

ISRAELITE PROPHECY AND
THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

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ISRAELITE PROPHECY AND
THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

PORTRAIT, REALITY, AND
THE FORMATION OF A HISTORY

Edited by

Mignon R. Jacobs and Raymond F. Person Jr.



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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Edited by James B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ARM	Archives royales de Mari
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>AusBR</i>	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovanien-sium
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BLS	Bible and Literature Series
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZABR	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
Cahiers de l'IPOA	Cahiers de l'Institut du Proche-Orient Ancien du College de France
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series

CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CSJCA	Center for the Study of Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity
EABS	European Seminar in Historical Methodology
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
<i>FGrH</i>	Felix Jacoby, <i>Die fragmente der griechischen historiker</i> . 3 vols. in 14. Berlin: Weidmann, 1923–1958.
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTKAT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
IRT	Issues in Religion and Theology
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
NABU	Nouvelles assyriologiques breves et utilitaires
NCBC	New Century Biblical Commentary
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OIS	Oriental Institute Seminars
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTM	Oxford Theological Monographs
OTS	Old Testament Studies
PFES	Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society
PHSC	Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and Its Contexts
POS	Pretoria Oriental Series
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>

SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SBLAIL	Society of Biblical Literature Ancient Israelite Literature
SBLANEM	Society of Biblical Literature Ancient Near East Monographs
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSBL	Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBLWAW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World
SDSRL	Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature
SEÅ	Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok
SFEG	Schriften der Finnischen Exegetischen Gesellschaft
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
TB	Theologische Bücherei: Neudrucke und Berichte aus dem 20. Jahrhundert
<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. 17 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–
<i>THAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> . Edited by Ernst Jenni, with assistance from Claus Westermann. 2 vols. Stuttgart: Theologischer Verlag, 1971–1976
USQR	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

ZTK

Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche



INTRODUCTION

Mignon R. Jacobs and Raymond F. Person Jr.

At the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, the Deuteronomistic History section and the Israelite Prophetic Literature section held a joint session devoted to the exploration of the Deuteronomistic History as prophetic literature. The steering committees of these two sections understood that the changing discussions concerning prophecy and concerning the Deuteronomistic History required our coming together to explore the areas of common interest, and invited four distinguished scholars with different backgrounds and approaches to give substantive papers on the topic. Revisions of these four papers—the chapters by Marvin Sweeney, Diana Edelman, Ehud Ben Zvi, and Thomas Römer—are included in this volume, as well as other essays solicited by the editors. Together these essays provide a wide and varied survey of current scholarship on prophecy as a phenomenon behind the literature and the literary portrayal of prophecy in Deuteronomy–Kings.

Earlier scholarship on prophecy drew sharp lines between various cultic functionaries (for example, priest versus prophet) and focused on the Latter Prophets, thereby often ignoring the Former Prophets, or Deuteronomistic History.¹ Although they too showed evidence of redactional histories, the Latter Prophets were understood to be closer to prophetic speech, since they consisted primarily of prophetic oracles, in contrast to the prophetic narratives in the Former Prophets. However, the privileged position of the Latter Prophets as more reliable for historical research has now been undermined by its sharp contrast with the portrayal of prophecy in other ancient Near Eastern literature.² The prophetic books

1. For a lengthier review of this literature, see the contribution below by Ranfrid I. Thelle, 7–33.

2. See the essays in Martti Nissinen, ed., *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern*

of the Hebrew Bible are unique in comparison to other contemporary prophetic literatures, because of their long complex redactional histories and their generic variance. That is, most references to prophetic activity in ancient Near Eastern sources occur in nonprophetic genres which did not undergo further copying or revision (such as the Mari letters). In those few instances in which they were incorporated into another genre (as in the Neo-Assyrian collections), even these genres did not continue to be copied and preserved for new situations in later generations. Thus, the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible remains unique generically in relation to other ancient Near Eastern literature on divination. This uniqueness raises questions concerning its utility for historical reconstruction relative to these other genres. Together, these trends undermine the validity of using both the Deuteronomistic History and the Latter Prophets for a reconstruction of the historical phenomenon of prophecy in ancient Israel and Judah. Nevertheless, these remain our only sources for ancient Israelite and Judean prophecy. Therefore, even though biblical prophetic literature brings with it even more difficulties for such historical reconstruction than other ancient literature, scholars interested in prophecy in ancient Israel nevertheless must find ways to approach this literature for historical research.

