate an interest in interpreting or reinterpreting the earlier citation from Proto- or Deutero-Isaiah.

But current intertextual work is also rooted in contemporary literary criticism, particularly the recognition of the role played by readers in the construction and interpretation of a text. With the rise of reader-response criticism and the subsequent development of synchronic literary perspectives in biblical exegesis, interpreters have come to recognize the role of the reader in the construction of biblical texts. Such work posits that texts are entities in and of themselves that stand independently of the author or authors who produced them.[5] With only the text as evidence, it is impossible to know the mind of the author, either on the part of the interpreter of the text or even of the author who wrote it. Interpreters construct an image of the author based on their own subjective readings of texts and then use that construct as a basis for giving expressions to their own concerns. Bernard Duhm's identification of the so-called Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah is a case in point.[6] Duhm's identification and isolation of the songs presupposes his view that ancient authors were only able to express themselves in short, self-contained units. Furthermore, Duhm

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3. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*; Barth, *Die Jesaja-Wörte*; Vermeylen, *Du prophète d'Isaïe*; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*.

4. See Stackert, *Rewriting the Torah*, 18–29.

5. See Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 140–236; Morgan with Barton, *Biblical Interpretation*, 203–68.

6. Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia*, 19.

argued that a suffering messiah figure must be the subject of the songs. Later interpreters have observed, however, that the songs are closely inter-related to their larger literary context in Isa 40–55, which identifies Jacob/Israel as YHWH's servant.[7] Contemporary theorists, based especially in the work of Bakhtin, posit that authors and interpreters draw on the larger world of language and text that they inhabit, often subconsciously, so that it is impossible for the scholar to know whether an intertextual association is the deliberate work of an original author or the observation of a reader who reads her or his own ideas into the text.[8] In such a view, texts do not convey the meanings intended by their authors, as it is impossible to know what an author intended, either by the interpreters or even by the author him- or herself. Meaning is thereby ascribed to texts by their readers, and the validity of the interpretation is decided by the numbers of other readers willing to accept it. And so we must ask whether it is possible to account for such subjectivity in assessing potential intertextual relationships between and among texts.

Although the field is often polarized by author- and reader-centered theorists who deny the validity of the others' work, contemporary inter-preters must recognize that textual interpretation calls for a synthesis of these views. Texts are indeed the products of authors who wrote them with a specific set of intentions that readers may or may not recognize and correctly reconstruct. At the same time, texts are read by readers who bring their own worldviews to bear in their interpretation—and therefore construction—of the texts at hand. But the extent to which later readers correctly discern the presumed intentions of a text's author must be judged in relation to the criteria presented above.

3.

With these considerations in mind, analysis may now turn to Isa 60–62, beginning with its formal structure and generic characteristics. Isaiah 60–62 has long been recognized by interpreters of the book of Isaiah as a coherent text that appears in the form of a prophetic announcement of

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7. Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *A Farewell to the Servant Songs: A Critical Examination of an Exegetical Axiom* (Lund: Gleerup, 1983); cf. Harry M. Orlinsky, *Studies in the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah: The So-Called "Servant of the L-rd" and "Suffering Servant" in Second Isaiah*, VTSup 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1967).

8. E.g., Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*.

the restoration of Jerusalem.[9] The passage is clearly demarcated by the initial announcement in Isa 60:1 ("Arise, shine, for your light has come"), with the focus throughout on Zion's restoration, and the concluding announcements in Isa 62:10–12 concerning the arrival of the deliverer and the restoration of Zion. Isaiah 63:1 begins a new unit that focuses on YHWH's return from victory over Edom. The basic structure of the passage is easily established by the prophet's presentations of the words of two different speakers: YHWH's words to Zion in Isa 60:1–22 and the speech of the anointed priest in Isa 61:1–62:12. The two subunits are interrelated by the role played by the priest in the temple as spokesperson to the people on behalf of YHWH; that is, YHWH makes the initial announcement of Zion's restoration, and the priest reiterates and elaborates on YHWH's words.

The prophet's presentation of YHWH's words to Zion in Isa 60:1–22 concerning the return of Zion's exiles and the restoration of Zion comprises two elements. The first is the prophet's address to Zion in Isa 60:1–3 to rise and see the shining presence of YHWH. The second is the prophet's presentation of YHWH's address to Zion in Isa 60:4–22 that announces Zion's restoration. This unit in turn comprises three elements, namely, the command to Zion to see both the approach of her children and the wealth from the nations in Isa 60:4–7, the announcement proper of the restoration of Zion in Isa 60:8–18, and the prophet's presentation of YHWH's promise for eternal possession of the land in Isa 60:19–22. The prophet's presentation in Isa 61:1–62:12 of the speech of the anointed priest comprises five basic elements, including the anointed one's statement of his commission to release the captives so that they might serve in Jerusalem as priests to the nations in Isa 61:1–9, the anointed one's psalm of rejoicing over the restoration of YHWH's righteousness before the nations in Isa 61:10–11, the anointed priest's pledge to Jerusalem to enable her righteousness and deliverance to be realized in Isa 62:1–7, the announcement of YHWH's oath of protection for Jerusalem in Isa 62:8–9, and the announcement and signal that the deliverer has arrived in Isa 62:10–12.

The structure of the passage may be diagrammed as follows:

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9. Stromberg, *Trito-Isaiah*, 11–13; for a detailed analysis of Isa 60–62, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*; for discussion of form critical methodology, see Sweeney, "Form Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, repr. as ch. 2 in this volume.

Prophetic Announcement of the Restoration of Jerusalem (Isa 60:1–62:12)

4.

Consideration of the intertextual dimensions of Isa 60–62 may begin with its immediate literary context in Isa 56–66, so-called Trito-Isaiah, as well as the book of Isaiah as a whole.[10] Scholars have long recognized Isa 56–66 as a major component of the book of Isaiah, most commonly as a diachronically defined component of prophecies from the early Persian period ranging from the late sixth through the fourth centuries BCE. Considered synchronically, my previous work has shown that these chapters portray the restoration of Jerusalem and the obligations of the people to YHWH's covenant.[11]

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10. For earlier intertextual work on Isa 60–62, see Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel,* 80–88; Wolfgang Lau, *Schriftgelehrte Prophetie in Jes 56–66*, BZAW 225 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 1–117.

11. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4,* 87–92.

The intertextual relationship between Isa 60–62 and its context in Isa 56–66 appears to be constituted not in this instance by the citation of earlier texts, but by its place with the structure and sequence of texts within Isa 56–66 that are concerned with Jerusalem's restoration. Although Jerusalem's restoration is a major concern of Isa 56–66 as a whole, Isa 60–62 appears to be differentiated from its immediate literary context in Isa 56–66. In portraying the restoration of Jerusalem, Isa 60–62 makes no differentiation among the restored people, that is, all are restored in the understanding of this text. But when one considers Isa 60–62 in relation to its context within Isa 56–59 and 63–66, a major difference appears insofar as Isa 56–59 and 63–66 are interested in differentiating the righteous and the wicked within the people. Isaiah 56–59 begins in Isa 56:1–8 by announcing that foreigners and eunuchs are included in the restored people, but it continues by stipulating the covenant obligations of the people, especially observance of the Shabbat. Other texts in Isa 56–59 take up the issue of covenant observance and repentance for those who had failed to observe YHWH's will: Isa 56:9–57:21 focuses on YHWH's willingness to forgive those who repent, Isa 58:1–14 presents an admonition to repent, and Isa 59:1–23 presents a lament concerning YHWH's willingness and ability to forgive those who repent. Isaiah 63–66 focuses on judgment against those who are considered wicked and restoration for those who are righteous: Isa 63:1–6 focuses on YHWH's punishment of Edom as a symbol of wickedness among the nations, Isa 63:7–64:11 presents the prophet's lament and appeal for mercy on behalf of the people, and Isa 65:1–66:24 presents a scenario of restoration for the righteous and death for the wicked. Isaiah 60–62 does not share in the differentiation between the righteous and the wicked, although it does portray the scenario of restoration. Such considerations indicate that Isa 60–62 and Isa 56–59, 63–66 were not written by the same authors.

We now turn to the intertextual relationship between Isa 60–62 and Isa 40–55 or Deutero-Isaiah. It is important to recognize that, although Isa 55 constitutes the culmination of Deutero-Isaiah in the view of most diachronically oriented scholars, Isa 55, with its concern for redefining Israel as the recipient of YHWH's eternal Davidic covenant, introduces Isa 56–66.[12] Isaiah 56–66 thereby defines the expectations of those who

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12. Sweeney, "Reconceptualization of the Davidic Covenant in Isaiah"; Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*.

would take part in YHWH's covenant. We have already observed that Isa 60–62 does not share in the differentiation of the righteous and the wicked characteristic of Isa 56–59 and 63–66, which raises the question of the relationship between these textual blocks and Isa 60–62. Given its shared concerns with Isa 40–55 with the restoration of the exiles to Jerusalem, we may ask, To what extent is Isa 60–62 related intertextually to Isa 40–55? Is Isa 60–62 a part of Isa 40–55? Or is it somehow closely related?

The intertextual interrelationship between Isa 60–62 and Isa 40–55 or Deutero-Isaiah appears to be close, although there is indeed differentiation between the two bodies of text. The portrayal in Isa 60–62 of the restoration of Jerusalem shares a basic concern with that of Deutero-Isaiah, that is, the city will be restored and the exiles restored to the city without consideration of their righteous or wicked character. Likewise, Isa 60–62 portrays a servant figure who speaks in Isa 61:1–7 much as Deutero-Isaiah presents a servant figure throughout Isa 40–55. But whereas Deutero-Isaiah portrays a suffering servant who is to be identified with Jacob/Israel, the servant figure in Isa 60–62 displays a different character.

The servant figure in Isa 61:1–7 is not Jacob/Israel. This servant's tasks, to proclaim the release of the captives, to comfort the mourners of Zion, and to call on them to oversee the restoration of Jerusalem, indicate that this servant is to address and exhort the exiles, but that this servant is not to be equated with them even metaphorically. Many scholars therefore argue that the servant figure in Isa 61:1–7 must be a prophet or a royal figure.

The bases for identifying this figure as a prophet are (1) his role in addressing Israel like a prophet, (2) the statement in verse 1 that "the spirit of my L-rd YHWH is upon me," and (3) the use of two key verbs from Isa 6 and Isa 40:1–11, two key texts that have been recognized as the prophetic commissioning narratives for Proto-Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah respectively.[13] The statement concerning "the spirit of YHWH" is a corollary of the figure's anointed status and may be discounted, as we will see below (see, e.g., 1 Sam 16:13).

But we now encounter the deliberate intertextual citation of terms that appear in Isa 6:1–13 and Isa 40:1–11, which portray the prophetic commissioning of Isaiah ben Amoz in Isa 6:1–13 and Deutero-Isaiah in Isa 40:1–11.

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13. E.g., Seitz, "Divine Council."

The first verb is *šəlāḥanî* ("he has sent me") in Isa 61:1, which relates intertextually to Isaiah's response, *šəlāḥēnî*, "send me!" to YHWH's request for a prophet to speak to the people on YHWH's behalf in Isa 6:8. The second verb is *ləbaśśēr* ("to proclaim good tidings") also in Isa 61:1, which appears as a key term in Deutero-Isaiah's prophetic commission in Isa 40:9 to serve as the *məbaśśeret ṣîyôn* ("herald of Zion") or the *məbaśśeret yərûšālāim* ("herald of Jerusalem"). Such intertextual references indicate a sense of continuity with the prophet Isaiah ben Amoz, as portrayed in Isa 6, and the anonymous prophet, Deutero-Isaiah, as portrayed in Isa 40:1–11. Insofar as Isa 6:1–13 and Isa 40:1–11, from which the intertextual lexical citations are drawn, are both generally considered to be prophetic commissioning or call narratives, many interpreters simply presume that the servant figure in Isa 61:1–7 must be a prophet.

But there is a problem with the presumption that Isa 61:1–7 must be a prophet. The servant figure in Isa 61:1–7 is described as anointed by YHWH. Prophets are typically called or summoned to service by YHWH, but we must recognize that prophets are not typically anointed in ancient Israel or Judah. Our servant figure in Isa 61:1–7, therefore, cannot be a prophet. Consequently, other scholars identify him as a royal or messianic figure in keeping with the royalist perspective of the book of Isaiah. Kings in ancient Israel and Judah are anointed, and so the argument carries some merit. Surely, such identification is attractive when one considers the intertextual relationships with Proto-Isaiah's oracles concerning the ideal Davidic monarch in Isa 9:1–6, 11:1–16, and 32:1–8. Indeed, the emphasis on the great light that will shine from Zion at the outset of the passage in Isa 60:1–3 to herald the restoration of Zion clearly has intertextual links with Isa 9:1, which speaks of the people who have walked in darkness but now see a great light as the ideal Davidic king emerges. Proto-Isaiah is heavily invested in Davidic ideology when viewed in diachronic perspective.[14] Isaiah 9:1–6 portrays the ideal righteous Davidic monarch identified as "the prince of peace" who will bring peace to his people. Isaiah 11:1–16 identifies the wise and righteous monarch who will restore the unity of Israel and Judah and subdue their enemies. Isaiah 32:1–8 is the ideal king who will reign in righteousness and appoint ministers who will govern with justice. But when viewed in synchronic perspective, identification with an ideal Davidic monarch is hardly satisfactory insofar as Deutero-Isaiah identifies

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14. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*.

Cyrus as YHWH's messiah and temple builder in Isa 44:28 and 45:1, and reassigns the Davidic covenant from the house of David to the people of Israel as a whole in Isa 55. When viewed in synchronic intertextual perspective, Davidic ideology changes markedly in the book of Isaiah. There is no longer a Davidic monarch in Isa 40–66, much less in Isa 56–66.

Monarchs are not the only figures who are anointed in ancient Israel and Judah; priests are anointed as well, and in the absence of the Davidic—or any other Judean or Israelite—monarchy at the close of the Babylonian exile and outset of the Persian period, we must look to literature beyond the book of Isaiah to consider another possibility. Priests are anointed in ancient Israel and Judah, but priests are in short supply in the book of Isaiah until Isa 66:18–22, which announces that YHWH will select priests and Levites from the exiles returning to Jerusalem from the nations.

When we consider intertextual evidence of the larger literary world of the Bible outside the book of Isaiah, it seems likely that our servant figure is indeed a priest,[15] perhaps to be identified with Joshua ben Jehozadak, who returned to Jerusalem in 522 BCE with Zerubbabel ben Shealtiel and who was ordained as high priest for the newly reconstructed temple completed in circa 515 BCE. Joshua ben Jehozadak's role is described briefly in Ezra 3 and especially in the visions of Zechariah ben Berechiah ben Iddo in Zech 1–6. I have already discussed the intertextual relationship between the book of Zechariah and the book of Isaiah in detail, noting particularly that Zechariah is composed as a response and counterpoint to Isaiah.[16] Whereas Isaiah maintains that Jerusalem and Judah must submit to Cyrus and the Persian Empire in keeping with YHWH's will, Zechariah—and indeed the Book of the Twelve as a whole—calls for the rise of a new Davidic king who will play a role in YHWH's defeat of the nations and the nations' recognition of YHWH at Zion. Joshua ben Jehozadak plays a key role in Zechariah, that is, he is ordained in Zech 3, is portrayed as an anointed figure alongside the royal Zerubbabel in Zech 4, and sits crowned on the Jerusalem throne with a priest by his side in place of the absent Zerubbabel in Zech 6. Joshua is the de facto Judean ruler (under Persian sovereignty) of Judah until the rise of the new Davidic monarch in Zech 9–14.

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15. Cf. Pierre Grelot, "Sur Isaïe LXI: La Première consecration d'un grand prêtre," *RB* 97 (1990): 414–31.

16. Sweeney, "Zechariah's Debate with Isaiah"; cf. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 559–709.

Closer attention to the portrayal of the servant figure in Isa 61:1–7 points to his role as a priest. He is anointed, and he is tasked to proclaim release (Heb. *dərôr*) to the captives, liberation to the prisoners, a year of YHWH's favor, and a day of vindication for our G-d in Isa 61:1–2. The proclamation of release, *dərôr*, is indeed a priestly function that is identified with the proclamation of the Jubilee year in Lev 25:10 and the Sabbatical Year in Jer 34:8, 15, 17, and Ezek 46:17. The year of release occurs every seven years when fields are allowed to lie fallow so that the poor might glean (Exod 23:10–11), so that slaves might be released (Exod 21:2–11, Jer 34:8–16), and so that debts might be forgiven (Deut 15:1–18). With the passage of seven Sabbatical Years, a year of Jubilee is proclaimed, in which land is returned to its tribal owners in addition to the other provisions (Lev 25). The rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple in 520–515 BCE would at the very least mark the reinstitution of the sabbatical system in Jerusalem, and Joshua ben Jehozadak as high priest would be the figure who would oversee its implementation. Furthermore, as high priest, Joshua would oversee the ordination of other priests to serve under him in the newly restored temple, which would explain the comments in Isa 61:1–7 that our servant figure would clothe the mourners of Zion with turbans, the oil of rejoicing, and a garment of praise before naming them as priests of YHWH who would oversee the influx of wealth brought to the temple by the nations at large (see the description of the priestly garments in Exod 28–29).

Such a description and such a role suggest that our servant figure in Isa 61:1–7 is a priest, perhaps Joshua ben Jehozadak, high priest of the rebuilt Jerusalem temple in 520–515 BCE, and the restoration of Jerusalem as portrayed in Isa 60–62 is in fact based on the restoration of the Jerusalem temple as the holy center of the city and of creation at large in ancient Judean thought.[17]

5.

The preceding discussion points to the crucial role of intertextuality in the interpretation of Isa 60–62. Here intertextuality must be understood in three dimensions: the deliberate citation of or allusion to other biblical texts, the interpretation of texts in relation to their immediate literary contexts, and the interpretation of texts in relation to the broader literary

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17. Levenson, "Temple and the World"; Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*.

world. Isaiah 60–62 constitutes an element of Isa 56–66, which defines the obligations to YHWH's covenant by those who would be considered righteous in the restored Jerusalem in the final form of the book. But our discussion also points to a diachronic dimension of Isa 60–62 as a potential culmination for an earlier edition of the book that included Deutero-Isaiah together with Proto-Isaiah. There are indeed differences between Isa 60–62 and Isa 40–55, which suggests that Isa 60–62 was composed as part of a sixth-century redaction of the book of Isaiah—written at the time of the reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple—that could easily have played a role in the dedication of the new temple. Such a redaction would have played a role in facilitating the transition of Judean authority from the royal house of David to a combination of the Persian monarchy and the Jerusalem priesthood, all under the umbrella of YHWH's role as sovereign monarch of creation. Isaiah 60–62 thereby had a hand in providing the religiopolitical foundations for Jewish life throughout much of the Second Temple period.

33
Jeremiah among the Prophets

1.

One of the great advances of modern scholarship on the prophets was von Rad's recognition that each of the Major Prophets of the Hebrew Bible was based in a distinctive theological tradition that defined its theological message. Isaiah was rooted in the Davidic/Zion tradition, Jeremiah was based in the tradition of Mosaic Torah, and Ezekiel was rooted in the Zadokite priestly tradition.[1] Von Rad did not posit any such foundational theological tradition for the Book of the Twelve Prophets—he followed Protestant tradition in reading the Twelve as twelve discrete prophetic books, but similar proposals might be posed in relation to the Twelve.[2]

A second great advance has now emerged in the early twenty-first century, that is, the concern with intertextuality and the inherently dialogical character of biblical literature. Such work is based in the perspectives of literary theorists, such as Bakhtin, who pointed to the intertextual character of all literature, whether such intertextuality be defined in relation to the deliberate authorial citation of one piece of literature in another, the intertextual relationship between two pieces of literature that are put into relationship by later readers of the texts, or the inherent intertextual relationship among all literature.[3] Levinas refines contemporary

1. Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:33–49, 147–75, 188–219, 220–37, 238–62, 278–300.

2. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, esp. xv–xlii; Sweeney, "Sequence and Interpretation."

3. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981). For

understanding of intertextuality by pointing to the dialogical character of a literature, that is, any literary work may be read in conversation with any other work of literature, whether such dialogue is recognized by later readers or not.[4]

Each prophetic book has its own distinctive outlook, but they address common sets of concerns. This paper focuses on the book of Jeremiah and its intertextual and dialogical relationship with itself and with the other prophetic books. Insofar as Jeremiah appears in two major forms in the Bible, discussion begins with a comparison of the very different MT and LXX forms of the book. Discussion then turns to Jeremiah's dialogue with the other major books, including Isaiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Prophets. Issues include the hermeneutical perspective of each prophetic book, their understandings of the relationship between YHWH and the nations Israel and Judah, the status of the Davidic monarchy, the role of the Jerusalem temple, and the role of foreign nations.

<div align="center">2.</div>

Jeremiah is in dialogue with itself. Jeremiah appears in two very distinctive forms: the MT Hebrew text of Jeremiah (MT Jeremiah) and the LXX Greek text of Jeremiah (LXX Jeremiah).[5] MT Jeremiah is a far more expansive text that is approximately one-eighth longer than the LXX Greek form. The macrostructures of the two forms vary markedly.

The first issue to note is the different form and conceptualization of Jer 1–10 in the MT and LXX versions of the book.[6] MT Jer 1–10 includes major macrostructural markers in MT Jer 1:1–3, 2:1, and 7:1, which demarcate MT Jer 1–6 and 7–10 as the first two major units of the book. MT Jer 1–6 includes four constituent subunits, including the superscription in MT Jer 1:1–3, the commissioning of the prophet in MT Jer 1:4–10, signs concerning

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introductions to intertextuality in the field of biblical studies, see Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality"; Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*; Newsom, *Book of Job*; Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back*.

4. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*; see also Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, John Edward Philips, and David Jobling, eds., *Levinas and Biblical Studies*, SemeiaSt 43 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

5. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Differing Perspectives in the LXX and MT Versions of the Jeremiah 1–10," in *Reading Prophetic Books*, 135–53.

6. Sweeney, "Differing Perspectives."

YHWH's plans to punish the nation if it does not repent in MT Jer 1:11–19, and a lengthy subunit in MT Jer 2–6 that calls on the people to repent.

LXX Jeremiah presents a markedly shorter and different text at two major locations, namely, Jer 2:1–2 and 7:1–2. The shorter text of LXX Jeremiah presents a different understanding of the text—and thus Jer 1–10 as a whole—from MT Jeremiah. LXX Jer 1–10 lacks the major macrostructural markers and other elements of MT Jer 1–10, which points to a major difference, namely, MT Jeremiah is addressed especially to Jerusalem, and it calls on Jerusalem to repent based on experience with Israel and Judah. LXX Jer 1–10, however, is addressed to the entire nation, including Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem in an effort to convince all three to return to YHWH.

Discussion of the textual differences in MT and LXX Jer 1–10 demonstrates their differences in structure and outlook. MT Jer 2:1–2 presents an example of the prophetic word formula, a command spoken by YHWH to the prophet to proclaim to Jerusalem, and an example of the prophetic messenger formula, namely, "And the word of YHWH came to me, saying, Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, Thus says YHWH," followed by the oracular material in MT Jer 2–6 that calls on both Israel and Judah to repent in order to avoid judgment.[7] YHWH's instruction to proclaim these oracles to Jerusalem signals an interest in warning Jerusalem of impending disaster if the prophet's words are not heeded. LXX Jeremiah presents a different understanding. LXX Jer 2:(1–)2 reads simply, "And he said," followed by the sequence of oracles calling for repentance. LXX Jer 2–6 is therefore left without a distinctive identity as a textual block within the larger structure of LXX Jeremiah, and the interest in addressing Jerusalem is absent. Two consequences follow. One is that LXX Jer 2–6 is incorporated structurally into the account of YHWH's word to Jeremiah in LXX Jer 1:11–19 concerning YHWH's threat of judgment against the nation. The other is that the warnings in LXX Jer 2–6 are not directed specifically to Jerusalem, but to the nation at large, including Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem.

The second major feature is the placement of the oracles concerning the nations in each version of the book. MT Jeremiah places the oracles concerning the nations at the end of the book, in MT Jer 46–51, immediately prior to the narrative concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in MT Jer 52. LXX Jeremiah places the oracles concerning the nations immediately following LXX Jer 25:13, which portrays YHWH's cup of wrath from

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7. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Structure and Redaction in Jeremiah 2–6," in *Form and Intertextuality*, 94–108.

which the nations must drink. Furthermore, the order of the nations differs. In MT Jer 46–51, the order is Egypt (MT Jer 46:1–12, 13–28), Philistia (MT Jer 47:1–7), Moab (MT Jer 48:1–47), Ammon (MT Jer 49:1–6), Edom (MT Jer 49:7–22), Damascus (MT Jer 49:23–27), Kedar (MT Jer 49:28–33), Elam (MT Jer 49:34–39), and Babylon (MT Jer 50:1–51:58, 51:59–64). In LXX Jer 25:15–31:44 (MT Jer 46–51) the order is Elam (LXX Jer 25:15–39, MT Jer 49:34–39), Egypt (LXX Jer 26:1–12, 13–28; MT Jer 46:1–12, 46:13–28), Babylon (LXX Jer 27:1–28:58, 28:59–64, MT Jer 50:1–51:58, 51:59–64), Philistia (LXX Jer 29:1–7, MT Jer 47:1–6), Idumea/Edom (LXX Jer 29:8–23, MT Jer 49:7–22), Ammon (LXX Jer 30:1–5, MT Jer 49:1–6), Kedar (LXX Jer 30:6–11, MT Jer 49:28–33), Damascus (LXX Jer 30:12–16, MT Jer 49:23–27), and Moab (LXX Jer 31:1–44, MT Jer 48:1–47).

By placing the oracles concerning the nations at the conclusion of the book, MT Jeremiah presents an understanding that the downfall of the nations that have oppressed Judah, Jerusalem, and Israel will take place at some point following the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem and their restoration, as announced throughout MT Jer 1–45. MT Jer 25:11–14 and 29:10–14 anticipate that the period of punishment and subjugation to Babylon will last for seventy years following the onset of the exile. From the standpoint of MT Jeremiah, restoration would follow afterward, and then the nations that oppressed Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel and were condemned in MT Jer 46–51 would meet their own punishment. The placement of the oracles concerning the nations following LXX Jer 25:13 appears to serve a very different conceptualization of the book. By placing the oracles concerning the nations after those concerned with the punishment of Israel and Judah, proto-LXX Jeremiah anticipates a future judgment against those nations that had oppressed Israel and Judah prior to their restoration. With the anticipated subjugation of the nations announced in the middle of the book, LXX Jeremiah is then free to take up the fate of Jerusalem, including both its anticipated restoration and its actual destruction. It is noteworthy, then, that LXX Jeremiah concludes in LXX Jer 51:31–35 (MT Jer 45:1–5) with the notice that Baruch ben Neriah will write down Jeremiah's words and see great things. Such a notice both anticipates the realization of the scenario laid out in the LXX version of the book and points to Baruch as Jeremiah's visionary successor.[8]

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8. J. Edward Wright, *Baruch ben Neriah: From Biblical Scribe to Apocalyptic Seer* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), esp. 1–39.

The third major feature is the presentation and conceptualization of Davidic kingship in the two versions of Jeremiah. Both versions include Jeremiah's critique of King Jehoiakim in Jer 22 for building a sumptuous palace for himself while ignoring the needs of his people as well as Jeremiah's oracle in Jer 23:1–8, which calls for a righteous Davidic monarch. But whereas MT Jer 33:14–26 presents a second oracle concerned with the house of David, LXX Jer 40 omits this oracle.

Jeremiah's condemnation of Jehoiakim in both versions has implications for the book's understanding of the future of the house of David. Jeremiah is instructed by YHWH to confront King Jehoiakim ben Josiah for building a palace for himself while ignoring righteousness and the needs of his people. As part of his condemnation of Jehoiakim, the prophet cites the example of his brother and predecessor, Shallum, better known as King Jehoahaz ben Josiah, who was deposed by Pharaoh Neco of Egypt so that he might place Jehoiakim on the throne. The prophet laments that Jehoiakim is not righteous like his father, Josiah, and he announces that Jehoiakim will suffer an ignominious death as a result of his actions. The prophet concludes by condemning Jehoiakim's son, Coniah or Jehoiachin, who would be exiled as a result of his father's unworthiness to sit on the throne of David.

Jeremiah 23:1–8 then follows with the prophet's oracle anticipating a righteous monarch of the house of David.[9] He begins by condemning the shepherds, a common metaphor for kings, who let YHWH's flock stray away as a means to signal displeasure with Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin. But he anticipates a future time when a righteous Davidic monarch, to be known as "YHWH is our righteousness," will ascend the throne. Interpreters note that repeated use of the term ṣedeq, "righteousness," and the name yhwh ṣidqēnû, "YHWH is our righteousness," suggests that the oracle anticipates the reign of Jehoiachin's successor, Zedekiah ben Josiah.[10] In any case, the oracle indicates the prophet's commitment to seeing a righteous Davidic monarch on the throne, not his rejection of the Davidic monarchy altogether.

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9. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Jeremiah's Reflection on the Isaian Royal Promise: Jeremiah 23:1–8 in Context," in *Reading Prophetic Literature*, 154–66.

10. E.g., Jack Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, AB 21B (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2004), 164–66; Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 258–59.

The major differences in perspective between the two versions of the book on the issue of Davidic kingship appear in Jer 33.[11] MT Jer 33:14–26 includes a Davidic oracle, but LXX Jer 40 (33) omits this oracle. Insofar as it lacks the second oracle, LXX Jeremiah's viewpoint on the house of David must lie in its presentation of LXX Jer 22:1–23:8, namely, the prophet holds to righteous Davidic kingship, but condemns those who not live up to this ideal. But MT Jeremiah's view is nuanced. Its use of terminology from MT Jer 23:1–8, for example, *shepherds*, *justice*, and *righteousness*, points to its dependence on MT Jer 23:1–8, and its reference to the righteous branch (Heb. *ṣemaḥ ṣədāqâ*) points to its dependence on Isa 11:1–9 as well. But as Goldman's close reading of MT Jer 33:14–26 demonstrates, MT Jer 33:14–26 is not a simple oracle affirming Davidic kingship in Jeremiah, as many interpreters suppose.[12] Goldman demonstrates that the third feminine singular pronoun suffixes in the text of MT Jer 33:16 indicate that the Davidic promise is not assigned to the future David king, but to the city of Jerusalem, namely, "In those days, Judah shall be delivered and Jerusalem shall dwell secure, and this is what she [Jerusalem] shall be called, YHWH is our righteousness." The Davidic promise is granted to Jerusalem, and in verse 18 it is extended to the Levitical priests who will serve in the city as well. When MT Jer 33:14–26 is read within the larger context of the book, especially in relation to MT Jer 23:1–8, it upholds the prophet's commitment to righteous Davidic kingship, but it recognizes that a Davidic king might not sit on the throne. It thereby reads the eternal Davidic covenant in relation to Jerusalem and its Levitical priesthood.

3.

Jeremiah has extensive intertextual relationships with the book of Isaiah, including both author-centered forms of deliberate citation and reader-oriented forms of literary association.

Both forms of Jeremiah are presented generically as a chronicle that presents the "words of Jeremiah" (Heb. *dibrê yirməyāhû*), that is, his oracular words as well as narrative accounts of the events of his lifetime, whereas the book of Isaiah appears as a vision, that is, "the vision of Isaiah" (Heb. *ḥāzôn yəšāyāhû*). The Hebrew/Aramaic term *ḥāzôn*, from the root *ḥzh/*

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11. Sweeney, "Reconceptualization of the Davidic Covenant in the Books of Jeremiah."

12. Goldman, *Prophétie et royauté*, 9–64, esp. 11–12, 12–44.

ḥzy, includes both visual and audial experience and is best understood as perception.[13] Isaiah's vision extends well beyond his lifetime in the late eighth century BCE to include projections of YHWH's actions in relation to Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel in the time of the Achaemenid Persian monarch Cyrus the Great and beyond.

Whereas Jeremiah is a late seventh- and early sixth-century priest from the line of Abiathar, Eli, and Itamar ben Aaron who calls for adherence to Mosaic torah, Isaiah is a royal counselor who calls for adherence to the Davidic/Zion tradition, in which YHWH pledges eternal security for the royal house of David and the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah apparently supported King Josiah's program of religious reform and national restoration and viewed an early form of the book of Isaiah composed in the mid- to late seventh century BCE as a work in which Isaiah looked forward to a righteous Davidic monarch like Isaiah.[14]

Redactional reconstruction of early forms of Jer 2–6 and Jer 30–31 indicates that Jeremiah called on the former Northern Kingdom of Israel to repent and return to YHWH and Jerusalem.[15] But following the early and unexpected death of King Josiah at the hands of Pharaoh Neco of Egypt in 609 BCE, Jeremiah was compelled to rethink his view of Isaiah's earlier work. Jeremiah was forced to conclude that YHWH would not carry out the reunification of Judah and Israel under the rule of a righteous Davidic monarch during the reign of Josiah. Instead, Jerusalem and Judah would also suffer punishment like that of Israel for failing to observe divine torah and would only realize such restoration after a seventy-year period of punishment and exile. The original core of Jer 2:2–4:2, which focused on the return of Israel to Jerusalem and Judah in keeping with Josiah's restoration, was therefore expanded in Jer 2:1, 4:3–6:30 to include the punishment of Judah at the hands of the unnamed "enemy from the north." Indeed, Jeremiah's depiction of the "enemy from the north" as "a nation from afar" in Jer 5:14–19 appears deliberately to draw on Isaiah's depiction of the approaching Assyrian army in Isa 5:25–30. Likewise, Jeremiah's references to a foolish people without intelligence, who have eyes but cannot see and ears but cannot hear," in Jer 5:21 appears to draw

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13. See Jepsen, "*ḥāzâ*."
14. Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 208–55.
15. Sweeney, "Structure and Redaction"; Marvin A. Sweeney, "Jeremiah 30–31 and King Josiah's Program of National Restoration and Religious Reform," in *Form and Intertextuality*, 109–22.

on Isaiah's commission account in Isa 6, in which YHWH instructs the prophet to render the people blind, deaf, and dumb so that they will not repent and thereby undermine YHWH's purpose to be recognized as the true G-d throughout all creation. Jeremiah 30–31 originally comprised only oracles beginning with the formula "Thus says YHWH" that called on Israel to return to Jerusalem, again in keeping with Josiah's projected restoration, but the passage was expanded with oracles introduced by the formula "Behold, the days are coming" that envisioned the restoration of both Israel and Judah.

Judah's flagging fortunes following the death of Josiah and Jeremiah's theological worldview combine in the prophet's decision to question one of the fundamental tenets of Isaiah's theological worldview, the role of the Jerusalem temple as a symbol of YHWH's commitment to the eternal protection of the city of Jerusalem. Whereas Isaiah chastised King Ahaz ben Jotham of Judah for failing to believe in YHWH's promises of eternal protection for Jerusalem and the house of David in Isa 7:1–9:6,[16] Jer 7–10 presents YHWH's instructions to Jeremiah to stand in the gates of the Jerusalem temple and to argue that the temple alone would not ensure the nation's security. As a priest, Jeremiah would stand watch at the temple as a means to ensure the sanctity of those who would enter its holy precincts (see Pss 15, 24). YHWH instructs Jeremiah to remind the people that adherence to YHWH's torah is the key to their security. Again, as a priest, the teaching of YHWH's torah is one of his most important tasks (Lev 10:10–11). YHWH therefore instructs Jeremiah to cite elements from the Ten Commandments in order to underscore the point, namely, "Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely and burn incense to Baal and go after other gods whom you do not know, and come before Me in this house upon which My Name is called and say, 'We are saved!' in order to commit all these abominations?" YHWH further instructs Jeremiah to remind the people of his ancestral sanctuary at Shiloh, which was destroyed by the Philistines prior to the monarchic period. If Shiloh could be destroyed, so could Jerusalem.

Jeremiah is able to question the validity of Isaiah's prophecy elsewhere as well.[17] At the time when King Jehoiakim of Judah was planning revolt against the Babylonian Empire, Jeremiah demonstrated in the streets of

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16. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 143–88.

17. Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Truth in True and False Prophecy," in *Form and Intertextuality*, 78–93.

Jerusalem by walking about with a yoke on his neck to symbolize his view that Judah must submit to the yoke of Babylon or suffer severe consequences. Jeremiah was confronted by the prophet Hananiah, who took the yoke from Jeremiah's neck and broke it, declaring that YHWH would soon break the yoke of Babylon and ensure the freedom of Jerusalem and Judah. Such a message was consistent with that of Isaiah a century earlier, that is, YHWH would ensure the security of Jerusalem and the house of David. When Jeremiah later returned with a yoke of iron on his neck that could not be so easily broken, he reiterated his message, namely, only adherence to YHWH's expectations would protect the nation. Isaiah's earlier promises of divine protection had run their course and must now be viewed as false prophecy. To underscore and validate Jeremiah's point, Hananiah drops dead at the end of Jer 28, just as the Assyrian king Sennacherib was killed by his own sons in the temple of his own god at the end of Isa 36–37, following his expressions of defiance against YHWH, the G–d of Israel and all creation. Jeremiah's letter to the exiles follows in Jer 29, calling on the exiles to build houses, bear children, and prepare for a seventy-year exile. Prophets who speak otherwise—like Isaiah did a century before—must be false prophets.

