MAKING A DIFFERENCE

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Making a Difference

Essays on the Bible and Judaism
in Honor of Tamara Cohn Eskenazi

Edited by
David J.A. Clines, Kent Harold Richards
and Jacob L. Wright

Contents

Tamara Cohn Eskenazi has a special place in contemporary biblical scholarship. Among the first to bring a focus of scholarly attention to the period of ancient Israel's creativity after the Exile, she has also been a leader in foregrounding the Jewish tradition within the interpretative discourse of biblical scholars. And, as a woman scholar, she has advanced the study of issues in the Hebrew Bible that impinge on the concerns of women ancient and modern, while as a teacher and friend she has encouraged and developed the talents of many younger scholars. She has indeed been 'making a difference' in the world of scholarship and in the lives of her wide circle of friends.

Tamara Eskenazi was born in Israel, of Hungarian parents, and emigrated to the United States as a teenager in 1956. She married young, not beginning a university career until her mid-thirties. But once she began a degree in philosophy in the University of Denver in 1972 she found herself intellectually captivated. She never lost the excitement of new horizons, new books, and new conversation partners.

She followed her philosophy degree with a MA in Religious Studies at Denver, submitting a thesis on 'Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls on the Law'. Thereafter she began her doctoral work at Iliff School of Theology and the University of Denver, culminating in her dissertation in 1986, under the direction of Kent Richards. Her dissertation became her first book, *In an Age of Prose: A Literary Approach to Ezra–Nehemiah* (Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, 36; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989). It was something of a novelty in combining serious historical research with the discipline of biblical literary criticism as it was taking shape in that decade. Her grand insight was that the whole of Ezra–Nehemiah, disparate in origin though its parts may be, formed a true literary unity, with three dynamic elements: potentiality (Ezra 1.1-4), actualization (Ezra 1.5–Neh. 7.72) and success (Neh. 8.1–13.31). Key to its view of history were the centrality of the community in the postexilic reconstruction, the broadening out of the concept of the 'house of God' to include the whole city of Jerusalem and not just the temple, and the role of (even unwritten) texts as the vehicle for divine communication. There was a strong undercurrent here of a refusal of submission to hierarchy and an openness to valuing the roles of outsiders—foreigners, women, the poor.

Tamara Eskenazi's second book was the volume she constructed, along with David Clines, entitled *Telling Queen Michal's Story: An Experiment in Comparative Interpretation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), a collection of varying readings in the history of interpretation of the narrative of Michal, wife of David. To this project she brought an unparalleled wealth of rabbinic materials, setting in train her ongoing commitment to bringing together contemporary critical scholarship and traditional rabbinic interpretation. In the same year, she edited, with Daniel J. Harrington and William H. Shea, another volume, on *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Crossroad, 1991). A few years later there was the volume edited with Kent Richards, *Second Temple Studies*. II. *Temple and Community in the Persian Period* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

Another volume, jointly edited with Gary Phillips and David Jobling, *Levinas and Biblical Studies* (Semeia Studies; Atlanta: Scholars Press and Leiden: Brill, 2003), brought into the open her expertise and indeed affection for a Jewish philosopher whose name was not at all well known among biblical scholars at that time. Appropriately, several of the contributions to the present volume echo her interest in Levinas.

The most influential of her recent publications has been her commentary on the Pentateuch (edited with her colleague Andrea Weiss, a contributor to the present volume), *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* (New York: URJ Press, 2008). Responding to a challenge to women in Reform Judaism to express their sense of being permitted and competent in their study of Torah, Tamara Eskenazi has created a landmark volume, in which, as she says, her hope is to 'bring the women of the Torah from the shadow into the limelight, from their silences into speech, from the margins to which they have often been relegated to the center of the page—for their sake, for our sake and for our children's sake'. The volume was winner of the prestigious 2008 National Jewish Book Awards—and rightly so, since this is a volume that will not gather dust on the bookshelves of scholars but be used every week in synagogues across the world, blending the best of critical interpretation of the Pentateuch and rabbinic commentary with feminist concerns that have hitherto had little place in that context.

Eskenazi's latest book is her commentary on Ruth, an outstanding contribution to the Jewish Publication Society series of Bible commentaries, and winner of the 2011 National Jewish Book Award in Women's Studies. Together with Tikva Frymer-Kensky, who sadly died before completing her work on the commentary, Tamara created a rich and thoughtful reading of the biblical narrative focussing on the concept of *hesed*. Some sentences from her introduction are eminently quotable, giving as they do the flavour of her writing as well as of her approach to the biblical text:

> The central question one may ask is: What are we to believe or do in a world where God's presence is not self-evident? If we view Ruth against

the historical backdrop of Judges, this question becomes even more point-
ed: What are we to do in a world pervaded by chaos and violence? In an-
swer to these questions, Ruth delineates a theology of ḥesed—generosity
that goes beyond the call of duty. Human ḥesed, when rightly cultivated
'for the sake of heaven' (in its later Rabbinic formulation), serves as a real
power for good even when—perhaps especially when—God's presence is
not otherwise discernible.

Tamara Eskenazi is not just a prolific academic. To a much wider circle
than the scholarly guild she is known as an inspiring speaker, criss-crossing
the country on her innumerable visits as scholar-in-residence and workshop
leader for congregations. Yet another circle knows her as an extraordinarily
generous friend, a beloved teacher, and a consistent and faithful mentor
whose support and advice to them has been crucial throughout their career.

How such an outgoing personality, delightful conversationalist and inde-
fatigable *congressiste* can be at heart a very private person is something of a
mystery. Her quiet retreats into her books may explain it somewhat, for that
seems to be where her energies are recharged. Her bookshelves tell a great
deal about her. Her library is huge, her reading omnivorous. There are more
books of philosophy and of poetry and of literature than one might expect to
find in a typical biblical scholar's house, and her constant cultural engage-
ment shows itself in her own writing, gracious and fluid and wise.

It was a excellent suggestion when Jacob Wright proposed that a Fest-
schrift for Tamara Eskenazi was overdue, and the other editors have been
proud to join with him in preparing this volume in honour of a very remark-
able scholar and dearly loved friend.

The Editors

Abbreviations

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992).
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AGSU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ATAbh	Alttestamentliche Abhandlungen
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
Bib	*Biblica*
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BR	*Bible Review*
BZAW	Beihefte zur *ZAW*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
CCAR Journal	*Central Conference of American Rabbis: The Reform Jewish Quarterly*
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CRBS	*Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*
DCH	David J.A. Clines (ed.), *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (8 vols.; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–2011).
DDD²	Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 2nd revised edn, 1999).
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DSD	*Dead Sea Discoveries*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	*Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*
HALOT	Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner (eds.), *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (trans. M.E.J. Richardson; 5 vols.; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000).
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	George Arthur Buttrick (ed.), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (4 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962).
IDBSup	*IDB*, Supplementary Volume
ISBE	Geoffrey Bromiley (ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rev. edn, 1979–88).

JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JHS	*Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JOFA	Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance
JPS, JPSV	*Jewish Publication Society Version*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSIJ	*Jewish Studies—An Internet Journal*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period*
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplements
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series
JSSSup	*Journal of Semitic Studies* Supplements
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KTU	M. Dietrich, O. Loretz and J. Sanmartín (eds.), *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit, einschliesslich der keilalphabetischen Texte ausserhalb Ugarits* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976–).
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NS	new series
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et orbis antiquus
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OS	old series
OTL	Old Testament Library
RevExp	*Review and Expositor*
RevQ	*Revue de Qumran*
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SBLMS	SBL Monograph Series
SBLSCS	SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
Sem	*Semitica*
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
TBü	Theologische Bücherei
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VT	*Vetus Testamentun*
VTSup	*Vetus Testamentum*, Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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Twentieth-Century Orthodox Responsa, co-authored with Daniel Gordis, was published by Stanford University Press.

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Publications of Tamara Cohn Eskenazi

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Rabbinic Dirges and the Voices of Women in Lament

Rachel Adler

Lament is a genre attested both in the Hebrew Bible and in rabbinic texts.

We do not know how much overlap there is from biblical to rabbinic lament, but there are some similarities to be noted, especially in the dirge. My task in this article is to investigate rabbinic dirges, to show how they might shed light on Biblical dirges and to help us envision what performance might have looked like. Various scriptural texts attest that women were composers and performers of dirges, although the few dirges we have in the Hebrew Bible are attributed to men: David's lament over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1.19-27) and for Abner (2 Sam. 3.33-34) and the prophetic dirges for the nation such as Amos 5.2, Ezek. 27.2-11, or Isa. 14.4-21. There are also Naomi's words of lament for herself in Ruth 1.21-22. The only feminine voice to utter both dirge and national lament is that of Zion in Lamentations, and critics differ over whether this feminine voice is 'ventriloquized' by a male poet.[1]

Yet the existence of female lament-singers is irrefutable. God commands Jeremiah: 'Call the lament-singing women [מקננות], let the wise women come' (Jer. 9.16-17). Jeremiah exhorts the elegy-makers to teach their daughters the craft because the prophesied devastation will require so many lamenters (9.19). In 2 Chron. 35.25 Jeremiah is said to have composed dirges for King Josiah 'which all the singers, male and female, recited in their laments for Josiah as is done to this day. They became customary in Israel and were incorporated into the laments'.[2] Ezekiel says of his oracle on Egypt, 'This is a dirge and it shall be intoned. The women of the nations shall intone it' (Ezek. 32.16).

The work of lament-singing women is obscured by translations that describe them as 'professional mourners' or 'wailing women', which implies that all they did was ululate. On the contrary, both cross-cultural data and the evidence of biblical and rabbinic sources attest that women lament-singers

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1. For example, Barbra Bakke Kaiser, 'Poet as Female Impersonator: The Image of Daughter Zion as Speaker in Biblical Poems of Suffering', *JR* 67 (1987), pp. 164-82.
2. All biblical references are to the *JPS Hebrew–English Tanakh* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999).

orally composed laments and suggest that they had a repertoire of laments that people knew which could probably be customized for an individual death.[3]

The Babylonian Talmud indicates that professionally led laments were indispensable at funerals. In Mishnah *Ketubot* 4.4, Rabbi Yehuda rules that even the poorest husband must provide at the very minimum two flute play-ers and one lament-singing woman for his wife's funeral. A funeral may be delayed in order to summon the lament-singers (b. *Sanhedrin* 47a). The position of the lament-singers in the funeral procession was pivotal. A *baraita* teaches that they either immediately preceded or immediately fol-lowed the corpse, depending on local custom (b. *Sanhedrin* 20a).

This primacy can be interpreted to women's detriment. In a misogynis-tic midrashic interpretation in *Genesis Rabbah* 17.8 Rabbi Joshua teaches, 'Why do [women] walk in front of the corpse [at a funeral]? Because they brought death into the world, they therefore walk in front of the corpse as it is written, "He is brought to the grave … and all men follow behind him,/ Innumerable are those [feminine plural] who precede him"' (Job 21.32-33). This is probably not a reason for the custom, but a way of devaluing the leadership position of female lament-singers.[4]

What were the rules of rabbinic lament? Tractate *Moed Qatan* describes its formal structures as performed by female artists. 'What is meant by "chanting" [עינוי]?', asks Mishnah *Moed Qatan* 3.9. 'When all the women sing in unison. And lament [קינה]? When one speaks and all respond after her.' The laments the women sing in unison [עינוי] appear consistent with the practice alluded to in 2 Chron. 25.25 of having a repertoire of laments that many people know. Interestingly, however, what distinguishes קינה for the Mishnah is not the distinctive 'קינה meter' some biblical scholars point to, but a call-and-response-type structure.[5] This call-and-response structure shows up across cultures as a feature of lament that allows for improvisa-tion and customization.[6] Multiple voices are not only characteristic of rab-binic lament. Biblical scholars, too, have identified dialogical elements in biblical laments and multiple voices in lament psalms and in the book of Lamentations.[7] Adele Berlin observes, 'I imagine the chapters [of Lamen-tations] as spoken by different voices who stand in different locations in

3. S.D. Goitein, 'Women as Creators of Biblical Genres', *Prooftexts* 8 (1988), pp. 1-33.

4. *Genesis Rabbah* 17.8.

5. Adele Berlin, *Lamentations: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2004), pp. 2-3.

6. Nancy C. Lee, *Lyrics of Lament: From Tragedy to Transformation* (Minneapo-lis: Fortress Press, 2010), p. 51.

7. Carleen Mandolfo, *God in the Dock: Dialogic Tension in the Psalms of Lament* (JSOTSup, 357; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

reference to the destruction'.[8] In addition, possibly verses like 'There is no comforter for her' (Lam. 1.9, 17, 21) served as a refrain in which the listeners joined.

From both biblical and rabbinic examples, and from comparisons to laments in other Mediterranean traditions, lament has been characterized as tumultuous and disordered language, traumatized language interspersed with returns to the preverbal: gasps, sobs, tears, keening, cries of ah, alas, woe, while at the same time, strict literary conventions are maintained. We can see this disordered language in Lamentations where cries of איכה, literally 'how!', begin verses crammed into an alphabetical acrostic. These returns to the preverbal bear important meanings in lament, and are present cross-culturally. Gail Horst-Warhaft, a classics scholar, writes:

> Like the cries that puncture the text, so sobs, sighs and sudden intakes of breath are integral to the performance of lament. Singers of dramatic or plaintive songs from opera to blues will use their breath for heightened emotional effect … [B]reathing and singing, like weeping and singing[,] have always been so intimately associated that it may be difficult to determine where a sigh ends and a song begins.[9]

Breathing is linked with weeping which is linked with music. Throughout the ancient Mediterranean, flutes are used at funerals. They represent the breath, the body's mysterious, God-given internal wind instrument, now stilled.[10] Percussion instruments like drums may be used to represent the thumping heart. Or the body may be its own percussion instrument.

The third-century Palestinian Amora Ulla offers the following details about how rabbinic Jews, men, apparently, as well as women, grieved at funerals: 'הספד means beating on one's heart … טפוח means clapping one's hands together.[11] And קילוס means [lamenting] with the foot'—either stamping one's foot or, as the *Tosafot* suggests, slapping one's thigh (b. *Moed Qatan* 27b). What these actions tell us is threefold. They tell us that grief is expressed with the whole body. They tell us that grief is expressed rhythmically, probably as a percussive accompaniment to the lament music. And they tell us that lament exists at some intersection between art and violence.

I have said that lament is language traumatized, but there is also an impulse to traumatize the body. In the Torah there are explicit prohibitions on mourning practices of other cultures. Leviticus 19.28 commands, 'You shall not make gashes in your flesh for the dead or incise any marks on yourself: I am the Lord'. Within these boundaries, rabbinic law encourages

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8. Berlin, *Lamentations*, p. 9.

9. Gail Horst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 70.

10. Horst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voice*s, p. 71.

11. The wording is obscure. This is the gloss of Rashi, the eleventh-century French commentator, on *b. Moed Qatan* 27b.

mourners to enact a mimesis of death.[12] Like the dead, the mourner does not
bathe, anoint, or have sex. Biblically, the mourner would be in a state of
טומאה, impurity in which the person who has been in contact with a corpse
or in the same room with one must undergo a week-long withdrawal from
activities requiring a state of טהרה, purity, and have two lustrations with
the ashes of the red heifer.[13] In lieu of violence against his or her flesh, the
rabbinic mourner rips his clothes, a custom that safely channels the wish
to imitate the disintegrating body of the corpse.[14] And from Ulla we have
heard about striking the body.

   In lament for the dead, then, we have a type of social performance
led by experts, the lament-making women, but with open participation
for everyone, female and male. In this performance, language, weeping,
breast-beating, clapping, stamping, and ripped clothing, all express and
respond to a world disordered. Death has irrupted into the domain of the
living. All must lament before comforters can begin to console.

   What did lament-making women say? That is the jackpot question. Dirges
for funerals were preserved in the memories of those who performed them
and those who participated in refrains or call-and-response. But they were
not committed to writing. In tractate *Moed Qatan* 28b, however, the fourth-
century Amora, Rava, quotes seven snippets of lament sung by the women of
a Babylonian town named Shokhenziv. Talmudic scholars lived in this town
and it was a major center of scholarship.[15] The snippets of lament are out
of context and very obscure. There are many textual variants of these frag-
ments and many commentaries on the enigmatic words of the lamenters of
Shokhenziv. The Aramaic is very colloquial and therefore difficult, and there
are multiple and conflicting translations. An additional problem is whether
translations that theologize are attributable to the female lament singers or to
the more theologically invested classical translators and commentators. I will
now reproduce the Talmudic text, numbering the quoted laments:

1a מאי אמרן? אמר רב ויי לאזלא ויי ל חבילה.

1 אמר רבא נשי דשכנציב אמרן הכי ויי לאזלא ויי לחבילה.

2 ואמר רבא נשי דשכנציב אמרן גוד גרמא מככה ונמטי מיא לאנטיכי.

3 ואמר רבא נשי דשכנציב אמרן עטוף וכסו דבר רמי וגבר רברבי הוא.

4 ואמר רבא נשי דשכנציב אמרן שייול אצטלא.דמלתא לבר חורין דשלמו זודיה.

5 ואמר רבא נשי דשכנציב אמרן רהיט ונפיל אמעברא ויזופתא יזוף.

6 אמר רבא נשי דשכנציב אמרן אחנו תגרי אזבזגי מבדקו.

7 אמר רבא נשי דשכנציב אמרן מותא כי מותא ומדעין חיבוליא.

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   12. *B. Berakhot* 16b; *b. Moed Qatan* 15b, 20b, 21a, 22a, 24a; Yosef Caro, *Shulhan
arukh, Yoreh Deah Hilkhot Avelut* 380.1.
   13. Num. 19.11-21.
   14. *B. Moed Qatan* 22a.
   15. Adin Steinsaltz, *Talmud Bavli Mo'ed Qatan* 28b. See *HeHayyim* and *Iyunim*.

The first fragment is contributed by Rav, and then echoed by Rava quoting the women of Shokhenziv, and it is a case in point. Rashi translates it: 'Alas for the departed./Alas for his wounds.' There is the exclamation of woe, which we know to be common in lament. However, some commentators translate it, 'Alas for the departed. Alas for his pledge.'[16] The pledge, or item held in safekeeping for someone, is here understood to be the soul, the return of which its owner, God, will demand of the deceased.

The second fragment is more complicated. I will follow Soncino and translate, 'Take the soup bone out of the pot/and fill the vessel with water'.[17] The irony is that the same pot that made the sick man's broth will now heat the water to wash his corpse. Patrick Leigh Fermor in his account of Greek women's laments notes their custom of making homely objects such as the dead man's tools testify to his death.[18] Here the evidence of the transition from sickness to death is the pot and its two uses. Moreover, in rabbinic times, before the rise of burial societies, the dead man may have been washed by the same woman who made the soup.[19]

A third quotation is the only one in the grand style, invoking nature to mourn for the deceased: 'Cloak yourselves, high mountains, a great man and a noble was he'.[20] One snippet is both frank and acidly funny about the dead man's fecklessness: 'He rushes and tumbles aboard the ferry/and has to borrow his fare'. An interesting detail here is the ferry, a feature of the Hellenistic underworld. As has been noted in the case of Greek lamenters, this lamenter is not particularly orthodox in her theology.[21] There may be an element of satire here that brings to mind that mocking songs were also a women's genre.[22] Or perhaps, as Rabbenu Hananel argues, it is meant to

16. See Steinsaltz, *Moed Qatan* 28b: *Iyunim* at *Vai l'azlah, vai l'havila*.

17. Two sources for a translation are Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Press, 1921), and *Moed Katan* (trans. Rabbi Dayan H.M. Lazarus, *Seder Moed*, IV [London: The Soncino Press, 1938]). Jastrow's translation is strained. See *antikhi*, p. 83: 'Take the bone pin out of the jaw (the base in which the vessel is suspended) and let water be put into the *antichi*' [*sic*]. The Soncino emends *mekhaca* to *khacava*, deriving it from Latin *cacabus*, cooking pot, parallel to *antikhi* (*Moed Katan*, pp. 186f.).

18. Patrick Leigh Fermor, *Mani: Travels in the Southern Peloponnese* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 60.

19. According to Tractate *Semakhot* 2.10, it was permissible for a woman to prepare for burial the body of a woman or a man, though men were prohibited from preparing the body of a woman. It is conceivable that in ancient times before the ubiquity of burial societies and the rising prestige of the mitzvah, women may often have prepared the dead for burial. See Dov Zlotnick, *The Tractate Mourning* [*Semakhot*] (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), I, p. 10.

20. Following the gloss of Rabbenu Hananel (*Moed Qatan* 28b).

21. Horst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voice*s, p. 10.

22. Athalya Brenner and Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes, *On Gendering Texts: Male and Female Voices in the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), pp. 43-48.

be pathetic and ironic. This man has labored all his life and yet at last has to borrow the money for his final ride.[23]

Another lament can be translated, 'The grave is a fine robe for a free man, whose traveling outfit is now complete'. Rashi explains, 'That is to say, death is as beautiful or befitting as an outfit of [finest] Milesian wool. All he has is his shroud, for he is poor.'[24] Soncino translates, 'borrow [and buy] a Milesian robe/To dress a free-born son: [Give it free of charge] for provision left he none'.[25] Soncino has translated *shayul* as 'lend' rather than as 'Sheol', the grave. But this makes less sense than Rashi's translation, for lamenters at a burial would not be taking up a collection to pay for the shroud, although Rabbenu Hananel too translates, 'Let us prepare fine garments to lay out this good person who has died'. The term *zavdah* can refer to a shroud, a traveling outfit or, metaphorically, a shroud as an outfit for one's final journey.[26] Rabbenu Hananel 's translation also removes the irony implicit in Rashi's gloss: for the poor free man, the grave itself is as good as a garment of fine Milesian wool as a traveling outfit for this last journey.

Another cryptic lament attributed to the women of Shokhenziv can be translated, 'our brothers are like merchants who are searched at the boundary'. In other words, just like traveling merchants who are searched and made to declare their goods at the boundary, our brothers are tested by their characterological 'goods' when passing the boundary from life into death.[27] Rabbenu Hananel says the meaning is that our brothers the merchants will be examined or tested by their possessions and their business practices.[28] Rashi translates 'Our brother the merchant will be judged by the brood he left behind', which is puzzling.[29] Soncino translates, 'Our brothers are merchants who/at the customs houses are searched'.[30] This seems to presume that 'merchant' is a metaphor but Soncino does not elaborate further on its meaning.

The final lament of the women of Shokhenziv I will translate following Rabbenu Hananel as 'This death is like any other death [i.e. all must die]. Death is the principal and the length of sickness is the interest.'[31] Soncino translates, 'This death or that death [is the end of the quest]: Our bruises

23. Rabbenu Hananel, *Mo'ed Qatan* (Vilna edition, 6; Jerusalem: Pe'er HaTorah, 1929) 28b.

24. Rashi, *Moed Qatan* 28b.

25. Soncino *Moed Katan*, p. 186.

26. Jastrow, 'Zavda', p. 384.

27. See Jastrow, 'Zavzaga', p. 378. See also *Ein Yaakov* (New York: Avraham Yitzchak Friedman, n.d.), Perek Shlishi, *Moed Qatan* 28.

28. Rabbenu Hananel, *Moed Qatan* 28b (Vilna Edition).

29. Rashi, *Moed Qatan* 28b.

30. Soncino *Moed Katan*, p. 187.

31. Rabbenu Hananel, *Moed Qatan* 28b (Vilna Edition).

are the rate of interest'.[32] In this translation, death is the principal and pain is the interest. In any case, the tone is ironic , and as in the previous lament a financial metaphor is used. Note that all the fragments from the female lament-singers are prefaced 'And Rava said, the women of Shokhenziv say', as if these quotations from females had to be individually chaperoned into the Talmudic text.[33]

Most of these lament fragments are quite different from the example I shall discuss next. We have seen instances of irony and grim humor collo-quially expressed, with domestic or financial metaphors. Both areas were ones in which women participated, although they were disadvantaged in the economic domain.[34] We have seen regret, but a minimum of ornate rhetoric and sentiment and no startlingly beautiful poetry.

The next example is the only one I have found that refers to a biblical lament. This text is from Tractate *Nedarim* (b. *Nedarim* 66a-b), and it picks up a quotation from David's lament for Saul and Jonathan, 'Daughters of Israel, Weep over Saul / Who clothed you in crimson and finery / Who decked your robes with jewels of gold' (בנות ישראל / אל שאול בכינה / המלבישכם שני עם עדנעם / המעלה עדי זהב על לבושכם). The text relates that these lines were used to mourn Rabbi Ishmael. The story is told both in the Mishnah and in the Gemara that follows. Rabbi Ishmael was said to have taken an indi-gent girl into his home and cared for her. He even had a gold tooth made for her to substitute for a missing one. When her uncle saw her made beautiful, he regretted his previous vow to have to no benefit from her. Rabbi Ishmael absolved him of the vow on the grounds that he had not vowed concerning the transformed girl he now saw. His vow was therefore an error and thus the man was permitted to marry her. At Rabbi Ishmael's death, it is related, a lament singer sang, 'Daughters of Israel, weep over Rabbi Ishmael, who clothed you in crimson and finery'. This story suggests that if it were partic-ularly appropriate, a biblical lament might be quoted. Perhaps it is an indi-cation that rabbinic-period lamenters had biblical laments in their repertoire, since in the story it is the lament singer and not the rabbis who makes the quotation.

We might well end with our own lament: woe to all those laments that were not recorded. Lament singing ended in many communities in response to the Zohar's teaching that Satan is among the women at funerals and has permission to kill.[35] In response the *Shulchan arukh* repeats the laws of

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32. Soncino *Moed Katan*, p. 187.

33. There are too many of them to constitute a scribal error. It is more like a refrain.

34. Judith Romney Wegner, *Chattel or Person: The Status of Women in the Mishnah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 10-19, 126-27, 172-73.

35. *Zohar*, Vayyaqhel 196a-b. See also Zev Farber, 'Women, Funerals, and Cem-eteries', *JOFA Journal* (Summer 2008).

lament singers but recommends that women not go to cemeteries.[36] The seventeenth-century book of funeral laws and lore, *Maavar Yabok*, says that women must walk behind the men. Their lamenting weakens the song of the seraphim, who rejoice at the arrival of the deceased soul.[37] There seems to have been trouble enforcing these rules among the women.[38] Possibly the women were asserting the legitimacy of the lament tradition. In some communities, laments were sung in Judeo-Arabic, Aramaic having become a dead language. But an entire oral literature, the songs that were sung by מקוננות, are lost forever. We have only these talmudic references to tell us about their performance and their content. As Job's messengers say, 'I alone have escaped to tell you' (Job 1.15, 16, 17, 19).

36. Rabbi Yosef Caro, *Shulhan arukh, Yoreh Deah Hilkhot Avelut* 3359; *b. Berakhot* 51a.

37. Rabbi Aaron Berakhiyah, *Maavar Yabok*, Siftei Ra'ananut 3.10, quoted by Sylvie Anne Goldberg, *Crossing the Jabbok: Illness and Death in Sixteenth through Nineteenth Century Prague* (trans. Carol Cosman; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 115.

38. Goldberg, *Crossing the Jabbok*, pp. 115-17.Thanks to Professor Gail Labovitz for her help on this paper.

THE SWEET LIE OF METAPHOR:
LEVINAS'S REFLECTIONS ON METAPHOR AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

Annette Aronowicz

Unifying all of Emmanuel Levinas's reflections on metaphor in his previously unpublished work is the theme of transcendence.[1] Metaphor, he says, reveals what is above the human (*le surhumain*) in language,[2] 'the movement toward the infinite'.[3] In talking about it, he often resorts to metaphor, as if illustrating the impossibility of speaking about transcendence without metaphor or of metaphor without transcendence. Metaphor even becomes a metaphor for God, or, in a reversal, it is God whom he calls the metaphor of metaphors.[4] Even when he concludes that metaphor does not point to a transcendence that is transcendent enough,[5] he still uses metaphor to describe the transfer to what is absolutely other.[6]

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1. These reflections come in two formats. The first is a series of fragments, notes Levinas jotted down on scraps of paper both during his internment in a German prisoner of war camp in the Second World War, and in the subsequent 15 years or so. They can be found in the first of the unpublished volumes, Emmanuel Levinas, *Carnets de captivité et autres inédits: Oeuvres 1* (ed. Rodolphe Calin and Catherine Chalier; Editions Grasset & Fasquelle, IMEC éditeur, 2009). The second format is as the content of expository essays that he wrote from the period 1947 to 1962, and that he delivered orally as talks in the Collège de philosophie, instituted shortly after the war by the philosopher Jean Wahl. Among these essays is one entitled 'La métaphore', given in February of 1962. Other essays in this collection also touch on the subject, however, for most of them address the issue of language in one form or another. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Parole et silence et autres conférences inédites: Oeuvres 2* (ed. Rodolphe Calin and Catherine Chalier; Editions Grasset & Fasquelles, IMEC éditeur, 2009). The talks in this second volume reflect many of the comments in the fragments but the fragments also contain ideas or expressions not found in the essays and vice versa. In my effort to capture the flavor of Levinas's thought, I have drawn from both formats and thus both collections.
2. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 235.
3. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 241.
4. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 240; *Parole et silence*, p. 346.
5. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, pp. 330-31; *Parole et silence*, p. 337.
6. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, pp. 350-51; *Parole et silence*, pp. 344-46.

Taking seriously that one cannot speak of metaphor except metaphori-cally, I will focus on two images in Levinas's reflections—metaphor as words peeling into ever thinner slices[7] and metaphor as standing on the tip of one's toes,[8] which eventually will lead us to the word 'God'. To compensate for the abstract exposition of these images in the first part of this paper, which risks losing the very surplus[9] that only the concreteness of metaphor can convey, I will call, in a second part, upon several poems of Yehuda Amichai. Since much of this famous Israeli poet's work is biblical exegesis, his poems, when interpreted through a Levinassian lens, might serve as a window into one 'modern' approach to the transcendence within the biblical text.

Peeling into Ever Thinner Slices

Metaphor, according to Levinas, brings to light meanings that we do not become aware of until the appearance of the metaphor itself. When we compare a woman's radiant face to a day in May, for instance, the very juxtaposition of the face and spring sunlight releases a shared meaning, made possible by the 'excess' in individual words.[10] This meaning is not an illustration of the prior concept 'to shine'. The merging of face and May sunlight brings in a new dimension that neither expression has by itself. Metaphor peels meaning into ever finer slices, says Levinas, each resembling the others and yet different from them.[11] 'The marvel: a mean-ing could be transformed into another, as if everything were in everything, not because everything belongs to one system, but as if everything were the seed of everything else, as if every single thing carried within it the design of all the others. It is fertilization that is meaning.'[12] Thus, meta-phor reveals a fluid world of interrelated meanings that each time comes to light in a specific way, tied to the specific metaphor that reveals it. We live in a web of meanings rather than being merely its producers: 'lan-guage—the light in which one sees the light'.[13] The transcendence here is the 'surplus' in words, hidden until metaphor reveals yet another peeling of meaning. Our concepts do not control this surplus ahead of time. Lan-guage, then, as metaphor reveals it, is not in the first place the naming of objects or the conveying of information. It is the revelation of a surplus that comes to us each time anew.[14]

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7. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 241; *Parole et silence*, p. 335.
8. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 350.
9. Levinas, *Parole et silence*, p. 325.
10. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 230. For the image of a woman's face and the sun in May, see *Parole et silence*, p. 332.
11. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 241; *Parole et silence*, p. 335.
12. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 230.
13. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 295.
14. Levinas, *Parole et silence*, p. 325.

Standing on the Tip of One's Toe

In the second metaphor describing metaphor, that of standing on tippy toes, Levinas concentrates not on a hidden world of meanings, but on the very etymology of the word. Metaphor means crossing over, transferring, going beyond. Beyond what, one might ask? Levinas answers: beyond the world of our experience. 'Language would have as its consequence to raise intention beyond what experience offers. Metaphor, essence of language, would inhere in this push to the limits (*poussée extrême*), in this superlative always more superlative which is transcendence, the crossing beyond a fixed limit, a beyond nature.'[15] It is in this context that the image of standing on tiptoes occurs: 'The particular intention of metaphor is not the discovery of some new content. It is in the "quotation marks" that it lets us add, in the fact of stretching on the tip of our toes, in a kind of levitation—in the affirmation of a meaning that is "other".'[16] The expression 'quotation marks', in quotation marks itself, refers to suspending our experience of the world in search for something beyond it.

This would seem to necessitate that there first be a literal meaning—based on our sense experience and then a figurative meaning—the crossing over of metaphor. Levinas does not deny that we do treat certain meanings as literal and others as not but he insists that this distinction is purely conventional. 'All the words of our language are the effect of countless metaphoric mutations of history and nonetheless leave the impression of a term taken in its literal sense.'[17] He gives examples of words that have a metaphoric origin but which now are conventionally understood as literal when he discusses the word 'table'. When we say to set the table, to table a motion, to turn the tables, the periodic table of elements, he claims 'only context makes one of these literal as opposed to the others'.[18] Given that we can't make an absolute distinction between literal and figurative, Levinas then asks, 'whether metaphor doesn't coincide with meaning itself, whether any saying is heard if it is not emphatic?'[19]

We speak, then, because we want to communicate something that crosses over, that requires emphasis. If it were only a matter of communicating information, perhaps grunting or pointing or fixed formulae would do. We

15. Levinas, *Parole et silence*, p. 229.
16. Levinas, *Parole et silence*, p. 350.
17. Levinas, *Parole et silence*, p. 327.
18. Levinas, *Parole et silence*, p. 332. I have changed some of the examples to conform to English idiom. The French original reads: 'Le mot *table* a-t-il son sens littéral en indiquant le meuble où on mange, un bureau où l'on écrit, les repas que l'on prend (quand on dit la table chez Mme X est détestable)'.
19. Levinas, *Parole et silence*, p. 327.

speak to indicate the stretching beyond, not the end point of what we reach. In conventional usage, however, this stretching gets forgotten. Once a metaphor becomes part of ordinary speech, it begins to litter the floor of being or meaning with dead leaves, as Levinas puts it.[20] Literature then becomes necessary. 'Literature is henceforth indispensible to meaning. It consists in reigniting metaphors whose light has gone out in the midst of a language that has become a system of signs.'[21]

God as the Metaphor of Metaphors

Already in a metaphor juxtaposing a woman's radiant face to a day in May, we stand on the tip of our toes, going beyond our physical experience. This stretching reaches its highest degree of self-awareness in words such as transcendence, infinite, nothingness.[22] These are 'words within thought that are meant to carry us beyond thought'. But aren't these concepts rather than metaphors? 'Unless', says Levinas, 'conceptualization is but a modality of metaphor',[23] which means that metaphor already does the work of these concepts—the stretching beyond. But if stretching beyond is what we do through metaphor, then the word 'God' is the chief metaphor we have to make us conscious of it. 'The marvel of marvels of metaphor is the possibility of leaving experience behind, of thinking further than the givens of our world. What is it to leave experience behind? To think God.'[24]

The leap from a metaphor like the sunshine of a woman's smile to the word 'God' seems enormous. But it is precisely the enormity of the leap that the word 'God' points to. It does what all metaphor does but it is metaphor pushed to the extreme. Levinas becomes even more emphatic. 'Without God there would be no metaphor. God is the very metaphor for language—the fact of a thought that reaches beyond itself.'[25] This would mean that we wouldn't be speaking at all if it weren't for the desire to seek what is beyond. The word 'God' then becomes the chief clue for the activity of language, for what we do when we speak.

But there is something problematic here. If 'God' is a metaphor for language is there anything beyond language itself? Are we not in a circular loop? Having gone this far, Levinas finds objections to his own argument. In the interest of time, I will focus on only one of them. Metaphor remains a form of knowledge, a form of cognition and 'to know the transcendent is a

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20. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 241; *Parole et silence*, p. 335.
21. Levinas, *Parole et silence*, p. 328.
22. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 267; *Parole et silence*, p. 327.
23. Levinas, *Parole et silence*, p. 325.
24. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 231.
25. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 233.

contradiction in terms'.[26] It is to reduce it to something within us, which we may not have been aware of before the act of thought but which nonetheless becomes part of us.[27] But did not Levinas speak earlier of metaphor as signaling the crossing over, the standing on the tip of our toes, rather than a content of knowledge? Recognizing limits, however, remains an act of consciousness and comes from us. 'Every metaphor stays within immanence. Thought is the very definition of immanence—… Metaphor—the metaphorical crossing beyond—nonetheless stays equivalent to thought.'[28] The word 'God', like any metaphor, becomes a mental placeholder for something beyond our experience, but a mental placeholder all the same. It is still mental activity, originating with us. 'Language always says what is. But being is the immanent notion par excellence, that which the soul always rediscovers within itself, as if it were its author.'[29] As a result, even 'God' is no more than a mental projection of our own limits.

So if the content of language, not matter how exalted, cannot take us out of immanence, does language still have any place at all in our reach for transcendence? Levinas affirms that it does, but not in its content. Rather the transcendent appears because speech is always addressed to someone, and that someone escapes cognition. To address an interlocutor is not to encompass that person in a thought but precisely to reach beyond thought. He or she remains beyond the content we are delivering and beyond the context in which our specific language makes sense. The interlocutor at the moment of address is not an object of knowledge, but the one to whom my speech is directed. He or she always compels address, regardless of historical time and place. There would in fact not be speech if there were not someone outside one's mind forcing us out of ourselves into conversation.[30]

One would think that at this point Levinas would abandon metaphor as the sign of transcendence, but he doesn't. In speaking of our relationship to the interlocutor, he says, 'And it is this transport for which it is appropriate to reserve the word metaphor'.[31] In these and other quotations, metaphor signals the crossing from the realm of thought to the realm of what is not longer thinkable but only doable—responding, addressing, protecting. So, metaphor is not dismissed. It is necessary to signal—after the fact—what is accomplished outside language, and which is the source of language—our relation to another person. We come back to the word 'God'. 'God is the

26. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 306.
27. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 234.
28. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 330.
29. Levinas, *Parole et silence*, p. 339.
30. This is a summary of the last section of Levinas's essay 'La métaphore', in *Parole et silence*, pp. 339-44. But there are also various fragmentary notes on the subject in *Carnets de captivité*. See, for example, pp. 350-51.
31. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 346.

metaphor of metaphors, which conveys the necessary "transport" to establish meanings "absolutely". Ethical meaningfulness accomplishes the intent of metaphor. It is an order that precedes culture, but which already transcends atoms.'[32] 'God' becomes the word for what is outside language and outside culture, always meaning absolutely. We verify the transcendence it denotes not by thinking a content, not even a content of something beyond content, but by addressing or responding to a person.

Amichai—Peeling into Ever Thinner Slices

It is through several poems that we hope to explore these ideas about metaphor further. As abstract as they may be, Levinas's thoughts on this subject are meant to help us see a meaning that cannot arise independently of particular, concrete expressions. In what follows, we will return to peelings and tippy toes, and the word God, but as these phenomena arise from very specific expressions, and in response to an interlocutor, the poet Yehuda Amichai.

> *The Real Hero*
> The real hero of The Binding of Isaac was the ram,
> Who didn't know about the collusion between the others.
> He was volunteered to die instead of Isaac.
> I want to sing a memorial song about him—
> About his curly wool and his human eyes,
> About the horns that were so silent on his living head,
> And how they made those horns into shofars when he was slaughtered
> To sound their battle cries
> Or to blare out their obscene joy.
>
> I want to remember the last frame
> Like a photo in an elegant fashion magazine:
> The young man tanned and pampered in his jazzy suit
> And beside him the angel, dressed for a formal reception
> In a long silk gown, both of them looking with empty eyes at two empty places,
>
> and behind them, like a colored backdrop, the ram,
> caught in the thicket before the slaughter,
> the thicket his last friend.
>
> The angel went home.
> Isaac went home.
> Abraham and God had gone long before.
>
> But the real hero of The Binding of Isaac
> Is the ram.[33]

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32. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, p. 346.
33. Yehuda Amichai, *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai* (trans. Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 156-57.

'The Real Hero Was the Ram' (1986) could stand for the way all poetry, in its metaphoric juxtaposition of words, jolts us into a common world of submerged meanings, and surprises us by peeling off one more slice. The story of Genesis 22, the binding of Isaac, rises to the surface through the scattered mention of the particular actors in the drama. With it also arise the millennia-old commentaries about it. The poem floats on this submerged sea, whose fluidity Amichai emphasizes by singling out the ram. Abraham has received enormous attention, and so has Isaac. No one has neglected God and the angel. But the ram has not been juxtaposed to anything. He is left in the thicket. The central metaphor of the poem is that neglect. It has made of the ram's death something not worth discussing or noticing, part of the story and yet unseen. Yael Feldman, in her book *Glory and Agony: Isaac's Sacrifice and the National Narrative*, points out that many Israelis, after the first Lebanon war of 1982, reacting against earlier Zionist ideology, interpreted the ram in Amichai's poem as the ordinary foot soldier in Israel's wars,[34] so often presented in the national mythology as the young man, Isaac, willingly sacrificing himself for the common good.[35] Within the poem, he becomes the victim of the machinations of those in power or, alternatively, as I see it, of the whole society, for a certain image of itself, the image in the glossy magazine. But the surplus the poem makes available certainly also has to do with another very visible juxtaposition, that of the ram with a human face, focusing on the eyes and soft curls. It is difficult to escape the allusion to the image of 'going like sheep to the slaughter', often appearing in the Israeli context to describe the supposed passivity of the exilic Jew, unable or unwilling to defend himself, one whom others could kill with impunity. But since the sheep about to be slaughtered suggests a hero in a military context, there is a loud clash of images, reigniting the fire beneath the passive/active dichotomy characteristic of modern discourse. Is Amichai underscoring young soldiers' lack of agency, notwithstanding all the advertising about the New Jew's militancy? Is he proclaiming that not participating in savage victory cries is the only heroic deed available to a human being caught in a nationalist ideology? Is he pointing, as Feldman suggests, to the inevitability of the war victim in human society,[36] whose death is always drowned out by victory cries? In any case, the meaning of the poem comes through two metaphors: the sudden centrality of the ram, juxtaposed to its prior neglect, and the ram's human features. Either way the metaphors peel yet another slice from the binding of Isaac story, reigniting the urgency of an ethical concern

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34. Yael Feldman, *Glory and Agony: Isaac's Sacrifice and National Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 273.

35. Feldman, *Glory and Agony*, p. 6.

36. Feldman, *Glory and Agony*, p. 273.

that has been aestheticized, like those photographs in a glossy magazine. The previous metaphors have become dead leaves.

Standing on the Tip of One's Toes

We have seen in the previous discussion that standing on tippy toes is best expressed in the word 'God', although a metaphor like the sheep/man already makes us see, not with our physical senses but with our moral eyes, already pushes us beyond what is. From this perspective, it is worth paying attention to the word 'God' in 'The Real Hero'. In it, God is at best peripheral to the story, in the same way that the ram's sacrifice is peripheral to the story as told in the Bible. His position in the poem becomes a metaphor for the irrelevance of god-language. The central metaphor becomes the ram's human eyes and his silent horns, what we keep on missing and that only the emphatic nature of metaphor can bring within our line of vision. It is as if one has to relegate god-language to the margins in order to hear again the prophetic cry of the god who manifested himself in the response to the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. Only when we demystify god-language, can the transfer from the ontological to the ethical occur. But does this poem really transport outside a content of thought? Does it not remain a poem and thus, like all art, mere play, according to Levinas?[37] Perhaps the poem's palpable anger lies in Amichai's awareness that his own words cannot save the ram in the thicket. This is merely a song recording his loss.

Concluding Remarks

If we were to stop here, it would be tempting to say that reading the Bible requires of us to demystify at all points the word 'God' in order to make room for an ethical dimension that that word can obscure. But we might recall that for Levinas the word 'God' cannot simply be demystified once and for all. It is as inevitable as language itself since it is what gives rise to language in the first place. In Amichai's poetry too, God appears and reappears, and not always as someone who can simply be dismissed. I would like to conclude with one of his poems in which the word itself does not appear but where it is very strongly implied.

> *A Song of Lies on Sabbath Eve*
> On a Sabbath eve, at dusk on a summer day
> When I was a child,
> When the odors of food and prayer drifted up from all the houses
> And the wings of the Sabbath angels rustled in the air,
> I began to lie to my father:
> 'I went to another synagogue'.

37. *Parole et silence*, pp. 337-38.

I don't know if he believed me or not
But the lie was very sweet in my mouth.
And in all the houses at night
Hymns and lies drifted up together,
O taste and see,
And in all the houses at night
Sabbath angels died like flies in the lamp,
And lovers put mouth to mouth
And inflated one another till they floated in the air
Or burst.

Since then, lying has tasted very sweet to me,
And since then I've always gone to another synagogue.
And my father returned the lie when he died:
'I've gone to another life'.[38]

In this poem, the narrator tells his observant father that he is now going to another synagogue after he very clearly has stopped attending any service at all. Yet, if the lie tastes sweet in his mouth, it might be because he has found another source of transcendence, the very earthly love depicted in the couples blowing themselves up like balloons on Sabbath eves. This is a transcendence of rather humble proportions—low to the ground and evanescent—but off the ground nonetheless. So far we seem to be in the demystifying mode characteristic of the first poem. There is nothing beyond this world and the pleasures of the senses. But in the last stanza, the poet gets trapped in another kind of transcendence. He cannot help hoping that his father has gone to another life, although he knows it is a sweet lie. Is this not because our loves, whether they be erotic or filial, force us to stand on tippy toes, making us refuse to accept what is—the death of the other person as final? It would seem, then, that once we have demystified all transcendence and have concentrated only on this earthly realm, our human relations force us right back up again. To indicate this movement, we have only metaphor, sweet lie, and all. The second synagogue, which reduces all possibility of transcendence to the ephemeral transport of earthly love, cannot do without the transcendence of the first synagogue, and so the eternal cycle of demystification and the return to metaphor continues.

Perhaps nothing brings out the ethical dimension of this dismissal of transcendence and its reinsertion than a fragment from a later collection of Amichai's poems, 'The Bible and You, the Bible and You, and other Midrashim':

Three sons had Abraham, not just two.
Three sons had Abraham, Ishmael, Yitzhak and Yivkeh.
First came Yishma-el, 'God will hear',
Next came Yitzhak, 'he will laugh',

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38. Amichai, *Selected Poetry*, pp. 138-39.

And the last one was Yivkeh, 'he will cry'.
No one has ever heard of Yivkeh for he was the youngest,
The son that Father loved best,
The son who was offered up on Mount Moriah.
Yisma-El was saved by his mother Hagar,
Yitzhak was saved by the angel,
But Yivkeh no one saved.
When he was just a little boy,
His father would call him tenderly, Yivkeh,
Yivkeleh, my sweet little Yivkie—
But he sacrificed him all the same.
The Torah says the ram, but it was Yivkeh.
Yisma-El never heard from God again,
Yitzhak never laughed again.
Sarah laughed only once, then laughed no more.
Three sons had Abraham, Yishma, 'will hear', Yitzhak, 'will laugh',
Yivkeh, 'will cry.
Yishma-El, Yizhak-El, Yivkeh-El.
God will hear, God will laugh, God will cry.[39]

He retells the story of the binding of Isaac, inventing a character that does not appear in Genesis 22 at all, Yivkeh, the youngest son, whose name in Hebrew means 'he will cry'. He is the one whom Abraham sacrifices on Mount Moriah. Unlike Ishmael who has the word 'God' in his name and unlike Isaac, whose birth God predicted, Yivkeh has no connection to God at all. We don't even know if the command to kill him came from God. Fathers sacrifice their beloved sons in war, regardless. But then in the last line of the stanza, the word 'God' is insistently put back in the names of each of the children. 'Yishma-el, Yitzhak-el, Yivkeh-el, God will hear, God will laugh, God will cry.' Could the word 'God' not be a metaphor for our inability to be resigned to Yivkeh's invisibility? It remains our word for standing on tippy toes, for refusing a complete absence of a moral dimension, even if God can do no more than cry. The stretching beyond remains.

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39. Yehuda Amichai, *Open Closed Open* (trans. Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld; New York: Harcourt Inc., 2000), pp. 21-22.

Educating Jewish Girls in Medieval Muslim and Christian Settings

Judith R. Baskin

This essay compares how Jewish girls were educated in Muslim and Christian milieus between approximately 800 and 1500 CE.[1] Topics include Jewish attitudes towards educating women, degrees of female literacy in Hebrew and vernacular languages, education in prayer, ritual, and halakhic regulations, vocational training and activities, and women of unusual educational attainments. A basic premise of the essay is that education in medieval Jewish societies was gendered, reflecting rabbinic Judaism's conviction of the essential differences between the capacities and appropriate roles of women and men.[2] A second assumption is that elite social status, based on wealth or learning or both, was the most important factor beyond gender in determining a medieval Jewish woman's level of education.

Jews in Muslim Lands

The major sources of information about Jewish social life in the medieval Muslim world, particularly between the ninth and twelfth centuries, are the documents of the Cairo Genizah. Many of the mostly urban Mediterranean Jews whose religious, literary, commercial, and personal writings are preserved in the Genizah were involved in trade, and their undertakings often involved overseas travel. While some Jews in this peaceful and prosperous era became quite wealthy, Jewish communities were largely middle class, although there were also Jews at the lower ends of the social ladder. As Shlomo Dov Goitein, the preeminent interpreter of the Genizah texts, has written, there is no comparable collection of written sources for the Muslim society of this time and place so it is difficult to know to what extent

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1. An earlier version of this essay, 'The Education of Jewish Girls in the Middle Ages in Muslim and Christian Milieus', appeared in Hebrew in *Pe'amim: Studies in Oriental Jewry* 82 (2000), pp. 1-17.

2. On traditional gender roles in Judaism, see Baskin 2002. For a fuller discussion of medieval Jewish women, see Baskin 2012; Baumgarten 2004; Goitein 1967–1993; and Grossman 2004.

Jewish social norms reflect practices of the majority population (Goitein 1967–1993: III, 357). Nevertheless, it seems likely that Jewish attitudes and customs regarding women were strongly influenced by Islamic norms and that women's status was not particularly high. Thus, polygyny was not uncommon, and while Jewish women of prosperous families were not literally isolated in women's quarters as were Muslim women of comparable social rank, community values stressed that woman's place was in the home. The twelfth-century Jewish traveler, Petaḥiah of Ratisbon, wrote of the Jewish community of Baghdad, 'Nobody sees there any woman, nor does anybody go into the house of his friend, lest he should see the wife of his neighbor. But he knocks with a tin knocker, and the other comes forth and speaks to him' (Benisch 1861: 15). The observation of Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), who lived much of his life in Cairo, that 'There is nothing more beautiful for a wife than sitting in the corner of her house' (*Mishneh Torah*, 'Book of Women: Marriage' 13.11) reflects both a continuation of rabbinic attitudes and the high degree of Jewish acculturation to Muslim custom. Goitein remarks that the education of Jewish women in this milieu was neglected to a degree that is not found in other periods of Jewish history, although he points out that the Jewish women of urban middle-class Cairo, including married women, had broad privileges in the economic realm, including significant freedom of movement, which went far beyond halakhic guidelines (Goitein 1967–1993: III, 153-55).

Traditional Jewish attitudes did not advocate significant female learning and this meant that efforts to give girls a substantive religious education were rare. Goitein writes that since the purpose of primary education was preparation for participation in public prayer, an obligation not incumbent on women, it was natural that only boys regularly attended school (Goitein 1962: 63). In the *Mishneh Torah*, his influential legal code, Maimonides discouraged the education of girls in traditional texts because of females' lack of halakhic obligation to study as well as his belief in women's essential inferiority in the mental skills required for serious Torah study:

> A woman who studies Torah is rewarded, but not on the same level as a man, because she was not commanded to do so, and anyone who performs a precept that he is not commanded does not have the reward of someone who is commanded to do so, but a lesser one. Therefore, even though she has a reward, the Sages commanded that a man should not teach his daughter Torah because most women's thought is oriented in a different direction, and not toward the study of Torah, and as a result they will turn the words of Torah into frivolity. Our Sages said: Whoever teaches his daughter Torah, it is as if he taught her frivolity. This all refers to the Oral Torah. However, regarding the Written Torah he should not set out to teach her, but if he does teach her, it is not considered as if he taught her frivolity (*Mishneh Torah*, 'Book of Knowledge: Study of Torah' 1.13).

Maimonides' views remained influential, not only throughout the Middle Ages but well into the modern period. Goitein believes the educations of most Jewish women in the Muslim milieu were extremely limited, that illiteracy was common, and normal female knowledge of Hebrew was usually confined, at best, to being able to recite a few prayers from memory (Goitein 1962: 63; 1967–93: V, 46; III, 356). However, there were exceptions, particularly in elite households where there were no sons (Goitein 1962: 64). Among the best known learned women from this milieu is the only child of the Gaon Samuel ben Ali, also known as Samuel ha-Levi ben al-Dastur (d. 1194), a prominent scholar who headed the academy in Baghdad for more than thirty years. Petaḥiah of Ratisbon, the twelfth-century traveler from Spain, reported that this Gaon's daughter was expert in the Scriptures and Talmud, writing: 'She gives instruction in Scripture to young men through a window. She herself is within the building, while the disciples are below outside and do not see her' (Assaf 1930–47: III, 1; Benisch 1861: 19; Goitein 1962: 64). So well known was this unnamed woman, whose husband Zekhariah ben Berekhel succeeded her father as Gaon, that several elegies written on her death by the Hebrew poet Eleazar ben Jacob ha-Bavli (d. 1250) survive in which she is described as a 'precious benefactress, a source of wisdom and splendor to the people' and as providing 'eyes to the blind and language to those who are mute' (Dinur 1968: II, Book 3, 120-21). It is interesting that the same motif of the veiled or hidden woman who teaches male students reappears in both Jewish and Christian literary sources of the later Middle Ages (Baskin 1991: 46).[3]

Genizah documents record instances of fathers who instructed their daughters in scripture, as in these words of mourning for a daughter who died as an adult: 'When I remember how intelligent, how knowledgeable, how graceful of diction you had been … Would I could listen to you again while I taught you Bible or questioned you in its knowledge by heart…' (Goitein 1967–93: II, 184). There is also evidence that some women, discussed below, studied Scriptures with their husbands or other relatives and used their knowledge to earn their livelihoods as teachers. However, Goitein points out that even women educated beyond the norm for their sex could never compete with men who had been exposed to Hebrew language and sacred texts from early childhood, both in study and in synagogue worship, and he observes elsewhere, 'One thing is sure. With few exceptions, the women known to us from the Genizah papers did not come together to study the Bible' (Goitein 1967–93: III, 34).

Joel Kraemer has collected almost two hundred examples of letters written by women that were stored in the Cairo Genizah (Kraemer 1995; Kraemer 2002). These include personal correspondence to family members as

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3.　See below, n. 9.

well as requests and pleas sent to community institutions and functionaries. Although many of these letters were dictated to professional scribes, Kraemer finds that women's letters preserve a high degree of directness and naturalness not found in letters written by men, and suggests this may be because women could not afford to hire professional scribes who were skilled in the methods of official expression but used less learned clerks who simply recorded their thoughts verbatim (Kraemer 1995: 164). However, he also points out that dictation to a scribe does not always prove the sender's illiteracy since women used professional scribes just as men did even when they could write themselves. The scribes added formal components to introductions and conclusions; moreover, legal requests, complaints, and subjects needing the seal of the court or the approval of a community official would be written by a professional (Kraemer 1995: 164; Goitein 1967–1993: III, 221). While some letters to women imply that the recipient would have to find someone to read it to her, suggesting female illiteracy (Goitein 1962: 63; Kraemer 1995: 164), Kraemer notes that others, including letters from husbands to wives, were very private and were obviously intended only for the eyes of the woman herself (Kraemer, 1995: 164).

Some women definitely wrote their own letters. In one example a dying woman, who had herself received a good education, invokes their 'saintly mother' when she begs her sister to care for the woman's daughter, and 'to make efforts to give her an education, although I know well that I am asking you for something unreasonable, as there is not enough money for maintenance, let alone education' (Goitein 1962: 66-67; 1967–1993: III, 353-54; Kraemer 1995: 164). As this despairing letter indicates, education was expensive and it seems likely that the few girls who did receive substantive instruction in reading and writing, whether in Hebrew or Arabic, were daughters of prosperous families. The twelfth-century author Samuel al-Maghrebi reports in his autobiography that his mother and her two sisters, who grew up in Basra, Iraq, were deeply learned in the Torah and wrote regularly in Hebrew and Arabic; according to Goitein, these were unusual accomplishments even among men in a time when the art of writing was acquired only by certain classes of people (Goitein 1962: 64; 1967–1993: II, 184; III, 355; Assaf 1930–1947: II, 28). Goitein indicates, however, that it was not unheard of for daughters of scribal families, both Jewish and Muslim, to learn calligraphic skills, noting that the Jewish community in the Iraqi town of Daquq was headed by Azariah, 'son of the female copyist' (Goitein 1967–1993: II, 184).[4]

Parents of girls who wished their daughters to learn essential Hebrew prayers often hired private teachers, some of whom were women. While a Genizah letter refers to a girl who attended school with her unruly brother

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4.   See below for further discussion of female scribes.

(Goitein 1962: 65; 1967–1993: II, 183), Goitein suggests that more typical arrangements for female education are evident in a letter in which a woman entrusted with the supervision of orphan girls suggests placing two of them with a woman who would teach them needlework and hiring a private instructor who would come to the house to teach them prayers 'so that they should not grow up like wild animals and not even know "Hear Israel"' (Goitein 1962: 68-69; 1967–1993: II, 183-84; I, 128).

Sometimes one tutor might teach a group of girls. A responsum (a response by a rabbinic authority to an inquiry on a legal issue) of Maimonides refers to a blind male teacher in Alexandria who taught Hebrew prayers to young girls. Because he was blind, the girls were able to dispense with their veils when studying with him. The responsum concerns a rash vow the teacher made not to teach the daughters of a particular man with whom he had quarreled and which he now regrets. The arguments for why he should be allowed to cancel the vow and resume teaching these girls include his assertions that there is no one who can fill his place, he is suffering significant financial and personal loss from severing contact with this family, and 'there is no value in the teaching of women' and 'women do not teach correctly'. One senses that this man fears female teachers as economic rivals who may take over his students. Maimonides rules that the teacher may cancel his vow and resume teaching these girls but has no comment on the relative worth of women teachers (Blau 1957–1986: II, 524-25, no. 276; Assaf 1930–47: III, 2; Goitein 1962: 63-64; 1967–93: II, 183).

The women who taught skills of various kinds probably had no other means of support. As Goitein writes, 'teaching by women must have been a desperate attempt to gain a livelihood rather than an expression of yearning for a higher form of existence' (1967–93: III, 356). He refers to a widow of a scholar who was hired to teach needlework to two orphans (Goitein 1967–93: I, 128). Indeed, most women described as teachers taught embroidery and other forms of needlework; these were extremely important accomplishments since married women at all levels of Jewish society were expected to earn income through their handiwork. Usually a wife was permitted to keep her earnings for private use, although clauses in some Genizah marriage agreements stipulate that she provide her own clothing out of her profits (Goitein 1967–93: I, 127-30; III, 133).

While female teachers of religion most frequently instructed girls privately in basic Hebrew prayers, occasionally women taught in primary schools for boys. Such a *mu'allima*, or female Bible teacher, was usually a relative of the teacher who owned the school; she acted as an assistant, taking care of the smaller boys, and as an administrator, negotiating with the mothers over tuition costs and other managerial issues (Goitein 1962: 64-65, 69-71; 1967–93: I, 128; III, 355). The letter about the difficult boy who attended school with his sister mentions in passing that one of the two

teachers at the school was a woman. She managed things when the male teacher was absent and often protected the boy from her colleague's wrath, while also putting up with the worst of his misbehavior (Goitein 1962: 65).

Two responsa of Maimonides connected to the same marital dispute tell of a deserted wife who was able to make herself independent by teaching boys, at first as an assistant to her brother and then with the aid of her two sons. Apparently she had initially learned some Bible from her husband and had improved her knowledge during his absence. After some years her husband reappeared and demanded that she give up the school because it injured his dignity for his wife to be a teacher, and besides, he had no one to serve him. Moreover, he was concerned that her role as a teacher would damage her reputation because she would come into frequent contact with the fathers of her pupils, a situation which he saw as potentially embarrassing both for his estranged wife and for himself. Otherwise, he asked permission to take a second wife, a contingency forbidden by a clause in his wife's marriage contract. The wife, in turn, argued that her husband had been repeatedly undependable in the past, that she had built up her student clientele over time, and that if she gave up her teaching she would not easily be able to resume her school should her husband again disappear. She notes in her letter that the parents sent the boys to her school because of her teaching skills, 'not because of her son', although she also points out that her son dealt with the men whose sons were studying with her while she was there for the women coming to get their children. Maimonides proposed that the Jewish rabbinical court compel the husband to divorce his independent wife on the grounds that he had not fulfilled his legal obligation to support her. Moreover, he advised the wife to refuse all relations with her husband and to forfeit her marriage portion (which was unlikely to be recoverable, in any case), since these actions, too, would constitute grounds for divorce. After that, Maimonides says, 'She will have disposition over herself, she may teach what she likes, and do what she likes'; but he rules that 'if she stays with her husband, he has the right to forbid her to teach' (Blau 1957–1986: I, 49-53, 71-71; nos. 34 and 45; Goitein 1962: 70-71; 1967–93: II, 185; III, 345; III, 355-56; Melammed 1997).

