

LEVITES AND PRIESTS
IN BIBLICAL HISTORY AND TRADITION

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Edited by

Mark A. Leuchter
and
Jeremy M. Hutton

Society of Biblical Literature
Atlanta

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AB Anchor Bible
ABD *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
AnBib *Analecta biblica*
AoF *Altorientalische Forschungen*
AOAT Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AS Assyriological Studies
ATD Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AThANT *Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments*
BA *Biblical Archaeologist*
BASOR *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBB Bonner biblische Beiträge
BDB Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1907.
BETL *Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium*
BHK *Biblica Hebraica*. Edited by R. Kittel. Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1905–6; multiple editions.
BJS Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT *Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament*
BN *Biblisches Notizen*
BO *Bibliotheca orientalis*
BWANT *Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament*
BZ *Biblisches Zeitschrift*
BZABR *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte*
BZAW *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
CBC Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CC Continental Commentaries
CHANE *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East*
ConBOT *Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series*
COS *The Context of Scripture*. Edited by William W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002.
CTH *Catalogue des Textes Hittites*
DJD *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*
DSD *Dead Sea Discoveries*
Eothen *Eothen: Collana di studi sulle civiltà dell'Oriente antico*

- ErIsr Eretz Israel
 FAT Forschungen zum Alten Testament
 FRLANT Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
 GAT Grundrisse zum Alten Testament
 HALOT Koehler, L., W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–99.
 HAT Handbuch zum Alten Testament
 HBM Hebrew Bible Monographs
 HdO Handbuch der Orientalistik
 HKAT Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
 HSM Harvard Semitic Monographs
 HThKAT Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
 HTR *Harvard Theological Review*
 HUCA *Hebrew Union College Annual*
 IBHS *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
 ICC International Critical Commentary
 JANER *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
 JANES *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
 JAOS *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
 JB Jerusalem Bible
 JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*
 JHS *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
 JJTP *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*
 JNES *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
 JSJ *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*
 JSOT *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
 JSOTSup *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series*
 JSP *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
 JSPSup *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series*
 KHAT Kurzer Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
 KUB *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi*
 LHBOTS Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
 NAB New American Bible
 NCB New Century Bible
 NEAEHL *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*. Edited by E. Stern. 4 vols. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Carta; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.

- NEB New English Bible
NET New English Translation
NICOT New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDB *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Edited by Katharine Doob Sakenfeld. 5 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006–9.
NJB New Jerusalem Bible
NJPS *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures. The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text*
NLT New Living Translation
NRSV New Revised Standard Version
OBO Orbis biblicus et orientalis
ÖBS Österreichische biblische Studien
OEANE *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*. Edited by E. M. Meyers. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
OLA Orientalia lovaniensia analecta
OTE *Old Testament Essays*
OTL Old Testament Library
OTM Oxford Theological Monographs
OTS Oudtestamentische Studiën
PEQ *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
PJ *Palästina-Jahrbuch*
RB *Revue biblique*
RBL *Review of Biblical Literature*
REB Revised English Bible
RevQ *Revue de Qumran*
RGG *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Rev. ed. Edited by Hans Dieter Betz et al. 8 vols. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998–2005.
RSV Revised Standard Version
SAHL Studies in the Archaeology and History of the Levant
SAOC Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
SBLABS Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies
SBLAIL Society of Biblical Literature Ancient Israel and Its Literature
SBLDS Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLEJL Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature
SBLRBS Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
SBLStBL Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature
SBLWAW Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World
SBT Studies in Biblical Theology
SBTS Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
SEÅ *Svensk exegetisk årsbok*
SHANE Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East

| | |
|---------------|--|
| <i>SJOT</i> | <i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i> |
| SOTSMS | Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series |
| StBoT | Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten |
| STDJ | Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah |
| StPohl | Studia Pohl |
| SubBi | Subsidia biblica |
| SWBA | Social World of Biblical Antiquity |
| TA | <i>Tel Aviv</i> |
| <i>TDOT</i> | <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–. |
| THeth | Texte der Hethiter |
| <i>TRE</i> | <i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i> . Edited by G. Krause and G. Müller. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977–. |
| <i>TynBul</i> | <i>Tyndale Bulletin</i> |
| VT | <i>Vetus Testamentum</i> |
| VTSup | Vetus Testamentum Supplements |
| WBC | Word Biblical Commentary |
| WC | Westminster Commentaries |
| WMANT | Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament |
| <i>ZABR</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte</i> |
| ZA | <i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i> |
| ZAH | <i>Zeitschrift für Althebräistik</i> |
| ZAW | <i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> |
| ZBK | Zürcher Bibelkommentare |
| ZDPV | <i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina Vereins</i> |