Like Isaiah, Jeremiah anticipates a righteous Davidic monarch. As a royal counselor grounded in the Davidic/Zion tradition, Isaiah presents oracles in Isa 9:1–6, 11:1–16, and 32:1–8 that state clearly his view that YHWH would restore a righteous Davidic monarch to the Jerusalem throne. Jeremiah's own royal oracle in Jer 23:1–8 appears to draw on the language of Isaiah's royal oracles, particularly in Isa 11:1–16, in an effort to portray YHWH's righteous Davidic monarch in his own time. The emphasis on the king's righteousness (*ṣedeq*) appears to anticipate Zedekiah ben Josiah, who ascended the throne in 597 BCE following the death of Jehoiakim ben Josiah and the deportation of his son Jehoiachin to Babylon.

Perhaps an earlier form of the royal oracle in Jer 23:1–8 presumed King Josiah of Judah as YHWH's righteous monarch, but the death of Jehoiakim, the exile of Jehoiachin, and the Babylonian appointment of Zedekiah as a puppet king undermine any confidence in the true rise of a righteous Davidic monarch in the aftermath of the Babylonian suppression of Judah following their defeat of Egypt in 605 BCE. Such doubts might have prompted the placement of Jeremiah's oracle concerning false prophecy in Jer 23:9–40 immediately following the royal oracle; with the Babylonian takeover of Judah, how could any prophecy concerning the rise of a righteous Davidic monarch ring true?

The second instance of a royal oracle in MT Jer 33:14–26 reformulates the anticipation of a righteous Davidic monarch. The feminine singular pronouns in MT Jer 33:19 indicate that MT Jer 33:14–26 shifts YHWH's promise of eternal security from the Davidic king to the city of Jerusalem and the Levitical priests who serve in the Jerusalem temple. LXX Jer 40/33 includes no such text and thereby indicates its continuing adherence to the ideal of a righteous Davidic king. But the reticence to hold to YHWH's eternal promise to the house of David in MT Jeremiah finds a dialogue partner in the book of Isaiah once again. Although the first portion of Isaiah in Isa 1–33 includes three royal oracles, in Isa 9:1–6, 11:1–16, and 32:1–8, the second part of the book of Isaiah corresponds to MT Jeremiah by calling for a shift in thinking concerning YHWH's promise to the house of David. Second Isaiah, an anonymous prophet who spoke in the late sixth century at the end of the Babylonian exile and the beginning of the reign of the Achaemenid Persian monarch Cyrus the Great, declares that Cyrus—and not an heir to the house of David—will be YHWH's chosen messiah and temple builder in Isa 44:28 and 45:1.[18] The anonymous prophet also declares that YHWH's eternal Davidic promise will not be assigned to the house of David per se, but to all Israel, in Isa 55. By making such a shift, our anonymous Isaian prophet recognizes that no Davidic king will sit on the throne in Jerusalem following the Persian-period restoration, but instead declares that YHWH's restoration of Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel constitutes the true fulfillment of YHWH's eternal promise to the house of David. One of the anonymous prophets of Isa 56–66, collectively known as Third Isaiah, takes the issue a step further by stating in Isa 66 that YHWH must be recognized as the true and eternal king of Israel and all creation, but no Davidic monarch appears in the offing.

Ultimately, Jeremiah's portrayal of the punishment of both Israel and Judah in Jer 2–6 and the restoration of both Israel and Judah to Jerusalem in Jer 30–31 anticipate Second Isaiah's visions of Israel's return to Jerusalem in Isa 40–55, and the suffering of both Jerusalem/Judah and Jeremiah likewise anticipate the suffering servant of Isa 52:13–53:12 prior to the restoration.[19]

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18. Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, 108–57; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, AB 19A (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 243–55.

19. See esp. Sommer, *Prophet Reads Scripture*, 32–72.

4.

The books of Jeremiah are closely related to the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel was a Zadokite priest from the line of Aaron, Eleazar, and Phineas who was preparing to serve in the Jerusalem temple when he was exiled to Babylonia together with King Jehoiachin ben Jehoiakim of Judah following Jehoiakim's failed revolt in 598–597 BCE.[20] He was a younger contemporary of Jeremiah, having been born in 522 BCE at the outset of King Josiah's religious reform and national restoration beginning in the eighteenth year of his reign (2 Kgs 22:3; cf. 2 Chr 34:8). Ezekiel was never ordained as a priest due to his exile from Jerusalem. During the fifth year of his exile, in 592 BCE, when he reached the age of thirty, the year in which a prospective young Zadokite would be ordained for service at the temple altar, Ezekiel experienced a divine vision in which he was commissioned to serve as a visionary prophet of YHWH (Ezek 1–3).

Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel is formulated as a chronicle of the prophet's career. Ezekiel's book differs from those of Jeremiah. Rather than with a superscription like that of Jer 1:1–3, the book of Ezekiel begins with a narrative account in Ezek 1:1–3 that identifies the prophet, the date of his inaugural vision, and other information concerning his background. The structure of the book of Ezekiel proceeds with a sequence of chronological formulae in Ezek 1:1; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; 33:21; and 40:1, which traces the chronology of the prophet's career for twenty years from the age of thirty in the fifth year of his exile (Ezek 1:1–2) through the age of fifty in the twenty-year of his exile (Ezek 40:1), which corresponds to the active years of a Zadokite priest from the time of his initial ordination at the age of thirty through his fiftieth year, when he would retire from active service.[21] Although Ezek 29:17 refers to Ezekiel's twenty-seventh year of exile, when he would have turned fifty-two, most interpreters maintain that this is a redactional update to the text insofar as Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre commenced in 585 BCE, but the city only surrendered thirteen years later, in 570 BCE.[22] Overall,

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20. Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel*, 9–19.

21. Sweeney, "Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest"; Tyler D. Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel*, FAT 2/43 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

22. Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, AB 22A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 616–18; Paul Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary*, LHBOTS 482 (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 182; Steven Tuell, *Ezekiel*, NIBCOT (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 206.

Ezekiel's career as a visionary prophet of YHWH corresponds to the years in which he would have served actively as a priest in the Jerusalem temple had he not been exiled.

Ezekiel would have been a supporter of King Josiah's religious reform and national restoration. Having been born in 522 BCE, at the outset of Josiah's reform, Ezekiel would have been educated to serve in the Jerusalem temple, the centerpiece of Josiah's reform program. But with the early death of Josiah at the hands of Pharaoh Neco of Egypt, Ezekiel, like his older colleague Jeremiah, would have had to rethink his stance on Josiah's program, especially after he was exiled to Babylonia at the age of twenty-five in 597 BCE. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel has a commitment to divine torah as a basis for the relationship between YHWH and Israel, but unlike Jeremiah, Ezekiel would view the Jerusalem temple as the holy center of Israel and all creation that would serve as the source of divine revelation in the world. Whereas Jeremiah viewed the temple as unable to ensure the nation's security, Ezekiel viewed the temple as the sacred center of the relationship between YHWH and Israel. When the Babylonians took control of Jerusalem in 597 BCE, they apparently erected a stela in the courtyard of the temple likely commemorating Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian god Marduk for the victory, which Ezekiel would have called "the infuriating image that provokes anger" (Ezek 8:3; Heb. *semel haqqin'â hammagneh*) and viewed as a desecration of the site. Ezekiel's vision of the desecration of the temple and YHWH's departure from the site in Ezek 8–11 includes other indications of the temple's desecration as well, such as the men led by Jaazaniah ben Shaphan worshiping the sun to the east, women mourning for the Babylonian god Tammuz, and foul imagery that replaced the imagery of the garden of Eden in the temple interior, according to Ezekiel's vision.[23] It is not clear that these events actually took place, insofar as they appear as part of Ezekiel's visionary experience, but it is noteworthy that Jaazaniah ben Shaphan, a son of one of Josiah's officers and a member of the same family that gave Jeremiah such important support throughout his career, leads the men in worshiping the sun. Jaazaniah's presence in this vision suggests that Ezekiel viewed the Shaphan family and a priest such as Jeremiah, who came from a secondary priestly line, as among those who contributed to the temple's desecration.

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23. Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Destruction of Jerusalem as Purification in Ezekiel 8–11," in *Form and Intertextuality*, 144–55; Sweeney, *Ezekiel*, 56.

In Ezekiel's view, the desecration of the temple calls for its purging and resanctification, and that is precisely what the book of Ezekiel portrays. Ezekiel is compelled to prepare for a journey through the wilderness as he is exiled to Babylon, thereby reversing the tradition of Israel's journey from Egypt through the wilderness to the promised land (Ezek 12).[24] Like Jeremiah (Jer 2), he recalls Israel's rebellion in the wilderness as an act in which Israel, YHWH's bride, abandoned YHWH to pursue other lovers (Ezek 16, 20). Ezekiel does not look to past generations to explain Jerusalem's present punishment. Jeremiah quotes the proverb, "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the son's teeth are set on edge," in Jer 31:29–30 as an example of the present attitude that Judah suffers due to the sins of its ancestors, an attitude that will be reversed when the restoration takes place. In Ezek 18:2, Ezekiel quotes the same proverb to demonstrate his view of moral causation, that is, that the current generation suffers for its own sins, not for those of its ancestors.[25] He considers the experiences of several generations of men who commit transgression against YHWH versus those who observe YHWH's torah and concludes that those who commit transgressions suffer the consequences of their action, whereas those who observe YHWH's expectation are held to be innocent and therefore do not suffer. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel agree that such a view constitutes the future ideal of Israelite ethics.

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel agree that YHWH will punish nations, but their view as to why this is the case differs. Jeremiah calls for the punishment of the nations that oppress Israel and Judah, including Babylon, which may signal the Persian Empire in MT Jeremiah. Ezekiel views the nations not only as oppressors of Israel, but as desecrators of creation as well. He does not include Babylon in his oracles against the nations in Ezek 25–32, but he does see the deaths that they have brought about as a desecration of the land on which the restored temple will one day stand.[26] In Ezekiel's view, the land must be purified of death before the

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24. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Ezekiel's Conceptualization of the Exile in Intertextual Perspective," *HBAI* 1 (2012): 154–72, repr. as ch. 35 in this volume.

25. Sweeney, *Ezekiel*, 92–97; contra Gordon Matties, *Ezekiel 18 and the Rhetoric of Moral Discourse*, SBLDS 126 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), who like many interpreters maintains that Ezekiel speaks about individual rather than generational responsibility.

26. Sweeney, *Ezekiel*, 179–93.

restored temple is built.[27] In Ezek 37:1–14, he has a vision of the Valley of Dry Bones, apparently viewing a battlefield where the dead had been left exposed to desecrate the land.[28] Ezekiel envisions the restoration of these corpses as sinews and flesh cover the bones so that these dead might live and render the land pure once again. In Ezek 38–39, Ezekiel sees the land desecrated by the corpses of the army of Gog of Magog.[29] When the animals of creation devour the corpses of the dead and the rest are burned by fire, the land is purified from death so that the temple might be built.

Ezekiel is a true adherent of Josiah's reform. Jeremiah initially supported the reform as a means to return Israel to Judah and place both the temple and the house of David at the center of a reunited Israel.[30] Jeremiah recognized that Jerusalem and Judah would also suffer punishment before the process was complete, but he gives little role to the Jerusalem temple and focuses instead on Jerusalem and YHWH's torah as his focal points for restoration. Ezekiel agrees with Jeremiah that the process would include judgment against Jerusalem, but he envisions the rebuilding of the temple in ideal form together with the restoration of all twelve tribes of Israel around the temple and the renewal of creation as well as the focal points of his view of the ultimate outcome of Josiah's efforts in his final vision in Ezek 40–48.[31] The restored temple is like none that is ever seen in Jewish history (Ezek 40–42); it corresponds neither to Solomon's temple nor to the Second Temple, and it has therefore been identified as the future third temple in rabbinic understanding of Ezekiel's vision.[32] The temple will be the site of renewed worship of Israel and observance of YHWH's torah (Ezek 43–46). Whereas the two versions of Jeremiah disagree about the future of the Davidic promise, Ezekiel is certain that there will be a Davidic king who will lead the people in coming to the temple to worship

27. Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Assertion of Divine Power in Ezekiel 33:21–39:29," in *Form and Intertextuality*, 156–72.

28. Sweeney, *Ezekiel*, 179–83.

29. Sweeney, *Ezekiel*, 186–93.

30. Sweeney, "Royal Oracle in Ezekiel 37:15–28."

31. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Form and Coherence in Ezekiel's Temple Vision," in *Reading Prophetic Books*, 233–50.

32. See S. Olam Rab. 26.51–52, which identifies Ezekiel's temple as "the future temple to come [Heb. *habáyit lāʿātîd habbāʾâ*]," and the commentaries of Rashi and Radaq, who employ the same language. See Samuel Mirsky, *Midrash Seder Olam: A Photostatic Reproduction of Ber Ratner's Edition of the Text, Notes and Introduction* (Brooklyn, NY: Moznaim, 1998), 20.

YHWH (Ezek 45). Although Ezekiel typically refers to the Davidic king as a "prince" (Heb. *nāśî'*) throughout the book, he refers to the future king of a reunited Israel and Judah as *melek*, "king," in Ezek 37:15–28 (esp. v. 24; cf. Ezek 43:7). When the temple is restored, the waters that flow from it will render the Dead Sea as a fertile lake lined with luscious fruit trees and filled with fish. Ezekiel sees the restoration of the temple, a reunited Israel, and the leading role of the house of David as the goals of YHWH's actions in purging the temple, just as Josiah had envisioned such a scenario as the goals of his own program of reform and restoration.

5.

The Book of the Twelve Prophets constitutes a very special case among the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible insofar as it simultaneously constitutes a single book and a collection of twelve individual books that comprise the whole.[33]

Like Jeremiah, the Book of the Twelve appears in two different forms in the MT Hebrew version of the book and the LXX Greek version.[34] Each version presents a different order of books. The MT order includes Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. There are many different orders within the LXX manuscript tradition, although the order in Codex Vaticanus, the earliest complete Greek version of the Bible, has become the basis by which interpreters recognize the LXX order, which includes Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Other orders appear among the Dead Sea Scrolls and other versions, which raises questions concerning any recognized order of books, although the Wadi Murrabbaʿat Hebrew manuscript of

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33. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, xv–xliii.

34. Sweeney, "Sequence and Interpretation." Many contemporary scholars, e.g., James D. Nogalski, view the Book of the Twelve as a heavily edited composition rather than as an ordered assemblage of discrete books, but they ignore the evidence of the Septuagint and its order. See Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 2 vols., SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011). For a selection of current scholarship on the Book of the Twelve, see Albertz, Nogalski, and Wöhrle, *Perspectives on the Formation*. On the interrelationship between synchronic and diachronic readings of the Book of the Twelve, see now Daniel C. Timmer, *The Non-Israelite Nations in the Book of the Twelve: Thematic Coherence and the Diachronic-Synchronic Relationship in the Minor Prophets*, BibInt 135 (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

the Twelve and the Nahal Hever Greek manuscript of the Twelve from the Judean wilderness both present the same order as the MT.[35] Thus the MT order is very stable, even as the LXX order is often more fluid.

Many interpreters maintain that the order of the books in either sequence is historical, but closer examination of the books demonstrates that this is "not entirely true. Joel and Obadiah might be read as ninth-century prophets, and the historical order of the eighth-century prophets should be Amos, Hosea, and Micah. The order of the books in both versions appears to be determined by a concern with the paradigm of a metaphorical marriage between YHWH and Israel as the basis for the covenant in Hosea and Malachi. After Hosea, the MT version of the book appears to give special concern to Jerusalem throughout, insofar as it places Joel after Hosea and Obadiah after Amos, both of which take up Jerusalem. The LXX order appears instead to give special attention to the fate of the Northern Kingdom of Israel as a paradigm for that of Jerusalem and Judah, insofar as it places Hosea, Amos, and Micah first, all of which are concerned primarily with northern Israel, whereas the later books in the sequence give primary attention to Jerusalem and Judah. The concern with Jerusalem in the MT version of the Book of the Twelve is analogous to that of MT Jeremiah, and the concern with northern Israel in the LXX version of the Book of the Twelve is analogous to that of LXX Jeremiah.

Both forms of the book of Jeremiah are in intertextual dialogue with the two forms of the Book of the Twelve Prophets. Both forms of Jeremiah are fundamentally concerned with the observance of YHWH's torah by both Israel and Judah, and both forms also begin in Jer 2–6 with a portrayal of Israel as the wayward bride of YHWH who pursued other gods or other lovers in the wilderness. The appeal to Israel to return to YHWH by observing YHWH's torah is apparent in both. Likewise, both versions of the Twelve begin with Hosea's use of the marriage metaphor to portray Gomer's alleged abandonment of her husband, Hosea, as a metaphor for Israel's alleged abandonment of her husband YHWH. The use of this metaphor in Hosea is more political than religious in orientation insofar as the prophet apparently has Israel's relationship with Assyria and Egypt in mind as the basis for his understanding that Israel had abandoned YHWH. Both version of the Twelve likewise conclude with Malachi, in

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35. Ben Zvi, "Twelve Prophetic Books." For discussion of the textual versions, see esp. Jones, *Formation of the Book of the Twelve.*

which YHWH declares abhorrence of divorce in Mal 2:10–17 and calls for Israel's return to the observance of Mosaic torah in Mal 3:22.

There are other similarities. Both forms of Jeremiah make use of the symbolic vision report in Jer 1:11–12, 13–19; and 24:1–10, in which YHWH shows the prophet a vision and then asks him what he sees in an effort to elicit an interpretation.[36] In each case, Jeremiah interprets the almond rod (Heb. *šāqēd*) as a pun that signifies that YHWH is watching (Heb. *šōqēd*) the divine word to perform it; the boiling pot poured out from the north as a sign of the impending invasion from the north; and the differentiation between good and bad figs presented at the altar as metaphor for the good and the bad among the exiles who will ultimately be restored to the land or who will suffer punishment. Similar forms are in use by Amos in his vision sequence in Amos 7–9 to signal the use of plumb line to indicate that Israel had measured up to YHWH's expectations in Amos 7:7–9 and a basket of summer fruit (Heb. *qāyiṣ*) to signify that the end (Heb. *qēṣ*) had come upon Israel in Amos 8:1–3. Zechariah also uses the form in the vision sequence of Zech 1–6 to indicate that the golden menorah in the new temple signifies the anointed king and the anointed priest in Zech 4 and the coming punishment of Babylon on the plain of Shinar in Zech 5. Jeremiah 26 cites Micah's announcement that Jerusalem would fall in Mic 3:12 during Jeremiah's trial for sedition, and Jeremiah's oracle against Edom in Jer 49:7–22 cites Obad 1–4, 5–6, and 10–16 to denounce the Edomites for their role in ravaging Judah and Jerusalem. Like Jeremiah, Nahum calls for the downfall of Israel's oppressor, Assyria, but unlike Jeremiah, who can only anticipate Babylon's downfall in Jer 50–51, Nahum actually gets to see it.

There are differences as well. Both versions of Jeremiah view the temple as far less important than YHWH's torah to the relationship between YHWH and Israel/Judah. But the Book of the Twelve gives special attention to the temple in Joel, Obadiah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Joel envisions YHWH's defense of Jerusalem from the attacking nations. Obadiah accuses the Edomites of playing a role in the desecration of the temple during the Babylonian assault. Habakkuk may well be a temple priest who stands his watch while waiting for YHWH to defeat Judah's oppressors. Zephaniah calls for the nation's recognition of

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36. Susan Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision in Biblical Tradition*, HSM 30 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983).

the sanctity of the temple together with the observance of YHWH's torah. Haggai sees the rebuilt temple as a sign that YHWH will overthrow the nations and raise a new king in Jerusalem. Zechariah employs the imagery of the rebuilding temple throughout his visions in Zech 1–6 to signify the restoration of the nation, and the apocalyptic war against the nations in Zech 12–14 culminates with their recognition of YHWH at the Jerusalem temple. Malachi calls for the people to support the temple together with observance of YHWH's torah. And whereas Jeremiah provides a full portrayal of the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the nation, the Book of the Twelve, like Isaiah, skips over this issue in moving from Zephaniah, who threatens exile, to Haggai, who portrays the implications of building the new temple at the time of the initial return under Zerubbabel and Joshua ben Jehozadak.

The portrayal of the monarchy is a key issue. There are differences between the two versions of Jeremiah in their understanding of the future of the Davidic monarchy. Whereas LXX Jeremiah anticipates the rise of a righteous Davidic monarch in LXX Jer 23:1–8, MT Jeremiah reassigns the Davidic covenant to Jerusalem and the Levitical priesthood in MT Jer 33:14–26. Both versions of the Book of the Twelve show some ambiguity in portraying the high priest Joshua ben Jehozadak crowned and sitting on the throne seemingly reserved for the Davidic figure, Zerubbabel ben Shealtiel, in Zech 6. Otherwise, both versions of the Book of the Twelve anticipate a Davidic monarch who will serve as YHWH's regent in the future. Hosea 3:1–5 anticipates a united Israel and Judah under the rule of a Davidic monarch. Amos calls for the restoration of the fallen booth of David in Amos 9:11–15. Haggai declares Zerubbabel to be YHWH's signet ring, a metaphorical statement concerning his role as YHWH's regent, in Hag 2:20–24. Zechariah anticipates that YHWH's apocalyptic war against the nations that oppress Israel will be led by the future Davidic monarch, which in turn will lead to the nations' recognition of YHWH at the Jerusalem temple. Both forms of the Book of the Twelve appear to be in agreement with LXX Jeremiah when it comes to the question of Davidic kingship.

6.

Jeremiah is in dialogue with itself and with the other prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible. The dialogue may be deliberate—in the case of authorial citation of other prophetic books—or not, in the case of literary

association due to the placement of Jeremiah together with the other pro-
phetic books in the biblical canon. Sometimes Jeremiah agrees with the
other prophets, and sometimes there is substantial disagreement. Some
might see such disagreement as problematic insofar as it undermines the
notion of a uniform theological viewpoint throughout the biblical canon.
But such disagreement must be seen as a desideratum insofar as it allows
readers to see that there are a variety of standpoints within the canon
itself as well as among the readers of the Bible, who so frequently disagree
among themselves as to the correct understanding of the Bible. Such vari-
ety of viewpoints brings us closer to an understanding of the divine, who
cannot be limited in relation to human perception, and of human com-
munities themselves, who in reading the Bible and especially the Prophets
according to their various standpoints allow us to see dimensions of G-d
and the Prophets that we otherwise might not see. Our challenge, then, is
to learn to listen to the variety of viewpoints expressed in Jeremiah and
the other prophets as well as within and among the communities that
read them in order that we might better understand the messages that
these books convey.

34

The Ezekiel That G-d Creates

1.

Many would affirm the view of Paul Joyce and others concerning the radical theocentricity of the book of Ezekiel.[1] As the many examples of the proof or recognition formula in the book, "and you/they shall know that I am YHWH," indicate, the book focuses on YHWH's actions in the world as proof of YHWH's role as sovereign creator of the world. I affirm this view, but I also recognize, from the standpoint of the book itself, that YHWH has created or prepared Ezekiel for his role as visionary prophet of the exile who would make known YHWH's actions in the world as sovereign creator. I therefore would like to focus on the Ezekiel that G-d creates, or the radical and complementary Ezekiel-centricity of the book, as a basis for understanding the theological premises of the book. Ezekiel is a Zadokite priest and visionary prophet of the exile who was born and raised in the context of King Josiah's program of reform and national restoration and who articulated the goals of Josiah's program of reform and restoration in the changed circumstances of the Babylonian exile.[2]

2.

The book of Ezekiel presents the visions and oracles of Ezekiel ben Buzi, who was a Judean priest and prophet exiled to Babylonia in 597 BCE

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1. Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, JSOTSup 51 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 89–105; Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 27–31.

2. Sweeney, "Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest"; Sweeney, *Reading Ezekiel*.

together with King Jehoiachin ben Jehoiakim as part of the first exile by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Ezekiel was a priest of the line of Zadok who was trained to serve at the altar of the Jerusalem temple during the last years of the Judean monarchy. The initial reference in Ezek 1:1 to his inaugural vision "in the thirtieth year," that is, his thirtieth year, indicates that he was born in 622 BCE, or the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, the year that 2 Kgs 22:3 and 2 Chr 34:8 indicate that King Josiah began his temple purification. The book of Ezekiel asserts that in his thirtieth year, that is, the fifth year of Jehoiachin's exile, or 592 BCE, Ezekiel saw visions of G-d, which marked the beginning of his new career as a visionary prophet of YHWH.

Ezekiel's visions include a vision of YHWH's throne chariot in Ezek 1–3 in which he is commissioned to serve as YHWH's prophet, a vision in Ezek 8–11 of YHWH's decision to destroy the city of Jerusalem and to kill or exile its population, and a vision of the new temple in Ezek 40–48, which portends a new temple structure in Jerusalem, a renewed and reconstituted twelve tribes of Israel, and a restored creation.[3] Ezekiel's visions are characterized by bizarre imagery and concepts, such as the four cherubim who bear YHWH's throne chariot through the heavens, each of whom has a body of burnished bronze, the feet of cattle, three sets of wings, and four faces, which represent four aspects of the divine character. His vision of the restoration of the dry bones in Ezek 37:1–14 precedes an oracle in Ezek 37:15–28 that envisions the reunification of northern Israel and southern Judah ruled by a Davidic king and gathered around the Jerusalem temple. His vision of the restored temple in Ezek 40–48 differs markedly from what is known of the First Temple, built by King Solomon ben David, and the Second Temple, built at the beginning of the Persian period. The book of Ezekiel attempts to interpret the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Jerusalem temple, the Babylonian exile, and the future restoration of Israel, Jerusalem, and the temple as an act of YHWH designed to purge Jerusalem, the temple, Israel, and creation at large as a basis for restoring a new creation with Jerusalem, the temple, and Israel at its center.

The book of Ezekiel is organized according to its introductory chronological formulas, which begin in Ezek 1:1–3 and continue throughout the

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3. Sweeney, "Ezekiel's Debate with Isaiah"; Sweeney, "Destruction of Jerusalem"; Sweeney, "Form and Coherence."

book. Ezekiel 1:1–3 dates Ezekiel's inaugural vision to the fifth day of the fourth month of the thirtieth year. The significance of the thirtieth year is left unexplained, although verse 2 indicates that it is to be identified with the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah, which would be circa 592 BCE. Subsequent chronological introductions appear in Ezek 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; 33:21; and 40:1. The sequence of dates given in these formulas indicates a twenty-year period for the presentation of Ezekiel's oracles from the fifth year of Jehoiachin's exile, in 592 BCE, according to Ezek 1:1–3, through the twenty-fifth year of his exile, in 572 BCE, according to Ezek 40:1. An exception to this sequence appears in Ezek 29:17, which refers to Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre in the twenty-seventh year, that is, in 570 BCE. Interpreters have pointed out, however, that Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre lasted for an unanticipated lengthy period, but it actually began shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in 587/586 BCE, which would correspond to the tenth or the eleventh year of Jehoiachin's exile in keeping with the preceding formula in Ezek 29:1 and the following formula in Ezek 30:20.[4] Interpreters posit that Ezekiel himself may have changed the date following the successful conclusion of Nebuchadnezzar's siege by 570 BCE.[5]

The twenty-year chronology points to the significance of the reference to the thirtieth year in Ezek 1:1–3. Numbers 4:3, 23, and 30 specify that priests who are descended from Kohath, the ancestor of the high priest Aaron, are to serve in the tent of meeting, that is, the precursor of the holy of holies of the temple, from the age of thirty until the age of fifty. Numbers 8:25 specifies that all other Levites who serve in support of the tent of meeting serve from the age of twenty-five until the age of fifty. Insofar as Ezekiel is a Zadokite priest, he is born and trained to serve in the temple itself, whereas the Levites would only serve in support roles and would not enter the most holy precincts of the temple. As a Zadokite priest, Ezekiel would be active from the age of thirty until retirement at the age of fifty, that is, the span of years from his initial vision in the thirtieth year, that is, his thirtieth birthday in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile, until his fiftieth year, which would correspond to the twenty-fifth year of Jehoiachin's exile. The chronological time span of the book from chapter

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4. H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre from the Beginning of the Second Millennium B.C.E. until the Fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 538 B.C.E.* (Jerusalem: Schocken Institute, 1973), 295–347; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, 614–18.

5. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, 618.

1 through chapters 40–48 corresponds to the years of active service that Ezekiel would expect as a Zadokite priest at the temple.

Other features of Ezekiel's experience support this contention. Ezekiel was raised for service in the Jerusalem temple, but once he was exiled in 597 BCE, at the age of twenty-five, he would never be able to do so. As a Zadokite priest, he would have been ordained for service in the temple in a special seven-day ritual that corresponded to the dedication of the temple altar. The ceremony is described in Exod 29, Lev 8, and Num 8. The prospective priests are ordained over a course of seven days in which the appropriate offerings are made for them at the temple altar as they go through the transition from their former, unconsecrated status to their new status as holy priests of the temple. At the conclusion of the seven-day period, the priests are then considered holy and are able to present offerings at the temple. We do not know all of the details of the consecration, but Samuel's consecration as a priest as presented in 1 Sam 3 entails a visionary experience of YHWH in which the young Samuel hears YHWH calling him to divine service. Ezekiel's visionary experience on the banks of the Chebar Canal would qualify as such a visionary experience calling him to divine service, and its duration of seven days, in which he is silent, would correspond to the seven-day ordination period described in Exod 29, Lev 8, and Num 8. Ezekiel could not serve as a holy priest of YHWH in a foreign land outside the Jerusalem temple. Instead, he experiences a different sort of seven-day revelatory experience analogous to that of priestly ordination that enables him to serve as a visionary prophet of YHWH in Babylonia for the same thirty-year period that he would have served as a temple priest.

The sequence of chronological statements in Ezekiel identify and introduce the units that constitute the formal literary structure of the book of Ezekiel from Ezekiel's thirtieth until his fiftieth year. Ironically, they present a sequence of events over his professional lifetime that would enable him to oversee the purging of the profaned Jerusalem temple in Ezek 8–11 through the projected restoration of a new, purified, holy temple that would take its place in Ezek 40–48. The following diagram presents the formal structure of the book:

Ezekiel's Visions concerning the Purge of Jerusalem

3.

The interest in presenting the Zadokite priest Ezekiel as a visionary prophet who oversees the purge of Jerusalem points to key theological dimensions of the book of Ezekiel.

The Jerusalem temple was the holy center of creation.[6] Proper maintenance of the temple's sanctity aided in securing the welfare of Israel or Judah in particular and the world of creation at large. YHWH is the creator, and the temple serves as a symbol for the sanctity and stability of creation. The morning service of the temple symbolizes creation itself. It takes place at the break of dawn, when the sun shines over the Transjordanian mountain ranges and illumines the interior of the temple, which faces east, to reveal the various features of its construction to emulate the role of light as the first element in the order of creation as portrayed in Gen 1. The Genesis narrative makes it clear that YHWH will act against creation if the sanctity of creation is not maintained. YHWH unleashes a flood to destroy creation because the shedding of blood has

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6. See esp. Levenson, "Temple and the World"; Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*.

corrupted the sanctity of creation, and he makes a covenant with human-ity in the aftermath of the flood that specifies the means by which blood, considered holy because it is the source of life, may be shed (Gen 6–9). Consequently, the temple serves as a means to give expression to the sanctity of creation. Blood is shed there in the context of liturgical wor-ship of YHWH when animal offerings are presented to honor YHWH and to provide meat for human beings to eat. The holy context in which such offerings are made is meant to limit human violence, that is, by limiting the types of animals that may be offered and by circumscrib-ing the circumstances in which such offerings are made. Special care is given to the treatment of blood, which conveys the life of the animal and is thereby considered holy. Bloodshed must be limited and blood must be returned to the ground, and the temple ritual is designed to ensure that blood—and therefore the holiness of life—is properly treated. The improper shedding of blood defiles the temple—and creation itself—and requires that the temple and creation be purged or resanctified following such defilement.

Other elements are also involved. The proper function of the temple liturgy is to symbolize and establish the holiness of the temple and to sanc-tify the relationship between Israel and YHWH—and thus of the world at large. Time is sacred in Judaism, and the observance of sacred time, the Shabbat or Sabbath on every seventh day (Saturday) and the holi-days, that is, Rosh Hashanah (the New Year), Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), Sukkot (Booths or Tabernacles), Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Weeks or Pentecost), and other observances, are key to acknowledg-ing and preserving the sacred order of creation. But the sanctity of the temple and the creation that it represents is not only expressed in ritual terms; it is expressed in moral terms as well. Ancient Judean religion (and modern Judaism) require the observance of YHWH's moral laws as well as YHWH's ritual laws that appear throughout the Torah or Pentateuch. Leviticus 19 is exemplary in this regard because of the manner in which it combines ritual and moral requirements for human beings. Indeed, the entrance liturgies in Pss 15 and 24 make the moral imperative clear by stating that those who would enter the temple precincts must be persons who have observed YHWH's commands—ritual and moral. In the view of the Zadokite priesthood—and Ezekiel—failure to observe YHWH's moral commands defiles the temple and creation just as much as the fail-ure to observe the ritual commands. When the temple is defiled, it must be purged or purified to restore its sanctity and the sanctity of creation.

Examples of temple reform/purging by Kings Asa (1 Kgs 15:9–14, 2 Chr 14:1–6), Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:3–7, 2 Chr 29–31), Josiah (2 Kgs 22:3–23:25, 2 Chr 34–35), and Judah the Maccabee (1 Macc 4:36–59) provide examples of such purges.

YHWH addresses Ezekiel as Ben Adam, "Son of Adam," throughout the book. As a Zadokite priest with access to the holy of holies of the Jerusalem temple, Ezekiel represents humanity before YHWH. Only Zadokite priests had access to the temple structure, and the high priest would only enter the holy of holies, where the ark of the covenant, was kept on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, to atone before YHWH on behalf of the nation Israel and the world of creation at large (Lev 16). The Jerusalem temple was built to symbolize the garden of Eden.[7] Its interior walls were paneled with wood, which was carved and inlaid with figures of cherubs, animals, fruits, trees, and so on to symbolize the garden. Indeed, the cherub embroidered on the curtain that covered the entry into the holy of holies was meant to represent the cherub who guarded the garden of Eden and its tree of life once Adam and Eve had been expelled (Gen 3:24). The high priest's entry into the holy of holies on Yom Kippur, where he would pronounce the name of YHWH as part of the atonement ceremony, symbolized humanity, that is, the sons of Adam, attempting to reenter the garden of Eden.[8] As a Zadokite priest qualified to appear before YHWH as the holy representative of Israel and humankind at large, Ezekiel is entitled to be addressed as Ben Adam.

Most importantly, the book of Ezekiel presents the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as a process of purging in which YHWH determines that the Jerusalem temple has become impure, thereby requiring its consecration. Such consecration of the temple was a common practice in the ancient Judean world, as the coordination of the consecration of the priests with the consecration of the altar noted above in Exod 29, Lev 8, and Num 8 demonstrates. But such an effort in the book of Ezekiel points to an effort to interpret the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in such a manner as to protect and assert the power, presence, holiness, and righteousness of YHWH as G-d of Israel/Judah. YHWH was not overwhelmed by Babylonian power or by Marduk, the god of Babylon. Rather, Ezekiel portrays YHWH as the holy sovereign of creation who

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7. Levenson, "Temple and the World."

8. See Hayward's discussion of Ben Sira, Jubilees, and Philo of Alexandria in *Jewish Temple*, 38–72, 85–107, 108–41.

deliberately purges the temple as part of an effort to purge and renew creation itself. Insofar as the Jerusalem temple served as the holy center of both Israel/Judah and all creation in ancient Judean thought, the purge of the temple entails the purge of creation as well.

Ezekiel's understanding of wrongdoing and defilement appears throughout the discussion of guilt and innocence in Ezek 18. The purpose of this exercise is to challenge a popular proverb that posits that children suffer punishment for the sins of their elders. Ezekiel instead argues that each person suffers punishment or earns mercy based on his or her own actions. He posits a number of cases, each one involving a person from a different generation, in which the guilt or innocence of the person must be forgiven. In the first instance, he describes a man who is righteous, that is, he does not eat (impure meat slaughtered) on the mountains, worship idols, commit adultery, sleep with a menstruating woman, wrong anyone, keep a debtor's pledge, rob anyone, withhold bread and clothing from the needy, take interest in financial transactions, and so on. Ezekiel cites a combination of ritual and moral actions, each of which is addressed in the Holiness Code of Lev 17–26 and elsewhere in the legal materials of the Pentateuch. A man who avoids such actions is considered righteous and is not subject to death. But if he has a son who does such things, the son will suffer punishment. As Ezekiel works through his examples, it becomes clear that only the person who engages in wrongdoing will suffer punishment. The righteousness of an ancestor will not save a wicked person from punishment, and the guilt of an ancestor will not result in punishment for a righteous person.