Oblique references to another female teacher appear in a letter in which a man, Abu 'l-Mansur, is addressed as 'the son of the schoolmistress' at the 'synagogue of the woman teacher'. Since the space for the name of Abu 'l-Mansur's father is left blank, it seems likely that his mother, too, was either a deserted wife or a widow with sufficient learning to run a school to keep her family from starving (Goitein 1967–73: III, 355-56). In addition to women teachers, Genizah documents also refer to female physicians and oculists. However, Goitein cautions that it would be wrong to assume that these were educated women: 'as those mentioned belonged to the lower strata of the society, they certainly had not gone through the expensive

apprenticeship of scientific medicine, but were practitioners whose knowledge and skill had come to them by tradition' (1967–73: I, 128).[5]

Truly well-educated women were almost always from families of wealth, learning, and political power. The daughter of the Gaon Samuel ben Ali has already been mentioned. Goitein refers to a Hebrew poem addressed to Dunash ibn Labrat (c. 950), generally regarded as the initiator of Spanish Hebrew poetry, apparently written by his wife. Goitein believes that the author of this 'short, charming poem' must have been trained in religious poetry, and although one cannot prove that the wife actually wrote it, Goitein expresses his personal belief that she was the writer because of the depth of personal emotion expressed (Goitein 1967–73: V, 468-69; Fleischer 1984).

Another elite Jewish woman from Spain, Qasmunah, is known for three poems in Arabic which survive in a medieval anthology of Arabic poetry written by women. In this document Qasmunah is said to have learned to write poetry from her father, Isma'il ibn Baghdala, who was also a poet. While it is well known that many medieval Jewish men were extremely well versed in the scientific, philosophical, and literary culture of the Muslim world, aside from these poems there are no other surviving documents indicating that Jewish women had any significant exposure to or participation in this learned discourse. Goitein agrees with the suggestion that Qasmunah was the daughter of the powerful court Jew, head of Spanish Jewry, and noted rabbinic scholar and poet, Samuel ha-Nagid (Isma'il ibn Naghrilla) of Granada, who lived between 993 and 1056. He was known to have had three sons and a daughter and to have instructed his children in poetry. Goitein suggests that Qasmunah, as the daughter of such a high-ranking courtier, was comfortable among the women of the Muslim court, some of whom were certainly literate, if not learned, and this is how she was exposed to Arabic secular poetry and how her verses found their way into a book compiled by a Muslim (Goitein 1967–93: V, 468-70; Bellamy 1983: 423-24). Similarly, the wife and daughter of the twelfth-century Hebrew poet and philosopher Judah Ha-Levi were known for their learning. An acrostic poem by Ha-Levi's daughter, Huldah, entitled 'Bat Ha-Levi', appears in a collection of Ha-Levi's writings.[6]

Such erudition, however, was the rare exception among Jewish women in the Muslim world. Yet, if most women were not learned, Genizah writings reveal that Jewish women were anxious to further the educations of their sons, even when this entailed significant financial sacrifice. One letter

5. On female physicians in Ashkenaz, see below. Women were particularly known for their expertise in treating eye diseases.

6. On Ha-Levi's wife, see ibn Yaḥya 1928: 19; on his daughter, see Kayserling 1879: 136 and Zolty 1993: 152.

relates how a woman left her husband in Alexandria and moved to Cairo in order to provide her son with an excellent education; in another a poor widow in Alexandria did everything possible to solicit funds so that her sons could study (Goitein 1962: 71). In an anguished communication, a woman appealed to the Nagid David II ben Joshua (c. 1355–1367), a descendant of Maimonides, to take steps against her husband whose attraction to the mystical Muslim practice of Sufism had led him to neglect his family and to endanger the Jewish education of their three sons (Goitein 1962: 72-74; 1967–93: II, 252-53). As these documents indicate, it was through enabling her sons to become learned in Jewish law and literature, not through her own learning, that the Jewish woman in the Muslim world most often demonstrated her piety to her family and her society.

Women's Education in Christian Europe

Jews began settling in Western Europe in Roman times, primarily as merchants and traders. As Europe became Christian, Jews found themselves subject to increasing legal disabilities, a process which continued throughout the medieval period. With the advent of the Crusades at the end of the eleventh century Jews began to be barred from virtually any source of livelihood but money lending. They were often compelled to wear distinctive clothing and badges, and ultimately, towards the end of the Middle Ages, they were either expelled altogether from areas where they had long lived, or were forced to live in crowded and unpleasant ghettoes. In Christian Europe small communities of Jews lived in towns significantly less developed than the cities of the Muslim world (Chazan 2007). Despite the legal disabilities they suffered, and their ultimate insecurity as to property and life, Jews tended to be prosperous and many enjoyed a standard of living comparable to the Christian lower nobility, or, as urban centers grew, the upper bourgeoisie. For Jews, as for Christians of similar economic standing, literacy was considered normal and, indeed, essential. In both communities, at least until the rise of Christian universities in the thirteenth century, substantial learning was reserved for a small religious leadership elite (Chazan 2010).

Like the Christian women among whom they lived, Jewish women had significantly more freedom of movement than women in the Muslim world. Many were independently involved in business activities. The higher economic status of women in Ashkenaz is indicated, in part, by the large dowries they brought into marriage that assured a wife a prominent position in her household. A further recognition of the high personal status accorded to Jewish women in this milieu, as well as a sign of the influence of the prevailing mores of the Christian environment, is the eleventh-century *takkanah* (rabbinic ruling) forbidding polygyny for Jews

in Christian countries. This change in traditional Jewish law is attributed to the era of R. Gershom ben Judah (c. 960–1028), the first great rabbinic authority of Ashkenazic Jewry, together with the even more significant pronouncement that no woman could be divorced against her will (Grossman 2004: 70-78). One might point, as well, to the twelfth-century ordinance of R. Jacob Tam that limited the absence of a husband on business travel to no more than eighteen months away without either the permission of the court of the nearest city, or the consent of his wife in the presence of proper witnesses. This effort to protect wives from desertion, probably a reenactment of earlier rulings, indicates both a problem with prolonged absences by husbands, sometimes because of family quarrels, and the high esteem in which women were held in these communities (Grossman 2004: 74-75).

Yet women's higher social position did not change traditional Judaism's emphasis on maintaining separate religious and intellectual realms for women and men, as gendered patterns of educating children demonstrate. Jewish boys began their formal educations by the age of five and progressed from the Hebrew alphabet through biblical studies to some talmudic tractates by thirteen, with particularly talented students continuing Talmud studies into adulthood (Marcus 1996; Kanarfogel 1992). Ashkenazic society was particularly conscious of the dangers of sexual temptation and tried to limit unnecessary contacts between men and women, especially in the realms of learning and prayer. Unlike the Muslim environment, there are no references in this milieu to female teachers of young boys. Ephraim Kanarfogel has noted that the *Sefer ḥukkei ha-Torah*, a twelfth-century educational curriculum, advocates an extreme, almost monastic, separation between men and women in the context of education, advising that academy heads should absent themselves from their homes and wives except on the Sabbath in order to avoid sexual thoughts while they are teaching (1992: 104-105). Similarly, he points out that the thirteenth-century *Sefer ḥasidim*, written in the Rhineland, advises a teacher to set up a school on the far side of his home so that students will be prevented from gazing at the female members of the household as they enter and leave the home. If this precaution is not taken, he writes, 'their Torah study will be accomplished while sinning' (Parma edition, par. 800; Kanarfogel 1992: 104).

The majority of Jewish girls were instructed at home. Mothers taught their daughters cooking, needlework, and household management, as well as the rules of rabbinic Judaism applicable to home and marriage; these were considered essential so that a woman would know how to observe dietary laws, domestic regulations pertaining to the Sabbath and festivals, and the commandments relevant to her family life and her relations with her husband (Baskin, 1991; Grossman 2004: 158-70). *Sefer ḥasidim* ordains that young women must learn those practical commandments and halakhic rules, but goes on to warn that 'an unmarried man should not teach a girl,

not even if the father is present, for fear that he will be sexually aroused or she will be overcome by her passions'. Rather, a father should teach his daughter and a husband should teach his wife (Bologna edition, par. 313).

Like Maimonides in Egypt, most Ashkenazic medieval rabbinic leaders maintained that women should not be taught the complexities of Jewish law. In his *Sefer mitzvot gadol*, the early thirteenth-century rabbinic authority Moses of Coucy explained that although 'a woman is exempt from both the commandment to learn Torah and to teach her son, even so, if she aids her son and husband in their efforts to learn, she shares their reward for the fulfillment of that commandment' ('positive commandment' 12).[7] In his introduction to *Sefer mitzvot katan*, R. Isaac ben Joseph of Corbeil (d. 1280) encouraged women to master the commandments that applied to their live, explaining that 'The reading and studying of them will benefit them as the study of Talmud helps men'. Both of these precepts were cited by R. Moses Isserles as accepted practice in his glosses for Ashkenazic Jewry to the sixteenth-century law code, the *Shulḥan arukh* (*Yoreh Deah* 246.6).

R. Jacob ben Moses Moellin (d. 1427), known as the Maharil, a German-Jewish authority of the fifteenth century, echoes Maimonides' ruling in the *Mishneh Torah* in opposing any formal education for girls, either from books or from a tutor. In a responsum he indicates that girls can learn what they have to know from observing their parents in the home, with resort to the local rabbi in instances of uncertainty. He gives his reasons as the rabbinic fear that an instructed woman will come to bad ways since 'women's minds are weak', as well as his observation that the women of his generation seem to be adequately 'knowledgeable about the laws of salting and rinsing and taking out the nerve, and the laws of the menstruating woman, and so forth' purely on the basis of home teaching (responsum 57). Although rabbinic opinions allowed women to be instructed in techniques of ritual slaughtering, the only evidence that women actually did act as slaughterers comes from Italy, usually in cases when women lived in isolated locations or in distressed circumstances (Toaff 1998: 71).

Lack of instruction in Hebrew was not seen as an impediment to women's religious practice and prayer. The question of whether or not it was essential to pray in Hebrew was an ancient one. According to the Mishnah (*Soṭ.* 7.1), the vast majority of prayers, with the exception of the priestly benediction, could be legitimately recited in any language. However, as Ruth Langer has pointed out, the talmudic discussion of this *mishnah* in the Babylonian Talmud (*Soṭ.* 32a–33a) suggested that those praying in Aramaic forfeited angelic aid in bringing prayers before God since angels do not understand Aramaic. Later authorities circumvented this problem by allowing prayer,

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7.   This view is based on the talmudic opinion that women earn merit by supporting the attainment of scholarship by the men of their family (*Ber.* 17a).

both public and private, in any vernacular other than Aramaic. Langer notes that this was 'a matter of particular importance to women who were less frequently educated in Hebrew and often did not attend synagogue services' (1998: 22-23, 112). In fact, halakhic authorities took for granted that women did not understand Hebrew, as in the following passage from *Sefer ḥasidim*, which reflects the halakhic mainstream in its assumption that prayers in the vernacular are acceptable:

> If someone come to you who does not understand the Hebrew language and he is God-fearing or if a woman comes to you, tell them that they should learn the prayers in a language they understand, for prayer is first and foremost an entreaty of the heart and if the heart does not understand what issues from the mouth how can the supplicant benefit? It is better that a person pray in whatever language [the person] understands (Bologna edition, par. 588).

Similarly, R. Asher ben Jeḥiel, known as the Rosh (1250–1328), a German rabbi who brought Ashkenazic customs to Spain, discusses the issue of whether prayer in the vernacular is permitted in private as well as in public. He quotes the students of R. Jonah Gerondi (d. 1263) to the effect that private prayers need not be said only in Hebrew 'since the whole world knows that women, who are obligated to pray, customarily pray in any language except Hebrew' (*Commentary on Berakhot*, Chapter 2, *s.v. matzati*). Whether medieval Jewish women had access to written texts of vernacular prayers is unknown since no manuscripts of vernacular prayers are extant from the period prior to the invention of the printing. R. Isaac ben Joseph of Corbeil's encouragement to women (cited above) to read and study commandments relevant to their lives suggests that vernacular works intended for women may have existed as early as the thirteenth century. Daily and holiday prayer books in Hebrew with translations in Judeo-Italian (Italian written in Hebrew characters), or sometimes in Judeo-Italian alone, survive from late-fourteenth- to mid-sixteenth-century Italy. Colophons indicate that these manuscripts were copied for specific women (Riegler and Baskin 2008: 18-23). In a late fifteenth-century Judeo-Provençal translation of the prayer book, presented as a wedding gift by a man to his sister, the usual morning blessing in which a man thanks God for not making him a woman has been altered and the person praying thanks God for 'making me a woman and not a man' (Riegler and Baskin 2008: 19-21).[8] Printed collections of legal *tkhines*, women's supplicatory prayers in Judeo-German, began to appear in the sixteenth century as part of the larger production of vernacular printed literature of biblical paraphrases, legal instruction, and ethical writings directed at women and poorly educated men (Weissler 1998).

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8.   Two Hebrew prayer books with roots in Provence, copied for women in 1478 and 1480, also preserve this liturgical change (Riegler and Baskin 2008: 19-21).

Jewish efforts to educate their daughters may sometimes have gone beyond the minimum knowledge necessary to fulfill legal obligations. A twelfth-century student of the Christian theologian Abelard implicitly criticizes a lack of educational zeal in his own community when he reports that 'the Jew, even the poorest of the poor, even if he has ten children, will send them to learn, not in order to receive a reward as the Christians do, but in order to understand the Bible of God, and not only the sons but even the daughters'.[9] His observation is borne out by the fourteenth-century ethical will of Eleazar ben Samuel of Mainz. Eleazar urges all his children to attend synagogue in the morning and evening, and to occupy themselves a little afterwards with 'Torah, the Psalms or with works of charity'. Daughters, as well as sons, are admonished to live in communities among other Jews so that their children may learn the ways of Judaism, and, significantly, he insists that 'they must not let the young of either sex go without instruction in the Torah' (Abrahams 2006: 210). R. Isaac ben Moses of Vienna (1180–1250), author of the *Sefer or zaru'a*, encouraged parents to bring little children, both male and female, to the synagogue, and endorsed the custom of allowing children to kiss the Torah while it is being rolled up. He believed this would heighten the sensitivity of the children to the performance of religious precepts and would increase their piety (*Hilkhot shabbat*, Part 2, sec. 68; Kanarfogel 1992: 38).

A few Jewish women from rabbinical families were educated beyond the norm for their sex. Some of these women of the scholarly elite led prayers for other women of their communities; among those whose names we know are the twelfth-century Dolce, the wife of R. Eleazar ben Judah of Worms, and Urania of Worms of the thirteenth century. Urania's headstone epitaph commemorates her as 'the daughter of the chief of the synagogue singers. His prayer for his people rose up to glory. And as to her, she, too, with sweet tunefulness officiated before the women to whom she sang the hymnal portions' (Taitz 1992: 64). Indeed, Worms, which had a separate room for women attached to the synagogue, may have had special traditions associated with women and worship.

In poetic elegies for his wife and two daughters, killed by intruders in their home in 1196, R. Eleazar ben Judah of Worms gives details about a learned woman's activities and how she educated her female children. He relates that Dolce, who supported her family and her husband's students through her business ventures, was also involved in religious activities; she attended synagogue regularly, sewed together forty Torah scrolls, made wicks for the synagogue candles, and instructed other women and led them in prayer. Of his thirteen-year-old daughter, the father poignantly wrote that she had 'learned all the prayers and melodies from her mother.

9.   Landgraf 1937: 434, cited by Smalley 1952: 78.

She was pious and wise, a beautiful virgin. She prepared my bed and pulled off my boots every night. Bellette was nimble about the house, and spoke only truth, serving her Maker and spinning and sewing and embroidering.' And of his younger daughter, Hannah, Eleazar remembers: 'Each day she recited *Shema Yisrael* and the prayer that follows it. She was six years old and could spin, sew, and embroider, and entertain me by singing.'[10]

For many Christian women of ability and ambition a celibate life within the Church offered a refuge where significant learning was possible, but Jewish women had no such options. Moreover, the universality of marriage for Jewish women, usually at puberty, and the lack of any respectable alternative, also conspired with strongly entrenched custom to prevent most females from undertaking traditional learning. As in the Muslim milieu, a few exceptions are known by anecdote. Thus, the fourteenth-century Miriam Schapira appears in a genealogical history of the Luria family composed by Joḥanan b. Aaron Luria in the early sixteenth century. In this document, Miriam, who is praised for her depth of knowledge of Jewish law, is said to have conducted a school for men where she delivered her lectures while sitting behind a curtain.[11]

In the early fifteenth century, Leah, daughter of a scholar and the wife of R. Zalman Ronkel, appears to have acquired sufficient talmudic knowledge to deal knowledgably with certain legal issues. However, she was reproved by R. Jacob Moellin for advancing an argument contrary to his own. He wrote: 'Why have you written so much to me? Actually I should not address myself to you, only to judges; but my heart is sad for you and because of respect for your father who is a great scholar, I will be forbearing and answer you … even though it is unnecessary. I will explain all … lest you seem wise in your own eyes' (responsum 199). Although R. Moellin

10. The Hebrew texts are found in Haberman 1945: 164-67; for English translations of all the documents connected with the deaths of Dolce and her daughters, and commentary, see Baskin 2000: 429-37.

11. According to the *Encyclopedia judaica*, the genealogical document of Joḥanan ben Aaron Luria was incorporated by his nephew Joseph ben Gershom of Rosheim into his *Sefer ha-Miknah*. The references to Miriam Shapira in this document can be found in Kayserling 1879: 138. The legendary aspects of this tale, so similar to that told about the daughter of Samuel ben Ali in Baghdad, are evident. Indeed, a similar theme reached the fifteenth-century Christian writer, Christine de Pisan. In a chapter of her *The Book of the City of Ladies* (Pisan 1982: 154 §II.36.3) entitled 'Against Those Who Say It Is Not Good for Women to be Educated', she mentions a professor at one of the Italian universities whose daughter, Novella, was so learned that she sometimes delivered his lectures. And as she was very beautiful, Christine explains, he hung a little veil before her face, so as not to distract students from learning: 'In this manner she supplemented and sometimes lightened the work of her father, who was so fond of her that in order to have her name remembered he made one of his lectures into a legal text which he named after his daughter'.

believed that Rebbetzin Ronkel's learning was not intrinsically worthy of his notice, he wrote to explain why her decision was mistaken out of respect for her learned male relations. Similarly, the leader of German Jewry in the generation after R. Jacob Moellin, R. Israel Isserlein (1390–1460), also corresponded with a woman. In two of his final responsa, he answered Hindel, widow of Paltiel Katz. She claimed the money left by her late husband belonged to her by right of her marriage contract, while other relatives claimed it as payment for debts. R. Isserlein's first responsum to this woman expresses his anger at her attempt to interpret the law: 'One does not ask a woman how she is at all, how much more so a woman such as you who is not living in peace'. Still, his arguments against her position suppose a good knowledge of rabbinic argumentation on her part. R. Isserlein's second responsum indicates that Hindel Katz had decided to comply with his ruling and he begins, 'From women in the tent, you are blessed' (*Terumat ha-deshen*, Part 2, no. 260). In fact, R. Isserlein's wife, Schondlein, wrote a legal response in her husband's name to a woman who asked a question about the laws of menstruation (Grossman 2004: 165, 298).

Education, of course, does not only refer to religious learning. Jewish women everywhere were actively involved in economic activities, and often they supplied a part or even the whole of the family income, sometimes allowing their husbands to devote themselves to study. During their husbands' absences on business, women often ran the family's affairs. Many were trained for these economic activities, learning reading and writing in the vernacular and the mathematics essential for commerce. Avraham Grossman points out that Jewish women met with Jewish and gentile men for business purposes, traveling when necessary, and that few objections are cited anywhere to women's wide-ranging freedom of action (Grossman 2004: 111-22, 147-53, 274-75). Women engaged in all kinds of commercial operations and occupations, but money lending was especially preferred; widows would frequently continue their financial activities, occasionally in partnership with another woman (Jordan 1978; Grossman 2004: 260-62; Keil 2004). Such undertakings, which could be highly complex, undoubtedly required literacy in the vernacular and training in mathematics and bookkeeping. These skills were also acquired by medieval Christian women of the urban middle class who engaged in business, although probably a century or two after they were common among Jewish women. A document from the circle of the German-Jewish pietists of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century indicates that even these educational skills were not imparted to females without some moral struggle, since fears about the perils of female literacy was deeply engrained. Thus, a pietist who was teaching his daughters to write justified his actions as follows:

> If they do not know how to write, they will be forced to request men to
> write their receipts for pledges when they lend money. They will be alone

with those men who write for them and they may sin, and this will be my fault, for whenever it is in one's ability to construct a fence for sin and one does not do it … And even if they do not sin, they may think about it. Moreover, he did not want them to acquire a bad reputation, and thus, he taught them to write receipts for pledges …[12]

Some women were involved in vocational activities they learned from their fathers or husbands; these included scribal skills. Scribal work required extensive training and preparation, including such tasks as the purchase of suitable parchment, cutting it to the required size, its ruling, and the preparation of ink. While the halakhah is clear that, 'A Torah scroll … that was written by a heretic … a slave, a woman, or a minor is invalid and is to be stored away (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 'Book of Love: Laws of *Tefillin*' 1.13 [following Babylonian Talmud *Giṭ.* 45b]), this ruling applies to Torah scrolls (and *tefillin* and *mezuzot*) for synagogue use. There is no prohibition against women writing or copying texts in standard book form, regardless of the contents and a number of surviving manuscripts have colophons indicating that they were copied by women. However, a woman's scribal skill does not indicate extraordinary learning since the level of erudition required for copying manuscripts does not have to be high (Riegler and Baskin 2008: 11). Among medieval female copyists of Hebrew texts was Paula from the renowned Anavim family; she lived in the Jewish community of Rome in the late thirteenth century. Paula, the daughter of a scribe, copied at least three manuscripts, on hundreds of parchment folio pages; presumably, she learned her copying skills from her father or others in his workshop. Paula's surviving colophons demonstrate significant knowledge of Hebrew and biblical sources, although it is unclear to what extent the language she used is formulaic (Riegler and Baskin 2008: 11-14). While there is little evidence that Jewish women served as scribes in the Muslim realm, there is testimony about a certain Miriam in late fifteenth-century Yemen. She was the daughter of a highly skilled scribe and she herself was described as expert. She is said to have copied a Pentateuch with the following colophon: 'Do not blame me if mistakes are found in it, for I am a nursing mother, Miriam daughter of Benaiah the scribe' (Riegler and Baskin 2008: 15).

There are also references in Jewish and Christian sources to independent Jewish women who practiced medicine (Baskin 1991; Shatzmiller 1992). Jewish women who worked as midwives and wet nurses, often for non-Jews, are well documented in Spain, and the existence of several medieval obstetrical treatises in Hebrew, apparently intended for female midwives, indicate that at least some women involved in medical practice were literate in that language (Barkai 1988).

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12. Passage in Hebrew Ms. 1566, Bodleian Library Oxford, p. 178a, published in Dan 1975: 140.

Conclusion

In both Muslim and Christian environments, Jewish girls were trained at home in domestic skills, basic prayers, and in the knowledge of essential laws connected with dietary regulations, domestic observance of the Sabbath and festivals, and the halakhic rules regarding separation from their husbands during and following their menstrual periods. They also learned vocational skills which could be used to enhance family income. Since Jewish women in Ashkenaz had higher social status and significantly more personal freedom and economic responsibility than most of their counterparts in the Muslim environment, they were more likely to be literate in the vernacular and to be numerate, as well. While some families may have hired tutors for their daughters, and while a sister may occasionally have accompanied her brother to primary school, there were no organized schools for Jewish girls in either the Muslim or Christian milieu, although several girls might study together with one teacher. A very few women, usually daughters of learned fathers, learned to read Hebrew and studied traditional texts. The Jewish woman who achieved knowledge of the culture and literary modes of the majority society was exceedingly rare. The Genizah records the activities of female teachers who tutored young girls in prayers and sometimes worked in primary schools for boys. In Ashkenaz, educated women often served as synagogue prayer leaders instructing girls and women in prayers and melodies. However, in the highly gendered societies of the Jewish Middle Ages any female efforts at equal admission into male scholarly discourse were firmly rebuffed; women in both milieus were most honored for enabling the men of their families to study.

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MADAME POTIPHAR REVISITED
OUT OF AND IN THE CLASSROOM

Athalya Brenner

> Can we say, then, and not only of the Joseph story, whether it really is *all there is* in Chapter 39 of Genesis? Of course it is not.[1]

Who Is Madame Potiphar?

A pampered youth called Joseph is thrown into a pit by his envious brothers and later sold to nomad traders (who? Genesis 37). They sell him to an Egyptian functionary (what function?) of the pharaoh named Potiphar. Potiphar likes his new slave and makes him his majordomo. Yhwh helps the young man. The young man is good looking—sequentially this may be the reason why his master's wife (who is she?) desires him. She commands, 'Lie with me!' He refuses (but does not state he does not desire her). She persists (for how long?); one day he comes into the house when everybody but the woman is away. She gets hold of him; he escapes out, leaving a garment (which garment?) in her hands. She accuses him of rape, or intention to rape—first to her household (who? Are they back?), then to the husband. The husband is angry (does he believe her?). The young man is thrown into jail, without defending himself. In there he prospers again, with Yhwh's help (Genesis 39). End of story, or episode. Simple? A woman seduces, a man retains his high moral ground?

A fascinating woman, Madame Potiphar of Genesis 39, fascinating mainly by omission. She is nameless, being mostly referred to as 'his wife' or 'his master's wife'. She has no ancestry. She has neither past nor future, for she disappears from the Joseph cycle after this episode. She has no looks: we know nothing about her physique. She has no age. She has no emotions, no motivation for her desire, which is suddenly and roughly and haughtily and directly and impolitely expressed to the young servant Joseph, 'Lie with me!'

Indeed, on the surface of Genesis 39, she is not interesting. Her function is to assist Joseph in his education process, from an arrogant teenager who

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1. Brian Murdoch, *The Medieval Popular Bible: Expansions of Genesis in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), p. 175.

cannot shut his mouth about his dreams of grandeur, thus alienating his broth-ers (Genesis 37) to a more self-controlled young man, on his way from the well to prison (chap. 40), from which he will rise to control Egypt and save it, as well as his own family. Clearly, the journey from careless youngster to wise councilor, or from a pre-civilized state to a civilized state, requires train-ing and is naturally full of pitfalls and obstacles: the more difficult the journey is, the more impressive the hero's [be]coming into his own destiny.

The motif of a woman figure, preferably a loose woman or one behav-ing as such, assisting the hero into becoming a man through the knowl-edge=power of sexual intercourse is neither rare nor exclusive. Two pertinent examples are Shamhat, sent to Enkidu in the Gilgamesh epic in order to entice him from the animal into the human world; and the story in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* about the courtesan who saves the world by bringing Rishyasringa, an ancestor of Lord Rama, out of the forest.[2] In these foundational stories consenting to sex with the 'for-eign' woman civilizes the hero. In Genesis 39 the motif is reversed: Joseph becomes a man precisely because he refuses the woman's advances. That the refusal to seduction is the mirror image of consent—that both responses serve the plot similarly, and the woman figures are redundant after having fulfilled their task—is highlighted by their immediate disappearance from the scene as well as from the up-and-coming progress of the hero's journey.

Curiously, though, the apparent reversal in the motif is not the only mod-ification in the Genesis 39 story. Madame Potiphar seems not to disappear from the Hebrew Bible altogether; and she certainly gets amplified in, not deleted from, the Bible's Jewish (and Islamic, and Christian) afterlives. Along the way she is much changed. She variously acquires age, appear-ance, name, motivation, additional actions, character, rhetorical skill, par-tialities, fashion sense, theological information, female friends, and even a child (daughter or son). Her afterlives, in short, make her a figure to eclipse that of Joseph's. The question remains, therefore: if she is so marginal, a serviceable footnote only for ironically facilitating Joseph's moral evolve-ment through his refusal, why and how does she become such a round char-acter in the biblical story's hereafters? Put differently: what are the gaps,[3] redundancies, ambiguities and undercurrents, in Genesis 39, that enable interpreters to read against the surface grain of the text and create a full-blown, 'round'[4] female counterpart character out of a flat poster?

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2. See Royce M. Victor, 'Delilah—a Forgotten Hero (Judges 16:4-21): A Cross-Cultural Narrative Reading', in *Joshua and Judges: Texts @ Contexts* (ed. A. Brenner and Gale A. Yee; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, forthcoming 2013).

3. M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1985), Chapter 6.

4. E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Harcourt, 1927).

In the Hebrew Bible (Sort of …)

Is there a link between the Joseph pericope (Genesis 37–50) and biblical wisdom literature? On the face of it, the theme of the foolish young man who becomes educated, successful and presumably happy, with the god's help, seems to fit the ideology and lessons of Proverbs; and the 'courtier who is elevated in the foreign king's court' is a well-known theme, evident in Esther and Daniel, both related to wisdom ideals.

Michael Fox surveys scholarly opinions about this matter, from von Rad onwards.[5] In his opinion, though, 'The Joseph story is found to reflect significantly different attitudes and assumptions from those characteristics of didactic wisdom. The concept of wisdom in the Joseph story is affiliated with the pietistic and inspired wisdom of Daniel rather than with the ethical and practical wisdom of Wisdom literature.'[6] About Genesis 39 he writes, specifically:

> Any wise man—as well as prophet and priest—would have approved of Joseph's rebuff of the advances of Potiphar's wife. Yet this episode does not really reinforce Wisdom literature's ethical teaching, because Joseph's moral stance brings him no lasting benefit. Joseph's prior accomplishments are suddenly wiped out by an unfair and erratic accusation, and he is thrown into prison for an indefinite term. When he finally prospers it is not because of his sexual virtue but in spite of it.[7]

It seems to me that Fox treats the episode and its significance for Joseph's career much too lightly. If wisdom is considered a forerunner or equivalent of philosophy, as it should, then a quick look at Philo's piece *On Joseph*[8] teaches us, as does classical Greek philosophy and various political ideologies until today, that a leader's mettle is defined by his emotional restraint, and specifically his sexual control. Sexual mores and sexual restraint are translated into political accountability and restraint. This makes our incident much more central to Joseph's history than Fox would have it and, by implication, makes the incident—and the seducing woman—much more of a wisdom trope.

For a 'foreign' or 'other' woman, an אשה זרה, is as central to Proverbs 1–9 as the mirror-image feminine figure of Wisdom and opposite of one's 'own wife' in that collection. That woman figure in Proverbs is, first and foremost, 'foreign': whether this means she is ethnically foreign, or from another in-group, is a moot point because she is defined as an 'other'. She

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5. M.V. Fox, 'Wisdom in the Joseph Story', *VT* 51 (2001), pp. 26-41.
6. Fox, 'Wisdom', p. 41.
7. Fox, 'Wisdom', p. 30.
8. Especially 8–17. Yonge's translation, accessed on the Internet, http://www.early christianwritings.com/yonge/book23.html.

entices by speech, not by deed (Prov. 2.16; 5.3; 6.24; 7.5, 21); at the most, finally, she becomes physically active in chap. 7, when she 'takes hold' of her victim and kisses him (v. 13). She wants to entice her would-be lover into her house (5.8; 7.16-20). She is clearly married but her husband seems absent (7.19). Once she is said to be good looking (6.25).

The similarities between this 'foreign' woman and Madame Potiphar were not lost on the midrashists. A clear reference to Proverbs 7 as a whole, with an almost verbatim quotation from vv. 7, 10-13, is to be found at the beginning of *Genesis Rabbah* 87 and *Yalkut Shimeoni* for the chapter.

This analogy is interesting. The connection is made in a relatively early (pre-Islamic) Midrash collection, and in a late medieval one (although not in the *Proverbs Midrash* which, chronologically, stands between these two).[9] I would like to raise the possibility that, through an inner-biblical intra-textuality, the two portraits, in Genesis 39 and in Proverbs 1–9, are either mutually dependent or else one and the same portrait, variously used in each of their contexts. For my purpose it makes little difference whether Madame Potiphar is the original and the 'other' woman is the abstracted copy, or whether the 'other' woman is the original and Madame the concretized example. Issues of provenance and dates for the two texts are complex and go beyond this question. Suffice it to point out here that the similarities, as well as the general framework in both of warning a young man against adultery, and the setting out the reward or punishment thereof, are too numerous to assume independent status for each—as the midrashists clearly understood, in their own way. Thus, at least that, Madame Potiphar lives in Proverbs, not only beyond the Bible.

In Jewish and Islamic Literature, and in Current Biblical Scholarship

In his *In Potiphar's House* James Kugel collected the main Jewish post-biblical texts relating to the Genesis 39 narrative[10] and compared them to the Islamic main story, in Sura 12 of the Qur'an, with a nod to later Islamic traditions. When Kugel asks questions similar to the ones posed here, namely how did it happen that the story was amplified the way it was, his premises are similar yet also different. He assumes that every amplification should accord with the Rabbis' dictum that even *derash*, however fanciful, must

9. Joseph and his stories are mentioned in the Proverbs *Midrash*: so in the midrash on Prov. 1.11-14, which draws an analogy to Joseph, his brothers and his sale. Surprisingly, though, Proverbs 7 gets no explication apart from for one verse (7.25). So in Solomon Buber's eclectic edition.

10. James L. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 11-124. A distinct feature of his work seems to be the preference of the Jewish sources over the Qur'an as primary materials, which is not always nuanced or correct.

hark back to a source in the text, be it grammatical or otherwise. Kugel's interest is in arranging storylines or story 'families', chronologically and developmentally related. For instance, this is how he analyzes the additional scene of the ladies' party—in which Madame Potiphar invites her woman friends, to be served by Joseph; when he enters, they cut themselves with the knives provided for dealing with the catered foods, thus collectively losing their symbolic Joseph-virginity and admitting to inevitable empathy with Madame, in view of Joseph's beauty—as stages hanging on some features developed from the biblical text.[11] Kugel, who lists so many of the relevant sources and analyzes them so well, is interested in Joseph—much like the biblical author and the Jewish midrashists, I suppose; he is much less interested in Madame, much like Fox. This trend is even more pronounced in Kugel's later treatment of Genesis 39 in *The Bible as It Was*.[12] We owe Kugel a debt for collecting the relevant materials and dishing them up to us so beautifully. However, his relative lack of interest in Madame Potiphar is probably the reason for not elaborating the significance of what happens to her in the story's afterlives beyond the notion—correct in itself—that, paradoxically, the more rounded and attractive her figure, the more it supports Joseph's self-restraint.

Feminist critics are interested in the gaps and fissures of the biblical text for Madame, not only for Joseph. Alice Bach[13] builds a portrait of the woman through her afterlives. Mieke Bal focuses on the woman and fills the gaps in her own way,[14] in a *tour de force* from Greek tragedy through Rembrandt and Thomas Mann's *Joseph and his Brothers*;[15] and later even claims that the Qur'anic story is actually better and more satisfying as a piece of literature than Genesis 39.[16] At any rate, her focus is on the woman rather than on Joseph.

So what shall we do with this text? And more closely, what makes Madame so attractive that she slowly but surely grows in role within the story, if not necessarily and always in moral stature?

11. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House*, pp. 58-60.

12. James L. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge and London: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 252-61.

13. Alice Bach, 'Breaking Free of the Biblical Frame-Up: Uncovering the Woman in Genesis 39', in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (ed. A. Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997 [1993]), pp. 318-342 (page numbers in the reprint slightly different from the 1993 original).

14. Mieke Bal, 'Myth à la lettre: Freud, Mann, Genesis and Rembrandt, and the Story of the Son', in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (ed. A. Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997 [1993]), pp. 343-78 (page numbers in the reprint differ slightly from the 1993 original).

15. Thomas Mann, *Joseph and his Brothers* (English translations 1948, 2005).

16. Mieke Bal, *Loving Yusuf: Conceptual Travels from Present to Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

The biblical narrative is skewed in Joseph's favor. However, even this is a problem. If Joseph is not at all tempted, then he is one kind of righteous man, and difficulties abound: such a young and ambitious man, not wholly temperate as witnessed before, is all of a sudden such a moral hero? If, on the other side, he is tempted but withstands temptation, for reasons of loyalty to divine command and human morality, that makes him another kind of hero: one that is based on the dictum, 'Who is mighty? He who subdues his desire'.[17] Differently put, two views are possible when considering who is a virtuous man. According to the one, 'For there is not one good man on earth who does what is best and doesn't err' (Qoh. 7.20); according to the other, 'The path is level for the righteous man' (Isa. 26.7, both translations JPS). Now, which *ṣaddîq* is to be preferred? That depends on your point of view and temperament. A quick survey of the relevant Jewish sources, from Philo and *Jubilees* and Josephus and the *Testament of Joseph* to *Genesis Rabbah* to *Sefer ha-yashar* and in between, shows that for over a millennium Jewish sages were divided on this issue: some attributed to Joseph no sexual desire for the woman, whereas others insisted that, on the verge of succumbing, he turned back and fled. Virtually all agree that he actually did not do it. But funny things occur on the way: Madame's bed is introduced by both parties as a possible scene for the uncommitted crime and the ladies' party is invented and elaborated, to name but two major amplifications.

The problem with each of these opposite positions is that an enlargement of Madame's figure is necessary in order to extol Joseph's virtue, be that what it may. If she is not good looking, not young, not clever, not attractive, not convincing, not persuasive—where is the temptation, even if wasted on the righteous young man? So she is given a voice, fashion sense, energy, brains, a name after the Islamic sources (Zulaikha) and outstanding rhetorical ability; so notably in the *Testament* but also in other sources. Supposedly this is done in order to praise Joseph; but the result is that Madame grows, in front of surprised readerly eyes, from a prop to a power.

Another source for amplification—and, unlike Kugel, I take into account content and semantic matters only, not points of grammar and linguistics—is the lack of clarity built into Genesis 39 on some matters. These matters, or doubts, concern Joseph's behavior throughout the affair. Is Joseph aware of his looks, or does he use them (some sages think that he aware, and thus bears a certain culpability)? Why does Joseph not tell Madame he does not

17. M. *Avoth* 4.1. The Hebrew is actually even more direct: איזהו גבור־הכובש את יצרו, where יצרו, 'his desire', is in fact an ellipsis for יצר הרע, the usual rabbinic euphemism for (unbridled) sexual desire.

desire her (39.8-9; surely no problem for a spirited youth like him, with the god on his side, even if he is a mere slave, which he clearly is not!)? Why does Joseph come into the house when Madame is after him, while no one is in attendance on that day (v. 11)? What part of his attire does he leave with her when he runs out (v. 13), a piece of clothing that can serve as evidence for her claim later? Why does he not defend himself to the master? for fear again? And how can the master's moderate response be explained, and who is the target of his anger (vv. 19-20)?

Solutions to these questions can work in favor of Joseph as a total *ṣaddîq* (he is socially inferior, thus afraid; he knows he would not be believed; he is indignant; he waits for the god to help him; he is speechless in face of audacity) or as a tempted but restrained man (partly guilty; knows what he nearly did; sinned in his heart if not in actuality) equally well. So the winds of interpretation blow to and fro, and whatever direction they take, they blow up the woman's character.

Sex sells. A good yarn is always popular. The narrative that has sex at its center, ambiguous definitions (is Potiphar a eunuch or a military man, hence virile? The Hebrew סריס bears both explanations. This would influence the story considerably!) and actions of and by its characters, is forever popular. Even with prim and prudish souls. Such souls will settle for ultimately making sexual decorum win the conflict, but will have their fun on the way. Again, in a retelling of a story with sexual content, Madame Potiphar—the only person in the biblical story who is not coy about her position—would have a greater role.

Another readerly reason for enhancing the woman's role is perhaps dependent on the ones just set out. When the woman's role is enhanced and her significance boosted, there arises a tendency to justify her behavior beyond ascribing to her real love instead of 'just' desire. I do not think this tendency is motivated by prudery but, rather, by the quest for balance between literary significance and moral value. In such readings, Potiphar becomes Potiphera (Gen. 41.45, 50; 46.20) the [adoptive, see below] father of Aseneth (So when did he become a eunuch? After he desired Joseph; see for instance the Pseudo-Jonathan Targum for Gen. 39.1) and Madame becomes her [adoptive] mother. Aseneth also whistle blows on her stepmother in the matter of Joseph (*Yalkut Shimeoni* for Genesis 39, 146). Now, this is the first step in making Madame a better woman. The next will be to attribute to her a motivation wholly different to 'just' sexual desire. In that direction, since Potiphar is a eunuch, Madame approaches Joseph to 'lie with her' in order to produce a child and adopt him, much as Sarah meant to do (Genesis 16), only in reverse. That Joseph refused makes him ungenerous at worst but not a sinner; since the husband knew about the plot he puts Joseph in jail but takes no harsher measures. This

line is subscribed to, in varying manners, by Ron Pirson,[18] Diana Lipton[19] and David Zucker.[20] Such a reading is neither less nor more fanciful than, for instance, creating a wonderful wardrobe for Madame to change all day long in order to attract Joseph (in almost all the sources), or introducing Madame's illness and the ladies' party (in the Qur'an and medieval Jewish sources)—thus illustrating her love for him. It does, however, whitewash Madame completely. Motherhood is a holy motivation in biblical literature, barrenness a curse. Do we need to strip Madame, Zulaikha, Mut-emenet (as Thomas Mann calls her), of her desire in order to domesticate her into a Torah stereotype? Do we need to enroll her in the service of patriarchy's interest, much like Tamar and Ruth, so that she actually loses her independent sexual agency, appropriate or not? Do we need to foreground her, make her into a positive figure, by collaborating with the Torah ideology of a woman's true role in life? Do we need to dehydrate a sexy, juicy story even though the rabbis already wallowed in its potentials? Hmm. Or perhaps, together with Weinberger for instance, can we continue wondering what if, what if Joseph actually slept with her?[21]

Why should one give up a good, entertaining story? Karen Merguerian and Afsaneh Najmabadi[22] begin their discussion of Sura 12, Sura Yusuf, of the Qur'an with an anecdote: the believers implore Muhammad for a good story. He gives them a 'best story'—the Sura. Its content is, compared to Genesis 39, amplified. Additional incidents like the ladies' party are added; the order of events is changed (first prison, then final temptation); details vary, and material similar to various Jewish midrash treatments are in evidence. And again, much as in the *Testament of Joseph*, this incident is central in Joseph's illustrious career; and again, although the woman is considered morally unreliable and full of guile, much like her female visitors who help her accuse Joseph, the woman's role grows bigger if not more positive. Not until the works of the Persian poet Firdawsi (10th century)

18. Ron Pirson, 'The Twofold Message of Potiphar's Wife', *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 18/2 (2004), pp. 248-59.

19. Diana Lipton, 'Joseph and Potiphar's Wife: A Case Study', in her *Longing for Egypt and Other Unexpected Biblical Tales* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), pp. 248-67.

20. David J. Zucker, 'Madam Potiphars Boy Toy [sic!]: No Laughing Matter', *Women in Judaism* 8/1 (2011) [accessed online].

21. Theodore Weinberger, '"And Joseph Slept with Potiphar's Wife": A Re-Reading', *Literature and Theology* 11/2 (1997), pp. 145-51. He writes: 'it is possible to argue that Joseph's incarceration is punishment for the sin of rejecting mutual attraction and sexual intimacy in favour of loyalty to a slave master' (p. 145). His general argument is that in the Bible and in Judaism desire *per se* is not a negative concept.

22. Karen Merguerian and Afsaneh Najmabadi, 'Zulaikha and Yusuf: Whose Best Story?', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997), pp. 485-508.

and the mystic and poet Al-Jámi (15th century) does the story come into its own as a love story. And, if one may add, so it does also in Thomas Mann's novel.

In the Classroom

I have written about Genesis 39 and its afterlives several times;[23] and have taught it several times to undergraduates, in Israel; and to graduate students in the United States, The Netherlands and Hong Kong. Different audiences, different countries: similar development of reader response.

As we started the class and read Genesis 39 for the first time, searching for the textual lacunae and ambiguities and redundancies and issues that later interpreters would try to solve, updating the text for their own needs, several things were apparent. *One*, the whole class started off by being on Joseph's side: even a young-woman-only class in an Israeli teacher training college reached easy consensus on this. *Two*, as a result, Madame was seen as a negative woman, driven by passion not true love, a hussy at best. *Three*, when asked to visualize Joseph's good looks, responses varied as to hair, eyes and skin, but he was certainly young, comely, well-built and manly.[24] *Four*, Madame was either older (Cougar Town!) or old; some denied she was attractive at all, some stated she was mature 'but' attractive. *Five*, why did Joseph go into the house? Answer: he had to, because of his work.[25] *Six*, what exactly happened there? What garment? Answer: nothing happened; outer garment (inside the house?). *Seven*, did Madame lie to the servants and her husband? Answer: sure. *Eight*, why did Joseph not defend himself? Answer: he knew nobody would believe him. *Nine*, did the man believe his wife? Answer: sure, he was an idiot / no, he knew what women are like. *Ten*, why did he not kill Joseph then, as punishment for adultery? Answer: He liked Joseph/he did not wholly believe his wife (see previous question).

These are exactly the positions the surface meaning of the text leads the reader to, so to speak. Righteous indignation at Madame's behavior—disloyal to her husband, unfair to Joseph, lawless and godless—was felt by all, to a greater or lesser degree. Small voices raised the possibility that she

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23. Two examples are: Athalya Brenner, 'Lust Is my Middle Name, I Have No Other: Madam Potiphar', in A. Brenner, *I Am: Biblical Women Tell their Own Stories* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), chapter 3, pp. 50-57; and Athalya Brenner and Jan Willem van Henten, 'Madame Potiphar through a Culture Trip, or, Which Side Are You On?', in *Biblical Studies/Cultural Studies: The Third Sheffield Colloquium* (ed. J. Cheryl Exum and Stephen D. Moore; JSOTSup, 266; Gender, Culture, Theory, 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 203-19.

24. Some rabbis are not so naïve: they portray Joseph as a feminized fop; see *Genesis Rabbah* 86 and elsewhere.

25. Again, the rabbis are less naïve.

loved Joseph and could not help it; but at this stage those small voices were resolutely silenced.

The class lasted a term, and comprised a journey through ancient and medieval commentators—Jewish, Christian, Muslim—and contemporary readers, including feminist interpretations. Slowly a change occurred, reaching its climax at the end of the term. Joseph became less innocent; Madame metamorphosed into a young[er], better-looking, much less bitchy woman trying to have a life (Yes, Potiphar became more of a eunuch as a result). Emphatic voices described her as truly lovelorn. Many attempts were made to exonerate her, even if in part. Do you wish to exclaim, 'But of course, you were the teacher, and you are a feminist, you would lead your students to this result?' Let me answer: This is part of it. Only.

Speculating Back to Front: Who Then Is Madame Potiphar?

At the beginning of this essay I speculated about Madame's extra-biblical literary ancestry, arguing that in myth an experienced—not necessarily older—female figure can be dispatched to a young man in order to initiate him into sex and hence into civilized society, and his destiny. One option is to read Genesis 39, influential in Joseph's career beyond its small textual scope, as a mirror-image reversal of this motif: Joseph does not consent, but this is (part of) his initiation into productive adulthood and leadership.

This, now, needs further nuancing. While Joseph ostensibly refuses, the biblical text remains ambiguous. This is picked up in the interpretation, and even more so in art representation of this story (from Rembrandt to Chagall, a bed and crimson drapes are seldom absent from the showdown scene of Madame's seduction; one wonders, is it a 'before' or 'after'?). Not one voice, but quite a few are raised with the question, Did he or didn't he? A good question; no definitive answer can be supplied. But it is good to upset the biblical status by asking.

Toward the end of their essay Merguerian and Najmabadi consider the difficulties of reading the Qur'anic story of Madame and Joseph as a woman. This is difficult: exonerating is a problem, praising is a problem as well. At least on the surface, she is the villain of the piece, in the Qur'an and in Genesis. They write:

> [T]he story needs more than factual correction to lose its power in the construction of woman as beguiling. Taking a lead from those commentators who feared the consequences of women's readings of the story, we would imagine that it is precisely such readings and rewritings that are called for in order for women to be able to appropriate this best story from the predominantly misogynistic work to which it has been put.[26]

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26. Merguerian and Najmabadi, 'Zulaikha and Yusuf', p. 503.

Now, this seems to me the main problem and the main task. As Brian Murdoch asks, see the quote at the beginning of this essay, is that all there is to it, what we seem to read in Genesis 39? 'Of course not' is the answer to his rhetorical question. This answer can, and should, be extended to what is fondly called nowadays 'the reception history of the text' and to its authority.

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Tamara, you have invested much energy, scholarship and good sense in bringing Second Temple biblical women 'out of the shadows'. Is Madame Potiphar a Second Temple woman? Perhaps, if Genesis 39 was composed in the wake of Proverbs 7; perhaps not. Be that as it may, I hope you like this piece, in tribute to you and the kind of work you do with such dedication and enthusiasm.

The Politics of Marriage in Genesis

Mark G. Brett

It is an honour to express my deep gratitude to Tamara Eskenazi for the paradigm of biblical scholarship that she has advanced over many years, providing an admirable balance of literary, historical and ethical concerns. Here I take the opportunity to explore afresh a topic has been a focus of many of our conversations, beginning with the published questions that she has raised about *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity*.[1] More than a decade ago, that book proposed a reading of the 'final' editing of Genesis in the Persian period, identifying evidence that this rendering of the ancestral traditions was deliberately opposed to the vision of genealogical purity advanced in Ezra–Nehemiah. The hypothesis was presented as simply as possible, mainly in narratological terms, yet resisting a tendency still common at the time to separate narrative criticism methodologically from historical studies. The questions that were put to me were essentially twofold: first, how can we account for the idea that the received text of Genesis was not a part of Ezra's Torah, and secondly, what evidence is there that the Achaemenid administration actually supported the ethnocentric policies advanced in Ezra–Nehemiah?

I have interpreted the editing of Genesis as a product of the Persian period, but have so far refrained from identifying the precise contours of literary sources or from taking sides in the emerging debates about post-P additions to the Pentateuch. In pursuing the questions put to me, the present essay again resiles from grand theory about the Pentateuch as a whole, but risks some historical reconstruction, both of the compositional history of Genesis and of Achaemenid politics in the fifth century BCE.

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1. Notably in Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, 'From Exile and Restoration to Exile and Reconstruction', in *Exile and Restoration Revisited: Essays on the Babylonian and Persian Period in Memory of Peter R. Ackroyd* (ed. G.N. Knoppers, L.L. Grabbe, with D. Fulton; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2009), pp. 86-88, referring to Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity* (Routledge: London, 2000). An earlier summary was presented in my essay 'Politics of Identity: Reading Genesis in the Persian Period', *Australian Biblical Review* 48 (1999), pp. 1-15.

   One of the more promising hypotheses concerning the development of the Torah traditions is that some significant editing, subsequent to P, was undertaken by the so-called Holiness School (hereafter 'H'). This hypothesis gathered momentum especially after Israel Knohl published his views in English in *The Sanctuary of Silence* (1995), and he has recently reformulated some of these influential arguments.[2] While it may be the case that the editorial activities of H extended over a very long period, as argued by Knohl, there are compelling reasons to think that H's inclusive social vision of equity before the law arrives only after, and in response to, the administration of Nehemiah. In another article, I have set out the reasons for this view, beginning from the question why Ezra's reading of the law in Nehemiah 8 departs from H's liturgical calendar as we now have it in Leviticus 23, notably omitting the Day of Atonement.[3] Similarly, Ezra's reading of the law passes over the requirements stated in Lev. 16.29-30:

> This shall be a statute to you forever: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall deny yourselves, and shall do no work, neither the native nor the immigrant who resides among you. For on this day atonement shall be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before Yhwh.

H's inclusive social vision is hierarchical, and its rhetoric of 'one law' for natives and immigrants is not sustained with consistency, but, significantly for the present discussion, this text is one among several indications that H does allow for the accommodation of strangers in ways that are rarely imagined in Ezra–Nehemiah.[4]

   2.   Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); Knohl, 'Who Edited the Pentateuch?', in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research* (ed. T.B. Dozeman, K. Schmid and B.J. Schwartz; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), pp. 359-67.
   3.   Mark G. Brett, 'Natives and Immigrants in the Social Imagination of the Holiness School' (paper presented at the EABS, Thessaloniki, 2011, forthcoming). This paper is deeply indebted to Christophe Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), but departs from Nihan's conclusions in 'Resident Aliens and Natives in the Holiness Legislation', in *The Foreigner and the Law: Perspectives from the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (ed. R. Achenbach, R. Albertz and J. Wöhrle; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), pp. 111-34.
   4.   Notable are Neh. 9.2 ('the seed of Israel separated themselves from the foreigners') and Ezra 9.2 (the 'holy seed has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands'). See further Saul Olyan, 'Purity Ideology in Ezra–Nehemiah as a Tool to Reconstitute the Community', *JSJ* 35 (2004), pp. 1-16. By contrast, Ezra 6.21 is likely to be a very late addition, and it is clearly distinguishable from the impermeable genealogical barriers assumed elsewhere in the bulk of the earlier traditions. There are a number of quite different accounts of this later layering of the Ezra material. See especially H.G.M. Williamson, 'The Composition of Ezra 1–6', *JTS* 34 (1983), pp. 1-30, reprinted in Williamson, *Studies in Persian Period Historiography* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004),

Accordingly, on the issue of intermarriage, Yairah Amit can rightly distinguish between the exclusivist tendencies of Deuteronomic traditions and 'the open option represented by the editing of the Holiness School'.[5] She argues that the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 should be seen as a composition of H during the Persian period, which affirms divine blessing on a Canaanite woman on the grounds of her implied torah observance (specifically of levirate law), rather than her ethnicity.[6] Both Amit and Knohl have, in effect, invited us to consider further the implications of the hypothesis that the final editing of Genesis is the work of H.[7] There are, of course, proposals that find editorial work in the Pentateuch subsequent to H, but for our present purposes we will wield Occam's Razor and not multiply entities without compelling reasons to do so, especially when considering the narrower compass of Genesis–Leviticus.[8]

While it is commonplace to assume that Genesis unambiguously endorses endogamous marriages, some assumptions on this topic may be

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pp. 244-70 (269); Jacob Wright, 'Writing the Restoration: Compositional Agenda and the Role of Ezra in Nehemiah 8', *JHS* 7/10 (2009), pp. 19-29; Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah Memoir and its Earliest Readers* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), pp. 338-39; Juha Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe: The Development of Ezra 7–10 and Nehemiah 8* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), pp. 69-73.

5. Amit, 'The Case of Judah and Tamar in the Contemporary Israeli Context: A Relevant Interpolation', in *Genesis: Texts@Contexts* (ed. A. Brenner, A.C.C. Lee and G.A. Yee; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), pp. 213-20 (217). Cf. Diana Lipton, *Longing for Egypt and Other Unexpected Biblical Tales* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), p. 243: 'Despite his obvious priestly associations, Ezra's model, both for marriage and for land, is rooted in the Deuteronomic worldview'.

6. Amit, 'Narrative Analysis: Meaning, Context and Origins of Genesis 38', in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen* (ed. J. LeMon and K.H. Richards; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), pp. 271-91.

7. This task has been undertaken by Megan Warner through examination of some detailed examples in '"And I will remember my covenant with Abraham": The Holiness School in Genesis' (DTheol dissertation, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2011), See also the compelling analysis of H editing in Genesis 17 by Jakob Wöhrle, 'The Integrative Function of the Law of Circumcision', in *The Foreigner and the Law* (ed. Achenbach, Albertz and Wöhrle), pp. 71-87.

8. Numbers 25, to mention just one example, appears to contain material that is later to, or at least different from, H. The editors of this chapter may well be re-interpreting priestly tradition in a manner that opposes intermarriage. See the discussion in Christophe Nihan, 'The Priestly Covenant: Its Reinterpretation and the Composition of "P"', in *The Strata of the Priestly Writings: Contemporary Debate and Future Directions* (ed. S. Shectman and J.S. Baden; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2009), pp. 87-134, 116-26. Cf. Reinhard Achenbach, *Die Vollendung der Tora: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Numeribuches im Kontext von Hexateuch und Pentateuch* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002).

questioned by means of the simple observation that 'Of course, the concept of intermarriage does not apply very well to the narrative of Genesis; until the generation of Jacob's grandchildren, it would have been impossible for Israelites to marry other Israelites'.[9] From the time of *Jubilees* onwards, it seems, interpreters of Genesis have worked hard to create the impression that the ancestral marriages are valid and proper, but there are many ways in which this common interpretive endeavour departs from the details of the primary texts. Indeed, as Sarah Shectman has recently noted,

> Of Jacob's twelve sons, we only learn about the marriages of three, but none is a relative, let alone an Aramean: Simeon marries a Canaanite woman (who seems to be one of multiple wives), as does Judah. Joseph marries Asenath, the daughter of an Egyptian priest. All of these unions are reported without a word of censure.[10]

Shectman's question is well formulated: why does the emphasis found in both P and non-P texts on the Aramean lineage of the matriarchs (via Terah or Bethuel) suddenly evaporate with the sons of Jacob? This question, if not her answer, is illuminating.

According to Athalya Brenner, 'Nowhere is the dialogic relationship between a foreign and local identity as exemplified in matrimonial preferences stronger, perhaps, than in the story of Dinah (Genesis 34), where Jacob seems to favor acceptance of exogamy, while his sons favor a separatist stance'. Indeed, but is it not a narrator's admission of hypocrisy that Simeon ends up with a Canaanite wife (46.10), and that the sacking of Shechem by Simeon and Levi includes the abduction of women and children (34.29), thereby inverting the Ezra's requirement for divorce of 'foreign' wives?[11]

Shectman takes the view that the earlier ancestral traditions had bequeathed to the final editors of Genesis a puzzling tension between the endogamy of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the subsequent exogamy of Jacob's sons. The cognitive dissonance experienced by the final editors is resolved, in Shectman's thesis, by their innovations in Genesis 31. Focussing on Gen. 31.14, she proposes that the metaphorical use of חלק and

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9.   Martha Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests: Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 70.

10.   Sarah Shectman, 'Rachel, Leah, and the Composition of Genesis', in *The Pentateuch* (ed. Dozeman, Schmid and Schwartz), pp. 207-22 (210).

11.   Athalya Brenner, 'Territory and Identity: The Beginnings and Beyond', in *Crossing Textual Boundaries: A Festschrift for Professor Archie Chi Chung Lee in Honor for his Sixtieth Birthday* (ed. Lung Kwong Lo, Nancy Nam-Hoon Tan and Zhang Yīng; Hong Kong: Divinity School of Chung Chi College, 2010), pp. 202-11; see further the discussion in my essay, 'Self-Criticism, Cretan Liars, and the Sly Redactors of Genesis', in *Autobiographical Biblical Criticism: Between Text and Self* (ed. Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger; Leiden: Deo, 2002), pp. 116-32.

נחלה in the speech of Rachel and Leah imply that the sisters no longer have kinship ties to their father's household. Thus, their question is rhetorical: 'Is there still a portion and inheritance for us in the house of our father?' The answer is clearly in the negative. From this point onwards in the final shape of the Genesis narrative, the old lineage connections with Terah and Bethuel are severed, and hence on Shectman's account the marriages with people of the land can pass without comment.

   Despite the elegance of this proposal, I have essentially two reservations about it. First, it is simply not the case that the earlier endogamous marriages conform to common anthropological norms without complication. Secondly, it is unlikely that the cognitive dissonances bequeathed by earlier traditions regarding ancestral marriages might be addressed by purely literary solutions, without regard for the historical challenges faced by the editors' audience. Here we will entertain the hypothesis, as suggested above, that the editors belong to the Holiness School (or are strongly influenced by them) and that they are burdened not simply by the weight and contradictions of tradition, but by the social and economic challenges arising from Nehemiah's ethnocentric policies.[12]

   A number of the proposals outlined in *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity* can now be assessed in light of subsequent research. For example, we must acknowledge that the marriage of Abraham to Sarah, as described in Gen. 20.11-12, is not just endogamous; it is incestuous, and specifically outlawed by the Holiness Code. Leviticus 18.9, 11 prohibits congress with the מולדת אביך even if a sister might come from a different mother. A similar lack of torah observance is reflected in Jacob's marriage to two sisters (*contra* Lev. 18.18). The fact that these breaches of marriage laws have been tolerated by the final editors of Genesis does not imply that the editors have succumbed to the weight of inherited traditions. Nor does this kind of 'legal friction' speak against the hypothesis that those editors belonged to the school of H.[13] Rather, we should be provoked as readers to ask what purposes might have been served by such inconvenient narrative details, especially if the intertextual incongruities can ironically be fitted into a pattern. In effect, I am suggesting that the pious appearance of endogamy in the characterization of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is being relentlessly but indirectly exposed by the final editors as contrary to divine commands. This suggestion might well be considered preposterous, were it not executed with such consistency in the texts as we have them.

   12. One might also note that the Jubilee legislation could be interpreted as a response to Nehemiah's own economic challenges, as in John Rogerson, *A Theology of the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 2009), pp. 126-33.
   13. Cf. Gershon Hepner, 'Abraham's Incestuous Marriage with Sarah a Violation of the Holiness Code', *VT* 53 (2003), pp. 143-55; Hepner, *Legal Friction: Law, Narrative and Identity Politics in Biblical Israel* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010).

The issue of inconvenient textual truths comes into a sharp focus when we turn attention to the endogamous marriage of Isaac, beginning with the wooing of Rebekah. To begin with, Abraham's speech in Gen. 24.4 contains a distinctive word choice: מולדת is found in the very verses of the Holiness Code mentioned above that imply the irregularity of Abraham's marriage to Sarah (Lev. 18.9, 11; cf. Gen. 20.11-12). This same term, as Jean-Louis Ska has recently noted,[14] is also used in Gen. 12.1, where Abram is first called on to leave his מולדת:

לך לך מארצך וממולדתך   (Gen. 12.1)

אל ארצי ואל מולדתי תלך   (Gen. 24.4)

Ska mentions this connection in assembling arguments for the lateness of Gen. 12.1-3.[15] Instead of acknowledging, however, that 24.4 has Abraham *disobeying* the divine command in 12.1 to leave his ארץ and his מולדת, Ska simply notes that chap. 24 shares a postexilic inclination towards endogamy. But the link with Gen. 12.1 can be said, on the contrary, to be *undermining* the endogamous presumptions of Genesis 24, and it is striking that the narrator of Genesis neither provides a divine prohibition of intermarriage, nor an explicit divine blessing on the wooing of Rebekah. Ironically, then, when Jacob does receive a divine command in 31.3—'Return to the ארץ of your fathers and to your מולדת'—the land in question is the land of Canaan, and the clan solidarities with Mesopotamia have effectively been dissolved.[16]

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14. Ska, 'The Call of Abraham and Israel's Birth Certificate (Gen 12:1-4a)', translated in his *The Exegesis of the Pentateuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), pp. 46-66. Note that Gen. 24.37-41 reverts to a more common usage of משפחה, which in my view highlights the distinctiveness of the kinship terminology in 24.4, 7 and its intertextual link to 12.1. See Brett, *Genesis*, pp.49-50, 80-81.