INTRODUCTION

Mark Leuchter and Jeremy Hutton

Ancient Israel's priestly functionaries have always occupied a paramount position in the study of the Hebrew Bible, both in antiquity and in modern scholarship. Already in Julius Wellhausen's groundbreaking study of Israelite religion, attention was drawn to the central position of Aaronides, Zadokites, and Levites in the formation of the biblical corpus and the historical development of Israelite religious ideology and identity,¹ and countless important studies have followed in Wellhausen's wake. The antiquity and authenticity of the textual sources concerned with priests and Levites have time and time again been subjected to detailed scrutiny, the relationship between the various priestly houses serves as a point of departure for reconstructed histories of Israel's monarchic politics, and the distinctions between ranks and gradations of priests in a variety of compositions has fueled intense speculation regarding the various iterations of sacral activity as Israelite communities formed, dissolved, and reformed over time.² In recent decades, the study of Priestly language and ideology have further clarified the nuanced distinctions between different schools of Priestly thought;³ these forays not only have provided important entrees into the understanding of ritual and concepts of holiness in Israelite religion but have contributed to new ways of understanding the growth of the biblical literature more broadly. They have also more clearly delineated the role of Priestly ideology in the shaping of

1. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (trans. J. S. Black and Allan Menzies, with a preface by W. Robertson Smith [1885]; repr., with a foreword by Douglas A. Knight; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 121–67.

2. See among others Kurt Möhlenbrink, "Die levitischen Überlieferungen des Alten Testaments," *ZAW* n.s. 11 (1934): 184–231; A. H. J. Gunneweg, *Levitin und Priester: Hauptlinien der Traditionsbildung und Geschichte des israelitisch-jüdischen Kultpersonals* (FRLANT 89; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965); Aelred Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood* (AnBib 35; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969); Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 195–215.

3. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (3 vols.; AB 3, 3A, 3B; New York: Doubleday, 1991–2000); Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

major literary collections such as the Pentateuch, the Psalter, and the historiographic texts spanning Joshua–Kings.⁴

Yet despite more than a century of critical research, many problems continue to stand in the way of our understanding of the diversity, function, origins, influence, and legacy of priests and Levites as depicted in the Hebrew Bible. Virtually all scholars accept the broad division between Aaronide priests, on one hand, and Levites, on the other, with long-standing sacral and political rivalries defining the boundaries between them. Similarly, many have accepted a model seeing a relatively late, Persian-era reconciliation and orchestration of the priestly ranks, with Aaronides serving as the dominant priestly house governing temple affairs and Levites functioning as scribal and administrative mediators between the public and the ruling Aaronides.⁵ However, there is little agreement regarding the topography of the road leading up to this late hierarchical ordering, and questions abound regarding the social location of the various priestly groups, the discrepancies in the depictions of their origins, the inconsistencies in sources regarding their ritual functions, the relationship between prophecy and the priesthood, and of course the thorny matter of dating the texts housing these collective data.

The impasse facing scholars studying Israel's priesthood in its manifold forms is, to some degree, rooted in the presuppositions and related limitations in defining the very terms "priest" and "Levite." The idea of priests representing a common ancient Near Eastern social typology set apart for cultic authority, ritual and ceremonial training, intercessory responsibility, and legal expertise is generally recognized, and studies into Israelite religion commonly accept that Israel's priestly figures should be viewed as part of the spectrum of ancient priesthood in cross-cultural perspective. However, while some scholars have worked from the position that priesthood was from the outset an exclusively hereditary status deriving primarily from Levite "tribal" ancestry,⁶

4. On the Pentateuch, see the collection of essays in Gary N. Knoppers and Bernard M. Levinson, eds., *The Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2007); Eckart Otto and Reinhard Achenbach, eds., *Deuteronomium zwischen Pentateuch und Deuteronomistischem Geschichtswerk* (FRLANT 206; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004). For a brief but illuminating examination of the Psalter, see Mark S. Smith, "The Levitical Redaction of the Psalter," *ZAW* 103 (1991): 258–63. On Joshua–Kings, see the recent study by Jeffrey C. Geoghegan, *The Time, Place and Purpose of the Deuteronomistic History: The Evidence of "Until This Day"* (BJS 347; Providence, R.I.: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006).