In Ezekiel's view, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed because they had been defiled. Nevertheless, Ezekiel's view of human wrongdoing takes a long view. In the account of his symbolic actions in Ezek 5, Ezekiel constructs a model of the besieged city of Jerusalem and then lies before it on his right side for 390 days to account for the years of Israel's sins and for forty days on his left side to account for the years of Judah's sins. The years roughly correspond to the last forty years of Judean history, from the time that Josiah turned to YHWH in the eighth year of his reign in circa 632 BCE (2 Chr 34:3) until some point beyond Ezekiel's act. The 390 years of Israel's sins appear to account for the years from Jeroboam's reign, beginning circa 922 BCE, until Josiah turned to YHWH. Ezekiel likewise accuses Israel and its ancestors in Ezek 20 (cf. Ezek 16) of having failed to observe YHWH's will for centuries. Nevertheless, these sins do not result in the destruction of the temple. Rather, the corruption of the temple is the cause,

and in his vision of the corrupted temple in Ezek 8–11, Ezekiel identifies "the image of jealousy" (Heb. *semel haqqin'â*) situated by the north gate of the altar as the fundamental cause of the temple's destruction. This image appears to be a stela that would have been erected in the temple courtyard by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to celebrate his subjugation of Jerusalem in 598 BCE at the time of Jehoiakim's failed revolt (2 Kgs 24:1–4, 2 Chr 36:5–8). Babylonian stelae typically included a text that announced the triumph of the king as well as pictorial depictions of the Babylonian gods who made the king's victory possible.[9] Such a stela erected in the temple court would have constituted idolatry by depicting foreign gods in a holy place where foreigners were not to set foot. With the temple corrupted, other acts become idolatrous, that is, women weep for the Babylonian god Tammuz, men worship the sun, the wall engravings of the temple appear to be ghastly idolatrous apparitions, and so on. At this point, Ezekiel declares the temple to be corrupt, and the vision of its destruction then proceeds.

Ezekiel's understanding of righteousness, repentance, and restoration is intimately linked to his understanding of wrongdoing, defilement, and punishment. Just as human beings are capable of choosing to engage in wrongful and defiling behavior, so they are fully capable of choosing to engage in righteousness and holiness. As Ezek 18 makes clear, human beings are able to change their behavior, to repent before YHWH, and thereby to reform their lives and actions. But the book of Ezekiel does not posit a major human repentance that will lead to restoration; rather, YHWH chooses to bring about the restoration of Israel, Zion, and the temple for the sake of YHWH's holy name. Although the defilement of the temple marks the turning point in YHWH's decision to destroy Jerusalem and the temple in an effort to purge them of their defilement, Ezekiel's oracles concerning the history of Israelite and Judean wrongdoing had made it clear that, in the view of YHWH and the prophet, Israel and Judah had committed trespasses and defiled themselves throughout their entire histories. As a result, YHWH does not wait for human repentance in the book of Ezekiel. Instead, the purge of the nation is designed to remove its allegedly impure elements and begin once again with a new basis that will lead to an ideally righteous and holy nation gathered around the new temple in Jerusalem at the center of a restored creation.

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9. See Hammurabi's stela, which depicts him receiving his law code from the god Shamash (*ANEP*, 246, cf. 515); Shamash-resh-usur, governor of Suhi and Mari, standing before Adad and Ishtar (*ANEP*, 533).

Two elements play key roles in Ezekiel's scenario of restoration: (1) the recognition of YHWH by Israel and Judah as well as by the nations of the world and (2) the sanctification of YHWH's holy name.[10]

The recognition of YHWH permeates Ezek 1–39. Throughout these chapters, Ezekiel constantly employs the recognition formula "and they shall know that I am YHWH" to identify YHWH as the agent behind the momentous changes that are taking place in the world.[11] Such an agenda makes eminent sense in a world that sees the rise of the Babylonian Empire and the destruction of Jerusalem, Judah, and the temple as the major events of Ezekiel's day. In such an environment, the general public would likely conclude that Marduk, the city god of Babylon, was the preeminent deity of the time. Certainly, the Enuma Elish, the Babylonian creation epic, would support such a view insofar as it portrays Marduk's rise to power as the result of his efforts to defeat the forces of chaos in the world and to build a natural and political order that would place Marduk at the head of the gods and Babylon at the head of the nations. As result of Babylonia's conquests, Babylonia was rising to become the unchallenged power of the day. Following the conquest of western Asia, many expected that Babylon would take Egypt as well. But as a Zadokite priest of YHWH from the Jerusalem temple, Ezekiel would hold no such views of Marduk's power and standing in the world. In Ezekiel's view, YHWH was the preeminent deity of the world of nature and human events. Consequently, Ezekiel's oracles constantly conclude with the recognition formula to demonstrate to his audience that YHWH is the true power in the world, who appears to him in Babylonia, who destroys the Jerusalem temple, who brings the people of Judah into captivity, who brings down the mighty nations of the world, and who will restore the twelve tribes of Israel, the Jerusalem temple, and creation at large.

Jerusalem needed to be restored in order to reestablish a holy Israel and a holy creation. Ultimately, such restoration entails the holiness of YHWH's name. One of the major functions of the temple was to serve as the place where the holiness of the divine name—and thereby YHWH's presence—would be manifested in the world of creation. Insofar as YHWH's name and presence were manifested in creation, creation itself was sanctified and thereby functioned as it should, namely, as a potential

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10. See Walther Zimmerli, *I Am YHWH* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982).

11. For discussion of the recognition/proof formula, see Zimmerli, *I Am YHWH*, 1–111.

garden of Eden in which the ideals of creation could be realized on behalf of human beings and all that lived within. The temple—and its priesthood—thereby served as intermediaries between YHWH and creation. The temple provided the means to promote and maintain holiness among the people, and the people through their holy and righteous action strove to maintain the divine presence in the world of creation. For the people of Israel, this meant a special obligation to interrelate with YHWH, to observe YHWH's divine instruction or torah (Heb. *tôrâ*), and thereby to ensure that creation provided the means to sustain life and security in the world.

The priesthood would play a special role in this interrelationship with YHWH, as their task was to represent the people before YHWH and to teach the people YHWH's expectations. The Zadokite priesthood, descended from Phineas ben Eleazar ben Aaron, had the obligation to serve at the altar before YHWH (Num 25), and the other priestly lines, including the descendants of Ithamar ben Aaron and the Levites in general, had the obligation to perform the tasks of the temple at large (Num 17–18). The high priest, chosen from among the Zadokites, had the obligation to appear before YHWH at Yom Kippur to atone for the people (Lev 16). His role was to offer the *ḥaṭṭaʾt* or sin offering on behalf of the nation and to enter the holy of holies on Yom Kippur as part of the nation's effort to atone before YHWH. But with the temple defiled and destroyed, the means by which such atonement could be offered was unclear. With the Zadokite priesthood either dead or exiled away from Jerusalem and the site of the temple, such atonement was no longer possible. Consequently, YHWH would take action to see to it that the atonement would take place.

Ezekiel the Zadokite priest was designated to become YHWH's watchman or visionary prophet to communicate to the people YHWH's intentions and actions in the world (Ezek 1–3, 33). In addition to warning the people of wrongdoing and impending judgment, Ezekiel was to announce YHWH's intentions to act in the world to restore the holiness of the temple, Jerusalem, and all creation. Ezekiel's task is made clear especially in Ezek 3, when he is designated as YHWH's watchman to announce that YHWH will sanctify the divine name once again. In Zadokite thought, YHWH's name or presence in the world is defiled by profane human conduct, and it is sanctified by proper human action. Without a sanctified temple or priesthood to ensure the holiness of the divine name, YHWH acts alone to ensure the sanctification of the divine name, the restoration of Israel, the restoration of the temple, and the restoration of creation. At

the conclusion of Ezek 8–11, in which YHWH departs from the defiled temple and commands its destruction, YHWH announces that YHWH will serve as a small sanctuary (*miqdāš məʿaṭ*) that will represent YHWH's intention to gather the surviving people from exile, give them a new heart and new spirit that will ensure their observance of YHWH's instructions, and restore the relationship between YHWH and the people of Israel. Ezekiel 36:16–38 likewise expresses YHWH's intentions to purify the people of Israel, to restore them to the land of Israel, and to restore the land to an Eden-like state where the people can flourish and observe YHWH's instructions. Ezekiel 37:1–14 presents Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones, in which the dead bones, presumably of the people of Israel, are brought back to life, thereby removing the impurity of death from the land and enabling its restoration. Ezekiel 37:16–28 foresees the restoration and reunification of the house of Joseph or Ephraim and the house of Judah, that is, northern Israel and southern Judah, under the rule of a new Davidic king and gathered around YHWH's restored sanctuary. Ezekiel 38–39 envisions the purification of the land from the corpses of the army of Gog from Magog, the enemy of Israel who was defeated by YHWH in the land. The purification of the land from the defilement of death thereby prepares the land for the restoration of the holy temple.

Ezekiel's vision of the new temple in Ezek 40–48 constitutes the culmination of the book. The passage is fraught with difficulties, most notably that Ezekiel's temple does not correspond to either Solomon's temple or to the Second Temple as described in any other source. Many modern scholars have attempted to argue that the temple vision is a late addition to the book of Ezekiel.[12] But Ezekiel's identity as both a Zadokite priest and as a visionary prophet of YHWH makes the culminating vision of the book a necessity, particularly since the book of Ezekiel is organized around the notion of a purge of the Jerusalem temple at the center of Jerusalem, Israel, and all creation, and their anticipated restoration. Ezekiel would have passed the age of fifty, at which a priest would normally retire, and he would therefore not serve as a priest in the temple described in the vision. With the vision of the new temple in Ezek 40–48, Ezekiel's encounter with the holy as a Zadokite priest and visionary prophet of YHWH is completed.

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12. E.g., Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, trans. Ronald E. Clements, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 73; contra Jon D. Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48*, HSM 10 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 10–11.

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In the end, Ezekiel's final vision, of a restored temple with all Israel arrayed around and the Davidic monarch as a key worshiper among the people, points to the anticipated realization of the goals of King Josiah's program of religious reform and national restoration. King Josiah himself may have been dead, but Ezekiel's visions point ultimately to the eschatological realization of Josiah's ideals.

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Ezekiel's Conception of the Exile in Intertextual Perspective

This paper identifies and examines the intertextual allusions in Ezek 12 that appear throughout the chapter in an attempt to assess their significance. It argues that Ezekiel draws especially on Isaian texts concerning the blindness and deafness of the people as well as texts in both Isaiah and Exodus concerned with the exodus in formulating the understanding of exile presented in Ezek 12. The paper proceeds in three stages. First, it examines the literary form and setting of Ezek 12 within the larger literary framework of the book of Ezekiel as a whole. Second, it identifies and examines a number of intertextual relationships between Ezek 12 and texts from Isaiah and Exodus concerned with the condemnation of Israel and the conceptualization of the exodus. Finally, it draws conclusions concerning the implications of these intertextual relationships for the interpretation of Ezek 12. Overall, it maintains that Ezekiel constructs an understanding of Israel's exile to Babylonia on the basis of earlier Isaian and Exodus texts concerned with the condemnation of Israel and the exodus from Egypt. Ezekiel reverses the typical portrayal of the exodus as an act of YHWH's deliverance of Israel to one of YHWH's punishment of Israel. But deliverance remains the ultimate goal of exile as the chapter envisions the exile as part of the process of the purging of the nation.

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1. Introduction

Interpreters have long noted the intertextual relationships between YHWH's statement to Ezekiel in Ezek 12:2, "O, Ben Adam, in the midst of a rebellious house you live. They have eyes to see, but they don't see, and they have ears to hear, but they don't hear, because they are a rebellious house." Jeremiah 5:21, "Hear this, O foolish people without sense, that has eyes but don't see, that has ears but don't hear," is often the first noted intertextual citation because of its close similarity to the statement in Ezek 12:2. Deuteronomy 29:3, "and YHWH has not given to you a mind to know and eyes to see and ears to hear until this day," often follows, again because of its similarity to Ezek 12:2. Finally, the infamous Isa 6:9–10, "and he said, 'Go, and you shall say to this people, "hear constantly, but do not understand, and see constantly but do not know!" Dull the mind of this people, stop up its ears, and close its eyes, lest it see with its eyes, and hear with its ears, and understand with its mind, so that it repents and is healed,'" completes the triad with a text that employs the major themes and vocabulary found in the Ezekiel passage.[1]

Although most scholars are aware of these intertextual relationships, their interpretative significance for the passage is often limited to noting that the text characterizes the people of Israel/Judah in the context of Ezekiel's symbolic act concerning the exile, that is, YHWH instructs Ezekiel in the following verses to gather his belongings as he is about to go into exile.[2] In such a context, the characterization of the people as blind, deaf,

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1. For discussion of the intertextual references in Ezek 12:2, see esp. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 269–70. Many commentaries note the intertextual relationships, e.g., Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary*, OTL, trans. Coslett Quin (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 149; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, AB 22 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 208–9; Leslie Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, WBC 28 (Dallas: Word, 1994), 178; George A. Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936), 129; John W. Wevers, *Ezekiel*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 81; Margaret C. Odell, *Ezekiel*, SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 135; Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, "Ezekiel," *NIB* 6:1193; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 367–68; Tuell, *Ezekiel*. A number of commentaries do not note the intertextual relationship, e.g., Georg Fohrer, *Ezechiel*, HAT 13 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1955), 63–68; Ronald Hals, *Ezekiel*, FOTL 19 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 80–84; Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 118–19.

2. In addition to the commentaries noted above, see the analyses of Ezekiel's sign act in Georg Fohrer, *Die symbolischen Handlungen der Propheten*, ATANT 54

and senseless provides the basis for exile, that is, Ezekiel charges that they have failed to recognize YHWH or to act in accordance with YHWH's will, and so the exile becomes a punishment for their failure. But in fact, interpreters have failed to appreciate the full extent and impact of the intertextual relationships throughout Ezek 12, which includes other allusions to Isaiah, such as the reference to the desolation of towns and land in Ezek 12:20 (see Isa 6:11–12), as well as a number of allusions to the accounts of the exodus from Egypt in Exod 1–15, such as YHWH's command to Ezekiel in Ezek 12:4–6 to carry his belongings on his shoulder as he departs from the city (see Exod 12:33–36). One might also note that Isaiah is very much concerned with the exodus as well, insofar as Isaian oracles frequently portray the Assyrian Empire as a new oppressor of Israel and Judah on a par with Egypt.

This paper identifies and examines the intertextual allusions in Ezek 12 that appear throughout this chapter in an attempt to assess their significance. It argues that Ezekiel draws especially on Isaian texts concerning the blindness and deafness of the people as well as Isaian and Exodus texts concerning the exodus in formulating the understanding of exile presented in Ezek 12. The paper proceeds in three stages. First, it examines the literary form and setting of Ezek 12 within the larger literary framework of the book of Ezekiel as a whole. Second, it identifies and examines a number of intertextual relationships between Ezek 12 and texts from Isaiah and Exodus concerned with the condemnation of Israel and the conceptualization of the exodus. Finally, it draws conclusions concerning the implications of these intertextual relationships for the interpretation of Ezek 12. Overall, it maintains that Ezekiel constructs an understanding of Israel's exile to Babylonia on the basis of earlier Isaian and Exodus texts concerned with the condemnation of Israel and the exodus from Egypt. Ezekiel reverses the typical portrayal of the exodus as an act of YHWH's deliverance of Israel to one of YHWH's punishment of them. But deliverance remains the ultimate goal of exile, which the chapter envisions as part of the process of the purging of the nation.

(Zürich: Zwingli, 1953), 55–58; W. David Stacey, *Prophetic Drama in the Old Testament* (London: Epworth, 1990), 193–96; Kelvin G. Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign Acts: Rhetorical Non-verbal Communication*, JSOTSup 283 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 261–89. Each of these studies focuses on Ezekiel's act as symbolic of exile but does not examine the significance of the intertextual references beyond that framework.

2. Formal Analysis

Scholars typically argue that the literary form of the book of Ezekiel comprises three major segments that express the book's eschatological perspective: (1) Ezek 1–24, which focuses on the punishment of Jerusalem and Israel; (2) Ezek 25–32, which focuses on judgment against the nations; and (3) Ezek 33–48, which focuses on salvation for Jerusalem, Israel, and the nations.[3] However, a closer examination of the book's literary features demonstrates that such a reading is unwarranted.[4] The three-part thematic scheme is not consistently represented throughout the segments of the book as claimed. Instead, the chronological statements that appear throughout the whole provide a relatively consistent chronology that begins with the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile in Ezek 1:1–3 and culminates in the twenty-fifth year of exile in Ezek 40:1, which concludes the chronological sequence. Insofar as the fifth year of Jehoiachin's exile coincides with Ezekiel's thirtieth year (see Ezek 1:1), the chronology encompasses Ezekiel's own lifetime from the age of thirty through the age of fifty, the very years in which a Zadokite priest would serve in the Jerusalem temple. Insofar as Ezekiel is a Zadokite priest exiled from the Jerusalem temple, his prophetic career coincides with the years he would have served as a priest in the temple had he remained in Jerusalem. Rather than serve as a priest in the temple, Ezekiel serves as a prophet for his people in Babylonian exile, interpreting YHWH's purposes in destroying both Jerusalem and the temple only later to reestablish Jerusalem, the temple, the land of Israel, and all creation. These divine actions are part of a purging process for the land due to the alleged corruption of the temple, which was recognized in ancient Judah as the holy center of creation.

The literary form of Ezekiel may be represented as follows:

Ezekiel's Visions concerning the Purging and Restoration of Jerusalem

I.   Introduction: Ezekiel's oracles concerning his inaugural vision   1–7
II.   Ezekiel's oracles concerning his vision of YHWH's departure   8–19
       from the Jerusalem temple and this event's significance

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3. E.g., Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 1–2; Hals, *Ezekiel*, 2–4.

4. See Sweeney, "Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest"; cf. Sweeney, *Prophetic Literature*; Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting*.

Ezekiel 12 appears within the second major segment of the book (Ezek 8–19), which takes up Ezekiel's oracles concerning his vision of YHWH's departure from the Jerusalem temple and its significance. It follows Ezek 8–11, which presents Ezekiel's oracles concerning his vision of YHWH's departure as the premise of the entire segment. A series of twelve sub-units then follows in Ezek 12–19, each introduced by a version of the basic YHWH word transmission formula, *wayyəhî dəbar-yhwh ʾēlay lēʾmōr*, "and the word of YHWH came to me, saying…," each of which takes up in sequence a different aspect of the interpretation of YHWH's departure from Jerusalem. Insofar as Ezek 12 includes five instances of the YHWH word transmission formula in verses 1, 8, 17, 21, and 26, it comprises the next five subunits of the sequence, namely, Ezek 12:1–7, 8–16, 17–20, 21–25, and 26–28. Each takes up a different aspect of the interpretation of YHWH's departure from Jerusalem. Verses 1–7 focus on a symbolic action that presents the exile as a reversal of the exodus, verses 8–16 present Ezekiel's explanation of the symbolic act, verses 17–20 present Ezekiel's eating and drinking as a reversal of the exodus, verses 21–25 take up the efficacy of the vision, and verses 26–28 take up the imminent fulfillment of Ezekiel's oracles. The other subunits in the sequence also present their perspectives concerning YHWH's departure from Jerusalem. Ezekiel 13:1–23 takes up the issue of false prophets; 14:1–11 takes up threats against false prophets and diviners; 14:12–23 takes up the question of individual righteousness; 15:1–8 presents the allegory of the useless vine; 16:1–63 presents the allegory of Jerusalem as G-d's adulterous wife; 17:1–24 presents the allegory of the eagles, vine, and cedar; and 18:1–19:14 takes up the responsibility of

the individual and the demise of the monarchy. The literary form of Ezek 8–19 may then be represented as follows:[5]

Presentation of Ezekiel's Oracles after His Vision of Jerusalem's Destruction and YHWH's Departure from Jerusalem

I.	Autobiographical vision account concerning Jerusalem's destruction and YHWH's departure from Jerusalem	8–11
II.	Oracle: symbolic act concerning the exile as reversal of exodus	12:1–7
III.	Oracle: Ezekiel's explanation of the symbolic act	12:8–16
IV.	Oracle: symbolic action concerning eating and drinking (exodus reversal)	12:17–20
V.	Oracle: concerning the efficacy of the vision	12:21–25
VI.	Oracle: concerning the imminent fulfillment of Ezekiel's oracle	12:26–28
VII.	Oracle: concerning false prophets	13:1–28
VIII.	Oracle: threats against false prophets and diviners	14:1–11
IX.	Oracle: concerning individual righteousness	14:12–23
X.	Oracle: allegory of the useless vine	15:1–8
XI.	Oracle: allegory of Jerusalem as G-d's adulterous wife	16:1–63
XII.	Oracle: allegory of eagles, vine, and cedar	17:1–24
XIII.	Oracle: concerning individual responsibility and demise of the monarchy	18:1–19:4

Each subunit in Ezek 12 contributes to the oracle sequence that interprets YHWH's departure from Jerusalem.[6]

Ezekiel 12:1–7 begins with an account of Ezekiel's compliance with YHWH's instructions to gather his belongings and to go into exile from Jerusalem. The text includes two major elements. The first is Ezekiel's account of YHWH's instructions in verses 1–6. It begins with the YHWH word transmission formula in verse 1, in which Ezekiel introduces YHWH's instructions in verses 2–6. YHWH's instructions begin with a statement of the premise in verse 2, in which YHWH informs Ezekiel that he lives in the midst of a rebellious people, justifying the decision to destroy the city

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5. Contra Hals, whose analysis is based on the presumption that these chapters comprise independent texts (*Ezekiel*, 46–131).

6. Contra Hals, whose analysis of the constituent units of Ezek 12 is based on his understanding of the symbolic actions underlying the text rather than on the text itself (*Ezekiel*, 74–84).

and to inaugurate the exile. Verses 3–6 then present a series of instructions, each defined by an imperative or second-person verbal form. The first set of four appears in verses 3–4a, which instruct Ezekiel to prepare by day for exile. This set is introduced by an address form, "and you, Ben Adam," followed by two imperative statements instructing Ezekiel to prepare his baggage and to go into exile by day in the sight of the people. These statements are followed by a finite verbal statement that summarizes the purpose of the act, namely, to demonstrate to the people that they are rebellious. A concluding finite statement summarizes the whole, that is, that Ezekiel is to bring out his baggage by day. The second set of six instructions in verses 4b–6 instructs Ezekiel to go into exile by night. Again, the set is introduced by an address form, "and you," followed by second-person instructional statements to depart by night so that all can see, to dig through the wall, to go out through the wall, to carry his baggage on his shoulder, to depart by night, and to hide his face so as not to see the land. The concluding clause explains YHWH's purpose insofar as Ezekiel's symbolic act will serve as a sign to the house of Israel that they are rebellious and that exile is the consequence for the rebellion. Finally, verse 7 employs five first-person verbal statements to present Ezekiel's compliance with YHWH's instructions. Overall, this text employs the symbolic action to initiate YHWH's explanation of the rationale for the exile. The following diagram illustrates the formal structure of Ezek 12:1–7.

Oracle: Symbolic Act concerning the Exile as Reversal of Exodus

I.	Ezekiel's account of YHWH's instructions	12:1–6
	A. YHWH word transmission formula	12:1
	B. YHWH's instructions	12:2–6
	1. Premise: Ezekiel lives in a rebellious house	12:2
	2. Individual instructions	12:3–6
	a. Prepare for exile	12:3–4a
	b. Go into exile	12:4b–6
II.	Ezekiel's compliance with YHWH's instructions	12:7

Ezekiel 12:8–6 then takes the explanation a step further. This subunit is formulated as Ezekiel's account of YHWH's explanation of the preceding symbolic action, in which the YHWH word transmission formula in verse 8 introduces YHWH's speech in verses 9–16. YHWH's speech is formulated as an instruction speech that begins with YHWH's address

to Ezekiel as "Ben Adam" and a summation of the people's request for
an explanation of the act in verse 9, followed by the explanation per se
in verses 10–16. The explanation begins with two sets of instructions in
verses 10 and 11–14, each introduced by the imperative, 'ĕmōr, "say!"
The first, in verse 10, is an introductory instruction to announce that
the oracle pertains to the ruler (nāśî'), Ezekiel's characteristic term for
the king in Jerusalem (presumably Jehoiachin) and the house of Israel.
The second, in verses 11–14, presents the details. It begins in verse 11
by explaining that Ezekiel's act is meant to illustrate what will happen to
both the king and the people. Verses 12–13 state that the king will go into
exile following the pattern of Ezekiel's symbolic action, and verse 14 states
that YHWH will scatter his entourage in all directions. YHWH's speech
concludes in verses 15–16 with statements that provide the rationale for
the exile, that is, that they (the king and the people) will know that "I am
YHWH." The YHWH self-identification formula in Ezekiel functions as
a means to characterize an event as a revelation of YHWH's presence,
power, and action in the world.[7] The formal structure of Ezek 12:8–16
appears as follows:

Oracle: Ezekiel's Explanation of the Symbolic Act

I.	YHWH word transmission formula	12:8
II.	YHWH instruction speech	12:9–16
	A. Summation of people's request for explanation	12:9
	B. Explanation	12:10–16
	1. Announce that oracles pertain to ruler	12:10
	2. Details of the announcement	12:11–16
	(a) Act illustrates fate of king and people	12:11
	(b) King will go into exile following pattern of Ezekiel	12:12–13
	(c) YHWH will scatter king's entourage	12:14
	(d) Rationale: they will know that l am YHWH	12:15–16

Ezekiel 12:17–20 then extends the symbolic action by specifying how
Ezekiel is to eat and drink while in exile as a means to symbolize how
the people will fare in exile. Following the YHWH word transmission
formula in verse 17, verses 18–20 present YHWH's instruction speech

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7. For discussion, see Walther Zimmerli, "The Word of Divine Self-Manifestation
(Proof Saying): A Prophetic Genre," in *I Am YHWH*, 99–109.

to the prophet. It begins with the address form "Ben Adam" and an initial second-person instruction in verse 18 to eat his bread and drink his water in trembling and apprehension. The explanation for this action appears in verses 19–20. Again, YHWH employs second-person address language to tell the prophet that he is to explain to the people that they shall eat and drink in a similar fashion because the land will be wasted and desolate. The concluding YHWH self-revelation statement emphasizes the revelatory character of the act. The formal structure of the text appears as follows:

Symbolic Act concerning Eating and Drinking (Exodus Reversal)

I.	YHWH word transmission formula		12:17
II.	YHWH's instruction speech		12:18–20
	A.	Instruction: eat and drink in trembling and apprehension	12:18
	B.	Explanation: people will follow this pattern	12:19–20

Ezekiel 12:21–25 then shifts attention to the question of the fulfillment of visions. The YHWH word transmission formula introduces the subunit in verse 21, which in turn is followed by a YHWH instruction speech in verses 22–25. YHWH's instruction speech, which begins with the customary address form, "Ben Adam," is a variation of a disputation speech.[8] It begins in verse 22 with a rhetorical question that states the premise to be disputed by implicitly denying the validity of the common proverb among the people, "The days go on, and every vision comes to nothing." The proverb indicates that the people have little faith in prophetic visions, perhaps including those of Ezekiel, because they do not come to pass. Verses 23–25, introduced by the particle *lākēn*, "therefore," present YHWH's instructions as to how Ezekiel will refute the assertion of this proverb. YHWH first proscribes the proverb and replaces it with a positive statement, namely, "the days draw near, and the fulfillment of every vision," explaining that there shall no longer be false visions or soothing divination in Israel. Instead, YHWH asserts that any oracle that YHWH speaks will be fulfilled without delay. The formal structure of this text appears as follows:

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8. Adrian Graffy, *A Prophet Confronts His People*, AnBib 104 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1984), 52–56; cf. Donald F. Murray, "The Rhetoric of Disputation: Re-examination of a Prophetic Genre," *JSOT* 38 (1987): 95–121.

Oracle: Concerning the Efficacy of the Vision

I.   YHWH word transmission formula   12:21
II. YHWH's instruction speech (disputation)   12:22–25
    A. Premise: YHWH's visions come to nothing   12:22
    B. Refutation: fulfillment of YHWH's visions without delay   12:23–25

Finally, Ezek 12:26–28 reinforces the preceding point. Following the YHWH word transmission formula in verse 26, verses 27–28 present YHWH's instruction speech (introduced again by "Ben Adam"), which reasserts the fulfillment of YHWH's visions without delay. The speech again employs a modified disputation form, which begins in verse 27 with the premise to be disputed in the form of a quotation of the people's view that the prophet's visions are for the distant future.[9] Verse 28, introduced by *lākēn*, "therefore," then instructs Ezekiel to refute the premise by telling the people once again that YHWH's oracles will be fulfilled without delay. The formal structure of this text appears as follows:

Oracle: Concerning the Immanent Fulfillment of Ezekiel's Oracle

I.   YHWH word transmission formula   12:26
II. YHWH instruction speech (disputation)   12:27–28
    A. Premise: prophet's visions are for distant future   12:27
    B. Prophet's visions fulfilled without delay   12:28

Within the larger context of Ezek 8–19, the concern with the realization of divine visions in Ezek 12:21–25 and 12:26–28 anticipates the concern with false prophecy that appears in 13:1–23 and 14:1–11. Overall, the five subunits in Ezek 12 (vv. 1–7, 8–16, 17–20, 21–25, and 26–28) explain the significance of Ezekiel's vision of YHWH's departure from Jerusalem and destruction of the city in Ezek 8–11 by arguing that the people are going into exile. These passages also lay the groundwork for refuting false prophecy by asserting that YHWH's visions will be fulfilled and that they will be fulfilled without delay.

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9. Graffy, *Prophet Confronts His People*, 56–58; cf. Murray, "Rhetoric of Disputation."

3. Intertextual Analysis

Discussion may now turn to the intertextual aspects of Ezek 12:1–7, 8–16, 17–20, 21–25, and 26–28.[10]

The first major instance of an intertextual reading in these passages occurs in Ezek 12:2, "O Ben Adam, in the midst of a rebellious house you dwell, which has eyes to see, but does not see, [and] ears to hear, but does not hear, because they are a rebellious house" (Heb. *ben-ʾādām bətôk bêt-hammerî ʾattâ yōšēb ʾăšer ʿēnayim lāhem lirʾôt wəlôʾ rāʾû ʾoznayim lāhem lišmōʿa wəlôʾ šāmēʿû kî bêt mərî hēm*). Within the context of Ezek 12:1–7, the verse presents the premise for YHWH's instructions to Ezekiel concerning his symbolic action to announce and illustrate the exile of the people. Specifically, the verse charges that the people are rebellious and that they had eyes and ears to see and hear YHWH's instructions to them, but failed to do so. The exile then functions as the punishment for this neglect.

The language of Ezekiel's statement clearly interrelates with two texts in the Bible, that is, Jer 5:21 and Deut 29:3. Jeremiah 5:21 reads, "Hear this, O foolish people without sense, [who] have eyes, but they do not see, [who] have ears, but they do not hear" (Heb. *šiməʾû-nāʾ zōʾt ʿam sakāl wəʾên lēb ʿênayim lāhem wəlôʾ yirʾû ʾoznayim wəlôʾ yišmāʿû*). This particular statement functions within the larger context of Jer 5:20–31, in which it states the premise of an oracle that announces retribution against the people whom Jeremiah charges with failing to revere YHWH. Deuteronomy 29:3 reads, "And YHWH has not given to you a mind to know, eyes to see, and ears to hear until this day" (Heb. *wəlôʾ nātan yhwh lākem lādaʿat wəʿênayim lirʾôt wəʾoznayim lišmōʿa ʿad hayyôm hazzeh*). The verse functions as part of Moses's speech to Israel in Deut 29–30, in which he lays out covenant curses should the people not observe the terms of their covenant with YHWH. Specifically, it functions within Deut 29:1b–8 as part of Moses's exhortation to the people that they should revere YHWH for all that YHWH did for them in the wilderness.

Although the lexical parallels between Ezek 12:3 and its counterparts in Jer 5:21 and Deut 29:3 are clear, neither passage offers a sustained parallel to our text in Ezekiel. Each offers only a very limited intertextual

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10. For discussion of intertextual methodology, see esp. Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality."

relationship that simply highlights the charge that the people lack sense, insight, understanding, and so on, in relation to YHWH's expectations.

It is striking, however, that the book of Isaiah offers tremendous parallels to the motifs of senselessness, blindness, and deafness in Ezek 12:3. Indeed, these motifs have long been recognized as major themes throughout the book of Isaiah.[11]

The motif first appears in Isa 6, which is widely recognized as the vocation account of the prophet. In the context of Isaiah's throne vision of YHWH in the Jerusalem temple, the prophet volunteers to serve as YHWH's messenger to the people.[12] His commission is striking insofar as YHWH instructs him to make sure that the people remain deaf, blind, and ignorant lest they turn or repent and are healed, thereby missing the punishment that YHWH has in store for the people to serve the divine purpose:

> And (YHWH) said, "Go, and you will say to this people, 'Hear constantly, but do not understand; and see constantly, but do not recognize. Cloud the mind of this people, and stop up its ears, and close its eyes, lest it see with its eyes, and with its ears hear, and with its mind understand, and repent to be healed.'"

YHWH's instruction to the prophet presents tremendous theological problems insofar as it presents YHWH as deliberately impeding the ability of the people to see, hear, and understand YHWH's divine purposes in order to ensure that they will suffer punishment. Within the immediate context of the prophecies of the eighth-century prophet Isaiah ben Amoz, YHWH's statement is intended to convey YHWH's power and capacity to bring about judgment against the people of Israel for their alleged failure to trust in YHWH's promises of eternal protection for Jerusalem and the house of David (see esp. Isa 7).

The theme is picked up in the later work of Second Isaiah, the anonymous prophet who announces YHWH's worldwide sovereignty at the end of the Babylonian exile as well as in texts included in First Isaiah that aid

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11. E.g., Clements, "Beyond Tradition History"; Ronald E. Clements, "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah," in *Old Testament Prophecy: From Oracles to Canon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 78–104.

12. For discussion of Isaiah's throne vision, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 132–42; Marvin A. Sweeney, "Isaiah and Theodicy after the Shoah," in *Strange Fire: Reading the Bible after the Holocaust*, ed. Tod Linafelt, BibSem 71 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 208–19, repr. as ch. 30 in this volume.

in binding the two major formal subunits of the book, Isa 1–33 and Isa 34–66, together.

Second Isaiah employs the theme to indicate that the time for Israel's blindness and deafness is over, since YHWH is about to return them to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile.[13] Isaiah 42:16, for example, states, "And I will lead the blind in a path that they do not know, in ways that they do not know I will guide them; I will make darkness before them into light and rough places into a level plain; these are the things that I will do and I will not abandon them." Isaiah 42:18–21 then announces YHWH's servant to the blind and deaf people, "Listen, O deaf ones, and look to see, O blind ones, who is blind but my servant? And deaf like my messenger whom I send? Who is blind like Meshullam? Or blind like the servant of YHWH? Seeing many things, but he does not observe; opening ears but he does not hear; YHWH purposes [it] for the sake of His righteousness; He magnifies instruction and glorifies it." Isaiah 43:8–10a returns to the theme of the blind and the deaf as they are brought forth to serve as witnesses to YHWH's actions in the world as sovereign and creator: "'Bringing forth the blind people who have eyes, and the deaf people who have ears; all the nations are gathered together, and the peoples are assembled. Who among them declares this? [Who] will make known those things that took place before? Let them bring their witnesses so that they may be vindicated; let them hear and declare the truth. You are my witnesses,' declares YHWH." Finally, Isa 44:18 employs the motif to satirize those who worship idols: "They do not know, and they do not understand, because their eyes are plastered shut without seeing; their minds without understanding."

Isaiah 29:18 employs the motif to anticipate the time when the blind and deaf will see and hear: "And the deaf shall hear in that day the words of the book, and from darkness and obscurity the eyes of the blind will see," thereby linking First Isaiah's expressions of the motif in Isa 6 to those of Second Isaiah. Isaiah 35:5–10, in clear anticipation of Second Isaiah, likewise announces the opening of the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf as the exiles begin their journey home to Zion: "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf be opened; then shall the lame leap like a ram and the tongue of the mute proclaim, for waters shall burst out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert … and a highway and a

13. See esp. Clements, "Beyond Tradition History," 83–86.

road shall appear there, and it shall be called the Holy Way … and the ran-somed of YHWH shall return and they shall come to Zion with rejoicing."

This last text makes an important point in the presentation of the motif of the blind and the deaf in Isaiah, namely, the opening of the eyes of the blind and ears of the deaf is part of a larger pattern in which the exiled people of Israel will recognize that YHWH is bringing them forth from Babylonian exile much like their ancestors who were brought forth from Egyptian bondage at the time of the exodus to be returned to the land of Israel.

The analogy between exile and exodus in Isaiah points to the next major intertextual feature of Ezek 12: YHWH's instructions in verses 4–6 (see also vv. 7, 12–13) for the prophet to prepare for exile. The instructions read,

> And you shall bring out your baggage like the baggage of exile by day before their eyes, and you shall go out in the evening before their eyes like those who go out into exile. Before their eyes, you shall dig for your-self in the wall, and you will go out by it. Before their eyes, on [the] shoulder you shall carry [your baggage]; in darkness you shall go out; your face you shall not cover so that you will not see the land, for I have designated you as a sign for the house of Israel.