15. Ron Hendel's attempt to refute Ska by proposing a diachronic semantic shift in the biblical uses of מולדת from an earlier meaning of 'kin' to a later meaning of 'offspring' is unconvincing; he contemplates no semantic arguments for the possibility of synchronic polysemy and no literary arguments for textual polyphony. He seems to imply that the editors of Genesis preserved a diachronic series of linguistic systems and literary sources, without borrowing or adapting earlier lexical usages that can be found in the inherited traditions. Hendel, 'Is the J Primeval Narrative an Independent Composition? A Critique of Crüsemann's "Die Eigenständigkeit der Urgeschichte"', in Dozeman, Schmid and Schwartz (eds.), *The Pentateuch*, pp.187, 191.

16. Taken together with Shectman's argument about the watershed verse in Gen. 31.14, this divine command in 31.3 undermines Nihan's interpretation of 28.1-2 as an attempt to keep marriage and land 'inside the clan' (Nihan, *From Priestly Torah*, p. 384). Like Abraham's instructions to avoid Canaanite women in 24.3-4, Jacob's instructions in 28.1-2 are in the mouth of a character, rather than framed by the narrator in divine discourse. This narratological point might seem overly subtle, but it is part of a larger pattern in the editing of Genesis. If there ever were divine sanctions for Abraham and Jacob's instructions in 24.3-4 and 28.1-2, they have been overlaid with divine commands to the contrary.

It is not necessary, for our present purposes, to claim that the composition of Gen. 12.1-3 belongs in its entirety to the same layer of composition as does the wooing of Rebekah in chap. 24. Methodologically, this makes little difference to my reading of Genesis: H editors might have adjusted a single word from earlier compositions to achieve their ends, and indeed, such small changes would be beyond the wit of scholarly genius to detect. The accumulation of subtle story telling in the 'final' text of Genesis possesses a highly complex compositional history, and this need not prevent us from investigating the historical impact of these accumulated narratives as we have them, having in view our best hypotheses regarding the events of the Persian period.

When first proposing the hypothesis that the editing of Genesis is contesting the ethnocentrism of Ezra–Nehemiah, my argument was presented without detailed consideration of the EN traditions and their own compositional history during the Persian period. Especially in the light of subsequent research, the argument could not now be sustained in such simple terms. To be clear, however, I was not suggesting that Persian administrators directly promoted ethnocentric social policies.[17] The proposal was simply that Ezra and Nehemiah were Persian emissaries who for their own reasons adopted such policies, which were presumably then considered acceptable to Achaemenid interests to the extent that social stability was achieved. The fact that this ethnocentrism was resisted by a number of biblical traditions is well known. Here I tentatively add some further definition to the politics of the Persian period, in part to make the point that this tension between 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' tendencies need not be reduced to a trans-historical generality; analogies between different historical processes are often significant, but not because they can be captured by general historical laws.

To begin with, it will be necessary to summarize a view that is argued in detail elsewhere.[18] It now appears to me that the more inclusive social vision of H was forged in conscious opposition to Nehemiah's administration, probably *before* the sharply oppositional discourse of עם הארץ was articulated in Ezra 1–6, or perhaps even in Ezra 9.1-3. The Holiness School were outlining ways to embody permeable social boundaries, perhaps most notably in Exod. 12.43-49, thereby proposing reconciliation between the 'children of the Golah' and the peoples of the land who never went into exile, as well as envisaging possibilities for including the surrounding *goyim* who troubled Nehemiah. In some respects at least, this social vision was an expansion of what has been described as priestly 'ecumenism' or inclusive monotheism.[19]

17. Cf. Eskenazi, 'From Exile and Restoration to Exile and Reconstruction', pp. 86-88.

18. Brett, 'Natives and Immigrants in the Social Imagination of the Holiness School'.

19. See especially Mary Douglas, *Jacob's Tears: The Priestly Work of Reconciliation*

It is perhaps worth noting in passing that some accounts of P's ecumenism have suggested that intermarriage within the 'circle of Abraham' is seen as legitimate (that is, marriage between people of the circumcised nations descended from Abraham) but that intermarriage with the 'Canaanite' and 'Hittite' peoples of the land is illegitimate.[20] If this was indeed the view of an early P document,[21] the editors have erased any explicit indications to this effect, leaving only ambiguous narrative elements in Genesis and no legal opposition to lay intermarriage in H. The ethnic sentiment expressed by Rebekah in Gen. 27.46 remains just that, an ethnic sentiment.[22] The holiness of the *laity* is a key idea for H, not for P, and yet we do not find H imposing the hierarchical marriage restriction for the High Priest found in Lev. 21.14 upon the people as a whole.[23] Indeed, in Amit's view noted

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Albert de Pury, 'Abraham: The Priestly Writer's "Ecumenical" Ancestor', in *Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible. Essays in Honour of John Van Seters* (ed. S.L. McKenzie and T. Römer; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), pp. 163-81; Konrad Schmid, 'Gibt es eine "abrahamitische Ökumene" im Alten Testament? Überlegungen zur religionspolitischen Theologie der Priesterschrift in Genesis 17', in *Die Erzväter in der biblischen Tradition: Festschrift für Matthias Köckert* (ed. A.C. Hagedorn and H. Pfeiffer; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 67-92; Jakob Wöhrle, 'The Un-Empty Land: The Concept of Exile and Land in P', in *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and its Historical Contexts* (ed. E. Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 189-206; Wöhrle, 'The Integrative Function of the Law of Circumcision', in *The Foreigner and the Law* (ed. Achenbach, Albertz and Wöhrle), pp. 71-87; Brett, 'Permutations of Sovereignty in the Priestly Tradition' (paper read at International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, London, July 2011).

20. See, for example, Albert de Pury, 'Der priesterschriftliche Umgang mit der Jakobsgeschichte', in *Schriftauslegung in der Schrift. Festschrift O.H. Steck* (ed. R.G. Kratz *et al.*; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), pp. 55-56; Schmid, 'Gibt es eine "abrahamitische Ökumene" im Alten Testament?'. pp. 75-76; cf. Wöhrle, 'The Un-Empty Land', pp. 202-204; Nihan, *From Priestly Torah*, pp. 383-94.

21. Sarah Shectman suggests that the earliest layers of P 'do not expressly forbid exogamy' (*Women in the Pentateuch: A Feminist and Source Critical Analysis* [Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009], p. 145, citing Shaye Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999], pp. 260-62). So also Saul Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 63-102; Christine Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 19-44.

22. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), p. 1585. This example is examined in Brett, *Genesis*, pp. 9-11, 88-89.

23. In a fresh approach to these issues, Diana Lipton argues that Lev. 21.13-15 is not comparable to Ezra 9.1-2 in part because the H law is not so much concerned with the ethnicity of the mother as with the possibility of introducing non-priestly children into the Aaronid family (essentially the same concern is expressed in Ezek. 44.22 even though Ezekiel permits marriage with the widows of other priests). Drawing attention

above, there is enough room to think that Genesis 38 incorporates a Canaanite woman specifically to make the point that torah observance can override ethnicity.[24] Cultic participation is for H explicitly open to those who adopt the practice of circumcision (Exod. 12.43-49; cf. 'those who are not of your seed' in Gen. 17.12).

Yet the groundwork for H's inclusivism has already been laid by P, within which the קהל גוים 'assembly of nations' in Gen. 35.11 (cf. the קהל עמים in 28.3) is indicative of the possibilities for inclusion. Christophe Nihan points to the cultic-sounding phrase קהל גוים and draws the conclusion that for P Israel's destiny was 'from the beginning' to become a 'priestly nation'.[25] But the plural form of 'nations' or 'peoples' is highly significant for P, and it is not easily reduced to the single priestly nation of Exod. 19.3b-6.[26] It is hard to avoid the inference that for P the many nations who descend from Abraham and Jacob's seed, and who in this sense are connected to Abraham's eternal covenant, may yet become part of the sacral assembly (קהל). Accordingly, the practices of 'separation' that are legally required by H are more a matter of separating from impurities, rather than from other ethnicities.

The use of the term priestly 'ecumenism' does, however, run the risk of implying that we are talking here simply about priestly theology in some narrowly religious sense. The neat separation of religion and politics is a modern invention and can only be attributed to ancient texts with cautious qualifications. In this connection, a recent article by Rainer Albertz

especially to Ezra 9.12, Lipton emphasizes that the 'mixing' of holy and profane seed risks loss of control over the land (*Longing for Egypt*, pp. 218-38). On the land theme, see further Tamara Eskenazi, 'The Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah', in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (ed. O. Lipschits and M. Oeming; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), esp. pp. 517-26.

24. On the possibility of intermarriage in H, cf. Jan Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17–26* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), p. 85; Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, pp. 1584-85: 'The Priestly sources (H and P), on the contrary, express neither opposition to nor prohibition of intermarriage. Endogamy is not a prerequisite for holiness'. Nihan has observed that the *gerim* are not themselves exhorted to be holy, but his inference that H opposes intermarriage does not follow ('Resident Aliens and Natives', pp. 128-29, 132 n. 73; cf. Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, pp. 384-85).

25. Nihan, *From Priestly Torah*, p. 388 n. 497. Erhard Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), pp. 456-58, sees in Gen. 35.11 a reference to both Yehud and Samaria, but this version of ecumenism is too narrow to account for the multinational rhetoric of P. See further Brett, 'Permutations of Sovereignty in the Priestly Tradition'.

26. Although this is precisely what was done already in the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Gen. 35.11, as described in Robert Hayward, *Targums and the Transmission of Scripture into Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), pp. 165-68.

illustrates how the inclusiveness of H might be related to a social tension between the narrowly 'Judean' perspectives in the EN traditions as opposed to the broader 'Israelite' perspectives evident in a number of biblical traditions in this later period.[27]

Albertz has provided a plausible reading of two well known letters from Elephantine in the late fifth century (TAD A4.7-9) regarding the reconstruction of the temple of Yahu,[28] and he suggests that the shift of addressees in these letters relates to significant political issues: the first letter, written in 410, is addressed to the Persian governor of Yehud, Bagohi,[29] Johanan the high priest in Jerusalem, and Ostanes, the head of the assembly of elders in the Judean self-government. The second letter, from 407, is addressed to Bagohi and to the sons of Sanballat in Samaria, who both possess Yahwist names—Delaiah and Shelemiah.[30] In Albertz's reconstruction, the Judean self-government was opposed to the reconstruction of the Yahu temple on the grounds that it represented a breach of the Deuteronomic law of centralization (Deuteronomy 12), but, after the second letter, Bagohi intervened and approved the reconstruction of the Elephantine temple in consultation especially with the Samarian leadership. In this respect, an inclusive Yahwism can be seen to be supporting strategic Persian interests, at least to the extent that Egyptian national sentiment could be held in check by providing support to the Jewish mercenaries in the Persian garrison at Elephantine.

On the basis of this historical reconstruction, it becomes evident that imperial interests in the late fifth century could indeed be served by an inclusive religion, even if in the mid-fifth century Nehemiah's exclusivist approach might equally have served to support social stability in Yehud.[31] It is precisely such ironic historical twists that postcolonial studies have highlighted.[32]

27. Rainer Albertz, 'The Controversy about Judean versus Israelite Identity and the Persian Government: A New Interpretation of the Bagoses Story (Antiquitates XI.297-301)', in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context* (ed. O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers and M. Oeming), forthcoming.

28. Cf. Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 61-64; Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), pp. 603-605.

29. Albertz identifies Bagohi with Josephus's 'Bagoses' in *Antiquities* 11.297-301.

30. Cf. Gary N. Knoppers, 'Nehemiah and Sanballat: The Enemy Without or Within?', in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century BCE* (ed. O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers and R. Albertz; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), pp. 305-31.

31. So Kenneth Hoglund, *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

32. See further Brett, *Decolonizing God: The Bible in the Tides of Empire* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), pp. 112-31.

One might therefore feel justified to infer that H's inclusivism can be related in part to the political tensions between Yehud and Samaria, and that this could account for the scattered evidence of concessions made to the north in late biblical material, particularly in relation to the temple on Mt Gerizim.[33] In this connection, it would be important to note that H's inclusivism relates not just to the possibilities of intermarriage but to the probability of cultic diversity. The Holiness Code proposes that festivals can take place 'in all your settlements' (Lev. 23.14, 21, 31) rather than at a single site. This liturgical calendar is not explicit in mentioning the slaughter of animals, but Exod. 12.20 similarly refers to celebrating the Passover 'in all your settlements' (which presumably includes the slaughter of animals), suggesting an H perspective here as well as in Exod. 12.43-49. These concessions towards multiple cultic sites need not be revealing a pre-exilic setting for H as some have suggested; on the contrary, a setting in the late fifth century would also be possible.[34]

In concluding, I would pose a question back to Tamara Eskenazi: what can we know about the content of Ezra's Torah, 'the law of the God of heaven' as it is named in Artaxerxes' Persian voice in Ezra 7.12, 21? The ethnocentric policies in Ezra–Nehemiah do not fit well with the inclusive monotheism of the priestly tradition as we have it in the Pentateuch, yet the very late editing in Ezra 1–6 does seem to be moving closer to the reconciling legal visions of H. Perhaps it is time for a reconsideration of the compositional history of the book of Ezra, paying particular regard to its fit, or lack of fit, with priestly and H traditions. Any theory linking Ezra to the finalizing of the Torah has a good deal to explain. We look forward very much to reading Professor Eskenazi's Anchor Bible Commentary on Ezra–Nehemiah when it appears.

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33. Christophe Nihan, 'The Torah between Samaria and Judah: Shechem and Gerizim in Deuteronomy and Joshua', in *The Pentateuch as Torah* (ed. G.N. Knoppers and B.M. Levinson; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), pp. 187-223.

34. This argument has been proposed by Julia Beaumont in 'Tradition and Innovation: Inner-biblical Hermeneutics and the Holiness Legislation' (Dissertation, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2011).

THE VOICE AND THE BOOK

Catherine Chalier

According to Emmanuel Levinas, when we search for what best character-
izes a human being, we should not think, as Aristotle did, of their ability
to think in a rational way but of their openness to books, of their ability to
read them. Levinas was once asked, 'How does one begin thinking?', and
he answered:

> It probably begins through traumatisms or gropings to which one does not
> know how to give a verbal form: a separation, a violent scene, a sudden
> consciousness of the monotony of time. It is from the reading of books—
> not necessary philosophical—that these initial shocks become questions
> and problems giving one to think. The role of national literatures is here
> perhaps very important. Not just that one learns words from it, but in it one
> lives 'the true life which is absent', but which is no longer utopian. I think
> that in the great fear of bookishness, one underestimates the 'ontological'
> reference of the human to the book that one takes for a source of informa-
> tion, or for a 'tool' of learning, a *textbook*, even though it is a *modality* of
> our being. Indeed, to read is to keep oneself above the realism—or the poli-
> tics—of our care for ourselves, without coming however to the good inten-
> tions of beautiful souls, or to the normative idealism of what 'must be'. In
> this sense, the Bible would be for me the book par excellence.[1]

Levinas's meditation on the importance of books for a *human* life remains
a main feature of his philosophy until the end of his life. After he had dis-
covered and described the responsibility for the other in a completely new
philosophical way, after he had described human subjectivity as inhabited
by the other and 'the human as a breakthrough that occurs in being', he
turns to the question of books again:

> I have spoken of Scripture and the Book. I thought of their firmness which
> already tightens, hard as a verse, in all languages, before becoming letters
> traced by a stylus or quill. *What one calls written in souls is at first written
> in books*. Their status has always been too quickly made commonplace
> among the tools or cultural products of Nature or History … I think that

1.   Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethique et infini* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), pp. 15-16 (= *Ethics
and Infinity. Conversations with Philippe Nemo* [trans. Richard Cohen; Pittsburgh:
Duquesne University Press, 1985], pp. 21-22).

across all literature the human face speaks—or stammers, or gives itself a countenance, or struggles with its caricature.

Among all books, Levinas gives a special status to the Bible, to the Book of Books, or to the Holy Scriptures, not because they have a sacred origin but because they signify 'through the expression of the face of the other man that they illuminate'[2] and also because they awaken in their readers so many new interpretations of their meaning. This multiplicity of interpretations is indeed inseparable from what a book is for Levinas, and especially in the case of the Bible: one has to interpret it but one has also to let it interpret one's life.

Yet, if a book needs to be interpreted, it also means the lonely and silent words written on a piece of parchment, on paper or on an electronic device, remain powerless once written. They can't impose a meaning on anybody and they beg an interpretation from the person who reads them—or, better said, from the person who studies—in order to remain alive. They can't force a precise meaning since they rely entirely on the reader who turns to them and take care of them discovering anew their meaning, or, better said, discovering their power of meaning otherwise than previously thought.

Now, contrary to a long philosophical tradition that argues that thinking—especially thinking in a logical way—is a silent activity, Levinas argues thinking and language are inseparable. Moreover this language does not rely only on philosophical concepts but on all kinds of words—including concrete words, images and metaphors—that must be uttered in a lively way by someone to someone else. It's one of the main themes of his lectures in the Collège philosophique from 1947 until the publication of *Totality and Infinity* (1961). In these lectures he even emphasizes the key role of the *voice* and he agrees with Franz Rosenzweig's criticism of a classical philosophy which separates thinking and language, thinking and the other, thinking and time. Let us remember here that Rosenzweig was even very severe about Socrates' dialogues with his disciples since he argued that the questions of these disciples never lead Socrates to change his mind—which is not the case in a real dialogue when I don't know what the other person is going to say. Socrates used to say thinking is a silent language within one's own psyche, not a lively dialogue with someone else.

My main questions in this paper will be:

1.   If, according to Levinas, there is an ontological reference of the human to the book, if what is written in souls is first written in books, what is exactly a *book* for him? What is the difference between a book and what he calls a document? Why does he describe the Bible as the book of the books?

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2.   Levinas, *Ethique et infini*, pp. 125-26 (= *Ethics and Infinity*, pp. 116-17). My emphasis.

2. Written words and oral words. The *voice* of the master and the voice of the disciple. Why does a new interpretation of a verse—a *hiddush*—have to be discovered while speaking to someone else?
3. The discovery of one's own psyche while reading the book of the books. Is a *voice* calling us in this book?

1. *A Book and a Document*

A book is not a document. In his preface to the French translation of R. Haim of Volozin's book, *Nefesh hahaim* (*The Soul of Life*), Levinas offers words of praise: 'This is an extraordinary book, it testifies to a complete and perfect culture', what it says 'comes from the deepest interiority, from this marvellous dimension of consciences and books'.[3] Now, if such is the case, what is indeed a book for Levinas? Why does he want us not to mistake it for a document, especially when this book is called 'Scripture'?

First we must recall that a document—or a book we read as though we were opening a mere document, not knowing anything about the greatness of books—relies on the desire of its writers to give us information about something. Or, better said, we imagine such is the case. When reading the Bible or the Talmud as though they were documents, we look for information about the past, about what the ancient Hebrew people or the Rabbis of the first centuries were trying to achieve at a certain historical time, about what they thought or imagined or wanted us to believe, and so on. Spinoza is one of the first philosophers to interpret the Bible from such a point of view. In his *Theologico-Political Treaty*, he even argues that there is no philosophical truth in the Bible but only meanings that are neither true nor false. These significations only testify to what the ancient prophets were imagining about God and about their fate. For instance, when they use an image such as 'the right hand' of God (Exod. 15.6), we must not try to allegorize this image (it was Maimonides's error to do so, Spinoza argues) and do violence to the texts as the Rabbis did in their discussions trying to find some new understanding of such an image as though it was an inspired image. We must be content with saying: the ancient Hebrews imagine God as such, in an anthropomorphic manner. This task requires from us a scientific study: one has to have a good knowledge of grammar, philology, archaeology and nowadays of the humanities (especially history, linguistics and so on), to be an expert on such matters. It is, of course, hard work which relies on the presupposition that words and sentences once written a long time ago must be interpreted within the context of this past time (and not of our present). These words must be understood within the frame of past

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3. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Préface', R. Haïm de Volozine, *L'âme de la vie* (trans. Benno Gross; Lagrasse: Verdier, 1986), p. viii.

discussions and of past problems and not be taken at their face value or falsified on the pretence they have got new significations nowadays. Spinoza used to be sceptical about language in general and about the language of the Bible in particular: he writes that we have forgotten the true meaning of the Hebrew words as they first were understood in past times and that's why we can't have a true knowledge of most parts of the Scriptures.

Levinas underscores that, in spite of its scientific achievements, Spinoza's exegesis and, later on, the Science of Judaism—the so-called historical method or biblical criticism—has 'never been able, to this day, to take the place of that other reading', the traditional reading of the Bible as a book and not as a document. Yet if this other reading has become more and more difficult for modern people, if they have forgotten what a book is, it is not because of Spinoza and of scientific rationalism. On the contrary, Levinas supports the thesis that it is because 'men have ceased hearing the Word' that 'biblical criticism is gaining possession of the texts'. He writes that our attention nowadays has become more and more 'incapable of perceiving the divine resonance of the Word, which, thus reduced to a linguistic fabric, itself requires the precautions of a science'.[4]

Now Levinas's main thesis on the ontological importance of books lies in the difference he establishes between the intention of the author's book and the wide range of meanings of the author's words. This is not a curse, this is a thesis on language, and especially on the language of the Bible.

Are readers of documents aliens to such an idea? Certainly not, but in quite a different way from the readers of books. The French historian Marc Bloch also recognized there is such a discrepancy between the intention of authors and the possible meanings of their words and sentences. Once written the latter testify to something else. In his dialogue *Phaedrus*, Plato had already noticed what was for him a curse weighing on written words: their authors could not help it that people would understand wrongly what they wanted to say. But the historian thinks he can overcome this curse; he wants to decipher the meaning of these words in spite of their ambiguities so as to get information about their authors: 'What a human being says or writes, all that he makes, all that he touches, can and must give us an information about him'. For instance, a modern historian when studying the Bible or the Talmud from that point of view is eager to learn something new about the authors of the past, to learn something that these authors did not always mean to express explicitly. Bloch explains

4.   Emmanuel Levinas, 'Les cordes et le bois', in his *Hors sujet* (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1987), pp. 192, 193 (= 'The Strings and the Wood', in his *Outside the Subject* [trans. Michael B. Smith; London: The Athlone Press, 1993], pp. 126, 128).

that an historian must extort from these authors information that they did not wish to give us.[5]

Let's now turn to reading a book. When we do, it's not the knowledge of past times that is at stake, but our own life, our way of thinking as a precise and unique person, or as a people or as a community. A book does not only give us information about past events or people since even when it does it also *inspires* our own way of thinking and living *now.* There is a dialogue between the person who studies and the people who once wrote books. Readers of books know that they are responsible for them in a very particular way: a book relies on future generations. In the case of the Torah, those generations are responsible for the awakening of the spirit that remains hidden in the verses even when they have already been interpreted by famous sages or scholars. These verses still beg for a new interpretation (a *hiddush*). Such is the Jewish reading of the Bible. Levinas argues that when we mistake a book for a document this is precisely this point that we miss. As Spinoza did, we try to make the *genealogy* of the Bible instead of its *exegesis.* While the genealogical approach is mainly eager to discover *new information* and new *knowledge* about the past, exegesis is eager to find *new meanings* in the verses, meanings that have not yet been discovered as though they were waiting for us to discover them.

A book—and not a document—and especially Scripture, which has inspired so many other books, is inseparable from the history and the destiny of its readers, 'from their ways of perceiving the Signs, from the meaning their reading retains by predilection'. It relies on their questions, the deepest of which are inspired by their sufferings and by their joys, by their despair and their hope, and not by a so-called objective scientific study. These readers study the language of the book—letters, words, sentences—as if they were urging them (the readers) to become 'their interior space' and to help them ascend to the multiplicity of significations they still hide. A book is thus already 'overdetermined by the "ancient newness" of the *commentaries'.* Levinas remarks: 'Scripture has a *mode of being* distinct from that of pure matter available to the grammarian's analysis. A being such that the history preceding counts less than the lessons following it; such that inspiration is measured by what it has inspired; such that a break is produced in the synchronic system of signs circulating within immanence so that, under cover of the first signified, other significations begin to make themselves heard, calling for a new Saying, an interpretation: these are some traits of an ontology that the scientific thematization of the text cannot but miss.'[6]

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5.   Marc Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire* (Paris: A. Colin, 1949), pp. 27, 40; republished in *L'histoire, la guerre, la résistance* (Paris: Collection Quarto, Gallimard, 2006).
6.   Levinas, *Hors sujet*, pp. 192-93 (= *Outside the Subject*, p. 127).

Only books, and not documents, call for such new interpretations (*hiddushim*)—as opposed to new discoveries concerning past times—because their language is an inspired language. Levinas says that the wings of the spirit that remain folded back within the letters are in need of a reader. A reader is the one who has to help them take their flight. When one mistakes a book for a document, one forgets such a task, one does not know that a book may animate one's own life and interiority. In Levinas's words, one forgets the Saying and is content with the Said.

Now if we want not to forget the Saying while reading a book, we also have to listen to the voices of those who study; we can't do it silently and without answering both the voices of the past and the voices of the present. Levinas insisted on that point in his first philosophical lectures at the Collège philosophique in Paris, just after the Second World War and I will turn to them now.

2. *The Voice and the Saying*

In his lecture entitled *Parole et silence* (*Word and Silence*), given in 1948, Levinas says he disapproves of silence because it keeps alive inhumanity. This is indeed a stern charge against philosophers who despise ordinary words for being ambiguous and unable to lead us to truth. These philosophers teach us—as Socrates did—to examine ordinary words carefully so as not to be fooled by their lack of substance and to use dialectical means in order to submit them to reason as though, without such a submission, words would certainly delude us. Philosophers provide justification for their despising ordinary and live language because thinking—so they argue—may do without them. Those who think must never expect words to be of any help; on the contrary they will lead them astray. We may recall here that Heidegger—whose philosophy Levinas was deeply acquainted with at that time—used to refer to the etymology of Greek words—before their being contaminated by ordinary language—as the unique source of an authentic thinking. He felt utter contempt for all ordinary words and for all languages except Greek and German, for their being non-philosophical and leading us to an *inauthentic* life.

In this lecture, Levinas refers to these traditional philosophical stances and he says he wishes to philosophize otherwise: he wants to give live language a priority over the language of thematization (the Said) and also to give oral words a moral right to judge silent contemplation or silent meditation. Such a priority presupposes the presence of the other. Levinas vindicates his position when he explains that usually philosophers recognize that language takes for granted the presence of another person but only because this other person may participate in the quest for a common truth, not because the person speaks to us or reveals to us something really new,

something that really surprises us. Although the traditional philosophical position might seem generous—any one may be invited to share this common truth—it is also an appeal on behalf of silence and solitude since the other person is never taught anything else but to think for oneself. As Levinas writes later on in *Totality and Infinity*, 'This primacy of the same was Socrates's teaching: to receive nothing of the Other but what is in me, as though from all eternity I was in possession of what comes to me from the outside—to receive nothing or to be free'.[7]

In this lecture that announces some of the main thesis of *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas says that his philosophical 'method' will subordinate the usual visual and silent privilege of light—the privilege of essence—to a phenomenology of *sound*. Sound destabilizes our tranquillity and our silence. When hearing a sound it is as though *time* was introducing itself in our language, preventing us from being content with what is said. Sound makes time visible, explains Levinas who quotes a poem by Pushkin entitled 'The Prophet', a poem which describes how our hearing may become attentive to the being of things. Sound is the presence of what is not here, of what I cannot receive in myself as a part of myself. In that sense it testifies to an exteriority that I cannot thematize. Sound is not a name, it is a verb, or a symbol. But what is really new with 'the symbolic value of expression accomplished within sound'?

It is the newness of the Other, of what I cannot reduce to a theme or a Said. 'Philosophy itself is identified with the substitution of ideas for persons, the theme for the interlocutor, the interiority of the logical relation for the exteriority of interpellation. Existents are reduced to the neuter state of the idea, the concept Being'.[8] But Levinas is looking for a method which will give the Other all his or her 'glory'[9] and this word 'glory' will remain important in his later books. It does not point out to a sudden light or honor but rather, according to the Hebrew meaning of the word, to the weight of something I may never include in myself, of a transcendence that calls me but remains invisible. Even when it is a 'still small voice' (1 Kgs 19.12) like the one heard by Elijah, such a sound helps to escape oneself, from the bondage of the ego.

Levinas will not pursue this phenomenology of sound in his books but in *Totality and Infinity* he will describe how the face of the other testifies to a

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7.   *Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1961), p. 34 (= *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* [trans. Alphonso Lingis; Pittsburgh: Duquesne Press University, 1969], p. 43).

8.   *Totalité et infini*, p. 87 (= *Totality and Infinity*, p. 88).

9.   See Emmanuel Levinas, *Parole et silence et autres conférences inédites au Collège philosophique* (Œuvres, 2; ed. Rodolphe Calin and Catherine Chalier; Paris: Grasset/IMEC, 2009), p. 90.

first signification that I cannot integrate within myself. And this precise first signification—described as a verb, a calling to me, a *Saying*—will become the necessary orientation of all the other significations, philosophical significations included, of course.

In another lecture, given in 1950, *Teachings* (*Les enseignements*)[10] Levinas goes deeper on that matter: he compares it to the relation between a master and a pupil and also—which is our main purpose in this paper—to the question of books. Why is teaching so crucial for him? First because, contrary to Sartre's existentialism which was very influential at that time, Levinas does not think being a created being is a drama, he rather sees it as an election or as a first passivity that does not contradict freedom (Sartre's thesis) but requires an education. Since a drama may occur at any time between all those who are elected (see Cain and Abel), every creature, every elected being needs an education. Education will help a real fraternity to be achieved among elected creatures, because it will point out the uniqueness of each one. This rather optimistic Levinasian view just after the Second World War also means that we have to open books anew and especially the Jewish texts and to discover how they may become a source for a renewed life, for a renewed interiority.

    The second reason why teaching is important is that books call for other books, 'but such a proliferation of written words stops or culminates when the live word (*parole vivante*) filters into them, when critique turns into teaching. And then, once more there are books.'[11] Books are not enough as long as they lack the master's voice, or the father's voice as Levinas specifies. Such a voice is not an authoritarian one; it announces to every one that they are responsible for the fragility of what is written. This responsibility for the books, for their meanings being discovered and remaining alive, is described in similar terms as is the responsibility for the Other.

    Election is not a privilege, it's the discovery of this responsibility, but one has to listen to the master's or to the father's voice so as to discover it. When I hear the voice of a master, even the humblest one, I discover this responsibility that comes to me from an absolute past.

Now this is a key point as regards the reading of books. In a lecture delivered two years latter (1952) and entitled *The Written Word and the Oral Word* (*L'écrit et l'oral*), Levinas explains that the living word—the word told to another person—is necessary for those who have the premonition that if books have something to tell them it also means they have something to ask from them as unique persons. When such a requirement disappears,

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10. Levinas, *Les enseignements*, in *Parole et silence*.
11. Levinas, *Les enseignements*, p. 187.

especially because we prefer a solitary erudition and a silent knowledge, we forget our own responsibility as a reader of books. As I have already mentioned, Plato used to say that once they are separated from the oral word of the person who wrote them, books become orphans and that's why he was in favor of the oral word only. Levinas argues that in our modernity we have the necessary tools to prevent—or try to prevent—such a danger: philology for instance must help us find again what the author really meant to say. Philology—and other scientific disciplines—want to decipher this first intention. They sometimes succeed and sometimes fail but, in any case, they miss what Levinas here calls the author's 'expression' (as opposed to the author's intention).

A reader who is looking for the truth that the writer was trying to *express* (later on Levinas will speak of the power to say his or her words) does not try to reconstitute the writer's so-called intention. The truth expressed is greater than the writer's intention, and it is a Saying (not a Said), a Saying that is calling us 'from a centre which is outside of ourselves',[12] and will remain always outside of ourselves. 'Expression does not consist in *giving* us the Other's interiority', 'the Other who expresses himself precisely does not *give* himself' but expression is the essence of language.[13]

How can we pay attention to expression when reading books? A scientific interpretation tries to discover what the writers wanted to say, who may have had an influence on the writer, and so on. Levinas says it is as though it is considering them as 'barbarian', as people who do not express anything, who do not demand something from us. When we want to listen to their expression, we have to begin discussing with them and answer their questions. We have to give back their importance to the voice and to the dialogue: dialogue with the voices of the past and dialogue with the voices of the present. We have to go to school and encounter a master or face a face. This is most difficult since 'daily speech and the insufficient speech of teachers who are not masters are already written words'. Teachers who only teach us what they know, although they might be excellent teachers, are not masters. 'It's only when a master speaks that his thought has a face',[14] or, better said, here an expression that makes us responsible for it.

A master is not a 'mid-wife' who helps the disciples' cleverness grow as in the Socratic view. A master does not impose on the pupils his or her knowledge or reasons, but rather orientates them toward this absolute past I mentioned a while ago. Toward a centre which never appears but which calls them. A master in Levinas's view orientates me toward the trace of the

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12. Levinas, *Les enseignements*, p. 212.
13. *Totalité et Infini*, p. 221 (= *Totality and Infinity*, p. 202).
14. *Totalité et Infini*, p. 217 (= *Totality and Infinity*, p. 226).

Infinite, of God who reveals himself 'in speaking'. This God transcends all the gods of paganism, not because he is a better God, but because he wants me to answer my neighbour's (or pupil's or master's) calling. That's precisely why oral teaching prevails over writing teaching.

In a note published in the first book of his *Inédits*[15] Levinas explains that what we call a 'bookish' knowledge is what has not been taught in an oral way by a master. He emphasizes this importance of the oral teaching which is inseparable from the written teaching. A real master is not one who delivers (*accouche*) the pupil's spirit but the one whom the pupils are always questioning. Levinas reminds us that the Talmudic discussions are pluralistic discussions because the Talmudic sages knew that truth has a dialectical structure. That is also why every society must be eager to have schools where it is possible to encounter masters—and not only books—to listen to their voices and to ask them questions. According to the philosopher schools are 'the point of Archimedes' of true freedom,[16] schools are the place where books are always opened, the place where we don't use books but where they speak to us because we ask them questions.

When we study the Torah, the Book that has inspired so many books, while paying attention to the voice that is calling us we do not discuss the verses from an historical-critical point of view, although it might be most important in certain circumstances. In the *Inédits,* Levinas even assumes that 'Judaism is invulnerable to the biblical critic' because what counts is that the writings we now read, although they might have been written later than the sages claim, have been meditated on and elaborated for centuries by oral tradition and by consciences that were 'lucid and total'.[17] In any case, when we study the Torah now we still try to discover what new significations (*hiddushim*) might be expressed in the language of the verses. And it is not enough to discover them silently while studying alone; one has to tell them to someone else, to address them to another person and to listen to this other person's questions.

   In the book of Leviticus (1.1-2) it is said, 'And the Lord called unto Moses and spoke unto him out of the Tabernacle of the congregation saying, "Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them…"' In his commentary Rashi explains that it was the Lord's voice that was heard by Moses and although 'the voice of the Lord is powerful' and 'full of majesty' (Ps. 29.4),

15. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Carnets de captivité et autres inédits* (Œuvres, 1; ed. Rodolphe Calin and Catherine Chalier; Paris: Grasset/IMEC, 2009), A. 5, pp. 254-55.
   16. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, A. 156, p. 314.
   17. Levinas, *Carnets de captivité*, A. 2, p. 254.

the people could not hear it. Only Moses paid attention to it. Now this voice was speaking unto him 'from the mercy seat that was upon the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim' (Num. 7.89). In his commentary to the latter verse, Rashi writes that the voice could have been heard by anybody since it was speaking to itself (*middabber* = *mitdabber,* hithpael), but such was not the case; it was just that Moses heard it as though it was speaking to him. This is precisely how, while listening to well-known verses we may, from time to time, hear them as though they were speaking anew to us now and asking us to express something new about them to other people. Such readers have to remain all ears since we never know exactly when we will hear the voice calling us. Such are the ways of election; it is always a surprise, but no one is elected by the voice before one answers its calling.

The voice and what is written in books are inseparable. According to the Jewish tradition at least, books are meant to answer this 'voice of the words' (*kol devarim*, Deut. 4.12). This voice was the unique 'thing' that the people could see at Mt Sinai (*zulati kol*). And Levinas's thesis about the expression 'all the people see the voices (*roim et-hakolot*)' (Exod. 20.18) is that the voice has become a written expression that one has already to interpret. But if such is the case, the Voice needs the voices—very carnal voices—of its witnesses so as to be heard now. Although 'the Infinite does not appear to him that bears witness to it', 'the witness belongs to the glory of the Infinite. It is by the voice of the witness that the glory of the Infinite is glorified.'[18]

Now if some books have no lively posterity it is because readers want to substitute their own voices to the Voice, they refuse to testify to it. But once the voice has become a book it cannot prevent bad interpretations, it is powerless. When readers argue they have the only right interpretation of a verse, when they try to imprison the Saying within the boundaries of their own Said, even if they argue they have received a direct inspiration from God, one must not pay attention to them. We may recall here the famous story in the Talmud when it is said that although R. Eliezer had the support of a divine voice (a *bat kol*) he could not win in the discussion with his colleagues since the Torah is no longer 'in heaven' (Deut. 30.12), no divine voice may decide what is right and what is wrong.[19] According to this story God said that his children (the rabbis) were right in not agreeing with R. Eliezer since the Torah was no longer in heaven, they had only to listen to human voices interpreting it.

18. Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), p. 229 (= *Otherwise Than Being* [trans. Alphonso Lingis; The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981], p. 146).

19. See b. *Baba Metsia* 59b.

Emmanuel Levinas agrees with such an idea since for him also God's word may be heard within the boundaries of human words. The Infinite contracted itself within the Torah which in consequence gets an infinite density. If we want to discover a little of what this infinite density means we have to interpret the verses again and again and transmit our *hiddushim* to our pupils or our friends. Yet many people, especially philosophers, remain unable to interpret the Torah because they cannot 'decipher a writing hidden in a palimpsest',[20] they cannot decipher the 'expression' of the Hebrew language because most of the time they have no knowledge of it. They forget the voice hidden in the Scripture and it remains in exile within the written words. Levinas wants us to open our Jewish books anew and discover how their expression is calling every one of us and also renewing our own interiority.

3. *The Discovery of One's Own Psyche*

There is one last question to be discussed briefly: what does Levinas really mean when he points out that was 'is written in souls is at first written in books', as I mentioned in my introduction? Why does he think that when books are in danger our own psyche is in danger too?

His answer—and there are many expressions of it in his works—is as follows: 'without an extreme attention to the Book of the Books, one can't listen to one's conscience'. Books prevent spirituality from being outshone by mere cleverness or knowledge,[21] they are necessary 'to give new priority to the inner life' or to 'the true inner life', which means a life that does not rely on institutions. After the Shoah, Levinas was very anxious about the new generation's spiritual fate and he wanted surviving Jews to 'teach the new generation the strength necessary to be strong in isolation, and all that a fragile consciousness is called upon to contain at such times'. Now, for that purpose, one had to open the Jewish books anew.[22] This consciousness has to be strong especially because civilizations and institutions may be destroyed or become perverse, as happened during the war. Therefore morality has to be known and justified 'in the fragility of the conscience, in the 'four cubits of the *Halakhah*', in that precarious,

20. Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1972), p. 96 (= *Collected Philosophical Papers* [trans. Alphonso Lingis; The Hague: Nijhoff, 1987], p. 148).

21. See 'Entretien avec François Poirié', in François Poirié, *Emmanuel Levinas. Qui êtes-vous?* (Lyons: La Manufacture, 1987), pp. 125, 67: books are 'the essence of spirituality'.

22. Emmanuel Levinas, *Noms propres*, « *Sans nom* » (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1976), p. 180 (= *Proper Names* [trans. Michael B. Smith; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996], p. 122).

divine abode'. Such is Judaism, 'humanity on the brink of morality without institutions'.[23]

May we go deeper into this matter? If what is written in our souls is indeed first written in books, it is also because books—the Torah and the oral tradition that elucidates its expressions but also the great national literatures that were inspired by it—help us discover what remains hidden in our soul. The interpretation of the verses turns out to be a spiritual voyage, a voyage that Israel as a people and every person among them, even the humblest ones, are supposed to undertake. No one may engage in a real voyage on behalf of someone else because it is dependent upon each person's deepest questions, questions that arise from their own life. Whether they have their roots in our anxiety and our suffering or in our joy and our gratefulness, these questions have an extraordinary power: they help us discover new significations hidden within the expression of the verses and these significations are not verified by any objective erudition but by one's own life. It is not only a private affair since Levinas holds that if one person does not participate in this elucidation, aspects of the Revelation remain waiting to be discovered.

The four traditional levels of interpretation of the Torah—literal, allusive, metaphoric and secret (*pshat, remez, drash* and *sod*)—are meant to open our understanding of the Hebrew expressions of the text. The Jewish mystics say that God who inspired these expressions is hidden within them, and they look upon these expressions as though they were God's garments. But one must add something else: these four levels of interpretations are also qualifications of our psyche. We sometimes prefer to stop short and refuse to go deeper than a literal (*pshat*) interpretation of our own soul. We fear the worst that might always happen during such a voyage and we wrongly believe that certitudes and dogmas—about the Torah and about ourselves—are a safe haven.

Although it is always a personal adventure, this voyage is never a lonely one. It is orientated by a constant encounter and dialogue with the masters of past times—the oral Torah—and such an encounter and such a dialogue are similar to the ones we have with our best friends: friends who share with us the enigma of existence and wonder about its meaning. Such an encounter is a demanding one and it is not free from hard conflicts but it is necessary for it prevents us from going astray—which might happen when we think we do not need to share our point of view with anybody. This discussion is also what prevents the multiplicity of interpretations from becoming mere relativism; it places it within *one* tradition. Levinas says that such a discussion helps us discover not the unity of the source of the Scripture

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23. Levinas, *Noms propres*, pp. 182, 181 (= *Proper Names*, pp. 123, 122).

but 'the marvelousness of the confluence' of what is written. We must trust 'the sages' wisdom' and discuss with them. 'This confidence may be looked upon as a faith, but this faith that we declare is the only one that we do not have to keep quietly for ourselves. It is not a shameless profession of faith like the ones that are loudly published in such an indiscreet way in all public places.'[24]

Now may those who undertake this voyage within the Book and within themselves, remaining in a constant dialogue with the voices of the masters and of their pupils, also hope to hear the voice of the One 'who spoke and things came to existence'? Where and when do we hear such a voice? As most readers of Levinas know, he maintains that we hear this voice—the voice of the Infinite—when we answer our neighbour's face urging us to be responsible for him or her. But I want to underline here, in my conclusion, that Levinas always describes the verses as though they were faces calling for our responsibility. The voice of the Infinite may be heard when we answer this calling also. What is supposed to be written in our souls—for instance 'Thou shalt not kill' (Exod. 20.13)—is first written in a book but the voice who orders us to take care of our neighbour is also the very voice that orders us to take care of the books. Now in both cases this voice cannot compel us to answer in a positive way; it is up to us not to let the voice disappear.

24. Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficile liberté: essais sur le judaïsme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1976 [original, 1963]), pp. 44, 95.

The Failure of the Flood

David J.A. Clines

No event in human history was intended to make such a difference as the coming of the Flood. It was planned to bring human history to an end. If it had happened according to the divine design, nothing else would have.

As it turned out, the Flood was a failure. What might have been the most seismic of historical events left no mark at all on human history. The world is no different, humans are no different, and no one, not even the deity, apparently, learned anything from the experience.

The biblical narrative of the Flood reflects the failure of the event it purports to recount. Its narrative logic fails, the ethics of the deity as depicted are questionable, and the theological import of the narrative is ugly. On top of that, scholarly commentary on the narrative is so flimsy and uncritical as to be a failure in itself.

1. *Narrative Logic*

According to the biblical narrative, the Flood is determined upon by the deity because humans are wicked. He is sorry he has created humans and resolves to 'blot them out' with a flood of waters. The universal Flood he plans to bring upon the earth will destroy not only all humans but also all animals, and the earth itself (Gen. 6.13). His design is therefore to undo the whole work of creation.

In the event, according to the narrative, that is the opposite of what happens. The earth survives, the waters dry up, the animals are released on to the earth to breed abundantly (8.17)—and humanity, because of whom the annihilating Flood has been sent, is charged with being fruitful and multiplying and filling the earth yet again (9.1).

So the deity not only totally changes his mind about the wisdom of creating the world, he also totally changes his mind about the wisdom of uncreating it. The narrative, however, does not say that. It spends some time explaining how God decided to destroy the world, and how he felt about his original creation: he was 'sorry that he had created humans, and it grieved him to his heart' (6.6). But it does not spend a moment over how he felt about reversing his decision to destroy the world, or over how or why he made yet another U-turn.

It is true that after the report of the divine decision to blot out humans and animals (6.7), it is said that Noah 'found favour in the eyes of Yhwh' (6.8), but nothing is said at that point of what shape the favour will take, and nothing is said to indicate that Noah's personal salvation will also mean the salvation of the whole creation, human and animal. We are given a clear statement of the divine reasoning for sending the Flood (the wickedness of humans was great in the earth, 6.5), and of the feeling of regret or revulsion in the divine emotions that was the engine for the decision (6.6). But there is no statement either of the reasons for the reversing of the Flood or of any divine feelings that may have generated the second decision.

We observe that in the report of the decision to send the Flood, the deity is focalized: we read his assessment of the wickedness on earth (6.5), a report of his feeling about the matter (6.6), and a speech (to no one in particular) about what he intends to do about the matter (6.7). But when it comes to the reversal of the decision, it is Noah who is focalized: Noah 'finds favour' in the eyes of Yhwh (6.8), Noah did all that Yhwh commanded him about making the ark (6.22), Noah did all that Yhwh had commanded him about taking the animals into the ark (7.5), Noah went into the ark (7.7). Even when the deity decides to bring the Flood to an end by making a wind blow over the earth, the notation is that 'God remembered Noah' (8.1), where the grammatical subject is 'God' but the focus is still upon Noah.

So the narrative itself draws attention away from the second change of heart on the part of Yhwh—to the extent that many readers do not even realize that a decision has been taken that is of the same magnitude as the decision to send the Flood in the first place.

Why is the narrative so secretive about the second change of heart? Could it be that to reverse a decision on this scale looks like misfortune, to reverse it twice looks like carelessness? Certainly, the narrative raises more questions than it answers. We might ask:

(1) How did the righteousness of one man manage to subvert the cosmic decision of the deity that was motivated both rationally (human wickedness) and emotionally (God's regret)? Was there some calculus at work in the divine mind of the order that would declare the presence of ten righteous persons in Sodom enough to spare the city? If so, why did Noah's righteousness not spare the earth from the Flood? Or was Noah's 'finding favour' in the eyes of Yhwh an arbitrary and emotional event (as finding favour generally is)?[1]

(2) The contrast between humanity's wickedness and Noah's righteousness might have been expected to lead to salvation from the Flood for Noah

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1. David Petersen reminds us that 'In the Tetrateuch, the idiom "to find favor" … rarely if ever denotes a moral quality on the part of the person who is designated as having found favor' (David L. Petersen, 'The Yahwist on the Flood', *VT* 26 [1976], pp. 438-46 [441 n. 10]).

(with him dying eventually of old age), but not to the survival of humanity in general.[2] The deity surely intends that outcome, so what is it about Noah that leads the deity to rescind his decision to destroy the world?

Whatever the reason, the narrative has failed its readers by fully motivating the original decision without motivating the second, subversive, decision at all.

How does the scholarly tradition manage this failure of the Flood narrative? By eliminating the conflict between Yhwh's first and second decisions. Thus:

> The biblical story of the Flood relates how God destroyed the existing world but saved Noah and his family and representatives of each animal species in an ark.[3]

No, it relates how God first decided to destroy the world he had created and then changed his mind again.

> The flood resulted from the Lord's decision to destroy all living creatures because of the great wickedness of man [*sic*].[4]

Indeed, but was not the subsequent decision *not* to destroy all living creatures worth a mention?

> God repented of his creation and determined to destroy both men [*sic*] and beasts … only the righteous Noah and his family would be spared (vv. 8-9).[5]

No, God cannot have decided at one and the same time to destroy all that lived *and* to spare Noah and his family and the animals and so ensure that humans and animals alike would not be wiped out. That would have been a

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2. A first-time reader might well expect that, given the divine decision to wipe out humanity, the preservation of Noah and his family in the ark represents only a temporary amelioration of the decision, deferring the death of the selected few for the natural course of their lives. There is no hint in the narrative of the making of the ark that the original decision to destroy humankind has been reversed—except for the odd fact that pairs of animals are taken on board the ark. They cannot be for the family's food, since the eating of animals is not permitted until after the Flood. Their presence on the ark is the sole sign (though a very obscure one) that a repopulation of the earth is already envisaged. A contraindication of that design might however be the fact that Noah's sons are not said to have any children prior to the Flood, and might therefore be thought to be unlikely progenitors of a whole new race of humans. Genesis 10.1 informs us that 'sons/children were born to [Shem, Ham and Japheth] after the flood'; this notation, which does not seem to interest any commentators, may be designed to address the anomaly that I have referred to.

3. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, 'Flood, the', in *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (ed. Paul J. Achtemeier; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), pp. 312-14 (312).

4. Jack P. Lewis, 'Flood', in *ABD*, II, pp. 798-803 (799).

5. J.H. Marks, 'Flood (Genesis)', in *IDB*, II, pp. 278-84 (278). There is nothing about Noah's family in vv. 8-9, by the way.

logical impossibility; there must have been two decisions, the second effectively cancelling out the first.

> God determined to destroy all living creatures with a flood because 'the wickedness of man was great' … [T]he corruption of humanity was so great that God could find only one, Noah, who was 'righteous'.[6]

The author thinks the destruction of all living creatures is compatible with the preservation of Noah and his family and the animals in the ark. It is not.[7]

   I conclude that the scholarly tradition is uncomfortable with the idea of the deity's vacillation over the destruction of life on the earth. It is a matter of the greatest moment, and it would not do to represent the deity as dithering over his decision. So his second change of heart becomes, in the tradition, a feature of his first change of heart, and the saving of the human race is made, irrationally, into an aspect of the destruction of the human race.

2. *Ethics*

My point here is that the decision to destroy the earth, and humanity along with it, represents an ethical failure on the part of the deity. Yhwh has created a world which by his own estimation is 'very good' (Gen. 1.31)[8] but when he finds that humans have become wicked, and that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually (6.5), that the earth is 'corrupt' and that 'all flesh' has 'corrupted his (or, its) way' (6.12),[9] and that the earth is filled with violence because of humanity (6.13), he knows of no way of rectifying the situation except to 'blot it out'. He has never taken any steps

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6. H.F. Vos, 'Flood (Genesis)', in *ISBE*, II, pp. 316-21 (316).

7. Franz Delitzsch says, '[T]he human race is not exterminated without its continuance being at the same time kept in view' (*A New Commentary on Genesis* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888], I, p. 234 ['[D]as Menschengeschlecht wird nicht vertilgt ohne dass zugleich dessen Erhaltung ins Auge gefasst wird' (*Neuer Commentar über die Genesis* [Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke], 1887, p. 154)]). But if its continuance is kept in view, the human race is not being exterminated.

8. The reader trained in source criticism might notice that I am not shy of treating a 'P' verse as if it belonged to the same text as the 'J' verses I cite elsewhere in the paper. I do not deny the existence of 'J' and 'P' (though I have my doubts), but I maintain my right to read Genesis as a single unified text. I have recently reconsidered the issue of sources for the Flood narrative in 'Putting Source Criticism in its Place: The Flood Story as a Test Case', to be published in *Biblical Interpretation and Method: Essays in Honour of Professor John Barton* (ed. Katharine J. Dell and Paul M. Joyce).

9. I take the suffix in דַּרְכּוֹ 'its way' to refer to the natural order of existence of living creatures, the 'manner of life and conduct prescribed' to them (as August Dillmann, *Genesis Critically and Exegetically Expounded* [trans. W.B. Stevenson; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897], I, p. 268 [= *Die Genesis erklärt* [Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 3rd edn, 1886]).

to check the violence or to lessen the wickedness.[10] He knows nothing about reform or education, he cannot distinguish shades of grey. He cannot imagine any kind of redemption or amelioration or compromise. Unlike the potter of Jer. 18.4, he does not know how to rework a pot that has been 'spoiled' (the same word שחת). The only punishment he knows about is capital. We would account his response a failure of ethical agency.

So far is the deity from a creative management of the situation, he seems to be capable only of a mimicking of the human wrongdoing that has so distressed him:

(1) Three times the human fault is called a 'corruption' or 'destruction', with the verb שחת: the earth 'was corrupt in God's sight' (6.11), 'God saw the earth, and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way' (6.12). So what does the deity determine to do? Why, to 'corrupt' (שחת) all humanity and earth with them (6.13). Our English versions, squeamishly, will not allow the same verb to be used of the deity's action as of humanity's, so all of them I have consulted[11] have Yhwh 'destroying' the earth rather than 'corrupting' it.

(2) The other term for human wickedness here is 'violence' (חמס): the earth was 'filled with violence', we twice read (6.11, 13). The term is indeed not used explicitly of the deity's action but how else should we categorize the 'blotting out' (מחה) of humans and animals alike (6.7), the 'making an end' of all flesh (6.13)? If חמס 'violates an order established or guaranteed by God' (Stoebe),[12] the subversion by a Flood of the world order divinely ordered at creation must surely count as an act of outrageous חמס. If חמס is 'ruthless outrage perpetrated by the strong on the weak' (Skinner),[13] a sentence of universal death by drowning must by any account constitute חמס, must it not? Worse even than humanity's חמס, should we not say? For the antediluvian world of wicked humans was still recognizably the world of Genesis 1, with seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, and all the characteristics of an ordered universe; the world drowned in the Flood will have been utterly unmade, subjected to the most extreme denaturing, a return to the watery chaos that existed before creation.

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10. Norman Habel is a rare commentator when he writes, 'One option would have been be to modify this model of *adam* so that they are not so obsessed with evil ideas' (*The Birth, the Curse, and the Greening of Earth* [The Earth Bible Commentary Series, 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011], p. 84), but he evaluates the divine response as 'overreaction' (pp. 83, 85, 86, 87)—which to my mind puts it too mildly.

11. Namely KJV, RV, ASV, RSV, NRSV, NEB, REB , NAB, NJB, NJPS, NIV.

12. H.J. Stoebe, 'חָמָס *ḥamas* violence', in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann; trans. Mark Biddle; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), I, pp. 437-39 (437).

13. John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910), p. 159.

How do our commentators fare on this front? Not surprisingly, they hardly ever notice the correspondence between the actions of wicked humanity and those of the deity,[14] and they certainly do not draw the conclusion that the deity's treatment of the earth is no better than humanity's. Of course, they entirely approve of the actions of the deity.

> Revolt and corruption have gone beyond all bounds and have reached a climax which demands a decree of destruction,

writes Westermann.[15] So Westermann too evidently knows no way of responding to wrongdoing except by the extermination of the wrongdoers.

Von Rad even glories in the viciousness of the divine decree; says he:

> P bears witness very simply to God's power and freedom in allowing even an entire age to be engulfed in judgment.[16]

Allowing? When it is his decree! And by all means, let God be free, though every human be drowned; we wouldn't want God to feel under any obligation to the creatures he brought into existence, would we?

And here is Walter Brueggemann:

> God has powerful ways to bring the world to his vision of unity and harmony and order … This God takes with uncompromising seriousness his own purposes for creation. And he is impatient when those purposes are resisted.[17]

It must be admitted that drowning everyone on earth is a 'powerful way' of bringing the world to the divine vision. But does the end justify the means?

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14. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary* (trans. John J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), p. 415, does observe that the same verb is used for the human actions and for God's decree of destruction, but the only conclusion he draws is that the humans have 'destroyed' the earth. He does not stumble over the same word being used for sinful human activity and for presumably justifiable divine action. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 278, also notes the dual use of the verb, remarking that 'God's decision is to destroy what is virtually self-destroyed … already'. But it does not trouble him that God's action is no different morally speaking from that of the wicked humans. Bill T. Arnold thinks that God's corruption of the earth is a kind of poetic justice (*Genesis* [New Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], p. 99). Robert W.E. Forrest is very clear about the parallel between human action and divine action: 'God has evidently decided that human violence must be met with divine violence' ('Paradise Lost Again: Violence and Obedience in the Flood Narrative', *JSOT* 19 [1994], pp. 3-18 [9]). But even he is not disposed to make any ethical judgment on the matter.

15. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, p. 415.

16. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. John H. Marks; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, revised edition, 1972), p. 127.

17. Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Interpretation; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2010), p. 75.

To will the end is to will the means, is it not? So it needs to be said that the 'divine vision' on display in the Flood narrative includes not only 'unity and harmony and order' but destruction and violence and heartlessness.[18]

3. *Theology*

Two sentences in the Flood narrative especially attract my attention.

a. *The Reason for the Flood*
Such a enormous catastrophe, intentionally let loose upon humanity, surely deserves a proper justification. The narrative of Genesis purports to offer such a justification:

> Yhwh saw that the wickedness of humanity was great in the earth and every imagination (יצר)[19] of the thoughts of its heart was only evil continually (6.5).

A similar sentence occurs later in the narrative:

> The imagination (יצר) of the heart of humans is evil from their youth (8.21).

Now this cannot be a satisfactory justification, or any kind of acceptable theological statement, since it is manifestly untrue. We have only to imagine its opposite, 'Yhwh saw that the goodness of humanity was great in the earth and every imagination of the thoughts of its heart was only good continually' to know immediately that such an extreme and unsubtle judgment is absurd. You can no more believe the one statement than the other. Anyway, Noah was one of the generation of the Flood, and if he is 'righteous' the comprehensiveness of the statement of human wickedness cannot be sustained. Would we not agree that it cannot ever have been the case that a whole generation of humanity never had a decent thought or committed a good action,[20] and that anyone who says what our narrative alleges must be devoid of moral sense.

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18. The reader is invited to re-read the quotation above with the substitution of 'President Bashir Assad' for 'God' and of 'Syria' for 'the world' and 'creation', in order to identify the kind of milieu in which the language of 'powerful ways', 'uncompromising seriousness' and 'impatience' is appropriate.

19. 'It is difficult to say whether יֵצֶר is more properly the "form" impressed on the mind (the disposition or character), or "that which is formed" by the mind (imagination and purpose)' (Skinner, *Genesis*, p. 150).

20. I call in aid Adam Smith (no sentimentalist) and the opening words of his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*: 'How selfish soever man [*sic*] may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it' (London: A. Millar, 1759).

This must be the most negative assessment of human nature ever uttered, inside or outside the Hebrew Bible. You might expect commentators to unite in warning their readers against the extravagance of the statement, and its lack of conformity with the outlook of the Hebrew Bible in general, and to affirm unhesitatingly their own personal disavowal of its theology.

What we find in the scholarly tradition, however, is exemplified by the following:

> The ground of the pessimistic estimate of human nature so forcibly expressed in v. 5 is the whole course of man's [*sic*] development as hitherto related … The fratricide of Cain, the song of Lamech, the marriages with the angels, are incidents which, if not all before the mind of the writer of the Flood-story, at least reveal the gloomy view of the early history which characterises the Yahwistic tradition.[21]

> A state of corruption of massive proportions has come about … and this is the reason why God has decided on destruction … Humanity's wicked state consists in striving after what is wicked.[22]

> What God forms is beautiful; what man [*sic*] forms is repulsive … [T]his kind of malaise is a chronic condition, not just a spasmodic lapse.[23]

> The judgment on man [*sic*] … is extremely sharp … The statement comprises … the entire inner life of man [*sic*] … It means even the reflections of fantasy, the rising and freely formed movements of the will, were 'only evil continually'.[24]

> Verse 5 is perhaps the most emphatic articulation of the human condition in the Bible. Yahweh 'saw' or perceived clearly the undeniable reality of the human condition: every imaginative and cognitive impulse of the human heart was persistently evil … evil is, in fact, the profile of everything human.[25]

> The fact that only Noah was saved because only he was righteous implies clearly that the rest of his generation was individually evil … It is of no consequence whether the individual guilt of all but one member of any given generation is statistically probable. We are concerned here, not with the historicity of the narrative, but with the essential religious concepts which underlie it.[26]

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21. Skinner, *Genesis*, p. 150. The commentator does not recognize the absurdity of justifying the total annihilation of humankind on the ground of one boastful song, of marrying angels (not the fault of the humans), or even of a single murder (wicked as it was).

22. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, p. 410.

23. Hamilton, *Genesis 1–11*, p. 273.

24. Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 117.

25. Arnold, *Genesis*, pp. 90-91.

26. Nahum Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), p. 52. We might well ask what the value of a religious concept is that views humanity as entirely degraded. Can the Flood story, containing such an assessment of humanity,

The conjuring, day dreams, and self-perception of the world are all tilted against God's purpose. God is aware that something is deeply amiss in creation, so that God's own dream has no prospect of fulfilment… The question is not whether people are 'good-hearted' in the sense we call 'nice', but whether in the deep places of life, human persons and the human community are capable of saving themselves. Can human persons transcend calculated self-interest which inevitably leads to death?[27]

While admitting that the judgment of the text is pessimistic and 'sharp', the tendency of these writers is to affirm the text, and certainly not to criticize it to any degree. There is no recognition of its outrageous slur on humanity.