Although Martin Noth's hypothesis of the Deuteronomistic History continues to have a tremendous influence on the study of Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets, the notion of a "Deuteronomistic History" has itself come under attack more recently.³ Noth's notion of a single Deuteronomistic redaction was quickly challenged by scholars postulating additional redactions, but even the American consensus of two redactions

Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, Arabian Perspectives (SBLSymS 13; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000). See also Martti Nissinen, "Spoken, Written, Quoted, and Invented: Orality and Writtenness in Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy," in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy* (ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Michael H. Floyd; SBLSymS 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 235–71; and Martti Nissinen, "How Prophecy Became Literature," *SJOT* 19 (2005): 153–72.

3. For recent reviews of scholarship on the Deuteronomistic History, see Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Macchi, eds., *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (JSOTSup 306; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical, and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2005); and Raymond F. Person Jr., *The Deuteronomistic School: History, Social Setting, and Literature* (SBL SBL 2; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002).

and the European consensus of three redactions have come under serious challenge, so that it is unclear what the scholarly consensus concerning the Deuteronomistic History is. Increasingly, scholars are emphasizing the diversity within the Deuteronomistic History, especially in the differences among the individual books. Furthermore, the redaction history of the Deuteronomistic History is being pushed beyond the earlier assumptions of an exilic setting into the Persian period. Despite this growing diversity of approaches to its redactional history, the vast majority of scholars assume that this literature underwent multiple redactions in different historical periods. However, there remains little consensus on which literary passages should be assigned to what historical periods. Nevertheless, no matter which particular redactional model one accepts, such a complex redactional history suggests a significant span of time between the earlier sources in which the portrayal of the various prophetic figures occurs and the latter redactional stages, undermining the possible value of the prophetic material in the Deuteronomistic History for historical reconstruction.

This collection of essays concerns the relationship of prophecy to the Deuteronomistic History, including the historical reality of prophecy behind the literature and the portrayal of prophecy in the literature (often with the assumption that it probably does not accurately reflect the historical reality of prophecy behind the Deuteronomistic History). Although not all of the essays are concerned with reconstructing the historical reality of prophecy, all of the contributors start with the assumption that the portrayal of prophecy in the literature reflects the ideology of the Deuteronomists, so that any historical reconstruction must draw from the careful comparison of this portrayal with other literature—for example, Penta-teuchal traditions, pre-Deuteronomistic sources, and other ancient Near Eastern literature. Thus, it is not surprising that those contributors interested in reconstructing the historical reality of ancient Israelite prophecy find greater diversity of intermediaries, as is found in other ancient Near Eastern cultures. For example, Rannfried Thelle, Diana Edelman, and Martti Nissinen emphasize a broader range of specialists in divination in ancient Israel similar to that found in Mari and Nineveh. Marvin Sweeney identifies differences between Israelite and Judean prophets and their roles as cultic functionaries, both of which fit well into the larger cultural context and the ancient Near East. Furthermore, some of the contributors emphasize that for ideological reasons the portrayal of prophecy and some of the characters in the Deuteronomistic History strongly privileges one

function over another or one group of cultic specialists over another. For example, Diana Edelman suggests that כֹּהֵן (*kōhēn*) may best be translated “diviner” or “oracle-giver” rather than “priest,” and Thomas Römer and Mark Leuchter argue that Moses and Samuel, respectively, are redefined by the Deuteronomists as being more prophetic than the earlier sources and redactions show them to be.

Despite the general agreement among all of the contributors that intermediation in ancient Israel was more varied than Deuteronomistic literature portrays, we must not overlook the fact that the portrayal of prophecy in the Deuteronomistic History nevertheless remains within the purview of its large cultural context. Therefore, three contributors examine the complementary relationship of the Deuteronomistic History with other literary portrayals of prophecy. Ehud Ben Zvi compares the Deuteronomistic History with the Latter Prophets; Martti Nissinen with literature from Mari and Assyria; and Raymond Person with the book of Chronicles. Although differences may occur between the portrayal of prophecy in the Deuteronomistic History and in these other works, we must be careful not to privilege one perspective over the other as we strive to reconstruct the historical phenomenon of prophecy behind the literature.

In “Reflections of Ancient Israelite Divination in the Former Prophets,” Rannfrid Thelle provides an excellent survey of the secondary literature concerning the use of the Deuteronomistic History for understanding the phenomenon and history of prophecy in ancient Israel, and concludes on the basis of her reading of the primary sources that Israelite prophets were the religious experts to whom kings and royal officials turned for divine consultation. Thus, in contrast to older understandings that often distinguished divine inquiry from proclamation, Thelle argues that we should view the variety of perspectives on divination within the Former Prophets and between the Former Prophets and the Latter Prophets “as reflections of a larger phenomenon of divination.”⁴

In “Prophets and Priests in the Deuteronomistic History: Elijah and Elisha,” Marvin Sweeney focuses on northern prophetic figures and the ways they are contrasted with southern prophetic figures, especially in relation to priestly functions. He concludes that in the northern kingdom prophets functioned more as priestly figures than their southern counter-

4. Thelle, p. 24.

parts did, and that this distinction has important consequences for understanding the religious differences between Israel and Judah.