Key features of this instruction include the baggage to be carried on the shoulder, the digging through the wall, the departure by night, and the wit-ness of the people. Scholars have argued that the references to daylight and nighttime betray later literary growth in the passage,[14] but they in fact are elements in a coherent narrative. The daytime activities relate to Ezekiel's preparations for exile before the eyes of all the people, whereas the night-time activities, again before the eyes of the people, represent the actual departure. The reference to digging through the wall relates to the context of Ezekiel, insofar as he is instructed to dig through the wall as he enters the temple courtyard in Ezek 8:7–8. Whereas the digging represents the efforts of Babylonian sappers to enter the city during the course of the siege of Jeru-salem, the instruction to dig through the wall at the time of exile may well allude to Zedekiah's efforts to escape the city as Jerusalem's defenses failed.[15]

The motifs of carrying baggage on the shoulder and departing by night are of particular significance because of the role they play in the

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14. E.g., Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 267.
15. See Friebel, *Sign Acts*, 272.

exodus narrative and in Isaiah. Exodus 12 indicates that the Israelites were fully dressed and equipped with their kneading bowls on their shoulders as they prepared to depart from Egypt. Exodus 12:34 indicates how the Israelites carried their kneading bowls on their shoulders as they hurriedly prepared to depart from Egypt: "And the people took their dough before it would rise [with] their kneading bowls wrapped in their garments upon their shoulders." Earlier, the people were instructed to eat their bread hurriedly, dressed for a rapid departure, as YHWH was about to strike at the Egyptians during the night. Exodus 12:12 reads, "And I shall pass through the land of Egypt on this night and I shall strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, including humans and animals, and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute punishment. I am YHWH."

Similar motifs appear in the Isaian use of the exodus tradition to depict Assyria's oppression of Israel and YHWH's deliverance of Israel from Assyria. Isaiah 10:24–26 establishes the analogy between the Assyrian oppression of Israel and the Egyptian oppression at the time of the exodus, indicating that YHWH will wield a staff against Assyria for beating Israel just as YHWH struck both the Egyptians and the Midianites for the same reason. As a result of YHWH's punishment of Assyria, Isa 10:27 describes the burden that will fall from Israel's back, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be removed from your shoulder and his yoke from upon your neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of fatness," using fatness imagery to refer to the arrogance of the Assyrians. Earlier, Isa 9:1–3 employed the motif of darkness to portray YHWH's deliverance of the people from Assyria: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwell in a land of deep gloom (have seen) a light shining upon them … for the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of the one who oppresses him, you have broken as on the day of Midian." As a result of YHWH's defeat of the oppressor, Isa 9:1–6 envisions the birth of a righteous Davidic ruler who will bear dominion—instead of the earlier Assyrian/Egyptian oppression—on his shoulder. The well-known Isa 9:5 reads, "For a child is born to us, a son his given to us, and dominion shall be upon his shoulder."

The analogy between Ezekiel's conceptualization of exile and the exodus tradition in both the book of Exodus and the book of Isaiah is further developed by noting YHWH's instructions to Ezekiel in Ezek 12:18–20 concerning the eating of bread and drinking of water in anxiety while in exile:

O Ben Adam, your bread in trembling you shall eat and your water in
anxiety you shall drink. And you shall say to the people of the land,
"Thus says my L-rd YHWH to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land
of Israel, 'Their bread in anxiousness they shall eat and their water in
desolation they shall drink in order that their land may be desolate due
to its being filled with the violence of all its inhabitants. And the inhab-
ited cities shall be laid waste and the land shall be desolate, and you shall
know that I am YHWH.'"

The portrayal in Exod 12:11 of the escaping Israelites eating on the
run comes into consideration as an analogy to Ezek 12:18–20: "And this
is how you shall eat it [the Passover offering]; your loins shall be girded,
and your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; it is a Passover
offering to YHWH." This statement depicts how the Israelites will eat the
Passover offering in the temple once YHWH has redeemed them from
Egyptian bondage and brought them home to the land of Israel. The hur-
ried manner of eating is meant to recall the conditions of the exodus
from Egypt. Isaiah does not directly depict the hurriedness of eating, but
focuses instead on the desolation of the land. In response to Isaiah's ques-
tion as to how long YHWH's proposed punishment of Israel will last, Isa
6:11–12 presents the answer: "Until cities are desolate without inhabitant
and houses without anyone, and the land is completely devastated. And
YHWH will banish human inhabitation and multiply depopulation in the
midst of the land, and while there is still a tenth [of the population] in it, it
shall again be burned like a terebinth and an oak when one fells even their
stump; the holy seed is its stump." Indeed, Isa 11: I envisions the house of
Jesse and Israel like a felled tree that grows new roots as it is rejuvenated:
"And a shoot shall grow out of the stump of Jesse, and a shoot shall sprout
from its roots." Ultimately, Isa 11:11 works the image of the new growth
of the house of Jesse into a vision of Israel restored from exile in Assyria,
Egypt, Pathros, and elsewhere, while Isa 11:15–16 makes explicit the anal-
ogy between the exodus from Egypt and the restoration of Israel following
the period of Assyrian oppression: "And YHWH will dry up the tongue of
the sea of Egypt, and He will raise His hand over the Euphrates with His
burning wind, and he shall smite it into seven streams so that they will
walk through it dry-shod. And there will be a highway for the remnant of
His people which was left from Assyria just as there was for Israel on the
day when He brought them up from the land of Egypt."

The final intertextual relationship to be considered here appears in
the references to false prophecy in Ezek 12:21–25 and 12:26–28. As noted

above, the concerns here are to confirm the fulfillment of YHWH's word in Ezek 12:21–25 and to project that fulfillment into the distant future in Ezek 12:26–28. A very telling reference appears in Ezek 12:24, "For there shall no longer be any false vision or smooth divination in the house of Israel." The issue of false prophecy does not appear in Exodus, but it is quite prominent in Isaiah. Indeed, Isa 30:10–11 relates an oracle in which the people purportedly address prophets to demand false prophecy: "Who said to the seers, 'do not see' and to the visionaries, 'do not envision to us truths. Speak to us smooth (easy) things, envision delusions. Turn from the path, turn aside from the way. Cease from our mouths the Holy One of Israel.'" As for the interest in distant fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy, Isa 30:8–9 notes that Isaiah's prophecies must be written for a distant future: "Now, come, write it upon a tablet with them, and upon a book inscribe it, so that it will be for a future time as a witness forever. For it is a rebellious people, lying sons, sons who are not willing to hear the torah [instruction] of YHWH." Clearly, the accusation that the people are rebellious (Heb. *mərî*) relates back to Ezekiel's initial premise in Ezek 12:1 that he lives in the midst of a rebellious house. Likewise, Ezek 12:21–25 and 12:26–28 establish a transition to the condemnation of false prophets in Ezek 13:1–23.

4. Interpretation of Ezekiel 12

This discussion demonstrates clear thematic or motific parallels between the conceptualization of Israel's exile in Ezek 12 and the depictions of exile and restoration in Exodus and Isaiah. Discussion may now turn to the significance and interpretation of these parallels.

The absence of consistent lexical parallels between Ezek 12 and the various texts in Exodus and Isaiah considered above makes it difficult to argue for a relationship of direct dependence between Ezekiel and Exodus/Isaiah. This issue has arisen in past studies of Ezekiel that note Ezekiel's differences from the P material of the Pentateuch, both in terms of lexical and conceptual features.[16] It remains uncertain as to whether Ezekiel is dependent on the P material of the Pentateuch or whether P is dependent on Ezekiel. Insofar as most scholars date the P stratum of the Pentateuch

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16. See Risa L. Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile, and the Torah*, JSOTSup 358 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 1–29.

to the Persian period, it would appear that P presupposes Ezekiel, but the
two traditions often differ markedly in their perception of issues. Inter-
preters must bear in mind, however, that it would be a mistake to assume
that, apart from fundamental aspects of priestly worldview and practice,
all priests would adhere to a single position; Ezekiel appears to be an inde-
pendent and original priestly thinker.

Second Isaiah likewise postdates Ezekiel, rendering it unlikely that
Ezekiel was dependent on Second Isaiah's notion of a new exodus from
Babylonia to the land of Israel. Instead, Ezekiel's presentation of the exile
in Ezek 12 predates Second Isaiah. Insofar as most scholars view Isa 35 as
an exilic or Persian-period text that bridges First and Second Isaiah, Isa
35 must be viewed as postdating Ezekiel.[17] Indeed, many earlier scholars
viewed Isa 35 as the work of Second Isaiah.[18]

Whereas the P stratum of the Pentateuch and Second Isaiah postdate
Ezekiel, the same may not be said of the JE exodus traditions and much of
the material in Isa 1–39. This observation has implications for interpreting
Ezekiel's presentation of the exile in Exod 12.

The basic instructions concerning the observance of Passover in Exod
12:3–20 are generally considered part of the Priestly stratum of the Penta-
teuch.[19] Yet two factors must be considered: (1) interpreters cannot know
to what extent that the P stratum of this text is based on a reworking of
an earlier and underlying JE text, and (2) the following material concern-
ing the rapid departure from Egypt and the carrying of unleavened bread
and kneading bowls on the shoulder in Exod 12:21–23, 27b, 29–34, 35,
36, 37–39 is attributed to the J stratum.[20] Whereas past generations of
scholars viewed J as the earliest of the pentateuchal sources, more recently
scholars have begun to argue that J dates to the late monarchic or exilic
period.[21] Although those who favor the exilic period cite the role that Bab-
ylon plays in the J stratum (e.g., Gen 11:1–9), interpreters must recall that

17. See Steck, *Bereitete Heimkehr*; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 447–54.

18. E.g., Charles C. Torrey, *Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T&T
Clark, 1928), 92–104, 295–301.

19. See Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 39–40.

20. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 142. On the fact that inter-
preters cannot know to what extent that the P stratum of this text is based on a rework-
ing of an earlier and underlying JE text see Barton, who discusses the impact of "the
disappearing redactor," i.e., the redactor whose work is done so well that it is undetect-
able for redaction criticism (*Reading the Old Testament*, 45–60).

21. Nicholson, *Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century*, 132–60.

Babylon was an ally not only of Hezekiah during his late eighth-century revolt against Assyria (see, e.g., 2 Kgs 20:12–19, Isa 39) but also of Josiah during the course of his late seventh-century reform program. Opposition to Judah's alliance with Babylon would not have been lacking during the reigns of Hezekiah or Josiah. But Josiah's death at Megiddo in 609 BCE while supporting Babylonian interests and the subsequent Babylonian subjugation of Judah in 605 BCE would have provided ample grounds for the composition of J-stratum texts in the Pentateuch with a generally suspicious view of Babylon. Insofar as Ezekiel appears to have been born at the outset of Josiah's reform in 622 BCE and lived well beyond his fiftieth year in 572 BCE—the year to which his culminating new temple vision is dated—the JE version of Exod 12 would have been extant during his lifetime.[22] Some version of the exodus narratives, with their motifs of escape from foreign bondage and return to the promised land of Israel, would have made great sense during the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah, particularly since both kings were concerned with freeing Judah and Israel from Assyrian rule.[23]

Much the same may be said of the material from the first part of the book of Isaiah cited above, namely, Isa 6:1–13 (and Isa 7); 10:24–26, 27; 11:1–16; 29:18; 30:8–9. Isaiah 6:1–9:6; 10:5–12:6; 28; and 29 include much material that may be attributed to Isaiah ben Amoz, but these texts have been heavily edited during the course of King Josiah's late seventh-century reform program.[24] Indeed, the motif of the exodus in Isaiah with its emphases on escape from Egypt and the analogies drawn between Egypt and Assyria would have been especially important to Josiah's reform. Assyria and Egypt were allied throughout Josiah's reign, and Josiah's reform was aimed especially at gaining independence from Assyrian suzerainty. Isaiah's depiction of YHWH's deliverance from Egyptian and now Assyrian control would have provided major theological support to Josiah's program. Furthermore, a Josian edition of the book of Isaiah would have been extant during Ezekiel's lifetime.

Although the texts in Ezek 12 include no overt references to the exodus from Egypt, they include a number of motifs, such as blindness,

22. See Sweeney, "Royal Oracle in Ezekiel 37:15–28," which examines the implications of Ezekiel's birth in 622 BCE for his understanding of Josiah's reform.

23. For an overview of the impact of Josiah's reform on the composition of biblical literature, see Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*.

24. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 57–59; Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 234–55.

deafness, and ignorance, walking in darkness, and traveling with one's gear on one's shoulder, that appear in texts depicting the exodus during the late monarchic period. Both Exodus and Isaiah are heavily interested in demonstrating YHWH's capacity to bring punishment and to deliver Israel from oppression once the period of punishment is concluded. It would seem then that Ezekiel could draw on such traditions in constructing the portrayal of exile in Ezek 12:1–7, 8–16, 17–20, 21–25, and 26–28. By incorporating motifs known from the late monarchic Exodus and Isaian texts, the sequence in Ezek 12 argues that Israel cannot expect the deliverance from YHWH articulated in the late monarchic period Exodus and Isaian traditions; rather, Israel can expect exile, this time to Babylonia rather than to Egypt or even Assyria. Deliverance might eventually come, but another period of exile and oppression will overtake Israel and Judah first. This leaves one last issue, that is, the concern with false prophecy in Ezek 12:21–25 and 26–28. Insofar as the Josian-period edition of Isaiah presents YHWH's deliverance of Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel in the aftermath of Assyrian oppression, the portrayal of impending exile in Ezek 12 presents a direct challenge to Isaiah's scenario of deliverance.[25] Whereas Isaiah promises deliverance from Assyria as the ultimate outcome of YHWH's treatment of Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel during the Assyrian period, Ezekiel maintains that the period of punishment is not yet over. From Ezekiel's standpoint, any scenario of deliverance would have to wait for the conclusion of the current round of punishment at the hands of YHWH and the Babylonian Empire. Having made such a challenge to the Josian-era version of the book of Isaiah, the repeated examples of the YHWH self-revelation formula, "and they will know that I am YHWH," in Ezek 12:16 and 12:20 make a very important point, namely, that Ezekiel's understanding of exile—and not Isaiah's—represents the true word of YHWH. The following instances in Ezek 12:25 and 12:28 that assure the fulfillment of YHWH's word underscore Ezekiel's challenge of Isaiah's word.

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25. For an earlier study of Ezekiel's debate with Isaiah, see Sweeney, "Ezekiel's Debate with Isaiah."

Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns in Reading the Book of the Twelve Prophets

1.

The question of the literary form and compositional history of the Book of the Twelve Prophets has emerged as a major concern in recent scholarship. Interpreters have increasingly recognized that Book of the Twelve Prophets as a whole stands as a literary work in its own right as well as a presentation of its twelve constitutive prophetic books.[1] Although a number of models have been put forward, the redaction-critical readings of James Nogalski, Schart, Jakob Wöhrle, and others have emerged as an important force in contemporary critical scholarship.[2] In general, these scholars have developed a model that traces the compositional history from an initial late monarchic or exilic book of four prophets that grew through a series of stages into the full form of the Twelve Prophets that emerged in the Hellenistic period. The model has been quite influential in central European

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1. For discussion of the Book of the Twelve, see esp. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:xv–xlii; Paul L. Redditt, "The Formation of the Book of the Twelve: A Review of Research," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Schart, BZAW 325 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 1–26; Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen*, 1–27.

2. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*; Nogalski, *Redactional Processes*; Schart, *Die Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuchs*; Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen*; Wöhrle, *Der Abschluss des Zwölfprophetenbuches*; see also Burkard M. Zapff, *Redaktionsgeschichtliche Studien zum Michabuch im Kontext dem Dodekapropheton*, BZAW 256 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997).

scholarship, in large measure due to the appeal of diachronically oriented redaction-critical models among German-speaking scholars, but it has less of a following in North American and English-speaking circles, where more synchronically oriented canonical and literary models are becoming increasingly influential.[3]

The division between these two approaches is both unnecessary and counterproductive to the larger interests of modem, critical scholarship. Indeed, developments in redaction-critical methodology call explicitly for a combination of synchronic and diachronic strategies in reading biblical texts. Several methodological issues must be considered.

First is the synchronic question of the final form of the text at hand and its role in setting the agenda for diachronic study of the text.[4] Classical redaction-critical method frequently presupposes that redaction criticism appears near the end of the sequence of methodological steps because of the secondary nature of redactional additions to the text.[5] But Knierim argues that biblical exegesis must grapple with redaction-critical concerns at the outset, beginning with consideration of the final form of the text, insofar as biblical texts come to us from the hands of their presumed final redactors, who would have expanded and shaped the text according to their own concerns and understanding of the text at hand.[6] Interpreters cannot assume at the outset that a text is the product of redaction or that the interpretation of the final form of the text is self-evident. Rather, the final form of the text must be critically analyzed first to understand fully the organization, conceptualization, and concerns of the text as a whole. Only then may the text be probed for evidence of earlier levels of composition that must be reconstructed as well as the settings from which those levels

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3. See, e.g., Edgar W. Conrad, *Zechariah,* Readings (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999); Ehud Ben Zvi, *Micah*, FOTL 218 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Ben Zvi, *Hosea*, FOTL 21A, part 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

4. See Sweeney, "Formation and Form"; Sweeney, "Form Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, repr. as ch. 2 in this volume.

5. Richter, *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft*, 165–73; J. H. Hayes and C. R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 127–38; cf. Odil Hannes Steck, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Guide to the Methodology*, 2nd ed., RBS 39 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998); Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets: Towards a New Canonical Criticism*, JSOTSup 376 (London: T&T Clark, 2003).

6. Knierim, "Criticism of Literary Features"; cf. Knierim, "Form Criticism Reconsidered."

of composition would have derived. Indeed, explicit reference to later settings within the literature in question is crucial, such as the references to Cyrus in Isa 44:28 and 45:1 that provide a key argument to demonstrating the exilic setting of Second Isaiah. This issue is of particular importance to current research on the Book of the Twelve insofar as contemporary scholars often presume textual discontinuity without first understanding the organizational patterns and underlying conceptualization of the final form of the text. This problem is particularly acute when one considers the thin formal and linguistic bases, such as alleged Deuteronomistic language, as well as the influence of later theological categories, such as eschatology and the day of YHWH, on which much of contemporary redaction-critical work proceeds in reading the Book of the Twelve.

Second is the synchronic and diachronic problem of textual criticism. For the most part, biblical scholars are trained to view textual versions, such as the LXX, Dead Sea Scrolls, Targums, Peshitta, Vulgate, and so on, as treasure troves for improving the reading of the MT. But as text-critical research has developed during the twentieth century and beyond, scholars have learned to recognize that the versions have their own distinctive literary characters and theological or hermeneutical outlooks that mark them as literary-theological works in their right.[7] Although versions such as the LXX may be translated from an underlying Hebrew text, the interpretation of a version such as the LXX is not necessarily dependent on an understanding of the proto-MT or other Hebrew versions from which it might be derived. Such an observation has tremendous ramifications for reading the Book of the Twelve and reconstructing its compositional history, especially when we consider that the LXX forms of the book—with their variety of sequences in the orders of the twelve constituent books—differ markedly from the MT form and its well-known order of books. Given this consideration, it is not entirely clear that the MT represents the earliest form of the Book of the Twelve that would then stand as the foundation for redaction-critical work. Analysis of the Book of the Twelve must begin with the synchronic task of assessing the final forms of the versional texts in question, for example, the LXX, MT, and other relevant forms, to address the diachronic question of their respective socioreligious, sociopolitical, and historical settings. Only then may work turn to

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7. See, e.g., Arie van der Kooij, *Die alten Textzeugen des Jesajabuches: Ein Beitrag zur Textgeschichte des Alten Testaments*, OBO 35 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981); Van der Kooij, *Oracle of Tyre*.

the diachronic process of reconstructing the literary growth that led to those textual forms.

Third is the problem of evaluating textual coherence or more properly the lack thereof, which has been the primary basis for identifying the literary seams that point to redactional layers in a biblical text for well over a century. John Barton calls this methodological procedure into question by raising the issue of the so-called disappearing redactor.[8] The disappearing redactor refers to a redactor who has done the work of redaction so well that the literary seams are no longer evident, thereby depriving critics of one of the primary criteria employed in redaction-critical research. The issue is further complicated by advances in literary criticism, insofar as literary scholars such as Sternberg have demonstrated the importance of the role of textual gapping, in which textual discontinuity so often functions as a deliberate means employed to signal elements of plot and characterization within a single text.[9] Scholars must now reckon with the possibility that a coherent text in fact is a redactional text and a discontinuous or gapped text may well be the work of an original author. Again, this issue is of particular importance to study of the Book of the Twelve, which comprises twelve relatively coherent and discrete prophetic books in an order that is inherently unstable. Given the differences in the sequence of the constituent books, we cannot presume a specific sequence among the books or even that there was a collection of books prior to the present forms of the Twelve.

Fourth is the question of how biblical books are received and read. Modem literary criticism has correctly challenged the traditional diachronic notion of the author as the governing factor in the interpretation of literature. For most of the twentieth century, modem scholarship has proceeded on the basis of the view that the reconstruction of the earliest levels of texts in relation to their earliest settings gives us access both to the original text forms and to the setting and intentions of its original authors. But modem reader-response criticism raised the question of the role of the reader in the construction of literature, that is, to what extent do the reader's concerns govern the interpretation of literature and indeed construct the text insofar as those concerns then set the

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8. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 45–60.
9. Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*.

agenda for interpretation?[10] Indeed, modem scholarship is replete with examples in which New Testament concerns are read back into the text of the Hebrew Bible. The interpretation of the phrase *wəhāyâ bəʾaḥărît hayyāmîm*, "and it shall come to pass in later days," in Mic 4:1 and Isa 2:2 has so frequently been interpreted as a signal of the text's eschatological concerns. But such an interpretation is based on the LXX rendition of the phrase, *kai estai ep' eschatōn*, "and it will come to pass upon the end of days," and later Second Temple period and New Testament concerns with eschatology. Comparison with the usage of the Akkadian cognate of the phrase, *ana aḥrat ūmī*, literally "in the back of days," and examination of *wəhāyâ bəʾaḥărît hayyāmîm* in context demonstrates that it simply refers to the future, not to an eschatological scenario, as has been presumed by so many interpreters working under the influence of the LXX rendition of the phrase and its understanding in relation to New Testament concerns.[11] Concern with the text's reception does not negate concern with the text's author, as some modem literary critics contend. Rather, reader-response and reception criticism open a discussion as to how texts are interpreted in later times and contexts as a complement to attempts to reconstruct the intentions of the author. Such concerns have important implications for reading the Book of the Twelve, especially when we consider that visions of restoration in the monarchic period might have a very different construction when they are read in the Persian, Hellenistic, or Greco-Roman periods and beyond.

With these considerations in mind, this paper assesses the final forms of the LXX and MT versions of the Book of the Twelve Prophets in an effort to understand their distinctive orders of presentation and to reconstruct sociopolitical, socioreligious, and historical settings in which each form would have been produced. The paper presupposes my earlier redaction-critical analyses of the books of Hosea, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk within the Book of the Twelve presented in my study of the role played by King Josiah's program of religious reform and national restoration in the composition of biblical literature.[12] My earlier analyses

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10. See Edgar V. McKnight, "Reader Response Criticism," in McKenzie and Haynes, *To Each Its Own Meaning*, 230–52; cf. Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading Isaiah*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets*.

11. Horst Seebass, "אַחֲרִית," *TDOT* 1:210–12; cf. De Vries, *From Old Revelation to New*, 89–95.

12. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*; see also Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, ad loc.

of these books argued that Hosea, Amos, Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk are discrete compositional wholes that were composed in relation to specific concerns and settings in the late monarchic period. Micah, however, shows evidence of having been redacted to address concerns with the Babylonian exile.

Analysis of both the final forms of the Book of the Twelve and its constituent prophetic books points to a very different model for reading the Book of the Twelve as a whole and for reconstructing its compositional history. This paper argues that the LXX order of the book represents the original sequence of the Book of the Twelve that dates to the early Persian period, whereas the MT represents a later order of books that may be placed in relation to the efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah later in the Persian period to restore Jerusalem as the holy center of postexilic Judah.

2.

The Book of the Twelve Prophets appears in a variety of forms, including the MT, a variety of LXX forms, several forms known from the manuscripts of the Judean wilderness, and others. An assessment of these forms is necessary in order to determine the basis on which analysis of the Book of the Twelve as a whole can proceed.[13]

The MT Hebrew text of the Twelve Prophets constitutes a long-recognized standard form of the text, including a standard order of its constituent prophetic books. The MT order includes Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. This order is not mentioned in the Talmudic discussion of the order of the biblical books (b. B. Bat. 14b). It does appear in MT Hebrew manuscripts beginning with the Cairo Codex of the Prophets, which dates to 896 CE, and it is generally recognized as the oldest manuscript of the MT version of the Prophets. The MT order also appears in two manuscripts of the Book of the Twelve from the Judean wilderness, including the Wadi Murabbaʿat Twelve Prophets scroll (Mur 88), which dates to the second century CE, and the Nahal Hever Greek Twelve Prophets Scroll (8ḤevXIIgr), which dates to the late first century BCE.[14]

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13. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:xxvii–xxxix: Sweeney, "Sequence and Interpretation."

14. See Józef T. Milik, "Rouleau des Douze Prophètes," in *Les grottes de Murabbaʿat*, ed. Pierre Benoit, Józef T. Milik, and Roland de Vaux, DJD 2 (Oxford: Clarendon,

Although Dominique Barthélemy views the Nahal Hever Greek Twelve Prophets scroll as an early example of the so-called *kaige* recension of the LXX, its very wooden translation style—including instances when it simply transliterates a Hebrew term whose meaning is not clear—its close adherence to the proto-MT, and its adoption of the proto-MT order of the Twelve Prophets indicates that it is not a recensional text at all. Instead, the Nahal Hever Greek Twelve Prophets scroll must be considered as a somewhat crude local translation of the proto-MT not unlike that witnessed in the Wadi Murabbaʿat Twelve Prophets scroll.[15] The proto-MT order of the Twelve Prophets was also employed in the Vulgate, which was produced by Jerome in the fourth century BCE on the basis of Jewish sources available at the time.

The Greek manuscript tradition witnesses a wide variety of orders in the presentation of the Book of the Twelve Prophets, but a number of the earliest uncial manuscripts present the order Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.[16] These manuscripts include Codex Vaticanus, which dates to the fourth century CE; Codex Sinaiticus, which also dates to the fourth century CE; Codex Alexandrinus, which dates to the fifth century CE; Codex Marchalianus, which dates to the sixth century CE; and Codex Basiliano-Venetus, which dates to the eighth–ninth centuries CE. This order also appears in the canon lists of Pseudo-Gelasius, falsely attributed to the late fifth-century Pope Gelasius, and Codex Claromontanus, which dates to the fifth or sixth century CE. The relatively early dates of these manuscript witnesses indicate an early LXX order that continues to appear in critical editions of the LXX. Although this order is not explicitly cited in the Babylonian Talmud, the Talmud's discussion of the order of books raises the possibility of a historical sequence, including Hosea, Isaiah, Amos, and Micah, which may presuppose the order now found in the early LXX uncials.

Other orders are also known, but none appears as consistently as those of the (proto-)MT and early LXX traditions, and so they need not

1961), 181–205; Emanuel Tov, *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Naḥal Ḥever (8ḤevXllgr)*, DJD 8 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

15. Dominique Barthélemy, *Les devanciers d'Aquila*, VTSup 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1963); cf. my discussion in Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 26–28.

16. See Swete, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 125–28, 129–32, 197–230.

be considered.[17] Altogether, these orders demonstrate great fluidity in the reading of the sequence of the Book of the Twelve so that we must establish which order of the book likely represents the earliest form of the Book of the Twelve Prophets.

In my earlier work on sequence of the Book of the Twelve, I have identified distinctive conceptualizations underlying our two primary text forms.[18] The LXX sequence begins with Hosea, Amos, and Micah, which has generally been understood to represent an interest in grouping the books historically in the LXX, but close attention to the order of these three books indicates that this is not the case at all. Amos cites events associated with the Israelite-Aramaean wars of the late ninth and early eighth century BCE and makes no overt references to the Assyrian Empire. Hosea is very much concerned with Israel's alliance with Assyria, initiated under King Jehu (r. 842–815 BCE) and continued by his descendants through the reigns of King Jeroboam ben Joash (786–746 BCE) and King Zechariah ben Jeroboam (746 BCE). Micah presupposes the Assyrian invasion of Judah by Sennacherib in 701 BCE and even describes his own experience in fleeing from his hometown of Moresheth-Gath on the border between Judah and Philistia, which is precisely where Sennacherib struck. The chronology of these three prophets must be Amos, Hosea, and Micah rather than Hosea, Amos, and Micah. Chronology therefore does not satisfactorily explain the sequence.

Although chronology may be influential, insofar as Hosea, Amos, and Micah are all eighth-century prophets, another principle must explain their order. Concern with the anticipated judgment against the Northern Kingdom of Israel emerges as the principle that motivates the sequence of these books. Hosea is explicit in condemning the Northern Kingdom—and to a lesser extent, Judah—insofar as he employs the metaphor of his own failed marriage with Gomer to explain YHWH's plans for judgment against the purportedly faithless bride Israel (Hos 1–2). But Hosea also envisions the reunification of Israel and Judah under a Davidic king as part of the process of restoration (Hos 3:1–5). Amos dearly condemns northern Israel, particularly for its alleged crimes of social justice against his native Judah (Amos 2:6–16). He, too, calls for the restoration of Davidic rule over Israel and Judah (Amos 9:11–15). Micah has much criticism for the kings

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17. For discussion, see Jones, *Formation of the Book*; Ben Zvi, "Twelve Prophetic Books."

18. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:xxvii–xxxix; Sweeney, "Sequence and Interpretation."

of northern Israel, whose decisions led to the invasion of his homeland, but he has plenty of critique for the Davidic kings who followed in their northern counterparts' footsteps, ultimately costing Micah his home (Mic 1–3). For all of Micah's dissatisfaction with the kings, the book envisions a Davidic king who will overthrow the nations that threaten Israel—but it does so in relation to the aftermath of Babylonian exile (Mic 4–5).

Micah's critique of the northern and southern kings then leads us to Joel, which portrays YHWH's defeat of the threats posed by the nations to Jerusalem. Indeed, Joel's frequent intertextual citations frequently take up Obadiah, which follows in the LXX sequence.[19] Obadiah focuses on judgment against Edom, one of the nations that threatened Jerusalem in Judean history. Jonah takes up the question of YHWH's mercy to Nineveh, thereby preserving the very city that would one day destroy northern Israel and subjugate Judah. Jonah's position prior to Nahum is auspicious in the LXX form of the Book of the Twelve. Nahum celebrates the downfall of Nineveh, the Assyrian oppressor spared in Jonah that went on to destroy Israel and subjugate Judah. Habakkuk establishes that YHWH has brought the Chaldeans, that is, neo-Babylonians, to threaten Jerusalem but will ultimately defeat them for their alleged arrogance and crimes (Hab 1–2). Zephaniah warns Jerusalem to adhere to YHWH or suffer the consequences. Haggai calls on the people of Persian-period Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Zechariah portrays the significance of rebuilding the temple, anticipating YHWH's defeat of the oppressor nations who have subjugated the city. Finally, Malachi calls for adherence to YHWH's torah and temple as the bases for restoring the ruptured covenant.

Altogether, the LXX sequence of the Book of the Twelve points to an interest in the fate of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and its implications for Jerusalem and Judah. Just as northern Israel would suffer punishment for its failure to adhere to YHWH's will, so Jerusalem and Judah would suffer the same fate if they did not learn the lesson. But once the punishment was over, YHWH would act to restore Jerusalem and the people at large, who would then be expected to adhere to YHWH' s expectations. Indeed, Micah correlates the concern with northern Israel's punishment with the question of restoration following the Babylonian exile. But the Babylonian exile does not otherwise become an explicit concern until

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19. For discussion of Joel's intertextual citations of Obadiah and other biblical works, see esp. Siegfried Bergler, *Joel als Schriftinterpret*, BEATAJ 16 (Frankfurt: Lang, 1988).

much later in the sequence of the Twelve, when Habakkuk questions YHWH concerning the presence of the Babylonians in Judah and Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi presuppose settings in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile.

When we turn to the MT sequence of the Book of the Twelve, we see a different set of concerns, in which the fate of Jerusalem appears to be highlighted throughout. The MT begins with Hosea's portrayal of the disruption of the covenant and its implications for northern Israel, but it immediately turns to Joel, with its interest in the threat posed to Jerusalem by the nations. It then returns to Amos's indictment of northern Israel, but then it turns in Obadiah to an indictment of Edom, which is well-known for its role in the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Micah's diatribes against the northern and then the southern kings precede YHWH's efforts to save Nineveh from judgment once the people of the city repented. With Nahum's celebration of the downfall of Nineveh, Jerusalem's deliverance from oppression once again comes to the forefront. Habakkuk focuses on Judah—with obvious implications for Jerusalem—in his dialogue with YHWH concerning the presence of the Chaldeans, and his anticipation of YHWH's deliverance once the punishment of the land is complete. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are all expressly concerned with Jerusalem and the temple.

The differing sequences of books and the underlying concerns that come to expression in these sequences demand consideration of the socio-religious, historical, and political settings that would have produced each. When we see the concern with the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the LXX sequence, with its focus on judgment against Israel, its anticipation of reunification under a Davidic king, its focus on judgment against Jerusalem, and finally its interest in the restoration of Jerusalem, we see a concern that is initially rooted in the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah. Both monarchs are portrayed as engaging in temple reform and revolt against their Assyrian overlords with an eye to reasserting Davidic rule over the territory and people of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel. Of course, with the inclusion of clearly postexilic books, such as Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the monarchic period cannot serve as the setting for the full form of the LXX version of the book. But the concern with northern Israel's experience as a model for that of Jerusalem and the anticipation of full restoration points most decidedly to the early Persian period, when the restoration of the temple pointed to the possibility of the nations' recognition of YHWH's worldwide sovereignty by the nations and the potential

for the restoration of Davidic rule over all Israel once again. Later periods, such as the later Persian, Hellenistic, or Hasmonean periods, do not qualify. The later Persian period sees no overt interest in the restoration of Israel and Judah or even of Davidic kingship. The Hellenistic period likewise sees no interest in the reunification of Israel and Judah or the restoration of Davidic kingship, particularly after Alexander the Great brutally suppressed Samaria but established an alliance with Jerusalem. The Hasmonean period sees no restoration of Davidic kingship as the Hasmoneans, who actually restored Jerusalem's rule over northern Israel, were not Davidic. But interest in the restoration of the Davidic monarchy emerges during the period of Hasmonean rule as the Judean population becomes increasingly dissatisfied with their Hasmonean rulers.

When we turn to the concern with Jerusalem throughout the MT sequence of the Twelve, we see that it is concerned with the potential threats to Jerusalem and YHWH's plans to restore the city and temple once the threats have passed. Such concerns might well find their impetus in the post-Josian monarchic period, but the inclusion of clearly postexilic books, such as Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, points to later periods. Although concern with northern Israel still appears, its focus has been diluted by the deliberate highlighting of Jerusalem's fate, both in terms of judgment and restoration, throughout. Although the building of the temple and Zerubbabel's return to Jerusalem might have ignited hopes for the reunification of Israel and Judah in the early Persian period, no such reunification appears to be contemplated in later periods. The portrayal of the administrations of Nehemiah and Ezra focuses on the restoration of Jerusalem throughout, but the relationship with Samaria is invariably portrayed as one of conflict and threat against Jerusalem. Likewise, the concluding emphasis on adherence to YHWH's torah and temple fits well with the Ezra-Nehemian setting. Although concerns with the restoration of Davidic kingship also appear throughout the sequence, they are a distant vision to be realized once the full period of punishment is over. Later periods again do not qualify. Jerusalem is not threatened during the Hellenistic period, as indicated by Alexander's alliance with the city and the subsequent period of Ptolemaic rule. Although the Seleucid dynasty clearly threatens Jerusalem, the rise of the Hasmonean dynasty precludes the restoration of Davidic rule.

Although both forms of the Book of the Twelve are extant for centuries to come, it appears that the LXX sequence, with its interest in the fate of northern Israel as a model for Jerusalem's and Judah's future, is

the earlier form of the book. Indeed, the close intertextual relationships between Joel and Obadiah, on the one hand, and Jonah and Nahum, on the other hand, appear to support such a contention. Consequently, any theory of the redactional formation of the Book of the Twelve Prophets must account for the LXX sequence of books.

3.