If it were indeed true that antediluvian humanity was incapable of anything but evil, it would not be surprising that the deity regretted that he had created humans; but what he should have done in that case was not to blame them but to blame himself for the most egregious design fault in history. Blotting humanity out will not wipe away the stain on his competence and character as a creator.

b. *Continuing Human Sin*

It is rarely recognized that the reason given by the narrative for the sending of the Flood (6.5) appears toward the end of the narrative as the reason why another Flood will not be sent (8.21). The wording is slightly different,[28] but the sense seems to be identical.

It is indeed sometimes argued that 8.21 does not mean that Yhwh will not again curse the ground (with a Flood) *because* humans are sinful from their youth, but *although* humans are sinful from their youth, adopting a rare though attested sense of the particle כִּי.[29] W.M. Clark, for example, argued that the meaning is that 'in spite of the motivation for a flood remaining

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possibly be 'a vehicle for the expression of some of the most profound biblical teachings, an instrument for the communication of universal moral truths' (Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, p. 59)?

27. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, pp. 77, 82.

28. Genesis 8.21 lacks the 'every', the 'only' and the 'continually' of 6.5. Skinner thought that the emphasis in 8.21 lies in 'from their youth', explaining that 'the innate sinfulness of man [*sic*] constitutes an appeal to the divine clemency, since it cannot be cured by an undiscriminating judgement like the Flood, which arrests all progress toward better things' (*Genesis*, p. 158). If that were so, 8.21 would express an even more dismal view of humanity on the deity's part. But the flaw in this comment is that the writer seems to think of the Flood as an intended *cure* for human wickedness, rather than as simply the *removal* of it.

29. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (ed. David J.A. Clines; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), IV, p. 387 (§6), lists some 40 occurrences of כִּי in this sense in the Hebrew Bible (the particle occurs 4488 times, which makes 40 occurrences rather rare).

present, God binds himself to take another course of action'.[30] For the present purpose, it does not matter very much which understanding of כִּי we adopt. Whether the sinfulness of humanity is the reason why another Flood will not occur, or whether another Flood will not occur despite the sinfulness of humanity, in both cases it is being affirmed that humanity is permanently sinful, both before and after the Flood.

This is a powerful theological statement. It reinforces the extravagant assessment of humanity in 6.5, but it also lets slip the fact that, according to the Flood narrative itself, the Flood changed nothing. The Flood was therefore pointless.[31] It is not just that it achieved nothing, and that the world was no better off after it than before it. It is not a question of efficiency or effectiveness. More important is the moral issue at stake. It was bad enough to destroy humanity on account of its sins, but it was worse to do so when thereafter it is acknowledged that perennial and unrelieved sinfulness will never again be a reason for wiping out humanity. The failure of the Flood is fundamentally the deity's failure.

What of the scholarly tradition? Here is one line of approach:

> God will no longer allow himself to be moved by their evil deeds to a judgment such as the Flood has been, but will exercise long-suffering and patience. Otherwise indeed He would have no other alternative but very often to decree similar exterminations.[32]

To this I would respond: If after the Flood the deity can decide to be long-suffering and patient, why could he not have adopted such an attitude before the Flood and spared humanity his massacre? What is it he has learned from the actual execution of his plans for the Flood that he could not have envisaged before he carried them out? Nothing has changed in humanity, and we are driven to suppose that before the Flood the deity could not really imagine what the devastation would look like; now that it has occurred, he finds himself too tender-hearted to let it happen again. Is that it?

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30. W.M. Clark, 'The Flood and the Structure of the Pre-Patriarchal History', *ZAW* 83 (1971), pp. 184-211 (206), following R. Rendtorff, 'Offenbarung als Geschichte', *Kerygma und Dogma* 7 (1961), pp. 69-78 (73). Similarly S.R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis, with Introduction and Notes* (Westminster Commentaries; London: Methuen, 1926), p. 95; von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 123; Hamilton, *Genesis 1–11*, pp. 309-10.

31. Petersen likewise says that for the Yahwist the Flood was 'an ineffectual ploy' ('The Yahwist on the Flood', p. 444). Kenneth A. Mathews allows that if 8.21 contains the *reason* why there will not be a second Flood 'it might be taken that God deemed the Flood a failure and conceded man's [*sic*] condition as irrevocable' (*Genesis 1–11* [New American Commentary, 1A; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995], p. 395). It is brave to let the question whether the Flood was a failure or not hang upon the rendering of the particle כִּי in Gen. 8.21.

32. Dillmann, *Genesis*, I, p. 290.

My second witness to the scholarly tradition is Gerhard von Rad. He esteems 8.21 'one of most remarkable theological statements in the Old Testament', which he apparently intends as a sign of approbation. He continues:

> The same condition which in the prologue is the basis for God's judgment in the epilogue reveals God's grace and providence. The contrast between God's punishing anger and his supporting grace, which pervades the whole Bible, is here presented almost inappropriately, almost as indulgence, an adjustment by God towards man's [*sic*] sinfulness … For our narrator, the Flood is the Last Judgment, but one in which God checks sin's spread on the earth; a judgment, to be sure, which at its end reveals more strongly than the stories of the Fall and Cain a wonderful saving will of God.[33]

It needs to be pointed out that the 'saving' that appears at the end of the Flood narrative is no more than the deity's saving of humanity from himself. If he had not decided on a Flood, no saving would have been necessary. And against von Rad, the Flood has not even delivered the benefit of a 'checking' of sin, as 8.21 presciently notes: Noah is barely out of the ark before Yhwh typecasts humanity as 'evil from its youth'—not antediluvian humanity, let it be noted, but the humanity yet to be engendered by the righteous Noah's sons. Above all, it shows an alarming insensitivity, in an age like our own that has seen the Holocaust and numerous genocides, to read the Flood narrative as a revelation of God's grace and providence (even if the narrator intended it to be read like that); it is not a cheerful story.

Some enlightened parents of our day will not allow Noah's Arks into their children's toy cupboards, and will never entertain their offspring with the tale, so saving themselves much confusion of face. It might be proposed that commentaries on Genesis should likewise be locked away from impressionable adults until there should be published a truly critical example of the genre, a volume that does not unthinkingly rehearse the unlovely ideology of the biblical narrative. Perhaps that would make a difference.

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33. Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 123.

Micah Yosef Berdyczewski and the New Jewish Mimesis: Two Stories in Honor of Tamara C. Eskenazi

William Cutter

My contribution to this important volume lies outside the biblical field to which Tamara C. Eskenazi has contributed so richly. But this occasion of honor gives me the opportunity to seek a nexus between the modern literature that I study and the classic literature to which Professor Eskenazi has devoted her life. In the following brief essay and two translations of important early twentieth-century short stories, I suggest that this nexus may be seen in the stubborn continuity of theme and language between the modern and ancient worlds. Modern Hebrew authors, and poets in particular, have exploited the classic texts and tropes of Jewish culture for modern stories of struggle—both individual and national—and have used the modern condition to re-engage with texts from the Tanakh. The connection is richer than this simple description might imply: Sometimes the later literary text illuminates the ancient world by filling in spaces within the narrative—struggling against the 'flatness' that Erich Auerbach described decades ago[1]—and sometimes it casts the values of that ancient world into doubt; it always demonstrates that the readership for which the modern literature was intended was familiar with the canonical tradition. In one of the stories before us we will find a modern skepticism based on a specific biblical mythology of purification; and in the second story, a comic gesture calls into question clichés and assumptions of the post-biblical as well as the biblical past.

   Some of this revisionary intertextuality has been innocent (a simple reference point, or a learned reference), and some of it has represented the convenience of biblical and rabbinic texts being at hand, or an ownership of the ancient land or world. But much of the intertextuality uncovers possibilities in the ancient texts that might have gone unnoticed. In recent decades, more political readers, like feminists, gay activists, psychoanalysts of one kind or

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   1.   Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (trans. Willard R. Trask; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953; original edition: *Mimesis: dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* [Berne: Francke Verlag, 1945]).

another and Reform Jewish 'hermeneuts', have revisited classic texts and acted as ventriloquists in order to impose contemporary values on the biblical text. From a purely literary point of view, the way in which these texts and traditions is used speaks to the identity and culture of a particular narrator. Micah Yosef Berdyczewski engaged these texts in somewhat paradoxical ways, and enjoyed being narrator as well as author.

Berdyczewski (Bin Gurion, as he later Hebraized his name) had a short career which ended in his fifty-seventh year in Berlin, Germany. From humble beginnings in Hasidic villages, combined with rigorous rabbinic study, he early on abandoned his village to begin a life of scholarship within the Western Enlightenment environments of Switzerland, Breslau and Berlin. But his first marriage ended in divorce—related, certainly, to the ideas which pestered his busy mind. His second marriage to the young dentist, Rachel Romberg, became a story of deep devotion and mutual support. Once Berdyczewski began his odyssey westward from Russia, he produced dozens of short stories and novels, and a fierce arsenal of essays on numerous subjects pertinent to the secular-nationalist thinking of his day.[2] He was scrupulous about textual integrity, and any misreading he committed was carried on only after rigorous scholarship. But he certainly liked to illuminate robust texts that had not become part of what we loosely call 'the canon', as in his collection *Das Born Judas* (often called *Out of our People's Past*). At times (as in 'Para Aduma' or 'The Red Heifer', when he uses Joseph's dream to describe lean times and plentiful times), biblical allusion simply 'judaizes' the story and identifies the narrator as an educated man speaking to an audience that was on the inside of Jewish cultural reference. The real Berdyczewski was the perfect insider to such knowledge, an insider who stood outside of his natal community but knew it well.

Berdyczewski did cloak his narrators in antinomian garb and in the camouflage of an anthropologist-recorder-storyteller. Sometimes his author and his narrator change places, and I have tried to suggest this by translating in both present and past tense when that shift served to reflect that distinction. The storyteller was not far from the author himself, who mined the tradition for a subterranean layer of remarkable wild undertones that he felt were the

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2.   A complete bibliography—inclusive of the research until 1970—was provided by Dan Almagor and Samuel Fishman in *Micah Yosef Berdichewsky: A Bibliography* (The University of Tel Aviv, 1970). The work was compiled under the guidance of Professor Arnold Band of UCLA as doctoral supervisor of the compilers. Since that period extensive work has been carried on by Professor Avner Holtzman of Tel Aviv University, whose Berdyczewski studies and direction of Berdyczewsk's literary estate have increased our resources and understanding of this enigmatic and spectacular figure. No serious work on Berdyczewski can be carried on today without Professor Holtzman's guidance, and I personally have been the beneficiary of that guidance for over two decades.

actual textures of that ancient tradition. It seems that many writers of his generation found a cleansing release, a kind of narration towards Jewish health that culminated in the establishment of the Jewish state. For him, uncloaking the unsavory truths was part of that cleansing and health. But in that uncovering of repressed energy and polite and toxic cover there are echoes of the kind of literature which is closest to Professor Eskenazi's heart. Professor Eskenazi's persistent search for healing and redemption within most classic texts takes a curious turn within this phase of Jewish modernity. For here, it is the very subterranean heat and passion which needed healing that Berdyczewski felt had to be exposed, even as he believed that such heat and passion were signs of Jewish authenticity. (Hence ancient rituals intrigued him, and Hasidism captured his imagination and appreciation in spite of his contempt for its actual personalities.) Berdyczewski, along with his contemporary Shaul Tschernichovski, saw an underlying sickness among Jews in the lived world, and used some classic imagery to highlight that pathology. In 'The Red Heifer' for example, Berdyczewski took the classic legend of the paradoxically charismatic Para Aduma and used the metaphor to describe the impure motives of men whose task in the Jewish community of the mid nineteenth century should have been to preserve the purity and holiness of dietary practice. Less reliant on myths of this ancient energy, but in the same thematic vein, his narrator in 'The Pause' (*Hahafsakah*) tells the story of a nearly disabled community that was aroused from its torpor of poverty and routine by the appearance of two tin horn Rebbes from obscure communities whose arrival 'in town' (the fictional Tornova) tosses everything into a spiritual muddle, its residents sparring over which of the two Rebbes was most important, and finding the means to celebrate the miraculous occasion of the visit of both of them. The narrator's humor is evident in his bold overstatement and description of the town's character types, and his sly asides to readers. The sleepy little town becomes aroused to the point of not being able to function, and soon enough everyone realizes that they must return to their sleepy exilic life. Messianism in this story becomes a kind of holiday from the drudgery of opening the store or the stall, by providing a second or even third glass of wine for the Sabbath. But Messianism in Judaism inevitably bears some relationship to homeland, and to the role of the Dispersion vis-à-vis that homeland. And here Berdyczewski, among all of the angry young people of his generation, excelled in nuance and paradox. For unlike messianic strivers like Gershom Scholem or Leon Pinsker and A.D. Gordon, or even the poet Tschernichovski, Berdyczewski loved the very Diaspora for whose residents he expressed such derision. This ambivalence has been discussed in a short essay by Israeli scholar Aaron Komem, who notes the relationship between social detail and affection.[3]

3.   Aaron Komem, 'The Frozen Smile: The Transition from Satire and Comedy to

Those who read his stories carefully will see a deep love within Berdycze-
wski's tone of contempt, a kind of revisiting of Bialik's final verse in 'Upon
my Return':

> You have not changed from what you were before,
> Old and worn out, with nothing new
> Let me come my brothers into your company
> so that we may rot together.

He seems to have loved the people in the small towns he mocked, just as
he loved the family from whom he fled in fact years before—a family from
a small eastern European town that had stifled him, that was provincial, and
yet that he often described as authentic and embracing. Such was his para-
doxical relationship to that world that has prompted some to read 'The Red
Heifer' as glorifying the violence with which the story ends. I have argued
that he could not really have been glorifying that world, although some-
times his narrators are deceptive, and he fools his audience in the narrator's
'tsk tsk' because for once he really means it. I draw from other of his stories
to illuminate his critique and his belief that the Jewish people has carefully
chosen its literary canons in order to highlight certain intellectual and spiri-
tual qualities while conveniently suppressing what one really knows was
there—in the Diaspora of old, and by implication, in Berdyczewski's own
Jewish world.[4]

In both stories before us, the calm boredom of the Jewish town carries a
subterranean extravagant passion, a tendency to move quickly from enthu-
siasm to destructive behavior, from a democracy of indulgence to a painful
mockery of the status quo. In 'The Red Heifer' our narrator even notes that
the events of this story, which would seem to have come from some primi-
tive past, happened just yesterday. Here the implication is that violence in
the ancient world might have somehow been justified. The events of 'The
Red Heifer' are not innocent, and we find local thugs greedily destroying
a quiet man's property in the tradition of King David's seduction of Bath
Sheva, whereas the events in 'The Pause' grow from a community-wide
suppression of all desire and the constant fiddling from day to day to satisfy
empty stomachs.

Empathy and Drama in the Story "The Pause", in *Micah Yosef Berdyczewski: Research
and Testimony* (ed. Avner Holtzman; Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2002) [Hebrew].
Komem supports my notion (with more extensive scholarship) of Berdyczewski's
ambivalence towards his original community.

4.   My translation is substantially the same as one that appeared in *Reading Hebrew
Literature: Critical Discussions of Six Modern Texts* (ed. Alan Mintz; Hanover, NH:
Brandeis University Press, 2003). I am grateful to Professor Mintz for permission
to refashion this translation and for the invitation to participate in his illuminating
Brandeis seminar.

Berdyczewski's cynicism might not have made Professor Eskenazi's ten greatest hits, but she always appreciates the kind of honesty that motivated these two stories by one of modern Judaism's most interesting figures. And I am confident that she will be intrigued by efforts to describe the way people have really lived, as opposed to idealized depictions of life in the small town. While Berdyczewski's short narratives are often flat as regards character development, they give detail as to what is involved in the violations of dignity and serenity that are sometimes mentioned in Bible and Talmud in a few short sentences. In that sense, they serve to round out those of the world of old. And one can say quite definitely that Berdyczewski has imposed—in these two stories before us—a narrator with a sense of history, a sense of irony, and a sense of wonder as to what people will do to survive. He would not be surprised to read that, in the year 2012, public stewards in regions of America that are starving for tax money foster the public's messianic trust that one can win the lottery or solve one's problems at the gambling tables and, in seeking a messianic solution, wind up without the means to survive.

The Red Heifer (1906)

This is a story about a red heifer and something that happened not long ago in a little town near Horan, where a certain rabbi lived. I, the storyteller, was not present so did not witness these things myself, but I did hear about them from reliable witnesses. The story is surely unsettling, and at times I was tempted to cover it up. But when all was said and done, I decided to write up the story for others to read.

Our generation, after all, is destined to die out, and the next generation will not know its ancestors and how they lived in the Diaspora. Now, if one wants to find out about how that life really was lived, they should know about it—its light as well as its shadows. Let us know that although we were Jews, we were also just 'flesh and blood' humans, with all that the term suggests.

So there was a ritual slaughterer in the town of Dashia who was qualified and was about to become apprentice to the ritual slaughterer in another city; but he was eventually found to be ineligible, so that he could not become a ritual slaughterer after all. Instead of becoming a teacher or Torah reader, or prayer leader or just a laborer without a particular craft, or a *luftmentsch* or a storekeeper, he chose a vocation that was close to slaughtering, even though in social class or religious standing within Jewish life it was a long way from that profession. Put another way, this man had really wanted to attain the pious office of ritual slaughterer, but he had to become a simple butcher in the Jewish street and open up a simple butcher shop. He abandoned his studies and his uniform and the sacred laws and prohibitions of

ritual slaughtering and became a regular butcher, a profane man standing all day in his shop, dressing carcasses and slaughtered lambs on pegs, stripping them of their skin, extracting the proper veins and selling the meat by the pound.

And not only that. He took religious matters lightly and he wasn't fastidious when it came to Jewish law, in the way of most butchers who were not exactly observant. And while I don't want to wash our dirty laundry in public, it must be said that they sometimes inadvertently sold non-kosher meat as kosher for the simple reason that unqualified meat in towns like this, where there are more Jews than there are villagers who eat pork, was about half the price; while the kosher meat, because of tax and duty and other such things, was certainly not free and its price might be twice that of non-kosher meat. While these butchers may be punished for this in hell, any Jew with a family needs to find a way to make some profit here on earth. It is well known, moreover, that butchers love to eat and drink and provide three meals a day for their families and not restrict themselves to modest or purely spiritual sustenance, as do Torah scholars and pious people.

All forms of butchering have an element of cruelty because of the blow to the animal's throat, or when its limbs are cut off, even if the animal is slaughtered properly. Just yesterday a goat may have been grazing in the pasture, the lamb hurrying along to its fold, and today the blood is drained and the animal's breath extinguished, and these animals may soon be hanging upside down on a pole. Blood, which is life, is now on the hands and fingers of the butcher. It is the butchers who assist the ritual slaughterers, preparing the cow or the bull while the slaughterer's knife is being sharpened. The ritual slaughterer remains pious, for religion and its sacred commandments protect him and his life, and the crueler aspects of this business are left to the butcher and his destiny. Butchers are plenty strong, and when, for example, a disturbance breaks out in town, they are often called upon to be the tough guys. All the spiritual folks fear these butchers because they can be bullies, and it is best not to anger them. They can be merciless.

But there is something good about all of this. The Jewish people are a weak and timid people, fearful of the slightest provocation; and whenever there have been pogroms against Jews, a hundred might flee from one drunken peasant and submit passively to broken windows and vandalized households. But the butchers had learned to fight back and to arm themselves with clubs and axes when the times called for that. Something like this happened once at Eastertime during a brief interregnum, a full generation before the Jews had learned how to stand up for themselves. Is it any wonder that they became the self-styled vanguard of Israel's heroes?

There are two ways to speak about people who steal. The Torah treats the thief, or *ganav*, more stringently than the robber, or *gazlan*, because the *gazlan* treats all people equally, whereas the *ganav* does not. And to be

precise about it, when you are dealing with butchers, you are dealing with two opposites. When these heroes, who are afraid of nothing, do manage to steal a bull or a cow, they do it secretly and without the owners knowing—or, they have others do it for them. One can see this as a way of making a living ['doing business'] rather than as an act of theft. In the butcher business, when you slaughter a cow or a bull and actually pay for the animal directly, it costs five times as much as an animal for which you have not paid. Perhaps a bull has wandered off and was abducted and turned over to the butchers, or perhaps there had once been fifty cows in a pen and now only forty-nine remain, a number that is still plenty from the owner's point of view. Reckon how many things can go wrong with the slaughter of a cow: sometimes the ritual slaughterer will do damage at the moment of killing, sometimes a lung can be punctured, or damage may occur regarding any one of the eighteen prohibitions. Dashia was a poor city, and often Jews could not pay for their meat. Meat that isn't soaked within three days becomes unfit, and in summer it spoils. How could a butcher survive without some little side-benefits?

You may say that this behavior is forbidden, that a Jew ought not do this. Yet do not all social dealings and commercial transactions involve a bit of deception? There is no essential difference, except that when it comes to business, this is not just 'in a manner of speaking'. And it surely wouldn't stop those who do it from wearing the garb of pious folks who pray in the choicest seats in the synagogue. All other people, that is to say, the butchers and their ilk, don't get reckoned among the pious and have to pray at their separate house of worship, the synagogue 'of the morning watch' instead of the main synagogue in town. The householders have holy excuses and pious terms for the drink that they have in the morning after prayers, as they do for all the other gross physical things they do. The butchers down their brew without apology and don't need a death in the family or a holiday to justify having a glass. While I know that the butchers are not saints, and I don't want to make too many claims on their behalf, I would not have called them scoundrels were it not for this one thing that happened. It was evil—plain and simple! Who among us can pronounce that word in all of its bitter meanings? People want to live and they do have uncontrollable urges in their bellies—insistent bellies which do not have silken linings.

And here is how it happened. In Dashia there lived a man named Reuven, an average fellow who didn't stand out particularly; and who knows if he would even have been known in Dashia at all were it not for his cows?

Most of the citizens of Dashia, if they had means at all, kept cows that gave enough milk so that they didn't have to pay for it in a store. Reuven always had the best cow in the city. In this he was successful, and this he understood. He knew how to take care of his cows, to fatten them up and to make them look like the healthy cows in Pharaoh's dream. Reuven was

not above feeding his cow from his own table and drawing her water all by himself. The shed was always kept clean, and he was careful so that no accidents would happen. Everyone knew that his entire life was devoted to taking care of his cow.

The people of Dashia are city types without much knowledge of nature; but when a cow or a goat gives milk to its owner, some contact with nature occurs. In every corner of the town, people know the local cows and goats; and when the larger or more delicate animals return from grazing, all the residents look at each cow and goat and express their opinions about what they must be worth and the price of their milk. Each household loves its animals, and men walk with their cow or their goat as if they were walking with a friend. And why not? Animals, after all, are living things who get hungry and who need that hunger satisfied; they have sad feelings and affections and mothers who love them and long for them. If you don't know this already, just take a cow or a sheep or a goat home with you, and you will be looking at a living soul.

In those days, Reuven had a ruddy Dutch heifer, the likes of which—for its beauty and solidity and fullness of body—the inhabitants of Dashia had never seen. When she came back from feeding with the flock, her head was held high like a queen's; and the other cows paid her proper respect. She was indeed of a nobler race, as one could see from her strong body, her healthy udders, and her gorgeous coat. Reuven was once offered 150 rubles for her, whereas most any other cow had cost only 70 or 80 rubles—even the one belonging to a nobleman. How in the world, you might ask, did Reuven even come to possess a cow like that, given that he was not rich? But the citizens weren't so amazed, since people had come to expect good fortune from Reuven when it came to cows. This cow simply had to be the most wonderful in and around Dashia, for that is what was written in the book of destiny and that is the way it had always been.

And Reuven in those days was as happy as if his daughter was going to marry a brilliant Torah scholar; he would gain great delight whenever he heard people praising, glorifying and exalting his cow. They told wonder stories and spoke in hyperbole as if they were speaking, excuse the comparison, about their rabbi. They even exaggerated that the cow yielded four measures of milk at a time. They also said that from the butter alone, left over after they had all the milk they needed, Reuven cleared three rubles per week, and he had thirteen children and fifteen mouths to feed. In short, Reuven's red heifer, who gave birth each spring and whose offspring were worth fifteen pieces of silver, gave folks a lot to talk about when they were sitting around in the synagogue.

Dashia enjoyed its good fortune over the excellent heifer who would have served as a crown for even one of the great cities on God's earth. And ineffective were all the incantations of the jealous women who practiced

witchcraft and schemed to stop up her milk. Neither Satan nor his minions could do anything against such a grand creature that God had made.

But to everyone's surprise, all that meant nothing on the day of reckoning. The time came when the heifer's destiny was sealed even though she was the source of life for an entire family and the noblest thing in the city's fabric. Were she to die in the fullness of her years, or be felled by a plague or even die a simple death, we would certainly have been sad, but we would be resigned. Extinction comes to human beings as well, after all. The house that a person labors to build may burn down; and there isn't much one can do when a city is under attack. When tragedy happens in the course of life, who can complain? Or, if it was said that Reuven had gone crazy or that the heifer had ceased giving birth for a period of time and thus had to be sold for ritual slaughter, and was found kosher, and had her skin removed and her veins extracted, and was sold for rich flesh for some else's Sabbath table, sweet to the palate when fried or boiled, we might nod our heads in assent at the destiny of the milk-giving heifer. That would be in accordance with the natural order of things and the way of the world: things like that happen in life. But in the case of Reuven's heifer, a murder was committed, an awful murder as bad as the ambush of a human being. This happened in a way that was *not* in the natural order of things, or at least in the way that we expect things to happen among Jews.

So at this time there was a drought, and meat became more expensive. It was hard generally to make a living in Dashia, and even butchers who almost always could make a go of it were struggling. Disputes broke out, and there were violent actions, as one might expect. Reuven, a peaceful man by nature, took part in those disputes, and the butchers opposed him. One cannot explain all the reasons for what happened afterward, but I will tell the reader about them anyway, one at a time. And I don't mean to judge here, but am just telling the story. Others will come and judge and they will expound and clean up some of what happened.

It was the heifer's fate to be taken from her owners by a bunch of butchers. Many had their eyes on her when she returned from grazing and she had no idea what was going to befall her. The group gathered to plot their deed in the house of the slaughterer.

It happened on a Saturday night at the end of summer. Reuven and his household were sitting at twilight and taking pleasure from their heifer. His youngest children were patting her, while the older ones were singing her praises. The eldest daughter got up and took some fodder and gave her a nice ladle of water. Suddenly the heifer let out a piercing moan, and everyone trembled because they didn't know what had happened. Winter would come and darken the hearts of Jews when they realized that there was no firewood or warm clothing for their nakedness. Their deeds must have been wanting, and that is why they had no sustenance.

And then, it was midnight. Everyone was asleep and no light shone in any window. People were dreaming deeply in the gloomy night, because on the morrow the breadless day would begin again … Yet one butcher pierced that darkness and sneaked into Reuven's pen, where the heifer was standing. There was no lock on the door, and only a thick rope attached the heifer's leg to a tree. The prowler cut that rope with a sharp knife and took the heifer by her horns, leading her out a narrow pathway, while the heifer followed in dumb astonishment.

And, hush! The man and the animal stood at the doorway of the large cellar of Shaul the Butcher, where everyone had gathered. Two of them faced the heifer and pulled her while she involuntarily wagged her tail. They abruptly pulled her into the cellar, leading the reluctant animal as she held back and forcing her to do what she feared to do.

Now the heifer stood below, agitated. Seven of the men got up to receive her, dressed in aprons and furs as if they were peasants, with faces aflame. Each man had drunk a little glass to get his strength up, and the little candles shining in the dark made the scene hellish. They surrounded the calf and fondled her.

Suddenly, one of the butchers stood up like a lion, and tried to cast the heifer to the ground, but her legs were like iron. Some others came as reinforcements and struggled with her, but she dug her hooves into the ground while her eyes raged. The heifer got up as if to gore and banged her head against the wall until the cellar shook. One of the butchers crawled under her belly and secured her hind legs with a thick rope. He did the same to her forelegs. All of them got up and girded themselves and climbed upon her back and pushed her. She fell and let out a mighty groan as she tried to sever the ropes. But her attackers grabbed her with a vengeance that no one had seen before. Outside, rain began to fall on the roof and the wind howled. Sweat the size of beans fell from the butchers' foreheads because of such enormous effort; and they looked at one another like strangers while they took off their clothes and rolled up their sleeves for a fight. What pent-up feelings sought release!

One of the butchers, who was himself actually a ritual slaughterer, stood up calmly and sharpened the old blade; he took it out and rubbed its point with his fingernails. Once again, the butchers leaned over the heifer's back. Some took hold of her thick legs below and above, and two especially strong among them twisted her head with incredible might. It was as if doom filled the air, an awful decree of the end of days, and suddenly the butcher who was a slaughterer took up his blade and ran it back and forth across her delicate neck. The heifer let out an awesome earth shattering groan and a fountain of blood poured out, spreading in a great arc and shining in the light from the lamp that hung from the ceiling. The blood continued to flow, splattering on the ceiling and walls, on the ground and on the

trousers of the men as well as on their hands and faces. The heifer struggled with her remaining strength, shuddering while the ground became a river of blood. The murderers put her off to the side, and within an hour her ruddy soul departed and she died. Man had conquered beast!

Then another butcher took a sharp knife and plunged it into the belly of the heifer so that her innards came out, and then still others tore off her skin. There was pent-up power and compressed emotion unknown until this time.

The animal was stripped completely. The men began to divide her into pieces, cutting off her head and he legs. One butcher couldn't restrain himself. He took the fat liver and put it on the hot coals that had been placed in the corner. When the blood reached the flames, everyone ate it ravenously without proper salting, licking their fingers eagerly. A large bottle of brew was ready, so they ate and drank until they satisfied their lust. They were like the priests of Ba'al when the sacrifice was on the altar. But this did not happen at Beth El or at Dan; it happened in the Jewish city of Dashia—not at the time of the exiled ten tribes, but in the year 1884.

The second watch passed, and the rain poured while the wind raged. They divided the heifer ten ways, each man putting his portion in a sack. Each man carried his share on his shoulders and then repaired to his shop in the dark of night in order to hide the spoil. The city was asleep, and the people dreamt away while dogs barked and the skies were gloomy with rain. No one knew what had just transpired!

In their haste, the butchers forgot to close the cellar door, and so the dogs came and licked up the blood. In the morning, folks realized that Reuven's heifer had been stolen and they searched for her. Within an hour, they had found her ruddy coat still wet. They became frightened, and everyone who heard about it was shocked. In Reuven's house there was moaning and deep grief.

From the time of Dashia's founding, there had never been such a terrible day. Men wandered around aimlessly outside, women came together whispering and talking. It was as if there had been an eclipse of the moon in the midst of an eclipse of the sun, and everyone looked at one another as if the world had been turned into Job's Valley of the Ghosts. To slay an animal in the middle of her life is an awful thing.

As for what happened to the butchers who took part in the murder, the various quarrels and court trials and their punishments—both by man and by God—if I would tell all of these in detail, they would take up too much space. In brief, however, everyone who had a hand in doing this to that red heifer experienced bad things in his family life, as if a curse had been cast on him and his house without leaving any remnant. But all these things are written in the history of Dashia and its chronicles.

The reader can find out more there.

The Interlude (1902)

It had been a long, long time since sustenance was abundant in the city of Tornova, for the Jews there fell on hard times quite a while ago. Since then, the rich have become simple householders, and those who had been house-holders have become entirely impoverished. Those who are in between these two estates are stuck in their stores and at their work, providing the bread of affliction to the great and the humble who depend upon them … It's like a miracle that people there continue to live at all and to maintain a level of bare survival … On Sundays little scraps of food remain from Shab-bos.[5] Perhaps folks manage not to be so hungry by Monday. But on Tues-day the crisis sets in and everyone worries about bread for the week. On Wednesday someone manages to bake a little bread by borrowing some-how … On Thursday some dark bread is left over, there's a little flour, some potatoes and little pieces of herring—but everything pales compared to the many anxieties about flour for Shabbos … Everything has been bartered, and there are all kinds of ingenious examples of ingenuity, portable things have been transported, the gates all locked … And yet late in the evening—all the way up to midnight—it might be nighttime entirely, but somehow there is a little white flower mixed with some fermentation, set off in a cor-ner of the house. With a little fish for Shabbos eve, raisin wine and a tiny bit of chicken or beef liver, the world is in order and the people of Judea can put on their Shabbos finery, tighten their girdle sashes, and take up one or the other of the two important prayer books, 'Voice of Jacob' or 'Great Light', and to rush off to synagogue. Who is like unto the people Israel?!

While at the synagogue, nothing much has changed. Every day at the ap-pointed time, the folks of Tornova perform their labors, the work of morn-ing, afternoon and evening prayer. Every afternoon they gather there, those folks who have nothing to lose or to find, and they repeat the same con-versations that they have heard over and over. And every Thursday in the late afternoon, when Raphael Hillel is about to tire from all the words, the words that seem to speak for themselves, or that one hears from others, he will scratch his forehead with his right thumb and say—as is his tiresome custom: 'And, yet, there is another way to look at this'.

And when the people of Tornova get to drink a bit of wine, they drink from a little cup that isn't completely filled; just the opposite of what you might expect … But Jews don't ever stuff themselves; they only do this for their digestion in any case, or to warm their bellies. And when they set about

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5.   I have chosen to use the Ashkenazic rendering of Hebrew in order to suggest the texture of Dashia's population. I have used some tense shifts to try to capture aspects of the narrator's voice, and have supplied translations of concepts within sentences—especially where a term is repeated: *niggun* 'chant', for example, or *siddur* 'prayer book'.

to eat, they don't examine the utensils for kosher flaws, God forbid, but they are very careful not to waste water, fulfilling the old saying that 'The Holy One protects the welfare of the Jews'.

And when God gave Moses the tractate *Derekh eretz zuta*, he said to him: A man should never be awake for too long nor sleep too much; be too righteous or too clever. But everything should be in moderation, evenly paced, and people should hold fast to this principle and not let go.

And surely the Tornovites are mild-mannered folks, excelling in being average, and pursuing the middle path always. There is not a lot of dynamism in their world, ever since the 'great fire'. Since that time every day has been the same and every hour is the same as the one before or after. This sameness includes the way they conduct their prayers; the Amidah, they believe, was written down word for word ever since the time of Abraham. How can people change at all in such a world!

At this point I have to point out that the Tornovites are considered followers of the Talna Rebbe. They're not fanatical 'Hasidim'. They make only infrequent pilgrimage to their Rebbe, the Hasidic leader, mainly because they believe that one couldn't really get along without a Rebbe. This Rebbe was typical, and would sit with a far away look in his eyes; and they, being simple people, always have sat in Tornova since they don't have the time to be preoccupied with these matters. It sufficed that they attend to their Hasidic duties once every half or quarter of a year, and those who were even busier, only paid attention annually. It seems as if it were enough for a person to see the face of the Tsaddik around New Year's time, since it was at this time of the year that one's livelihood was determined on high … One might even say that more was determined: poverty and plague, executions and desolation, who by fire and who by water [a quip from Yom Kippur liturgy], and all the other matters of the new year. In any event, all of these matters were only the extras [*haroset*]; livelihood was the main thing, for without that no one can raise a family. Yes, the prayer book proclaims that one must continue praying about one's sins and transgressions, bloodshed and sexual transgressions, things that never really happened in the Jewish Diaspora anyway, but one had to be careful, after all.

Tornova itself has been a town forever. When God almighty decided go gather dust to create Adam, he went around, as it were, to every house and gathered up dust and detritus and placed it in his kerchief. And when the ministering angels first said, 'What is man that thou art mindful of him?', God decided to take counsel with the Shechina, his own divine presence.

And the ministering angels themselves are aged, white bearded, holier than our ancestor Abraham, and lacking in [the classic libido we call] *yetzer hara*. They didn't receive the Torah, since they were not in Egypt. And when God saw that they were without a task in the world, he said to them: You accompany the Shabbos and every pious man in his coming and going.

And if there had been more time for such things, the people of Tornova would have been even more pious, but they were stuck paying attention to their daily lives. We might be able to say that by paying so much attention to matters of this world, they were distracted from higher things; but actually we have learned that the truly charitable person is one who provides for his wife and children.

And that providing was never ample, as it was in so many other cities. The Tornovites need little—only bread and a little grain, and at the most potatoes and a bit of herring. They never extinguished the *yetzer hara* (libido), because one does need an egg once in awhile for a sick person or a birthing mother. Every egg contains the yellow eye and the white surrounding [a reference to an old Jewish saying]; and the *Shulchan arukh* determines when it is kosher or not; and the rabbi of the town knows about all of this, and because of that he can sell a little alcohol and candles with interest.

The rabbi of Tornova is the third in the succession whom we know by name. His predecessor had died, and the one before him died as well. Any further back and we have no sense of the future. They say that before then, in any event, was the reign of Nicholas the Czar.

And our current time, when my story took place, was in the middle of the reign of Alexander the Third; and the Tornova folks just called him Czar.

It's an old story, but it is new at the same time. A Rebbe comes to town, two Rebbes, in fact. And this is what happened. All the people of Tornova are, as I have said, followers of the Talna Rebbe, because they were in close proximity to him and because that's how it is. The old Rebbe was very important. His son had been a 'hidden Ashkenazi', who died before his time. And his grandson, the infant, was placed upon the rabbinic seat before his time. That's how it is, the rabbinate turns within its own silo …

And when I said that all the people in Tornova were Hasidim of Talna, I am exaggerating somewhat. There were still eight and a half people who have to be considered Hasidim of Makarov, and here is who they are: Shmuel ben Yochanan, Yochanan ben Shmuel, Yochanan's brother and Shmuel's brother, the ritual slaughterer with no family, Reuven ben Asher and his two sons, and, the least important of the group, Leibush the Little. The jokesters always called him 'The Tail of the Lion', but we will speak more carefully and call him 'Half Aryeh' ['Half Lion']. Practically speaking, everyone agreed.

And a certain unity prevailed among the Hasidim of Makarov, for they had no land for their own synagogue, and no 'power' in their community, and so they had a kind of arrogance in their very humility; and when called to the Torah from time to time they lift their heads out of the Tallit. And it is in their very nature to be spread out. I don't say anything like this as my own opinion, of course; I'm just repeating what folks say.

And Makarov is far from Tornova. It is an expensive journey—a bloody expensive journey [the narrator plays on the fact that the same root is used for blood and money (*dam*)], since the Makarov Hasidim have no money. It is a difficult journey and they have hungered for a Rebbe for a long time. Indeed, the Hasidim from Makarov don't even have pockets. The journey is very difficult and they have hungered for a Rebbe these many days.

It happens that this third son of the Tsaddik from Makarov gained permission from the authorities to travel to see a doctor. In plain language, to raise money … And as he neared Tornova, his few Hasidim invited people to their homes for Shabbos. They figured that it had been a long time since a Rebbe had come to Tornova and so people didn't really make a distinction between one Rebbe and another. And when the honorable rabbi visited, they flocked to see him to claim their redemption, and to ask about physical as well as spiritual sustenance. It turned out that their Rebbe was gathering a lot of disciples and they were becoming famous because of him.

So news came that this Rebbe was coming to their town. And the young folks who were still eating their simple meals, like manna, by the grace of their in-laws thought it would not be proper to encroach on the territory of the Rebbe from Talna. And so they were afraid, because perhaps this new Rebbe would steal hearts, and the town would have divided loyalties.

So they didn't ask many questions, and they also invited the young Rebbe from Talna to come to Tornova for that same Shabbos; and surprisingly he too received permission from the authorities of his region.

Two Rebbes coming to one city, and preparations beginning from both sides. The Makarover Rebbe will lodge with Yaakov Shmuel from the David family, because he has a large home, and has no sons of his own; and the Rebbe from Talna will stay with Reb Motil, the most distinguished resident of the city.

And these two houses were open from Wednesday morning on. People came and went, coming again and leaving again. Benches and extra tables were carried over to all the hotels. Pots and pans were brought to and fro. Windows were shined up, doors cleaned and the beds made. The bakeries attached to Reb Motil's house were already baking, and housekeepers bustled about buying chickens. Asher Zalman surreptitiously fretted about the fish, and for this purpose the Rebbe's purse was ample. And the main thing was that the men had already begun to drink a little Yash on the prospect of tomorrow, and in this instance the cups were full. Lemech Kalman had drunk two cups by the end of the first day.

Tornova had awakened to an unprecedented liveliness. Rumor had it that folks from the nearby villages would be coming for Shabbos. They also said that the wealthy farmer from nearby Zaravka, who only came to the city for the High Holy Days, was going to come with his ten sons and sons-in-law.

And yet another rumor had it that the Talna Rabbi had a beatific face while the very young rabbi from Makarov had a short temper.

And the Rebbe arrived already by Thursday. There were only a few people to greet him, and after conversing a short while with the first among his Hasidim, he secluded himself in his room in order to commune with his Maker. The Gabbai of town sat on the carpet in front of the room and fell asleep, while Half Aryeh kept watch at the door.

And that evening everyone else went out to greet the Rebbe from Talna. Some went on foot and others in their wagons; hearts were aflutter and the noise was great. The lesser folks sidled up to the more important folks, and the people who even that morning hadn't thought much about the Rebbe were by now out of their minds with enthusiasm. They loosened the horses' reins, while voices shouted out, 'We ourselves will pull his wagon. We ourselves!'

And the house of Reb Motil filled up. Everyone was running around hither and yon. Children paid no attention to their elders [perhaps a messianic reference], and the elders forgot what they needed to do. Everywhere you turned there seemed to be an awakening, a revival in every street and every house.

A Rebbe is coming to town! Two Rebbes!!

And on Friday night from one end of town to the other there was a kind of chaos and confusion. The women folk were busy as they had never been. Pots were broken and then replaced, the older girls helped their mothers, Menashe and Reuven, the water carriers, rushed about at their work; men hurried to the public baths, and in the streets people collided with each other; the goats tarried on their way to their pastures, and mixed around with the people; houses were surrounded, roof beams were carried hither and thither, and more tables were brought. Working and running, talking and listening was what was going on in Tornova, and even the most even-tempered had forgotten to keep their hands to themselves. The town sexton ran around and candles had already been lit. A special pride took over those assigned to lead prayers: Happy are they who dwell in your house, sanctified … Silent prayer, community prayer: Holy, Holy, Holy—It is our obligation to praise, come let us proclaim joyfully and raise our voices to the Rock of our Salvation. All of the great prayers tumbled out!

And at the end of the prayers, the zealous hurried to the Rebbes' lodgings, even before going home; and even those who had 'visited' their wives before prayers gulped the Kiddush wine with fish in order to get to the Rebbes' lodgings. People were already arrayed at the long tables; benches were placed on top of benches. Rows upon rows of people sat crowded around them; people stood shoulder against shoulder. All this with the silence of arousal. Dressed in black, the Rebbes' faces were pure white, surrounded by awe and elevation, a soft voice blessed the wine, the fish eaten

with all the refinement that is the custom with people like this, since the fish took the place of the holy sacrifice from the ancient temple … A *niggun* emerged for them, a deep chant, recalling forgotten things … Up and down the scale, surrounding everyone here and there, pouring out alternately in sadness and joy, awe and happiness … And the crowd would take hold of the end of each verse and give it its own melody. Eyebrows rose, and among many souls a new channel was opened, and the heart emerged from its private place. At a time like this there is no such thing as sin: Your people Israel, O God, are like a new creature, and outside only the heavens and the stars paid heed.

And in the morning everyone immersed himself in the ritual bath, as if they were bridegrooms … And for the first time folks were asking after the welfare of their fellows. An entirely new kind of intimacy had developed amongst the population.

Caravans of people filled the streets from the ritual bathhouse to the Beis Midrash, the house of study. Faces glowed, and the ritual side curls were still wet, and the wide white collars symbolized a new kind of spiritual readiness. People stuck their hands into each other's sashes, and the inquisitive among the people stroked their beards and asked, Who will *daven* morning prayers today? And who will pray the additional service? Specific melodies in the past day or so were not up to snuff, so we want to be certain that the prayers are led well.

And people were praying by now with a special joy. Most of the worshippers were moving back and forth, although here and there you could see someone having a conversation off to the side. Some people stood at the windows and looked outside as the earth was warming from the sun. Important people were called to the Torah. This was the Shabbos on which we read *Mevarchim* [the blessing of the New Moon]: 'May the One who performed miracles for our ancestors save us …'

People hurried through *musaf* [the additional service]. They loaded their children up with the prayer books and the *tallesim* [prayer shawls], and everyone ran to get to the tables where the Rebbes would be seated. It wouldn't be pleasant if in all of this hurrying around, one would miss saying the *motzi* [blessing over the meal] . And even the folks who were frail and who didn't come to the Rebbes' welcome the day before, came today. Everyone was joyful and began to drink in large gulps. Bottles were set on the tables, and wine and delicacies were passed around, and poor people even presumed to stand amidst the householders. And the very elderly passed up their afternoon naps. The women envied the men, and the young folks and little children relished their freedom, all of them were climbing up and down the windows and one tree at the side of the house had dropped its fruit from all of the shaking. And the sun stood in the heavens.

And when the third meal came, it was time for the Torah and the melodies of the Rebbes … Heads were bent and ears were listening. One of the Rebbes began: 'The truth, the truth, the truth … Israel is like a bride, a bride … Our hearts are like the ancient sacrifice offerings, offerings, offerings … It is joy, joy and more joy to be aroused towards the high places and towards the low. God of all the worlds … world, world … '

And everyone was happy and amazed, and people descended into the depths of their souls and raised up sparks of vitality, and a hidden light emerged from within people … That hour was like the final minutes of Yom Kippur … The real world seemed far away, and Tornova certainly was far away … And it seems that only those around these tables were really in the world. And at dusk the Shekhina dwelt … and everything depended upon the words of the Rebbe … All strength and desire were right here! Had one of the Rebbes given divine utterance to a wild notion, everyone would have left their senses!! Those seated and those standing … their essences and the fire of desire would have been lit … wiped out by the dust of the generations, but re-aroused at this time!

And Saturday night—the end of the Shabbos—the Sabbath Queen was ushered out by the whole assembly … What was holy remained holy, and the regular folks dressed in the elegant clothes of free men … People had drunk all they could, but those who were especially punctilious managed to drink even more. Reuven the children's teacher tried to dance alone … One of the faithful went into the kitchen and lusted after the kitchen maids … Some people didn't even return to their own homes. And for fun people stuck their hands into others' plates of food. For fun they tied up Gadi the beggar … Wild, wild laughter prevailed, and the drinking didn't really stop … With this kind of freedom, some men forgot about their stores, and Sunday's market day went by the wayside as people drank even more. Who cares about providing for their families when a Jew begins to celebrate even on a Sunday. And one fellow called out: Gentlemen, let us be happy! The Divine Presence has been aroused! Yet another beggar named Menashe jumped up from his seat and took another by the hand, and that man, Yerucham, dragged Shimon into the line, Shimon took Binyamin, and Binyamin grabbed Kalman's sash. Kalman began to play on his instrument, and everyone began a dance—at first in jest, but then in spiritual arousal and with abandon. And then people on the outside of that circle took the hands of other people and joined the circle, so that they danced in a large circle … And then others jumped into the middle of the larger circle and danced within. Everyone moved back and forth jumping and running; until their eyeballs bulged and until they drooled. One fellow tore open his shirtwaist and bared his chest. This is abandon—sheer abandon—when the Jews dance.

In the Rebbe's room and in the rooms surrounding that room, everyone danced, and the dance continued outside to other homes and even other

neighborhoods, dancing continued in the homes of the big shots in the city, of the town rabbi and in the homes of the ritual slaughterers and the cantors; even tailors—the little people—who are usually far from such things, mixed in with the Hasidim (the faithful) and danced along; the scholars forgot their biblical commentaries—like Radak and Malbim—and they joined in the drinking. The voices grew louder and louder. People uttered words that could not be understood. Dance steps turned into skipping, the noise increased, and bodies scattered about. Utter chaos! Your Jews were taking off their outer garments and dancing. The soul opened up the throat. People gained 70 times their usual strength. And people became a sheer life force. Such arousal and such chaos had never seen the light of day. It was as if fountains of joy that had been closed from ancient times were reemerging and making waves. Utensils lost their real value, walls no longer held people in, and the roofs no longer mattered … Everyone raised his own self up to new heights spreading out and making merry, moving the rooftops, arousing the hidden places of life from their hiding places, crying out and singing without control … Give these people rivers of wine, give them the turbulence of hugging and kissing, of infinite passion, of pious attachment to holiness that grabs the essence of each soul … Give them recompense for their lives that they had never lived or that their ancestors had lived, redeem what has gone on in all times and all generations.

And on the morrow, all was still abandon, any available money was gone and people had pawned their possessions, forgetting entirely what things were worth and spending more than they were able. People didn't think about what they were able to spend or what others were able to spend. People all ate together and they went from house to house and from neighborhood to neighborhood looking for food and drink. Chaos reigned!

And on Monday and Tuesday people began to realize that something was wrong, and they said more soberly, Whatever have you done? You took everything out of your house. And you drank to drown out the pain. Frail people started sleeping in the synagogue or on the dining table of this one, or even on the beds of that one. Women no longer knew where their husbands were. And some men had been missing for as long as two days.

The Rebbe returned home on Wednesday, and with whatever strength remained with them, the people escorted him out with dancing.

By Thursday a small remnant remained as a kind of dessert. But some things were already becoming apparent: there was no house that had not been emptied out; there was no one who hadn't eaten absolutely everything, to the point where there was nothing left for the coming Shabbos.

On that Saturday, people were restraining themselves so as not to desecrate their Sabbath; to the contrary, they managed to retain a little joy and a little something to drink, and to be enthusiastic by just a bit, and all this a remnant from the Rebbe and from all that he had done.

But when Shabbos was over, and Havdalah prayers were finished, and from the fire that burned green, when the women put their handkerchiefs in their apron skirts, they began to look closely at their husbands and say to them: Go open your store! Go out into the market! Take your needle and your awl! And then the people of Tornova went back to the daily routines and turned their attention to the daily business.

And so the long Exile began again …

Paul vis-à-vis Levinas[1]

Pamela Eisenbaum

To Jewish commentators on Paul as well as to many progressive Christian theologians, Paul's dealings with otherness are generally not viewed favorably, or at least Paul's views are seen to be limited and problematic. After all, Paul represents the beginning of the Christian missionary enterprise—his whole purpose was to turn others into Christians. According to this view, whoever the Other was whom Paul encountered, he did not care who they were as Other; his mission was to remake the Other in his own image. The Other's otherness was a problem to be overcome. The Pauline view of the Other represents what some have called an attitude of encompassment.[2]

In this paper I want to argue that Paul's ethics of the Other is illuminated and even made palatable to modern sensibilities when read in terms of the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. I would not have been able to imagine reading Paul and Levinas together if it had not been for Tamara's pioneering work in *Levinas and Biblical Studies*.[3] This volume was the first one devoted to reading biblical texts in light of Levinas and, in truth, it still stands as the definitive example of what it means to engage with Levinas when reading the Bible. I owe my career to Tamara, and I am grateful for the opportunity to honor my friend, teacher, colleague, and mentor with this

2. Gerd Baumann and André Gingrich, *Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach* (European Association of Social Anthropologists series; New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), pp. 25-27. I have capitalized 'Other' because this practice reflects the ultimate priority of the Other as Levinas postulates it; this will also help distinguish between when I use the term in a Levinasian sense and when it is ordinary usage.
3. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, Gary A. Phillips and David Jobling (eds.), *Levinas and Biblical Studies* (Semeia Studies; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

paper. Levinas's thought is filled with a spirit of generosity that I find inspiring; Tamara is one of the very few people who embodies the kind of generosity that most of us merely talk about.

Levinas is famous for saying that 'ethics is first philosophy', or 'ethics before ontology', by which he meant that ethics should not be grounded in some 'ontic' reality or in anything outside of the relationship between the Self and the Other.[4] I hope to show that the way Paul handled conflict between different groups within his communities is compatible with this kind of ethical philosophy. Furthermore, I hope to show that this reading of Paul allows interpreters of the apostle to view his teachings in ways productive for relating to any Other who belongs to another religious tradition.

In order to accomplish this task, I will first briefly review Levinas's philosophy about the 'Other' insofar as it is relevant to this paper, and then I will take a specific Pauline text and read it using the Levinasian framework described in the first section.[5]

Levinas

One of Levinas's most fundamental claims is that ethics is not grounded in ontology. In the history of philosophy, the great conundrum of ethics is the question of where to locate the grounding of any ethical system. In Christian and Jewish tradition, the grounding of ethics has traditionally been God, more precisely, God's moral instruction as manifest in the Bible. Since the Enlightenment, of course, locating the grounding of ethics in divinity has been a problem. For many, Kant's categorical imperative—one must treat others only as ends, never means—solved the problem, but for others the basic problem of grounding remained. *Why* should I make myself obligated to treat others only as ends and not means?

The standard answer to this question is to appeal to the golden rule, which itself is rooted for most of us in biblical tradition: 'Do unto others as I would have done unto me'. As traditionally understood, the golden rule itself is rooted in an assumption that all human beings are fundamentally the same. I treat the Other ethically because the Other is like me. The Other deserves to be treated just I would want to be treated, because we are both human beings. We have our humanity in common; we are fundamentally the same.

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4. Levinas says this throughout his work in different formulations, but it is used to name one of his essays, 'Ethics as First Philosophy', which appears in Emmanuel Levinas and Seán Hand, *The Levinas Reader* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

5. For a more in-depth but still succinct overview of Levinas, see Tamara Eskenazi's introductory essay in *Levinas and Biblical Studies* (ed. Eskenazi, Phillips and Jobling), pp. 1-16.

   In fact, teaches Levinas, this kind of ethical 'grounding' is dangerous. One could even claim that it potentially opens the door to the Holocaust. If the Golden Rule requires that I perceive the Other to be the same as me, or at least similar, what happens if I do *not* view the Other as being like me? What if I do not understand anything about the Other, who they are, where they come from, what they believe? In other words, if I view the Other as fundamentally different, then there is no reason to live by the categorical imperative or the golden rule. According to Levinas, the longstanding assumption of sameness implicit in the Western tradition of ethical philosophy has so often led to violence and oppression of the Other that it is untenable at best, dangerous at worst.

   Levinas's answer to this problem is to 'ground' human moral relations in the fundamental difference of the Other from the self.[6] The Other—*any* Other—is *not* like me; the Other is *wholly* other—to borrow a phrase from the neo-orthodox theologian, Karl Barth. The connection is more than rhetorical, because Levinas correlates the face of the Other with the face of God—which is one reason why Levinas sometimes speaks of 'height' in describing the relationship between the I and the Other. Just as God is unknowable, the Other is not epistemologically graspable, and I must not endeavor to make the Other an object of knowledge. I must, with modesty, recognize the reality of the Other's radical otherness. The Other stands in a position of height beyond my ken, and completely beyond my control.

   The otherness of the Other is captured by Levinas's idea of the face. As Levinas says, 'The way in which the other presents himself, exceeding *the idea of the other in me*, we here name the face'.[7] Levinas is implicitly critiquing Husserl and the phenomenological tradition in general, where one's intention of comprehension constitutes what is real. (Ultimately, Levinas is critiquing the entire philosophical tradition concerned with ontology.) The face is completely outside of me and even beyond my comprehension. There is no ontological totality that encompasses both me and the Other; neither can I get outside myself and assume a God's-eye point of view. As one commentator has said, 'For Levinas, there is no view from nowhere. Every view is from somewhere and the ethical relation is a description from the point of view of the agent in the social world and not a spectator upon it.'[8]

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   6.   The reason for scare quotes around 'ground' is that Levinas eschews foundations, like many other postmodern philosophers. I use the term only as a matter of convenience.

   7.   Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 50.

   8.   Simon Critchley, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 14. Although no explicit reference is made, I assume Critchley is alluding to the famous saying by Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Typically, the Western philosophical tradition has assumed that I must know what reality is, and what grounds reality, in order to make judgments about the world around me, including ethical judgments involving my relationships with others. This quest for ontological knowledge that has dominated Western philosophy is precisely the problem for Levinas, and he argues that it would be best to give up on the enterprise. The reason is partly because he does not think it possible, and therefore it is a futile endeavor, but more importantly it is because such totalizing projects have had undesirable ethical consequences. The very attempt to grasp reality in general—'Being' in Heidegger's language—constitutes the move toward constructing unity, that is to say, it is a totalizing move designed to encompass everything into itself, for it fails to recognize that individual subjectivities exist autonomously outside the self. This epistemological endeavor leads to an objectification of the Other and a desire to manipulate or control the Other. When I make the Other an object of knowledge, I am no longer in an ethical relationship with the Other; I no longer allow the Other a personal subjectivity. It is ultimately an act of violence.

In the history of philosophy, the preoccupation with ontology has compromised ethical thinking. In reality, according to Levinas, I do not need any kind of prior knowledge in order to have an authentic encounter with the Other.[9] There is no reason we need to 'ground' ethics in 'being', or, for that matter, anything else. In truth, we tend instinctively to recognize the presence of the Other. Levinas points out that it is 'difficult to be silent' in the presence of another; '…it is necessary to speak of something, of the rain and fine weather, no matter what, but to speak, to respond to him and already to answer for him'.[10] This desire to connect with the other—to *say something,* regardless of what it is—is evidence of the primacy of the human interrelationship above all else, including knowledge. Although it runs the risk of oversimplifying, the starting point for a Levinasian ethic is hospitality. As he himself says near the beginning of *Totality and Infinity*, 'This book will present subjectivity as welcoming the Other, as hospitality'.[11] It seems to me quite right then to say, following Tamara, that what Levinas teaches is 'implicitly biblical'.

9. Levinas in a late work calls the relationship with the other 'religion' in order to highlight the way in which the relationship cannot be reduced in knowledge. '"Religion" remains the relationship to a being as being. It does not consist in *conceiving* of him as a being, an act in which the *being* is already assimilated …' (*Entre nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1998], pp. 5-8).

10. Emmanuel Levinas and Philippe Nemo, *Ethics and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), p. 88.

11. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 27.

   Moreover, the relationship between the Self and the Other is not a relationship between equals, and it is not based on reciprocity.[12] It is an asymmetrical relationship in which the self has an infinite responsibility toward the Other. The notion of infinite responsibility is one of Levinas's most important ideas. As Levinas famously said,

> I always have, myself, one responsibility more than anyone else, since I am responsible, in addition, for his responsibility. And if he is responsible for my responsibility, I remain responsible for the responsibility he has for my responsibility. *Ein ladavar sof*, 'it will never end'.[13]

   The 'I' is infinitely responsible for the Other. There is no singular totality that encompasses everything, and thus there can be no limit on my responsibility. Levinas elsewhere says, somewhat shockingly,

> I am responsible for the persecutions that I undergo. But only me! My 'close relations' or 'my people' are already the others, and, for them, I demand justice.[14]

Levinas is following his thinking to its logical conclusion, which, by his own admission, he does 'not like mentioning'.[15] But by mentioning it, he illustrates the infinite responsibility of the individual, as well as the isolation of the individual. I can only see things from my single vantage point; I am alone, hence the consequence of infinite responsibility. In this formulation, however, I can never 'blame the victim' because the victim is always an Other for whom I have infinite responsibility.

   Before turning to Paul, I need to mention that it is significant for my reading of Paul here that Levinas is not just a philosopher; he is a *Jewish* philosopher. Levinas was an observant Jew, and was well studied in the Bible and rabbinic tradition. Hilary Putnam has said that if you miss the biblical resonances in Levinas's philosophy—even when he does not explicitly appeal to the Bible—you miss much of what he is saying.[16] Putnam emphasizes this in a discussion about the way in which Levinas understands the relation with the Other as a command or an obligation.

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   12. This is the distinguishing feature between Levinas's understanding of human intersubjectivity and Martin Buber's I–Thou.

   13. Levinas and Hand, *The Levinas Reader*, pp. 225-26.

   14. Levinas and Nemo, *Ethics and Infinity*, p. 99. For Levinas, 'justice' is the system of ethics, which he does not regard as his project. Levinas always focuses on the ideal relationship between the self and the Other.

   15. If it had not been in the context of an interview with Philip Nemo (captured in *Ethics and Infinity*), in which he was prodding Levinas, I imagine he might not have made these comments.

   16. This same point is argued not only by Tamara Eskenazi in her introduction, but also by several of the contributors to the volume *Levinas and Biblical Studies*.

'Thou shall not kill' is the first moment in my encounter with the Other.[17] When he invokes the commandment against killing, he is not merely thinking of a law against murder or doing violence to another. The reason he calls it 'the first moment' in the encounter with the Other is because he takes it as an injunction against any act in which one objectifies the Other, for once I make the Other an object of my knowing, I deny the Other subjectivity, and if I do that, I have done violence.

Levinas was not a theologian, and he did not write about Judaism *per se* the way many other Jewish philosophers have. Nor were Jews his target audience. Indeed, Putnam has characterized Levinas's work as constituting 'a mission to the gentiles'[18]—a fortuitous description, since it connects Levinas to Paul. 'Levinas's audience is typically a gentile audience', says Putnam. He celebrates Jewish particularity in essays addressed to Christians and to modern people generally.[19] And yet, says Putnam, Levinas is universalizing Judaism. In making this claim, Putnam is drawing on an essay of Levinas's entitled 'A Religion for Adults', and it is worth quoting at length:

> A truth is universal when it applies to every reasonable being. A religion is universal when it is open to all. In this sense the Judaism that links the Divine to the moral has always aspired to be universal. But the revelation of morality, which discovers a human society, also discovers the place of election, which in this universal society returns to the person who receives this revelation. This election is made up not of privileges but of responsibilities. It is a nobility based not on an author's rights or on a birthright conferred by divine caprice, but on the position of each human I … The basic intuition of moral growing-up perhaps consists in perceiving that I am not the *equal* of the Other. This applies in a very strict sense; I see myself obligated with respect to the Other, consequently I am infinitely more demanding of myself than of others … This 'position outside the nations' of which the Pentateuch speaks is realized in the concept of Israel and its particularism. It is a particularism that conditions universality.[20]

In this text Levinas is interpreting election not as a form of privilege but as a form of service. The doctrine of election as Levinas reads it is a near-perfect reflection of the asymmetrical relationship between the self and the Other for which Levinas is so famous. It is my claim in this paper that Putnam's characterization of Levinas's universalization of Judaism parallels Paul.