5. On the long process leading up to this ostensible reconciliation, see Joachim Schaper, *Priester und Leviten im achämenidischen Juda: Studien zur Kult- und Sozialgeschichte Israels in persischer Zeit* (FAT 31; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

6. Such, for example, is the view of Cody, *History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 29–38, 51, 58–60. More recently, Stephen L. Cook has advanced a similar position (*The Social Roots of Biblical Yahwism* [SBLStBL 8; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004], 55–57).

others have pointed to permeability as a hallmark of the priesthood.⁷ The term לוי (“attached [to]”) is itself highly suggestive of this meaning,⁸ indicating the method whereby local priesthoods grew over time through the incorporation of new members into their ranks,⁹ as well as how these priestly clans amalgamated into larger social entities. At what point, then, does a firm distinction between “priest” and “Levite” emerge in Israelite religion? Who is responsible for creating this distinction, and what purpose does it serve? How does such a division in rank or typology reflect larger sociopolitical trends implicit in the biblical sources?

Related to these matters is the fact that priestly function is evident in one form or another among ostensibly lay figures as well throughout the Hebrew Bible, and thus a strict dichotomy between Israelite laity and Israelite priests is difficult to sustain. Recent important works on family religion in ancient Israel, for example, demonstrate the depth of cultic life within family units that complement (or in some cases, rival) the cultic authority of priests at a regional or even state sanctuary.¹⁰ Textual/linguistic, anthropological, and archaeological evidence points to different priestly roles not only within the more familiar typological categories (“altar priests” versus “lector priests,”¹¹ or the depiction of Levites as scribes/librarians on one hand, militiamen on the other, or authoritative cultic functionaries on yet another), but also among

7. The fluidity of priestly status was discussed in the context of royal/administrative appointment by Gösta W. Ahlström, *Royal Administration and National Religion in Ancient Palestine* (SHANE 1; Leiden: Brill, 1982), 48–49. For a different approach to the issue of permeability and fluidity in priestly status, see Jeremy M. Hutton, “The Levitical Diaspora (I): A Sociological Comparison with Morocco’s Ahansal,” in *Exploring the Longue Durée: Essays in Honor of Lawrence E. Stager* (ed. J. David Schloen; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 227–30.

8. The etymology of the term is discussed by Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life* (Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 7; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 304; but cf. Cody, *History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 29–33.

9. See especially the brief discussion by Lawrence E. Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,” *BASOR* 260 (1985): 28.

10. Van der Toorn’s monumental study *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel* set the agenda for contemporary discussion on this topic. See also Saul M. Olyan, “Family Religion in Israel and the Wider Levant of the First Millennium BCE,” in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity* (ed. John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan; Malden, Mass./Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 113–26.

11. See especially the parallels discussed by Diana V. Edelman, “Of Priests and Prophets and Interpreting the Past: The Egyptian *HM-NTR* and *HRY-HBT* and the Judahite *NABI*,” in *The Historian and the Bible: Essays in Honour of Lester L. Grabbe* (ed. Philip R. Davies and Diana V. Edelman; LHBOTS 530; New York: T&T Clark International, 2010). A version of this paper was presented in the Priests and Levites in History and Traditions consultation at the 2009 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in New Orleans, Louisiana.

the elders of a village or clan and the male and female heads of individual households.¹² Religious life in ancient Israel was not simply left in the charge of priests—Levite, Aaronide, or otherwise—but was a far more textured and complicated phenomenon in which priests played an important but by no means exclusive role. Where, in this network of cultic interaction, may one situate a dedicated priestly caste? How do the textual sources regarding this caste evidence awareness, acceptance, or repudiation of these features?