Two major conclusions may be drawn from this discussion. First, we cannot assume that the MT provides us with a full basis for engaging in redaction-critical work on the Book of the Twelve. The variety of text forms of the Book of the Twelve indicates a fluid order in their presentation that must be assessed in order to determine which sequence constitutes the earliest form of the book. Although the proto-MT form of the book is known from the Judean desert, the LXX order of the books appears to be the earliest insofar it presents a concern with judgment against the Northern Kingdom of Israel that serves as a paradigm for understanding judgment against Jerusalem and Judah prior to restoration of the whole. Such concerns would have originated in the reigns of Kings Hezekiah and Josiah of Judah, who sought to bring the territory and population of the Northern Kingdom of Israel back under Davidic rule, but of course such an ambition was never realized during the reign of either king. Such concerns persisted through the early Persian period, however, when the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple was believed to portend the restoration of the house of David and the recognition of YHWH's sovereignty in Jerusalem throughout the entire world. The MT sequence indicates an interest in the fate of Jerusalem, including its punishment and its restoration, which is best set in the period of Ezra and Nehemiah and continued through the Second Temple period.

Second, the differing orders of the constituent books of the Book of the Twelve indicate that these books must be viewed as discrete compositions within the whole that can be shifted in sequence according to an overarching view of their respective significance within the larger form of the Book of the Twelve. Such an observation undermines views that each book is the product of gradual growth that was at least in part designed to shape them for their specific places within the Book of the Twelve. Indeed, my earlier individual analyses of Hosea, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk demonstrate that, with the exception of Micah, each is preoccupied with a set of concerns relevant to the historical settings identified

within the book for each. Only Micah shows an interest in the Babylonian exile, which would point to a potential interest in the overarching viewpoints of the book as a whole. There is little effort to correlate the books as a whole through their superscriptions, although Nogalski, Schart, Wöhrle, and others are likely correct in noting subcollections within the whole, such as Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah, or Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that overarching concerns with an eschatological day of YHWH or the like have played a role in the redactional correlation of these books. Such an agenda is not consistently applied throughout the books of the Twelve, and neither are the day of YHWH and other passages pertaining to the future markedly eschatological in relation to the concerns of their compositional settings. Rather, such concerns are read into the text by later readers. Instead, Micah appears to have been redacted with an eye to addressing the concerns of the Babylonian exile, but it is not clear that this redaction took place with an eye to shaping the Book of the Twelve.

In sum, the Book of the Twelve must be viewed as a literary work in and of itself, albeit in each of its extant forms witnessed by the MT, LXX, and other versions, as well as a collection of twelve independently composed prophetic books that have been brought together to form the whole.

Hosea's Reading of Pentateuchal Narratives:
A Window for a Foundational E Stratum

1.

Hosea 12 includes references to three major narrative complexes in the Pentateuch, namely, the Jacob narratives in Gen 25–35, including references to the account of the birth of Jacob and Esau, Jacob's wrestling with an angel, his establishing territorial boundaries with Laban, and his journey to Aram to find a bride; the exodus narrative, including a reference to the prophet who brought Israel up from Egypt; and the wilderness narratives, including a reference to Israel's dwelling in tents following the exodus from the land of Egypt.

Some interpreters maintain that these references must be later additions to the book of Hosea.[1] Considerations supporting such a view would include difficulties in establishing the compositional history of the Pentateuch coupled with the view that both the final forms of the Pentateuch and the Prophets are late redactional products of the Second Temple period. Some interpreters, citing the references to the Pentateuch among

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1. See, e.g., the paper by Jakob Wöhrle: "There's No Master Key! The Literary Character of the Priestly Stratum and the Formation of the Pentateuch," in Gertz et al., *The Formation of the Pentateuch*, 391–403. For the context of the study of Hosea in relation to the redactional formation of the Book of the Twelve, see Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammulungen*, 54–58, 229–40; Wöhrle, *Der Abschluss des Zwölfprophetenbuches*, 429–37; see also Schart, *Die Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuchs*, esp. 101–55; Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 58–73.

other arguments, now maintain that Hosea was composed entirely in the
Persian period.[2]

But recent changes in scholarly understandings of both Hosea and the
Pentateuch make it possible to realize that Hosea cited an early stratum
of the pentateuchal narrative to make a point concerning Israel's relations
with the Assyrian Empire. In the case of Hosea, reassessment of the Black
Obelisk of Shalmaneser III and the vassal list of Adad-Nirari III indicates
that Israel was a vassal of Assyria during the reign of the Jehu dynasty.[3]
Hosea was opposed to that alliance and called for a realignment of Israel's
foreign policy to forge a new alliance with Aram, from which Israel's ances-
tors had come.[4] In the case of the Pentateuch, recent shifts in pentateuchal
source theory indicate that the J stratum of the Pentateuch, formerly
viewed as the earliest of the strata, actually dates to the late monarchic or
even the exilic period.[5] Such a redating of J leaves open the possibility that
the E stratum of the Pentateuch, written during the time of the Northern
Kingdom of Israel, was the earliest stage of pentateuchal composition and
that the J stratum, written during the later period of the Judean monarchy
and its aftermath, was a redactional layer that reread and rewrote E after it
was brought south to Judah following the collapse of the Northern King-
dom of Israel in the late eighth century BCE.[6]

This paper argues that Hosea cited an early Ephraimite (E) version
of the Pentateuch to support his contention that Israel should abandon
its alliance with Assyria in order to forge a new alliance with Aram, the
homeland of Israel's ancestors. The paper proceeds in three major parts.
First, it examines Hosea's hostility to Assyria and Egypt in relation to the
evidence from the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III and the vassal list of
Adad-nirari III to argue that the prophet calls for an end to Israel's alli-
ance with Assyria. Second, it examines the pentateuchal citations in Hos

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2. E.g., James M. Bos, *Reconsidering the Date and Provenance of the Book of Hosea:
The Case for Persian-Period Yehud*, LHBOTS 580 (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

3. For the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, *ANET*, 281; *ANEP*, fig. 351. For the
tributary list of Adad-nirari III, see Page, "Stela of Adad Nirari III."

4. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:1–144, esp. 118–30.

5. E.g., John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale Uni-
versity Press, 1975); Van Seters, *Prologue to History*; Van Seters, *Life of Moses*; Christof
Levin, *Der J-hwist*, FRLANT 157 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993); cf.
Nicholson, *Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century*, 132–60; Dozeman and Schmid, *Fare-
well to the Y-hwist?*

6. E.g., Yoreh, *First Book of G-d*.

12 to establish their relationship to the current pentateuchal narrative in Genesis and their rhetorical functions in the book of Hosea. Third, it examines the pentateuchal narratives concerning Jacob, the exodus, and the wilderness journey to establish the likelihood that an E version of each narrative existed in the mid- to late eighth century, when Hosea would have been active. The paper demonstrates that it is possible to posit an E or Ephraimite composition of the Pentateuch that would have included early versions of the Jacob, exodus, and wilderness narratives. It further demonstrates that Hosea cited this narrative to support his argument that Israel should abandon its alliance with Assyria to reestablish its alliance with Aram.

<div align="center">2.</div>

Interpreters generally recognize that Hosea is opposed to religious apostasy in northern Israel.[7] The opening narrative in Hos 1:2–3:5 concerning Hosea's marriage to Gomer and its implications for understanding YHWH's metaphorical marriage relationship with Israel make this concern quite clear. Just as the prophet charges his wife with adultery insofar as he claims that she has pursued other lovers and proposes to divorce her, so YHWH charges Israel with having pursued other gods and proposes to bring punishment on the nation for having done so. Of course we will never know whether either Gomer or Israel is actually guilty of the infidelity of which they are charged; neither Gomer nor Israel ever gets the chance to speak or to defend themselves. Furthermore, we must recognize that the text is committed to defending divine integrity by charging Israel rather than YHWH with wrongdoing. This is particularly the case in view of Israel's destruction at the hands of the Assyrian Empire in 722/721 BCE despite YHWH's covenant with Israel that promised to make it a great nation with a population as numerous as the sands of the sea.

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7. For current major commentaries on Hosea, see Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea*, AB 24 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980); Graham I. Davies, *Hosea*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992); Jörg Jeremias, *Der Prophet Hosea*, ATD 24.1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983); Francis Landy, *Hosea*, Readings (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995); Andrew A. MacIntosh, *Hosea*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997); Wolff, *Hosea*; Gale A. Yee, "Hosea," *NIB* 7:197–297; Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:1–144.

But interpreters are less able to recognize the political dimensions of the prophet's message, namely, his opposition to Israel's vassal relationship with the Assyrian Empire from the time of King Jehu of Israel (842–815 BCE) through the last years of the nation's existence in 746–722 BCE.[8] Part of the reason for their reluctance is the failure of Kings to mention Israel's alliance with Assyria during this period, and another reason is the well-established view correctly argued by both Morton Cogan and John McKay that Assyria did not impose worship of its own gods on nations subjugated to its rule.[9] But the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III portrays King Jehu of Israel bowing at the feet of the Assyrian monarch in submission during the late ninth century BCE, and the vassal list of Adad-nirari III includes Jehu's grandson Joash ben Jehoahaz among his tributaries.[10] Furthermore, Assyrian vassal treaties typically included lists of the gods of all the nations that were party to the treaty as witnesses as well as ritual ceremonies that committed the parties to the treaty before all of the gods named therein.[11] The Assyrians may not have required the worship of their gods by nations bound to them by such treaties, but they certainly required recognition of their gods. Although unmentioned in the book of Kings, such an alliance is fully plausible for the late ninth through the mid-eighth centuries BCE, as it would have protected Israel from the advances of the Aramaeans, who sought to force their own alliance on Israel in order better to defend themselves against the Assyrians, who began probing their borders during the reign of Shalmaneser III.[12] Kings chose not to mention the Assyrian treaty, not because it did not exist, but because Kings is designed to portray Assyria as the agent of YHWH's punishment against Israel. From the standpoint of Kings's historiographical perspective, such a move would explain Israel's destruction in 722–721 BCE.[13]

With these considerations in mind, it is important to note that Hosea appears to have a special concern with the royal house of Jehu and the

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8. See esp. my treatment of Hosea in Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:1–144; Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 256–72.

9. John McKay, *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians*, SBT 2/26 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1973); Morton Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion*, SBLMS 19 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974), 55–96.

10. See note 3 above.

11. Wiseman, "Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon"; *ANET*, 534–41.

12. Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 330–40.

13. Sweeney, "Portrayal of Assyria."

Assyrian Empire.[14] The superscription for the book of Hosea, in Hos 1:1, mentions only King Jeroboam ben Joash (786–746 BCE), the fourth monarch of the house of Jehu, of the northern Israelite kings and a sequence of Judean kings including Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (783–687/686 BCE). The account of Hosea's failed marriage begins in Hos 1:2–5 begins with a divine command to marry a woman of harlotry so that she might bear children of harlotry, beginning with the firstborn, Jezreel. This name is quite propitious because it speaks to the origins of the house of Jehu. Jehu overthrew the preceding house of Omri by assassinating King Jehoram ben Ahaz of Israel, King Ahaziah ben Jehoshaphat of Judah, and Jezebel bat Ittobaal, the widow of King Ahab ben Omri of Israel at Jezreel. Jezreel, of course, also signals Ahab's murder of Naboth, instigated by Jezebel, so that he might seize Naboth's property at Jezreel for himself. Fundamentally, Jezreel signals the origins of the house of Jehu, and the subsequent children born to Hosea and Gomer—the daughter, Lo Ruhmah (No Mercy), and the second son, Lo Ammi (Not My People)—symbolize the dissolution of the marriage and the dissolution of YHWH's relationship with the Jehu-led Northern Kingdom of Israel.

We may also observe the prophet's statements about the Assyrians.[15] After accusing Israel of treachery in Hos 5:8–12, the prophet states in verse 13, "and Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his sore, and Ephraim went to Assyria and he sent to a contentious king. But he was not able to heal you, and he will not heal from you a sore." Here we see a scenario in which the prophet portrays Ephraim's unsuccessful turn to Assyria for aid. The circumstances are not clear, but the turn to Assyria is unmistakable. In Hos 7:8–10, the prophet accuses Ephraim of seeking aid everywhere among the nations, but not from YHWH. In verses 11–12, the prophet states, "And Ephraim has acted like a silly dove without sense; Egypt, they called; to Assyria they went. When they go, I will spread my net upon them; like a bird of the heavens, I will bring them down; I will chastise them when hearing of their treaty." The term *laʿădātām* is problematic, but it is best rendered as a form of *ʿēdût*, "testimony, treaty." Again, Israel's relationship with Assyria comes into question. The prophet accuses Israel of fruitlessly seeking recourse among the nations in Hos 8:7–14, "for they have gone up to Assyria like a wandering ass, Ephraim has hired lovers" (v. 9). In Hos 9:3,

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14. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:1–40.

15. For treatment of the following passages, see Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, ad loc.

the prophet charges that "They shall not dwell in the land of YHWH, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and in Assyria, unclean food they will eat." Hosea claims in Hos 10:5–8 that idolatrous calf of Beth Aven/Bethel "shall be carried to Assyria" (v. 6). He refers in Hos 10:14 to defeat at Beth Arbel by Shalman, that is, Shalmaneser III, the Assyrian monarch whom King Ahab fought and to whom Jehu submitted. In Hos 11:5, he claims, "No, he [Israel] returns to the land of Egypt, and Assyria is his king." When YHWH rescues them in Hos 11:11, "They will flutter like birds from Egypt and like doves from the land of Assyria." In Hos 12:2b, the prophet charges, "And a covenant with Assyria they make, and oil to Egypt they carry." When the prophet calls for Israel to return to YHWH in Hos 14:2–9, he states in verse 4, "Assyria will not save us; upon horses we will not ride, and we will not say again, 'our G-d,' to the work of our hands."

Clearly, Hosea has a problem with Assyria—and Egypt. When one considers the alliance between the Jehu dynasty and Assyria, the cause of that problem becomes clear, that is, Hosea objects to Israel's alliance with Assyria. And indeed, Egypt enters into the picture because scholars have long recognized that Assyria's foreign policy in the late ninth through the eighth centuries BCE was to take control of the trade routes to Egypt and thereby dominate the economy of western Asia and the eastern Mediterranean.[16] The question then becomes, Why?

3.

The answer to our question lies in Hosea's citations of the pentateuchal narratives, including the Jacob narratives and the exodus/wilderness narratives.[17]

Hosea 12 appears as a subunit within the larger structure of the book as a whole. As my previous studies of Hosea demonstrate, the book is designed as a prophetic instruction that calls for Israel to return to YHWH. Following the superscription, in Hos 1:1, the balance of the book, in 1:2–14:9, appears as Hosea's paraenetical appeal for Israel's return. The report of YHWH's speech to Hosea concerning marriage and the birth of children in 1:2–2:3 sets the tone and parameters for the report of Hosea's speech appealing for Israel's return in 2:4–14:9. Hosea 12:1–15 appears as an element within this larger structure, in which the prophet speaks, but

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16. Elat, "Economic Relations."
17. For discussion, see Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 1:116–30.

quotes YHWH throughout to make the appropriate points. Overall, the argument of Hos 12:1–15 is that YHWH has acted on Israel's behalf to bring them up from Egypt to a secure and well-defined land, as indicated by Jacob's treaty with Laban/Aram as related in Gen 31; Israel must therefore abandon its relationship with Assyria and return to YHWH.[18]

Structure Diagram of Hosea

Prophetic instruction: paraenetical appeal for Israel's return to YHWH	Hosea 1–14
I. Superscription	1:1
II. Parenetic appeal for Israel's return	1:2–14:9
A. Report of YHWH's speaking to Hosea: marriage and birth of children	1:2–2:3
B. Report of Hosea's speech concerning appeal for Israel's return	2:4–14:9
1. Report of Hosea's appeal to children for mother's return: restoration of united people under Davidic monarch	2:4–3:5
2. Report of YHWH's controversy against Israel	4:1–19
3. Detailed report of YHWH's call for Israel's return	5:1–14:9
a. Initial statement of issues: Israel's harlotry/alien children	5:1–7
b. Concerning Israel's alliance with Assyria/Egypt	5:8–7:16
c. Concerning Israel's kings and cultic apostasy	8:1–14
d. Concerning Israel's pagan cultic practice/rejection of YHWH	9:1–14:1
(1) Announcement of punishment	9:1–9
(2) Israel as grapes found in wilderness/rebellion at Baal Peor	9:10–17
(3) Israel as luxuriant vine that will be grown over	10:1–8
(4) Israel as trained heifer that must repent/return	10:9–11:11
(5) Ephraim's need for exile and return like Jacob	12:1–15
(6) Ephraim's exalted status turned to punishment and death	13:1–14:1
4. Appeal for Israel to return to YHWH/abandon alliance with Assyria	14:2–9

18. See Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 267.

III. Postscript: instruction for wise to understand (Hosea) and to   14:10
      act properly

Hosea 12 begins in Hos 12:1–2 with the prophet's above-noted objec-
tions to Israel's covenant with Assyria, which causes them to present oil
to Egypt. Hosea 12:3–7 then follows with the first set of references to the
Jacob narratives of the Pentateuch.[19] The pericope begins with the notice
that "YHWH had a controversy with Judah" in verse 3a. Some interpret-
ers view this notice with suspicion,[20] but they overlook the role that Judah
played in the tribal structure of the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the
reigns of the Omride and Jehu dynasties. Judah was a vassal of northern
Israel during this time. Although the Davidic monarch continued to sit on
the throne in Jerusalem, Judah was obligated to give support to northern
Israel in times of need. Examples would include Jehoshaphat's accompa-
nying the king of Israel in battle against the Aramaeans at Ramot Gilead
(1 Kgs 22) and against the Moabites (2 Kgs 3), the presence of the Judean
prophet and sheep broker Amos of Tekoa at Bethel to present tribute
offerings (Amos 7–9), the action of King Jehoash of Israel against King
Amaziah of Judah when the latter attempted to revolt (2 Kgs 14:1–22), and
the claims of King Jeroboam ben Joash/Jehoash of Israel to rule a kingdom
that extended from Lebo-Hamath in Aram to the Sea of the Aravah in
Judah (2 Kgs 14:23–29).
    Hosea 12:3b continues with a focus on YHWH's treatment of Jacob for
his deeds. Verses 4–9 present a series of acts drawn from the pentateuchal
narrative beginning with the references to Jacob's attempt to supplant his
brother in the womb (Gen 25:19–26), continuing with his struggle with
G-d (Gen 32:4–33) and culminating in the reference to YHWH's finding
Jacob at Bethel to speak with him (Gen 28:10–22). Each citation serves as a
means to remind the reader of Jacob's experience with YHWH. In the case
of his struggle with his twin brother, Esau, Jacob overcame Esau early on
by obtaining the rights of the firstborn (Gen 25:27–34) and the blessing of
his father, Isaac (Gen 27:1–45), but was forced into exile to Aram in order
to find a bride and to avoid Esau's wrath (Gen 27:46–28:9). Even when

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19. For earlier studies, see Helmut Utzschneider, *Hosea: Prophet vor dem Ende*
(Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 186–230;
Heinz-Dieter Neef, *Die Heilstraditionen Israels in der Verkündigung des Propheten
Hosea*, BZAW 169 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987), 15–49.

20. E.g., Wolff, *Hosea*, 206, 211.

Jacob returned to the land of Israel with his wives and children, he still had to contend with an angry Esau bent on vengeance. These examples would point to YHWH's support of Jacob during his struggle with Esau to prepare him to serve as Israel's eponymous ancestor.

In the case of the wrestling with G-d, that language is certainly preserved in Gen 32:29 at the point when the "man" with whom Jacob wrestled declared that his name would henceforth be "Israel" to signify his status as one who struggled with men and with G-d and prevailed, as well as his status as the eponymous ancestor of Israel. Interpreters have been troubled by the reference to angel in Hos 12:5, but such a statement need not reflect the text of an early version of the Genesis narrative, as some contend. Rather, it is an attempt to qualify the statement that Jacob had wrestled with G-d and prevailed when in fact the text in Gen 32:25 states that his opponent was a man. By introducing the term *angel*, Hos 12:5 resolves the ambiguity inherent in the (proto-)Genesis presentation as well as the theological problem posed by a statement that Jacob had overcome G-d/YHWH. As a result of the encounter, YHWH rewarded Jacob with his new status as eponymous ancestor of Israel and likewise explained the name of the city Penuel in the Transjordan as well as the Israelite practice of devoting the thigh portion of a sacrifice to YHWH.

Finally, Hos 12:5b refers to YHWH's appearance to Jacob at Bethel in Gen 28:10–22, where YHWH promised that Jacob would become a great nation in the land of Israel with descendants like the dust of the earth spreading throughout the land and blessing the families of the land. We may also note that Jacob's second encounter with YHWH at Bethel in Gen 35:1–15 again results in the promise that Jacob would become a great nation and the reiteration of his name Israel. Hosea 12:6–7 follows up with a reminder that YHWH guided and blessed Jacob throughout all of these struggles and an appeal to Jacob therefore to return to YHWH. In the context of Hos 12:1–2, such an appeal to return to YHWH would be a reconsideration of the covenant with Assyria.

A key consideration that ties these references together is not only YHWH's support of Jacob, but Jacob's growing from a contentious young man who rivals his older twin brother into a man who becomes the ancestor of his nation.[21] Each reference—the conflict with Esau, who is the

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21. On the Jacob narratives, see Sweeney, "Puns, Politics, and Perushim."

eponymous ancestor of Edom; the wrestling with the man/G-d/angel to
found Penuel and to obtain the name Israel; and the vision of YHWH at
Bethel—results in elements that define the national experience and char-
acter of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, namely, its conflicts with Edom
during the eighth century BCE that result in Edom's breaking away from
Israel and its vassal Judah (2 Kgs 8:20–22, 14:7; cf. 16:6) during the late
ninth through eighth centuries BCE. The references to YHWH's granting
the name Israel to Jacob constitute etiological explanations concerning the
origins of the name of the nation. The reference to Penuel likewise explains
the origins of a Transjordanian city that once served as King Jeroboam ben
Nebat's capital for ruling the nation (1 Kgs 12:25). The reference to Jacob's
wounded thigh explains the origins of one aspect of northern Israel's sac-
rificial practice, and the account of the vision at Bethel explains the origins
of northern Israel's royal sanctuary, not in polemical terms, as in the case
of Jeroboam ben Nebat (1 Kgs 12:25–13:34), but as a site that celebrated
Jacob's encounter with YHWH and YHWH's promise that Jacob and
his descendants would become a great nation. These are all elements of
northern Israel's national identity; they do not reflect the Judean polemic
against northern Israel in 1 Kgs 12:25–13:34 and 2 Kgs 17. Instead, they
make better sense as foundational narratives concerning the origins of the
Northern Kingdom of Israel. Such narratives would find their setting in
the Northern Kingdom of Israel itself, at some point following the founda-
tion of the kingdom under Jeroboam ben Nebat and prior to its demise
under Hoshea ben Elah.

The prophet returns to accusations against Ephraim/Israel in Hos
12:8–11, where he charges in verses 8–9 that Ephraim is to be likened to
a dishonest merchant who uses false balances to enrich himself to gain
power and thereby commits transgression and sin. The prophet cites
YHWH in verses 10–12 to remind the nation of what YHWH has done
for them. YHWH begins in verse 10 with a brief reference to bringing
the people up from Egypt and enabling them to dwell in tents once again
during the period of wilderness wandering. Both of these references refer
to foundational events in Israel's history and self-understanding in which
YHWH led the people to freedom from Egyptian bondage. Verse 11 con-
tinues with YHWH's statement of speaking to prophets, granting them
visions, and speaking with them through parables. Such statements would
have to refer to Moses and perhaps also to Miriam and Aaron, who would
have spoken on behalf of YHWH as prophets during the exodus from
Egypt and during at least the first part of the wilderness wanderings. After

all, Aaron and the Levites were not appointed as priests until Num 17–18, and both Miriam and Aaron were dead by Num 20 and 21. Again, the pentateuchal tradition is cited to support the prophet's contention of YHWH's support of Israel and to convince them to return to YHWH by rejecting the alliance with Assyria.

Interpreters have struggled with Hos 12:12 insofar as its third-person form suggests that YHWH's speech has ended and the prophet has resumed with a reference to Israel's apostasy. But verse 12 has an unspecified subject for its third-person verbs, that is, "If Gilead is iniquity, indeed, they are worthless/nothing. In Gilgal, they sacrificed bulls also [on] their altars like heaps upon the furrows of the field." The only antecedent for the two instances of "they" in this enigmatic verse is YHWH's reference to the prophets in verse 11, that is, "if Gilead is iniquity, then the prophets are worthless." What does such a statement mean? We must recognize that Gilead marks the eastern border between Israel and Aram. King Ahaz of Israel died defending Gilead from Aram in 1 Kgs 22, and his son Jehoram was assassinated by Jehu during the course of the deteriorating military situation in Gilead (2 Kgs 9–10). But Gilead is also the site of Jacob's treaty with Laban over their respective boundaries in Gen 31:22–54. Following Jacob's departure from Haran with his family, Laban pursued Jacob and overtook him in Gilead based on the claim that Jacob had stolen Laban's household gods. When Laban was unable to prove the charge, the two men came to an agreement over their respective territories and marked them by erecting a pillar and a heap of stones as a "heap of witness" (Gen 31:47; Heb. *galʿēd*; Aramaic *yəgar śāhădûtāʾ*), that is, as a boundary marker. The citation suggests that YHWH's prophets would be worthless if they led Israel to a land that would otherwise have been lost to Laban or anyone else. The point is reinforced with the reference to Gilgal. Gilgal was the site where Joshua crossed the Jordan River into the land of Israel and celebrated the first Passover in the land with circumcision and the required sacrificial offerings of firstborn bulls from the herd (Josh 5). Gilgal was also known for the twelve pillars that represented the twelve tribes of Israel. Insofar as the tribes of Manasseh, Gad, and Reuben are assigned land in the Transjordanian Gilead region, it would appear that Hos 12:12 is concerned with the reliability of YHWH's promise of the land of Israel, including the territory of the Transjordan, that is, "if Gilead is iniquity, they/the prophets are worthless; in Gilgal they sacrificed bulls upon their altars as heaps/boundary markers on the furrows of the field."

Hosea's point is that prophets brought the people of Israel/Jacob into the land of Israel, which has secure, recognized borders in Gilead. Should that land be lost, YHWH's efforts would be for naught, and YHWH's prophets would be worthless. The point is further reinforced by the prophet's remarks in Hos 12:12–13. First, Jacob fled to Aram to find a bride, where he served Laban by tending sheep to pay the bride price. Jacob's sojourn in Aram appears in Gen 29–31. Second, YHWH brought Israel up from Egyptian bondage by the agency of a prophet who watched over them. Third, Ephraim has given bitter offense to YHWH, and YHWH punished Ephraim for it. The Hebrew term *tamrûrîm*, "bitter offenses," is based on the root *mrr*, "to murmur, rebel," and recalls Israel's rebellion against Moses and YHWH in the wilderness, for which acts they were punished. These statements make several key points. First, Jacob's brides came from Aram, which means that Aram—and not Assyria—constitutes Israel's family base as well as a suitable partner for a treaty, as indicated by past experience. Second, YHWH brought Israel up from Egypt by the hand of a prophet to inhabit the land. YHWH employed a prophet to act Israel's behalf by bringing them up from Egypt into the land of Israel, as related in the exodus narratives. Third, Israel rebelled in the wilderness and was punished for it, and will suffer punishment again if they do not return to YHWH.

The initial premise of this unit was that the alliance with Assyria takes Israel back to Egypt to trade oil. Such an act constitutes an offense against YHWH, who brought them out of Egypt. By referring back to the Jacob and exodus and wilderness traditions, Hosea argues that the people should abandon their treaty with Assyria and return to a relationship with Aram like that of Jacob in order to return to YHWH.

Hosea 13:1–14:1 goes on to make the same point in religious terms, namely, Israel is pursuing idols (in its relationship with Assyria) and needs to return to YHWH, who brought them up from Egypt and into the land of Israel. Hosea 14:2–9 appeals for Israel's return and emphasizes that "Assyria will not save us" (Hos 14:4).

4.

When we turn to the question of dating the pentateuchal narratives that Hosea would have cited, we must begin with the recognition that Wellhausen's source-critical model of J, E, D, and P is severely flawed. First, we must recognize that Wellhausen's sources are not independent narra-

tive strands that have been woven together by a redactor, but they instead constitute redactional strata that expanded and reworked earlier layers of the narrative. The Priestly stratum appears to have composed the final edition of the work as a whole in the early Persian period, even though some of its elements, such as the Holiness Code in Lev 17–26, appear to be older.[22] D appears to derive from the late seventh-century reign of King Josiah rather than from earlier, northern Israelite reform circles,[23] but it constitutes most of the book of Deuteronomy and therefore does not affect significantly the character of the tetrateuchal narrative.

Although these issues raise a host of questions that have yet to be settled, the primary issue for the present is the interrelationship between the J and E strata. Wellhausen considered J to be the earliest of the sources, dating to the early Davidic monarchy during the ninth century BCE, and von Rad moved J back even earlier, to the origins of the house of David in the tenth century BCE.[24] E was placed in the early to mid-eighth century BCE at the height of northern Israelite power prior to its collapse due to Assyrian invasions in 734–732 and 724–721 BCE. But Wellhausen had a problem with J and E in that he so frequently was unable to distinguish them. Based on his view that a primitive, anthropomorphic understanding of G-d must date to the earlier source and that the house of David must be a focal point to the earliest source due to the founding role of the Davidic house, Wellhausen judged J to be earlier. Consequently, J must presuppose a coherent narrative that E as the later source would have supplemented. Neither Wellhausen nor von Rad was able to identify such a complete and coherent narrative at the level of either J or E. Ironically, Wellhausen thereby laid the foundations for later redaction-critical understanding of the sources with this move.

The inability to reconstruct a coherent and complete foundational narrative remained a major problem of pentateuchal scholarship for decades, but it was later historical research that identified Assyrian influence in the so-called J stratum that began to change the character of the discussion. Scholars such as Thomas Thompson and Van Seters began to recognize that elements of J presupposed Assyrian or even Babylonian ele-

22. Nicholson, *Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century*, 196–221; Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*, 1–20; Kratz, "Pentateuch in Current Research."

23. Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 137–69.

24. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs*; von Rad, "Form-Critical Problem"; cf. Nicholson, *Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century*, 3–92.

ments that could not have been known in the early Davidic period.[25] The narrative concerning the tower of Babel in Gen 11 could only have been known beginning with the late eighth-century reign of Hezekiah, who first allied with Babylon in an effort to revolt against Assyria. The reference to Abram's march through the main sites of the land of Canaan in Gen 12 presupposes the Assyrian practice of Palu campaigns, when the Assyrian king would traverse his empire together with his army in an effort to ensure his rule over potentially wayward vassal nations.[26] The patterns of Israelite law, including both the casuistic forms known from Hammurabi's law codes and the apodictic forms known from seventh-century Assyrian treaty texts, point to Assyrian influence in the composition of the so-called Covenant Code in Exod 20–24 and other Israelite legal texts.[27] All of these features and more point to Assyrian and possibly even Babylonian influence in the composition of the J stratum of the Pentateuch, which pushes the composition of the J stratum into the late eighth, seventh, and possibly even the early sixth centuries BCE.[28]

But such a scenario raises questions concerning the E stratum. If J is later, E cannot constitute a supplementary stratum for J. Given Wellhausen's difficulties in distinguishing J and E and the redactional character of the pentateuchal strata, we must consider that E might be the foundational text and that J might be a redactional stratum.[29] Interpreters have already demonstrated the largely Judean characters of the primeval history of Gen 1–11 and the Abraham-Sarah cycle of Gen 11–25, namely, the primeval history presupposes characteristics of the Jerusalem temple, and the Abraham-Sarah narratives presuppose a Davidic-like dynastic concern in their focus on the birth of a son to Abraham and Sarah.[30] But can the same be said of the Jacob, exodus, and wilderness narratives? Indeed, closer reading

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25. Thomas L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham*, BZAW 133 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974); Van Seters, *Abraham in History*.

26. Tadmor, "Campaigns of Sargon II of Asshur."

27. For casuistic or case law, see Alt, "Origins of Israelite Law," 171; for apodictic law, see the stipulations in the Assyrian vassal treaties (Wiseman, "Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon").

28. Cf. McCarthy, who argues for an early date for such parallels based on his early dating of J (*Treaty and Covenant*); see also McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant*, which surveys the state of scholarship at the time.

29. See Yoreh, *First Book of G-d*.

30. Levenson, "Temple and the World"; Joel Rosenberg, *King and Kin: Political*

of each of these narratives indicates their northern or Ephraimitic character, which presupposes a setting in the late ninth or eighth century BCE.

The Jacob narratives in Gen 25–35 have long been recognized as an account of the origins of Israel as recounted through the life of Jacob, Israel's eponymous ancestor.[31] Throughout the narrative, Jacob is in conflict with his fraternal twin brother, Esau, the eponymous ancestor of Edom, and his uncle and father-in-law, Laban, the eponymous ancestor of Aram. Running parallel to the accounts of Jacob's conflicts is the sibling rivalry between his wives, Rachel and Leah, and their respective handmaidens, Bilhah and Zilpah, who became the mothers of the tribes of Israel. Interpreters have long understood this account to address the origins of Israel as a whole, long before the division of the nation into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

But there are problems with this view. One would expect Judah to play a more important role among the sons of Jacob insofar as Judah was the tribe of David and Solomon, who united the tribes under a single monarchy that disintegrated only after the death of Solomon. Instead of appearing in a prominent position among the sons of Jacob, Judah appears only as the fourth-born son of Leah, and indeed, Judah is grouped together with Leah's other sons, who represent geographically peripheral tribes in Israel, namely, Reuben, from northern Moab; Shimon, from the Negev; Levi, which possesses no land; Judah, from the southern hill country; Issachar, from the Galil; and Zebulun, also from the Galil. The sons of the handmaidens are also geographically peripheral. The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid, are Dan and Naphtali, from the region north of the Galil, and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, are Gad and Asher, from the Transjordan and the region by Phoenicia respectively. The sons of Jacob's beloved Rachel—Joseph, the father of Manasseh and Ephraim, and Benjamin—are centrally located in the central and northern Israelite country as well as the strategically important Gilead region of the Transjordan. Indeed, Ephraim and Manasseh constitute the core of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and Benjamin was the first royal tribe of Israel under the house of Saul.

The emphasis on the central roles of the tribes descended from the sons of Rachel and their identification as the key tribes of northern Israel

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Allegory in the Hebrew Bible (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Clements, *Abraham and David*.

31. E.g., Westermann, *Genesis*, 2:518. See Sweeney, "Puns, Politics, and Perushim"; Sarna, *Genesis*, 177–78; Gammie, "Theological Interpretation."

becomes even more important when considering the northern features of the Jacob narrative. Jacob founds Bethel, later the royal sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam ben Nebat, in Gen 28. He receives YHWH's covenant at Bethel in Gen 28, and later in Gen 35 confirms his name, Israel, and receives the divine promise once again. Following his marriages to Rachel and Leah and the birth of his sons in Haran, Jacob returns to the land of Israel to found key locations for north-ern Israel in the Transjordan: Penuel, where he wrestles with the man and receives his name Israel; Sukkot, where he camps on his journey home; and Mahanaim, where he confronts Esau and ultimately separates from him. It is noteworthy that these cities would have been lost to Israel in the aftermath of Jehu's coup overthrowing the house of Omri circa 842 BCE. In the aftermath of the coup, 2 Kgs 10:32–33 relates that Hazael of Aram was able to strike the Transjordan, including the tribes of Manasseh, Gad, and Reuben. The Moabite Stone, the Deir ʿAlla inscription, and the Tel Dan inscription all confirm that the Transjordan was lost to Israel at this time.[32] Furthermore, 2 Kgs 8:16–24 notes that Edom broke away from King Jehoram of Judah, who ruled during the early reign of King Jehoram of Israel.

It is also noteworthy that Judah was a vassal of Israel throughout the reigns of the house of Omri and the house of Jehu in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE.[33] Indeed, King Jehoshaphat accompanied King Ahab of Israel to battle against Aram in 1 Kgs 22, and he again accompanied King Jehoram of Israel in battle against Moab in 2 Kgs 3. Jeshoshaphat's grand-son Ahaziah later joined Joram of Israel in battle against the Arameans at Ramot Gilead, as his grandfather had done. Ahazaiah was assassinated together with Jehoram of Israel by Jehu in 2 Kgs 8, when Ahaziah came to visit his wounded counterpart at Jezreel. Indeed, the house of Omri was closely tied to the house of David by the marriage of Athaliah, described in Kings both as the daughter of Omri (2 Kgs 8:26) and the daughter of Ahab (2 Kgs 8:18), to King Jehoram of Judah, making her the mother of

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32. The Moabite Stone, which relates the ninth-century defeat of Israel by King Mesha of Moab, appears in *ANET*, 320–21. The Deir ʿAlla inscription, which presents an eighth-century inscription concerning Balaam and the celebration of Aramaean victory over Israel, appears in Dijkstra, "Is Balaam Also." The Tel Dan inscription, which celebrates an Aramaean king's defeat of Israel in the ninth century, appears in Biran and Naveh, "Aramaic Stele Fragment"; Biran and Naveh, "Tel Dan Inscription."