17. Hilary Putnam, 'Levinas and Judaism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas* (ed. Simon Critchley; London: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 45; Levinas and Nemo, *Ethics and Infinity*, p. 89.

18. Putnam, 'Levinas and Judaism', p. 33.

19. Putnam, 'Levinas and Judaism', p. 34.

20. *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), pp. 20-21. Also cited in Putnam, *Levinas and Judaism*, p. 34.

Paul and his Response to Conflict in Corinth

Levinas's philosophical ethics as I have just described it is at odds with the traditional image of Paul with which many are familiar: the man whose mission was to transform others into Christians—to use the language of Levinas himself, Paul's goal was to transform the Other whom he encountered into one like himself. As the apostle was fond of saying, 'Be imitators of me'.[21] This would seem to be exactly the sort of disposition that Levinas seeks to counter.

According to the traditional portrait, Paul rejected his ancestral religion in order to transcend the particularity of Judaism, with its insistence on arcane laws and an exclusivism tending toward xenophobia. Because of his transformative experience of the resurrected Jesus, he rejected Judaism in favor of Christianity and thus became Christianity's greatest evangelist. In letters to his followers he articulated the universalist vision of Christianity, a religion of radical grace rather than the oppressive judgment of law, a religion of pure faith rather than works, a religion inclusive of all the world's peoples, knowing no cultural bounds and understood in contrast to Judaism, which was seen to be narrow, inward-looking, and exclusivist. As Kathy Ehrensperger, who has called Paul the 'champion of hegemonic universalism', says, 'If Paul actually is the founder of universalism in that sense, the encounter between Levinas and Paul would probably take on the form of confrontation rather than conversation'.[22]

In recent years this centuries-old portrait of Paul has been severely criticized by many scholars, including myself. In my view the critique has dealt a devastating blow to the traditional image of Paul, though the traditional image still prevails, in both scholarship and the popular imagination. Thus, part of my agenda in attempting this Levinasian reading is to try to gain further ground in the efforts of those who advocate for a Paul who is not the 'champion of hegemonic universalism'.[23]

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21. 1 Cor. 4.15; 11.1; 1 Thess. 1.6.

22. Kathy Ehrensperger, 'Reading Romans "in the Face of the Other". Levinas, the Jewish Philosopher, Meets Paul, the Jewish Apostle', in *Reading Romans with Contemporary Philosophers and Theologian* (ed. David W. Odell-Scott; New York and London: T. & T. Clark, 2007). Ehrensperger's essay is the only one I have found that uses Levinas to read Paul, although her agenda in using Levinas to read Paul is different from mine.

23. My critique of traditional readings of Paul and my proposal for an alternative portrait can be found in *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009). For an overview of current scholarship on Paul with special attention to the competing trajectories of the traditional and new perspectives (including the radical new perspective), see Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

Since I cannot in this brief paper perform a systematic analysis of all the apostle's moral teachings in all his letters, I will instead offer a close reading of one text, an excerpt from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, in order to demonstrate that Paul can be read in harmony with the fundamental insights of Levinas described above. Put in general terms, I see three ways in which Paul's letter resonates with Levinas. First, ethics is primary for Paul, which means theological knowledge is secondary—as mentioned above, one of Levinas's best-known sayings is 'ethics is first philosophy'. As we shall see, Paul devalues theological correctness in favor of the human relationship. The one and the other need not necessarily agree on what is true or what is real to live together in an ethical relationship. Second, Paul emphasized simply being with the Other, not necessarily trying to comprehend the Other. Not only does Levinas say that ontological knowledge is secondary to the ethical relationship, he also teaches that the 'I' does not really ever know the Other. The Other remains wholly Other. Paul displays a respect for the Other's otherness that reflects this attitude. Third, Paul regarded the Other as 'higher' than himself. Paul taught that the best disposition one could have toward the Other is one of profound humility and service. The Other's needs exceed those of oneself. One reason for this is that Christ was Paul's model, and Christ of course made a sacrifice of himself for others' sake. Another reason—one less recognized—is that he understood the election of Israel to be an election of service not power and authority. God chose Israel to play a certain role vis-à-vis the nations or gentiles. Thus, Paul's writing reflects this Levinasian principle not just at the individual level but also at the communal level.

I turn now to 1 Corinthians 8. In 1 Corinthians 8–10 Paul addresses a conflict in the community over food, over what is appropriate, or not appropriate, to eat. More specifically, the issue concerns eating meat sacrificed to idols. A situation has developed where some members of the Corinthian community believe they are entitled to eat meat that has been sacrificed to pagan gods, while other members of the community think this is sacrilegious; therefore Christians must abstain from such food. There is some debate about whether Paul is addressing exactly the same problem throughout this section of his letter, but that debate is not significant for my argument here. I tend to think it is the same issue, but, in any case, a focus on chap. 8 will suffice to illustrate my Levinasian interpretation.[24]

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24. Some have argued that Paul is addressing the issue of participating in cultic meals in temples to other gods in chap. 10, while the issue in chap. 8 is the eating of any meat bought in the market place that may have originally been slaughtered for the purposes of a sacrificial meal. We need not resolve the issue here, and a resolution is not crucial to the interpretation I am proposing (though my own position is that Paul's concern in general—that is, in both chapters—is with any meat that has been sacrificed

One of the things that most stands out about Judaism and Christianity in antiquity is that Jews and Christians made exclusive claims on their adherents. You could not worship the God of Israel or Jesus *in addition to other gods,* as would have been commonplace for most of the other religions operating in the Greco-Roman world. It is therefore not surprising that early Christians would object to eating idol meat. Indeed, in the other New Testament texts that mention this issue, eating meat that has been sacrificed to other gods is unambiguously proscribed.[25] The fact that it comes up in different texts and contexts indicates that the issue was a live one in early Christian communities.[26] In any case, Paul's response to the Corinthians' inquiry is complicated and lengthy. I am going to argue that Paul does not contradict himself (as some have suggested); rather he is arguing a subtle position rooted in an ethical stance consonant with the teachings of Levinas.

On the one hand, Paul affirms that, indeed, it is acceptable to eat meat sacrificed to idols because in reality there are no other gods but the One God, and if one knows this to be true, as presumably a Christian would, then whatever has allegedly been done with the meat does not matter. One who does not believe in other gods does not therefore commit idolatry by offering meat sacrificed to idols. On the other hand, at the end of chap. 8 he seems to say the opposite: that it is *not* appropriate to eat idol meat, and by the time he gets to chap. 10, he says in no uncertain terms that it is not appropriate to eat meat that has been sacrificed to other gods.[27]

Paul begins his discussion of idols by claiming that 'there are no idols in the world' and, invoking the *Shema,* that 'there is no God but one' (1 Cor. 8.4).[28] His very next statement, however, qualifies this point:

to idols). For discussions of the issue, see Gordon D. Fee, '*Eidolothyta* Once Again: An Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 8–10', *Biblica* 61 (1980), pp. 172-97; Ben Witherington III, 'Why Not Idol Meat? Is It What You Eat or Where You Eat It?', *Bible Review* 10/3 (1994), pp. 38-43, 54-55; E. Coye Still III, 'Divisions over Leaders and Food Offered to Idols: The Parallel Thematic Structures of 1 Corinthians 4.6-21 and 8.1–11.1', *Tyndale Bulletin* 55 (2004), pp. 17-41.

25. Acts 15.28-29; Rev. 2.14, 20.

26. Richard Hays, *First Corinthians* (Interpretation: A Bible Series for Teaching and Preaching; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1997), p. 134.

27. For discussions of Paul's complex rhetoric in this passage, see J. Fotopoulos, 'Arguments Concerning Food Offered to Idols: Corinthian Quotations and Pauline Refutations in a Rhetorical *Partitio* (1 Corinthians 8.1-9)', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 67 (2005), pp. 611-31; Peter D. Gooch, *Dangerous Food: First Corinthians 8–10 in its Context* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993); Joop M. Smit, *'About the Idol Offerings': Rhetoric, Social Context and Theology of Paul's Discourse in First Corinthians 8.1–11.1* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

28. Translations of Paul are mine unless otherwise indicated.

> For there are many that are called gods, both in heaven and in earth, just as there are many gods and many lords. But for us there is one God, the Father, from whom come all things, and for whom we exist, and one lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we exist (vv. 5-6).[29]

Commentators recognize the problem with this text, for it looks as if Paul changes his mind between v. 4 and vv. 5-6. He first says categorically that there is only one God, then in v. 5 he says there are, in fact, many who are called gods, and indeed, there are many gods, but for *us*—Paul and his followers—there is only one God. Interpreters debate whether Paul is actually saying there are other, presumably lesser, gods, or merely that other people *think* there are other gods. I think we can argue that the ambiguity is meaningful. But in order to make that argument I must back up for a moment.

Before Paul addresses the specific problem of idolatry, he makes a general statement about knowledge:

> Concerning food sacrificed to idols: We know that 'all of us possess knowledge'. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone thinks he knows something he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if one loves, one is known by him (vv. 1-2).

Thus the entire issue about meat sacrificed to idols is framed in broader epistemological terms. It is likely that Paul is motivated to do this because at least some members of the Corinthian community have framed it this way (hence the quotations around the assertion in v. 1 that 'all of us possess knowledge'). In terms of my Levinasian agenda, what stands out is that Paul is, in principle, subordinating knowledge to love, by which Paul means a certain kind of ethical relationship. Thus, when Paul makes the ostensibly self-contradicting statement about other gods existing and not existing, he qualifies his claims precisely because he wants to acknowledge that his knowledge claims are limited by his point of view. Categorical statements carry with them the pretense of having a god's-eye point of view. Although he initially makes what sounds like a categorical statement when he invokes the Shema—'there is no God but one'—he then goes on to say there *are* other gods and lords, not just those who are *called* gods by others. Whether or not Paul believes that other gods really exist is not the point.[30] Paul is

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29. Because of the poetic nature of this passage, many interpreters believe this is an early Christian creed or confession that Paul is quoting. See Hans Conzelmann, *First Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthian,* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 139-50; Richard A. Horsley, 'The Background of the Confessional Formula in 1 Kor 8,4-6', *Zeitschrift für die neutestamenliche Wissenschaft* 69 (1978), pp. 130-35.

30. Scholars agree that Paul is alluding to or evoking the *Shema*, but there are conflicting opinions about whether he is reinterpreting the *Shema* in terms of Christ, and whether or not his use of the formula says anything about Paul's belief (or not) in the

acknowledging that others 'know' (or have known) other gods and worship them. He acknowledges epistemological difference without denigrating the knowledge claims of others.

In vv. 7ff., Paul explicitly refutes the slogan articulated by the Corinthian delegation who wrote to Paul: 'all of us possess knowledge'. He says, 'It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge', presumably meaning the knowledge about the oneness of God. The argument of those who think it is acceptable to eat food that has been sacrificed to idols is based on a claim of knowledge, specifically the knowledge that there is really only one God. The logic goes like this: if one knows that there is only one God, it does not matter what one eats—even food sacrificed to idols, because there is no reality behind the idols. Thus, from the idol meat-eaters' perspective, what difference does it make? What matters is that one knows the theological truth about the singularity of the divine.

We have already seen the first part of Paul's response: yes, some of us have this knowledge ('for us there is one God, the Father'). Paul goes on to say he agrees with their knowledge claim that it makes no difference what one eats: 'We are no worse off if we eat, and no better off if we do'. But, he says, not everyone has this knowledge. Because Paul describes these others as 'accustomed to idols', it is clear that those without knowledge are gentiles who, presumably until recently, have worshipped other gods, and that worship entailed offering sacrifices to idols.[31] Paul also refers to these others as having a 'weak conscience'. There have been various theories over the years that attempt to explain why Paul refers to this group as 'weak', including that this group may be of a lower socio-economic level than those eating the meat.[32] Again, the specific identity of the weak is not my concern here; we need only observe that, by using the word 'weak', Paul in fact perceives them as more needy and less powerful than the meat-eating faction. Although it may at first glance appear that Paul denigrates them by his use of the term 'weak', Paul earlier identified himself among the weak, and uses this term positively as the appropriate position one should assume if one is a follower of Christ (4.10).

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existence of other gods, though I think the balance has shifted in favor of answering Yes to that question. See N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 128; Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 114; and Erik Waaler, *The* Shema *and the First Commandment in First Corinthians* (WUNT, 2/253; Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

31. Whether or not the ones who claim knowledge are Jews or Gentiles has been disputed. For our purposes it does not matter; it matters only that Paul claims to share their epistemological perspective.

32. This was most famously argued by Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

The culmination of the argument in chap. 8 is Paul siding with the weak, in spite of his agreement with those who think it is acceptable to eat food sacrificed to idols. Paul explains that if those of weak conscience see 'you, who has knowledge, reclining at the table of an idol, might not the one whose conscience is weak be encouraged to eat the idol food?' (v. 10). The problem is that the one with the weak conscience is accustomed to sacrificing to idols that for them represent real deities, and, implicitly, one who eats idol meat while thinking the idols are real has, in fact, committed idolatry. The consequence, says Paul, is that 'by your knowledge, the one who is weak is destroyed'. Having sinned against the weak, 'you sin against Christ' (v. 12). 'Therefore', the apostle concludes, 'if food is the cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause my brother to fail' (v. 13).

The bottom line is this: although Paul thinks the meat-eaters are theologically correct, and he shares their knowledge on the matter, that is not determinative for solving the conflict. Just the opposite. What governs Paul's message is an overarching concern for the well-being of those described as having a weak conscience. Paul's words are an admonishment to those who are eating the idol food. He instructs them to defer to the needs of the weak, in spite of the fact they are 'theologically correct' in Paul's opinion.

As noted by many commentators, Paul's argument does not end with chap. 8 but continues until the end of chap. 10. If anything, he becomes more adamant in taking up the position of the weak, stressing that the guiding principle must be the concern for the other: 'Let no one seek his own benefit, but that of the other' (10.25). Indeed, Paul says this in slightly different ways several times in his letter.[33]

There are several ways in which Paul's teachings in this text reflect Levinasian principles: First, ethics takes precedence over knowledge. Whether or not you think idols are real deities ultimately does not matter. If eating idol food compromises the 'conscience' of the other, I am not supposed to eat it. Contrary to the traditional image of Paul, he does not, at least in this example, teach that one must have the correct belief about Jesus or the divine. What you believe is unambiguously secondary to practices that prioritize the well-being of the other. Paul respects the difference of the Other as a fundamental difference that is not to be 'corrected' by those 'in the know'.

Second, Paul regards the Other as both more needy and, at the same time, superior: in Levinasian terms, the relationship between the I and the Other is not one of equals. The Other is in a position of greater height in spite of the fact that they are in greater need. Paul labels those who object to eating idol meat 'weak'. Thus, while scholars debate exactly who they

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33. See 10.31-33; 12.20-26; the love poem in chap. 13.

are, the 'weak' must lack some advantage the other faction has. If these two groups were simply two equal groups of people who disagree, Paul would not label them 'weak'. Indeed, Paul addresses his words to those members of the community who enjoy some sort of privilege, and he identities himself among this group. He speaks of the 'weak' as a third party—there is no question they are the ones who are Other in this conversation. In addressing the 'strong', he communicates that it is they, and he, who have the greater responsibility. At one point in his interview with Philippe Nemo, Levinas says that what he is after is the original 'after you, sir!' By this I take Levinas to mean that when people instinctively hold open a door for a stranger, they are instinctively serving the needs of the Other, with whom they do not have a reciprocal relationship and no expectation of a returned favor. Moreover, the 'I' is not acting from a position of power; on the contrary, the I treats the Other as having the position of greater height. Thus, Paul interprets whatever privilege the strong have as the greater responsibility. The 'I' must therefore unconditionally defer to the Other.

Third, Paul speaks from his particular Jewish point of view. He regards it as having universal validity but he does not feign the divine perspective. His ambiguity about whether or not other gods exist is a manifestation of this disposition. For Paul there is only one God, but for those who think other gods are real, they *are* effectively real; otherwise their actions would not constitute idolatry. Idolatry, in other words, depends upon the perspective of the one engaged in worship; it is not for the observer to tell the worshipper whether or not they are committing idolatry—*except* when, from my perspective, the observer *is* the Other. In that case, I must concern myself with the conscience of the Other. It is not so much because they will be offended but because, in the scenario as we have it in Corinth, the Other is a former pagan, who has undergone some sort of transformation to worshipping the Jewish God, and as a former pagan, the Other really did worship those other gods. As a result of that transformation, the Other has taken an extra step to worship the Jewish god. But if the Other perceives the I to be worshipping the Other's former god by eating idol meat, the Other could become confused or waiver in her religious commitments. Furthermore, it shows disregard for what the Other has given up, what the Other has 'sacrificed'.

Conclusion

I am struck by how consistent Paul's ethical philosophy as reflected in this passage is with Levinas. Through this Levinasian lens, I hope Paul can be seen as resource for progressive theologians and laypersons who are concerned with how we engage the religious Other. There are challenges, of course. In his letter to the Corinthians, the 'Other' of whom Paul speaks is

a member of the same religious community as the 'I' whom Paul addresses directly. In terms of religious otherness in the modern context, where the world is shrinking, the problem is not the Other within my community, rather it is the Other outside. In other words, the most critical conflicts are not between Protestants and Catholics, but with Muslim and Christians, or Muslims and Jews—that is a different story. Since Paul's teachings are set within the context of a conflict within the same religious community, one may reasonably ask whether Paul's teachings have anything helpful to say within the context of interreligious conflict.

Indeed, it has been said, 'The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there'.[34] To be sure, because Paul comes from an ancient culture far different from our own, his ethical teaching must be translated in ways that make sense to our modern context. But by using Levinas this problem is already implicitly addressed. Because Levinas does not distinguish between the Other who is a member of my family and the Other who is a complete stranger, a Levinasian reading of the apostle's instructions about the Other compensates for the fact that Paul is addressing members of his own community. If I am right that Levinas and Paul share a similar spirit, then it is not a very big jump to say that Paul's teachings can be extended to the relationship between *any* self and *any* Other.

Paul concerned himself with what J.Z. Smith calls 'the proximate Other', which is the kind of Other we humans typically concern ourselves with.[35] The Other who is radically Other is not the Other that threatens my existence. I do not have to spend time contemplating the difference between myself and a spider; I have to spend my time contemplating other human beings who seem in so many ways to be like me and yet manifest critical differences.

For Levinas, every other human being from my isolated point of view is wholly different than me. When I take that perspective, it no longer matters if the Other is the Other next door or on the other side of the world. Or, to put it in terms most relevant to this discussion, it does not matter if the Other is another kind of Christian or Jew, or whether they are a different religious species from me. It is incumbent upon me to assume responsibility for the well-being of every Other, regardless of how 'proximate' they are. My encounter with any 'face' is an encounter of greater height and infinite responsibility. While this understanding may seem at odds with Smith's 'proximate other'—the only other that matters as Other according

34. Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Differential Equations: On Constructing the Other', in his *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 239. Smith is alluding to L.P. Hartley in *The Go-Between*.

35. See Jonathan Z. Smith, 'What a Difference a Difference Makes', and 'Differential Equations', in his *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*.

to Smith—it really is not. In his work, Smith is not concerned explicitly with ethical questions but with descriptive ones about how people formulate conceptions of others (collectively speaking) and, at the same time, themselves. He points out that conflicts generally arise between groups of people who are part of different communities but who perceive themselves to share some sort of kinship or important commonalities:

> [B]y and large, Christians and Jews have not thought much about the 'otherness' of the Hua or the Kwakiutl, or, for that matter, the Taoist. The bulk of Christian and Jewish thought about difference has been directed against other Christians and Jews, against each other, or against those groups thought of as being near neighbors or descendants, in this case, most especially, Muslims.[36]

By invoking Smith I want to suggest that, in fact, we could benefit from a little more 'othering' of the Levinasian kind in our interreligious encounters. Levinas's emphasis on the total otherness of the Other, who is wholly different from me—irrespective of how near or far that Other is—insures against any objectification of the Other by the 'I', and any attempt at assimilation. As Tamara Eskenazi points out, Levinas's 'description of neighbor implicitly links Lev 19.18 (love of neighbor) with Lev 19.34 (love of stranger)'. In comparing Levinas to the rabbis on this point, she makes a keen observation:

> The rabbis assimilated the love of stranger (*ger*) to the love of neighbor, thereby interpreting the *ger*/stranger as a proselyte, diminishing his status of other. Levinas goes in the opposite direction. He seems to assimilate the neighbor into the stranger, claiming their equality as others to be faced in responsibility.[37]

When we turn our attention to those others who are part of other religious communities, it is likely that we do so because of some perceived threat to our identity, and in order for me to perceive such a threat, I must also perceive some sort of implicit connection, or at least some form of perceived permeability between us, and thus some way in which we perceive the other one as potentially impacting our identity in ways beyond our control—hence the feeling of being threatened. It is not then the strangeness of the Other or the otherness of the Other that is the problem; it is the way in which I perceive the Other as being like me that is the problem. It is a threatening ambiguity: the Other is not my neighbor, but somehow appears to be like me or connected to me. And it is precisely

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36. Smith, 'Differential Equations', p. 246.

37. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, 'Love your Neighbor as an Other: Reflections on Levinas's Ethics and the Hebrew Bible', in *Levinas and Biblical Studies* (ed. Eskenazi, Phillips, and Jobling), pp. 145-57 (148).

at this moment when Levinas and Paul can be most helpful. The Other is always the radical Other. I must not understand my relationship to the Other as reciprocal, and I must not make them an object of knowledge. I do not need to comprehend the Other of another religious faith; I only need to say, 'After you, sir!'

A Zionist Reading of Abraham Geiger
and his Biblical Scholarship

David Ellenson

Abraham Geiger (1810–1874) of Breslau and Berlin was by any standards a scholar of prodigious proportions with an encyclopedic knowledge of Jewish sources. No area of Jewish learning was beyond his purview or expertise, and his publications span virtually every area of Jewish interest. At the same time, he was an activist who championed the cause of Jewish religious reform and who established, in 1872, the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, the major educational institution for the training of German and central European Reform rabbis. Geiger has modeled for many modern Jewish academics what it means to be an engaged scholar who attempts to be as dispassionate and objective in their scholarship as is humanly possible while having great concern for the practical life and vitality of contemporary Jewish life and Jewish spirit.

Tamara Cohn Eskenazi surely embodies the paradigm Geiger established in her own career and scholarship. Her biblical researches on Ezra and Nehemiah as well as her prize-winning commentaries on the Torah and on the Book of Ruth reflect her fidelity to the highest levels of critical scholarship. At the same time, her instruction in Bible and her mentorship of students at the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion for more than two decades and her path-breaking work as Editor of the influential *Women's Torah Commentary* testify to the active role she plays in the formation of modern Jewish religious and communal life. Hers is a life of engaged Jewish scholarship and concern at its best.

I would also add an additional personal note here. I was privileged to serve on the committee chaired by the late Professor Michael Signer that selected Tamara for her position at HUC–JIR, and was overjoyed when this Israeli-born scholar accepted our offer of an appointment. No one could have ever been more collegial than Tamara was during the years we served together on the Los Angeles faculty, and I have constantly felt warmed by our friendship for these past twenty years. I am therefore especially delighted and honored to dedicate this essay to Tamara on the assessment the Zionist historians Menachem Soloveitchik and Zalman Rubashov offered of Geiger and his work on the Bible in their *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra—l'mada'ei*

ha-mikra (*A History of Biblical Criticism—Part I of a Series in the Science of the Bible*), published in Berlin by D'vir Publishing in 1925. This essay will not actually discuss his biblical studies *per se*. Rather, as a work of *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, this article will focus on how two Zionist students of modern biblical criticism in the generation after Geiger presented the legacy Geiger bequeathed the world in the area of biblical scholarship. As such, my hope is that this essay will provide a contribution to modern Zionist intellectual history. In view of her lineage as an Israeli and as an engaged academic teaching and writing on the Bible in a Reform seminary, such a topic seems a fitting way to express my esteem and regard for Tamara and her manifold contributions to Jewish and academic life.

The *Authors*

In order to appreciate the nature of their summary and evaluation of Geiger on the Bible, it is necessary to provide background on both Soloveitchik and Rubashov. Menachem Soloveitchik, while perhaps distantly related to the famed family of Lithuanian rabbinic scholars, was not directly linked to them. Rather, Soloveitchik, who was born in Kovno in 1883 and died in Israel in 1957, was a prominent political figure and Zionist leader as well as biblical scholar. He derived from a distinguished and wealthy family, and was known to the larger world as Max Solieli, even as he published in Hebrew under the name Soloveitchik. As a young man, Solilei studied at the university in St Petersburg and continued his education later at various institutions of higher learning in Germany. His particular interest was in the biblical period.

An active Zionist from his youth, in 1904, in Saint Petersburg, he was among the founders of the Russian-language Zionist journal *Jewish Life*. With the establishment of the state of Lithuania, Solieli was elected to its parliament (Seimas) and served as minister of Jewish Affairs from 1919 to 1921. He proved adept as a leader of a community divided by ideological differences, and as a defender of Jewish rights. Perhaps discouraged by efforts to curtail Jewish autonomy in Lithuania, in 1922 he left for London, where he served briefly as a member of the Zionist executive, resigning after about a year over differences with Chaim Weizmann. In 1923, Solieli moved to Berlin, where he was an editor of the *Encyclopedia judaica* until 1933, overseeing articles devoted to the Bible and the ancient Near East.

Solieli moved to Palestine in 1933 and settled in Haifa, where he held a number of leadership positions. With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, he was appointed director of Kol Yisra'el, the broadcast service. His publications include *Basic Problems of Biblical Science*, written in Russian in 1913, and, with Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-Mikra*, the source for this essay.[1]

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1. For these biographical data on Solieli, see *Encyclopaedia judaica, s.v.* 'Solieli

Zalman Rubashov Shneur Zalman Rubashov, better known as Zalman Shazar, was President of Israel from 1963 to 1973. Shazar (an acronym for Shneur Zalman Rubashov) was born in Mir in the province of Minsk in 1889. In 1892, after a disastrous fire in Mir, the family moved to the nearby town of Stolbtsy, where Shazar received a heder education under the influence of Habad, in addition to being influenced by his parents' Zionism.

Shazar's writings span 70 years. His literary work took many forms, from poetry and autobiographical fiction, to scholarly treatises and journalistic articles. As early as his student days, Shazar had been drawn to the study of the Sabbatean movement and to biblical criticism. In the former he was attracted by the passion for national redemption, which he sensed as central within the mystic yearning of European Jewry in the dark days of the seventeenth century. He wrote his first article on the subject in *Ha-Shilo'ah* in 1913. His work on the subject of Jewish mysticism was published in the Russian Jewish Encyclopedia and numerous studies and was praised by Gershom Scholem.

In the field of biblical criticism, Shazar played a pioneering role in introducing this field to a Modern Hebrew language audience. He had himself studied biblical criticism at the University of Strasbourg and in 1914 he translated the Russian essays of Solieli on the subject, *Basic Problems of Biblical Science*, into Hebrew.

Soloveitchik, Rubashov, and the Project of Biblical Criticism

In light of this brief biographical background, we can now assess how these two men—so devoted both to scholarship and to the cause of Zionism and the Jewish State—presented and analyzed the work of Abraham Geiger, whose scholarship they appreciated and admired even as they departed radically from the stance he adopted towards the matter of Jewish nationalism. To fully appreciate the presentation and analysis Soloveitchik and Rubashov offered of Geiger, it is instructive to view their writing on Geiger in the larger framework of their entire book. In the introduction to *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, they point out how difficult it had been to introduce biblical criticism into the Jewish world. Due to the centrality of the Bible in western civilization, they contended that this field of study commanded great attention in the Western world. However, because the Bible, unlike, for example, Greek and Roman literature, was of religious significance and was therefore primarily within the province of the Church, such scholarship could not be separated from parochial religious concerns. Moreover,

(Soloveichik), Mordecai (Max); as well as Isaac Gruenbaum, 'Dr Menachem (Max) Soloveichik-Solieli', in *P'nei ha-dor* (Jerusalem, 5718/1956), pp. 306-11 [Hebrew] and Alexander Manor, *Zalman Shazar: Yihudo v'ytzirato* (Tel Aviv, 5721/1961) [Hebrew].

because such concerns were of practical significance to the lives of believers, it was difficult for such scholarship to be dispassionate, as the authors of these writings generally intended to promote particularistic religious viewpoints. Thus, Soloveitchik and Rubashov maintained that Catholic and Protestant biblical scholars employed their researches in completely different ways, often to favor and defend the stances of one tradition as opposed to the other. In making this observation, the Jewish scholars surely seemed to imply that a Jewish approach to this topic might well be marked by the same confessional, if not tendentious, goals.[2]

Soloveitchik and Rubashov then turned to the matter of biblical criticism and its reception in Jewish circles. They noted that critical research by Jews in this field was virtually completely neglected (*nisharah be-emet bod'dah b'mo'a'dah*).[3] They claimed that Jewish scholars had long feared that such a critical approach to the Bible would destroy the tradition. However, slowly, in the late eighteenth and certainly in the nineteenth century, the first representatives of the new spirit of criticism began to arise (*koh v'koh niru ha-natzigim harishonim, m'vasrei ha-shinui*).[4] Judaism and its supporters could not remain isolated, hermetically sealed off from the surrounding influences of Western culture. The worlds of science and that of the Jewish world began to meet and encounter one another *panim el panim*, face to face. 'Therefore the hour has approached where the barrier [between two worlds] must fall, [the barrier that separates the people] who are the creators [of the Bible] from their creation, and the scientific work that describes its context.'[5] Soloveitchik and Rubashov maintained that there was no need for committed Jews to fear this trend. Indeed, in a vein that reflects their own confidence in the all-encompassing strength of Jewish national revival in Eretz Yisrael, they maintained that new threads link modern critical biblical scholarship 'with the remarkable period that is unfolding in the land of our ancestors (*'im tekufat mofeit b'eretz avot*)'.[6] Like the Protestant and Catholic scholars they referred to at the outset of their introduction, Soloveitchik and Rubashov, even as they were committed to the 'objective' canons of modern scholarship, also believed that this scholarship could serve particular ends and values, i.e., the national project of the Jewish people as expressed in the Zionist Movement. They thus asserted, 'And from this consciousness the idea was born several years ago to attempt to present in a summary way the results of scientific biblical studies to a Hebrew audience

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2.   See the 'Introduction' to M. Soloveitchik and Zalman Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra* (Berlin: D'vir, 5685-1925), p. 1.

3.   Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 1.

4.   Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 2.

5.   Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 2.

6.   Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 2.

(*U'mitokh hakarah zo nolad b'kirbeinue lifnei shanim ahadot ha-ra'ayon l'nasot la-geshet l'siduram shel ma-da'ei ha-mikra b'ivrit b'tzurat sikum*).[7]

Soloveitchik and Rubashov stated that *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra* was to be organized and presented in the following manner. They claimed that their aim, first and foremost, was to present the complex findings related to the disciplines of critical biblical studies and criticism to a Hebrew-reading audience. This would allow the Jewish people to leave their isolation and allow Jews and Gentiles alike to recognize that the Bible occupied a proper place of honor among the classics of world literature and that the foundational narratives and teachings of the Jewish people were intimately connected to universalistic thought. They stated that their book was not directed principally at the scholar or researcher. Rather, they sought to address the 'community of [Hebrew] readers, those who are lifting up the life and creation of the Hebrew nation in our generation (*kahal ha-korim, nosei hayyim v'ha-y'tzirah shel ha-uma ha-ivrit b'doreinu*).[8] *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra* would allow these Jews to understand and appreciate the literary, religious, cultural, historical, and social dimensions of Jewish life during the period of the Bible.

Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*: Structure and Content*

Toldot bikoret ha-mikra is divided into three parts. The first part of the book contains seven chapters that deal with the canonization of the Bible, critical observations on the process of canonization of the biblical text as presented in the Talmud, treatment of the Bible in medieval Babylon among the Geonim (Saadia figures here in a prominent way), Jewish biblical exegetes throughout history (ranging from figures in Spain such as Ibn Ezra to men such as Rashi and Karo through Menasseh ben Israel), Christian exegetes, and Spinoza and his opinions on Scripture. In the second section of their book, Soloveitchik and Rubashov move directly to the field of 'scientific criticism' (*ha-bikoret ha-mada'it*). This section deals with source-critical theory, the documentary hypothesis, and the work of Wellhausen and his school, the influence of archeology on a scientific understanding of the Bible, and a concluding section on numerous other modern critics. It is only in the third section of their book that Soloveitchik and Rubashov return to the Jewish world and offer their analysis of Jewish biblical criticism in the nineteenth century.[9]

In this third section of the book, entitled, 'Criticism in Israel during the Nineteenth Century', Soloveitchik and Rubashov preface their assessment

7. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 2.
8. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 3.
9. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, Table of Contents, pp. v-vii.

of Geiger and provide the intellectual context for and understanding of his
work on the Bible. They do so by explaining how a critical approach to the
study of the Bible arose among Jews at the end of the eighteenth century
and the first decades of the 1800s through a focus on the writings of Moses
Mendelssohn (1729–1786) and Leopold Zunz (1795–1886).[10] Soloveitchik
and Rubashov were aware that rabbinical literature was traditionally the pri-
mary focus of religious study for Jews. After all, Judaism is not the religion
of the Bible alone. *Sola scriptura* is alien to the Jewish religion. Rather,
Judaism is the religion of the Bible as refracted through the lens of rabbinic
interpretation and literature. The Bible *qua* Bible was therefore neglected
as a primary object of study for Jews throughout the millennia. Instead, rab-
binic literatures in all their varieties—law, narratives, codes, and commen-
taries—were traditionally the major foci of Jewish concerns.

   As Soloveitchik and Rubashov argued, this Jewish concentration on
rabbinic literature and relative neglect of the Bible began to change with
the writings of Moses Mendelssohn and his circle. The 1781 Mendels-
sohn translation of the Bible into German was within two decades after its
appearance universally present in virtually every German Jewish house-
hold. Furthermore, the *Bi'ur*, the famed Hebrew commentary that Mendels-
sohn and his circle offered on the Bible, facilitated a greater interest among
Jews in the Bible as a topic worthy of study in its own right. . Furthermore,
Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1753–1827), a 'father of Old Testament crit-
icism', and other critical Christian scholars had a great influence on the
Bi'ur. Nevertheless, Mendelssohn, even as he was aware of Christian schol-
arship, still refrained from adopting a critical approach to the Bible. In his
Introduction to his *Bi'ur*, Soloveitchik and Rubashov quote Mendelssohn
as saying that for secular non-Jewish critics, the Torah is nothing more than
'a book of chronicles [required] for understanding the events of antiquity'.
However, 'Even it is regarded in this way by the sages of the nations and
their students, for us in the Household of Israel it is not so' (*'im yitakhen zeh
l'hachmei ha-amim v'talmideihem, lanu beit yisrael lo yitakhein*).[11]

   While the Mendelssohn translation and the *Bi'ur* did not fully embody a
critical approach to Scripture, Soloveitchik and Rubashov pointed out that
they were nevertheless vehicles that permitted the Jews to emerge from
their previous cultural segregation and primary focus on rabbinic literature
into the mainstream of German cultural life. The Mendelssohn Bible trans-
lation and biblical commentary facilitated the assimilation of German val-
ues and viewpoints on the part of German Jews and caused many of them to
place an emphasis upon the Bible as opposed to rabbinic literature. While
they were careful to point out that Mendelssohn could hardly be labeled

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   10. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, pp. 125-27.
   11. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 127.

a critical scholar of the Bible, his work nevertheless constituted a nascent turning point for an emerging Jewish interest in the Bible as a subject for serious consideration in its own right.[12]

However, it was to be several decades after Mendelssohn before this Jewish turning towards the Bible would be complete. Indeed, Soloveitchik and Rubashov observed that as the discipline of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* began to emerge, that biblical criticism was not initially given a significant, if any, place in this burgeoning field of study. For example, they point out that when Eduard Gans, who stood at the head of the 'Society for Culture and Scientific Study of the Jews' (*Verein fuer Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*) organized in Berlin in 1819, first advanced the notion of an academic study of Judaism, he did not mention biblical studies at all in his inaugural speech outlining the aims of the society.[13]

In featuring the work of the incomparable Leopold Zunz (1795–1886), the most magisterial and prolific scholar of Jewish studies during the nineteenth century, Soloveitchik and Rubashov reinforced the point they made regarding Gans when they stated that study of the Bible was not initially at the center of Jewish academic concerns in the early decades of the 1800s.[14] They emphasized that Zunz did not devote his early scientific studies to the Bible, but to medieval Jewish literature. Zunz, like other Jewish scholars, initially centered his work on the Talmud and other genres of rabbinic literature and placed them in primary focus even as he neglected the Bible as a topic for independent study. Soloveitchik and Rubashov claimed he did this not only because of the traditional Jewish concentration on rabbinic genres of literature, but also because it was this literature, not the Bible, that distinguished Judaism from Christianity.[15]

Nevertheless, the impact of the modern world and the directions of nineteenth-century academic scholarship in the Western university upon Jewish scholars were unrelenting in transforming Jewish cultural and religious life. These forces opened the way for the field of biblical studies to gain more attention from Jewish researchers—including Zunz himself.[16]

Relying strongly upon the Mendelssohn translation, Zunz offered his own translation of the Bible in 1837–1838. Shortly thereafter, he turned to the Tanakh itself. However, as Soloveitchik and Rubashov point out, Zunz did not choose to subject the first five books of the Bible to critical scrutiny. The classical Jewish religious commitment to the notion of Mosaic authorship of the *Humash* dissuaded him from moving in this direction. Instead,

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12. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, pp. 125-26.
13. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 128.
14. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 128.
15. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 128.
16. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, pp. 125-29.

Zunz chose to investigate the later writings of the Bible, specifically Chronicles and parts of *Ketuvim*. Zunz claimed that parts of Psalms were surely written in Babylon during the Exile and that Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles were divided at a later period in Jewish history. Originally, Zunz maintained that they constituted one book. Krochmal and Geiger both accepted these findings of Zunz and it was upon these foundations that Zunz laid that Geiger constructed his own initial works in the field of Bible.[17]

Having constructed this context, Soloveitchik and Rubashov were now prepared to turn to Geiger. They pointed out that Geiger began his famed *Urschrift*[18] by focusing on the period in Jewish history that marked the Jewish return from Exile in Babylonia through the period of the Hasmoneans. In their summary of his researches on the Second Temple period, the authors of *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra* indicated that Geiger pointed out that the authors of Chronicles were *b'nei Tzadok*, Sadducees, from the priestly family, and their aim was to indicate to their contemporaries that the priesthood and temple worship were at the center of 'Jewish national life' (*hayei ha-umah*).[19]

Foremost among the concerns of these priestly authors was the problem of intermarriage. In their view, these foreign women adversely affected the 'spirit [of the people]', and they reported that Geiger emphasized this element in his interpretations of these books. Thus, Geiger pointed out changes that distinguished the approach and emphases found in Chronicles and Kings from the writings of the early prophets. For example, in 2 Kgs 12.22, it is written of the servants who assassinated King Joash of Judah, 'His courtiers formed a conspiracy against Joash and assassinated him at Beth-millo that leads down to Silla. The courtiers who assassinated him were Jozabad son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer'. In contrast, 2 Chron. 24.26, states, 'Zabad son of Shimeath *the Ammonitess* [emphasis mine] and Jehozabad son of Shimrith *the Moabitess* [emphasis mine]'. By explicitly pointing to the fact that the mothers of Zabad and Jehozabad were foreign women, Soloveitchik and Rubashov emphasized that Geiger argued that the author of Chronicles wanted to indicate that the evil that befell the land was the result of intermarrying with 'the daughters of the land'.[20]

Soloveitchik and Rubashov continued by pointing out that Geiger cited 1 Kgs 11.1 to bolster this argument. There it is written, 'King Solomon loved many foreign women in addition to Pharaoh's daughter—Moabite,

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17. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, pp. 128-29.

18. Abraham Geiger, *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer Abhaengigkeit von der inneren Entwickelung des Judenthums* (Breslau: J. Hainauer, 1857).

19. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 129.

20. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 130.

Ammonite, Edomite, Phoenician, and Hittite women'. In contrast, Geiger
explained that 2 Chron. 8.11 omits mention of all foreign wives except
Pharaoh's daughter, when it states, 'Solomon brought up Pharaoh's daugh-
ter from the City of David to the place he had built for her, for he said,
"No wife of mine shall dwell in a palace of King David of Israel, for [the
area] is sacred since the Ark of the Lord has entered it"'. Geiger asserted
that this was done so as to minimize the force of the precedent King Solo-
mon represented for the men of this era regarding the legitimacy of inter-
marriage. Indeed, had the story of Pharaoh's daughter being married to
Solomon not been so well known, Geiger was of the opinion that mention
of this marriage would have been omitted. However, that option was not
possible given the widespread dissemination of this narrative among the
people. Hence, it was retained even as the author of Chronicles empha-
sized that her access to the sacred places of the Jewish people was circum-
scribed, i.e., she could not enter the palace of King David because it had
housed the Ark of the Lord. From this and countless other examples that he
brought, Soloveitchik and Rubashov stated that Geiger drew the following
conclusion, 'Every generation, every spiritual movement and every per-
sonality projected their own stances and views onto Scripture'. In so doing,
the 'spiritual and national consciousness' of each generation served as a
'crown' (*k'lil*) that supplemented the 'holy legacy' it had received. In this
way, Judaism and its adherents succeeded in making the traditions (*mass-
oret*) they received from previous generations enduringly relevant. Geiger
utilized the critical study of the Bible to maintain that the text was con-
stantly created anew in the image and views provided by each succeeding
generation (*b'tzilmah kidemutah*). Soloveitchik and Rubashov concluded
from this: 'And the entire book of Geiger is nothing more than a commen-
tary upon this overarching rule (*v'kol hasefer shel Geiger eino ela peirush
l'klal gadol zeh*)'. Scholarship had surely been employed in the service of
faith.[21]

Soloveitchik and Rubashov then emphasized that while Geiger devoted
considerable attention to various translations of the Bible and argued that
1 Maccabees showed Sadducean influence while 2 Maccabees displayed
Pharisaic influence, they maintained that the bulk of his *Urschrift* was
focused on changes that were present in the body of Scripture itself over
the generations. The *Urschrift* demonstrated over and over again that each
generation in Israel arrogated to itself the right of assessing 'Holy Scrip-
ture' through its own spirit and from its own perspective. The Tanakh, as
sefer ha-sefarim, the Book of Books, was 'a living document intertwined
with the soul of the people'. They noted that Geiger especially empha-
sized that these changes were designed to 'preserve the purity of the God

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21. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 130.

concept (*lishmor 'al taharat ha-musag shel ha-elohut*)' and to protect 'the honor of the people Israel (*she'mirat k'vod yisrael*)'.[22]

In looking at this last claim, it is instructive to turn to the work of Nahum Sarna, who, in his essay, 'Abraham Geiger and Biblical Scholarship', asserted that Geiger, invoking Judah Halevi, believed that the Jews had an inherent capacity to grasp revelation and that this disposition was present not just in individuals, but in the Jewish people as a whole. Sarna cites a famous passage in Geiger, who asks:

> How did it happen that such a people, a mere tribe surrounded by so many mightier nations, which had no opportunity of having an unobstructed view of the great events in the world, which had to fight many battles for its bare existence, which was confined within a limited territory and had to employ all its resources to defend itself against its powerful enemies—how did it happen that such a people rose to those sublime conceptions? It is an enigma in the world's history.[23]

Commenting upon this passage, Sarna observes, 'Geiger here parts company with his contemporary Christian scholars, who saw in the biblical description of idolatry the true national religion [of the Jewish people]', and who viewed Israel's constant 'infidelity' as 'the fruit' of the increasingly retrograde beliefs that marked the Jewish people. Several Jewish scholars (including Jacob Agus and Joseph Klausner) have noted the striking similarity between Geiger's idea of the original, intuitive, spontaneous, and national character of Israelite monotheism and the basic premise of the great *Toldot ha-emunah ha-yisraelit* (*The History of the Religion of Israel*) by Yehezkel Kaufman. Here the history of the biblical text is interwoven with the history of the people'.[24]

In offering this observation of Geiger's work, Sarna echoes elements of the assessment Soloveitchik and Rubashov provided of Geiger more than half a century earlier. How ironic it is that Abraham Geiger, the great anti-nationalist, would be considered—in his biblical studies—a spiritual forerunner and ancestor of the great Hebrew University biblical scholar and Zionist Yehezkel Kaufmann. How fascinating it is as well that Soloveitchik and Shazar regard Geiger as one who contributed through his biblical studies to championing the Jewish national spirit by defending the honor of the Jewish people and by claiming that the Jews as a people possessed an original religious genius. In reflecting on Geiger and this aspect of his legacy, the treatment that the Zionists Soloveitchik and Rubashov accorded the

22. Soloveitchik and Rubashov, *Toldot bikoret ha-mikra*, p. 131.
23. Cited in Nahum M. Sarna, 'Abraham Geiger and Biblical Scholarship', in *New Perspectives on Abraham Geiger* (ed. Jakob J. Petuchowski; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1975), p. 24.
24. Sarna, 'Abraham Geiger and Biblical Scholarship', pp. 24-25.

anti-nationalist Geiger in the course of their writings on biblical criticism demonstrates that history, if not cunning, is at least paradoxical and that the muse of history surely possesses a sense of humor. The engagements of Geiger and his work in the enterprise of the Jewish people and the Jewish religion were profound, and they mirror, in this sense, the engagements of my friend Tamara Eskenazi, to whom this essay is dedicated.

The Law Triumphant: Another Look at 1 Esdras[1]

Lisbeth S. Fried

Issues Surrounding 1 Esdras

The questions confronting readers of 1 Esdras are many: Is this Greek text a translation from a Hebrew or Aramaic original, or was it originally written in Greek? Is this the original version of the book, and the original order of the chapters, or is the canonical Ezra–Nehemiah the original version? That is, did the author of Ezra–Nehemiah rewrite 1 Esdras, or did the author of 1 Esdras rewrite Ezra–Nehemiah?[2] When and why was it written? Does it end in mid-sentence? Is it the intended ending? Is the beginning the original beginning, or are the beginning and the ending both lost? That is, is 1 Esdras simply a fragment of a much larger work that stretched perhaps from 1 Chron. 1.1 to Neh. 13.31? The answers to all these questions as well as its purpose and theological import must be sought in the order of the chapters within 1 Esdras, since this really is the only difference between the versions.

Work on the relationship between Ezra–Nehemiah and 1 Esdras has been ongoing for over 200 years. Yet since Pohlmann, scholars have been divided into two main camps.[3] The first considers 1 Esdras to be a fragment of a long history that includes Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah.[4] According

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1.   I offer this piece in love and respect to Professor Tamara C. Eskenazi in gratitude for her friendship and for many enlightening conversations.

2.   This question is indeed the focus of the articles in Lisbeth S. Fried (ed.), *Was 1 Esdras First? An Investigation into the Priority and Nature of 1 Esdras* (Ancient Israel and its Literature, 7; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011).

3.   K.-F. Pohlmann, *Studien zum dritten Esra: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach dem ursprünglichen Schluss des chronistischen Geschichtswerkes* (FRLANT, 104; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970). For a history of research see K. De Troyer, 'Zerubbabel and Ezra: A Revived and Revised Solomon and Josiah? A Survey of Current 1 Esdras Research', *CBR* 1 (2002), pp. 30-60.

4.   E.g., C.C. Torrey, *Ezra Studies* (New York: Ktav, 1970 [1910]); Pohlmann, *Studien zum dritten Esra;* A. Schenker, 'La relation d'Esdras A′ au texte massorétique d'Esdras-Néhémie', in *Tradition of the Text: Studies Offered to Dominique Barthélemy in Celebration of his 70th Birthday* (ed. G.J. Norton and S. Pisano; OBO, 109; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), pp. 218-48; Adrian Schenker, 'The Relationship between Ezra–Nehemiah and 1 Esdras', in *Was 1 Esdras First?*, pp. 45-58; D. Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt in Esdras a und Esra-Nehemia:*

to this camp, except for the story of the three youths, a late addition, 1 Esdras reveals the original form of the text of Ezra to which Nehemiah was added secondarily. When Nehemiah was added, the story of Ezra's reading the Torah was then taken from the end of Ezra and plunked into the middle of Nehemiah. That author then added the long prayer and the *'Amāna* signing to form a covenant renewal ceremony, often taken as the climax of the canonical story of the return.[5]

The second group of scholars sees 1 Esdras as a compilation of various passages taken from the separate books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, books which were already in their present form when the excerpts were taken.[6] According to this view, passages were compiled and rearranged just to accommodate the story of the three youths, a story seen as integral to rewritten Ezra. Both groups recognize, however, that once the story of the three youths is removed, not only is the order of events largely the same in the

Zwei Konzeptionen der Wiederherstellung Israels (OBO 158; Freiburg: Universitäts-verlag and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); Böhler, 'On the Relation-ship between Textual and Literary Criticism: The Two Recensions of the Book of Ezra: Ezra–Neh (MT) and 1 Esdras (LXX)', in *The Earliest Text of the Hebrew Bible: The Relationship between the Masoretic Text and the Hebrew Base of the Septuagint Reconsidered* (ed. A. Schenker; SBLCS, 52; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003), pp. 35-50. See recently, Deirdre N. Fulton and Gary N. Knoppers, 'Lower Criticism and Higher Criticism: The Case of 1 Esdras', in *Was 1 Esdras First?*, pp. 11-29; Lester L. Grabbe, 'Chicken or Egg? Which Came First, 1 Esdras or Ezra–Nehemiah?', in *Was 1 Esdras First?*, pp. 31-43.

5. E.g., Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* (Analecta biblica, 21; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963); McCarthy, 'Covenant and Law in Chronicles–Nehemiah', *CBQ* 44 (1982), pp. 25-44; Michael W. Duggan, *The Covenant Renewal in Ezra–Nehemiah (Neh 7.72b–10.40): An Exegetical, Literary, and Theological Study* (SBL Dissertation Series, 164; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001). For a suggestion of the original purpose of the *'Amāna* in Nehemiah 10 see Lisbeth S. Fried, 'A Greek Religious Association in Second Temple Judah? A Comment on Nehemiah 10', *Transeuphratène* 30 (2005), pp. 75-93.

6. E.g., Z. Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation* (SBLCS, 47; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999); Talshir*, 1 Esdras: A Text Critical Commentary* (SBLCS, 50; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001); Bob Becking, 'The Story of the Three Youths and the Composition of 1 Esdras', in *Was 1 Esdras First?*, pp. 83-71; Kristin De Troyer, 'The Second Year of Darius', in *Was 1 Esdras First?*, pp. 73-81; Lisbeth S. Fried, 'Why the Story of the Three Youths in 1 Esdras?', in *Was 1 Esdras First?*, pp. 83-92; Juha Pakkala, 'Why 1 Esdras Is Probably Not an Early Version of the Ezra–Nehemiah Tradition', in *Was 1 Esdras First?*, pp. 93-107; Zipora Talshir, 'Ancient Composition Patterns Mirrored in 1 Esdras and the Priority of the Canonical Composition Type', in *Was 1 Esdras First?*, pp. 109-29; James C. VanderKam, 'Literary Questions between Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 Esdras', in *Was 1 Esdras First?*, pp. 131-43; Jacob L. Wright, 'Remember Nehemiah: 1 Esdras and the *Damnatio memoriae Nehemiae*', in *Was 1 Esdras First?*, pp. 145-63.

initial six or seven chapters of these books, but in the majority of passages the wording is identical. Passages agree sentence for sentence. It must be concluded therefore that either 1 Esdras is a revision of Ezra–Nehemiah, or that Ezra–Nehemiah is a revision of 1 Esdras, or that they are each revisions of a third source. They cannot be independent accounts of historical events.

Date and Place of Composition

Although there is no consensus, a majority of scholars have concluded recently that 1 Esdras was based on the canonical texts of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and that the author of 1 Esdras rewrote Ezra in order to accommodate the story of Darius's three bodyguards.[7] If so, then the date of composition can easily be determined. Paul Harvey, Jr, has shown that the author of the story of the bodyguards was acquainted with court titles that were used *solely* by the Ptolemies, beginning with Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283–246 BCE). This establishes a locale in Egypt, most probably Alexandria, and a *terminus a quo* for the composition of the book. Hence, we have the same place and period of composition as the *Letter of Aristeas.* Indeed, that text exhibits the same attitude toward the Law that we see in 1 Esdras:

> Our Lawgiver first of all laid down the principles of piety and righteousness and inculcated them point by point, not merely by prohibitions but by the use of examples as well, demonstrating the injurious effects of sin and the punishments inflicted by God upon the guilty. Working out these truths carefully and having made them plain he [Eleazar, the High Priest] showed that even if a man should think of doing evil—to say nothing of actually effecting it—he would not escape detection, for he made it clear that the power of God pervaded the whole of the law (*Letter of Aristeas* 131–34).

Purpose of the Book

Since recent research has come down on the side of the priority of the canonical Ezra–Nehemiah, we are now free to ask about the purpose of the revision; several theories have been proposed.[8] While most scholars have focused on the first six chapters of Ezra and the purpose for their rewriting and for including the story of the three youths, Wright focuses on the reason for the elimination of Nehemiah's story.[9] Wright argues that the author of 1 Esdras knew Ezra–Nehemiah as one book and that he purposely rewrote the story of Ezra to blot out Nehemiah's memory. Nehemiah's memoir had offended the priestly writers who composed 1 Esdras because of its insinuation that the

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7. The majority of scholars writing in Fried, *Was 1 Esdras First?*, have concluded for the priority of the canonical books Ezra–Nehemiah.

8. See the articles in Fried, *Was 1 Esdras First?*

9. Wright, 'Remember Nehemiah'.

priesthood was corrupt, and that it had made alliances with and had even mar-
ried into non-Israelite families. Ezra–Nehemiah, moreover, presents the city
of Jerusalem in ruins until Nehemiah a non-priest and non-Davidide could
come and rebuild it, rather than showing it to have been built by the priests
immediately upon their return. All this is rectified by 1 Esdras's new and per-
fected version of the story of the return with the Davidide Zerubbabel and the
priest Jeshua replacing Nehemiah as protagonists.

I suggest here an additional reason for omitting Nehemiah's story. In
addition to these theories proposed recently, one view that has been over-
looked is the problem expressed in both 1 Esdras and in Ezra–Nehemiah of
how to cope with an angry god. The answer is certainly evident in Ezra–
Nehemiah (i.e., follow the commandments of Torah), but 1 Esdras answers
it even more forcefully and more definitively than the canonical books.
1 Esdras begins with the story of Josiah's Passover, one that had not been
held like it before (1 Esd. 1.18 [20]). Josiah is the epitome of the 'good king'
in both Kings and in Chronicles:

> He did what was right in the sight of Yhwh, and walked in all the way of
> his father David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left (2 Kgs 22.2
> = 2 Chron. 34.2).

But 1 Esdras adds another verse, not present in Kings or Chronicles:

> The deeds of Josiah were upright in the sight of the Lord, for his heart was
> full of godliness.
>   In ancient times the events of his reign have been recorded—concern-
> ing those who sinned and acted wickedly toward the Lord beyond any other
> people or kingdom, and how they grieved him deeply, so that the words of
> the Lord fell upon Israel (1 Esd. 1.21-22 [23-24 ET]).[10]

This verse in 1 Esdras foreshadows the fall of the kingdom to the Babylo-
nians in 586. It is stressed that it was only because of the sins of the people
and their wickedness that the kingdom fell, in spite of Josiah's attempt to do
what was right.

1 Esdras continues with the story of the fall of the kingdom (not told
in canonical Ezra), and the return of Judeans to Judah and Jerusalem, the
immediate rebuilding of the city and the temple, opposition to the temple's
construction, its final completion and dedication under Darius, and the cel-
ebration of the Passover (1 Esd. 7.10). This celebration forms an inclusio
with Josiah's Passover and indicates a return not only to Judah and Jerusa-
lem in body, but also in spirit.[11]

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10. Ralph W. Klein, 'The Rendering of 2 Chronicles 35–36 in 1 Esdras', in *Was
1 Esdras First?*, pp. 225-35.

11. See Sylvie Honigman, 'Cyclical Time and Catalogues: The Construction of
Meaning in 1 Esdras', in *Was 1 Esdras First?*, pp. 191-208, for a discussion of the
cyclical construction of these books.

In 1 Esdras, as in the canonical book of Ezra, the figure Ezra arrives in Judah immediately after the temple's dedication and the celebration of the Passover. He learns of the perfidy of the people in their intermarriages and, as in canonical Ezra, he prays and mourns. As in canonical Ezra, the people undergo a mass divorce, but in contrast to the canonical book, the narrative moves immediately to Ezra's reading the law. As Wright stresses, the entire story of Nehemiah is omitted.[12] There is nothing about Nehemiah's building the wall or his reforms; nor is there the anything even resembling a covenant renewal ceremony. There is no public signing of any agreement. All that is gone. The only section included from Nehemiah is the story of the law-reading, and with that, Ezra's role ends. The book finishes with the completion of the reading and the people going forth in great rejoicing because they were inspired by the words that they had been taught.[13]

One then must ask: If the covenant renewal ceremony is the climax of Ezra–Nehemiah, as often claimed,[14] why would it have been omitted from 1 Esdras? One answer offered is that we may not have 1 Esdras's actual ending. 1 Esdras ends with 'and they were gathered together', a phrase possibly taken from Neh. 8.13 and possibly the beginning of the celebration of the Sukkot holiday.[15] If 1 Esdras was intending to continue with the rest of Nehemiah 8, however, then it would have begun as Neh. 8.13 does with a reference to the second day. Nehemiah 8.13 begins 'on the second day they gathered', a phrase not found in 1 Esdras. Van der Kooij shows that the ending of 1 Esdras is likely the original ending. Instead of adopting a reading similar to that of NRSV ('because they were inspired by the words which they had been taught. And they came together'), he translates the passage thus:

> Then they all went their way, to eat and drink and enjoy themselves, and to give portions to those who had none, and to make great rejoicing; *both* because they were inspired by the words which they had been taught *and* because they had been brought together (1 Esd. 9.54-55, my italics).

This is one intelligible sentence, with the conjunction καις meaning 'both … and'.

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12. For a discussion of a possible reason for omitting Nehemiah, see Wright, 'Remember Nehemiah'.

13. Or because they 'thoroughly understood the words' (Zipora Talshir, *1 Esdras: A Text Critical Commentary* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001).

14. E.g., Duggan, *The Covenant Renewal in Ezra–Nehemiah*.

15. Arie van der Kooij, 'On the Ending of the Book of 1 Esdras', in *VII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies: Leuven, 1989* (ed. C.E. Cox; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), pp. 37-49; H.G.M. Williamson, '1 Esdras', in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (ed. James D. Dunn and John W. Rogerson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 851-58. See also Honigman, 'Cyclical Time and Catalogues'; and Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, 'The Chronicler and the Composition of 1 Esdras', *CBQ* 48 (1986), pp. 39-61.

If the present ending is the original ending of 1 Esdras, then one must ask why the covenant renewal ceremony is omitted. It is not enough to argue for the *damnatio memoriae* of Nehemiah, since Nehemiah's title could have easily been substituted for his name (Neh. 10.1 [ET 10.2]), as it is in 1 Esd. 9.49.[16] Rather, by ending with the law reading and not including the events of Nehemiah's governorship and not including the covenant renewal ceremony, 1 Esdras presents an entirely different picture of the restoration period from that presented in the canonical books. According to 1 Esdras, the people of Judah had been removed from their land because of sin, but now Ezra has brought the law, cleansed the people from the impurities of their mixed marriages through the mass divorce, and read the law in such way that the people now fully understand it. In 1 Esdras, the purified people rejoice because they have been inspired by the law. The picture is one of extreme optimism and relief. The world, or at least Judah and Jerusalem, has been set right, and as long as this course is kept, all will go well. There is no possibility of backsliding because the people have truly understood the law. The world is in a perfected state.

This contrasts starkly with the ending of the present book of Nehemiah. It presents the law-reading directly before a long confessional prayer that declares how God's gracious acts have been met only with disobedience and rebellion (chap. 9). The people promise to keep the commandments (chap. 10). The fact that this promise needs to be safeguarded by a curse (Neh. 10.30 [ET 29]) only confirms the people's frailty. This frailty is reified in Nehemiah 13. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem, returning a few years later only to find that these wonderful promises made by the people in Nehemiah 10 were all for naught. The promise to bring the tithe to the Levites (Neh. 10.37 [36]) was broken as soon as Nehemiah left the city (Neh. 13.10). The promise to keep the Sabbath, and not to buy grain or produce on the Sabbath (Neh. 10.32 [31]) was also broken as soon as Nehemiah went away (Neh. 13.15-16). To top it off, in spite of the mass divorce of the Judeans (Ezra 10) and in spite of their promise never to give their daughters to foreigners nor to take their daughters for their sons (Neh. 10.31 [30]), Nehemiah returns after his short absence only to find that indeed Judeans had married the women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab (Neh. 13.23, 24). In contrast to the optimism and joy described in 1 Esdras, Ezra–Nehemiah ends in failure, the grand promises all broken; the value of understanding the law has proven to be non-existent, their merriment only temporary. I suggest that this may be why 1 Esdras eliminated Nehemiah's memoir entirely and ends his story with the reading of the law. In 1 Esdras, the law-reading implies a perfected world under Torah law. In Nehemiah, reading the law has proved worthless.

16. *Pace* Wright, 'Remember Nehemiah'.

1 Esdras's law-reading is preceded by the mass separation from foreign wives. In canonical Ezra–Nehemiah, the mass divorce is followed not by the law-reading but by the story of Nehemiah's wall. The divorce and law-reading are separated by a good eight chapters.[17] By directly preceding the law-reading by the divorce, 1 Esdras highlights the holiness of the law since the entire community who hears the law is bound by it. Passive observers, those not under the strict command of the Mosaic covenant, are excluded from even listening to it. 1 Esdras then ends with the law-reading, with no hint of backsliding. If the text of 1 Esdras had originally begun with Josiah's finding the law in the temple, then the story of Ezra reading the law to the assembled people provides a nice conclusion.