In addressing these textual sources, one encounters the persistent problem of literacy and scribal authority and the role that Aaronide priests and Levites played in the production of Israel's literature. The last two decades of research have yielded a picture of ancient Israel as a largely pre- or nonliterate culture, with only the priestly and royal/administrative elite possessing the facilities to produce significant and complex written materials.¹³ For many scholars, even this becomes a possibility only fairly late in Israel's history, accompanying the rise of Judah in the late eighth century into full-fledged statehood capable of supporting a scribal infrastructure that could produce the materials currently found in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁴ Others still place the production of these materials later, in the Persian period, when the influence of the Persian imperial system provided a suitable background for the transmission of written tradition.¹⁵ In either case, these studies make the case that only within a complex state-sponsored matrix could Israelite priests draw from resources that would allow for the composition of texts. However, more recent research has challenged this paradigm and has demonstrated that scribalism existed beyond the confines of the royal court, the Jerusalem temple, or the offices of imperial administrators and was present already throughout the hinterland in the late Iron I–Iron IIa period.¹⁶ This raises many questions regarding the role of texts in different

12. See Cook's discussion of the sacral role of elders (*Social Roots*, 195–230). On male and female leadership in the household cult, see Olyan, "Household Religion"; and Susan Ackerman, "At Home with the Goddess," in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palaestina. Proceedings of the Centennial Symposium, W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and American Schools of Oriental Research, Jerusalem, May 29/31, 2000* (ed. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 455–65.

13. Ian M. Young, "Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence," *VT* 48 (1998): 239–53, 408–22; William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (New York/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 116–21.

14. Scholars adopting this view routinely defer to the conclusions drawn by David W. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah: A Socio-Archaeological Approach* (JSOTSup 109; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

15. Philip R. Davies, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Library of Ancient Israel; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 65–71.

16. Ryan Byrne, "The Refuge of Scribalism in Iron I Palestine," *BASOR* 345 (2007):

historical and social contexts and the purpose of literature widely regarded as possessing priestly interest (the P document, Deuteronomy, various prophetic works, etc.). Were these works composed and cultivated by priests for their own literate circles (as is often thought) or with a larger audience in mind? Are the compositional techniques and hermeneutical strategies associated with the production of these texts solely the province of the scribes of the Jerusalem temple, or did they originate and continue to develop in other social environments? How do the “official” texts of the Jerusalem priestly establishment countenance the function of texts deriving from competing scribal circles?

The present volume emerged from the papers presented at the Society of Biblical Literature meetings in New Orleans (2009) and Atlanta (2010) in a newly formed program unit entitled “Priests and Levites in History and Tradition” and devoted to the aforementioned unresolved issues. The unit was formed to revisit some of the axiomatic assumptions that have led to scholarly impasses in research over the last several decades, as well as to establish new avenues of inquiry that have surfaced in recent scholarship both within and beyond the field of ancient Israelite religion and the Hebrew Bible. The papers presented at these sessions explored the place of priests and Levites in relation to the cult, kinship, literacy, sexual politics and gendered space, warfare, mythology, administration, and other components of Israelite life from a multitude of positions and perspectives, demonstrating the benefit of and indeed the need for interdisciplinary approaches to untying the knots that have hindered progress in the past. The present volume incorporates many of the papers presented at those SBL sessions as well as others traversing similar and closely related territories, with the aim of defining fruitful trajectories for further research.

Four essays under the rubric “Priests and Levites in Social Context” discuss historical and sociological aspects of Israel’s religious functionaries. Ada Taggar-Cohen provides a comparison of Israelite (derived primarily from the so-called Priestly tradition) and Hittite models of priesthood, arguing for a number of functional and ideological parallels between the two. Susan Ackerman asks, “Who is sacrificing at Shiloh?” This question prompts an investigation into the ritual dynamics of ancient Israel’s sanctuaries, with the conclusion that it was not the priests but rather the common folk (“non-elites”), who were engaged in the sacrificial acts. This conclusion indicates that there may have been more space for women in the ritual process than is often supposed. Jeremy Hutton provides a history of scholarship on the so-called Levitical cities, arguing that, although Wellhausen anticipated (and even established)