33. For treatment of the Kings passages, see Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, ad loc.

Ahaziah and the rest of the Davidic kings. The house of David was closely tied by alliance to the house of Omri; given Judah's smaller size, it was a suzerain-vassal alliance in which Israel was the suzerain and Judah was the vassal.[34] Judah's vassalage to Israel would explain Judah's place as the fourth son born to Leah. Like his brothers, Judah would have represented a peripheral region in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

It was only during the reigns of Jehu monarchs Jehoash ben Jehoahaz and Jeroboam ben Jehoash that the Aramaeans were finally defeated and Israel's borders with Aram were secured once again (2 Kgs 14:22–25, 23–29).

It would appear that the Jacob narratives of Gen 25–35 were written to portray the experience of the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the reigns of the house of Omri and the house of Jehu during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE.[35] The Jacob narratives presuppose the central role of the Bethel sanctuary, the loss of the Transjordan during the wars with Aram, the loss of Edom, the role of Judah as a vassal to both dynasties, and ultimately the restoration of Israel's borders with Aram during the reigns of the later Jehu monarchs.[36] All of these events are played out in the interpersonal relations of the major characters of the narrative, that is, Jacob, Esau, Laban, Rachel, Leah, and the sons of Jacob/Israel. The narrative appears to constitute a form of reflection on this period in which the eponymous ancestors of Israel, Edom, and Aram, together with the mothers of the tribes of Israel, play the major roles.

These observations support the contention that the Jacob narratives in Gen 25–35 constitute an E or Ephraimite narrative concerning north-

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34. Even later, during the reign of the house of Jehu, King Amaziah of Judah attempted to revolt against the Jehu monarch, Jehoash of Israel. Amaziah was defeated by Jehoash, Jerusalem was breached, and Amaziah was ultimately assassinated for his miscalculation (2 Kgs 14:1–22; Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 361–67).

35. See also Sweeney, "Puns, Politics, and Perushim."

36. Avigdor Hurowitz argues that the account of Jacob's vision at Bethel in Gen 28 must date to the Babylonian period due to the correspondence of many of its details with the Babylonian Ziggurat Entemenanki and other Mesopotamian parallels, but by the end of his study he acknowledges that the Entemenanki was widely imitated, even when it was under Assyrian control. He consequently states that the account of Jacob's dream could have been written as early as the reign of Jeroboam ben Nebat of Israel, who reigned in the late tenth century BCE. See Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "Babylon in Bethel—New Light on Jacob's Dream," in *Orientalism, Assyriology, and the Bible*, ed. Steven W. Holloway (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 436–48.

ern Israel that would have been written toward the end of the reign of
the house of Jehu in the eighth century BCE to give expression to Israel's
history and experience. The reign of Jeroboam ben Joash, 786–742 BCE,
would provide a suitable setting, insofar as Israel was secure once again
during his reign and would then take the opportunity to write the Jacob
narratives as a means to reflect on Israel's history over the course of the
last century.

But we must also note that the Jacob narrative has been edited to fit
a larger J or Judean framework. Genesis 26, the account of the endan-
gered matriarch, Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, takes place in Gerar, along
the borders of Judah and Philistia. Although Gen 27–28 does not men-
tion Gerar, the placement of Gen 26 in its present position means that
Jacob leaves from the vicinity of Judah and passes through Israel on his
way to Aram.[37] Indeed, Jacob returns through the Israelite Transjordan
to Bethel on his way home. He returns to Hebron in Judah only in Gen
35:27–29 to bury his father, Isaac, which would then serve together with
Gen 26 as a redactional framework to locate Jacob in Judah rather than
in Israel. It would appear that the E or Ephraimitic Jacob narrative has
been placed into a J or Judean narrative framework. We might add the
observations that the narrative in Gen 34 concerning the rape of Dinah
portrays Shechem, Israel's early gathering point located on the borders of
Ephraim and Manasseh, in a very bad light. Insofar as Gen 34 constitutes
another example of an endangered matriarch narrative, it appears to be
the product of J redaction.[38]

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37. See Sweeney, "Form Criticism: The Question of the Endangered Matriarchs,"
which points to the potential redactional role of the endangered matriarch narratives
in Genesis.

38. The Joseph narrative in Gen 37–50 also appears to be a northern or E narra-
tive insofar as it focuses on the emergence of Joseph as the father of northern Israel's
leading tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. It also appears to be subject to J redaction at
two key points, Gen 37:18–36 (see esp. vv. 26–27) and Gen 42:35–38/Gen 43:8–14,
when Judah emerges as the figure who supplants Reuben in protecting from death
first Joseph, when he is thrown into the pit by his brothers, and later Benjamin, when
Joseph demands that the brothers bring Benjamin to appear before him. We may also
note the appearance of another endangered matriarch narrative in Gen 38, when
Tamar ensures that Judah's descendants are not born to a Canaanite mother, as well
as the placement of the blessing of Jacob over his sons in Gen 49, which ensures that
Judah is recognized as the royal tribe. Altogether, these features suggest J editing of an
earlier E narrative concerning Joseph.

The exodus and wilderness narratives are generally recognized as a combination of J, E, and P materials.[39] They present an account of Israel's emergence as a nation as a result of its experience in the exodus from Egypt and the journey through the wilderness to the land of Canaan. Many interpreters recognize that they function as a type of creation narrative, insofar as natural features of the lands of Egypt, Sinai, and Israel play significant roles in the narrative, for example, the burning bush, the first nine plagues against Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the appearance of quails and manna in the wilderness, and the water from the rock.[40] But the exodus and wilderness narratives also point to the origins of important features of Israelite national and religious life, for example, the celebration of Passover as the first of the three major holidays, the establishment of courts of justice, the institution of the Levitical priesthood, and of course the revelation of torah at Sinai, which serves as a model for the role played by Israelite temples in serving as the loci for the revelation of YHWH and divine torah.

There is little overt evidence that would identify Israel as presented in the exodus and wilderness narratives as either the Northern Kingdom of Israel or southern Judah. Even when the Song of the Sea indicates that YHWH will lead the people to a sanctuary, there is no hint that the sanctuary in any way represents Jerusalem or any of the northern sanctuaries, such as Gilgal, Shiloh, Bethel, or Dan. Rather, the narrative appears to presuppose all Israel.

Nevertheless, one feature of the narrative is quite distinctive, namely, the tenth plague, which calls for the slaying of the firstborn of Egypt and the redemption of the firstborn of Israel. Unlike the other nine plagues, the focus on the firstborn does not appear to explain the origins of the natural

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39. Cf. Thomas B. Dozeman, "Hosea and the Wilderness Wandering Tradition," in *Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible; Essays in Honor of John Van Seters*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Thomas Römer, BZAW 294 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 55–70. He argues that the wilderness allusions in Hosea cannot be recognized as an early form of the pentateuchal narrative because they lack the theme of divine guidance, but the Hosea references do recognize the prophet (Moses) who served as the divine agent in these narratives. Even if they were presented orally at the Bethel sanctuary, as Dozeman suggests, such oral forms would still have formed the basis for an early proto-pentateuchal narrative in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

40. E.g., Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 77; Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 177–82; cf. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 554–561.

features of creation. Instead, it appears to explain the origins of an early form of Israelite priesthood, especially as practiced in northern Israel.[41]

The tenth plague appears in Exod 11, and it precedes the instructions concerning the celebration of Passover in Exod 12. Most interpreters view it as the culmination of the plagues that result in Israel's exodus, but they do not note the distinctive nature of YHWH's instruction to Moses in Exod 13:2 concerning the significance of the firstborn: "Sanctify to me every firstborn issue of every womb from the people of Israel, including humans and animals, it is Mine." This statement then serves as the basis for the instructions in verses 1–16 concerning the observance of Passover and the recognition of YHWH's mighty act in delivering Israel from Egyptian bondage.

This statement also serves as the basis for the law concerning the firstborn in Exod 34:19–20: "Every first issue of the womb is Mine, from all of your cattle that are born male, the first issue of cattle or sheep. And the first issue of an ass you shall redeem with a sheep, and if you do not redeem it, you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem, and you shall not appear before Me empty-handed." Although the instructions concerning Passover in Exod 12 make it clear that the cattle and sheep are to serve as firstborn offerings to YHWH at Passover, the purpose of the redemption of the firstborn sons is not explained, either in Exod 34 or in Exod 12–13.

Nevertheless, the later narratives concerning Israel's departure from Sinai in Num 1–10 explain the function of the firstborn sons of Israel. A major issue in the Numbers account of the wilderness journey is the selection of Aaron and the Levites to serve as priests in Israel (see esp. Num 17–18). Such a selection was necessary to provide leadership for Israel and to put an end to the constant challenges of Moses and YHWH that appear throughout the wilderness narratives. At the outset of the narrative, it is noteworthy that YHWH states to Moses three times that the Levites will replace the firstborn of Israel, namely, "And YHWH spoke to Moses, saying, 'And I, behold, I, have taken the Levites from the midst of the sons of Israel, and they shall be to Levites to Me, for all the firstborn were Mine on the day that I smote all the firstborn of the land of Egypt. I sanctified for Myself all the firstborn in Israel. From humans to animals, they are Mine. I am YHWH'" (Num 3:11–13; cf. Num 3:40–51, 8:13–19).

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41. Sweeney, "Israelite and Judean Religions."

The narratives in Num 1–10 make it clear that the Levites are to serve as the priests of YHWH for the people of Israel in place of the firstborn, who formerly served in this role. The Levites are "to perform the service of the sons of Israel in the tent of meeting and to atone for the sons of Israel so that there shall not be among the sons of Israel a plague when the sons of Israel approach the sanctuary" (Num 8:19). Although most interpreters assume that the Levites are the legitimate priests of Israel, the priest and prophet Samuel serves as an example of a firstborn son who functions as a priest at Shiloh in 1 Sam 1–7.[42] When his barren mother, Hannah, finally bears Samuel as her firstborn son, she takes him to the sanctuary at Shiloh, where he is raised as a priest by Eli, the high priest of the sanctuary (1 Sam 1). He has a visionary experience of YHWH while sleeping by the ark of the covenant in 1 Sam 3, and he functions as the chief priest and leader of Israel following the death of Eli and his sons during the wars with the Philistines. It is noteworthy that Samuel's father, Elkanah, is identified as an Ephraimite in 1 Sam 1:1, although 1 Chr 6:1–15 identifies both Elkanah and Samuel as Levites in keeping with its general tendency to identify those from Samuel or Kings who take on holy functions as Levites.

The phenomenon is all the more interesting when we recognize that King Jeroboam ben Nebat, the founding king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, is criticized for a number of cultic sins, such as installing the golden calves for worship in the sanctuaries of Bethel and Dan, establishing a festival (Sukkot) on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, and appointing priests from among the people who were not Levites. As I have pointed out elsewhere, Jeroboam's practices were not deliberate sins; rather, they represented a different understanding of the religious institutions and practices of ancient Israelite religion from that of Judah.[43] In northern Israel, firstborn sons could serve as priests; in southern Judah, the Levitical priesthood was the norm. We do not know whether all northern priests were firstborn sons. Eli and his sons appear to represent a Levitical dynastic priesthood, but the example of Samuel shows that the service of firstborn sons as priests was accepted in northern Israel. And later, when Solomon came to power, Abiathar, the surviving priest of the house of Eli, was expelled to Anathoth, whereas Zadok, a descendant of Aaron, was retained as the high priest in Jerusalem. It would seem then that the house

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42. See Sweeney, "Samuel's Institutional Identity."

43. Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 172–82; Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, 67–72.

of Eli did accept firstborn sons within its ranks, whereas the Zadokite line of Jerusalem did not.

It is perhaps no accident, then, that the golden calf narratives of Exod 32–34, in which the Levites demonstrated their zeal for YHWH, portray Israel's sins of worshiping the golden calf as an analogy for the sins of Jeroboam.[44] Jeroboam's golden calves likely served as symbolic mounts for an invisible YHWH at Bethel and Dan much as the ark of the covenant served a similar function for YHWH in Jerusalem. But in Exod 32–34 and 1 Kgs 12:25–13:34, the golden calves are portrayed as idolatrous gods, and Jeroboam's decision to select priests who were not Levites is portrayed as a sin. But the introduction of the golden calf narrative in Exod 32–34, which provides the justification for the later decision to appoint the Levites as priests in Num 1–10 and 17–18, appears to be a redactional move that shifted the focus of the exodus and wilderness narratives. The exodus narratives were originally composed to explain the origins of Israel's observance of the Passover festival and the role of the firstborn as priests. But the present form of the golden calf narratives in Exod 32–34 and those concerned with the selection of the Levites as priests in Num 1–10 and 17–18 appear to represent a J or Judean revision that justifies the Judean practice of recognizing only the Levites as priests. Such a move indicates that an early form of the exodus narratives concerned with the origins of Passover and Israel's firstborn priesthood would have been extant in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

We may recognize this early form of the exodus narrative as an E or Ephraimite narrative that would have been available to Hosea in the latter portion of the eighth century BCE. We do not know whether he would have known these narratives in oral or written form; they at least provide the basis for his use of pentateuchal elements in Hos 12 to support his argument that Israel should reject its alliance with Assyria, that led it to trade oil with Egypt from which Israel fled in the exodus, in favor of an alliance with Aram, where its founding ancestor, Jacob, found his wives and made peace with his father-in-law, Laban.

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44. See Sweeney, "Wilderness Traditions of the Pentateuch" (repr. as ch. 15 in this volume), which demonstrates the dependence of Exod 32–34 on Dtr and DtrH texts, thereby laying a foundation for a late monarchic J narratives. Cf. Craig Evan Anderson, "The Tablets of Testimony and a Reversal of Outcome in the Golden Calf Episode," *HS* 50 (2000): 41–65, who points to the P redaction of the narrative.

5.

The preceding discussion demonstrates that an early E or Ephraimitic form of the Jacob (Joseph), exodus, and wilderness narratives must have existed in northern Israel during the height of the power of the Northern Kingdom. It follows then that Jacob was in a position to know of these narratives, either in oral or written form, and to cite him as part of his argument that Israel should abandon its alliance with Assyria in favor of an alliance with Aram. The question of Israel's alliance with Assyria was a major issue that ultimately led to a struggle for control of the throne in northern Israel spanning the reigns of its last six monarchs and finally to the destruction of the kingdom itself in 724–721 BCE, when Israel revolted against Assyria and Assyria invaded to put down the revolt. The debate over Israel's future saw the demise of four of Israel's monarchs as the pro-Assyrian and pro-Aramaean factions fought it out. King Zechariah ben Jeroboam, the last monarch of the pro-Assyrian house of Jehu, was assassinated only six months into his reign (2 Kgs 15:8–12). His assassin and successor, the pro-Aramaean Zimri, ruled only for a month until he in turn was assassinated by Menahem ben Gadi, who submitted to King Pul (Tiglath-pileser III) of Assyria (2 Kgs 15:13–16, 17–24). Menahem died of natural causes, but his son Pekahiah was assassinated by Pekah ben Remaliah, who proceed to establish the Syro-Ephraimitic alliance as part of a larger strategy to throw off Assyrian rule (2 Kgs 15:23–26, 27–31). Pekah was assassinated by Hoshea ben Elah when the Assyrians first invaded in 734–732 (2 Kgs 15:30), but he in turn revolted against Assyria in 724–721 and was deposed and imprisoned for his actions, while Israel was destroyed (2 Kgs 17:1–6).

Given the chaos that engulfed the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the last years of its existence, it is likely that Hosea—or at least his book—came to Judah, either to escape pro-Assyria Israelite monarchs who would have been hostile to his views or to escape the Assyrians, who were not likely to show mercy to anyone in Israel, especially during the course of their second invasion in 724–721 BCE. The anti-Assyrian views of the book of Hosea would have found a welcome home in Judah during the reigns of Hezekiah, who unsuccessfully revolted against Assyrian in 705–701 BCE, and his great-grandson Josiah, who attempted to restore Judah and Israel following the collapse of the Assyrian Empire in the late seventh century BCE. We may posit a similar scenario for the posited E stratum of the Pentateuch, which itself would have been brought south to Judah

as the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed. In the aftermath of that destruction, a J or Judean redaction of the Ephraimite narratives would have produced an EJ edition of the work that reflected Judean interests and ultimately formed the basis for later expansion by the addition of D or Deuteronomy and the final redaction by the P or Priestly stratum, which ultimately produced the final form of the Pentateuch in the Persian period.

Part 6
The Writings

The Question of Theodicy in the Historical Books: Contrasting Views concerning the Destruction of Jerusalem according to the Deuteronomistic History and the Chronicler's History

1.

The Former Prophets or Deuteronomistic History have received the lion's share of attention in historical research, especially since scholars have been more inclined to trust the historical reliability of the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings than the priestly history of the Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. The work of Noth is especially influential since he attempted to define the historiographical outlook of the books of the Former Prophets in relation to the theological viewpoint of the book of Deuteronomy.[1] Based on his observations of the theological compatibility of Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets, Noth argued that Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings constitute a coherent historiographical presentation of Israel's history in the land from the time of Joshua through the Babylonian exile defined in relation to the theological principles of Deuteronomy, for example, adherence to one G-d, worship at one legitimate site chosen by YHWH, a conditional concept of covenant in which Israel's possession of the land is dependent on their observance of YHWH's expectations as defined in Deuteronomy, and so on. In essence, Noth argued that the Deuteronomistic History authors reworked older source material to compile a history that was intended to explain the Babylonian exile as a consequence of Israel's failure to abide

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1. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (1967), 1–110; Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*.

by YHWH's expectations.[2] Subsequent scholarship noted nuances in the presentation. American scholars, such as Cross, Nelson, Knoppers, and the present writer, emphasize preexilic editions of the Deuteronomistic History that have been updated in relation to the Babylonian exile.[3] Especially noteworthy in this regard is the emphasis on the sins of northern Israel's first king, Jeroboam ben Nebat, to explain the fall of northern Israel to the Assyrian Empire as an act of divine judgment, and the identification of King Josiah of Judah as the ideal monarch of the Davidic line who would reunite northern Israel and southern Judah as in the days of David and Solomon. Following this preexilic Josianic edition of the Deuteronomistic History, the expanded, exilic edition of the Deuteronomistic History accounts for the failure of King Josiah's program by pointing to King Manasseh of Judah as a monarch whose sins were so great that YHWH determined to destroy Jerusalem and exile the people of Judah despite Josiah's righteousness.

Modern research on the Chronicler has tended to lag behind that of the Deuteronomistic History because of its concern with priestly and cultic matters and its rewriting of narratives found in the Deuteronomistic History. Nevertheless, the work of Noth was again decisive in pointing to the historiographical agenda of the Chronicler as a fourth- or third-century BCE work that sought to justify the character and outlook of the postexilic Judean community over against the Samaritans.[4] Research has advanced considerably since the work of Noth, however.[5] Scholars have come to regard 1–2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah as two separate historiographical works.[6] First and Second Chronicles must be taken far more seriously

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2. For overviews of research, see especially, Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 3–32; McKenzie, "Deuteronomistic History"; Thomas Römer and Albert de Pury, "L'historiographie deutéronomiste (HD): Histoire de la recherché et enjeux du débat," in *Israël construit son histoire: L'historiographie deutéronomiste à la lumière des recherches récentes*, ed. Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Macchi (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1996), 9–120.

3. Cross, "Themes of the Books"; Nelson, *Double Redaction*; Knoppers, *Two Nations under G-d*; Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 21–177.

4. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (1967), 110–217; ET, Martin Noth, *The Chronicler's History*, JSOTSup 50 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987).

5. Hugh G. M. Williamson, "Introduction," in *The Chronicler's History*, by Martin Noth, JSOTSup 50 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 11–26; Ralph W. Klein, "Chronicles, Book of, 1–2," *ABD* 1:992–1002.

6. Sara Japhet, "The Supposed Common Authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah Investigated Anew," *VT* 18 (1968): 330–31; Japhet, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 3–7.

as a historical source that preserves historical accounts of Rehoboam's for-tification of Judah's northern borders with Israel, Hezekiah's construction of Jerusalem's water system, Manasseh's subjugation to Assurbanipal at the time of the Babylonian revolt, and so on.[7] First and Second Chronicles, that is, the Chronicler's History, has its own sense of royalist eschatology that looks forward to an ideal Davidic restoration around the Jerusalem temple, and it explains disaster and suffering, such as the Babylonian exile, as the consequence of wrongdoing by the affected generation, rather than as the cumulative effect of wrongdoing by earlier generations or individu-als, as in the Deuteronomistic History.[8] Overall, the Chronicler's account represents a similar attempt, perhaps from the sixth or fifth century BCE, to account for exile and the prospects of restoration, but its viewpoint is quite distinct from the Deuteronomistic History.

Nevertheless, scholarly discussion of diachronic issues in the Bible's historical literature points to an important synchronic dimension of these books, that is, the degree to which they attempt to explain the disaster of the Babylonian exile. The explanation is frequently inadequate. Does Manasseh's apostasy truly warrant the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile, despite the righteousness of Josiah, long after their deaths in Deuteronomistic History? Indeed, this explanation comes into question when one reads in the Chronicler's account of Manasseh's repentance on being dragged in chains to appear before the Assyrian king in Babylon or of Josiah's guilt leading to his own death. Interpreters are beginning to recognize the theological importance of these attempts to explain disaster as expressions of theodicy, that is, G-d is righteous and all-powerful, and the disasters of the Babylonian exile or the earlier fall of northern Israel cannot be attributed to divine impotence, neglect, or evil.[9]

This lecture therefore examines the presentations of Manasseh and Josiah in the Deuteronomistic History and the Chronicler's History in

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7. E.g., Andrew G. Vaughn, *Theology, History, and Archaeology in the Chronicler's Account of Hezekiah*, ABS 4 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999).

8. E.g., Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought*, BEATAJ (Frankfurt: Lang, 1989); William M. Schniedewind, *The Word of G-d in Transition: From Prophet to Exegete in the Second Temple Period*, JSOTSup 197 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995).

9. E.g., Marvin A. Sweeney, "King Manasseh of Judah and the Problem of Theo-dicy in the Deuteronomistic History," in *Good Kings and Bad Kings*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe, JSOTSup 393 (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 264–78.

an attempt to discern how the Bible's historical works wrestled with the problem of theodicy in their attempts to explain theologically the Babylonian exile.

<div align="center">2.</div>

King Manasseh ben Hezekiah of Judah is both the longest-reigning monarch of the Davidic line and one of the most controversial kings of Israel and Judah. Manasseh ascended the throne following the reign of his father, Hezekiah ben Ahaz, at the age of twelve, and ruled Judah for fifty-five years. Although biblical sources maintain that YHWH delivered Hezekiah from the Assyrian invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE, historical sources indicate that Assyria maintained control of Judah throughout the first half of the seventh century BCE and that Manasseh submitted to Assyria as a loyal vassal throughout his reign.[10] Both the Deuteronomistic History in 1 Kgs 21:1–18 and the Chronicler's History in 2 Chr 33:1–20 charge that Manasseh was an oppressive ruler who filled Jerusalem with blood, presumably in suppressing opposition to his reign. But the two accounts differ markedly in that the Chronicler's History maintains that Manasseh repented of his actions and turned back to YHWH (2 Chr 33:10–17), whereas the Deuteronomistic History includes no account of Manasseh's repentance and maintains that YHWH decided to destroy Jerusalem because of Manasseh's great sins (1 Kgs 21:10–15; cf. 23:26–27, 24:3–4).

The Deuteronomistic History charge that YHWH decided to destroy Jerusalem and exile the people is quite controversial when one considers that the entire nation suffers for the sins of one man. The narrative is clear in charging that Manasseh caused the people of Judah to sin as well, but the narrative does not hold the people accountable for the destruction of the city or for their own exile; only Manasseh is to blame. This charge is all the more remarkable when one considers the Deuteronomistic History portrayal of Jeroboam ben Nebat as an evil monarch who caused Israel to sin, but the Deuteronomistic History narrative in 2 Kgs 17 maintains that the Northern Kingdom was destroyed on account of the sins of its people, led by Jeroboam and all of the other kings of Israel, throughout its history.

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10. In addition to Sweeney, "King Manasseh," see Lester L. Grabbe, "The Kingdom of Judah from Sennacherib's Invasion to the Fall of Jerusalem: If We Had Only the Bible…," in Grabbe, *Good Kings and Bad Kings*, 78–122; Francesca Stavrakopoulou, "The Blackballing of Manasseh," in Grabbe, *Good Kings and Bad Kings*, 248–63.

Neither Jeroboam ben Nebat nor any other individual bears the responsibility for the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The issue is presented as one of collective guilt.

The Deuteronomistic History portrayal of Manasseh as the individual responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah is therefore inconsistent with the Deuteronomistic History portrayal of Israel's downfall due to collective guilt. Jerusalem falls to Babylon first in 597 BCE during the reign of Jehoiachin ben Jehoiakim and again in 587/586 BCE during the reign of Zedekiah ben Josiah, and exiles of the population follow in each case. Because Manasseh's death is dated to 642 BCE, this means that the punishment of Jerusalem and Judah for Manasseh's sins is realized some fifty-one to sixty-one years following his death. Although some of the older inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah might have been alive during the reign of Manasseh, the punishment falls mainly on those who were not even born during his reign, not to mention that those who were alive were likely infants or children. Such a portrayal of punishment hardly meets with standards of moral accountability in which those who commit sins are responsible for their own punishment.

The Deuteronomistic History portrayal of Manasseh obviously displays considerable tension in the understanding of moral responsibility and the criteria for punishment or suffering in the Deuteronomistic History narrative. Indeed, such tension appears in the Deuteronomistic History understanding of covenant as well. Since the work of Noth, interpreters recognize that the Deuteronomistic History portrayal employs the understanding of the covenant relationship between YHWH and Israel articulated in the book of Deuteronomy in its portrayal and assessment of Israel's and Judah's history. Deuteronomy lays out YHWH's expectations for Israel and maintains that Israel will dwell securely in the land if it observes YHWH's expectations and that it faces exile from the land if it does not (see esp. Deut 28–30). The covenant is therefore largely conditional, insofar as national security is based on observance of divine expectations, although Deut 30:1–10 indicates that YHWH will prompt the people to repent and restore them to the land once that repentance takes place. The significance of the program of religious reform and national restoration undertaken by Manasseh's grandson King Josiah ben Amon of Judah as portrayed in 2 Kgs 22:1–23:30 then looms rather large in relation to the portrayal of Manasseh in the Deuteronomistic History, particularly since Josiah leads the nation in repentance and return to YHWH following the discovery of a

book of Torah in the temple.[11] Because Josiah's reforms correspond to the expectations for Israel laid out in Deuteronomy, most interpreters maintain that this book of Torah must be some form of Deuteronomy. Despite the nation's repentance under Josiah, 2 Kgs 23:26–27, 24:3–4 maintains that YHWH would not relent on the decision to destroy Jerusalem and Judah.

Because of this tension, many scholars argue that the present form of the Deuteronomistic History is a redactional work that was originally designed to point to King Josiah ben Amon as the ideal king of Israel who would lead the nation in returning to YHWH's expectations and reunite the twelve tribes of Israel under Davidic kingship and around the Jerusalem temple as in the days of David and Solomon.[12] Josiah's unexpected early death at the hands of Pharaoh Neco of Egypt in 609 BCE cut off such ideal expectations, however, and the subsequent fall of Jerusalem and Judah to Babylonia in 587/586 BCE called for an updating of the Josianic Deuteronomistic History to account for the Babylonian exile. By charging Manasseh with such egregious wrongdoing, the exilic Deuteronomistic History sought to explain the Babylonian exile as the result of Manasseh's sins, despite Josiah's exemplary character and repentance. Such a diachronic argument concerning the compositional history and development of the Deuteronomistic History then explains the literary, theological, and moral tension in the work, originally written for a very different purpose than the one it presently serves.

Ancient readers do not share the premises and conclusions of modern redaction-critical work, however, and the present synchronic form of the Deuteronomistic History undoubtedly prompted discussion and disagreement among the ancients just as it does today. Insofar as the Chronicler's History account of Manasseh's reign appears to be dependent on the Deuteronomistic History narrative while reworking portions of the narrative to provide a very different portrait of Manasseh, readers must also consider the account of Manasseh's reign in 2 Chr 33:1–20.[13]

The Chronicler's History account of Manasseh's reign in 2 Chr 33:1–20 begins in verses 1–9 much like the Deuteronomistic History account

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11. For discussion of Josiah's reform, see Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*.

12. See Cross, "Themes of the Books of Kings"; Nelson, *Double Redaction*; Knoppers, *Two Kingdoms under G-d*; Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*.

13. For discussion of the ChrH account of Manasseh's reign, see esp. Japhet, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 999–1014; Sweeney, "King Manasseh."

in 1 Kgs 21:1–18, with a portrayal of Manasseh's sins, such as his rebuilding of the illicit shrines that Hezekiah had abolished, the altars for Baal, the *asherim*, his consignment of his sons to the fires in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom, and so on. Second Chronicles 33:9 (cf. 2 Kgs 21:9) concludes the account of Manasseh's sins with a statement that he led Judah and Jerusalem into greater evil than that practiced by the nations that YHWH destroyed before Israel's entry into the land. Second Chronicles 33:10–17 differs from the Deuteronomistic History account with a narrative that recounts Manasseh's repentance. It maintains that YHWH sent Assyrian officers to bring him before the king of Assyria at Babylon. As a result, Manasseh humbled himself before YHWH, who answered Manasseh's prayer and returned him safely to Jerusalem. Manasseh then rebuilt Jerusalem, removed the various illicit religious installations that he had constructed, and worshiped YHWH alone. The summation of Manasseh's reign in verses 18–20 reiterates Manasseh's repentance while giving the usual details of major life events, death, burial, and succession.

Many interpreters argue that the account of Manasseh's repentance is a literary fiction that was designed to explain Manasseh's unprecedented reign of fifty-five years, longer than any other monarch of the Davidic line.[14] In part, this decision is supported by the view of many modern scholars that the Chronicler's History is a priestly work that is designed to justify priestly theology, rendering the work historically suspect in relation to the Deuteronomistic History. Nevertheless, scholars have increasingly come to recognize the theological viewpoint of the Deuteronomistic History as a factor in the presentation of events and that the Chronicler's History often includes reliable historical information lacking in the Deuteronomistic History, for example, Rehoboam's construction of fortresses to protect his borders in 2 Chr 11:5–12 or Hezekiah's construction of the Siloam water tunnel as part of a general refortification of Jerusalem in 2 Chr 32:1–8.[15] Such episodes have led to a reconsideration of the Chronicler's historical reliability. Although Chronicler's History presents history according to its own theological viewpoint, its historical claims cannot always be dismissed without critical reflection.

Manasseh's forced journey to Babylon to appear before the Assyrian king is a case in point. During the course of Manasseh's reign, Shamash

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14. See Japhet, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 1002.
15. E.g., Vaughn, *Theology, History, and Archaeology*.

Shum-ukin, king of Babylon and brother of the Assyrian monarch Assur-banipal, revolted against the Assyrian Empire. The revolt was put down, and Shamash Shum-ukin was killed in a very bloody campaign during the years 652–648 BCE.[16] As the son of Hezekiah, who had allied with the Babylonian prince Merodach-baladan to revolt against Assyria in 705–701 BCE, Manasseh would be suspected of sympathy with the Babylonian cause, if not outright support. Indeed, his grandson Josiah later died in 609 BCE in an attempt to support his Babylonian allies against the Assyrians and Egyptians. Given the history of alliance between the house of David and Babylon, it would make eminent sense for Assurbanipal to suspect Manasseh of disloyalty and to ensure Manasseh's adherence to Assyria by dragging him in chains to Babylon during or after the revolt to make an inquiry and to intimidate him with the potential consequences of dis-loyalty to the Assyrian crown. The portrayal of Manasseh's being dragged in chains to Babylon to appear before the Assyrian king has considerable plausibility as a historical event.

The historiographical perspective of the Chronicler's History enters into the picture, however, when it portrays Manasseh's experience as the result of an act by the all-powerful YHWH. Chronicler's History histori-ography also accounts for Manasseh's repentance since he survived the experience—unlike his grandson Josiah, who is killed by Pharaoh Neco when he attempts to stop the Egyptians from marching north to sup-port the Assyrians at Haran. Manasseh did not die early in life; therefore he does not persist in his earlier sinful acts. He certainly cannot be held accountable for the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people some fifty-one to sixty-one years after his death since, in the Chronicler's History viewpoint, those who do wrong suffer the conse-quences of their actions themselves. According the Chronicler's History viewpoint as expressed in 2 Chr 36:14, all the officers, priests, and people of the generation that suffered the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile did so because they committed sins and polluted the temple of YHWH in Jerusalem. The Chronicler's History has a very different evaluation of the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of Judah that does not permit to

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16. For historical overview, see Amélie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000–330 BC* (London: Routledge, 1998), 2:499–501; Albert K. Grayson, *The Assyrian and Baby-lonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries BC*, 2nd rev. and enl. ed., CAH 3.2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 147–54.

charge Manasseh with responsibility for these disasters. In order to clarify the Chronicler's History viewpoint concerning the early death of King Josiah of Judah, discussion now turns to the Chronicler's History presentation of Josiah's reign.

<div align="center">3.</div>

King Josiah ben Amon is one of the most remarkable monarchs of the entire house of David.[17] Josiah came to the throne of Judah at the age of eight following the assassination of his father, Amon ben Manasseh, by members of the Judean royal court. The motives for the attempted coup are not known, although it is likely that the coup was inspired by the decline of Assyrian power in the mid-seventh century BCE and resentment against Manasseh and Amon for continuing to serve as Assyrian vassals. The revolt was put down by the ʿam-hāʾareṣ, "the people of the land," apparently the rural population of Judah that had acted in the past to install kings at times of national threat (see 2 Kgs 11:18, 20; 14:21; 23:30).

Josiah's reign is especially well-known for his efforts at religious reform and national restoration. Second Chronicles 34:3 notes that Josiah began to seek the G-d of his father David in the eighth year of his reign (632 BCE) and that he began to purge Jerusalem and Judah of illicit shrines, altars, idols, and so on in the twelfth year of his reign (628 BCE). Both 2 Chr 34:8 and 2 Kgs 22:3 note that Josiah initiated a temple renovation project in the eighteenth year of his reign (622 BCE), which resulted in the discovery of a book of Torah that most interpreters identify with some form of Deuteronomy. The dates of Josiah's first two actions correspond to important events in the decline of the Assyrian Empire, namely, Assurbanipal, the last major monarch of Assyria, had died by 631 BCE, and Nebopolassar, the founder of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, began his revolt against Assyria in 627 BCE. This correspondence indicates that Josiah joined the Babylonians, the former allies of his great-grandfather Hezekiah, in preparing to reassert Davidic independence against Assyrian rule.

Both the Deuteronomistic History and the Chronicler's History agree that the discovery of the book of Torah in the temple prompted Josiah's repentance for failing to observe YHWH's expectations and that the book then served as the basis for Josiah's program of religious reform and

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17. For discussion of Josiah's reign, see Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*.

national restoration. The principles of the reform were those of Deuter-onomy: worship of YHWH alone; worship at the one cultic site designated by YHWH; rejection of Canaanite or pagan gods, practices, and worship sites; and observance of YHWH expectations as defined in Deuteronomy. To this end, Josiah purged and rededicated the Jerusalem temple to the worship of YHWH, destroyed pagan cultic installations in Jerusalem and Judah, destroyed the northern Israelite shrine at Bethel, and led the nation in reaffirming its covenant with YHWH. Josiah is portrayed in the Deu-teronomistic History as the most righteous monarch of the Davidic line, who "did what was pleasing to YHWH and followed all the ways of his ancestor David, and did not deviate to the right or to the left" (2 Kgs 22:2, 2 Chr 34:2), and who is described in superlative terms: "there was no king like him before who turned back to YHWH with all his heart and soul and might, in full accord with the Torah of Moses; nor did any arise after him" (2 Kgs 23:25). Such language is otherwise employed for Joshua (Josh 1:7–8) and the ideal monarch according to the torah of the king (Deut 17:18–20). Although David is frequently presented as a righteous mon-arch, his adultery with Bath-Sheba and murder of her husband, Uriah (2 Sam 10–12), disqualifies him as the ideal monarch of the Davidic line (see 1 Kgs 15:5). The Chronicler's History does not employ such laudatory lan-guage for Josiah at the conclusion of his reign, but merely makes reference to his faithful deeds in accordance with the torah of YHWH in 2 Chr 35:26.

Despite the great promise for his program of religious reform and national restoration, Josiah died in 609 BCE at the age of thirty-nine when he was killed by Pharaoh Neco of Egypt at Megiddo. Josiah led his army to Megiddo, apparently in an effort to halt the Egyptian advance to Haran, where the Assyrian army was about to make its last stand against the Baby-lonians and their Medean allies. Pharaoh Neco II of the Saite dynasty was a long-standing ally of Assyria from the early seventh century when the Assyrians installed his grandfather, Neco I, as an Assyrian client based in the city of Sais in the Egyptian delta.[18] Under his father, Pharaoh Psamtek I, Egypt was united and continued to serve as an ally of Egypt, although Psamtek's forays into Mesopotamia in support of Assyria prior to 609 BCE suggest that the Egyptians were no longer vassals to the Assyrians, but enjoyed a parity relationship instead. Josiah acted on behalf of his Babylo-

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18. See Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Empires*, 142–61, 677–747; Kuhrt, *Ancient Near East*, 2:634–44.

nian allies to prevent the Egyptians from joining the Assyrians at Haran. Josiah's act cost him his life. The Deuteronomistic History and Chronicler's History differ on the circumstances of Josiah's death, namely, 2 Kgs 23:29 simply states that Neco put Josiah to death at Megiddo, whereas 2 Chr 35:20–24 describes the battle between the Egyptians and Judeans at Megiddo in which Josiah was killed. With Josiah's death, Josiah's program of religious reform and national restoration was halted as Judah remained under Egyptian control until the Babylonians defeated Egypt at Carchemish in 605 BCE. As a result of its subjugation to Babylon, its former ally, Judah eventually revolted and suffered destruction and exile at the hands of the Babylonians in 598–597, 588–586, and 582 BCE.