17. For a suggestion as to the reason behind this strange ordering of chapters in Ezra–Nehemiah, see Lisbeth S. Fried, 'Who Wrote Ezra–Nehemiah—and Why Did They?', in *Unity and Disunity in Ezra–Nehemiah: Redaction, Rhetoric, and Reader* (ed. M.J. Boda and P.L. Redditt; Hebrew Bible Monographs, 17; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), pp. 75-97.

STANDING AGAIN AT SINAI?

Frederick E. Greenspahn

The reading from the Torah scroll is a climactic moment in every Jewish worship service during which it takes place, including Monday and Thursday mornings and twice each Sabbath. The practice probably originated in the study hall,[1] but it has become thoroughly ritualized, with the text's content subordinated to the drama of the moment.

Scholars have often interpreted this ceremony as reenacting the revelation at Mount Sinai; one even called it a 'minor theophany'.[2] The liturgy itself supports that view with its call for worshippers to recite Deuteronomy's statement, '*This* is the teaching which Moses placed before the Israelites' (Deut. 4.44, emphasis added) as they stand before the elevated Torah scroll.[3]

Despite its academic pedigree, this view is actually rooted in Jewish religious tradition. The Jerusalem Talmud requires worshippers to treat the Torah scroll exactly as it was at Sinai,[4] and the Zohar insists that 'when the Torah is publicly read … the whole congregation … should assume an attitude of awe and fear, of trembling and quaking, as though they were at that moment standing beneath Mount Sinai to receive the Torah'.[5] The nineteenth-century Hungarian rabbi Judah Aszod carried that point further, comparing the *bîmâ* that is located in the middle of the synagogue to Mt Sinai itself.[6] These interpretations understand the liturgy as recasting Jewish worshippers, wherever they may be, as the assembly of Israelites who received God's teachings and entered into his covenant at the foot of Sinai.

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1. Cf. *t. Meg.* 2.18.
2. Fine 1998: 524; cf. Schorsch 1987: 24, Goldberg 1987: 112, and Langer 2005: 121.
3. *Sop.* 14.14. Sefardic Jews recite this before the Torah is read; Ashkenazim say it afterwards (Elbogen 1993: 142).
4. *Y. Meg.* 4.1 74d; thus, *b. Meg.* 21a links the Torah's being read from a standing position to the fact that even God stood (based on Deut. 5.28), although the actual practice varies within different communities (cf. Margulies 1937: 173, #49, and Joseph Karo, *Bet Yosef* at *Arbaʿah Turim*, *Oraḥ Ḥayim* §141).
5. Zohar, *Vayaqhēl* 206a; thus the seven *aliyot* correspond to the seven occurrences of the word *qôl* in Psalm 29.
6. *Yehudah Yaʿaleh*, *Oraḥ Ḥayim* responsum #3 as quoted in Guttmann 1977: 280.

The fact that this aesthetically, intellectually, and theologically appealing explanation has religious roots is hardly grounds for rejecting it; however, there are several reasons to be skeptical. The liturgy may evoke the revelation at Sinai, thereby making worshippers feel as if they are participating in that event, but a closer look reveals the artificiality of that construct. Most conspicuous is the fact that the Bible does not claim that Moses received a scroll at the mountain, as archaic as that object may seem. Instead, the Bible is quite clear that he brought God's word down from the mountain on tablets.[7] Nor does Jewish tradition, which does teach that the Torah was *given* at Sinai, claim that it was publicly read there;[8] that was done by Joshua after the Israelites had entered the land.[9] Some rabbis even assert that the Torah was not revealed in one grand proclamation at Mt Sinai, but incrementally throughout the forty-year desert sojourn.[10] And while rabbinic tradition traces the requirement that Torah scrolls be made of parchment to Sinai,[11] animal skin was not the normal medium at the time. Biblical allusions to Israelite writing on both sides (e.g., Ezek. 2.9-10) would have required papyrus. Even the highly stylized font in which synagogue scrolls are written does not match the usage in Moses' time. Jewish tradition itself recognizes that the Torah was originally written in a different script than modern scrolls.[12] Also unrelated to Sinai is the requirement that the Torah be translated,[13] which would obviously have been unnecessary at that time.

If the scroll, the script, the public recitation, and the translation do not fit what Jewish tradition understands to have taken place at Sinai, then it is hard to sustain the position that it is that moment that the Torah service is meant to reenact. In fact, the liturgical pronouncement that 'This is the teaching which Moses placed before the Israelites' (Deut. 4.44), though evocative of Sinai, was not said there, but as the Israelites were preparing to enter the Promised Land. Moreover, its phrasing ('*This* is the teaching …') does not locate the worshipper at Sinai so much as identify the visible Torah with the teaching that had been given there. In other words, the recitation of that statement itself suggests a different setting, albeit one which is being connected with the original revelation. If this segment of the service should

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7.   Exod. 24.12; 31.18; 32.15-16; Deut. 4.13; 5.19; 9.9-16; etc.

8.   According to Exod. 24.7, Moses read the 'Book of the Covenant' (*sēper habbĕrît*).

9.   Josh. 8.30-35; the commandment that the Torah be read publicly is attributed to Moses (*y. Meg.* 4.1 75a), albeit not necessarily at Sinai.

10. E.g., *b. Git.* 60a; cf. *b. B. Bat.* 14b, *b. Men.* 30a, and *Deut. R.* 9.9.

11. *Y. Meg.* 1.11 71d; cf. *m. Yad.* 4.5, Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Tefillin* 1.8-9, and *Targ. Ps.-J.* Deut. 31.24.

12. *B. Sanh.* 21b, though some traditions hold that Ezra actually restored the original font (*t. Sanh.* 4.7, *y. Meg.* 1.11 71bc, and *b. Sanh.* 22a).

13. *B. Ber.* 8a; cf. *m. Meg.* 4.4, though Rashi connects the targum with Sinai (at *b. Qid.* 49a).

be understood as a drama, as it undoubtedly is, then it must be some other event that it reenacts.

According to the book of Nehemiah, the Judeans who had made their way back to their homeland under Persian auspices gathered in a Jerusalem square. There Ezra read from a scroll, not a set of tablets (Neh. 8.1-3). Moreover, Jewish tradition regards that scroll as having been written in the same script as is used today,[14] extending even to the lack of vowel signs, which, as has been noted since the sixteenth century, were a medieval invention.[15] He is also said to have translated the text, at least according to the traditional understanding of the word *mĕpôrāš* in Neh. 8.8.[16] Tellingly, all this was done from a raised platform (*migdal 'ēṣ*, Neh. 8.4), precisely as Jews do in the synagogue, where the scroll is read from the *bîmâ*, an architectural element mentioned in references to ancient synagogues.[17] And finally, the people there rose before the scroll, the reading of which was preceded by a blessing (Neh. 8.5-6), precisely as it is today. Despite all the evocations of Sinai, it is, therefore, Ezra's practice (with its admitted echoes of the Sinaitic theophany[18]) that Jews reenact when they read the Torah during synagogue worship.

This accounts for the tone of the Deuteronomic proclamation, '*This* is the teaching which Moses placed before the Israelites'. That phrasing may have been out of place at the foot of Mt Sinai, but it would have been entirely appropriate for those gathered around Ezra to equate what they were hearing with the teaching their ancestors had received centuries before. To be sure, Jewish tradition credits Ezra with instituting only Monday, Thursday, and Saturday afternoon Torah readings, whereas the Sabbath morning, New Moon, and holiday readings are traced back to Moses;[19] however, the Bible, which does attribute to him the requirement that it be read every seventh

14. Cf. n. 12.

15. Ginsberg 1967: 121-30; cf. *Machsor Vitry* §123 (ed. S. Hurwitz [Nürnberg: J. Bulka, 1923], p. 91), Hai Gaon as quoted in Chiese 1979: 7, and perhaps Judah ibn Barzilai as quoted in Faur 1986: 11.

16. Cf. *y. Meg.* 4.1 74d; *b. Meg.* 3a; *b. Ned.* 37b.

17. Levine 2000: 319-23; cf. *m. Sot.* 7.7-8, *t. Suk.* 4.6, and *y. Shek.* 5.1 55b. The rabbinic phrase *yrd lipĕnê hattêbâ* (*m. Tā'an.* 2.2; *t. Ber.* 2.9; *t. Roš Haš.* 4(2).12; *b. Šab.* 24b; *b. Meg.* 24b; *b. Ḥul.* 24b) could imply that the ark was lower than the worshippers (cf. Elbogen 1907: 704-705); however, it may only mean that the spot to which worshippers descended was lower than the ark (cf. Hoffman 1989–90: 42-44).

18. Cf. Fine 1998: 524-25. Sonnet 1997: 142-43 makes a similar point about Deuteronomy's description of the public reading ceremony (Deut. 31.10-13) being in terms that echo the Horeb theophany. So, too, the Jews gathered in Jerusalem after the exile are even said to have entered into a covenantal experience (*'ămānâ*) like that at Sinai (Neh. 10.1).

19. *Y. Meg.* 4.1 75a and *Sop.* 10.2; cf. apparently Josephus, *Apion* 2:175.8 §17 (LCL, pp. 362-63).

year (Deut. 31.10-13), makes no such claim. Moreover, repetition is a characteristic of rituals, not of the events they commemorate or reenact. For example, the Bible presents Israel as having left Egypt only once, even though it calls for that event to be reenacted annually, as Jews do to this day.[20] To be sure, historical fact matters less for this kind of analysis than communal self-understanding, which may be only implicit. Nonetheless, these several correlations demonstrate that it is Ezra's reading of the scroll that the Torah service reflects rather than the revelation to Moses.

Further support for this interpretation can be seen in the traditional placement of the ark, from which the Torah scroll is removed, on the synagogue wall facing Jerusalem, precisely where Ezra's reading took place. The recitation of a verse from Isaiah—that 'instruction shall go forth from Zion and the LORD's word from Jerusalem' (Isa. 2.3)—dramatizes that connection. That statement may seem unremarkable; after all, it accurately reflects the prophet's point about God's teaching emanating from Jerusalem, presumably among priests.[21] However, Isaiah's term for 'instruction'—*tôrâ*—carries a very specific resonance when recited as the sacred scroll becomes visible during synagogue worship.[22]

The reference to Jerusalem may also seem unexceptional in a rite that is filled with allusions to the land of Israel; however, its use in this context is odd. Although Jerusalem was undoubtedly a center for instruction in biblical times, Jewish doctrine does not teach that the Torah came from Mt Zion but from Mt Sinai. By connecting the Torah scroll to a geographical location different from that stated in the Bible, the liturgy is making a dramatic claim.

This development has biblical precedent. The Bible often describes the Israelite capital with imagery taken from other locations. Psalm 48 provides a vivid example when it speaks of Jerusalem as 'most beautiful, joy of all the earth, within the north, city of the great king' (v. 3 [ET 2]). Of course, Jerusalem was not in the north, but in the center of ancient Israel; however, the Hebrew word for north (*ṣāpôn*) was also the name of the Canaanite Olympus, home of the god Baal.[23] The psalmist has thus applied the concept of the divine dwelling at *Ṣāpôn* to Jerusalem, the 'city of our God' and

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20. Exod. 12.14. Jewish tradition does allow for the possibility of multiple exoduses, e.g., *Exod. Rab.* 20.11, *PRE* §48, *Targ. Ps.-J.* Exod. 13.17, *Targ.* Pss. 78.9, with allusions in *b. Sanh.* 92b and *Mek.*, *Bešallaḥ, petiḥta* (ed. H.S. Horowitz and I.A. Rabin, pp. 76-77); cf. de Vaux 1978: 374-81.

21. Cf. Jer. 18.18 and Ezek. 7.26; Ezra is himself identified as a priest (Ezra 7.11; 10.1, 16; Neh. 8.2, 9; 12.26).

22. So, too, the term *tôrâ* in Deut. 4.44, which worshippers surely understand as referring to the Torah scroll, even though it originally meant God's teaching.

23. KTU 1.4 v. 51-55 (p. 19), 1.6 i.12-18 (p. 25), and 1.6 vi.9-13 (p. 28); cf. Sarna 1971: 747-50.

'mountain of his holiness' (v. 2 [ET 1]).[24] Psalm 132 also identifies Jerusalem as God's home when it declares, 'The Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his seat. This is my resting place for all time; here I will dwell' (vv. 13-18). These concepts may have originally applied to Sinai, which is elsewhere called the 'mountain of God' (e.g., Exod. 3.1; 18.5; 24.13), who is identified as 'the One of Sinai' (Judg. 5.5; Ps. 68.9 [ET 8]). Indeed, once the Israelites arrive at Sinai, God tells them that 'I brought you to me' (Exod. 19.4). That may also explain the Bible's description of the theophany as having been accompanied by thunder, lightning, and smoke (Exod. 19.14-20; 20.18), since Canaanite tradition presents Baal's appearances as being accompanied by thunderstorms.[25]

Sinai was not the only location from which Jerusalem coopted imagery. The prophet Ezekiel looked forward to a time when Jerusalem would be a source of waters (47.1-12), a concept elsewhere linked with Eden.[26] Chronicles connected Jerusalem with Mt Moriah (2 Chron. 3.1),[27] where Isaac was to have been sacrificed, and the book of Psalms linked it with Salem (Ps. 76.3), the place where Melchizedek met Abraham. This process continued in post-biblical times, when Jerusalem was called 'the navel of the land',[28] an appellation earlier used for a place near Shechem.[29]

These examples demonstrate that Jerusalem absorbed terms and images that had originally been associated with any number of other places. This usurpation of theological imagery parallels the historical process whereby Jerusalem displaced Shiloh as the ark's home.[30] It is, therefore, fitting that the prophet looked forward to a time when Zion would become the highest mountain, to which all peoples would converge as it finally achieved the stature appropriate for a hill of such importance.[31]

Synagogue architecture also expresses the idea that Torah came forth from Jerusalem.[32] The cabinet (*'ārôn*) in which Torah scrolls are housed is

24. Cf. v. 10 (ET 9), 'Your lovingkindness is inside your palace'.

25. KTU 1.2 i.35 (p. 7), 1.3 iv.32 (p. 13), and 1.4 iv.59 (p. 18); thus, Baal's title 'rider on clouds' (KTU 1.2 iv.8 and 29 [p. 9], 1.3 ii.40, 1.3 iii.38 and rev iv.4 [pp. 11-12], 1.4 iii.11 [p. 17]; cf. Ps. 68.5 (ET 4) (*rōkēb bā'ărābôt*), v. 34 (ET 33) (*rōkēb bišmê šěmê-qedem*), and Deut. 33.26 (*rōkēb šāmayim*).

26. Gen. 2.10-14; cf. Isa. 33.20-21 and Akkadian *bāb-apsî* (gate to primeval ocean, *CAD* B, p. 22, and A2, p. 197). El lived at the source of rivers (*mbk.nhrm*, KTU 1.6 i.33 [p. 25]).

27. This linkage may already be present in the various plays on the consonants *y-r-'-h* in Genesis 22 (e.g., v. 14).

28. *Jub.* 8.19; Josephus, *War* 3.3.5 §52 (LCL, 3:18-19); cf. *b. Sanh.* 37a and Ezek. 5.5, which describes Jerusalem as being *bětôk haggôyim*.

29. Judg. 9.39; cf. Ezek. 38.12.

30. 2 Sam. 6.2-4, 9-12; cf. 1 Sam. 4.3-4; 5.1, 8, 10; 6.1, 10-12; 7.1-2; 2 Chron. 35.3.

31. Isa. 2.2-4 = Mic. 4.1-3.

32. Cf. Goodenough 1954: IV, 124.

typically located at the top of several steps.[33] In a design that goes back to antiquity, it is often framed by two columns and sheltered by a gabled roof under a decorative conch shell.[34] The resulting image is plainly that of a building façade. Some scholars believe that this was modeled on the portals of Greco-Roman temples;[35] however, the fact that Torah shrines are customarily located on synagogues' Jerusalem-facing walls makes it reasonable to infer that the building they evoke is the ancient Temple.[36] Its entrance was flanked by two columns.[37] Sefardic tradition even speaks of the ark as *hêkāl* (lit. 'palace').[38] Its various accoutrements are designated *pārôket*, *kappōret*, and *nēr tāmîd*, terms derived from the Bible's desert tabernacle,[39] which prefigures the Temple,[40] and are surrounded by decorations that depict objects often linked to the Temple.[41] As they pray facing Jerusalem and, symbolically, the Temple, synagogue worshippers rise as the 'Torah comes out of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem' (Isa. 2.3), precisely as the prophet foretold.

The liturgy and choreography of the Torah ritual thus continue Jerusalem's usurpation of Sinaitic traditions.[42] However, it is not the Sinaitic revelation which they mimic, but the traditional understanding of Ezra's reading of the Torah, with its public reading from a scroll written in block script and accompanied by a translation.

In no way does this understanding of the Torah service as a reenactment of Ezra's gathering undermine the importance of what happened at Sinai. Jewish tradition expressly describes Ezra as a reflection of Moses.[43] Making

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33. Cf. Neh. 8.5. The Zohar stipulates that there be six steps to the reading desk on the basis of 1 Kgs 10.19 = 2 Chron. 9.18 (*Vayaqhēl* 206a).

34. Levine 2000: 317, 328; Sukenik 1934: 57. According to Goodenough 1958: VIII, 96-104: 84, shells were a common element in pagan shrines.

35. Goldman 1966: 70-93. Milson 2007: 108f. regards it as evoking the gate of heaven; cf. Lightstone 1984: 117-18.

36. Cf. Hachlili 1988: 280; Kraeling 1956: 60. The synagogue orientation towards Jerusalem evolved during the third and fourth centuries CE (Langer 1998: 51, 66; Levine 2000: 179-81). Cf. Dan. 6.11 and Josephus, *Apion* 2.2 §10 (LCL, 1:294-97). For a different view, see 1 Kgs 8.29-30, 44, 48; *m. Ber.* 4.5; *t. Ber.* 3.16; *t. Meg.* 4(3).22; *y. Ber.* 4.5 8b-c; *b. B. Bat.* 25a; *Tanḥ. B. Vayišlaḥ* 21 (p. 87b).

37. 1 Kgs 7.13-22.

38. Levy 1963: 50.

39. Cf. Exod. 27.20; 25.17-22; 26.31-34.

40. Cf. Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Beit Ha-Beḥîrah* 6.15.

41. Cf. Roth 1953: 25.

42. *B. Men.* 110a describes Torah study as replacing sacrifice; cf. *b. Tā'an.* 27b and *b. Meg.* 31b. Faur 1986: 166 cites Isaac Cardoso's observation that 'Mt Sinai represents what later would be the Sanctuary or Holy Temple' (*Las excelencias de los hebreos*, p. 129).

43. *B. Sanh.* 21b-22a; cf. *t. Sanh.* 4.7 and *y. Meg.* 1.9, 1.11 71b.

that connection is, in fact, the whole point of the line from Deuteronomy. But that does not require the Torah service to be a reenactment of Moses' experience, at least no more than Ezra's reading is itself presented as reenacting what happened then.

In the end, it may not make a lot of difference whether Jewish worshippers see themselves as standing in the desert with Moses or in Jerusalem under Ezra, especially since most worshippers probably do not pay much attention to the ideas that their actions dramatize at all. The process actually works in reverse, with the liturgy expressing an idea that those enacting it can articulate and internalize.[44] Moreover, Jewish theology has often asserted that God's revelation is a continuing process. As the kabbalist Isaiah Horowitz put it, 'The Holy One, blessed be he, gave the Torah, and he gives the Torah at every time and every hour'.[45]

Ritual has an integrity of its own, quite apart from what those who participate in it are thinking. Still, it is useful to consider these elements in order to understand how a particular ritual actually works and the themes that it reflects, much as studying the notes out of which a symphony is composed can enrich our appreciation of the work as a whole. In that regard, contemporary scholarship has as much to offer familiar forms of worship as it does those of distant cultures and can even contribute to worshippers' own appreciation for the activities in which they engage.

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44. Rappaport 1999: 142-43.
45. Horowitz 1649: *Beit Ḥokhmah*, p. 25b; cf. Cohen 1972: 76; *Targ. Onq.* Deut. 5.19; *Exod. Rab.* 28.6. This idea is rooted in Deuteronomy's assertion that it was 'not with our fathers that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, the living, every one of us who is here today' (5.3) and its later insistence that 'I am not making this covenant with its sanctions with you alone, but with those who are standing here with us this day before the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here this day' (29.13-14). In that spirit, the blessings that accompany the reading of Scripture during synagogue worship end by describing God as the one who *gives* the Torah (*nôtēn hatôrâ*), a concept symbolically reenacted by the widespread contemporary ceremony in which the Torah scroll is passed from older to younger generations.

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THE COMPOSITION OF EZRA–NEHEMIAH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A MEDIEVAL JEWISH COMMENTATOR

Sara Japhet

For Tamara—
The poet of the age of prose

I

One of the foci of modern biblical scholarship since its very beginning has been the composition of the biblical books; questions pertaining to this topic have taken the lion's share of the critical attention of biblical scholars. This interest is of course well accounted for by the effect of these questions on the understanding of the biblical literature, in all its aspects. Such was not the case, however, for the study of the Bible in the ancient period. The traditional, conventional views of the composition of the different biblical books were summarized in one passage, in a *Baraita* found in the Babylonian Talmud (*Bava Batra* 14b-15b),[1] and were occasionally referred to in other passages in the vast rabbinic literature.

This general attitude toward the questions of composition changed in medieval Jewish biblical exegesis. Recent biblical research has made it abundantly clear that these questions attracted the attention of biblical commentators in the different centres of Jewish scholarship.[2] Remarks

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1. 'Moses wrote his own book, and the portion of Balaam, and Job. Joshua wrote his book and eight verses of the Pentateuch. Samuel wrote his book, and the Book of Judges, and Ruth. David wrote the Book of Psalms, including in it the work of ten elders … Jeremiah wrote his book, and the Book of Kings, and Lamentations. Hezekiah and his colleagues wrote Isaiah, Proverbs, the Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. The Men of the Great Assembly wrote Ezekiel, the Twelve Prophets, Daniel, and the Scroll of Esther. Ezra wrote his book and the genealogy of Chronicles up to him … Who then finished it? Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.' For the discussion of the statement regarding Ezra–Nehemiah, see below, p. 152.

2. For many years the only example of such a critical approach known to modern biblical scholarship was that of Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1164), whose critical remarks about verses in the Pentateuch that could not have been written by Moses became known to the world of biblical scholarship through the work of Baruch Benedict Spinoza (*Tractatus theologico-politicus* [1670], chapter 8).

pertaining to matters of authorship and editorship may be found in Kara-
ite biblical commentaries, in Byzantine Jewish commentaries, in Judeo-
Arabic commentaries, both Karaite and Rabbanite, in Spanish exegesis,
and in Northern French exegesis; the research on this topic, with all its
ramifications, is still in full swing.[3]

   In the study of Ezra–Nehemiah, questions pertaining to the compo-
sition, authorship, and sources of the book have been among the most
important foci of modern research, and have been dealt with by, among
others, Tamara Eskenazi, the honoree of this volume, as well as myself.[4]
However, as in relation to the other biblical books, this topic did not
attract the attention of ancient students of the book; almost all that we hear
in rabbinic literature about its authorship is that 'Ezra wrote his book'.[5]
Another feature of the early study of Ezra–Nehemiah is the fact that the
book belongs with the 'neglected' biblical works in Jewish exegesis. It
does not have an Aramaic Targum,[6] it is referred to in rabbinic literature
relatively little,[7] and there is no midrashic compendium of homilies that
treat it. None of the great biblical commentators of the eleventh through
the thirteenth centuries—Rashi, ibn Ezra, Rashbam and Radak—wrote
commentaries on the book,[8] and the overall number of such commentar-
ies is relatively small. Nevertheless, the wish to 'cover' all the biblical
books did yield several commentaries,[9] and one of these is the focus of
this article.

   The commentary I am referring to is known as Pseudo-Rashi—the com-
mentary published in the rabbinic Bible under the name of Rashi. After
many years in which no attention had been paid to this work, it has recently

   3.   For bibliographical data see Steiner 2003; Viezel 2010a; Ben Shammai 2010;
and the bibliography cited in these studies.
   4.   See, among others, Eskenazi 1988a, passim; 1988b, 2008; Japhet 2006. This is
the specialized topic of the recent book edited by Boda and Redditt (2008) and is of
course dealt with in all the modern commentaries on Ezra–Nehemiah and introduc-
tions to the biblical literature.
   5.   *Bava Batra* 15a. On the remark of *Sanhedrin* 93b, see below p. 152.
   6.   Similar to Daniel, perhaps because some parts of these books are already in Ara-
maic. Rabbinic sources do not refer to the lack of a Targum for these books.
   7.   For these citations see Aaron Hyman 1936: 249-59; and Arthur Hyman 1985:
193-95.
   8.   The commentaries printed in the rabbinic biblical compendia, *Mikraoth gedo-
loth* under the names of Rashi and ibn Ezra are wrongly attributed to them. The com-
mentary attributed to ibn Ezra was composed by Moses Kimhi (see Geiger 1910: 225);
for the anonymous Pseudo-Rashi see below.
   9.   Viezel (2010b: 7-8, 46-49) mentions ten such commentaries in addition to
Pseudo-Rashi, written between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries. Viezel points
to the possibility that a few more commentaries on Ezra–Nehemiah were composed
but did not survive (2010b: nn. 41, 205).

been thoroughly studied by Eran Viezel.[10] His conclusion is that the anonymous author was a student of Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam), Rashi's grandson (c. 1085–after 1159); the commentary was written in France, in the middle of the twelfth century, and thus belongs to the Northern French School of exegesis at the height of its productivity.[11]

II

Pseudo-Rashi makes quite a few comments concerning the composition of Ezra–Nehemiah, one of which has already been pointed out by Viezel.[12] In his comment on Neh. 1.1 the commentator remarks briefly and in an off-handed manner: '*The words of Nehemiah etc*.[13] Nehemiah wrote this book from here onwards.'[14] On the face of the matter the view that Neh. 1.1 marks the beginning of a new book or a new section, written by Nehemiah, seems a straightforward conclusion from the heading of the chapter, 'the words of Nehemiah'; 'the words of X' is a standard beginning of several biblical and extra-biblical books,[15] and had been noticed as such in earlier rabbinic sources. This conclusion might also be influenced by the changes of style and protagonist at this point, in the move to Nehemiah's first-person narrative.[16] However, the significance of the commentator's remark is broader than just a plain interpretation of the verse.

   The traditional Jewish view of Ezra–Nehemiah is that it is one book called Ezra, as stated in the Talmud's brief remark, 'Ezra wrote his book' (*Bava Batra* 16a). This view is attested also by the notations of the Masoretes, which are conventionally added at the end of the biblical books and are found at the end of the book of Nehemiah; and by the inclusion of Ezra–Nehemiah as one book in the count of the biblical books as 'twenty four' (or 'twenty two' by Josephus).[17] The author of the book, Ezra the scribe, is identified already in the title of the book. Also in the Septuagint Ezra–Nehemiah was initially considered one book, but later on it was divided into two, and the book of Nehemiah was named 'Second Ezra'. This nomenclature attests to the view that the

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   10. Viezel 2010b: 1-58.
   11. Viezel 2010b: 56-58.
   12. Viezel 2010b: 35.
   13. English translations of Ezra–Nehemiah follow either the NJPS or the NRSV, unless otherwise stated.
   14. דברי נחמיה וכו': מכאן ואילך כתב נחמיה ספר זה.
   15. See 1 Kgs 11.41; Jer. 1.1; Amos 1.1; Prov. 30.1; 31.1; Qoh. 1.1; 1 Chron. 29.9; and more.
   16. Viezel 2010b: 35.
   17. Josephus Flavius, *Against Apion*, chapter 8, p. 180.

division was rather technical, and had no consequences for the identification of the author. The division of the book into two books was later adopted by the Vulgate and in its wake by the early printed editions of the Hebrew Bible and as well as by modern translations.[18]

In modern biblical scholarship the unity of Ezra–Nehemiah was put in question, as is perhaps best illustrated by the title of James VanderKam's study, 'Ezra–Nehemiah or Ezra and Nehemiah?' VanderKam's conclusion is that these are two originally separate works that were secondarily put together.[19]

This is the thrust of our commentator's remark. According to him, from Nehemiah 1 onwards, the author was not Ezra, as traditionally accepted, but Nehemiah. The phrasing of this remark is not absolutely clear: should we infer that according to the commentator's view, the chapters from Nehemiah 1 onwards are a separate book, composed by Nehemiah, or does he regard these chapters as a continuation of 'this book', namely the book called Ezra? Even if we adopt the more limited possibility—that Nehemiah merely continued what Ezra began—the view expressed by this remark underscores the independence of Nehemiah 1–13 from Ezra 1–10, and presents a different view of the authorship of Ezra–Nehemiah.

The innovative conception embedded in this view has implications not merely for the question of authorship of Ezra–Nehemiah, but also for the broader context of the canonization of Scripture. As is well known, the ancient sources are unanimous in regard to the principle that must have governed the canonization of the biblical books: they are seen as having been written by prophets, under the inspiration of the 'holy spirit' (רוח הקדש).[20] Ezra was indeed considered as one of the prophets, an aspect of his person well illustrated by the later apocryphal *4 Ezra* on the one hand, and by the rabbinic statement that 'Malachi is Ezra', that is, the last among the biblical

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18. For a concise presentation of the question and the relevant material see Williamson 1985: xxii-xxiii.

19. VanderKam 1992. VanderKam was preceded, among others, by M.Z. Segal 1943: 93-96, 103; Talmon 1976: 318. See also Kraemer 1993, and the review of research in Min 2008. Quite a few articles in Boda and Reddittt 2008 adopt the same view.

20. See already Josephus Flavius in *Against Apion*, the end of chapter 7 and chapter 8, pp. 178-80, and in the rabbinic literature: 'After the later prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi had died, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel' (*Yoma* 9b and parallels); for references and variants see Milikowsky 1994: 85. 'Until that time [i.e. the time of Alexander], there were prophets prophesying by the Holy Spirit; from there on "bend your ear and listen to the words of the wise" (Prov. 22:10)', *Seder olam rabbah* 30.12, p. 355; Milikowsky 1994: 83-85. For a broad discussion of the topic of canonization, with many original insights, see Haran 1996; and note additional literature in Milikowsky 1994.

prophets, on the other.[21] Nehemiah is nowhere included among the prophets, so how should the ascription of the book to him be explained?

It seems that Pseudo-Rashi adopted and further developed an earlier rabbinic saying that holds a similar view. In a passage in tractate *San-hedrin* the participating rabbis raise a question: 'Let us consider: Nehe-miah said all the words of Ezra;[22] why then was the book not called by his name?' (*Sanhedrin* 93b). Several reasons are suggested to account for the omission of Nehemiah's name from the title of the book, but none of them refers to the fact that Nehemiah was not a prophet, and that nowhere is he regarded as one. The underlying assumption of the passage is that Nehe-miah was responsible for '*all* the words of Ezra', that is, the book of Ezra–Nehemiah in its entirety.[23]

The ascription of a biblical book to Nehemiah brings to mind the rabbinic discussion in *Bava Batra* 15a. Following the Tannaitic statement that 'Ezra wrote his book and the book of Chronicles up to him', the Talmudic discuss-ants ask who 'completed' it (that is, the book of Chronicles). The answer is that Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah completed it. Although the scope of Nehemiah's part in the book of Chronicles has been a matter of debate—due to its dependence on the meaning of 'up to him', which has been interpreted in different ways—there can be no doubt about the general conclusion that Nehemiah is explicitly included among the biblical authors.[24]

The conclusion seems straightforward: both the Talmudic tradition—in *Sanhedrin* 93b and *Bava Batra* 15a—and Pseudo-Rashi include Nehemiah among the biblical authors. According to the statement in *Sanhedrin* 93b he was the author of the entire book of Ezra–Nehemiah, while according to Pseudo-Rashi he wrote only Nehemiah 1–13. Since no word is said about Nehemiah being included among the prophets—neither there nor any-where else—does this mean that they conceived of Nehemiah as writing his book as a layman, as a leader of the people telling of his own projects and experiences?

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21. מלאכי זה עזרא, *Megillah* 15a and parallels, and Pseudo-Rashi on Ezra 7.6. See Viezel 2009b: n. 37. Ezra is not included among the prophets in *Seder olam rabbah* 20.

22. Hebrew: כל מילי דעזרא נחמיה אמרינהו. The standard English translations present it in an interpretative paraphrase: 'The whole subject matter of [the book of Ezra] was narrated by Nehemiah' (Soncino edition); or, 'All the matters of the book of Ezra were said (i.e. authored) by Nehemiah' (Schottenstein edition).

23. The Talmud's wording is, 'Nehemiah said *all* the words of Ezra'; but Pseudo-Rashi modifies this statement somewhat, to say that 'Nehemiah said *most* of the words in the book of Ezra' (Pseudo-Rashi's commentary *ad loc.*, lemma מכדי).

24. The different interpretations of 'up to him' are illustrated by the English trans-lations, among other ways: 'up to his own time' (Soncino edition); 'to the point of his own lineage' (Schottenstein edition). See the detailed discussion and the convincing conclusions of Viezel 2009, and the bibliography cited there.

In his book on the canonization of Scripture, Menahem Haran proposed the view that the books of the third part of the Bible, the Hagiographa (*Ketuvim*), were regarded as canonical not because of their contents or views, but because of the period in which they were written (or supposed to have been written). According to his view the biblical period until the end of the first phase of the Second Temple was regarded as the 'canonical period', and every work written during this period, or believed to have been so, became canonized.[25] However, Haran does not deal with the specific problem of Ezra–Nehemiah or with the question of Nehemiah as an uninspired author (perhaps because he regards the book of Ezra–Nehemiah as part of the 'Chronistic composition').[26] From a more general perspective, Haran's view on the canonization of Scriptures, including the Hagiographa, as a process of collecting of all the works that survived from the 'canonical period', rather than selecting from a broader religious literature according to certain principles,[27] is quite idiosyncratic, and I doubt that it can serve as a point of departure for solving the problem at hand.

Milikowsky claims that, according to the view of *Seder olam* that 'every book included in the Bible is conceived as words of prophecy … [T]he very composition of a biblical book, or even one section included in a biblical book, is by itself a proof that that person was a prophet.'[28] However, Milikowsky also points that *Seder olam* does not identify the author of Ezra–Nehemiah; moreover, he notes that according to the view of *Seder olam* Ezra was not a prophet and cannot be regarded as the author of Ezra–Nehemiah.[29] Nehemiah is not mentioned at all. Since according to *Seder olam* Ezra–Nehemiah must have been written by a prophet, the question regarding its authorship remains floating in the air.

It seems that both the Talmudic passages mentioned above (*Sanhedrin* 93b and *Bava Batra* 15a) and Pseudo-Rashi display a less dogmatic approach to the question of canonization and assume that not all the authors of the biblical books were prophets. This liberal view seems also to provide the conceptual basis for more discussions of authorship and editorship in medieval commentaries.[30] Such a view is further supported by the other

25. Haran 1996: 72-78.
26. Haran 1996: 62.
27. Argued throughout the book, and summarized on pp. 357-58.
28. Milikowsky 1994: 84.
29. Milikowsky 1994: 86 n. 18. Milikowsky does not bring up the question of Chronicles, which—according to the *Baraita* in *Bava Batra*—was also composed by Ezra and completed by Nehemiah.
30. See above, pp. 148-49 and n. 3. This does not apply to the figure of the *mudawwin* as conceived in Karaite exegesis. As has been shown by Uriel Simon (1991: 93-98), and further developed by Haggai Ben Shammai (2010), the persons defined as the *mudawwin* of biblical works were all regarded as inspired prophets, and therefore as having been active until the time of Malachi.

statements made by Pseudo-Rashi regarding Ezra–Nehemiah's composition, to which I will now turn.

<div align="center">III</div>

Another remark concerning matters of composition is found in Pseudo-Rashi's concise comment on Neh. 7.5-6:

> *And there I found written*. All these things were written in this document: 'These are the people of the province' (7.6) until 'We have also cast lots for the wood offering (10.35)'.[31]

Before we turn to discussion of the comment, a few comments on the broader literary context of this biblical passage and the flow of the biblical narrative are in order. According to Nehemiah's story, when the work on the wall of Jerusalem was completed, he realized that the city was not adequately inhabited: 'The city was broad and large, the people in it were few, and houses were not yet built' (Neh. 7.4). In order to repopulate Jerusalem in an orderly manner he needed precise information about the general population of the province. He therefore relates, 'I found the genealogical book of those who were the first to come up and there I found written …' (7.5); this statement is followed by a long list of returnees, which is a duplicate of Ezra 2.1-70. This is the juncture where Pseudo-Rashi makes the comment that 'All these things were written in this document'. On the face of the matter, this is no more than an obvious interpretation of the text, to account for the fact that the list of returnees is a duplicate of Ezra 2.1-70;[32] in fact, however, its implications are much broader, as we will see shortly.

The continuation of Nehemiah's story, the description of the actual inhabitation of Jerusalem, is found in Neh. 11.1-2:

> The officers of the people settled in Jerusalem; the rest of the people cast lots for one out of the ten to come and settle in the holy city of Jerusalem, and the other nine-tenths to stay in the towns. The people gave their blessing to all the men who willingly settled in Jerusalem.

The leap of the narrative thread from chap. 7 to chap. 11 raises as a matter of course the question of the origin and position of the intermediate chapters, Nehemiah (7) 8–10. Modern scholarship has dealt extensively with the

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31. In the printed editions the comment is divided into two parts and consequently its meaning becomes unclear.

32. According to the narrative sequence of Ezra–Nehemiah, Ezra 2 is the original form of the list, while Nehemiah 7 is its secondary occurrence. Williamson claimed that the literary development was reversed: that Nehemiah 7 was the original version, while Ezra 2 is its duplicate (Williamson 1985: 28-30). This debate is of no consequence for the present discussion.

questions of origin, composition, and function of these chapters, and has come up with a great variety of answers.[33] These are the questions underlying Pseudo-Rashi's remark, to which he attends without explicitly posing them—as is the general method of the medieval commentators: he defines all the material now included in Neh. 7.6–10.34 as 'non-Nehemianic'. According to his view this material was not part of Nehemiah's own narrative but was found in the 'genealogical book', taken from this source, and integrated into Nehemiah's story. However, in contrast to the common modern view of the sequence of the story, Pseudo-Rashi does not point to Neh. 11.1 as the resumption of Nehemiah's narrative but rather places the end of the borrowed material at Neh. 10.34, leaving out of consideration the legal material of vv. 35-40, which are a continuation of the ordinances and procedures set out in vv. 28-34. Since there is no literary indication of any kind that would justify the break of Nehemiah 10 after v. 34 and point to a change of authorship, I asked myself what could motivate this sensitive commentator to see the end of the inserted unit after v. 34 rather than with the conclusion of the record of the covenant at v. 40. And, since Pseudo-Rashi did not make explicit the arguments that had led him to his view, he left me no choice but to look for such arguments myself. My conclusion is that his view was motivated by the details of the story.

In the last chapter of the book Nehemiah summarizes some of his exploits on behalf of the Temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the people of Judah, and addresses God with the repeated prayer, 'Remember me, O my God, for good' (13.31; the address is phrased somewhat differently in vv. 14 and 27). In the last passage of the chapter Nehemiah refers to the actions he took on behalf of the priests, the Levites and the Temple: 'I purged them of every foreign element, and arranged … for the wood offering at fixed times and for the first fruits' (13.30). The last two issues on the list—the wood offering and the first-fruits—are precisely the same two items that conclude the record of the covenant: the wood offering in 10.35, and the detailed arrangements for the first-fruits and other priestly and Levitical offerings in 10.36-40. This literary fact led the commentator to conclude that since Nehemiah had mentioned explicitly that it was he who had been responsible for the arrangements concerning these two matters, the account of Neh. 10.35-40 should be ascribed to him. He therefore placed the conclusion of the borrowed material after 10.34.

As pointed out above, although one would expect the 'genealogical book' to include only the list in Neh. 7.6-73, Pseudo-Rashi regards all of

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33. These questions are dealt with by all the commentaries on Ezra–Nehemiah, and also by Eskenazi 2000–2001. For recent discussions of the literary development of the book of Nehemiah see Wright 2004; the discussion of Neh. 7.1–12.27 is on pp. 295-314. See also Boda 2008; for the history of research, see pp. 27-33.

7.6–10.34 as 'non-Nehemianic'. This observation is certainly motivated by the literary features of this material: the direct continuation from 7.73 to 8.1 and onwards; the fact that the protagonist of Nehemiah 8–9 is not Nehemiah—it is Ezra in chap. 8 and the Levites in Nehemiah 9, with Nehemiah playing only a minor role (at 8.9—which modern scholars regard as a gloss); the direct continuation from chap. 9 to chap. 10; and the fact that contrary to Nehemiah's own narrative Nehemiah does not speak in the first person but is referred to in the third person (Neh. 10.2).

What, according to Pseudo-Rashi's view, was the origin of this literary unit? The commentator does not provide an explicit answer to the question, but from a very short comment on Neh. 7.6 one may infer that he saw the origin of this block of material in the circles originating with Ezra. The comment glosses the statement of Neh. 7.6, 'those who were the first to come up', and reads as follows: 'The Jews who came up with Ezra at first'. This remark stands in some tension with the heading of the list in 7.7, where the leaders of the earlier return are presented as Zerubbabel and others, rather than Ezra. The commentator himself acknowledges this information in his comment on the next verse: '*Who came with Zerubbabel*: who came with Zerubbabel from the captivity of the exile' (v. 7). Although the concise phrasing of the comments does not allow for an unequivocal conclusion, it seems that the commentator ascribes the production of the list to the days of Ezra, when the earlier arrivals to Judah—with Zerubbabel and others—were documented. This view would fit well with all the other features of the inserted section, which includes not only the list of returnees, but also other records relating to Ezra and his deeds, all written by an anonymous author.

A few more remarks pertain to the list of 7.6-73. Since the commentator regards this text as a secondary version of Ezra 2, he does not provide any comment on the details of the list (except to identify Jeshua as Joshua the high priest), and he refers the reader to his commentary on Ezra 2: 'Everything is explained above' (the end of the comment on v. 7). Instead, he offers a kind of introduction to the list, in which he explains the origin of the differences between its two versions:

> These figures, sometimes they match the figures above and sometimes they do not match one another. The text is not so precise regarding the figures, but the total is equal here and there, as it is said: 'The sum of the entire community [43,360]' (Neh. 7.66//Ezra 2.64). And the author of the book (Hebrew: כותב הספר) relied on this total and was not so precise regarding the figures of the details.

Of the two lists, the commentator prefers the version of Ezra 2 as the correct account of those who returned from Babylon; he explains the different numbers in Nehemiah 7 as a case of imprecision, which he ascribes to the anonymous 'author of the book'. This author is neither Ezra, who

composed Ezra 1–10 and presented accurately all the details of the list in
Ezra 2, nor Nehemiah, whose story was interrupted in 7.5 and resumed in
10.34. 'The author of the book' is thus the person who wrote the 'genea-
logical book' that Nehemiah consulted in order to repopulate the city of
Jerusalem, and from which 7.6–10.34 was taken.[34] This author did not win
the commentator's respect; he regards his work as imprecise and no dif-
ferent from that of any other human author; his records should not be seen
as fully reliable.

IV

We have seen so far that Pseudo-Rashi identified three literary components
in the book of Ezra–Nehemiah: the book written by Ezra, to which he does
not refer explicitly but should by implication be identified as Ezra 1–10;[35]
the section written by Nehemiah as noted in the comment on Neh. 1.1 (Neh.
1–7.5; 10.35–13.31); and the 'genealogical book', written by an anonymous
author, from which Nehemiah took 7.6–10.34 and inserted them into the
midst of his own composition. In addition to these three extensive literary
units, the commentator identifies in Ezra 1–10 several additional sources,
which were incorporated into the flow of the story.

   One of the well-known features of Ezra–Nehemiah is the inclusion in
the narrative of official documents in their original forms and languag-
es.[36] Pseudo-Rashi takes note of the scope and boundaries of these doc-
uments in a most consistent fashion. He sets the boundaries of Cyrus's
edict by commenting on its beginning and end. He remarks on Ezra 1.1:
'*As follows*. And thus he said to them in the herald's proclamation and in
his written letter which he sent throughout his kingdom'; then he com-
ments at the end of v. 4: 'From "thus said Cyrus" up to here [this is] the
herald's proclamation and the message of the written letter'. He deline-
ates the letter of accusation sent to Artaxerxes by the people of Samaria

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   34. Steiner 2003: 146 discusses the comment of Pseudo-Rashi in the context of
his discussion of the figure of the 'redactor'. However, the inclusion of this comment
under that rubric does not fit the meaning of the comment, which refers explicitly to
an author of a defined document (Neh. 7.6–10.34) rather than to a redactor. Also, the
identification of the author of the comment with Rashi on the basis of the single other
occurrence of the phrase 'the author of the book', in Rashi's commentary on Judg.
5.31, seems very doubtful. (For more on the [erroneous] attribution to Rashi of the
commentary on Ezra–Nehemiah, see Viezel 2010b: 13-18, 55-56). In the attempt to
see the 'author of the book' as another title for the redactor Steiner describes Rashi's
straightforward comment on Judg. 5.31 as 'far from clear', which is certainly not the
case.
   35. See below on Ezra 7.27, p. 158.
   36. On this feature of the book see Japhet 1983: 181-82.

by stating at the end of 4.11: 'This is the beginning of the letter, "your servants, men of the province of Beyond the River" etc., until "you will no longer have"' (4.16).[37] Artaxerxes' answer to the letter is delineated explicitly at its end, by the comment at the end of 4.22: 'Up to here [this is] the answer that Cyrus[38] answered'. Pseudo-Rashi delineates also the boundaries of the letter of Tattenai, the governor of Beyond the River, and Darius's response to this letter. He translates the Aramaic of 5.7: '*this is what was written in it*: This is what was written inside the letter', and then concludes at the end of v. 17: 'Up to here is the written letter that Tattenai and Shethar-bozenai sent'. The next notes to this effect refer to the boundaries of Darius's answer. The comment on 6.6 reads: '*Now Tattenai etc*. This is an answer which Darius answered Tattenai and Shethar-bozenai'; and then at the end of v. 12 we find: 'Up to here is Darius's answer'. Artaxerxes' letter to Ezra the scribe opens with 'This is the text of the letter which King Artaxerxes gave Ezra' (7.11), and Pseudo-Rashi only comments on the meaning of the two Aramaic words: פרשגן הנשתון. However, he refers to the end of the document at the end of 7.26 in a rather lengthy comment:

> Up to here is the written letter which King Darius[39] gave to Ezra the scribe in order that he should carry it to Jerusalem, to show it to the priests and the Levites and the king's treasurers, in order that they would go on keeping the commandments and worshiping the Lord in the Temple and observing the Torah as prescribed.

The end of the quoted document is emphasized by the comment on v. 27, which draws attention to the change of style and to the person of the writer: '*Blessed is the Lord*. Ezra wrote so in his book when he gave thanks to the Lord'.

   All in all, the commentator defines six passages in Ezra 1–7 as external documents: Ezra 1.2-4; 4.11-16, 18-22; 5.7-17; 6.6-12; 7.11 (or 12)-26; and he also refers to the Aramaic record of Cyrus's memorandum (6.3-5), although without the standard phraseology. In his comment on 6.2 he remarks: '*And it was found in Achmetha*: a document of a certain scroll was found there … and this is what was written in it: its memorandum.'

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37. In the Hebrew version these are the last words of v. 16.

38. According to the rabbinic view of the history of the Persian period, followed consistently by Pseudo-Rashi, 'Artaxerxes' is not a proper name of a particular Persian ruler, but a general designation of the Persian kings, similar to the title 'Pharaoh' for the Egyptian kings. 'For the whole kingdom is called Artaxerxes' (*Seder olam rabbah* 30.12; see also *Rosh Hashanah* 3b, and Pseudo-Rashi on Ezra 4.7). It thus applies to either Cyrus or Darius, whose identity is determined by the context.

39. On the identification of Artaxerxes as Darius, see the previous note.

The consistency of the commentator's attendance to the identification of the documents, and his employment of standard phraseology, attest not only to his interest in the topic of composition, but also to his sensitivity to the changes of style, and his awareness of the author's literary technique. He regards Ezra 1–10 as 'his book', that is, Ezra's book, but distinguishes systematically between the narrative sections of the book and the documents embedded in it. He does not, however, draw further attention to the difference between the two modes of Ezra's composition, the first person singular that characterizes Ezra 7.27–9.13 (and on which he comments in 7.27), and the neutral third-person narrative style that obtains throughout the rest of the book.

<div align="center">V</div>

What awoke this commentator's attention to the composition of Ezra–Nehemiah, and what led him to his unconventional views? My first impulse was to attribute his view that Neh. 1.1 marks the beginning of a new work to his possible acquaintance with the Vulgate, where Ezra and Nehemiah are presented as separate books. However, the model of the Vulgate could account only for this remark and would not explain all the others. Moreover, even this remark seems to be more easily explained by the Talmudic precedent in *Sanhedrin* 93b. A better explanation seems to be the sharpened critical approach, and the attention to the literary aspects of the biblical text, achieved through the activity of the *Peshat* school of exegesis in northern France. The individual comments dispersed throughout the commentary add up to a display of an acute literary sensitivity combined with a free approach to the biblical text that allows the commentator to draw the full consequences of his literary analysis. This is the approach that lies also at the foundation of modern biblical scholarship. Pseudo-Rashi's achievements are of course circumscribed by the limits of the knowledge available to him in his time and place. He had a more limited knowledge of the Hebrew language, along with a problematic view of the general historical and chronological background of the period in general and of the Persian Empire in particular. He had of course no access to the linguistic, literary, historical, sociological and anthropological theories that are available to the modern scholar. The commentator was in every way a child of his time, working within the framework of the conceptual presuppositions and the scholarly conventions of the *Peshat* school of biblical exegesis, and within the didactic milieu of the rabbinic academies. With all these conditions and limitations, his achievements are striking, and deserve our attention even today.

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THE SAMARITAN SCHISM OR THE JUDAIZATION OF SAMARIA? REASSESSING JOSEPHUS'S ACCOUNT OF THE MT GERIZIM TEMPLE

Gary N. Knoppers

The portrayal of Samarian–Judean relations in the latter part of the fourth century in Josephus's *Antiquities* seems to point to a decisive degradation in relations between Samaria and Judah.[1] Indeed, the story in Josephus's *Antiquities* (11.302-46) about how a mixed marriage (ἐπιγαμία) between Nikaso, the daughter of the Samarian governor Sanballat and Manasseh, the brother of the Judean high priest Jaddua, led to the construction of a new Samarian temple on Mt Gerizim has often been cited as crucial to show a schism between Samaritans and Jews.[2]

Josephus's literary account has had a profound effect on the history of interpretation. The Josephus text purportedly constructs binary oppositions between Yahwists in the North and Yahwists in the South: different peoples (*ethnē*)—Judeans and Samarians; different temples—historic Mt Zion over against dissident Mt Gerizim; and different priesthoods—the authoritative

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1. It is a great pleasure to dedicate this essay in honor of Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, who has done so much to further the academic study of the Persian and Hellenistic periods over the past three decades. Tamara has not only brought a fine literary sensitivity to the study of the Torah, Ezra–Nehemiah, and 1 Esdras, but also has been instrumental in encouraging the work of younger scholars in the field. Finally, Tamara has been at the forefront of efforts in the SBL to support dialogue among scholars, stemming from different lands, employing different methodologies, and advancing new perspectives on old texts.

2. Some issues of terminology. I am referring to Yahwistic Samarians and Yahwistic Judeans to distinguish these groups from the later Samaritans and Jews of the early Common Era. Clearly, there were important lines of continuity between both sets of groups, but also some historical, social, and religious differences. To complicate matters, there is an inherent ambiguity in Josephus's usage of the terms Σαμαρεῖται (Samaritans) and Σαμαρεῖς (Samarians). One might expect Josephus to use the former to designate the religious group and the latter to designate residents of Samaria, but Josephus is inconsistent in his employment of these and other like terms (e.g., Σικιμῖται, 'Shechemites'). See Kippenberg 1971; Kartveit 2009; Pummer 2009. To complicate matters further, the Seleucid province of Samaritis (Σαμαρῖτις) comes also into play, because the term 'Samaritan' (Σαμαρίτης) designates a resident of this administrative district (Dušek 2012: 71).

high priestly line of Jaddua over against the breakaway lineage begun by Manasseh.[3] To be sure, some (recently Magen 2007; 2008a; 2008b) have insisted that Josephus got the date of the temple construction wrong (by assigning it to the fourth century not to the fifth century), but they have not disputed his fundamental outline of the temple construction and its significance.[4]

Critical questions have been raised, however, about Josephus's reliability as a historian. Not all scholars have followed Josephus's narrative as an insightful gateway to the ancient past. Some have seen a consistent and decidedly anti-Samaritan bias in his writing.[5] Others have questioned Josephus's sources and handling of this era. Working in the first century CE, Josephus had few reliable archival or literary sources with which to reconstruct Judean-Samarian history at the end of the Persian era and the beginning of the Hellenistic era. He seems to have had access to only limited information about this period and, drawing upon the few late biblical sources at his disposal, unwittingly compressed the entire Persian era (Williamson 1977; Schwartz 1990). In the case of the union between Manasseh and Nikaso, Josephus may have employed a garbled version of the tale about an elite Samarian–Judean intermarriage involving the house of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, and the house of Eliashib, the high priest of Jerusalem (Neh. 13.28-29). But this is uncertain, because there are many differences between the elaborate discussion of Josephus and the terse anecdote of Nehemiah.[6]

At times, Josephus uncritically borrowed material from legendary sources relating, for example, to the purported arrival of Alexander in Jerusalem and incorporated this material into his own account (Gruen 1998; Grabbe 2008.74-75). There are also very serious gaps in knowledge that skew his larger narrative framework. The Flavian historian of the first century CE does not seem to be aware of the tradition discussed by the Roman writer Quintus Curtius Rufus (*Hist. Alex.* 4.8.9-10) that the Samarians murdered the Macedonian-appointed prefect of Syria (Andromachus) in 331 BCE, while Alexander was extending his campaign into Egypt. This insurrection led to punitive reprisals by Alexander's forces against the guilty parties. The

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3. Nevertheless, on the question of separate Samarian and Judean peoples, the work of Josephus does not speak with a single voice (see below).

4. Oesterley (1932: 157) prefers to have it both ways, speaking of a two-stage schism, dating to the 5th and the 4th centuries BCE.

5. E.g., Coggins 1975; Grabbe 1987; Nodet 1997; Zsengellér 1998; Hjelm 2000; Kartveit 2009; Pummer 2009. Differently, Egger 1986.

6. '[A]part from the families involved and the position of the husband and wife in them, there are no similarities between the union of Neh. 13.28 and the Manasseh-Nikaso marriage' (VanderKam 2004: 76). See also the alternative reconstruction of Wright 2004.

dozens of assorted fourth-century private legal documents (mostly slave dockets), known as the Samaria papyri (Cross 1969; 1974; Leith 1997; Gropp 1986; 2001; Dušek 2007), hidden in the caves of the Wâdî ed-Dâliyeh, most plausibly originate from elite Samarians fleeing from the forces of Alexander.[7] According to Syncellus and one passage in the *Chronicon* of Eusebius (Olympiad 112 [205F]), Alexander destroyed the town of Samaria and settled a colony of Macedonians at the site. Alternatively, according to another passage in the *Chronicon* of Eusebius and Jerome, it was Perdikkas who settled the city with Macedonians. In any event, the archaeological evidence from the Wâdî ed-Dâliyeh and the historical testimony of Quintus Curtius Rufus indicate the limitations of enlisting Josephus's *Antiquities* as a reliable guide for understanding the history of this period.

The questioning of Josephus's literary presentation needs to be extended to his account of the Mt Gerizim temple. My interest in this essay lies with Josephus's larger depiction of Samarian–Judean relations during late Persian and early Hellenistic times. Rather than employing his work as a tool to understand when the Samarian temple was built, I am using it as a means to understand how one influential and important early Jewish interpreter dealt with the complexity of Judean–Samarian relations during the era in which he thought the new shrine was constructed. In so doing, I would like to contest the standard theory that Josephus's account portrays a major cleavage between the Yahwistic communities of Samaria and Judah during the period under review. Instead, I would like to argue that the Josephus narrative about the new Samarian shrine may be profitably read in a diametrically opposed way.

There is no question but that Josephus wishes to present the arrival of a new Samarian temple as a momentous, dreadful, and divisive event in the history of Samarian–Judean relations. Yet, his very depiction of the circumstances leading up to and ensuing from the establishment of a new sanctuary on Mt Gerizim assumes a range of close links between Yahwists in the two neighboring provinces. Among the very stories of strained relations and division, one also finds tales of religious contacts, voluntary migrations, intermarriage, competitive emulation, sacerdotal blood relations, and cultural transformation. Rather than effectively rupturing relations between Samaria and Judea, the rise of the new shrine paradoxically led to a strengthening of bilateral ties between Judeans and their Samarian neighbors.

In what follows, I shall discuss the thrust of Josephus's narration, raising questions about some aspects of his presentation and commenting on others that have been neglected in treatments asserting a schism in

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7.   Given the historical plausibility of this reconstruction, it seems improbable that the same imperial king would reverse course and authorize the building of a new sanctuary in Samaria (*Ant*. 11.322-24).

Samarian–Judean relations. Special attention will be paid to how Josephus contextualizes and explains the origins of the Samarian Temple. The focus will then shift to the effects of that new institution on life in Samaria and Judah.

I. *From Darius to Alexander: The Origins of the Samarian Temple*

The book of Ezra–Nehemiah refers to a so-called mixed marriage between an unnamed daughter of the governor of Samaria (Sanballat) and an un-named son of Joiada (and grandson of Eliashib), the high priest of Judah (Neh. 13.28). The Judean governor summarily expelled the priest in question, because Nehemiah thought his actions defiled the priesthood (Neh. 13.29).[8] A much more detailed and elaborate story, containing a few of the same plot elements as well as many new ones, is found in the work of Josephus. He depicts (*Ant*. 11.302-303) an incident in the late fourth century BCE (not the fifth century) involving Sanballat's daughter Nikaso marrying a brother of the Judean high priest Jaddua named Manasseh. The satrap Sanballat, whose Cuthean origins were, according to Josephus, the same as those of the Samarian people, assented to such an intermarriage (ἐπιγαμία), because he recognized Jerusalem's renowned stature and the troubles its former kings created for the entire region under the Assyrians (*Ant*. 11.303).[9] In other words, Sanballat's endorsement of the arrangement was rooted in geopolitical expediency, rather than in some sense of religious affiliation or native solidarity with Jerusalem's high-priestly regime. The matrimony, reflecting a calculated recognition on Sanballat's part of Jerusalem's international standing and historic importance, created a blood affiliation where none previously existed.

Yet, if Sanballat hoped 'to gain the goodwill of the entire Judean people' (γενήσεσθαι πρὸς τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθνους παντὸς εὔνοιαν, *Ant*. 11.303) by means of this arrangement, he did not succeed. The Jerusa-lemite elders protested Manasseh's high position at the Jerusalem temple, literally his 'sharing the high priesthood with his brother, while married to

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8.   This is too large an issue to tackle here. See the discussions in Rudolph 1949; Williamson 1985; Eskenazi 1986; Blenkinsopp 1988; Grabbe 1992; 2008; Wright 2004; Becking 2011.

9.   The allusion to powerful kings and Jerusalem's past stature is probably drawn from 1 Esd. 2.16-20 (// Ezra 4.12-16). See also *Ant*. 11.97 (Pummer 2009: 107). The comment about Cuthean ethnicity draws on Josephus's earlier presentation of the after-math of northern Israel's fall to typecast Samaria's leader of a later time (*Ant*. 9.279, 288-90; 10.184). Indeed, the attribution of foreign ethnicity is necessary to confirm that the nuptials were exogamous. Yet, Josephus does not seem to be consistent on the issue. Herod's marriage to the Samari(t)an Malthake does not receive a verdict of dis-approbation (*B.J.* 1.562; *Ant*. 17.250).

a foreigner' (τοῦ ἀρχιερέως ἀδελφὸν ἀλλοφύλῳ συνοικοῦντα μετέχειν τῆς ἀρχιερωσύνης, *Ant*. 11.306-308).[10] Sharing the elders' discontent, Jaddua consented to bar Manasseh from continuing to serve any longer (*Ant*. 11.308-309). The elite nuptials between Nikaso and the curiously named Manasseh thus came with unintended consequences. Resenting his dismissal and not wishing to divorce his wife, Manasseh complained to his father-in-law, who not only pledged to award him the position of high priest, but also, with the consent of King Darius III, promised him the construction of a new temple on Mt Gerizim.[11] The implementation of Sanballat's pledge was, however, delayed. Given the political turmoil in western Asia in which the Achaemenid regime was quickly losing control of its empire, the sanctuary was not constructed under Darius III (*Ant*. 11.313-17).[12]

   Following the Macedonian conquest, Sanballat tried again. In this case, he appealed to Alexander the Great's own sense of political expediency to secure permission from him to build Manasseh a new sanctuary (*Ant*. 11.310-21). The ethnographic suppositions inherent in Sanballat's request are quite unusual. Sanballat made the case to Alexander that his rule would be best served if the power of the Judeans were divided into two (εἰς δύο διῃρῆσθαι τὴν Ἰουδαίων δύναμιν) so that in the event of an insurrection the people (τὸ ἔθνος) would not stand in solidarity against the rule of their (foreign) kings, as they had done in former times (*Ant*. 11.323).[13] Significantly, Sanballat's appeal presupposes that Samarians and Judeans belong to the same people.

10. It is unclear what this sharing of the high priesthood came to in practical terms. Josephus does not explain the reference. VanderKam (2004: 82-83) discusses the possibilities.