In “Court Prophets during the Monarchy and Literary Prophets in the So-Called Deuteronomistic History,” Diana Edelman argues that the ecstatic prophet was simply one of many and various practitioners of divination available to the royal courts in ancient Israel, but the Deuteronomists favored the ecstatic prophets over the others in their portrayals of the kings’ always having access to divine consultation.

In “Prophetic Memories in the Deuteronomistic Historical and the Prophetic Collections of Books,” Ehud Ben Zvi examines the understanding of prophecy by the literati of Persian Yehud in the Deuteronomistic History and the Latter Prophets. He concludes that both collections of prophetic literature “balanced and informed each other” within the “*Sitz im Diskurs* in which they were read.”⁵

In “Prophets and Prophecy in Joshua–Kings: A Near Eastern Perspective,” Martti Nissinen argues that, despite some differences, the portrayal of prophets in Joshua–Kings compares favorably with what we know of prophecy in Mari and Assyria, concluding that “the socioreligious foundation of prophecy in Joshua–Kings consists of the institutions of divination, kingship, and worship.”⁶

In “Moses, Israel’s First Prophet, and the Formation of the Deuteronomistic and Prophetic Libraries,” Thomas Römer examines the relationship between Deut 18:15–20 and other pentateuchal sources, on the one hand, and other deuteronomistic books (especially Kings and Jeremiah), on the other hand. He concludes that Moses as Israel’s first prophet was a deuteronomistic construction in Deuteronomy that influenced the portrayal of deuteronomistic prophets in Kings and Jeremiah. This central image of prophecy was transformed when Deuteronomy became a book in the Torah, and when the Elisha and Elijah narratives were inserted in Kings.

In “Samuel: A Prophet Like Moses or a Priest Like Moses?” Mark Leuchter reconstructs the portrayal of Samuel as a pivotal figure in Israel’s history paralleling Moses in pre-Deuteronomistic sources and in the Deuteronomistic redactional material. He argues that the Deuteronomists transformed the more priestly Samuel of their sources into a more prophetic Samuel in their reworking of the tradition.

5. Ben Zvi, “Prophetic Memories in the Deuteronomistic Historical and the Prophetic Collections of Books,” p. 102.

6. Nissinen, p. 127.

In “Prophetic Stories Making a Story of Prophecy,” Mark O’Brien uses the stories from the books of Samuel and Kings to discuss the ways in which the ancient authors reused literary resources. Defining “story” as having two senses—characters and their interaction, and author/redactor—he proposes that both senses may be found in the story of prophecy in Samuel and Kings, as is evident in the recurrent prophecy-fulfillment schema. O’Brien notes that many of the stories in the Deuteronomistic History depicted the encounter between prophets and kings and became integral to the story of the monarchy. The essay therefore looks at two central aspects of the prophetic stories: (1) the creativity in the composition and use of prophetic stories and (2) the limitations of prophetic stories leading to another stage in the story of prophecy.

In “Prophets in the Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Chronicles: A Reassessment,” Raymond Person argues against the consensus model that suggests that the portrayal of prophecy in the Deuteronom(ist)ic History represents an exilic understanding of prophecy that differs significantly from that of the book of Chronicles, which represents the postexilic understanding. Rather both portrayals can be understood as similar, faithful representations of the ideology of prophecy within the broader tradition among the ancient Israelite elite of the Persian period.

Together these essays strongly suggest that the ancient Israelite prophets were not isolated charismatic individuals, but intermediaries who functioned within larger cultic settings. However, the contributors generally agree that within the portrayal of prophecy in the Deuteronomistic History, the Deuteronomists strove to limit which intermediaries were considered authoritative and to delineate more carefully the prophetic role from those of other cultic figures. Thus, this collection of essays contributes to the ongoing discussion concerning the tension between the historical reality of prophecy behind the Deuteronomistic History and prophetic literature in general, as well as the ideological portrayal of prophecy in biblical literature, especially in the Deuteronomistic History.⁷

7. Two recent collections of essays reach similar conclusions: Lester L. Grabbe and Martti Nissinen, eds., *Constructs of Prophecy in the Former and Latter Prophets and Other Texts* (SBLANEM 4; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011); Mark J. Boda and Lissa M. Wray Beal, eds., *Prophets, Prophecy, and Ancient Israelite Historiography* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013). Unfortunately, the timing of the publication of these volumes meant that the contributors to this volume did not have access to these collections.