Josiah's early death and the demise of his program of religious reform and national restoration clearly constituted a major disaster for the kingdom of Judah. Although there are indications that a Josianic Deuteronomistic History was written to present Josiah as the ideal monarch of the Davidic line who would reunite the twelve tribes of Israel under Davidic rule around the Jerusalem temple, the present forms of both the Deuteronomistic History and the Chronicler's History are written to account for the destruction and exile of Jerusalem and Judah, although each differs in its presentation of Josiah's death in relation to the later reality of destruction and exile.

The Deuteronomistic History simply states in 2 Kgs 23:29 that Pharaoh Neco put Josiah to death at Megiddo, thereby avoiding any mention of the battle that is highlighted in the Chronicler's History account of Josiah's death. Although the battle is the most plausible historical scenario for Josiah's demise, the presentation of Josiah's death corresponds to the Deuteronomistic History understanding that Josiah would die in peace. According to 2 Kgs 22:11–20, Josiah repented upon hearing the words of the book of Torah read to him by his officials and then consulted the prophetess Huldah to determine the will of YHWH concerning the future of the nation. Huldah's response indicates that YHWH had already determined to bring disaster on the nation for its wrongdoing, but Josiah's repentance had earned him the right to die in peace before such a tragedy would be realized. Within the larger context of the Deuteronomistic History, Huldah's oracle presupposes YHWH's earlier determination to destroy Jerusalem and Judah as a result of Manasseh's sins. But Huldah's oracle also appears to be constructed on the basis of Elijah's earlier oracle to King Ahab ben Omri of Israel in 1 Kgs 21:27–29. Upon hearing Elijah's condemnation of the house of Omri for its sins, particularly Ahab's role in the murder of Naboth

of Jezreel in an effort to acquire his land, Ahab repented for his crimes. As a result of Ahab's repentance, Elijah granted Ahab the right to die so that he would not see the destruction of his entire house. Ahab is then killed in battle against the Arameans at Ramoth Gilead in 1 Kgs 22, and his dynasty comes to an end out when Jehu, a commander of Israel's army, seizes the throne and wipes out the house of Omri in Jezreel and Samaria in 2 Kgs 9–10. Insofar as Ahab's sister or daughter Athaliah is married to King Joram ben Jehoshaphat of Judah (2 Kgs 8:18; cf. 2 Kgs 8:27), she became the mother of King Ahaziah ben Joram of Judah and thus the ancestress of the subsequent Davidic line. In the presentation of the Deuteronomistic History, Josiah's demise appears in relation to YHWH's oath to destroy the house of Omri as well as YHWH's oath to destroy and exile Jerusalem and Judah. Josiah does not die in battle against Pharaoh Neco, however, in order to fulfill Huldah's oracle that he may die in peace. Ultimately, Josiah's death in the Deuteronomistic History serves the larger historiographical interest in explaining the destruction and exile of Jerusalem and Judah. Even Josiah's righteousness was not enough to save the kingdom following YHWH's vows concerning Omri and Manasseh.

Although there are certain similarities with Deuteronomistic History in the Chronicler's History account Josiah's death, the Chronicler's History narrative in 2 Chr 35:20–26 has been sufficiently modified to provide a very different assessment of this event. The Chronicler states that Josiah died in battle against Pharaoh Neco of Egypt at Megiddo, which is a far more historically plausible account for the circumstances of Josiah's death. Given the Chronicler's view that those who sin suffer the consequences of their own sins, the encounter between Neco and Josiah prior to the battle is especially noteworthy. When Josiah comes to Megiddo with his army prepared to stop Neco's advance, Neco tells Josiah that he had no cause for war with the Judean monarch. Instead, Neco states that his issue is with another kingdom that is at war with Egypt, and that it is the will of G-d that Neco hurry to the coming battle. Indeed, Josiah is interfering with G-d's will and risks destruction if he does not desist. Josiah ignores Neco's advice and commences the battle with Neco, in which Josiah is killed. The narrative is careful to note that Neco's words had come from the mouth of G-d, which entails that Josiah died at Megiddo at the hands of Pharaoh Neco of Egypt because he defied the will of G-d. The Chronicler's History narrative includes the account of Huldah's oracle in 2 Chr 34:22–28, with its promise that Josiah would die in peace before the destruction of Jerusalem because of his repentance. The Chronicler's History makes no

mention of Manasseh as the cause of the destruction. Huldah's oracle indicates that YHWH will bring the curses of the book of the Torah found in the temple renovations on the heads of the people for their apostasy, and 2 Chr 36:14 makes it clear that the destruction took place because the officers, priests, and people had defiled the Jerusalem temple. Josiah was spared from seeing the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah, as Huldah promised, but his own death was caused by his refusal to heed the word of G-d as spoken by Pharaoh Neco of Egypt. In keeping with the Chronicler's perspective, Josiah dies because of his own wrongdoing.

Both the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicler's History presentations of King Josiah's reign are shaped in relation to their respective historiographical perspectives. The Deuteronomistic History lauds Josiah as the most righteous monarch of the house of David and indeed of all Israel, but it must account for his early death and the demise of Jerusalem and Judah by maintaining that YHWH had determined to destroy Jerusalem and Judah on account of the sins of Manasseh. The account displays considerable literary and theological tension, due primarily to the compositional history of a work that was written initially to point to Josiah's reign as the culmination of Israel's history but that had to be adjusted to account for the death of Josiah and the subsequent destruction and exile. By placing the blame for the disaster on Manasseh alone, the Deuteronomistic History account leaves open questions as to why an entire nation and later generations had to suffer for the sins of one man. The Chronicler's History account of Josiah's death presents a much more coherent understanding of Josiah's death that may well constitute an attempt to address some of the questions left open in the Deuteronomistic History. Although the Chronicler's History narrative appears to be based in part on the earlier Deuteronomistic History narrative, the Chronicler modifies the narrative to place responsibility for Josiah's death on Josiah himself. Although the Chronicler's History narrative includes the Huldah oracle that promises Josiah a peaceful death prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, the Chronicler's History maintains that Josiah defied the word of G-d in confronting Pharaoh Neco of Egypt, and therefore died in battle against Neco as punishment for his transgression.

4.

Examination of the historical literature concerning Manasseh and Josiah in the Deuteronomistic History and the Chronicler's History

demonstrates that both present the history of Israel and Judah from distinctive historiographical viewpoints. Both are ultimately concerned with explaining the disaster of the fall of Jerusalem and the beginning of the Babylonian exile in 597 and 588–586 BCE, but they differ in accounting for the cause of that disaster. Although both the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicler's History have their own distinctive historiographical perspectives, they agree on one fundamental point, namely, YHWH was not the party responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people. YHWH was the omnipotent sovereign of the universe who authorized the destruction, but the wrongdoing of human beings was the cause of the disaster. Both the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicler's History emerge then as examples of theodicy that defend the power and righteousness of YHWH in the face of disaster and evil. The fall of Jerusalem, the exile of the people, the deaths and suffering of so many were not due to YHWH's impotency, moral fallibility, or lack of attention. Rather, YHWH's power, righteousness, and attention to human affairs bring about the disaster when human beings fail in their obligations to YHWH. Such assertions of divine righteousness and power enabled both the Deuteronomistic History and the Chronicler's History to prepare an exilic or postexilic reading audience for the projected reconstruction of Jerusalem and Judah in the early Persian period.

What Is Biblical Theology?
With an Example on Divine Absence and the
Song of Songs

1.

Biblical theology has changed markedly in the years since World War II, when biblical theologians such as Eichrodt and von Rad wrote their magisterial works.[1] When viewed from the perspective of contemporary theology, each has its problems. Eichrodt dismissed the theological significance of Judaism and opted for an essentially Christian supersessionist perspective when he misrepresented Judaism as a legalistic system of observance devoid of the divine will, expressing his view of "Judaism's torso-like appearance … in separation from Christianity."[2] Von Rad avoided anti-Jewish statements, but nevertheless constructed a progression of *Heilsgeschichte* or "salvation history" that had no place for Judaism. In addition, both scholars neglected books of the Hebrew Bible, such as Esther and Song of Songs, neither of which mention G-d, thereby dismissing books of sacred Scripture that appeared in both the Jewish and the Christian Bibles. Neither addressed the theological issues raised by the Shoah, in which Germany and its sympathizers deliberately murdered some six million Jews, even though both had lived through that sordid period in human history.

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1. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*; von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*. See the response of Levenson to both of these works ("Why Jews Are Not Interested").

2. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:26.

But biblical theology has changed, insofar the field has learned to take account of both Judaism and Christianity as well as theological issues such as the absence of G-d, particularly in the aftermath of the Shoah or Holocaust. This paper therefore addresses two issues. The first is a theoretical discussion of what constitutes biblical theology in the contemporary interreligious world of Judaism and Christianity. The second is an illustration of how biblical theology might be conceived in relation to the question of divine absence and the Song of Songs in the contemporary post-Shoah and interreligious world.

2.

Biblical theology is the systematic theological exposition of the Bible.[3] Because the Bible appears in a variety of forms in both Judaism and Christianity, it is imperative that interpreters consider the context in which biblical theology is pursued. In Judaism, the Bible comprises the Tanak, twenty-four books of the Bible written in Hebrew and Aramaic that are organized into three major sections, including the Torah or Instruction; the Nevi'im or Prophets, including both the Former and the Latter Prophets; and the Ketuvim or the Writings. In Christianity, the Bible comprises both the Old Testament and the New Testament, although the number and order of books may vary within these two major rubrics. In Roman Catholicism, there are forty-six books of the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament for a total of seventy-three. In Protestant Christianity, there are thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, twenty-seven of the New Testament, and seven of the Apocrypha. Other traditions, such as the Slavonic, Armenian, and Ethiopian traditions, may include other books. Because Christianity considers the various versions of the Bible to be witnesses to the true Bible, the Christian Bible appears in a variety of forms and languages, such as Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Syriac, Latin, Ethiopian, Slavonic, Armenian, and others.

From its inception in the eighteenth century through the late twentieth century, biblical theologians have attempted to define a consistent and unified principle or center (German *Mitte*) around which to organize a biblical theology.[4] Proposals included variations of the G-d/man/salvation

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3. Sweeney, "Biblical Theology," 1137.

4. For discussion of biblical theology, see Sweeney "Biblical Theology"; Sweeney, *Tanak*, 3–41; Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*; Hayes and Prussner, *Old Testament Theology*;

paradigm; covenant; *Heilsgeschichte*, or salvation history; and others, but no one concept proved adequate to account for the entire Bible. Following the collapse of biblical theology in the late twentieth century, several new models or dimensions have emerged, such as the canonical form of the Bible, the dialogical character of the Bible, and the question of the theological integrity of the Bible.[5] I would like to consider each of these dimensions.

2.1. The Canonical Forms of the Bible

The first dimension is the canonical form of the Bible. Much of the first two centuries of modern critical biblical scholarship were spent in efforts to unravel the compositional history of the Bible in order to identity the earliest—and therefore the most authentic—layers of the biblical text. Such early texts would then serve as the basis for reconstructing the allegedly authentic message of the Bible. But as such work progressed, scholars became increasingly uncomfortable with assertions about biblical theology that were based on a reconstructed text that was never actually recognized in the churches or synagogues as the Bible.

Fundamentalists had long advocated basing their interpretation of the Bible on the final form of the biblical text, but when Childs proposed a canonical biblical theology that would base its interpretation on both the final form of the biblical text and its historical dimensions, he provoked an uproar of protests in some circles and a sigh of relief in others.[6] Childs proposed that the final form of the biblical text should serve as the basis for theological interpretation, not because the biblical text did not presuppose a compositional history, but because the final form of the biblical text was the form in which the church had received the text and interpreted it throughout its own history. Childs did not entirely eschew the diachronic dimensions of the text; indeed, he frequently viewed the process by which the final form of the biblical text was achieved to be a source of theological insight as well, and in many cases it is debatable whether he fully escaped

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Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Die biblische Theologie* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970); Perdue, *Collapse of History*.

5. Perdue, *Collapse of History*; Perdue, *Reconstructing Old Testament Theology*.

6. Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985); Childs, *Biblical Theology*; for critique, see Barr, *Concept of Biblical Theology*.

his own historical-critical background when interpreting the final form of the biblical text. But his essential goal was to uncover the *res*, or essence, of the biblical text that was embedded therein.

Childs's proposal offered a new dimension for biblical theology, which was especially so important because historical criticism had in fact been employed to privilege Protestant self-understanding and to polemicize against Jewish and Roman Catholic self-understandings. An example would be Wellhausen's privileging of the J source in the Pentateuch, with its face-to-face prophetic encounter between G-d and humans, as the earliest and therefore most authentic understanding of the Pentateuch, versus the place of the Priestly source, with its alleged interests in law and ritual, at the end of a largely degenerative process.[7] A canonical reading of the Pentateuch, for example, had the potential to correct the theological biases of Wellhausen's work if properly pursued.

But there were also problems with Childs's proposal that went beyond the simple dichotomy between historical or diachronic and canonical or synchronic reading strategies. For one, Childs did not account for the variety of canonical forms and versions extant for the Christian Bible.[8] Childs employed the Hebrew MT as the basis for his final canonical form of the Bible, which was apparently a nod to his understanding of the historical priority and authority of the text. He also included classical Jewish readings of the Bible together with those of Christian interpreters as part of his discussion of the canonical form of the text. But Christianity did and does not read the MT as the primary form of the Bible; Christianity reads the Greek LXX in its manifest forms, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and other versions all as witnesses to its understanding of the true form of the Bible revealed by G-d to humankind. Furthermore, Childs presumed a flat or singular understanding of the *res* or truth embedded within that text that did not account for its variety of forms, languages, and contexts for interpretation, including both the differences between Judaism and Christianity and the differences within Judaism and Christianity.

Consequently, biblical theology must account for the variety of canonical forms of the Bible and the contexts in which it is read. In my own work, I have distinguished between the canonical forms of the Tanak in

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7. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuch*; Wellhausen, *Prolegomenon to the History*.

8. See James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Sanders, *Canon and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972).

Judaism and the Old Testament and New Testament in Christianity as a basis for theological interpretation.[9] In Judaism, the tripartite division of the Tanak into the Torah, Prophets, and Writings entails a theological dimension, in which the Torah portrays the ideals of ancient Israel and its life in the land of Israel, the Prophets portrays the disruption of those ideals as Israel and Judah are taken away from the land of Israel to Assyrian and Babylonian exile, and the Writings portray the attempt to reestablish ideal Jewish life in the land of Israel under foreign rule. The Christian Bible likewise points to its own theological view of history in which the earlier or old covenant/testament of Moses based on torah/law is revealed followed by the revelation of the new covenant/testament of Jesus Christ. As I have constructed the Christian canon, the four-part structure of the Old Testament points to progression through history, namely, the Pentateuch takes up humanity's earliest history, the historical books take up Israel's later history, the wisdom and poetic books point to ahistorical questions of faith and knowledge, and the prophetic books point to the future. The New Testament has a similar structure, including the earliest history of Christ's revelation in the gospels, the later history of the early church in Acts, ahistorical questions of faith and knowledge in the epistles, and a view of the future return of Christ in the Apocalypse. Other constructions of the Christian canon are, of course, extant, but this provides an example of how a canonical principle of interpretation might work in the construction of a distinctive Christian biblical theology.

2.2. The Dialogical Dimension of the Bible

The second dimension of biblical theology I would like to consider is the dialogical dimension of the Bible.[10] Biblical theologians justifiably presume that the Bible represents divine truth, whatever their own particular religious tradition might be, but the nature of that truth raises issues. For the most part, interpreters presume that the truth represented by the Bible is intellectually consistent and without contradiction. Such a view of course led to the many attempts noted above to define a single principle around which to conceive or organize a biblical theology.

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9. Sweeney, *Tanak*, 20–36.

10. Sweeney, *Tanak*, 20–36; cf. Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

But the pluralistic nature of the Bible's contents extends not only to the many textual versions and canonical forms in which the Bible appears, but to its basic contents as well. Eichrodt had attempted to define a biblical theology based on the concept of covenant, but failed in his attempt because not all of the books of the Bible are concerned with covenant.[11] Von Rad likewise attempted to define a biblical theology based on the concept of *Heilsgeschichte*, or salvation history, but the Bible is likewise not entirely concerned with history.[12] Having completed his *Old Testament Theology*, criticism compelled him to write his *Wisdom in Israel* to account for the ahistorical wisdom literature, but even this volume attempted to interpret the wisdom literature through a historical lens.[13]

But von Rad's work also opened the door to a more pluralistic reading of the Bible even if he did not fully achieve it himself. One of his major accomplishments was the recognition that each of the prophets had distinct message, based on the distinct institutional traditions on which the prophets were based. Isaiah was a royalist, based in the Davidic covenant. Jeremiah presupposed the Mosaic covenant tradition based on Torah. Ezekiel was a Zadokite priest based in the Jerusalem temple. Such observations did not prevent von Rad from misreading many prophets. His treatment of Micah, for example, folds the prophet from Moresheth-Gath into the Isaian tradition, not recognizing that Micah, who was hardly a Davidic supporter, called for the destruction of Jerusalem, something that Isaiah never did.

Nevertheless, von Rad's recognition of the unique institutional identities of the prophets paved the way for the recognition of an essential dimension of the prophetic literature, namely, the prophets disagree among themselves concerning the nature of YHWH's action in the world.[14] The book of Isaiah, founded in the Davidic tradition, ultimately gives up the notion of a Davidic monarch and instead identifies the nation Israel as the recipient of the Davidic promise and King Cyrus of Persia as YHWH's temple builder, messiah, and regent for the true King, YHWH. Jeremiah,

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11. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*.

12. Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*.

13. Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972). Cf. Knierim's attempt to address this issue in Rolf P. Knierim, "Cosmos and History in Israel's Theology," in *The Task of Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 171–224.

14. See my discussion of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel in Sweeney, *Tanak*, 265–343.

although frequently citing his senior colleague Isaiah, ultimately argues that Jerusalem will come under judgment as well, just as the Northern Kingdom of Israel did in Isaiah's day. As a priest, he calls for observance of Mosaic torah rather than faith in the Davidic promise, and indeed redefines the Davidic covenant to include the city of Jerusalem and the Levitical priesthood, at least in the Masoretic form of the text. Ezekiel, the Zadokite priest, holds to the sanctity of the Jerusalem temple as his central concern for understanding YHWH's actions in the world and maintains the continuity of the house of David, noting that the Davidic monarch or prince will be among those who worship YHWH at the restored temple.

We may observe other differences elsewhere. The Former Prophets maintain that Israel and Judah were destroyed in large part because of the charge that the people failed to observe YHWH's torah, but they place special blame on the monarchs, King Jeroboam ben Nebath of Israel and King Manasseh ben Hezekiah of Judah, for the respective destructions of Israel and Judah years after their deaths.[15] Chronicles disagrees, and portrays Jeroboam ben Nebath as a king of little consequence and Manasseh ben Hezekiah as a repentant monarch who returns to YHWH in his later years. Josiah defies the word of G-d in Chronicles and dies as a result, whereas in Kings he is the ideal Davidic monarch. According to Chronicles, it is the people, their leaders, and the priests who defiled the temple, resulting in its destruction in their own generation; it was not the fault of monarchs who died decades or centuries before the disaster. Contrary to other biblical books, Esther and Song of Songs do not even mention G-d, which in the minds of many raises questions as to whether they are even theological books.

Given the fundamental disagreement so frequently apparent among biblical books, interpreters must recognize that the Bible does not posit a consistent understanding of truth, at least not in the way that rational theology or philosophy might envision. Rather, the Bible posits a variety of truths about divine action—or absence—in the world and the expected human response. Do we have faith in YHWH's eternal promise to the house of David and the city of Jerusalem? Do we observe Mosaic torah? Do we engage the sanctity of the Jerusalem temple? Do we attribute our problems to past generations? Or do we look to our own generation to identify our problems? Do we act in the world when G-d does not? All

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15. See my discussion in Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, 64–83.

of these options and more appear within the books of the Bible text, and, insofar as they are all sacred Scripture, they are all true.

But this is the point at which we must recognize the dialogical nature of the Bible. The books of the Bible disagree among themselves and sometimes even within themselves as each of the biblical writings posits its understanding of G-d, Israel/Judah, creation, the nations, the various institutions of Israel/Judah, and so on, in an effort to discern divine truth in the world in which we live. With their differing viewpoints, the books of the Bible are in dialogue with each other, often disagreeing, but each represents a particular viewpoint or viewpoints that must be engaged to understand the full range of truth that is presented therein. Each offers its own particular insight, even when it disagrees with or challenges the insights of other biblical writings. We may no longer be selective, reading Isaiah instead of Ezekiel, Kings instead of Chronicles, the Prophets instead of the wisdom literature, and so on. Such a viewpoint aids readers in better understanding G-d and our relationship with G-d, who cannot be reduced to a single principle or perspective. And such an understanding of the dialogical character of the Bible corresponds well with a canonical model in which the various canonical forms of the Bible differ from one another and disagree.

2.3. The Question of Theodicy

Finally, we must recognize the role of the question of theodicy in biblical theology. Modern experience with the Shoah is a key issue here because it raises questions of divine power, presence, and integrity in a way that past generations of scholars did not fully engage.[16] Past generations of interpreters have presumed divine righteousness and presence in their theological understandings of the Bible, but they did so while privileging the historical books and the Prophets and frequently ignoring or brushing aside books such as Job, Esther, Lamentations, and others that did not fit well into a theocentric world view in which G-d was always present, powerful, and righteous. Such views likewise influenced the way in which we read even the most central of books, such as Isaiah or Psalms.

Isaiah is a case in point.[17] Isaiah is one of the most cited prophets in both Jewish and Christian tradition. But the call vision in Isa 6 raises

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16. Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*.
17. Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, 84–103.

troubling questions about YHWH's actions in the world. Here, Isaiah is commanded to render the people blind, deaf, and dumb to ensure that they do not repent and therefore enable YHWH to carry out a program of punishment, exile, and restoration over the course of several centuries to be recognized as the true sovereign of creation. Isaiah presents a teleologically based understanding of YHWH's actions in the world in which YHWH's role as sovereign of all creation is ultimately to be recognized throughout all creation. Most interpreters have viewed such an agenda as an expression of supreme theological importance and character, but one can only maintain such a viewpoint if one is around at the end of the process. When considered from an ontological moral viewpoint, YHWH's commission to Isaiah is sinful, insofar as it will deliberately sacrifice generations of Jews for the greater glory of G-d. Modern theological discussion of the Shoah rejects such an understanding of the murder of some six million Jews in the twentieth century, but biblical theologians have been slow to recognize that Isaiah calls for precisely such a model.

Isaiah is sacred Scripture, and so we must ask, What are we to learn from this? Whereas past interpreters might see Isaiah's commission as a test of faith, post-Shoah interpreters might see another dimension, namely, YHWH presents Isaiah with a course of action to which he must stand up and reject. Isaiah does not do so, and by the end of the book of Isaiah, the ideals of the nations streaming to Zion to learn the torah of YHWH have not been achieved. Isaiah ends with a portrayal of the bodies of the wicked strewn about; perhaps if Isaiah had stood up to YHWH and said, "No!" like Moses in the wilderness, or Amos upon seeing the locusts and the fire, or Job when confronted with punishment that made no sense, or Bat Zion demanding that YHWH look at what was done to her, the book of Isaiah might have arrived at a different conclusion in which the goals of the book had been achieved. Perhaps the prophet shows us what not to do; indeed, what might have happened in World War II if enough people stood up and said "No!" to Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany or Tojo in imperial Japan? Or on a lesser scale, what might happen when we challenge authority that is exercised illegitimately or for immoral purpose?

Such an example shows that a critical questioning of even G-d is part and parcel of biblical theology. We cannot presume righteousness even at the highest levels of authority. Like Esther in a time of threat, we must learn to act on our own when G-d does not appear. And like Eve in the garden, we must learn to exercise our own intellects and moral capacities when G-d is not always present to tell us what to do. That, too, is a task of

biblical theology, and it is one that emerges when we recognize that we, too, must learn to act as moral agents or as true stewards of creation in the world that has been entrusted to us.

3. The Absence of G-d in the Song of Songs

The Song of Songs is one of the most controversial books in the Hebrew Bible insofar as it lacks any explicit reference to G-d and it employs sexual and sensual imagery to depict graphically a sexual liaison between two human lovers.[18] Song of Songs was nearly banned from the Hebrew Bible in Jewish tradition due to a dispute among the sages concerning its status, apparently due to its sexual motifs and mystical allusions, as recorded in Mishnah Yadayim 3:5. But Rabbi Akiva ben Joseph, one of the most revered of the rabbinic sages, came to the rescue of the Song of Songs by declaring, "G-d forbid! No man in Israel ever disputed the Song of Songs (that he should say) that it does not render the hands unclean [i.e., hold sacred status as Scripture], for all the ages are not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the Writings [i.e., Ketuvim] are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies."[19] Rabbi Johanan ben Joshua then ruled in favor of accepting Song of Songs as sacred Scripture in keeping with the views of Shimon ben Azzai, who cited a tradition from Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah. In the aftermath of this decision, the Song of Songs has been interpreted allegorically as a depiction of the relationship between G-d and Israel in the wilderness following the exodus from Egypt. The book is therefore read and studied at Passover. Christian tradition takes a similar approach by reading Song of Songs allegorically as a depiction of the relationship between Christ and the church. More commentaries have been written on Song of Songs than any other book of the Hebrew Bible.

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18. For major commentaries and studies, see David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); J. Cheryl Exum, *Song of Songs: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005); Michael Fishbane, *Song of Songs*, JPS Bible Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2015); Othmar Keel, *The Song of Songs*, CC (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); Tremper Longman III, *Song of Songs*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Murphy, *Song of Songs*; Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, AB 7C (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977); Phyllis Trible, *G-d and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, OBT (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

19. Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 781–82.

But the decision to read Song of Songs allegorically in both Jewish and Christian traditions points to the fundamental problem of the book. G-d is absent in the Song of Songs. Because Jewish and Christian readers of the book are generally believers in G-d—and I count myself among them—they have chosen a hermeneutical standpoint that deliberately reads G-d or Christ into the text despite the fact that neither G-d nor Christ are at all mentioned in the book. Some point to the Hebrew term *šelhebetyâ*, "an intense flame," in Song 8:6 as evidence of the presence of G-d in the book because its last syllable, *yâ*, employs the first component of the holy name of G-d, but the syllable functions only as a means to intensify the imagery of the flaming fire depicted in the word.[20] Indeed, even the decision of the Theology of the Hebrew Scripture program unit to label the theme of this session "The Hiddenness of G-d" presupposes the belief that the presence of G-d lies within the Bible—and therefore within each of its books—insofar as they are read as sacred Scripture that communicates the will or the word of G-d.

But such an approach obscures the reality of the text, namely, G-d is indeed absent in the text of the Song of Songs, and assertions to the contrary, however subtly expressed, undermine our ability to interpret this singular feature. Song of Songs is not alone in this absence; G-d is also absent in the MT Hebrew version of the book of Esther—and this, too, has provoked controversy in Esther's interpretation.[21] But Esther is frequently read in relation to the problems of divine presence instigated by the reality of the Shoah with questions as to whether G-d was truly present, engaged, or even moral in the face of the genocide.[22] Song of Songs, however, presupposes no such scenario of potential or realized genocide. Song of Songs presupposes the sensuality, passions, and pure joy of human sexuality—apart from the presence of G-d—and it is this that demands our attention.

We will therefore proceed by analyzing the formal characteristics of the Song of Songs, its literary structure, genre, and settings, in an effort to ascertain the purposes of the book.[23] We will then turn to consider its

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20. E.g., Exum, *Song of Songs*, 253–54; Longman, *Song of Songs*, 212–13; Murphy, *Song of Songs*, 192–93, 197–98.

21. See Sweeney, "Absence of G-d," repr. as ch. 40 in this volume; Sweeney, *Tanak*, 441–44.

22. E.g., Fackenheim, *Jewish Bible after the Holocaust*, 87–92; Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible*, 219–22.

23. For discussion of method, see Sweeney, "Form Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, repr. as ch. 2 in this volume.

purposes in relation to the motif of the absence of G-d and its place within the Hebrew Bible.

3.1. Formal Analysis of the Song of Songs

A formal analysis of the Song of Songs is essential to determine the organization of its contents in order to discern its interpretation. Song of Songs begins in Song 1:1 with a superscription that presents both the title of the book and the identification of its author, namely, *šîr haššîrîm ʾăšer lišlōmōh*, "the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's." The attribution to Solomon signals both the artistic character of the work and its sexual concerns, insofar as Solomon is remembered as the wisest of Israel's monarchs, who authored 1,005 songs and married some seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kgs 5:9–13, 11:1–5). Although the Kings narrative is constructed as a means to critique Solomon for apostasy,[24] the number of his wives actually testifies to his wisdom in international relations, insofar as ancient treaties among nations were sealed with a marriage between the royal houses of each nation, as well as his stellar reputation as a lover of women as seen from the standpoint of those who value quantity. The superscription thereby suggests to the reader that the book conveys both artistic beauty and passion concerning love.

Although scholars continue to disagree concerning the literary structure and interpretation of the Song of Songs, Phyllis Trible has presented one of the most cogent and suggestive analyses of the formal characteristics of the book.[25] She asks the most fundamental form-critical questions of the work, namely, Who is speaking? To whom? About what?, to identify three fundamental characters, apart from the narrator in the superscription of the book, whose interaction provides the foundation for determining the formal structure and organization of the Song of Songs. The fundamental characters include the female lover, who plays the dominant role in initiating the dialogue of the book and moving the plot forward; the male lover, who serves as counterpoint and complement to the female lover; and the daughters of Jerusalem or Zion, who are addressed at the conclusion of

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24. Sweeney, *1 and 2 Kings*, 62–186.

25. Trible, *G-d and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 144–65; cf. Sweeney, *Tanak*, 425–29; contra Roland E. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, Esther*, FOTL 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 98–124, who treats the book as a series of individual units.

each major movement of the text. Although the daughters of Jerusalem or Zion do not have voice in the text, many interpreters maintain that they are a chorus of women who play a key role in the performance of the Song of Songs by giving voice to a chorus whose words do not appear in the text. Insofar as the addresses to the daughters of Jerusalem/Zion appear in Song 2:7, 3:5, 5:8, and 8:4, the five constituent subunits or movements in the text include Song 1:2–2:7, 2:8–3:5, 3:6–5:8, 5:9–8:4, and 8:5–14. Each expresses a specific set of concerns that gives expression to the literary tension of the text and advances the plot, thereby leading ultimately to its culmination in Song 8:5–14.

Song of Songs 1:2–2:7 constitutes the first subunit or movement of the Song of Songs insofar as it presents the woman's expression of desire for her male lover. She is the speaker throughout, and she speaks in a sequence of stanzas that combine first-person assertions about her own qualities with second-person addresses to her male lover that both portray his qualities and rhetorically appeal for his response. She begins in Song 1:2–4 with an appeal for her lover's kisses and observations of his sweet fragrance that prompt the maidens to love him, and she concludes with a proposition that they go off together to make love. She describes herself as dark and beautiful in Song 1:5–8, employing nouns based on the root *šḥr*, which typically conveys efficacy insofar as black represents the combination of all colors and their power of expression.[26] As she speaks of her unguarded vineyard, here understood as an invitation, she asks him where he grazes his sheep so that she might follow him and join him. Finally, in Song 1:9–2:7, she employs hints of the *waṣf* form to describe both herself and her lover, often in very explicit and yet concealed terms, such as her reference to him as a bundle of myrrh between her breasts in Song 1:13 or his flag of love over her in the wine house in Song 2:4, as she anticipates their union.[27] The subunit concludes with her adjuration to the maidens of Jerusalem in verse 7 not to awaken or arouse love until it desires, apparently an adjuration to follow through with what they might start.

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26. See also Isa 8:20, in which *šaḥar* refers to "dawn" and the efficacy of creation, as well as Isa 47:11, in which *šaḥrah* refers to the magical powers of the daughter of Babylon (for discussion see Sweeney, "Philological and Form-Critical Reevaluation," esp. 39–40); cf. Pope, *Song of Songs*, 307–18.

27. For discussion of the *waṣf* form, see esp. Pope, *Song of Songs*, 54–59; Longman, *Song of Songs*, 50–52; Murphy, *Song of Songs*, 47–48; Marvin H. Fox, *The Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Love Poetry* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).

Song of Songs 2:8–3:5 then turns to the approach of the male lover, which suggests the impending consummation of the union between the woman and the man. She employs faunal imagery to describe his approach in Song 2:8–13 as a gazelle or a young stag leaping over mountains and hills to come to her. She then portrays him gazing through the window at her and bidding her to join him as spring blossoms in the land. She addresses him as her dove in Song 2:14, asking to see his face and hear his voice. In Song 2:15–17 she declares that "my beloved is mine, and I am his," prior to Song 3:1–5, in which she rises from her bed to find her lost love, who is not with her. The stanza ends in tension as she once again adjures the daughters of Jerusalem by the gazelles and the rams of the field not to arouse love until it desires.

Song of Songs 3:6–5:8 turns to the loss of the male lover in an expression of narrative tension that threatens the consummation of the relationship expected by both the woman and the reader. She begins the subunit in Song 3:9–11 with an image of King Solomon on his palanquin, and calls on the daughters of Zion and Jerusalem to go out and see King Solomon decked out in the crown his mother gave him on his wedding day. The image apparently expresses her desire for union with her lost lover. Song 4:1–7 then turns to a *waṣf*, spoken by the man, in which he describes her beauty with faunal images, "your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, grazing among the lilies." He turns in Song 4:8–11 to claims that she has captured his heart and that sweetness drops from her lips. In Song 4:12–5:1 he describes her as his bride, a locked garden and a well of living water from which he would presumably drink, but in verse 16, the woman speaks again, asking the winds to blow and spread the fragrance of the garden so that he might enjoy its fruits. By Song 5:1, the man claims that he has entered as an unidentified voice calls on the lovers to eat and drink of love. In Song 5:2–8, the woman awakens from her dream believing that her lover is at the door, but when she opens it, he is gone. When she goes out to search for him in the night, the city guards abuse her. She concludes with an adjuration to the daughters of Jerusalem asking them to, if they meet her beloved, tell him that she is faint with love.

Song of Songs 5:9–8:4 then moves to resolution with a portrayal of the union of the two lovers. Song of Songs 5:9 begins with the voice of the daughters of Jerusalem asking the woman how and why her lover is better than another that she adjures them as she has done. She responds with a *waṣf* in Song 5:10–16, in which she describes her man as having a head of the finest gold with curly black locks, eyes like doves, a torso like

a tablet of ivory, and a deliciously sweet mouth. The maidens agree to help her search in Song 6:1–3 as the woman reiterates that her beloved is hers. Song of Songs 6:4–11 then follows with a *waṣf* sung by the man, in which he describes the woman's hair like a flock of goats, a phrase that must have been intended to melt any Judean woman's heart! In Song 6:10, he regains his poise by asking, "Who is this that shines like the dawn, beautiful like the moon, radiant like the sun, awesome like banners?" and in Song 6:11 he went down to the garden of nut trees to look for his love. In Song 7:1–10, the daughters of Jerusalem address her as the Shulemite, a reference to a village known for its beautiful women, and call for the woman to turn back so that they might describe her beauty with another *waṣf*. She responds in Song 7:11 with her insistent declaration, "I am my beloved's, and for me is his desire." She the invites him to join her in the vineyards, where she gives herself to him. She concludes in Song 8:4 with her well-known adjuration to the daughters of Jerusalem, "Do not awaken or arouse love until it desires."

Song of Songs 8:5–13 is a frequently misunderstood conclusion to the book. Some see this section as a series of disconnected additions to the text,[28] but the imagery presented and the interrelationships of the individual images indicate a concern with communicating the significance of the relationship between the woman and the man. It thereby provides hints as to the purpose of the Song of Songs.

The first image in Song 8:5 presents a rhetorical question, which asks who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved. The answer is obviously the woman. She tells her lover that she aroused him under the apple tree where her mother conceived him. This segment draws on the bridal motif so well known in the prophets in which Israel is the bride and YHWH is the groom. Here, it subtly signals that the lovers are to be identified with Israel and YHWH, but it also points to the impending sexual union as an act that will result in the conception of a child, indicating that the union will have ongoing results in the creation of a human being.