11. For the convenience of readers, I am referring to King Darius III Codomannus (c. 336–330 BCE), but Josephus does not seem to have been aware that there was a succession of three Persian kings named Darius and four named Artaxerxes.

12. Given Josephus's implication that the temple construction was delayed, I am not inclined to accept the proposition that the two phases of temple construction outlined by the excavators of Mt Gerizim (Magen 2007: 158-60), dating to the mid-fifth century and the late third to early second century, correspond somehow to the story outline in Josephus (*pace* Dušek 2007: 538-47). The testimony of Josephus is confused, but he does not posit two different building stages. Dušek may be correct, however, in that the Samarian temple traditions with which Josephus was acquainted related to the second, much enlarged, building phase of the Hellenistic period, rather than those of the earlier Persian period with which he seems to have been unacquainted. Kartveit (2009: 95) presents an alternative possibility, namely that Josephus deliberately suppressed the earlier founding of the temple in order to shorten the time in which the temple existed.

13. In Nehemiah, the ethnographic suppositions are very different. Nehemiah never speaks of the Samarians and Judeans as comprising one people (*'am*), although some of his actions indicate that the ethnographic, social, and religious realities of his time were more complicated than he was willing to allow (Knoppers 2007).

In this passage, the Judeans are construed as historic Israel, encompassing both North and South, one people (*ethnos*). The usage of *Ioudaioi* in this comprehensive sense within Josephus's work is not unique (Schwartz 1989: 381-88). Yet, more often than not, Josephus speaks of Samarians as a separate *ethnos* from that of the Judeans (e.g., *Ant*. 10.184; 17.20; 18.85; Feldman 1996: 117-26). What Sanballat was proposing, according to Josephus, was to divide the Judean people cultically, an action that would generate political benefits for the new imperial regime. It may well be that Josephus projects the voice of Sanballat in the context of opportunistic international diplomacy, rather than presenting his own view of Judean-Samarian identity.[14] On other occasions, he states that Samarians typically profess kinship to Judeans when times are good for Judeans, but disavow such kinship when times are bad (*Ant*. 9.291; 11.340-45; 12.257, 261; Kartveit 2009: 80-85: Pummer 2009: 270-85).

There is another fascinating aspect of the Samarian governor's request. The very wording of Sanballat's appeal presupposes a shared Judean-Samarian concept of centralization focused at the Jerusalem temple. Against this background, one can readily understand why many interpreters have concluded that the construction of a temple on Mt Gerizim resulted in a Judean–Samarian schism. The new sanctuary purportedly broke the pan-Israelite Jerusalem monopoly on centralization and divided the Judean *ethnos*. Yet, there are acute problems with such an interpretation. The theory assumes what it needs to prove, namely that the Samarians and the Judeans were religiously united around one major sanctuary (Jerusalem) centuries before the Samarians split off to build their own sanctuary and formed their own separate religion. Indeed, there are serious difficulties with positing a major schism whether in the fourth century or earlier (Knoppers forthcoming). Such an implausible scenario also fails to find support in Josephus's own references to Samarian history.

In his comments on worship in the former northern kingdom, Josephus does not present the Cutheans (הכותים) as affirming, much less embracing, centralized worship in Jerusalem. Reworking his *Vorlage* (a version of 2 Kgs 17.23-33), Josephus comments on the cultic adjustments made by Cuthean immigrants in the late eighth century in the area of the former northern kingdom (*Ant*. 9.288-90).[15] Faced with severe pestilence and even death, these settlers learned from repatriated Bethel priests how to worship the greatest god of the land and did so with great zeal (*Ant*. 9.288-90;

14. Yet, if so, Josephus relies on his readers to discern the diplomatic subterfuge, because Josephus does not correct or qualify the assertion of the Samarian governor.

15. Josephus consistently lumps together all five peoples mentioned in 2 Kgs 17.24 under the nomenclature of one of them: the Cutheans (Χουθαῖοι; Kippenberg 1971; Egger 1986; Pummer 2009).

Pummer 2009: 67-76). The cultural corrections enabled the émigrés to survive, but Josephus does not claim that these colonists either accepted the doctrine of centralization or recognized the unrivalled sanctity of the Jerusalem temple.

In his discussion of the Judahite monarchy, Josephus follows Kings and (especially) Chronicles in speaking of royal Judahite campaigns led by Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30.5–31.21) and Josiah (2 Kgs 23.15-20; 2 Chron. 34.1–35.18) as reforming northern religious practices (*Ant*. 9.260-73; 10.52-54, 66-70; Begg and Spilsbury 2005: 194-99, 222-28). Nevertheless, Josephus presents the recipients of such reforms as surviving northern Israelites (not Cutheans). To my knowledge, he never discusses the possible relationship between the northern Israelite remnant presupposed in his northern reform accounts and the Cuthean settlers (= Samarians/Samaritans, *Ant*. 9.290; 10.184) inhabiting the land.[16] In any event, Josephus does not assert that the royal Judahite reform efforts had any lasting impact. Quite to the contrary, he presents the Samarians as ringleaders in the repeated attempts by outsiders to block the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple in the early Persian period (*Ant*. 11.19-20, 84-88, 114-19, 174-75).[17] In short, Josephus's portrayal of Sanballat's proposition to divide the Judean people by erecting a new cultic establishment at Mt Gerizim is inconsistent with his own earlier presentation of Samarian cultic practices. Either the writer is unaware of this contradiction or, as seems more likely, he is casting Sanballat as strategically misleading the Macedonian emperor to secure an imperial concession to construct a new shrine.

Yet, the bid for religious independence is more apparent than real. Having been successful in gaining Alexander's permission, Sanballat proceeded to build a temple, like the temple in Jerusalem, on Mt Gerizim (*Ant*. 11.321-24). In other words, the Samarian shrine did not radically depart in its structure, appurtenances, and internal design from the Judean shrine. The two were, in fact, quite similar. Moreover, the construction of the new sanctuary was rooted in a spirit of competitive emulation, rather than in compliance to any divine norm or command.[18] Because a theophany or angelophany accompanies neither the project (cf. 1 Sam. 24.16-17; 1 Chron. 21.16-19) nor its successful completion (cf. 1 Kgs 8.1-13; 9.1-9; 2 Chron. 5.2–6.3; 7.1-3, 12-22), the new shrine appears as a purely human endeavor.

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16. To complicate matters, his work repeatedly asserts that the exile of the northern tribes was comprehensive: 'He [Salmanasses] transported all of the people (πάντα τὸν λαόν) to Media and Persia' (*Ant*. 9.278; cf. 9.280; 10.184).

17. In so doing, he goes way beyond his principal source (1 Esdras; Pummer 2009: 81-102; Knoppers forthcoming).

18. The stress on Mt Gerizim's dependence upon an older and long-established exemplar is also found in *Ant*. 13.256.

Interestingly, Josephus does not clarify why Sanballat sought to construct a sanctuary specifically on Mt Gerizim. Why not build the sanctuary in another historic town, such as Shechem or Samaria, within the province? The closest Josephus comes to providing an explanation is in his comment (*Ant*. 11.311) that Mt Gerizim was the highest [*sic*] of all the mountains near Samaria.[19] Otherwise, the choice goes unexplained. Josephus does not mention the references to Mt Gerizim in the Pentateuch (Deut. 11.29; 27.11) that present Mt Gerizim as a place of divine favor.[20] In some textual traditions, Israel is even instructed to build an altar of unhewn stones on Mt Gerizim (so SP and OL Deut. 27.4-7; MT Mt Ebal) and to present burnt offerings and offerings of well-being there, rejoicing 'before Yhwh your God'.[21] These texts are extremely important in Samaritan tradition, because they point to the privileged status of Mt Gerizim.[22]

In his comments on these critical passages in Deuteronomy, Josephus (*Ant*. 4.307) stresses that recording the blessings and curses was meant to ensure that 'their lesson might never be lost through time'. Yet, the presentation of burnt offerings and other sacrifices on the altar was to be an exceptional event, not to be repeated, 'for that would not be lawful' (οὐ γὰρ εἶναι νόμιμον, *Ant*. 4.308). That Josephus felt compelled to offer such a clarification shows that he was aware of a critical issue in his source. Did the stipulations of Deut. 27.5-7 point simply to a one-time event (so Judeans) or to a foundational event to be associated with the eventual implementation of centralized sacrifice (so Samarians)? Josephus's declaration that the sacrifice was a unique occurrence demonstrates that he was aware of the hermeneutical problem and felt it necessary to defend the Judean position.

The issue of pan-Israelite altar sacrifices reappears in Josephus's account of the Israelite settlement (based on his interpretation of his Joshua *Vorlage*).[23] Josephus presents a series of relevant pan-Israelite ceremonies,

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19. Mt Ebal is higher (940 meters above sea level) than Mt Gerizim is, but the difference in height may not have been evident to Josephus.

20. Cf. Gen. 49.26; Deut. 33.15. In SP, the 10th commandment includes a mandate to set up stones and an altar on Mt Gerizim (SP Exod. 20.17b; Deut. 5.18b). That such an exegetical maneuver was executed indicates that the interpretation and application of Deut. 11.29-30; 27.2-11 had already become a contentious issue in the last two centuries BCE.

21. On the textual issues, see Knoppers 2011. Josephus's version of the Deuteronomic instructions stipulates that the Israelites were to erect the altar in the direction of the rising sun (cf. Deut. 11.30), near Shechem between Mt Gerizim and Mt Ebal (*Ant*. 4.305). The presentation of Josephus may assimilate toward the Shechem altar celebrations in Joshua (*Ant*. 5.69-70; cf. MT Josh. 8.30-35; LXX Josh. 9.1-3).

22. Nodet 1997; Zsengellér 1998; Hjelm 2000; Nihan 2007; 2012; Pummer 2007; Knoppers 2011; forthcoming.

23. The contrasts among the MT, LXX, and DSS fragments of Joshua (4QJoshuaᵃ) demonstrate that there was considerable fluidity in the development of this text within antiquity (Ulrich 1994; 1995; 1999; Tov 2012).

the first of which occurs near Jericho immediately after the crossing of the Jordan, involving the establishment of twelve stones from the twelve tribal leaders, the construction of an altar with sacrifices offered to God, and the celebration of Passover (*Ant*. 5.20-34). A later ceremony occurs at Shechem, involving the erection of the altar mandated by Moses (*Ant*. 4.305), the positioning of half the Israelite army on Gerizim (*Garizein*) and the other half on Ebal (*Hēbēl*), the offering of sacrifices, and the inscription of the curses upon the altar (*Ant*. 5.69-70; cf. *Ant*. 4.308).[24] This all-Israelite convocation only occurs, however, after the Israelites have subjugated the Gibeonites (*Ant*. 5.49-57; cf. Josh. 9.1-27) and defeated a series of royal adversaries (*Ant*. 5.62-67; cf. Josh. 10.1–12.24).[25]

In brief, Josephus was quite aware of the cultic importance of Shechem, Mt Gerizim, and Mt Ebal in earlier Israelite law and lore, but chose not to discuss such traditions in relation to Sanballat's request to build a sanctuary on Mt Gerizim. Casting the choice as involving Mt Gerizim's status as the tallest mountain near Samaria, Josephus effectively distances the Mt Gerizim shrine built by Sanballat from any connection with the norms, traditions, and practices of the ancient Israelites.[26] Yet, having done so, Josephus has created a significant problem for himself. How will he in the context of the first century CE explain to his readers the similarities between Judean and Samarian institutional rites, practices, and personnel? If Sanballat as a member of the Cuthean race had nothing whatsoever to do with the heritage of ancient Israel, how did the temple apparatus he founded come to resemble the Jerusalem temple apparatus? Why would Manasseh or the Cutheans he served wish to pattern the rites of the new sanctuary after those carried out in Jerusalem? To these questions, we shall now turn.

2. *Segregation or Integration?*
The Impact of the Mt Gerizim Sanctuary on Judean-Samarian History

We have seen that the nuptials linking Manasseh, a member of the Jerusalemite high-priestly family, with Nikaso the daughter of the governor of Samaria, eventually resulted in the building of a new sanctuary on Mt Gerizim at which Manasseh could officiate as high priest. Interestingly, both Josephus and his biblical sources agree that priestly intermarriage was not

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24. In contrast, Joshua writes a copy of the Torah (or Deuteronomy—so the LXX) on the altar stones (MT Josh. 8.32; LXX Josh. 9.2c).

25. In other words, the national celebration postdates the complete conquest of the land and predates the division of the land (*Ant*. 5.71-92; cf. Josh. 13.1–21.40).

26. Rather than representing a calculated attempt to divide the Judean *ethnos*, the construction of a shrine on Mt Gerizim was designed to fulfill a divine mandate, as stipulated in an authoritative sacred writing (Deuteronomy).

a one-off phenomenon.[27] Both the authors of Ezra–Nehemiah and Josephus (*Ant*. 11.145-52), in spite of the important differences between them, acknowledge that priestly intermarriage was repeatedly practiced in post-monarchic Judah. The case of Ezra's marriage reforms involves priestly lineages (including that of Jeshua's house), Levitical lineages, and laypersons (Ezra 10.18-44).[28] In discussing Manasseh's exogamy, Josephus concedes that many priests and Israelites (πολλῶν δὲ ἱερῶν καὶ Ἰσραηλιτῶν) were involved in such miscegenation and that these people deserted to Manasseh, settling in Samaria (*Ant*. 11.312). If one lends credence to Josephus's account, the occurrence of intermarriage was not unusual. What was unusual was both that such a high-level elite matrimonial had been deliberately arranged and that many of the other Judeans and Judean priests practicing exogamy moved to Samaria, following the completion of a new sanctuary on Mt Gerizim. In other words, the construction of a Samarian temple did not result in a fracture in relations between the two communities. Quite the contrary, the new cultic establishment attracted an influx of Judeans and Judean priests into Samaria.

Interestingly, Josephus mentions other important contacts between Judeans and Samarians that involve active Judean support for the new Samarian sanctuary. When Sanballat tenders his request to Alexander, he mentions the willing aid of many of Manasseh's compatriots for the proposed project (*Ant*. 11.322). In other words, many Judean priests favored the establishment of another temple in the land of Israel. Josephus thus concedes that the Mt Gerizim sanctuary enjoyed significant Judean priestly backing. Alternatively, one could dispute Sanballat's assertion of Judean sacerdotal support as a case of Samarian propaganda, but Josephus does not question or qualify the claim.

What is more, Josephus provocatively claims that Shechem, the Samarians' 'mother city' (μητρόπολις) of that time, was inhabited by renegade Judeans (ἀποστατῶν τοῦ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνους, *Ant*. 11.340).[29] In another

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27. By comparison, this is not a theme in the relevant (medieval) Samaritan sources in part, because Samaritans do not view Jews as non-Israelite (Knoppers forthcoming).

28. Although the texts in Ezra 7–10 do not specifically mention any cases of intermarriage involving Samarians. Indeed, neither Samaria nor the Samarians appear in this section of the book.

29. On the translation and its significance, see Pummer 2009: 124-25 (cf. Egger 1986: 78). The settlement in Shechem was earlier thought to have ended ca. 475 BCE (Wright 1965: 167; Lapp 2008: 5-6, 19-39), but recent comparative analysis indicates that it may well have continued to the fourth century (Stern 2001: 427-28). A group of Samarian refugees likely resettled Shechem following the establishment of a Macedonian settlement in the capital of Samaria (Wright 1965: 180-91), but there is no evidence that Shechem was the major urban center of the Samarians at this earlier time. Josephus may have confused the realities of a later time with conditions of the late fourth century.

context, Josephus avows that whenever a Jerusalemite would commit a sin, such as violating the Sabbath or consuming unclean food, he would take flight to the Shechemites, claiming that he had been unfairly banished (ἀδίκως ἐκβεβλῆσθαι, *Ant.* 11.346-47).[30] If Shechem did indeed have a mixed population, this was partly because it proved to be a magnet for dissident Judeans (Nodet 1997: 137). Such assertions of voluntary Judahite migrations to and inhabitation of areas within Samaria play havoc with the common supposition of a binary opposition between the two groups. From Josephus's vantage point, the Judeans residing within Shechem were defectors, but they were Judeans nonetheless.

Returning to the high-level marital union linking a member of the Jerusalem temple establishment with the daughter of the governor of Samaria, it is important to recognize that Josephus does not take issue with the bloodlines of the deserting priest in question. He openly acknowledges the high (Aaronide) pedigree of the priest, who took his leave from Jerusalem. This suggests that Josephus seemingly accepts the presence of an Aaronide priesthood in Samaria, but views this priesthood as derivative of the Aaronide priesthood found in Jerusalem.[31]

A related question should be raised in connection with Josephus's stories about the Mt Gerizim sanctuary: was the arrival of the new shrine a sign of the neighboring societies in Samaria and Judah moving decisively apart, remaining much the same, or actually drawing closer to one another? Paradoxically, the very evidence cited from Josephus's *Antiquities* to demonstrate that a Samarian schism took place in the fourth century actually points to increased contacts between Samerina and Yehud. If one pays close attention to Josephus's claims about the history of this time, one may conclude that Yahwistic Judeans and Yahwistic Samarians became more closely allied in a number of important respects than they had been previously. Josephus's account implies several commonalities shared by Judeans and Samarians. If the Samarians and Judeans were not (or had not become more) closely related, there would not have been such defections, intermarriages, and migrations. Samaria in general and Mt Gerizim in particular would not have become an attractive destination for those many Judeans who supported Manasseh or who found fault with their own cultic establishment for one reason or another, unless they saw in Samaria a kindred culture. Josephus's history implies, therefore, a significant mixing of the Judean and Samarian Yahwistic populations, at least within Samaria.

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30. Or (textual variant): *egkeklēsthai*, 'accused'.

31. In (medieval) Samaritan tradition, the opposite is true. The Aaronide priesthood in Jerusalem ultimately derives from that of the older Mt Gerizim sanctuary (Knoppers 2012). In both cases, however, the writers acknowledge the Aaronide nature of the breakaway cultic establishment.

Conclusions

In his recent monograph on the origins of the Samaritans, Kartveit (2009: 90-96) argues that Josephus's story about the temple on Mt Gerizim should be considered as a second founding myth for the Samarians, explaining the genesis of their central sanctuary and its related ritual practices. In his writing, Josephus casts aspersions upon the Samarians by referring to their allegedly foreign origins, opportunistic policies, loose morals, and derivative sanctuary (Kartveit 2009: 71-108; cf. Pummer 2009: 127-28).[32] There is much to be said for this theory, because Josephus provides his readers with multiple explanations of the Yahwistic Samarians—their origins, identity, and institutions.

The question that may be raised is: what are the purpose and the function of this second founding myth? If the first myth pertaining to a much earlier time defines Samarian identity as that of outsiders, Assyrian-sponsored immigrants who eventually learned to practice some native Israelite customs and worship the greatest god of the land (2 Kgs 17.24-33a; Josephus, *Ant*. 9.288-90), why include a second myth? It explains, in my judgment, the Judaization of Samaria, although Josephus does not put the matter in these terms. With the construction of a temple on Mt Gerizim, the Samarians became ironically much more like their Judean counterparts. Like the Judeans, the Samarians now had their own central sanctuary, modeled after the sanctuary in Jerusalem.

Acknowledging that many Judeans settled in Samaria elucidates why the practices of the Samarians and Judeans were so similar (Grabbe 1987: 241). Indeed, casting the inhabitants of Shechem as renegade Judeans serves the larger purpose of explaining to outsiders why their inhabitants might appear, to all intents and purposes, to be Judean. Describing in considerable detail how the brother of the Aaronide high priest in Jerusalem defected to Samaria to oversee the construction and management of a new temple at Mt Gerizim explains why the same Aaronide family came to administer two different major sanctuaries. As a result of significant Judean migrations northward, mixed marriages, priestly defections, emulative temple construction, and the appointment of a supervising Aaronide priest from the reigning high priestly family in Jerusalem, this area of Samaria becomes Judaic in all but name. The stress on the decidedly derivative nature of northern religion paradoxically reinforces the image of its Judean character. The Judean *ethnos* may be divided by the construction of a new sanctuary, but the people in Samaria supporting the new sanctuary become ironically

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32. See also Pummer 2009: 150-52. To this second myth (the first appears in *Ant*. 9.288-90), Kartveit (2009: 96-100) adds a third founding myth in the story of the Sidonians of Shechem (*Ant*. 11.344; 12.258-63).

more Judean as a result of all the new ethnic, demographic, and sacerdotal developments.

Josephus presents Samarian–Judean history according to a clearly Judeo-centric perspective, yet what he concedes is as telling as what he asserts. In his portrayal of the past, he acknowledges that the erection of a Yahwistic sanctuary in the North did not entail a complete breakdown of bilateral contacts between the two neighboring areas. Quite the contrary, the two districts came to share more things in common than they did before. If one wishes to employ the work of Josephus to reconstruct Samarian history in late Persian and early Hellenistic times (a dubious undertaking), one has to accept that the establishment of a Samarian temple cultus on Mt Gerizim was in no small measure a Judean enterprise.

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Levinas on Prophecy

Francis Landy

Tamara is a lover of Emmanuel Levinas, and edited a Semeia volume on Levinas, which I reviewed several years ago. This essay is a homage to both: to Tamara for her profound respect for Jewish sources, and for her Levinasian sensibility in reading the biblical text, with distance and intimacy, and to Levinas, for asking so many questions, for putting us on our guard against the ways we blind ourselves against the text's ethical challenge. It is also for all those who work for peace and justice in Israel, the object of Levinas's passionate Zionist concern,[1] as it was Isaiah's. For the most part I will be engaged in a very close reading of a few passages of Levinas on prophecy. Prophecy is central to Levinas's philosophy, and the subject of the key fifth chapter of his mature masterwork *Otherwise than Being*. I adopt Robert Gibbs's practice of quoting the text and surrounding it with commentary, as if it were a page from the Talmud. I have not, however, juxtaposed it with counter-texts and intertexts, as does Gibbs, though not because they do not exist. A fruitful project would be to compare Levinas and Blanchot on prophecy.[2] I have quoted the French alongside the English, except in the long citation from *Difficult Freedom*, because often the precise nuances of the text are not captured in the translation. In addition, Levinas's translators have no sensitivity to Jewish sources, and very often misconstrue the text for that reason.

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1. Levinas was a staunch Zionist for most of his life, but a Zionist of a particular stripe. For him, the State of Israel represented an opportunity for the Jewish people to fulfil its ethical responsibility after the oppression of the diaspora. He was passionate in his rejection of both secular Zionism and messianic religious Zionism. A recently published letter to Maurice Blanchot after the founding of the State of Israel in May 1948 expresses his ambivalence (Levinas 1948). For Levinas's complex and deeply engaged views on Israel, see his essay 'The State of Israel and the Religion of Israel' (*Difficile liberté*, 279-85; *Difficult Freedom*, 216-20), and the essays and interview published as 'Zionisms' in Levinas 1989: 267-89).

2. In particular, Blanchot's essay 'Prophetic Speech' provides a fruitful point for comparison (2003: 59-65). Blanchot's essay underlies Liss's approach to Isaiah (2003: 272, 290). Hammerschlag (2010) discusses the intimate and critical relationship of Blanchot and Levinas; see also Michael Levinas's moving memoir (2010).

The first section of this essay is a reading of a passage in which Levinas defines prophecy as a 'turning', in which the enclosed subject opens out to the call of the other. It introduces Levinas's major concepts—thematization, the witness, the Infinite, etc.—as well as his extraordinary playfulness. This passage is juxtaposed with one from *Difficult Freedom*, in which prophecy is described as disengagement and characteristic of the anachronism of Judaism. The middle two sections read, and then reread, Isaiah's call vision in chap. 6, which is one of Levinas's principal sources for the prophetic response. Isaiah 6, in which Isaiah is programmed to mislead the people and bring about their destruction, is one of the most ethically perplexing texts in the Hebrew Bible. I argue that in some respects Isaiah and Levinas converge, that a Levinasian reading is possible, while neither becomes thereby less strange or less irreducible to each other. The rereadings necessarily overlap, but they point to the ethical responsibility of repeated reading and listening, through which the text becomes part of the texture of our lives; if nothing else, Isaiah warns against premature closure. The last section returns to Levinas, and a section in his brilliant discussion of scepticism and reason on the parallel between prophecy and poetry.

<center>I</center>

> On peut appeler prophétisme ce retournement où la perception de l'*ordre* coïncide avec la signification de cet ordre fait de celui qui y obéit. Et, ainsi, le prophétisme serait le psychisme même de l'âme: l'autre dans le même; et toute la spiritualité de l'homme—prophétique.
>
> We call prophecy this reverting in which the perception of an order coincides with the signification of the order given by the one who obeys it. Prophecy would then be the very psyche in the soul: the other in the same; and all of man's spirituality would be prophetic (trans. Alphonse Lingis, (*Autrement qu'être*, 190; *Otherwise than Being*, 149).

Prophecy is a return (*retournement*) that is also a turning, a turning back that is also a turning point, an opening out into a new era, a new order, but which nonetheless is a reversion to something primordial, to a beginning which for Levinas precedes or is other than all beginning, which in his terms is anarchic, i.e. both that which disrupts all order and that which has no origin. Prophecy stands against the philosophy of being, accuses it in the name of what he calls 'first philosophy', i.e. ethics; it is that which is 'beyond essence', 'otherwise than being'. The prophet is called; but the order *coincides* with its signification: the sign that one makes to the other is the response, the responsibility, to the command that comes to us from the other, even if the other is mute, even before we know what the other has to say. As Levinas repeatedly tells us, the prophet answers *me voici* (*hinneni*,

'Here I am'), paradigmatically in Isa. 6.8. *Me* is in the accusative,[3] already situated as the object of address, but also as the accused, guilty before all the others, and for/on behalf of all the others.[4] But it is also *voici*, 'here', at the turning point, the intersection of the command and the response, stripped of all its evasions: 'sans zones sourdes propices à l'evasion' ('without deaf spots propitious for evasion').[5] The 'turning back' (*retournement*) is then to the *me voici* of the prophet, the human being without evasions or opacity (*transparence sans opacité*),[6] Adam without the fig-leaves.[7]

'Retournement' occurs a few pages before our quotation, as the interiority in which the 'exterior eminence' (*l'éminemment extérieur*) commands me through my very own mouth, as the evidence that we are never contained, without relation to the other. So then prophecy is 'the other in the same' (*l'autre dans le même*), the fact of being called, of being dispossessed by the other, even before we are, as in Isa. 49.1 and Jer. 1.5. Interiority is turning (*retournement*) in the sense of turning towards the other, containing or enunciating the other in oneself, so that the most exterior becomes the most interior. A little later on,[8] this turning (*ce retournement*) is the insertion or reversion of heteronomy in autonomy, so that we are always split, internalize the other. Metaphorically, this is the inscription of the law in consciousness,[9] so that the law commands us from the inside as well as the outside.

Prophecy is 'the psyche in the soul' (*le psychisme même de l'âme*), and the sum of human spirituality (*toute la spiritualité de l'homme—prophétique*).[10] It is thus a universal human property, rather than the preserve of a few select individuals. The psyche is an oft-repeated and key term in Levinas; it signifies, not the self in the usual sense, but an alienation or displacement of the self by the other. Likewise, in an unusually explicit footnote, Levinas writes: 'The Soul is the other in me. The psyche, the-one-for-the-other, may be possession and psychosis; the soul is already a grain

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3. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 186; *Otherwise than Being*, 146.

4. A favourite quotation of Levinas, which immediately follows the citation of Isa. 6.8, is from the Brothers Karamazov: 'Each of us is guilty for everyone before everyone, and I more than the others' (e.g. *Autrement qu'être*, 186; *Otherwise than Being*, 146). Levinas often repeats that one is responsible for the other's responsibility, even for that of one's persecutors.

5. For some reason Lingis translates *sourdes* as 'heavy'—'heavy zones propitious for evasion' (*Otherwise than Being*, 146).

6. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 186; *Otherwise than Being*, 146.

7. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 184; *Otherwise than Being*, 144.

8. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 189; *Otherwise than Being*, 148.

9. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 189; *Otherwise than Being*, 148.

10. Levinas uses two terms, *psychisme* and *psyché*, which Lingis translates interchangeably as '*psyche*'. The difference between them is unclear.

of madness'.[11] Prophecy is possession and dispossession by the other; the soul, in its responsibility for the other, is already, anarchically, a little mad, at least from the point of view of ontotheology and the subject, defined by self-interest. A characteristic metaphor for the psyche in Levinas is insomnia (*Autrement qu'être* 86; *Otherwise than Being* 68).

As Ajzenstat (2001: 99-100, 121) comments, Levinas's writings are full of synonyms (e.g. prophecy, glorification, sincerity, the saying) whose distinctions, while important, are perhaps less so than their convergence. All are examples of what Levinas calls 'the Said' (*le dit*) which breaks down into the readiness to speak, before any words are spoken (*le dire*), in response to the demands of the other. What is the psyche in (or of) the soul? What is the relation of the soul and the self (*soi*)? We do not know, but they suggest a distinction, that, for instance, the psyche is a region or inner recess of the soul, the soul of the soul, or that the soul may be separated from the self, as suggested by 'the other in the same'.[12] Elsewhere, however, the relationship is reversed: the soul is the pneuma of the psyche (*l'âme … est le pneuma même de la psyché*). The psyche is characterized by a 'denucleation' of the self (*le Moi*), a radical splitting (*fission*) of its interiority.[13] The soul animates (*anime*) the psyche, as its spirit, *pneuma*, a wind or breath blowing through it, and in turn the psyche is an aspect of, or contained within, the soul, as that which is foreign to it, as the very subjectivity of the subject (*Autrement qu'être* 189; *Otherwise than Being* 148), as it is called by the other.

'Toute la spiritualité de l'homme—prophétique' ('all human spirituality would be prophetic'). *Spirituality* is another key term in Levinas, equivalent to psyche and soul, and linked to a chain of synonyms and correlatives, in particular *pneuma* and *inspiration*. It is not, however, a species of knowing, as it is in Western philosophy,[14] it does not imply a special state of consciousness and transcendence. Instead, it is *sens*—both meaning and sensibility—conferred by one's sense of the other, the apprehension of his or her proximity, and the meaning one gives to him or her, in response and responsibility.[15] Levinas is inveterately anti-mystical, at least in the normal sense of mysticism.[16] All human spirituality is prophetic, not because it is ecstatic, grants

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11. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 86 n. 3; *Otherwise than Being*, 191 n. 3. Elsewhere it is the psyche that is 'the grain of madness' (*Autrement qu'être*, 180; *Otherwise than Being*, 142), confirming that 'psyche' and 'soul' are virtually interchangeable.

12. Rosenzweig similarly distinguishes between the Self, which is enclosed in itself, and the Soul, which opens to the other in love.

13. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 180; *Otherwise than Being*, 141.

14. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 123; *Otherwise than Being*, 96.

15. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*,123; *Otherwise than Being*, 97; cf. Fox 2011: 135-39.

16. Hilary Putnam (2002: 46) discusses Levinas's '"Lithuanian" distrust of the

insight into the divine, and is the prerogative of uniquely gifted individuals, but precisely because it is this invisible, passive readiness, that of the *me voici.*

Retournement suggests repetition, a going back to oneself and to a beginning, as indeed is indicated by the sentence immediately preceding ours, at the end of the previous section of *Otherwise than Being*: 'The trace of the infinite is this ambiguity of the subject, turn by turn beginning and go-between, diachronic ambivalence which ethics makes possible'.[17] Return thus is 'tour à tour', a constant alternation of going back and going forwards, hearing the 'unheard' (*inouï*) voice of the other and responding to it. Repetition and recurrence in Levinas is never to the same place or to the same person, since the order 'extradites' oneself from oneself, results in an overflow of the self to the other: 'recurrence is entirely opposite to return to oneself' (*récurrence est tout le contraire du retour à soi*).[18] It is thus like *teshuvah*, the familiar Hebrew term for repentance, in which the return to self, the reclamation of what it truly is to be human, is simultaneously a return to God, and becoming a new person. Sometimes, it is easier to read Levinas if one recognizes the Hebrew substrate to his words. For instance, Levinas's understanding of the word *âme* is clarified if one thinks of Hebrew *neshamah*, with its connotations of 'breath' and 'inspiration'.

> Judaism, disdaining … false eternity, has always wished to be simultaneously engagement and disengagement. The most deeply committed man, one who can never be silent, the prophet, is also the most separated being, and the person least capable of becoming an institution. Only the false prophet has an official function. The Midrash likes to recount how Samuel refused every invitation he received in the course of his travels throughout Israel. He carried his tent and his utensils with him. And the Bible pushes this idea of independence, even in the economic sense, to the point of imagining the prophet Elijah being fed by ravens (*Difficult Freedom*, 213; translation slightly modified).

charismatic'. See the recently published interview with Josy Eisenberg (2011: 4), in which Levinas declares his antipathy for what is commonly thought of as the 'numinous' and the 'sacred'. One suspects he may have Eliade in mind. He contrasts this with the notion of the spirit in Judaism (2011: 5), which he identifies with ethics. For example, in *Totality and Infinity* he succinctly states: 'Ethics is the spiritual optics' (p. 78). Ajzenstat (2001: 139-99) argues at length for affinities between Levinas and Abulafian and Lurianic Kabbalah. However, it is difficult to imagine Levinas having much patience with the mythic luxuriance of the Zohar. Lithuanian Judaism, to explicate Putnam's remark, is famous for its dry rationalism and opposition to Hasidic enthusiasm. Levinas spoke of his Lithuanian Jewishness, and especially of his appreciation for the *musar* movement on several occasions (cf. e.g. Cohen 1994: 116).

17. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 189; *Otherwise than Being*, 149.
18. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 190; *Otherwise than Being*, 149.

Another reflection on prophecy is found in Levinas's remarkable essay on 'Judaism and the Present', in his collection *Difficult Freedom* (*Difficile liberté*). In it he argues that Judaism is always anachronistic, both very young and very old, never in tune with the times. Here the prophet is the one who can never be silent (*celui qui ne peut jamais se taire*). Never being silent is the condition of 'saying', being attentive to the call of the other, in our first passage. The prophet speaks incessantly, not because (or not only because) he cannot stop talking, but because he embodies the divine command. His *hinneni*, expressed vocally or not, is the basis for all his speech— it is what Levinas calls 'witness'. At the same time, he is 'the person least capable of becoming an institution' (*le moins capable de devenir institution*). Ajzenstat (2001: 124) notes that for Levinas prophecy is a critique of religious structures. The prophet has no 'official function' and cannot be contained within orthodoxy. Religious structures constitute what Levinas calls *le dit* (the Said); the prophet stands outside them, even if his words are codified, become canonical.

What about the rest of this passage, with its strange anecdotes about Samuel and Elijah—contradicted, incidentally, by Elisha and the Shunammite woman,[19] and Elijah himself and the Tyrian widow? The image of Samuel clanking along with his pots and pans, his tent on his backpack, makes him into an itinerant, a figure of homelessness, separation from society. It exemplifies 'disengagement' (*dégagement*). But this disengagement is the opposite of that of Sartre, discussed on the previous page, which consists of a haughty detachment of the self in its commitments. For Levinas, this is nihilism, no matter how noble, since it negates that which is most humanly essential—our humanity, manifest in empathy[20] and responsibility. The prophet is disengaged; he does not want to be beholden to another, to partake in an economy, to be, perhaps, a burden. In the terms of *Otherwise than Being*, he is disinterested, not in the sense of being uninterested, but of not being engaged in a relationship between (*inter*) beings, in which he has an 'interest'. It is because he is disengaged that he can be engaged, that he can be a critic of a society in which he has no stake.

Levinas sees this as characteristic of Judaism, which wishes to be 'simultaneously engagement and disengagement'. Judaism's disengagement is manifest in the study of the Talmud and obedience to the Torah. Thereby,

19. The Talmud (*Ber.* 10b), from which Levinas derives this midrash, in fact contrasts Elisha and Samuel, and regards both as equally acceptable. Levinas is quoting Rashi. As often, he plays fast and loose with the sense of the Talmud.

20. This is not a term Levinas would use, since for him it implies a totalizing claim to feel what the other feels. Levinas insists on a responsibility to suffer on behalf of the other's suffering, to substitute oneself for the other's suffering. 'Empathy' is the capacity to respond to the other's suffering, to recognize it, to feel with it, in proximity, without claiming to be able to know it. In that sense the use of the term is justified.

however, it inserts itself into the world[21] precisely because of its disengagement, its anachronism, its refusal to abide by the world's values, its critique. It represents a wisdom anterior to science and history, which is manifest in fraternity and generosity of the heart.[22]

The prophet is the outsider, the critic of religious institutions. Yet Judaism is a supreme example of institutional religion. A similar paradox is that on the one hand Judaism is abstracted from the world, a particular manifestation of the truth, and on the other the prophet is a representative of all humanity, of the entire human potential for spirituality.

Putnam (2002: 34) writes that for Levinas 'all human beings are Jews'. Levinas dedicates *Otherwise than Being* to all the victims of all confessions and nations, all of whom are the victims of the same anti-Semitism. Judaism signifies not an ethnic or religious category that characterizes certain human beings, but an ethical position outside all particularity, in which we are called to respond to the other. From that perspective, all Jews are prophets, and everyone is a Jew and a prophet, insofar as they respond to the call. At the same time, Levinas is committed to the texts and practices of Judaism, as well as to the Jewish community.[23] Likewise, prophets are unique individuals, whose vocation corresponds to that of the Jewish people, but who are abstracted from the Jewish community and any community, which they criticize in the name of justice. The refusal to accept hospitality, moreover, is to refuse the other's response to your need, the other's ethical responsibility, and thus, from Levinas's point of view, may testify to a lack of responsibility. If, as Levinas is fond of quoting, all Israel are responsible for each other, the prophet is denying the other the possibility of exercising his vocation as a Jew. Samuel seems increasingly curmudgeonly, unable to recognize the face of the Other, as exemplified in his relation with Saul. Elijah, fed by the ravens in the Wadi Cherith, is hardly an example of economic independence, quite apart from his actual circumstances as a fugitive—at least from the point of view of the ravens.

> L'infini ne s'annonce pas dans le témoignage comme une thème.
>
> Infinity is not announced in the witness given as a theme (*Autrement qu'être* 190; *Otherwise than Being*, 149)

The discussion of prophecy with which I began continues here. 'The infinite' is another key term in Levinas. Contrasted with totality, as in Levinas's

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21. Levinas, *Difficile liberté*, 274; *Difficult Freedom*, 212.
22. Levinas, *Difficile liberté*, 276; *Difficult Freedom*, 213.
23. 'Judaism and the Present', for instance, is about the problem of young Jews in the wake of the Holocaust.

magnum opus *Totality and Infinity*, it designates everything that cannot be incorporated into a whole, as part of as system, comprehended by the sovereign philosophical self. In our context, it is 'the other in the same', 'the psyche in the soul'. The infinite is also a name or non-name of God, one of Levinas's preferred terms for God. The one who orders me is the other person, as part of an infinity of others, all different, all with their separate demands, all incomplete (*in-fini*), unbounded, and in need of my response. The Infinite 'announces itself' (*s'annonce*) in the *witness* given to it by the prophet, through his *hinneni,* in which the summons by God corresponds to, or, as Levinas puts it, 'coincides with*',* the readiness of the prophet. The prophet bears witness to the glory of God—Levinas's term for ethics—but not through anything said, not as a *theme* of his prophecy. Everything that the prophet says, in particular the demand for justice, is pervaded by the *witness* to the infinite, but it is not itself that witness. 'Theme' refers to the entire philosophical enterprise of developing theories, of articulating concepts, of systematic thought, such as that, indeed, of Levinas. The subject bears witness to the infinite which cannot be contained in any theme, otherwise it would be limited (*De l'infini dont aucun thème—aucun présent— n'est capable, témoigne donc le sujet*).[24] All that can be known of the infinite is its trace in us, the wake of its passing. 'The trace of the infinite is this ambiguity of the subject', to revert to our earlier quotation. The ambiguity of the subject is that it is both itself and the other, an origin in itself and only existing insofar as it is called by the other (*commencement et truchement*, 'beginning and go-between'). The infinite passes through the finite, or disguises itself there (*passe le fini et se passe*).

> …dans le Dire sans Dit de la sincérité, dans mon 'me voici', d'emblée présent à l'accusatif, je témoigne de l'Infini. L'Infini n'est pas *devant* son témoin, mais comme en dehors ou 'à l'envers' de la présence…
>
> … in the saying without the said of sincerity, in my 'here I am', from the first present in the accusative, I bear witness to the Infinite. The Infinite is not in front of its witness, but as it were outside, or on 'the other side' of presence… (*Autrement qu'être*, 190, *Otherwise than Being*, 149).

    In my presence as a person or prophet saying *hinneni*, in the accusative, as challenged, provoked and aware that I can never live up to the responsibility, I bear witness to that which is never present. I do not know quite what '*l'envers'* means here, and the quotation marks suggest that Levinas himself is unsure about the most precise expression to use, but it does suggest that the Infinite is the other side, the inverse of presence, but also that it is its hidden aspect, inside it, rendering it possible. Presence contains, or conceals,

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    24. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 186.

non-presence, the infinite. The coherence of presence and non-presence is what is meant by 'the trace of the infinite' being 'diachronic ambivalence'. On the one hand, the trace of the infinite manifests itself in *me voici*, in the subject founded in that very moment, and on the other the infinite is anachronistic, like Judaism, and can never be reduced to our own time. Diachrony is a characteristic concern of Levinas's work from his early *Time and the Other*, as that which breaks up the simultaneity of philosophical (and other) discourse and thought. The other addresses me from a time other than my own, and commands me to a responsibility that will far exceed my present.

> 'Me voici, au nom de Dieu', sans me référer directement à sa presence. 'Me voici', tout court! De la phrase où Dieu vient pour la première fois se mêler aux mots, le mot Dieu est encore absent. Elle ne s'énonce en aucune façon 'je crois en Dieu'. Témoigner de Dieu, ce n'est précisément pas énoncer ce mot extra-ordinaire, comme si la gloire pouvait se loger dans une thème et se poser comme thèse ou se faire essence de l'être.
>
> 'Here I am, in the name of God', without referring myself directly to his presence. 'Here I am', just that! The word God is still absent from the phrase in which God is for the first time involved with words. It does not at all state 'I believe in God'. To bear witness to God is precisely not to state this extraordinary word, as though glory could be lodged in a theme and would be posited as a thesis, or become being's essence (*Autrement qu'être*, 190; *Otherwise than Being*, 149)

We continue, after a short gap, with the introduction of the word 'God'. But the prophet, in saying *hinneni*, does not directly refer to God. He is here, present, for whatever task the other, the Infinite, imposes on him. In a brief and mystifying footnote, Levinas claims that *hinneni* means 'Send me', that the two parts of Isaiah's response in 6.8 ('Here I am! Send me!') are equivalent, that to be present is already to be sent.[25] But if so, it is without reference to the divine. The word 'God' works within me, sends me, and mingles (*se mêler*) with my words, but as the infinite, the 'other side' of presence. God is an extraordinary word, in that to pronounce the word is already to turn it into a theme, or into the essence of being, to engage in onto-theology.

   'God' is an extra-ordinary word, Llewellyn says (2002: 129), because 'it does not belong to any order'. 'It does not narrowly espouse grammatical categories like a noun (neither proper nor common noun), and does not exactly incline to logical rules, like a meaning (being an excluded middle between being and nothingness)'.[26] God is outside the order of language, or

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   25. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 186 n. 11; *Otherwise than Being*, 199 n. 11. I have no idea why he makes this footnote, or what is his basis for it.
   26. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 193; *Otherwise than Being*, 151.

of political and other institutions, though 'it' orders me to others. It is 'the only word that does not extinguish or absorb its saying',[27] because in saying 'God' one refers not to a being or Being, but to that which says and commands inside us, to 'the other in the same', to the saying of saying itself. To come 'in the name of God', like David to Goliath in 1 Sam. 17.45,[28] is to come in the name of that which is not directly present; it is to be a messenger for an always ('already', *déjà*[29]) anarchic ethical responsibility. In the next sentence after our quotation, we read that *'me voici' me signifie au nom de Dieu au service des hommes* ('"Here I am" signifies me in the name of God in the service of people').[30] To be a witness, to say *hinneni*, is already to designate me to others, to the prophetic task. To signify me, as *me voici,* in the name of God, in the name of that which is not a proper name or common noun, which does not espouse grammatical categories, enter into syntax, and so on, is to enter into relation with, or owe allegiance to, that which is only manifested in the service of people. To signify me, 'in'—the French is *au*, 'to'—the name, the signifier, of that which is never present and the source of signification, is already, in Levinas's startling metaphor, an 'extradition' of oneself from oneself.[31]

Levinas belongs to an apophatic tradition, in which the name of God is unpronounceable. To pronounce it is to evoke God in dialogue, as in Buber's I–Thou,[32] to enter in relationship with God as something apart from oneself, or to state God as an object of thought or belief ('I believe in God'). It is unpronounceable because saying, anterior to anything one actually says, is unsayable. Levinas seeks metaphors for God, such as the Infinite and Illeity,[33] which will intimate God's unboundedness, remoteness, or inseparability from every 'he', from every 'other'. It is possible, Levinas says, to 'enclose the glory of the Infinite in a word', but it constantly undoes its dwelling.[34]

27. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 193; *Otherwise than Being*, 151.

28. The example Levinas gives in his footnote, along with Isaiah 6.8 (*Autrement qu'être*, 190 n. 17; *Otherwise than Being*, 199 n. 17. See Ajzenstat's commentary (2001: 129-30).

29. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 193; *Otherwise than Being*, 151.

30. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 190; *Otherwise than Being*, 149.

31. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 190; *Otherwise than Being*, 149.

32. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 15; *Otherwise than Being*, 13.

33. 'Illeity', a neologism that pervades *Otherwise than Being,* combines *il* ('he') and *ille* (Latin deictic for 'that' with implications of remoteness and separateness) (*Autrement qu'être*, 15; *Otherwise than Being*, 13). It contrasts with the *il y a*, the impersonal susurration of the world, exemplified by the Shoah.

34. *Autrement qu'être*, 193; *Otherwise than Being*, 151. The reference is to Heidegger's famous dictum that language is the 'house of Being'.

> Dans le signe faite à l'autre, où je me trouve arraché au secret de Gygès, 'pris par les cheveux' …
>
> In the sign given to the other, by which I find myself torn up from the secrecy of Gyges, 'taken by the hair' …

We go back a little. Just after 'the Infinite is not announced in the witness given as a theme' and before 'in the saying without the said of sincerity', Levinas inserts two personae, who exemplify the opposed philosophical and prophetic traditions. Gyges, whose magic ring rendered him invisible (*Republic*, II, 359c-360a), represents the unseen and uninvolved observer. The secret of Gyges is the secret of the 'interior subject', who never exposes himself.[35] On the other hand, there is Ezekiel, who is 'taken by the hair' (Ezek. 8.3), transported by the spirit, dispossessed and dislocated from his ordinary comfortable life and from himself. Ezekiel, however, is a bizarre instantiation of the Levinasian prophet; and illustrates, indeed, Levinas's propensity for incongruity. Prophecy, as we have seen, is the turning back or turning around when a person responds to the other; it is a universal potential. In the next phrase following this passage, Levinas says that the sign to the other is given 'from the bottom of my obscurity'. Levinas, in other words, is interpreting the account in Ezekiel as a cipher or allegory for an inner experience, in which Ezekiel opened himself to the command of the other. There was no miraculous flight in the spirit to Jerusalem; the soul flight is not to be taken literally, or perhaps only as a metaphor for the transformation Levinas calls 'inspiration', which is another word for prophecy.

The inspiration here, however, dragging Ezekiel by the hair, preempts any response. He doesn't say *hinneni*, he doesn't have a chance. If to be a prophet is to say *hinneni*, Ezekiel is not a prophet. This is symptomatic of a problem in Levinas, which concerns his philosophy of Judaism, and his entire philosophical and rhetorical enterprise. The problem is that the more examples he uses, and the more metaphorical they are, the more they are subsumed in his system. It is almost as if Levinas says to himself, 'Let us make Ezekiel into a Levinasian *avant la lettre*!' The more extreme the case, the greater the challenge! Maimonides does the same in asserting that all prophetic experiences are just poetic figures for philosophical truths.[36] The difficulty is that the metaphorical transposition is violent; it is Levinas who is snatching Ezekiel by the hair. If Levinas's philosophy is one that resists totalization, then he cannot reduce Ezekiel to a cipher of himself; he has an

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35. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 185; *Otherwise than Being*, 145.
36. *Guide for the Perplexed* 2.46. For instance, Maimonides does not think Hosea actually married a 'wife of harlotry'.

ethical obligation to respect Ezekiel's utter, and potentially unethical, dif-
ference. He has to risk a prophet not being a prophet, in Levinas's terms.

> … l'anachronisme de l'inspiration ou du prophétisme est, selon le temps récupérable de la reminiscence, plus paradoxal que la prédiction de l'avenir par un oracle.
>
> … the anachronism of inspiration or of prophecy is, for the recuperable time of reminiscence, more paradoxical than the prediction of the future by an oracle (*Autrement qu'être*, 192, *Otherwise than Being*, 150).

The anachronism of inspiration or prophecy is that they come from an other, who cannot be integrated in my temporal order, that the infinite is dia-chronic. It is not that they come from an immemorial past, which cannot be remembered, but that they are irreducible to my experience. Yet they lay a claim to my response, to my openness. This anachronism is more funda-mental to prophecy, and more paradoxical, since it comes both from myself and the other, than the oracular predictions of a future, what Levinas else-where calls 'a drunken revelation'.[37] Robert Gibbs writes: 'The anachronism of prophecy is not oracular, not the foreknowledge of a yet-to-come future, but the obedience of speaking a command that already binds me, a present acknowledgement of a past that is not gone, and indeed was never present'.[38]

II

Let us return to Levinas's key text, Isa. 6.8, and look at it in context.

> And I heard the voice of my Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? And I said, 'Here I am, send me'.
> And he said: 'Go and say to this people, "Hearing, hear, but do not understand; seeing, see, but do not perceive".
> Make fat the heart of this people, make its ears heavy, dull/dazzle its eyes, lest it see with its eyes, and hear with its ears, and its heart understands, and it returns, and is healed.'
> And I said, 'How long, my Lord?' And he said, 'Until the cities are des-olate without inhabitant, and houses without human beings, and the ground shall be ruined, desolate' (6.8-11).

This is obviously one of the more paradoxical texts in the Hebrew Bible, and one I have spent much of my lifetime puzzling over. It is, I think, pos-sible to read it with Levinas's eyes.[39] However, such a reading will be not

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37. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 194; *Otherwise than Being*, 152.
38. Robert Gibbs, *Why Ethics? Signs of Responsibilities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 63.
39. Ajzenstat, *Driven Back to the Text*, 118-21, attempts just such a reading. How-ever, it amounts to no more than the hoary thesis that the command points to a time when

only contrary to the command but will accommodate it to an ethical scheme it resists. For Levinas, the prophets' primary task is to instil ethics, which is manifested in justice. This is the meaning of the Messianic Age, which is contrasted with eschatology, again in accordance with Maimonides.[40] 'Judaism unites men in an ideal of terrestrial justice of which the Messiah is the promise and the fulfillment. Ethics is its primordial religious emotion'.[41] Isaiah's watchwords, in particular, are 'justice and righteousness' (e.g. 1.17, 21-26; 5.7, 16). If Yhwh says, 'Whom shall we send?' and Isaiah replies, 'Here I am, send me', we know more or less what to expect. In contrast, Yhwh's instructions are wholly counter-intuitive. Yhwh wills the prophet to speak in such a way that the people will not understand, will not practise justice and righteousness, will not be healed, and will consequently be destroyed.

There is no way of justifying this from an ethical point of view, least of all that of Levinasian ethics. Yhwh is playing the part of the persecutor, who not only does not respond to the people's need, but desires their annihilation. Isaiah is made into the unwilling agent of that persecution, as indicated by his plaintive 'How long, my Lord?' The openness to whatever task Yhwh sets him turns into a cooption of the prophet's will by that which prevents any communication, any openness to the need of the other or even of his own self, since Isaiah is a member of 'this people'.

As Levinas frequently states, we are responsible for the persecution of our persecutors. We are responsible for God, even when he persecutes or destroys us. At the very least, we are responsible to the text. We must not forget, however, that it is a resistant text, demanding a resistant reading. It is Isaiah who writes (or Yhwh through Isaiah), to record and possibly explicate his experience. It is not just the trace of the infinite in the subject, but also the subject, in all its ambiguity, who writes the text. Even if it is a faithful transcription of Yhwh's words, we still hear it through Isaiah's ears, with his possible reactions of horror, incredulity, or acquiescence. As a text, moreover, it is a transcription of Yhwh's speech and Isaiah's response which already distances them from the inaugural encounter; in other words, it is already *le dit*, not *le dire*, already adrift in a sea of metaphors and ambiguities.

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the words will be understood, and is an educative device. See the extensive discussion in Liss 2003.

40. Mishneh Torah 14.1-12. See Kenneth Seeskin (2012: 19-21), Strickman (2011: 119-25). The literature is vast. Kavka (2004) situates Levinas with Maimonides in a Jewish meontological tradition, which regards messianism as an individual quest rather than a universal eschatological goal. Pointedly, in his interview 'The Paradox of Morality' (1988), Levinas says that before the 20th century religions began with the promise of a 'Happy End' (1988), but this is no longer possible.

41. Levinas, *Difficile liberté*, 272; *Difficult Freedom*, 211.

The real problem, however, is that, according to the text, we cannot be responsible, to our persecutors or to anybody else. 'Make fat the heart of this people, make its ears heavy …' At the same time, we are told to be hyper-attentive, 'Hearing, hear … seeing, see', to be responsible for our own incomprehension, and are rendered incapable of exercising our responsibility. I have elsewhere described this as a double-bind (Landy 1999: 70). So what is our responsibility to our persecutor who commands our responsibility and deprives us of it?

In any case, Isaiah has to continue to prophesy—compose, narrate his experience, try to understand, to communicate—and we have to read, attentive to the nuances of the text, trying to understand, even when understanding is impossible. If we succeed, we fail, and vice versa. This is a conventional mystical trope. In Jewish parlance, it is *yeridah letsorekh 'aliyah*, going down for the sake of going up. At each stage in the mystical process, we cross an abyss of nothingness and despair.

In Isaiah, too, destruction foreshadows restitution. The cities without inhabitant will be full of people; there will be a new world, without violence, ruled in justice and righteousness. There are many different accounts of this world, fraught with ambivalence. At the end of our chapter, there is the 'holy seed', which survives and regenerates, despite repeated burnings (6.13).

This is not Levinas's Isaiah, however. I don't know what Levinas would think of the vision of God surrounded by seraphim proclaiming his glory, but he would certainly try to understand it in the context of his own thought. Perhaps indeed Isaiah 6 marks the transition from ontology to ethics.[42]

Levinas is fundamentally a post-Holocaust thinker.[43] He lives in a world in which the cities—at least the cities of Torah—lie waste, without inhabitant. God is absent, or malevolent.[44] In this world, all one is left with is the command to pursue justice, even in the absence of God.

42. From a conventional point of view, the doxology of the seraphim in 6.3 testifies to the God of ontology, whose glory fills the earth (or, according to another reading, is the plenitude of the earth). The commission in 6.9-10 communicates that the prophetic message cannot be understood in these or any terms; as Hanna Liss says, it communicates non-communication. The prophetic ethical responsibility supersedes the apparent absence of the divine glory, or, in biblical terms, the hiding of God's face (Isa. 8.17). Of course, Levinas might interpret 6.3 unconventionally, since for him the glory of God is manifest in ethics.

43. That the Holocaust was the epochal moment in his philosophy is a commonplace. Most of his ideas were developed in the camp to which he was confined during the war. In 'The Paradox of Morality' he describes Auschwitz as being the explicitly Jewish moment in his philosophy, 'where God let the Nazis do what they wanted' (1988: 175). For his closeness to the post-Holocaust Jewish poet, Paul Celan, see Hatley (2011) and Bruns (2002: 200). See further the discussion of Levinas and evil in Bernstein (2002).

44. Ajzenstat (2001: 64-68, 87-88). For Levinas, God only manifests itself in the

Levinas is well known as an observant Jew. Yet through his works there is virtually nothing about the value of Judaism as a religious system, of ritual as meaningful, of Torah and *mitzvot* as a practice rather than a text and a preoriginary command from the other.[45]

III

Let us go back to the text. Rereading the text, with attention, fulfils the command, 'Hearing, hear'.[46] Reading the text means entering into a relationship to the poet and to the God who speaks to him. It is an—or the—ethical response, listening to whatever the other has to say, or to demand of us, even if it means our own mystification and destruction. Rereading the text relives the experience of it, multiplying the relationship, making it part of our own lives and obsessions.[47] We fulfil the command of the Shema, 'that these words shall be on your heart' (Deut. 6.6), just as Isaiah's commission doubles it. Moreover, we experience Isaiah's vision, especially since it is a first-person account, amplifying it in our imagination. The relationship between imagination and reality is at the heart of the quarrel between poetry

voice that responds to the command (*Autrement qu'être*, 182; *Otherwise than Being*, 143). In his interview 'The Paradox of Morality', Levinas says that 'God can not do anything at all' (1988: 169), and identifies God with the commandment to love (177). The idea that God's presence is only to be found in those who recognize him has very long-standing roots in Jewish tradition, for instance in Ulla's dictum that since the destruction of the Temple God is only to be found in the four cubits surrounding a person learning Torah (*Ber*. 8a). Levinas concludes *Otherwise than Being* by evoking, after 'the death of a certain god', the trace 'of that … which always already past … enters into no present' (*Autrement qu'être*, 233; *Otherwise than Being*, 185, my translation). See, in general, Kavka (2004) for the persistence of the meontological tradition.

45. For example, in the essay on 'Judaism and the Present' he is remarkably insouciant on the equal validity of different approaches to the observance of Halakhah among contemporary Jews (*Difficile liberté*, 271; *Difficult Freedom*, 210). This may well be conditioned pragmatically and hence ethically by the need to appeal to all segments of Jewish youth, in response to the greater danger, in Levinas's eyes, of abandoning Judaism in favour of secular ideologies. Cohen (1994: 131) quotes a passage from Levinas's preface to a French translation of Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem*, in which he advocates halakhic observance as the way in which Jews have maintained their 'invisible' intimacy with God. There are striking affinities between Levinas and Mendelssohn with regard to Jewish practice.

46. This is an eccentric interpretation of 'Hearing, hear', but I like it. It is a text I have read and commented on many times, and each time is different.

47. Gibbs (2000: 102-103), for instance, shows how Derrida's repeated rereadings of Levinas (and the same passages of Levinas) invite us to reread Levinas. This is the function of all criticism. In the ancient world, in particular, all reading was rereading, as emphasized repeatedly by my colleague, Ehud Ben Zvi.

and philosophy.[48] On the one hand, the imagination is all that we have to think what it is to be another, to substitute ourselves for that other. On the other hand, the imagination may also subsume the other in the same, may be a means of appropriation.

How then to make sense of it, without making sense of it, using the resources of our imagination? I had said earlier that a Levinasian reading is possible, but contrary to the divine command and to the ethical challenge that the text poses. How to make sense of a God who prevents repentance, who, as Celan says, 'wanted all this, knew all this'—wills and knows the empty cities and the barren desolate earth? Nonetheless, such a reading is mandatory, and, to repeat what I said earlier, gets to the heart of Levinas's enterprise—and perhaps Isaiah's.

Again, let us turn to Levinas's reflections in the crucial fifth chapter of *Otherwise than Being*. He concludes with a section on 'Scepticism and Reason'. For Levinas, scepticism is the necessary other face of philosophy, always refuted, always recrudescent. Philosophy is constantly restating itself against its hidden adversary. Philosophy, coterminous with the reason of state, encompasses and absorbs every 'saying', every interruption and objection, as Levinas shows in a masterly analysis.[49] At the same time it constantly 'unsays' itself, reduces the totality of discourse to the saying and the openness to the other—which Levinas, in one of his most pervasive and potent metaphors, compares to breathing.[50] Levinas is clearly also a sceptic, a remorseless critic of his own philosophy as well as any theology—as is Isaiah.

Levinas counters his argument about the book, which comprises every discourse and every objection, by noting that it is part of a tradition, that it has a history, and is thus diachronic. The book, and the tradition, passes from one to another, from the past to the future. 'But books have their fate, they belong to a world they do not encompass'.[51] Books are always addressed to someone outside the book, and that person speaks to others. Through the command, and through the revelation that the message is concealed, concealed and revealed at the same time, the responsibility is passed on to us. In other words, it is no longer God or Isaiah who speak this text, or they only do so through our mouths.[52]

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48. For a brilliant account of the relationship of imagination and reality in the poetics of South India, see David Shulman (2012).

49. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 214-15; *Otherwise than Being*, 169.

50. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 228; *Otherwise than Being*, 181.

51. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 217; *Otherwise than Being*, 171.

52. Gibbs (2000: 15, 100) comments on the withdrawal of the writer from the book in which he or she is no longer present, in ethical responsibility to the other, and reciprocally, the ethical responsibility of the reader to withdraw from the text, not to be self-interested, so as to listen and respond to the voice that speaks through it. This is consonant with Levinas's account of prophecy.

'Hearing, hear, but do not understand/Seeing, see, but do not know.' These may be synonyms, in a traditional and very straightforward parallelism. We too easily assimilate them to each other: hearing is equivalent to seeing, understanding to knowing. But supposing they are antonyms?[53] Hearing may refer to an internal condition, a receptivity to the voice of the other, a subject speaking to us, or it may be an intimation, a rumbling, from beyond the horizon, as in Isa. 28.22. Seeing is objective, neutral, connected to the voice of the other or independent of it. In Isaiah, images of 'seeing' and 'hearing' are all pervasive, from the first two verses onward. Isaiah is a 'vision'; 'seeing' is looking on, or failing to look on, the work of the Lord (e.g. 5.12, 19). Both are linked, moreover, to motifs of not-seeing and not-hearing, as the precondition for true insight and judgment.[54] For instance, the Davidic heir in 11.3 does not judge according to 'the appearance of the eyes' and 'the hearing of the ears'. In 33.15 the righteous paragon, whom I identify with the Davidic king, 'closes his ears' to the sound of violence. Hearing and seeing conjoin internal and external perspectives, response and separation, whose combination Levinas calls 'sensibility'. The doubling, however, suggests something more. 'Hearing, hear' is an ordinary intensive, but indicates that everyday hearing is not enough; we have to pay close attention to the words, or to the intonation of the voice. Similarly, 'seeing, see' points to something other than quotidian vision, a seeing of the invisible, corresponding to Levinas's assertion that the 'face' is beyond sight.[55] To see truly requires a hyper-vigilance.