1–31; Jeremy M. Hutton, *The Transjordanian Palimpsest: The Overwritten Texts of Personal Exile and Transformation in the Deuteronomistic History* (BZAW 396; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2009), 169–75; Seth L. Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew* (Traditions; Champagne, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

the major foci of the study of Josh 21 and 1 Chr 6, a variety of methodologies will be needed—including social-scientific criticism—to solve the enigmatic puzzle of the cities. Sarah Shectman explores the complicated status (or, better, *statuses*) of women descended from and married to priests and other members of the tribe of Levi. She demonstrates ancient Israelite women's complex network of social relations in both everyday and ritual contexts, including sexuality, mourning, and eating taboos.

A second group of four essays examines "Priests and Levites in Scriptural Context." Joel Baden analyzes the pentateuchal traditions concerning the origins of the Levites' claims to special status as devotees of YHWH. He argues that the Yahwistic author utilized two complementary traditions of the Levites' violent origins—in one tradition, they were landless; in the other, they were completely dedicated to the service of YHWH—to build up the J source's picture of that tribe. Cory Crawford probes the similarities and differences between the literary recollections of the temple in Jerusalem and the tabernacle in order to further understand the relationship between these two structures. Peter Altmann contrasts American and (Continental) European approaches to texts dealing with the Levites and priests, focusing on Deut 18:1–8. He concludes that each group has something to learn from the methodologies and conclusions of the other. In an excellent example of Altmann's "American approach," Stephen L. Cook combines biblical research with social-scientific investigation in order to interrogate the interaction between Deuteronomy (esp. 18:1–8) and the book of Jeremiah. He examines some of the tensions between these books' respective attempts to deal with Levites' disenfranchisement, discovering that Jeremiah's denunciation of the centralized cult in Jerusalem threatened to undo the Levites' economic and political gains that had only recently been made by the dissemination of Deuteronomy, with its pro-Levitical agenda.

Finally, the third group of essays focuses on "Priests and Levites in Exegetical Context." These essays have in common an interest in textual appropriations of Levitical and priestly traditions during the Persian and Hellenistic periods. In an essay inspired by what Altmann has called "European approaches" to priestly and Levitical texts, Mark Christian examines three biblical pericopae (Neh 8; Lev 17–26; and Deut 16:18–18:22) in redaction-critical perspective, teasing out their respective presentations of the complicated interactions among priest, prophet, and layperson. Jeffrey Stackert compares the perquisites assigned to the Levites in a few passages from Deuteronomy (notably, e.g., Deut 18:1–8) and in those passages' reformulation in the *Temple Scroll*. Stackert argues that the latter text has made several innovations, elevating the Levites' status while at the same time maintaining the strict distinction between Levites and Aaronide priests found in other biblical traditions. Finally, Mark Leuchter's concluding essay provides a reflection on the streams of tradition both received and augmented in the book of Daniel. He argues that the book occupies a medial position in a cultural development moving

from a more temple-based (i.e., Levitical) mode of religious engagement to one that is more scribally centered, wherein exegesis of an increasingly solidified biblical text serves as the locus of religious engagement and authority.

The contributions to the present volume demonstrate that while the foundations laid by earlier generations of scholars remain the basis for contemporary study, new avenues of inquiry are long overdue. It is essential that the methods and perspectives informing cross-disciplinary research be brought to bear on the study of the sacerdotal cultures of ancient Israel and early Judaism as advances in archaeology, the study of law, hermeneutics, sociology and anthropology, and literary criticism forge new mechanisms for exploring the record of the past refracted through the text of the Hebrew Bible. At the same time, conversations among these disparate methods and approaches are essential. The contents of the present volume offer complementary insights even as they offer challenges to the axioms and paradigms informing each investigative enterprise. In the end, it is our hope that this volume provides not only a representative look at the state of the field regarding the study of priests and Levites but also a point of departure for future research into the place of Israel's priestly caste within the miasma of ancient Near Eastern religion, the role that these figures played in their own socio-cultural universe, and the impact they had on subsequent authors and audiences.