Song of Songs 8:6–7 then turns to the imagery of the woman's role as a "seal" on the heart of the man. The "seal," Hebrew *ḥôtām*, refers to the signet ring that is used to seal and sign a document in the ancient Israelite/Judean world, thereby signing a contract that binds two parties into a lasting rela-

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28. E.g., Murphy, *Song of Songs*, 195.

tionship.[29] It can be used for political and business purposes, but the present context suggests a marriage relationship. The woman's statements that "love is as strong as death" and that "passion/zeal is as hard as Sheol" points to the intensity and presumed permanence of the relationship as a blazing flame that cannot be quenched.[30] Her last comment points to the futility and ridiculousness of anyone who things that they can buy such love with money.

Song of Songs 8:8–10 presents the little sister with no breasts who is yet too young for marriage but nevertheless can become engaged. It was not uncommon for young girls to be engaged for marriage by their parents long before they reach a suitable age. The imagery of a wall overlaid with silver is inherently defensive and lends itself to the understanding that she is no longer available for relationships with other young men.[31] The imagery of the door paneled in cedar indicates that someone will be able to enter, presumably the young man to whom she is engaged. Her final statement, "I am a wall, my breasts are like towers; so I am in his eyes as one who finds peace," portrays the manner in which her fiancé gazes on her as he waits for the time of their marriage.

Song of Songs 8:11–12 presents the statement of the girl concerning Solomon's need to post guards over his vineyard, in this case, a subtle reference to the girl to whom he is betrothed. She mentions the thousand shekels of silver that a man would pay for her, but she is not for sale. Solomon can keep his money, but he must pay his guards.

Finally, Song 8:13–14 portrays the young woman in the city garden, where someone might hear. She asks to hear the voice of her beloved and proposes that they flee to the hills, where they may consummate their relationship in private. The book therefore ends in anticipation of the sexual union that has functioned as the fundamental premise of the plot throughout.

The formal structure of the book then appears as follows:

Allegorical Dramatization of Relationship between Two Lovers (Song 1:1–8:14)

I.	Superscription: Solomon's Song of Songs	1:1
II.	Dramatization in five episodes	1:2–8:14

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29. See Exum, *Song of Songs*, 250–51; Keel, *Song of Songs*, 271–72; Longman, *Song of Songs*, 209–10.

30. Exum, *Song of Songs*, 251–53.

31. See Exum, *Song of Songs*, 254–59.

A.	Woman expresses desire for her male lover	1:2–2:7
B.	Approach of the male lover	2:8–3:5
C.	Loss of the male lover	3:6–5:8
D.	Reunion of the two lovers	5:9–8:4
E.	Consummation	8:5–14

This analysis of the Song of Songs points to its fundamental character as a love song in which a woman anticipates her union or marriage with a man who is to become her husband. Such a conclusion should surprise no one. When we consider the setting for the performance of such a song, a wedding is the first thing that must come to mind. Indeed, the narrative account in Judg 21:19–24 concerning the Benjaminite men who would lie in wait to claim their brides from the maidens dancing in the vineyards at the Shiloh sanctuary provides a suitable setting for such a song. The portrayal of the event is polemical, insofar as Israel had nearly destroyed Benjamin for its role in the rape and murder of the Levite's concubine in Judg 19–21, and so the Benjaminites must seize their brides as if to rape them because Israel had vowed not to give its daughters to Benjamin.[32] But the temple setting and the dancing in the vineyards portends the celebration of a sacred festival, perhaps Sukkot, which celebrates the fruit harvest of grapes and other produce prior to the onset of the fall rains. Such a setting might serve as the occasion for an engagement and subsequent wedding, but it also points to the mythologized portrayal of the relationship between YHWH and Israel as groom and bride, insofar as YHWH the groom provides the rains that produce grapes for the bride, Israel. A work such as the Song of Songs would easily serve a dual purpose as a wedding or engagement song for young lovers as well as a liturgical song to celebrate a holiday that marks YHWH's provision of fruit or food for the people. When read from this perspective, Song of Songs is a joyous song that celebrates the impending marriages between young men and women as well as the harvest of fruit that follows from the relationship between YHWH and Israel.

3.2. The Absence of G-d

But there is another dimension to the Song of Songs, which pertains to the motif of the absence of G-d in the text. Despite our best efforts to read G-d

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32. Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 110–25; Marvin A. Sweeney, "Davidic Polemics in the Book of Judges," *VT* 47 (1997): 517–29, repr. as ch. 20 in this volume.

into the Song of Songs, G-d remains entirely absent in the text of the Song of Songs, and the human characters emerge as the main and only characters in the book. This has important ramifications for the interpretation of the Song of Songs.[33]

First, the human characters of the Song of Songs, including the woman, the man, and the daughters of Jerusalem/Zion, are the only figures in the book who will serve its narrative agenda. In this case, we do not see in the narrative the need to overcome the challenges of foreign invasion, religious apostasy, the observance of divine torah, or any of the major crises and challenges that so frequently fill the pages the Hebrew Bible. Instead, the characters of the Song of Songs have only the happy task of consummating a sexual union. But as the above analysis has shown, the projected sexual consummation envisioned in the Song of Songs has wider ramifications. For one, the Song of Songs does not simply envision the sexual union itself; it envisions the sexual union in the context of a wedding between the woman and the man. As for the daughters of Jerusalem/Zion, they are not simply a necessary sounding board for the woman; they perhaps must be considered as her attendants as she prepares for her wedding.

Second, the human characters of the Song of Songs have only themselves on whom to rely. They cannot or do not depend on G-d to resolve the tensions that emerge within the narrative progression of the text; they can only rely on themselves to resolve those tensions. More specifically, it is the woman who must find the way to overcome the obstacles that she encounters. She does so by establishing relationships with the other characters of the book. She speaks repeatedly to the daughters of Jerusalem/Zion, adjuring them not to awaken love until it desires. Her adjurations serve as a form of chorus or perhaps an interlude that marks the various movements of the Song of Songs and its plot, but they also function as a means to establish the daughters of Jerusalem/Zion as her fictive audience. In this capacity, they become her sounding board as she pours out her emotions and feelings concerning her male counterpart. Although they rarely speak, they serve as her support group that enable her to muster the will and determination to persist in her goal, namely, to wed and bed the man in the narrative. In this regard, they are essential to her efforts. She repeatedly expresses her fears and doubts together with her desires,

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33. See esp. Carr, who points to the role of sexuality in human spirituality (*Erotic Word*).

and the daughters of Jerusalem/Zion, simply by serving as her audience, enable her to overcome those fears and doubts so that she might persist through the realization of her goals.

The woman must also establish her relationship with the man. Granted that the relationship is rather one-dimensional. She speaks only of her passion for him and her perceptions of his attractiveness. The man is no different. The reader learns little about him other than that he, too, finds her attractive and wants the union to take place, but he reveals little more. When he disappears, neither the woman nor the reader knows where he goes. Maybe he's got another woman? Maybe he's got a job, a profession, or a business? Maybe he's a drunk or a gambler? Maybe he's got cold feet? Neither the woman nor the reader will ever know where he is when he is gone, but indeed, it doesn't matter. This narrative is told from the perspective of the woman, and she does not need to know what he is doing. Her need is to have him return to her so that they might proceed. His needs do not really count apart from hers. Here it is wise to remember that even in antiquity, the wedding is all about the bride!

Third is the question of what happens on the morning—or the lifetime—after the consummation of the sexual relationship. By establishing relationships with the other human characters in the book, the woman in the Song of Songs overcomes the obstacles that bar her from achieving her goal, namely, the consummation of the union with the man or—more properly—her marriage to the man. But although the book and the reader are fixated on the sexual union, that union has wider implications as well. Sexual union in the ancient world generally entails childbirth, both as a biological and as a social reality. Contemporary means of contraception have enabled modern human to pursue sexual relations purely for pleasure, but the absence or limits of effective contraception in the ancient world pointed to the expectation that the birth of children would follow from sexual intercourse. Contraception has always been available since antiquity, even if its effectiveness has not always been assured, but the social expectation of sexual relations—and of weddings in particular—is that they lead to childbirth. This reality points to another dimension of the Song of Songs, namely, the human characters in the narrative, specifically the woman and the man, are in a position to act as creators in producing human life. Childbirth is not mentioned specifically as an outcome of the sexual union in the Song of Songs, but it is hinted at when the woman speaks of taking her lover to the garden where his mother gave birth to him. Even if it is mentioned only in an ancillary way, the creative powers

of the woman and the man in their relationship with each other grants to them a degree of creative power otherwise enjoyed and exercised by G-d. In this respect, the human characters of the Song of Songs partner together to consummate their relationship, but they also partner together with G-d to continue or to complete the creation that G-d has initiated outside the book.

Fifth is a continuation of what happens on the morning or lifetime after the sexual union. When children are born as a result of the sexual union, what are the woman and the man to do with them? Their task is to feed and clothe them, raise them, educate them, and form them into adult human beings who will someday engage in sexual union and marriage themselves to continue the cycle of creation and life that the original relationship between the woman and the man initiated. Although sexual union and the wedding are the end result of the narrative progression of the Song of Songs, the union is only the beginning of the postnarrative life that such union entails. Again, the human characters of the Song of Songs as a result of the relationship that they create through their sexual union will function as creators akin to G-d when they raise the children that result from their sexual union. In this respect, Trible is correct to point to Gen 3 as the intertextual corollary to the Song of Songs.[34] The woman in Gen 3 will give birth to children as a result of her sexual desire for the man—and his for her, although this dimension is not acknowledged in the text of Gen 3. It is therefore important to note that this role for women (and men) emerges only after the woman acquires knowledge or wisdom in the Gen 3 narrative by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Women are the first teachers of their children, if only by virtue of the fact that they must be around their infants when they are young to provide them with food. It is the women who play the key role therefore in forming the personality and worldview of their children, thereby preparing them for their lives as adults who will someday have children of their own and raise and educate them in turn.

3.3. Song of Songs as an Expression of Biblical Theology

Altogether, this analysis of the Song of Songs and the motif of the absence of G-d in the Song of Songs points to a key dimension of the text. Human

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34. Trible, *G-d and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 72–143.

beings are not simply sexual beings in the Song of Song. Through their relationships with each other, they emerge as creator figures on a par with G-d insofar as their sexual union enables them to become creators of new human beings with all that entails, that is, raising and educating the children that are born so that they, too, can become effective human beings and partners with G-d—and each other—in continuing and completing the creation that G-d initiated.

That is why Rabbi Akiva declares the Song of Songs to be the holy of holies in sacred Scripture. Insofar as Song of Songs envisions such a creative role for human beings resulting from their sexual capacities, the book became foundational together with Ezekiel and other texts in the development of Jewish mysticism during the Second Temple period, the rabbinic period, and beyond.[35] Indeed, Song of Songs played a key role in the development of the *merkabah* tradition, particularly the Sefer Yetzirah and the Shiur Qomah, which respectively examine the creative power of divine and human speech and the human perception of the divine presence in the world.[36] And these books in turn played key roles in the development of the kabbalistic tradition that turned to the examination of the personality of G-d and the recognition that the presence of G-d abides in each and every one of us, beginning with our sexual characters and capacities.[37]

4. Biblical Theology in Transition

Biblical theology has changed markedly since the collapse of the field in the late twentieth century. It is a field that must learn to engage the entire Bible, but at the same time to recognize that the Bible appears in different canonical and versional forms. It is a field that must learn to recognize that all of its books require engagement, not just the ones that we select because they are most compatible with our own theological worldviews. And it is a field that must recognize that the Bible lessons are not

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35. See Carr, *Erotic Word*, 139–51. For a survey of the influence of Song of Songs on later Jewish literature and thought, see Fishbane, *Song of Songs*, 245–304.

36. A. Peter Hayman, *Sefer Yeṣira: Edition, Translation, and Text-Critical Commentary*, TSAJ 104 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004); Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy*; Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions*; Marvin A. Sweeney, "Dimensions of the Shekhinah: The Meaning of the *Shiur Qomah* in Jewish Mysticism, Liturgy, and Rabbinic Thought," *HS* 54 (2013): 107–20.

37. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*.

always to be emulated; sometimes the Bible shows us courses of action or thought that must be challenged as we human beings must learn fully to distinguish between good and evil—especially when the evil comes from G-d. There are a host of other issues to discuss, for example, the roles of law and ritual as expressions of sanctity, the continuing validity of G-d's eternal covenant with Israel and its implications for Christian theology, a reevaluation of the New Testament claims of a loving G-d when measured against the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, and others. For now, we are just beginning.

Absence of G-d and Human
Responsibility in the Book of Esther

1. Introduction

In his recent study of the Jewish Bible after the Holocaust, Fackenheim argues that, in the aftermath of the Shoah, the existence of both Jews and Christians and their reading of the Bible can never again be what it once was.[1] As a result of the Shoah, Jews became the children of Job, for whom choice was destroyed. Christians, on the other hand, have been given a new choice, to acquiesce in the destruction of Jews and Judaism or not to acquiesce and to identify with Jews unto death. Such a scenario calls for a radical rethinking of theology, both Jewish and Christian, and a rethinking of the paradigms by which biblical books are read. This essay explores such a rereading of the book of Esther, clearly one of the most difficult theological books of the Hebrew Bible, in the aftermath of the Shoah.[2]

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The author dedicates this essay to the memory of Charles V. Dorothy, PhD.

1. Fackenheim, *Jewish Bible after the Holocaust*, 19.

2. For discussion of theological issues posed by the Shoah, see especially Steven T. Katz, "Jewish Faith after the Holocaust: Four Approaches," in *Post-Holocaust Dialogues: Critical Studies in Modern Jewish Thought* (New York: New York University Press, 1985), 141–73; Williamson, *Guest in the House*. For discussion of the implications of the Shoah for biblical theology in particular, see Sweeney, "Reconceiving the

Esther presents tremendous challenges to both Christian and Jewish scholars in their attempts to incorporate an assessment of the book within the framework of a comprehensive theological interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, such as that called for by Knierim.[3] The book presents the story of the origins of the Jewish holiday of Purim, in which Esther, the Jewish queen of the Persian monarch Ahasuerus, and her uncle Mordecai save the Jewish population of the Persian Empire from extermination at the hands of the evil royal minister Haman. The root of the theological difficulty lies in the complete absence of any mention of G-d in the Hebrew version of the book, generally conceded to be the oldest version of Esther, which functions as sacred Scripture in both Protestant Christianity and Judaism. Although chance and coincidence play important roles in the plot of the narrative, the book portrays the deliverance of the Jewish community not as an act of G-d, but as the result of actions by the human protagonists of the story.

In addition to the focus on human rather than divine action, other factors present problems to Christian theologians in particular, such as the alleged focus on Jewish nationalism or particularism rather than on universal values, and the slaughter of the enemies of the Jews throughout the Persian Empire following the discovery of Haman's plot.[4] As a result, Christian biblical theologians frequently express perplexity or hostility in their attempts to interpret Esther, and some have even questioned the role of Esther as a book of Christian Scripture. Nevertheless, Esther constitutes one of the books of both the Christian and Jewish Bibles, and it must be taken seriously as such, particularly in the aftermath of the

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Paradigms." See also Edward L. Greenstein, "A Jewish Reading of Esther," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Baruch A. Levine, and Ernest S. Frerichs (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 225–43, which presents a survey of issues relevant to a Jewish reading of the book of Esther.

3. See Knierim, "Task of Old Testament Theology." Knierim's study does not take up Esther, but it conveys one of the plurality of theologies in the Hebrew Bible that must be accounted for. For summaries of discussion concerning the book of Esther, see Moore, "Esther, Book of"; Gillis Gerleman, *Esther*, BKAT 21 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), esp. 1–7; Lewis B. Paton, *The Book of Esther*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908), esp. 97–118.

4. For a critique of those who charge that nationalism permeates the book of Esther, see Jon D. Levenson, "The Scroll of Esther in Ecumenical Perspective," *JES* 13 (1976): 440–52.

Shoah.[5] The book addresses the potential extermination of the Jewish people by a gentile nation, and it does so in a context in which G-d fails to act in any clearly demonstrable manner. This has especially important implications for Christian biblical interpretation, which relies primarily on a theological paradigm by which to read the Bible. It demonstrates that theology alone may not provide a fully adequate framework for the interpretation of the Bible in Christianity.[6] G-d is sometimes absent or fails to act in the Bible or in the world at large, and human beings are therefore left to assume responsibility for overcoming evil in the world. In keeping with these concerns, the balance of this essay treats three topics: (1) problems posed by the absence of G-d and violence in Esther to interpreters of the Hebrew Bible, (2) the generic literary character of Esther and the presentation of its primary protagonists, and (3) evaluation of the themes absence of G-d and human action in a post-Shoah reading of the book.

2. The Absence of God and Violence in Esther

The absence of G-d in Esther clearly constitutes the basis for difficulties with the book in both Judaism and in Christianity. G-d is never mentioned in any direct manner, although many take the references to "relief and deliverance … from another quarter" in 4:14 or to the efficacy of fasting in 4:16 as veiled references to the deity.[7] Others point to the role that coinci-

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5. For discussion of the use of the Hebrew term *Shoah*, rather than *Holocaust*, to label the attempted genocide against the Jewish people during World War II, see Garber and Zuckerman, "Why Do We Call the Holocaust." As Garber and Zuckerman note, the term *holocaust* is a translation of the Hebrew term ʾōlâ, or "whole burnt offering," which was offered daily in the ancient Jerusalem temple (see Lev 1). Its function was in part to honor G-d and to aid in maintaining the stability of the created world (see Levenson, "Temple and the World"). The use of the term *Holocaust* thereby implies that the attempted murder of European Jews was somehow sanctioned by G-d and that it was intended to serve the divinely created world order. By contrast, the Hebrew word *šōʾâ* simply means "destruction" and implies no theological legitimization of the attempted genocide or moral evaluation of its victims.

6. See Sweeney, "Why Jews Should Be Interested," esp. 71–72, which questions whether theology offers an adequate basis for a comprehensive interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.

7. For example, Sandra Beth Berg, *The Book of Esther: Motifs, Themes and Structures*, SBLDS 44 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 177–79.

dence or chance plays in seeing to the deliverance of Jews from Haman's plot as signs of divine intervention or control of events:[8] Mordecai, while sitting at the gate, by chance overhears a plot to assassinate Ahasuerus and warns the king through Esther (2:19–23); Haman just happens to approach Ahasuerus at a time when the king wishes to honor Mordecai for saving him from the assassination attempt (6:1–11); Haman accidentally falls on Esther's couch just as Ahasuerus reenters the banquet hall, convincing the king that Haman meant to assault her sexually (7:7–8). Nevertheless, such contentions appear to be rationalizations for the absence of G-d in the text; chance does indeed play a role, but Esther, Mordecai, Ahasuerus, and others make decisions and undertake actions that ultimately see to the deliverance of the Jewish people.

Others argue that G-d must have appeared in the book in some form but that a later reworking of Esther removed any reference to the deity.[9] There is absolutely no objective evidence for such a conclusion, as no pre-MT manuscript or version of the book is extant. No copy of Esther has been found among the scrolls from the Judean wilderness, which, with only a few exceptions, are generally regarded as the earliest extant Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible. The early Greek versions of Esther contain various texts that do not appear in the Hebrew version of the book and that refer explicitly to G-d. Nevertheless, the references to G-d in the Greek versions of Esther appear in texts that are generally regarded as secondary additions to or reworkings of the earlier Hebrew form of the book.[10] The Greek versions of Esther constitute some of the earliest attempts to interpret the book. In part, the additions to Esther likely reflect the discomfort felt by the translators or composers of the Greek texts of Esther, who sought to overcome the problems posed by the absence of G-d in the text by adding material that refers specifically to the deity and to prayer by the major protagonists. Nevertheless, interpreters must recognize that G-d simply does not appear in the earliest form of the book of Esther, and its major Jewish characters demonstrate no clear interest in G-d or in Jewish religious practice.

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8. For example, David J. A. Clines, *The Esther Scroll: The Story of the Story*, JSOT-Sup 30 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), 153–58.

9. Moore, "Esther, Book of," 636.

10. For a full discussion of the literary character of the Hebrew and the two Greek versions of the book of Esther, see Charles V. Dorothy, *The Books of Esther: Structure, Genre, and Textual Integrity*, JSOTSup 187 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996).

The second major problem in the interpretation of Esther is the portrayal of the massacre of Haman, his family, and his supporters. Following the revelation of Haman's plot to exterminate the Jews of the Persian Empire, Ahasuerus grants Jews the right "to gather and defend their lives, to destroy, to slay, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, with their children and women, and to plunder their goods" (8:11). Haman was hanged, and on the day that Haman's decree was to take place, Jews in the capital of Susa attacked and killed the ten sons of Haman and eight hundred of Haman's supporters. On next day, Jews throughout the empire killed seventy-five thousand of those who hated them. The result of the massacre was two days of feasting and rejoicing and the institution of the festival of Purim. Many have seen in these actions a vengeful, bloodthirsty, and chauvinistic spirit that can hardly serve as an inspiring model for forgiveness, mercy, and kindness. To be fair, however, such interpretations generally fail to note that the killing was limited to those who sought to kill Jews, and the narrative states repeatedly that Jews refused to take plunder from their victims. The celebration was for the deliverance of the Jewish people from destruction, not for the opportunity to destroy others.[11]

Both the so-called secular nature of the book and its portrayal of violence have clearly caused a great deal of discomfort to its later interpreters, both Jewish and Christian. Rabbinic authorities raised questions concerning Esther's canonical status, insofar as the book might provoke animosity against Jews among the gentiles, and because Purim was not explicitly authorized by Moses in the Torah (b. Meg. 7a, y. Meg. 70d). Medieval Jewish commentators went to great lengths to demonstrate that G-d was indeed active behind the scenes in Esther and that the descendants of Haman survived the massacre to study Torah in Bene Berak, the location where Rabbi Akiva, one of the leading sages of talmudic tradition, established his yeshiva, or rabbinical academy, in the aftermath of the Roman destruction of the Second Temple.[12] Modern

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11. See Greenstein, "Jewish Reading of Esther," 226.

12. Walfish, *Esther in Medieval Garb*. For discussion of Rabbi Akiva, see "Akiva," *EncJud* 2:488–92. Note well that the yeshivah established by Rabbis Yohanan ben Zakkai in Yavneh and Akiva ben Joseph in Bene Berak are credited with the survival and continuing development of Judaism in the period following the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans. For discussion, see Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, 245–56; Schürer, *History of the Jewish People* 1:514–28; Isaiah M. Gafni, "The

Jewish commentators are sometimes ambivalent about Esther. Scha-
lom Ben-Chorin argues that "both festival and book are unworthy of a
people which is disposed to bring about its national and moral regen-
eration under prodigious sacrifice." Elias Bickerman considers Esther
to be one of four "strange books" of the Bible because it fails to mention
G-d.[13]

Christian interpreters have been even more vociferous in their crit-
icism and frequent rejection of the book. Many early church fathers,
including Melito of Sardis (fl. ca. 167), Athanasius (295–373), Gregory
of Nazianzus (329–390), Theodore of Mopsuestia (350?–428), and
others, denied the canonical status of the book.[14] Luther, the founder of
the Protestant Reformation, declared in his *Tischreden*, "I am so hostile
to the book [2 Maccabees] and to Esther that I wish they did not exist
at all; for they Judaize too much and have much heathen perverseness."[15]
More recently, Wilhelm Vischer states that "the book of Esther pres-
ents the Jewish question in full sharpness [das Estherbuch stellt die
Judenfrage in voller Schärfe]" and argues that the answer to the ques-
tion of who should hang on the gallows is to be found in the crucifixion
of Jesus, "through whom he grants peace in place of mortal enmity,
between Jew and non-Jew [dadurch stiftet er den Frieden für Todfeind-
schaft zwischen den Juden und den Nichtjuden]."[16] Robert Pfeiffer states
in a diatribe against modern Zionism that "such a secular book hardly
deserves a place in the canon of Sacred Scriptures"; Bernhard Ander-
son decries the "fierce nationalism and unblushing vindictiveness which
stand in glaring contradiction to the Sermon on the Mount"; and von
Rad omits the book entirely from his acclaimed *Old Testament Theology*,

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Historical Background," in *The Literature of the Sages,* ed. Shmuel Safrai, CRINT 2
(Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 14–20; Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the
Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 214–31.

13. Schalom Ben-Chorin, *Kritik des Estherbuches: Eine theologisches Streitschrift*
(Jerusalem: Salingré, 1938), 5 (unavailable to me). The translation of his comment
is from Bernhard W. Anderson, "The Place of the Book of Esther in the Christian
Bible," *JR* 30 (1950): 34; Elias Bickerman, *Four Strange Books of the Bible* (New York:
Schocken, 1967).

14. Moore, "Esther, Book of," 635.

15. Cited in Anderson, "Place of the Book," 33. See also Hans Bardtke, *Luther und
das Buch Esther* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1964), 72–73. Bardtke provides a compre-
hensive analysis of Luther's views on Esther, both positive and negative.

16. Wilhelm Vischer, *Esther*, TEH 48 (Munich: Kaiser, 1937), 14, 21–22.

which emphasizes the "salvation history" that in his view permeates the entire Hebrew Bible, [17] except perhaps for Esther.

Altogether, both Jewish and Christian scholars seem to recoil from Esther because it does not conform to fixed ideas about what should constitute a biblical book. It does not mention G-d, it does not promote religious observance, it does not testify to divine mercy or peace, and it advocates death for enemies. And yet, this is precisely the point. The absence of G-d must be recognized as a fundamental premise of the book; attempts to read G-d into the book violate the integrity of its message and must be rejected categorically. At times in human experience, G-d does not always act in the face of evil, and the book of Esther presents the reader with that reality. Furthermore, the book of Esther is a part of both the Jewish and Christian canons of the Bible. It is sacred Scripture in both traditions, and as such, it demands a hearing on its own terms.

3. The Literary Character of Esther and Human Responsibility

In order to assess the significance of Esther's message concerning the absence of G-d in the face of evil, it is necessary to come to some understanding of the book's generic literary character. On the surface, it is presented as a historical narrative set in the court of the Achaemenid king Xerxes I of Persia (reigned 486–465 BCE), rendered as Ahasuerus in Hebrew. Various features of the book correspond to what is known of the historical monarch Xerxes I. He ruled an empire that extended from India to Ethiopia, had a winter palace at Susa, had a reputation for his lavish banquets and copious drinking, suffered harem intrigues as a result of his sexual appetites, and was known for extravagant promises or gifts as well as for a nasty temper.[18] Various scholars have attempted to establish some element of historicity to the narrative by pointing to these features and by identifying Mordecai with a Persian official named Marduka, whose name appears in a text from the late reign of Darius or the early reign of Xerxes.[19]

Nevertheless, there is clearly very little basis for such attempts. Xerxes was never known to have a queen named Vashti or Esther; his queen

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17. Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948), 743; Anderson, "Place of the Book," 32; Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*.

18. In addition to Moore, "Esther, Book of," see Moore, *Esther*, esp. xxxiv–xli.

19. See Moore, *Esther*, 1, and the literature cited there, esp. Arthur Ungnad, "Keilinschriftliche Beitrage zum Buch Esra und Ester," *ZAW* 58 (1940–1941): 240–44.

between the seventh and twelfth years of his reign (see Esth 2:16, 3:7) was named Amestris, who was known for her vengeance against Xerxes's paramours. Furthermore, Persian queens were required to come from one of seven noble Persian families, which would have rendered Xerxes's marriage to a Jewish woman such as Esther impossible. Various elements of the narrative do seem to correlate to historical realities of Xerxes and his reign, but they also show a great deal of divergence from the facts. The name of his mother was Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus and wife of Darius, which may well underlie Esther's Hebrew name of Hadassah. The Persian Empire was indeed divided into satrapies, but they numbered twenty and not 127 (see Esth 1:1). Xerxes was the target of conspiracy, but it was successful in that he was assassinated in his bedroom by his uncle Artabanus and his grandson Megabyzys. Overall, the book presupposes the historical figure of the Persian monarch Xerxes, but it is clearly a highly fictionalized account of events in his reign. Elements of reversal and exaggeration, bordering on the comedic, play especially major roles in the development of the plot.[20] Ahasuerus is presented not as the great Xerxes I, king of Persia, who mounted invasions against Greece and built the royal city of Persepolis, but as a weak, fickle, and usually drunken fool who is unable to make any but the most trivial or petty decisions. Ahasuerus deposes Queen Vashti for her refusal to obey his command to "show her beauty" before his drunken (male) guests during a banquet that lasted for 180 days. As a result, he sends a decree throughout the empire that commands women to honor their husbands and that every man be lord in his own house. He selects Esther as his queen as the result of an empire-wide beauty contest in which beautiful young women were prepared for twelve months for the one night they would spend in the royal harem to see whether the king would be pleased. Esther's marriage to Ahasuerus is not only improbable because of Persian custom concerning the queenship, but it takes the unlikely motif of the intermarriage of a Jewish woman to a gentile man to extremes by identifying the gentile man as the ruler of the greatest empire of the day. Haman's plot to kill all the Jews of the empire was caused by the refusal of Mordecai, the uncle and stepfather of Esther, to bow down before him because he was a Jew. Ahasuerus's command that Haman honor Mordecai for saving the king from an assassination attempt

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20. For an attempt to read Esther along these lines, see Kenneth Craig, *Reading Esther: A Case for the Literary Carnivalesque*, LCBI (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995).

dearly reverses Haman's plan, as he is the one who is to parade Mordecai through the streets of Susa announcing, "So shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor." When Haman is identified by Esther at a banquet with the king as the man who desires to kill her and her people, Haman conveniently stumbles onto Esther's couch, just as the king reenters the room, and appears to assault the queen. Haman and his ten sons are hanged on the gallows prepared for the Jews; Mordecai is made prime minister in the place of Haman; and the king issues a decree that allows the Jews of the empire to defend themselves and kill all of their enemies who attempt to attack them. Throughout the narrative, Ahasuerus stands idly by and allows others—Haman, Esther, Mordecai, and his servants—to make decisions for him and to control the course of action.

Clearly, Esther highlights the potential danger to the Jewish people living in diaspora under the control of a foreign monarch, who on the slightest pretext allows his court ministers to enact a program of genocide against them. Just as Ahasuerus deposes Vashti for her refusal to show her beauty, so he authorizes Haman to destroy the Jewish people because it does not profit the king to tolerate him. The arbitrariness of the decision is highlighted by the notice that Haman did not bring his charges to the king until the daily casting of the *pur*, or lot, indicated that it was a propitious day to do so. After Haman's plot is exposed, Ahasuerus just as easily decrees that the Jewish people would be able to annihilate any people or province, including women and children, that might attack them (8:11). The book of Esther cannot be taken seriously as historical narrative; it is a parody that presents the problem of threats faced by Jews when living in a gentile world.[21]

It is in the context of such literary exaggeration and reversal that the identities of the primary protagonists become especially important. Mordecai, Esther, and Haman are identified with figures from past tradition that speak to the failure of Jews to destroy an enemy that threatens their existence.[22] Mordecai is identified in 2:5 as the son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite. His pedigree is particularly important in that it has been long recognized as a means to identify both Mordecai and his niece Esther as descendants of Saul son of Kish, the first king of Israel.

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21. See Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends*, HDR 26 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), esp. 153–91. Wills considers Esther to be an example of the "Jewish court legend" genre.

22. See Greenstein, "Jewish Reading of Esther," 230.

Haman likewise is named in 3:1 as the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, which identifies him as a descendant of the Amalekite king Agag.

The significance of this identification is essential for understanding the purposes of the Esther narrative. According to 1 Sam 15, Saul lost his kingship for his failure to destroy the Amalekite king Agag and his retinue in accordance with the command of G-d. It was only when the prophet Samuel appeared on the scene that Agag was hewn down, and the prophet declared that Saul had thereby lost his kingship for his failure to obey the command of G-d. The reasons for such a command appear both in the narrative of 1 Sam 15 and in the narratives concerning Israel's experience in the wilderness of Sinai. Amalek is identified in Exod 17:8–15 and Deut 25:17–19 as the people who attacked Israel in the wilderness "when you were faint and weary, and cut off at your rear all who were faint and weary." Because tradition presents the Amalekites as a people who sought the total destruction of Israel, a special curse is directed against Amalek to "blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." In essence, Amalek symbolizes, both in biblical and subsequent rabbinical tradition, the enemy of Israel par excellence who seeks the total annihilation of the Jews.[23] As a result of his failure to destroy the Amalekites, Saul's kingship quickly declines. Saul is unable to protect Israel from its enemies and focuses instead on his attempts to kill David and even his own son Jonathan. Consequently, Israel is subjugated to the Philistines and is nearly destroyed. Israel was delivered from destruction only when David was able to take action to defeat Israel's enemies.

The analogies between Mordecai/Esther and Saul on the one hand and Haman and Agag on the other hand are central to the purposes of the narrative, insofar as they point to the issue of attempted genocide against the Jewish people. Whereas Saul failed to confront the threat to Israel's survival, and nearly saw the destruction of his people as a result, Mordecai and Esther indeed take matters into their own hands and see to the deliverance of Jews from Haman's plot. The narrative takes care to signal that those attacked and killed by the Jews were enemies who sought to destroy them, and it emphasizes this theme by pointing to the refusal of the Jews to take booty from their dead enemies. The identities of those

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23. See "Amalekites," *EncJud* 2:787–91. For discussion of moral issues pertaining to the Amalekites in Jewish tradition, see Zev Garber, "Deconstructing Theodicy and Amalekut: A Personal Apologia," in *Shoah: The Paradigmatic Genocide; Essays in Exegesis and Eisegesis*, SS 8 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 119–36.

killed as the sons of Haman and those who sought to attack the Jews (Esth 9:7–10, and 8:11, 13; 9:1, 5, 16) are entirely in keeping with the Bible's various expressions of corporate punishment and salvation as expressed in the Deuteronomistic History (e.g., Josh 7–8, 2 Kgs 17), the prophetic literature (e.g., Isa 6, Hos 14), and indeed in the New Testament's view of universal human sin and the possibility of redemption (e.g., Romans), in contrast to the greater focus on individual moral accountability regnant in modern Western and, particularly, North American society. The issue is not vengeance, nor is it genocide against the Persians; it is a matter of justice, that is, the fundamental responsibility and universal right of self-protection against those who would murder—in this case, those who would annihilate the Jewish people. The absence of G-d in this scenario is crucial. As in the narrative concerning Saul and Agag, it is the responsibility of the human protagonists of the narrative to confront and destroy the evil. They cannot wait for G-d to carry out this responsibility for them. Mordechai's statement to Esther in 4:14 expresses this concern admirably: "Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." Ironically, despite her status as a woman, and an intermarried one at that, she is the only person who has the power to make a difference. Everything depends on her.

4. Concluding Evaluation

The absence of G-d and human responsibility for the confrontation and eradication of evil are clearly fundamental themes in the book of Esther. In this respect, these themes point to the reality of human experience in that the presence of G-d is not always evident in times of crisis, and human beings are thereby obligated· to step forward to act when G-d fails to do so.[24] lt is perhaps for this reason that talmudic sage Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish considers Esther to have been revealed together with the torah at Sinai, and Levenson states that Esther presents "a profounder and more realistic stance of faith than that of most of biblical tradition" (y. Meg. 70d).[25]

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24. For discussion of the human responsibility to act at a time when G-d hides the divine face and to continue to witness to G-d, see Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust*, esp. 128–43. Cf. Fackenheim, *G-d's Presence in History*, esp. 84–92. Fackenheim argues that Auschwitz must be viewed as a command by G-d not to hand Hitler a posthumous victory, that is, to affirm Jewish existence and to continue to wrestle with G-d.

25. Levenson, *Esther*, 21.

These themes also point to the role of Esther as sacred Scripture, especially insofar as Esther constitutes a critique of a premise found in most of the biblical literature: G-d will act to punish the wicked and to protect the righteous in a time of danger. Many argue that Esther was not written for this role, as the author of Esther could not possibly have been aware that the work would be incorporated into a much later generic entity known as the Bible,[26] but the use of the Saul and Agag tradition points to the fact that Esther is written with specific intent to interact with an element of scriptural tradition. The author may not have been conscious of the Bible per se, but the author was certainly aware of this particular tradition and employed it in formulating the Esther narrative and its message.

Finally, this reading of the book of Esther has special significance for Christian theology and the interpretation of the Bible in the aftermath of the Shoah. It demonstrates that Christian biblical theology must come to terms with the Jewish character of the Christian Old or First Testament, particularly in relation to the theological reality and legitimacy of the Jewish people in Christian thought.[27] Jews are not fodder for gentile extermination, either by death or by conversion and theological subordination. Esther calls for human responsibility to confront such evil. Within the context of Christian Scripture, the book of Esther demonstrates that it is a Christian responsibility to recognize this reality and to act on it by recognizing the continuing legitimacy of Jews and Judaism as a fundamental axiom of Christian theology. G-d cannot perform this task for Christians; rather, much like Esther, Christians must do it themselves.

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26. For example, Michael V. Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 238.

27. Although the Christian Old Testament and the Jewish Tanak are each considered as the "Hebrew Bible," they are not one and the same, as indicated by the very different presentation of the constituent books in each tradition. For a full discussion, see Sweeney, "Tanak versus Old Testament."

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