'Understanding' and 'knowing' are likewise paired throughout Isaiah, paradigmatically in 1.3. To 'understand' is a natural consequence of hearing, whereby the message is received, interpreted, incorporated within one's own mental world; through the understanding the self constitutes itself. 'Knowing' may result in understanding, but at least when coupled with sight implies a dimension or accompaniment of vision, an intimate contact with the other, which may or may not be possessive, a reaching out

53. I explored the relationship of metaphors of 'seeing' and 'hearing' at length in my essay 'Vision and Voice in Isaiah' (Landy 2000). See also Landy 2012.

54. Robert Carroll (1997) has provided the most perspicacious discussion of blindness and insight in Isaiah, on which I have drawn in many of my writings.

55. See Waldenfels (2002) for a convenient discussion of the development of Levinas's concept of the face throughout his writings. Waldenfels contrasts Levinas's view with that of Merleau-Ponty, for whom the visible face conceals the invisible. For Levinas, the face, which is a sign of the expressive exigency of the other person, is a violent disruption of the present and the visible; it is the trace of the Infinite. The face is preeminently ethical, rather than cognitive or aesthetic (Cohen 1994: 183). Cf. Wyschogrod (2002: 195), who describes it as an 'epiphany'. Through the face one apprehends the 'being beyond being', and thus beyond the visible; one senses the subject (Wyschogrod 1974: 83).

that precedes its integration as part of a said, part of an intelligible world. 'Knowing' in Isaiah is ultimately the knowledge of Yhwh, as in 11.9.

As with sight and audition, true knowledge is antithetical to false knowledge, and involves a process of not-knowing. To look intensely and not to know suggests a deliberate refusal to identify the object of sight, to defer any premature knowledge. To 'know' something is to know what it is, whereas for Isaiah it may be unknowable. Throughout Isaiah conventional wisdom—the totality of *le dit*, in Levinas's terms—is the reverse of the true wisdom Isaiah (or Yhwh) teaches. To know is to undo the structures of power and knowledge of this world, to learn to be an ethical, and at least from Isaiah's point of view, authentic human being all over again. In Levinas's terms, it is *exposure* and *nakedness*, when the ring of Gyges is removed and we no longer hide ourselves behind Adam's fig-leaves.

'Hearing, hear' and 'seeing, see' thus may be linked to 'not understanding' and 'not knowing', to a systematic destruction of conventional wisdom and knowledge. But then we go to the next sequence: 'Make fat the heart of this people, make its ears heavy, glaze over/ make its eyes gaze'. As I have tried to show elsewhere (Landy 1999: 71-72) each of these verbs is ambiguous, and combines opposite connotations. Looking, for instance, is a form of blinding, since שעה, 'gaze', and שעע, 'smear over, dull', are practically indistinguishable.[56] Everything that should lead to enlightenment, like enriching (השמן) the mind (לבב), produces imperviousness, dullness, and self-glorification (הכבד את אזניו, 'make its ears glorious'). Every message then is double-edged.

But it is the ending which is surprising: 'lest … it return and be healed'. What is wrong with being healed, and repenting? For Levinas, however, repentance does not lead to healing, in any self-satisfied, complacent sense, but to responsibility. Responsibility is a condition of absolute indigence, of suffering on behalf of the other. Levinas says that justice can only be established if I am unsituated and destitute (*desitué et destitué*).[57] We have to lose radically our place, our shelter in being.[58] To repent does not mean to return to life as it was, for instance to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.[59] It is, instead, the turnaround, the turning-point. It is what happens when the cities are left without inhabitant.

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56. השע only occurs elsewhere in Ps. 39.14, where it means 'look away'. Scholars usually determine the meaning from the context.

57. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 204-205; *Otherwise than Being*, 160.

58. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 233; *Otherwise than Being*, 185.

59. This is precisely Liss's thesis. Isaiah's message is non-political. Yhwh is transformed from the national god of Judah and Israel, who disappears with those kingdoms, like Assur, to become a different and as yet incomprehensible deity, who is not dependent on sovereign power.

Levinas writes that 'the kingdom of heaven is ethical'.[60] The kingdom of heaven, he elaborates, is only to be found in the 'one-for-the-other' in disinterestedness.[61] It is outside or beyond reason and the state. Hence Levinas's philosophy 'unsays' itself. Levinas remarks on the 'strangeness' of his discourse,[62] that on the one hand it is a work of philosophy, which tries to protect itself on all sides, which turns the uniqueness of the One or God into a theme,[63] and on the other which through its very proliferation of images and terms, its addressing itself to another, its setting itself outside the philosophical tradition, it intimates what it is to be an ethical human being, or a prophet. Derrida famously compares Levinas's writing to the waves on the seashore, always different, always the same.[64] When we are denuded of everything else, what is left? It is perhaps a choice, between *il y a* and *ille*, between the world as an impersonal 'there is', circumscribed only by death, and as constituted by people, irreducible to ourselves, to whom, however, we owe an obligation, and with whom we can create the ethical kingdom, the kingdom of heaven.

Isaiah likewise lives proleptically in a world that has been destroyed, even though to all appearances it is still extant. After his initiation, he is no longer part of this people and speaks a strange language (e.g. 28.11), even though it may be identical to that of his audience. As with Levinas, it amounts to a question: what is left, with the disappearance of Israel's hopes and dreams? How to communicate across barriers of incomprehension and complacency? As with Levinas, too, the answer turns on ethics, particularly the key terms 'justice' and 'righteousness'. Of course, Isaiah is an immensely protracted work, both as a book composed over many centuries and as a reading experience. It twists and turns in response to events, and Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah, in particular, have radically different imaginative foci. The terms 'justice' and 'righteousness' acquire new meanings, which do not displace the old ones.[65] The glorification of Zion and the sub-

60. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être* 231; *Otherwise than Being*, 183.

61. The English translation has 'interestedness', which must surely be a typographic error.

62. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 231; *Otherwise than Being*, 183.

63. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 215; *Otherwise than Being*, 169; see also Hatley (2011: 190).

64. For Derrida, this is evidence for *Totality and Infinity* as a 'work of art, not a treatise', which thus exceeds any possible interpretation (1977: 312 n. 7). Cohen (1994: 135) elaborates on the metaphor by suggesting that Levinas's works are more like an incoming tide, in which each wave advances on the previous one. This is not, in fact, very different from Derrida's contention that each wave recapitulates and enriches all the previous ones. See also Bernstein (2002: 252) who comments on the 'sameness' of all Levinas's works. To me, they have a fugal quality, with endless changes on the same few interlocking themes in infinite variations.

65. In particular, in Deutero-Isaiah, they refer to the vindication of Israel rather than to ethical duties. Trito-Isaiah combines the two meanings (Blenkinsopp 2003: 134).

servience of the nations is radically subverted by the climactic vision of all nations united in the worship of God.[66]

<div style="text-align:center">IV</div>

In the midst of the section on Scepticism and Reason, poetry and prophecy converge as twin counters to the reason of state and logic.

> Vertu qui se met à nu dans le *dit* poétique et l'interprétation qu'il appelle à l'infini. Vertu qui se montre dans le dit prophétique méprisant ses conditions dans une espèce de levitation.
>
> This possibility is laid bare in the poetic said, and in the interpretation it calls forth ad infinitum. It is shown in the prophetic said, scorning its conditions in a sort of levitation (*Autrement qu'être*, 214; *Otherwise than Being*, 170).

The poetic said opens itself to an infinity of interpretations, which are also, however, interpretations which *appeal to the infinite*, which enable the infinite to pass through the space of the poem, turning everything said into a saying, an address by the poet to the other, to ourselves, or by us to the poet or whoever speaks through the poet. The poem, in this sense, is a witness, to the trace of the infinite, and interpretations both take us back to the trace (as it were, de-inscribe the poem), and retrace it. In this *said* there is a quality, a *virtue, which is laid bare*, which renders itself naked, and which is that which does not fit into any system. The image of nudity suggests the exposure of the subject to the call of the other. But it is that which *calls* here,[67] which calls the interpretation to the infinite, in other words to itself, as well as to infinite proliferation.

The prophetic said *despises its conditions*, in other words its context, its embeddedness in language and the social order. It is only possible because of those conditions—they are the preconditions for it—but it is also that which condemns the world in which it arises, and promises a new world. It walks by a *species of levitation*, a curious image for a certain detachment from our terrestrial existence; it may recall Ezekiel snatched by the hair. In any case, the prophet answers *me voici* to something other, which Levinas calls variously 'transcendence',[68] 'height',

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66. This is of course not to suggest that Isaiah can be reduced to any single message, or that the end has any privileged status. As much as the book evinces a drive for unity, it, like any book, is inherently fissile.

67. The antecedent of *il appelle* is in fact ambiguous. It could be the 'virtue' or 'the poetic said'. Lingis's translation as 'possibility' seems to me to be inexact.

68. Transcendence is one of Levinas's many synonyms for the Infinite or the Otherwise than Being.

'heaven', metaphors which have to be taken not as referring to a realm surpassing this one, but to the ever presence of the other that is irreducible to me and to my world.

Like the poetic said, the prophetic said contains a *virtue* or quality, defined in the previous sentence as a meaning distinct from that of the system of signs, which *shows itself* in prophetic contempt and transcendence. The prophetic language always speaks for that which is outside the system, results in an estrangement of the prophet from his society.

What is interesting is the parallelism between the two sentences. The prophetic said and the poetic said are equivalent. The virtue laid bare in the one shows itself in the other; the poetic said calls the myriad interpretations to the infinite, while the prophetic one rises above its conditions in the summons to transcendence. Poets are prophets, an association with a long history;[69] Isaiah, for instance, is compelling precisely because of the power of his poetry. He is a master of language, the heir of a complex poetic tradition, characterized by intricate structures and elaborate metaphors. At the same time, a certain tension accompanies the relationship of prophecy and poetry.[70] If prophecy and poetry are the result of divine inspiration, the more crafted the language, the more it may be false to its divine origin. The beauty of language may distract us from its message, and thus prophecy may side with philosophy in its rejection of poetry.

Levinas, in particular, distrusts poetry, at least poetry that sees as its object the description of the world or the creation of an aesthetic work of art. He is opposed to the Mallarmean and Heideggerean tradition.[71] For Levinas, the only true, or at least ethically valid, poetry is prophecy: poetry that calls one to the Infinite, and is an intimate address from one to the other that witnesses not only to the poet's self, the lyrical ego, but the poet's response and indigence.

69. Whether the prophets were poets was the subject of a famous debate between Graeme Auld and Robert Carroll (1983), but it goes back to Robert Lowth and the early German Romantics (Cullhed 2007).

70. See the discussion in Geller (1983). An extreme position is taken by Cohen (1994: 253), who says that the Jewish mystic or prophet can never be confused with the poet. This is to ignore the long tradition of Jewish mystical poetry.

71. Levinas's attitude towards poetry is complex (as is Plato's). On the one hand, he rejected a certain Romantic poetics; on the other, he wrote many literary essays, and his works are suffused with literary allusions. For good discussions, see Bruns (2002) and Hatley (2011).

> Le langage est déjà scepticisme. Le discours cohérent s'absorbant tout
> entier dans le Dit—ne doit-il pas sa cohérence à l'État qui exclut, par la
> violence, le discours subversive? La cohérence ainsi dissimule une tran-
> scendence, un mouvement de l'un à l'autre, une diachronie latente, une
> incertitude et le beau risque.
>
> Language is already scepticism. Does not the coherent discourse, wholly
> absorbed in the said, owe its coherence to the State, which violently
> excludes subversive discourse? Coherence thus dissimulates a transcen-
> dence, a movement from the one to the other, a latent diachrony, uncer-
> tainty, and a fine risk (*Autrement qu'être*, 216; *Otherwise than Being*, 170).

We come now to an end. The language of poetry and prophecy is already
scepticism, is already questioning any established order and truth. But this
is true of language itself, which always means more than it says, which can
never be fitted into a complete and irrefragable truth. Language passes from
one to the other, a past to a future, hiding a *latent diachrony*, an unknown
history and an indeterminate destiny. Poetry and prophecy are a *fine risk*.
One never knows what one is going to say, or where it will lead.

'The prophetic Said' (*le dit prophétique*) may be a book, the totality of
all the words of the prophet or prophets, which contribute to a whole, either
the Book of God or its earthly counterpart the Torah. Prophetic books also
have their coherence, their metanarrative, the familiar trajectory from disas-
ter to triumph. At the same time, the book is a transcription, and a pointer to
that which lies outside the book, the intimate encounters between people, in
love and justice, and between them and God. The new world happens when
one turns from the book to welcome the stranger. All of Isaiah's ambigu-
ous words emanate from his vision, and take us back there, to the terrify-
ing opening of the eyes to the invisible, never described, presence of God
(6.1, 5). All the words of the book hide and reveal that presence, which is
set naked (*se met à nu*) so as to unfold in interpretation. God exposes him-
self as in need—'Whom shall we send? Who will go for us?'—and Isaiah
responds out of his own exposure, as a 'man of unclean lips' (6.5), and his
transformation by the seraph.

Scepticism is the overt or concealed dialogue partner of prophecy. It may
manifest itself in the prophet's voice, in the objections or indifference of
the audience, and most of all in the judgment of history. The metanarrative
becomes more and more improbable. Isaiah 63.7-64, just before the glo-
rious climax of the book of Isaiah, may be an example. The antagonist of
God is death, and with it the loss of all human significance. In particular,
the destruction of Jerusalem is the end not only of an era and a civilization,
but of God's investment in the world. The prophets write out of the cavity
of death and exile, retrospectively and prospectively, in which all the mean-
ings and hopes of the Bible are swallowed up. Where there should be a

centre there is nothing. As various scholars have shown, exile does not end with the return; home is not what it used to be.[72]

On this void the prophets build their edifices, like Ezekiel's imaginary Temple in Ezekiel 40–48. Are they any less real for being imaginary? Or more precisely, can the new world only be built with ethics, as Levinas would say, and the Isaiah of 28.17, whose temple is rebuilt with justice and righteousness? Do we not have an ethical duty to the dead, a *yad vashem*, as in Isa. 56.5? Then the prophet is also the poet of ontotheology, or of Orphism, who sings being in the face of the loss of being, who tells us who we are, and were.

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72. This is most clearly the case with the Damascus Document, but is a pervasive phenomenon. For example, in Trito-Isaiah, the restoration has not truly happened. On the Damascus Document see, e.g., Grossman (2002: 173).

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'Where were you when I founded the earth?' Poetic Subversions of a Human-Centered World in Job[1]

Adriane Leveen

> Poetry … offers that knowledge which is explosive and surprising.[2]

> The notion that all creation is to serve human interests is rejected.[3]

In late October 2011 the leaves hadn't yet fallen in the parks of New York City. In fact they hadn't even turned color. Summer seemed to linger in the months of warm weather that autumn. Suddenly, an early, heavy snow covered the leaves. The combination of snow and leaves proved lethal. The added weight brought down branches and electrical cables, creating havoc and long days of power shortages. A strange and unexpected early snow in late October brought a great urban setting and many towns up and down the region to a halt.

In the midst of its swirling, pounding snow, the storm presents us with a paradox. It reminds us that nature often holds the upper hand, bringing us to our knees in an instant, even in a city that often obscures the cycles and processes of the natural world.[4] On the other hand, human behavior contributes to the unexpected weather, further disrupting its cycles and processes and illuminating the fragile balance of atmosphere, sea, and land that we tamper with at our own considerable risk. Over the last decade we have experienced ever more frequent and disastrous weather-related events—hurricanes, rising sea levels, and growing regions of parched, desolate land—that are

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1. Author's note: I have chosen to write about Job since I know the book holds a significant place in Tamara Eskenazi's life and in her work. Her teaching and scholarship powerfully embody her conviction that *Tanakh* remains a compelling, powerful source of wisdom in a world that has gone awry. God's stunning poetry out of the whirlwind is such an example, contributing a crucial biblical perspective to the increasingly urgent contemporary conversation about the human relationship to the natural world.

2. Adonis, *New York Times*, October 18, 2010.

3. G. Tucker, 'Rain on a Land Where No One Lives: The Hebrew Bible on the Environment', *JBL* 116 (1997), pp. 3-17 (14).

4. When living in an urban setting shaped by human society, one thinks of that world as natural, 'the way the world has always been', as Tucker puts it ('Rain on a Land Where No One Lives', p. 9).

outcomes of human activity.[5] It is getting ever harder to ignore nature's responses as well as a simple truth. We have the power to exploit the world around us. But such exploitation will lead to devastating consequences that we will not be able to control. We have the power, but not the wisdom, to know how to limit ourselves in order to preserve our planet. How can we mobilize ourselves to act before it is too late?

Changes in human behavior in response to environmental disasters will only emerge out of a collective public debate accompanied by political will. The Bible has in the past exerted an influence, and even authority, over public debates and subsequent actions and may still do so in the present.[6] In fact, the Bible has examined the question of the human role in, and responsibility to, the natural world. Knowledge of the Bible's views might then inform our own. In this essay I intend to highlight and analyze those views by means of a close reading of one of the pertinent biblical texts—God's response to Job from the whirlwind. It should be clear that I am engaging in scholarly advocacy rather than neutral analysis. I can't think of a better model for such engaged scholarly inquiry than that found in the work of Dr Tamara Eskenazi.

No text in the Bible is better suited to address the issue at hand in a compelling way than God's answer to Job out of the whirlwind. In a magisterial survey of the divine creation God demands that Job take immediate stock of his relationship to the natural world: 'Where were you when I founded earth? Tell, if you know understanding' (Job 38.4).[7] As suggested by the environmentalist Bill McKibben God's stunning speech out of the whirlwind 'undercuts every bit of the orthodoxies that entwine us … [reminding Job of a world] that seems to have its own independent meaning. Most of

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5.   According to the Global Carbon Project, an organization of international scientists, global carbon dioxide emissions in 2010 show the biggest jump ever recorded (as reported by the *New York Times*, December 5, 2011). Worse news followed. The meteorologist Jeffrey Masters reports that over the 30 years he has been working in the field, he has 'never seen a year that comes close to matching 2011 for the number of astounding, extreme weather events' (*New York Times*, December 25, 2011).

6.   In a recent essay on the enduring influence of the Bible in western tradition, Marilynne Robinson (*New York Times*, December 25, 2011) defines modern religious thought as 'an attempt to do some sort of justice to the rich difficulties present in the tradition'. The relationship can work both ways. The complexity of thought found in that tradition can be brought to bear in helpful fashion to our own equally difficult, complex concerns.

7.   Unless otherwise noted, I will use the new translation of Job by Robert Alter, *The Wisdom Books* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010; used by permission). At times I provide an alternative phrase from another translator in a footnote, either because of a significant difference in meaning or stylistic variation. For instance, Job 38.4b has been translated alternatively as 'Speak if you have understanding' (JPS). Translations from Genesis are my own.

the action takes place long before the appearance of humans and on a scale so powerful and vast that we are small indeed' (McKibben 2005: 26-27). God's remarkable shift in attention from the human being to the natural world pushes Job to reconsider the many assumptions upon which he based his behavior and his thinking, and especially attend to the consequences when nature is foregrounded instead of his concerns.

This essay argues that God's speech from the whirlwind overturns two dominant biblical ideas: that the human being is central to the natural world and is master over it. The speech substitutes a radical, though simple, proposal in place of these two basic ideas. Job is not master of the world but a rather marginal figure, as is the human community writ large. Such a new understanding emerges from a different sort of knowledge and a different way of seeing the world than Job (and the audience/reader of these texts) currently possesses. 'A major goal of [God's] address is to clarify the limits of Job's knowledge, wisdom and control of the world. A central theme is God's design … which includes both care for and limits upon all aspects of creation' (Tucker 1997: 13). The poem's message is clear: the world is not there to serve Job's needs and in fact is largely indifferent to them. We too may come to see the world differently and realize in consequence that the world and its vast array and variety of life does not exist solely for our exploitation of it.

In what follows, I begin by discussing the dichotomy between the natural world and the historical/cultural realm in the Bible that is reinforced within contemporary scholarship. That sketch provides a necessary corrective to the over-emphasis on the historical in biblical interpretation at the expense of the natural world. Such a corrective allows the reader a clearer view of the role of the natural world in the Bible, and a keener appreciation of the radical nature of God's response to Job. I briefly digress to describe how God's speech from the whirlwind responds to the split between creation and history, but this time from within the corpus of biblical wisdom. I then refer to those prior biblical texts, found in Genesis 1–3, whose influential narratives portray the human being as the culmination and ruler of God's creation. Those views appear in startling contrast to the divine speech from the whirlwind in Job. Next I describe Job's view of the world before God's speech to him overturns it. A close reading of God's poetic response to Job follows. Along the way I will cite at least a few of those recent works in biblical scholarship, engaged in interpreting God's answer from the whirlwind, that might make a difference to the environmental crisis in which we find ourselves.

Unhelpful Dichotomies: Creation vs. History in the Hebrew Bible

In a 1997 essay Gene M. Tucker argues that the natural world plays an important role in the biblical corpus but that its role has long been overlooked,

particularly in the commentary of biblical scholars in the last century. He seeks to understand why interpreters ignore this important dimension of the Bible. After all, nature provides sustenance to the children of Israel, is proof of God's glory, and is a rich source of imagery for metaphors of God's creation.[8]

Tucker describes the tendency in modern biblical commentators to clearly differentiate and distance the biblical worldview from those of Israel's neighbors. They rightly identify

> ancient Israel's tensions with the religions of its neighbors and its resistance to connecting natural forces or features with deities (Tucker 1997: 3).

Yet by emphasizing that distinction from other ancient cultures and reinforcing it, scholarly commentators end up focusing predominantly on Israel's unique view of God as intervening and acting in history on its behalf. God, the redeemer, the one who takes the people Israel out of another's nation's land, is the divine covenant maker and lawgiver. Tucker writes of the consequence:

> [T]he emphasis on Israel's historical consciousness—especially in this century—all too often has been bought at the price of the Hebrew Bible's affection for the natural world (Tucker 1997: 3).

One might add that the preference Tucker identifies in modern biblical scholars for history and human activity over the natural world reflects and reproduces the general preference in modern life for human-centered production and profit as well as urban development and expansion over against the preservation of other species, forests, open spaces, and clean air and water.

Ronald Simkins echoes this understanding of the biblical split between nature and history/culture in his 2003 full-length study, *Creator and Creation*. Simkins succinctly formulates the dominant interpretative stance on God 's role in history and creation:

> Unlike all other ancient Near Eastern gods, Yahweh acted in human affairs to save Israel and to guide human history according to his plan of salvation … the natural world was not considered to be significant in its own right (Simkins 2003: 1).

Both writers argue that we must recognize and avoid such polarities in order to more clearly observe and analyze the Bible's actual reflections on the human relationship to the natural world. In fact, a balance between the two impulses—to understand God's role *both* as creator *and* as redeemer of

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8.   Tucker concludes that the biblical worldview contained in God's answer from the whirlwind 'is not so much anthropocentric as theocentric. That is why it speaks of creation [as God's accomplishment] and not nature' ('Rain on a Land Where No One Lives', p. 17).

the children of Israel in the realm of history—provides a more accurate picture of the various strands that exist within biblical narratives.

Interestingly, the tension between the natural world and that of human beings, and between nature and history was already fought over in the Bible itself. Stephen Geller has described one such conflict that is pertinent to our present concerns—that between Wisdom literature, particularly in Job, and Deuteronomy. According to Geller nature is of great importance to 'Old Wisdom', a series of speculations grounded in the ancient world and within early biblical texts that 'sought to establish the essential unity of natural and moral orders' (Geller 2002: 111). Deuteronomy challenges and supersedes Old Wisdom by replacing the wonders and authority of nature with the wonders and authority of God's covenant, God's law, and the demands of monotheism, or in the dichotomy laid out above—God as acting in human history (Geller 2002: 111-12). Instead of observing God's presence through creation and nature, ancient Israelites would encounter God through revelation and Torah, both of which lead to morality and right conduct.[9]

Such an outcome is intolerable to the poet in Job, who, according to Geller, responds to the Deuteronomic transformation of Old Wisdom with a daring challenge of his own. The Job poet moves beyond both Old Wisdom and Deuteronomy by producing 'great art'—a breathtaking and emotionally compelling view of the origins and development of God's created world long before the arrival of the human being. The poetry in Job would provoke a profound awe in the reader, thereby restoring God's authority *as creator* and eliciting a renewed interest in the natural world as a reflection of God's majesty and power.[10] Such a move shifts the emphasis away from largely human affairs (Deuteronomic laws and practices) back to an appreciation of the natural world as a source of inspiration.

Genesis 1–3

Of course God is introduced as the creator at the very beginning of the *Tanakh,* in Genesis 1–3. These texts appear in dialogue with the divine response to Job out of the whirlwind. Justification for an intertextual

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9.   Geller identifies an intermediary response within the wisdom school and locates that insufficient response in the friends. For the details, see his essay.

10. As put by Geller, 'Revelation and nature cannot be reconciled by human wisdom. Only through transfiguring emotion can even the demand for reconciliation be made *sublimely irrelevant',* 'Nature's Answer', p. 129. It is the sublime in the divine poetry that provides 'transfiguring emotion', a cathartic solace for the suffering Job. The emphasis on the God of Wisdom as a creator rather than a God who intervenes in history on behalf of a particular people allows for readings that stress the universality of the Biblical God. As an example of such a reading see Terence Fretheim's work, *God and World in the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005).

reading lies in the fact that the Genesis stories as well as the divine poetry in Job describe God's creation of the world and focus on similar subject matter—the earth and its creatures, the seas, the heavens, and morning as well as light. In addition Job reproduces the pairings of light and darkness and heaven and earth that are so familiar from Genesis 1. Job also contains two rather specific intertextual markers to Genesis 1 that are persuasive: דשא 'grass' (38.27) and תהום 'the deep' (38.16, 30).

So let us begin with Genesis 1, a text that emphasizes and elevates the role of the human at the expense of all other creatures and all other phenomena in God's world in contrast to Job. Genesis 1.26, 28-29 are the pertinent verses in which we see the development of the role accorded to the human being:

> And God said, Let us make the earth creature in our image, by our likeness, and *let them have dominion* over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the heavens, and the animals, and all the earth, and all the crawling things that crawl upon the earth … Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and *subdue it, and have dominion* over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the heavens, and all living things that crawl upon the earth … And every seed-bearing plant on the face of all the earth and every tree that has fruit bearing seed, yours they will be for food (italics mine).

The earth creature or human being is elevated by virtue of being formed in God's image. If one attends to the word order, what follows—granting the human control over all other creatures—appears to be the logical consequence of such elevation. Note that the human is granted control not only over all other creatures but is commanded to *subdue the earth* itself two verses later. In other words, a hierarchy has been created that places the human at the top. Furthermore, the plants, the fruit, and after the flood, even the animals—exist to provide food for the human.

However, a number of interpreters understand 'dominion' to mean 'stewardship'—a promising concept rather than an obstacle for contemporary moral thinking on the human role within the natural world. Simkins summarizes the argument: 'rather than exploit nature, humans are commissioned to care for the natural world' (Simkins 2003: 7). Tucker makes a similar formulation: 'human beings are created as royal stewards of a good creation. To be identified as "image of God" entails both the freedom and the responsibility to act on God's behalf, consistent with that God's will, which will is the good of the creation.'[11] Even if dominion is made more palatable by considering it as stewardship, these arguments grant the human being a great deal of power, reinforcing the emphasis on the human role and continuing

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11. Tucker, 'Rain on a Land Where No One Lives', p. 6. A particularly well-argued version of that idea can be found in Jeremy Benstein, *The Way into Judaism and the Environment* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2006), especially pp. 42-53.

to focus our attention on human affairs and concerns at the expense of the natural world. As an extension of that view, the natural world, according to Genesis, largely exists to sustain us.

The second story of creation, that of Genesis 2–3, explicitly places the human being at the center of our world. As Tucker puts it, 'who can doubt that the human beings, their lives and their troubles, are the central subject of Gen 2.4b–3.24?' (1997: 9). He argues that the consequence of the punishment after expulsion is the severing of the human to the soil, which is now cursed. The narrative in Genesis 2–3 results in a pronounced estrangement of the human community from nature (Tucker 1997: 9).

The poetry in Job does not simply expand upon the categories found in Genesis in its own poetic survey of the world. It overturns those views. The world and its creatures are not created primarily for the use of human beings. In fact, the powerful forces of the natural world and many of its creatures ruthlessly and violently defy any human attempt to rule and subdue them. The world that God shows Job operates according to rules of which we are ignorant. To substantiate these claims, I will now turn to Job, first by examining the context in which Job suffers and then in closely reading God's response to him.

Job's World Immediately Prior to the Whirlwind

Job longs for that time before his inexplicable suffering began. In his reverie he captures a view of his prior self, when he thought he was central to God's plans and the object of God's delight:

> Would that I were as in moons [months] of yore,
>   as the days when God watched over me,
> when he shined his lamp over my head,
>   by its light I walked in darkness (29.2-3).

Job identifies God as an intensifying presence in his life, experiencing the divine attention over the course of months narrowing into days of careful watching. 'God's lamp' is set in a parallel relation to the 'months' by picking up on the Hebrew ירח, which literally means 'moon'. By the light of those moons/divine lamp, Job is able to find his path. Job attributes the light thus produced to God's desire to compassionately respond to the human need to find one's way in the darkest hours. At least in these verses the moon does not exist on its own terms but for its functions—light and the marker of time's passage—on behalf of the human being, God's most important creation.

Job next muses on the great respect in which he has been held, not only by God, but also by his fellow human beings. He rehearses his philanthropic acts on behalf of the poor and the needy, the blind and the lame. In other words, he fulfills those demands, particularly of the prophets, made elsewhere of the

Israelites in the Bible. Job is not even an Israelite yet he has taken the trouble
to conduct himself in an exemplary fashion. His behavior, largely focused on
the needs of other human beings, parallels God's careful watching over Job in
the opening verses of the chapter cited above. As Job elaborates on the ben-
eficial results of his deeds and words, he borrows from natural imagery:

> At my speech they would say nothing further,
>   and upon them my word would drop.
> They waited for me as for rain,
>   and gaped open their mouths as for showers[12] (Job 29.22-23).

This chapter provides an excellent example of the anthropocentric view
of biblical texts. It is the human being who is God's first order of business
and interest. Even nature is used not for its own sake but as a rich meta-
phoric source to describe the views of Job's fellow human beings toward
Job and his powerful influence. The sustenance of his words grows over
time, developing from drops to rain to showers. The metaphor conveys the
nurturing effects of his words. Job exists at the very center of the humanly
constructed world. He has status, a secure position within the hierarchy of
his community, and is held in great regard. But Job's world, so humanly
constructed and celebrated, will barely register in God's response.

The next chapter, poignantly juxtaposed to Job 29, overturns the images
Job wove out of his reflections on his past life. In his difficult present Job
begins by addressing the hierarchy that had held him so securely in place
and goes on to develop the theme at great length:

> And now mere striplings laugh at me
>   whose fathers I spurned
>   to put with the dogs of my flock …
> And now I become their taunt,
>   I become their mocking word.
> They despised me, were distant to me,
>   and from my face they did not spare their spit (30.1, 9-10).

The respect accorded the elderly by their juniors is denied Job. But even
worse, these young who deny him respect are the children of men whom
Job, in his former life, would have considered as utterly beneath him. Note
the use of 'dogs' as a demeaning contrast to the fathers of the mockers.
The reference to the domestication of animals sets up a later juxtaposition
between wild and domestic creatures. What exits the mouths of Job's tor-
mentors—whether taunts or spit—humiliate Job. Note that words of spite
and mockery replace the words of Job so eagerly thirsted after in the pre-
ceding chapter. In sum, as astutely noted by Carol Newsom, 'a society that
rewards with honor [also] punishes with contempt' (1994: 12-13). Present
contempt is the inverse of prior honor.

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12. 'Spring showers' (Scheindlin 1998) or 'late rain' (JPS 1980).

The poet again uses imagery from nature, this time to describe Job's state of being in response to such humiliation. Nature remains a source for human expression, rather than existing for its own sake:

> Terror rolls over me,
>   pursues my path like the wind,
>   and my rescue like a cloud passes on (30.15).

Job is now robbed of what gave him a sense of solidity and security in the past—a prominent status within the human hierarchy, good deeds and God's attention. Terror replaces well-being. A pursuing wind best captures terror's relentlessness while rescue from such a state is so elusive that a moving 'cloud' best captures Job's unlikely chance of restoration to his former life. The norms and values of human beings in which Job placed such trust, and found such success, are illusory and unreliable.

One last passage will suffice to exemplify the focus on human community in the book of Job *before* God's response from the whirlwind. After Job's three friends finish rebuking him, Elihu, son of Barachel the Buzite, steps forward to offer the last retort to Job for his pride, stubbornness and denial of guilt. Elihu assumes that God knows what God is about and makes the case for God by means of water:

> Why, exalted is God, and we know not,
>   the number of his years is unfathomed.
> For he draws down drops of water,
>   they are distilled in the rain of his wetness,
> as the skies drip moisture,
>   shower on abounding humankind.
> Can one grasp the spread of cloud,
>   the roars from his pavilion? …
> For with them he exacts justice from peoples,
>   gives food in great abundance (36.26-29, 31).

The passage emphasizes God's role as creator (in this instance of rain), anticipating a theme that God will almost immediately take up to far more impressive and lofty effect. Elihu borrows from the earlier images used to describe the words of Job but now uses that imagery—drops and rain—to describe God's actions which supersede anything on the human plain. In echoing 29.22-23, Elihu makes the case that God, not Job, is the proper object of reverence. Even so, God retains a primary interest in the people over whom God rules (God gives food in great abundance as well as exacting justice from humanity). However, as we will see, Elihu's image of rain pouring down upon all humankind will be decisively replaced in the whirlwind speech with rain pouring down on a land devoid of any human beings. That shift, subtle as it may be, forcefully turns the reader and Job away from the world of human beings.

In this brief sketch of Job's worldview immediately prior to God's speech, we observe Job struggling to make sense of what has happened to him in light of his long-term assumptions about his experience and the ways of the world. Those ways include honor and status in human society, both of which he has lost. As we shall see, God will quickly change the subject from Job and his concerns to that of the earth itself along with the heavens and the seas.

> 'Where were you when I founded the earth?'

God begins the divine challenge to Job with a flourish of rhetorical questions:

> Who is this who darkens counsel
>   in words without knowledge? …
> Where were you when I founded the earth?
>   Tell, if you know understanding (38.2, 4).[13]

Right from the start, God's rhetorical questions suggest that Job is not equal to his divine debating partner. Job begins at an enormous disadvantage since he lacks the requisite knowledge. He is ignorant of God's ways. He is of course also ignorant of the origins of the earth. Note how v. 4 juxtaposes God's founding of the earth with Job's lack of knowledge of that event. 'Knowing' appears eight times in Job 38. Words of inquiry such as *ask, tell,* and *reveal* as well as those of perception, *see* and *observe,* also appear in an obvious way. Job is asked to put aside everything he thought he knew, in order to perceive the world differently and thereby acquire a different kind of knowledge. It is a lesson rather than a debate. But it is an urgent lesson with an urgent message not only for Job but also for us. From the very opening volley Job confronts the limits of human knowledge, and therefore should seriously ponder both the wisdom and the limits of human domination over God's world.

The content of this divine lesson has been identified as the basic structures of the earth and the sea, as well as those of the heavens and light and darkness; meteorological phenomena; and the animal world (Newsom 1994: 18). Robert Alter suggests that the layout 'is implicitly narrative: first God creates the world, then he sets in motion upon it an intricate interplay of snow and rain and lightning and winds, and in this setting he looks after the baffling variety of wild creatures that live on the earth' (1985: 94).

Significantly, God's narration of this world continues to be expressed to Job and the reader by means of poetry that is ever more stunning. The

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13. 'Lists of rhetorical questions, often presenting inventories of natural and social phenomena, were a favorite device of challenge by one wise man to an inferior one already in Egyptian and Mesopotamian traditions. By putting the answer in the form a series of unanswerable questions, the author concedes that the order of the cosmos will always be beyond penetration by the intellect' (Geller, 'Nature's Answer', p. 129).

poetry seems particularly suited to its subject—the natural world. Its parallelism is particularly adaptable to the slow unfolding over time of natural processes. We can witness the world phenomenon by phenomenon, animal by animal, verse by verse, bit by bit, as we tour God's entire creation. Poetry allows us to observe the grand and the minute. A particularly glorious example of poetry's ability to capture minute splendors can be found in a description of the sunrise:

> Have you ever commanded the morning,
>   appointed the dawn to its place …
> It turns like sealing clay,
>   takes color like a garment (38.12, 14).

The poetry turns a commonplace event into a subtle and delicate visual occurrence. Verse 12 begins the scene with a general term *morning* followed by *dawn*, a far more specific term that marks the first light of each morning. We can then observe the consequences of dawn, as the rising of the sun creates a light that slowly moves across the surface of the earth until we witness various hues of color. The movement from image to image invites us to carefully and closely inspect the earth and the play of light *as if for the first time* and to marvel at God's seminal acts as its Creator.[14]

Let us now more fully analyze God's presentation of the world and its concerns, a world in which the human is largely marginal. Many of God's descriptions, such as that of the inner workings of the sea, involve a tour of places that human beings would otherwise not be able to perceive on their own. Thus the poem conjures up a time before human beings existed ('Where were you when I founded the earth?') and also sites to which human beings, once created, would not have access. I begin with God's description of the origins of the sea and the actions necessitated in the divine act of creating it:

> Who hedged the sea with double doors
>   when it gushed forth from the womb,
> when I made clouds its clothing,
>   and thick mist its swaddling bands?
> I made breakers upon it my limit,
>   and set a bolt with double doors.
> And I said, 'Thus far come, no farther,
>   here halt the surge of your waves' (38.8-11).

The poetic language of vv. 8-9—the womb, a hint of amniotic fluid, swaddling bands—is that of birth, a fitting theme for God to deploy as birth mother to the world. Other images follow in 38.29 of labor and birth. 'From whose belly did the ice come forth, to the frost of the heavens who

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14. Thanks to Rachel Rosenfield in a personal communication for that observation.

gave birth?' This repetition heightens the reader's exposure to the language of childbirth, language primarily associated elsewhere in the Bible with women. The description in Job of God's role as the progenitor of an enormous array of life offers a striking contrast to the human ability only to reproduce its own species.

In v. 10 a general term, *my limit*, is made visually graphic by a description of its highly specific implementation: *set a bolt with double doors*. The poet concludes this section by conjuring up a stunning image of a sea's waves breaking against the shore. These images of natural power supersede those any human might be capable of producing. Even God needs a bolt with double doors to contain the power of the sea.

More images of raw natural power follow. In the face of such power the human would simply and repeatedly be overwhelmed. Storehouses of hail, an east wind whipping over the earth, and sheets of rain are conjured up. Of course in our day, it is precisely these kinds of severe weather events that serve as warnings of the dangers facing our planet.

In the poem, God actually links the weather to a land that will exist whether or not the human walks upon it. After conjuring up a mighty thunder storm, God announces its target:

> … to rain on a land without man,
>> wilderness bare of humankind.
> to sate the desolate dunes
>> and make the grass sprout there (38.26-27).

The parallelism in v. 26 can be found in the fact that *a land without man* can be defined as a *wilderness*. But 'without man' serves double duty in the verse since it is paired with 'bare of humankind'. The Hebrew לא אדם 'bare of humankind', elegantly and simply echoes לא איש 'without a man'. In v. 27 the poet juxtaposes the desolate dunes with the sprouting grass. The poet has created an image of the natural world, devoid of human beings, that nonetheless receives God's nourishing rains and sprouts new grass not because human beings require vegetation for food but simply because that is God's intent. As it is put by Gerald Janzen: 'God sends rain in the uninhabited wilderness … entirely apart from human utility' (Janzen 2009: 103). Ed Greenstein places the verses in their inner biblical context and thereby reminds us of what is at stake: 'The rain is depicted not as a moral instrument of reward and punishment [the view of Deuteronomy] but precisely as a phenomenon that has nothing to do with human conduct' (1999: 305).

Chapter 39 moves from this panoramic vision of the world to the wild and fierce creatures who inhabit it, creatures that simply exist and go about their business outside the realm of human beings. The poet zooms in on the wild ass (onager):

> Who set the wild ass free
>   and the onager's reins who loosed,
> whose home I made in the steppes,
>   his dwelling-place flats of salt?
> He scoffs at the bustling city,
>   the driver's shouts he does not hear (39.5-7).

'Steppes' are made more particular and visual when the poet zooms in on 'flats of salt'. We are brought closer and closer to a land far distant from that inhabited by humans. Suddenly the poet juxtaposes the land of the wild ass with that of the bustling city in v. 7 and does so in such a way that the reader can almost hear the shouts of the driver. But the point of course in the verse is that the onager 'does not hear' any of it, and, as playfully suggested by the poet, would mock the chaos of the city—the quintessential human place.

The poet continues to evoke the enormous distance between wild creatures and the needs of human beings by turning more directly to the human setting, highlighting its fields and threshing floors and especially the tasks at hand that require domesticated animals:

> Will the wild ox want to serve you,
>   pass the night at your feeding trough?
> Bind the wild ox with cord for the furrow,
>   will he harrow the valleys behind you?
> Can you rely on him with his great power
>   and leave your labor to him?
> Can you trust him to bring back your seed,
>   gather grain on your threshing floor? (39.9-12).

Verse 9 opens with the primary question: will the wild ox serve you? The resounding negative leads to the futility of human attempts to bind and harness such an animal to the plow. This animal will not serve a human. The juxtaposition in these verses of the various uses one might be able to make of an ox, if only it were domesticated, with the reality of the wild ox reminds the reader and Job that there are creatures who are untamable. Job obviously has no dominion over such creatures.

While glorifying in the power of these untamed creatures, the poet is not particularly sentimental about them. For instance, he considers the ostrich, a creature that forgets where she abandons her eggs and thereby leaves them vulnerable to those who will stomp on them and crush them. The ostrich, I would argue, is a counterpoint to the view in Genesis 1 that all that God creates is 'very good'. The Job poet suggests a world that may be arbitrary, cruel and at times, heart-breaking.[15]

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15. Though apparently the text's depiction of the ostrich is incorrect. See Izak Spangenberg, 'Who Cares? Reflections on the Story of the Ostrich (Job 39.13-18)', in *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions* (ed. N.C. Habel and S. Wurst; Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2001), pp. 92-102.

Verses 26-30 evoke the hawk and the eagle, magnificent birds that literally glide far above and out of our visual range. Not only are they visually remote but they also inhabit a sphere completely beyond human life, with our values and virtues:

> Does the hawk soar by your wisdom?
>   spread his wings to fly away south?
> By your word does the eagle mount
>   and set his nest on high?
> On the crag he dwells and beds down,
>   on the crest of the crag his stronghold.
> From there he seeks out food,
>   from afar his eyes look down.
> His chicks lap up blood,
>   where the slain are, there he is (39.26-30).

This culminating vision of chap. 39 offers us a strange world, a world in which we are utterly insignificant to the actions and concerns of God's other creatures. Such life is indifferent to our own. Irony makes the point: 'By your word does the eagle mount?' Parallelism again invites us to closely view these creatures as if for the first time. We see the hawks soar and then observe the necessary spreading of their wings to maintain their flight through the sky. The eagle rests not only on the crag, but on its crest, as far removed from our reach as possible. His keen vision allows him to see what we cannot. The accumulation of specific details about these fierce creatures forces us to reconsider our presumptuous claims of human centrality and power. John Collins bluntly argues: 'God has too many things on his mind to regard Job's fate as of great importance … Job is given a lesson in perspective. Neither he nor humanity in general is as important as he had thought' (2004: 515).

The description of wild animals indifferent to human life and far beyond human domestication reaches its grandest proportions in the description of the two great animals, bordering on the supernatural and mythic in their powers, found in chaps. 40–41. A few verses will suffice to remind the reader of these wild creatures. Of Behemoth, God declares:

> He makes his tail stand like a cedar,
>   his balls' sinews twine together.
> His bones are bars of bronze,
>   his limbs like iron rods …
> Could one take him with one's eyes,
>   with barbs pierce his nose? (40.17-18, 24).[16]

The answer of course is a resounding No. It is fascinating that the source of these metaphors, in contrast to those in chaps. 29–30, are from the world

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16. Alternatives for 40.24a: 'Can he be taken by his eyes?' (JPS); 'Who would grasp him by his eyes?' (Pope 1979); 'Can you catch him by the eye?' (Scheindlin 1998).

of human production and instrumentality—bronze and iron! Now it is the human world that exists as a rich source of language for creatures found in nature.

Leviathan, the more powerful of the two, is even more menacing:

> From his nostrils smoke comes out,
>   like a boiling vat on brushwood.
> His breath kindles coals
>   and flame comes out of his mouth.
> Strength abides in his neck,
>   and before him power dances.
> The folds of his flesh cling together;
>   hard-cast, he will not totter.
> His heart is cast hard as stone,
>   cast hard as a nether millstone.
> When he rears up, the gods are frightened …,
>   when he crashes down, they cringe.
> Overtake him with a sword? It will not avail,[17]
>   nor spear nor dart nor lance.
> Iron he deems as straw,
>   and bronze as rotten wood.
> No arrow can make him flee,
>   slingstones for him turn to straw (41.12-20).

How can we understand the extraordinary way in which God concludes the survey of the natural world? Why offer us creatures whose power so greatly supersedes our own? Alter provides an answer that summarizes the reading I have suggested throughout this essay:

> Elsewhere in the Bible, man is the crown of creation, little lower than the angels, expressly fashioned to rule over nature … But in the uniquely vivid descriptive poetry of Job 38–41, the natural world is valuable for itself, and man, far from standing at its center, is present only by implication, peripherally and impotently, in this welter of fathomless forces and untamable beasts (Alter 1985: 104).

Perhaps Leviathan is the one creature in God's survey who straddles the natural world and that of the gods. Elsewhere in the Bible Leviathan is a god Yhwh conquered long ago.[18] Job 41 hints at that earlier history by mentioning the gods sorely frightened by Leviathan. A hierarchy is thus created consisting of the gods, Leviathan and God, replacing Job's carefully con-

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17. At this point, I deviate slightly from the translation of Robert Alter.

18. Alter suggests that the mythic creature is nicely placed within the natural world and its creatures: 'What is remarkable about this whole powerfully vivid evocation of Leviathan is that the monotheistic poet has taken a figure from mythology, traditionally seen as the cosmic enemy of the god of order, and transformed it into this daunting creature that is preeminent in, but also very much a part of, God's teeming creation' (2010: 175 n. 26).

structed human hierarchy. Of course God is more powerful than Leviathan. Job, mere human as he is, doesn't stand a chance. Note how radically different this view of the human being is to that of Genesis 1–3.

Newsom reinforces this shift of view by identifying the commonality that exists when we consider the entire assemblage of creatures together—the lion and raven, onager and wild ox, behemoth and leviathan—all juxtaposed to the human being:

> [T]hey are associated with places outside of and opposed to the human cultural sphere … These animals are representations of what lies outside the bounds of the social/symbolic order … God's ironic presentation stresses to Job that he neither provides for these animals nor may he expect service from them. Such relationships, of course, are the primary ones that organize Job's moral world, the relationships of mutual obligation, the relationships of benevolence and dependence. Here God uses the wild animals to confront Job with something that will not fit those categories (1994: 22).

Job is finally forced to rethink all that he thought he knew. As Jon Levenson puts it, '… there are things human beings can never learn, that nature is not set up to human scale, and that creation is not anthropocentric, but radically, bafflingly, terrifyingly theocentric' (2002: 183). God's radical re-education of Job might plausibly trigger not only respect for the power of other living creatures but an awe that compels a change in human behavior. The world God has shown Job makes human domination laughable and the attempt to exploit its riches reckless.

And yet Job's actual response at the end of God's speeches is literally enigmatic. The Hebrew is obscure, leading to a variety of different translations and interpretations.[19] They range from those who see Job as meekly accepting his proper place as defined by God to a Job who is defiant, even sarcastic, as he rejects God's entire argument. The most suggestive formulation of Job's reaction to what he has just heard in light of the present reading, since it highlights the 'lesson' of God's survey of the natural world, is that proposed by William P. Brown: 'The outer limits of creation serve double duty for Job by deconstructing and restoring his character' (1999: 377). In other words, Job is radically changed by his encounter with the world that God has created.

But such a change is not necessarily obvious. If we turn to the final chapter in Job, we discover a world that exists in much closer proximity to that of Genesis 1 than we might have supposed considering the stunning natural world just described by the Divine Voice from the Whirlwind. Job is restored to his 'proper' place in a world in which the human is again at the center. He is granted abundant domesticated livestock and is blessed with ten children. He is vindicated in front of his friends. Yet I would contend

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19. See the discussion of the phrase (Job 42.6) in Good (1990: 375-78).

that after having witnessed the startling beauty and harsh reality of the nat-
ural world, Job would find his human world with its vindications and res-
titutions to be shocking, petty and dishonest. Would Job forget and turn
away from the voice out of the whirlwind, a voice that expanded his vision
instead of diminishing it, a voice that made the natural beauty and power of
the world visible to Job as if for the first time?

It is now time to consider those questions for ourselves. What might
God's speeches from the whirlwind contribute to a contemporary under-
standing of our role in relationship to the natural world?

After the Whirlwind: The Human Being and the Natural World Today

The world presented to Job and to the reader is essentially outside the
human realm. As we have seen, examples abound in God's survey that not
only reflect the sheer power of nature but that threaten the human enterprise.

> There is no morality to the way the law of gravity functions or to the range
> and efficacy of storms, earthquakes and viruses. God's creation is good, but
> in being what it was created to be (*and has become*) it has the potential of
> adversely affecting human beings … (Fretheim 2005: 244).

This is a slightly different formulation of the argument with which I
began this essay. We may think we can control nature. But we grossly mis-
read and tinker with 'what it was created to be'. We disregard its careful
balances and limited resources in our blind rush to exploit and rule. Should
we risk the world for the chance to subdue it? Ample evidence exists that
the natural world is responding to human actions in increasingly violent
ways. If God's survey in Job has taught the reader anything, it is the extent
to which we are ignorant of, or at the very least, underestimate, natural pro-
cesses. The natural world is far too powerful and unpredictable for us to
ultimately tame it.

Thus God's speeches from the whirlwind force us to develop a healthy
skepticism of our powers over the natural world. As suggested by Dale Pat-
rick, 'God disillusions the human will-to-power … humans are not cre-
ated to dominate but to fit within the limits of their ecosystem' (2001: 115).
There are places we cannot tread, 'places where the energy and the vitality
and indeed the violence of my being must meet its limit' (Newsom 1994:
20). We observed such places in God's survey—the depths of the sea, the
top of the tallest mountains, a confrontation with Leviathan. Such evidence
should force us to critically and urgently rethink assumptions of our own
centrality with its concomitant sense that unlimited exploitation is some-
how our due. And it is not a matter of sentiment. The human attempt to
dominate other species and to exploit the earth's resources has led us to the
brink of disaster. But remember that this bitter truth contains a paradox. We

are limited in our abilities to reverse the damaging processes we have set in motion. Yet we are the only living creatures on this planet capable of acting. In the end, a redefined and curtailed stewardship (one of the interpretations of the verses in Genesis 1) might after all contribute a timely and fruitful formulation of our role and compel us to act as we move forward into uncharted territory.

God's hauntingly beautiful, strange and compelling portrait of the natural world, with its web of interlocking species and our own profound limitations, bordering on insignificance, forces us to see that world again, freshly, as if for the first time. Under the influence of such fresh perceptions, might we move away from domination of other species to a revised model of stewardship whose foundation is the inter-relatedness of all life? Each facet of creation, including the human community, does not exist independently. Each flourishes only as a carefully calibrated part of a larger whole. The decline, deterioration or elimination of one aspect of the natural world and its living creatures has repercussions for us all.

In sum, God's speeches from the whirlwind challenge contemporary assumptions of human centrality and unfettered control and put forth an alternative vision:

> [N]othing God says indicates any particular preference for humans … This is a world designed for the benefit of the whole community of life, indeed of inanimate nature … Humans must find their niche within this dynamic, dangerous, but vibrant ecosystem … Divine sovereignty is exercised not at the expense of creaturely power, but in the realization of each species' capacity to thrive (Patrick 2001: 113).

Thus the lesson that God so majestically teaches Job is ours to learn as well. The world that God offers us to consider operates according to its own startling and arbitrary forces of which we are largely ignorant. It is a world that moves along its own course whether or not we are involved and whether or not we grasp its warning. It behooves us then to pause and reconsider. Perhaps the world's diversity, wildness, power and especially its strange beauty, as captured so memorably in God's speech out of the whirlwind, might awake us from our fatal indifference, forcing upon us the common sense, and especially the will, to act upon its behalf and ours, quickly and in our time, to restore its life sustaining balances.

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE, THEN AND NOW:
THE VERY DIFFERENT LIVES AND AFTERLIVES OF DINAH AND RIZPAH[1]

Heather A. McKay

Dinah tends to be known to feminist scholars as one of the archetypal victims of rape.[2] She is silent in her narrative; she makes no claims and expresses no desires. She moves from her own home to that of Shechem, at least partly, by a purposive act and is then brought back home willy-nilly by her brothers. Throughout her story she is 'used' as a 'tool' by men: both by foreign notables who see marriage between Dinah and Shechem as a means of opening up fruitful commerce and by her brothers who see punishing the Hivites for deflowering her as an 'honourable' route to significant plunder. Her father Jacob plays a less obvious role in the whole business. Dishonour runs through this story.

Rizpah on the other hand, although she also says not a word, manages to move David to honourable actions with respect to the remains of her two dead sons (by Saul), and of the five dead sons of Merab (by Adriel), and also the bones of his dead mentor, Saul, and of his dead friend, Jonathan. Rizpah wields enormous, if irregular and unexpected, power in her own right through her doggedly honourable actions. Honour runs through this story.

Scholarly analyses of these two tantalizing stories explore many questions thoroughly and fruitfully, but there remain questions that are unasked and, hence, unanswered—with whatever precision might be appropriate. Matters raised by the texts themselves and by scholarly discussion about the texts are explored in great detail,[3] but hidden assumptions, occurring in the minds of the scholars and their readers as they envision the unfolding

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1. Genesis 34, 2 Samuel 3 and 2 Samuel 21. Quotations are from the NRSV.
2. As also Tamar (by Amnon) in 2 Sam. 13.
3. See, for example, for Dinah: Susanne Scholz, 'What "Really" Happened to Dinah?', *lectio difficilior* 2 (2001); Ron Clark, 'The Silence in Dinah's Cry', *lectio difficilior* 6/1 (2006); Caroline Blyth, *The Narrative of Rape in Genesis 34: Interpreting Dinah's Silence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and for Rizpah: Athalya Brenner, 'Rizpah [Re]membered: 2 Samuel 1–14 and Beyond', in *Performing Memory in Biblical Narrative and Beyond* (ed. Athalya Brenner and Frank H. Polak; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), pp. 207-27.

of the narratives can be ignored or missed—leading to very different possibilities for readers' understandings of these two women characters.

The text presents the stories rather as a series of 'lantern slides' or 'tableaux' of significant moments than as a continuous 'film'. These 'moments' are what first strike our attention but our desire for coherence creates some kind of continuous narrative as we read. So, while scholars see many things clearly, many other unclear items remain unnoticed or invisible. While that may largely be due to the presence of unexamined assumptions, it could also be designated 'unseen blindnesses'. Perhaps scholars, like most people, notice more those matters that are otherwise of concern to them.[4] Whatever the cause, it is those particular grey areas and aspects that this paper seeks to identify and explore: the blurred images, or 'cuts' to the next key scene, where each reader imagines the outworking of the events in their minds and creates their sense of coherence for the stories. It is not a matter of 'what really happened'; it is a matter of what readers and scholars imagine to be happening while they read and envision the stories.

Dinah

Dinah's story has been explored extensively by many scholars, both male and female, feminist and non-feminist, and I do not assign males or females exclusively to either of these camps. It is the very baldness of the narrative in the two short scenes where she is mentioned that opens the story up to multiple and varied interpretations.

Scene 1: Genesis 34

[1] Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the region. 2 When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the region, saw her, he seized her and lay with her by force. 3 And his soul was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the girl, and spoke tenderly to her. 4 So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, 'Get me this girl to be my wife.' 5 Now Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled his daughter Dinah; but his sons were with his cattle in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came.

Scene 2: Genesis 34

[25] On the third day, when they were still in pain, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city unawares, and killed all the males. 26 They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went away. 27 And the other sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled.

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4. Just as a person who plays a particular musical instrument may hear the line for that instrument more clearly in an orchestral performance.

What Do We 'Know' about Dinah?

What Was Dinah's Age?

Dinah appears to have been born after all her brothers through Leah,[5] and the two maids: Leah's maid Zilpah,[6] and Rachel's maid Bilhah,[7] but before the two sons born to Rachel.[8] She is, therefore, older than Joseph and Benjamin who are not mentioned by name in Dinah's story, perhaps they were not yet born, and were certainly younger than her other ten brothers. The brothers named in her story are Simeon and Levi, Leah's second and third sons. We do not, however, know Dinah's age at the time of the story. I shall work with only two possible ages for Dinah: mid-teens and early twenties. The life expectancy of an ordinary woman in those days probably was probably less than forty,[9] so that it is less fruitful to explore other possible ages for Dinah.

If we think of Dinah as being 15 years old we will form a very different picture of the import of the story from if we imagine her to be 25 years old. In each of these scenarios our understanding of her station in life would be different, as would also be our understanding of her self-consciousness and expectations of life, as well as what her family—the close males, that is—would think of her and expect for her. The use, by Shechem,[10] of the word ילדה, female child of marriageable age,[11] for Dinah rather than עלמה, young woman of unspecified marital status, as used for Rebekah,[12] or נערה, young woman of unspecified marital status,[13] as applied to Esther,[14] would suggest the younger age to be more feasible,[15] although the several words that indicate a young female do not have precise meanings and overlap considerably. The word for virgin, בתולה, also applied to Rebekah,[16] is not stated for Dinah but merely implied by the text and assumed by readers and scholars alike.

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5.   Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun.
6.   Gad and Asher.
7.   Dan and Naphtali.
8.   Joseph and Benjamin.
9.   See Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001), p. 37.
10. Gen. 34.4.
11. Cf. *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (ed. David J.A. Clines; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), p. 154a.
12. Gen. 24.16.
13. Cf. *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, p. 277b.
14. Est. 2.7.
15. Clark, 'The Silence in Dinah's Cry'.
16. Gen. 24.16.

Can Dinah's Actions Be Compared to Those of Other Women in the Hebrew Bible?

A teenage Dinah reminds readers of the young Rebekah going out to fetch a pitcher of water from the local spring,[17] a place where she felt free to respond to a thirsty stranger who spoke to her, giving him her jar to drink from and offering to keep drawing water for the trough where his camels were drinking and to keep topping it up until his camels had had their fill. We read that Rebekah also accepted valuable gifts of items of jewellery from Abraham's emissary without appearing to be abashed or alarmed. In that story, Rebekah is not considered to have done anything unseemly, yet many scholars regard Dinah's trip out from home as unwise at best and reprehensible at worst. Possibly, Rebekah's journey and activities were carried out completely within the full public gaze in a very public place where she could be safe and not be regarded as imprudent in her actions. Enough people were around her either to observe her behaviour the whole time or to respond to cries for help. She, furthermore, seemed to feel no apprehension about taking the stranger home with her and did not appear to fear punishment once she got home, neither from her mother, to whom she spoke first, nor from her father Bethuel nor from her brother Laban. There was, obviously, no hint of sin or impropriety in Rebekah's actions or words on that occasion as far as her family were concerned. Readers and scholars tend to follow that assessment.

On the other hand, a 25-year-old Dinah might bring Ruth to mind as she went out to glean in Boaz's fields.[18] Ruth was a mature widow, having already been married for ten years, yet Boaz himself warned her to remain in the one field where the whole group of workers were busy at the time and to keep herself close to his female servants for fear of molestation by his young men whom he had already warned to leave her alone after catching sight of her as she gleaned. We can easily imagine what sight of her body that angle of vision would provide. Perhaps a clue for us here is his stress on Ruth remaining where others could easily observe her. Any risk, either from gossip or misdeeds, would lie in being in the company of a man, or men, out of sight of the main, mixed-sex body of workers.

It appears, then, that the full gaze of the local community is taken to be the best guardian of both morals and reputation in these biblical narratives. But, the moral innocence of Rebekah and Ruth seem to me to be established in the mind of the reader more by hindsight or by the explanations of the narrators portraying them. Dinah, as far as the reader knows, made no approach to an unknown male, as Rebekah did, nor did she seek the company of a higher social status male as he slept, as Ruth did. When looked

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17. Genesis 24.
18. Ruth 2.

at in those terms, Dinah seems more truly innocent within herself, rather than have taken care to behave in an innocent manner before the eyes of the community.

Was Dinah Beautiful?

We know absolutely nothing about Dinah's appearance except, perhaps, that she would be dressed in finer garments than those worn by a slave or servant, though not perhaps, as grandly as a chief's daughter, since Jacob was more of a nomadic shepherd than a settled landowner. Of her physical attributes, we learn nothing at all.

This is perhaps surprising, for many women in the Bible are described as beautiful, fair or comely: Sarai, Rebekah, Rachel, Abigail, Tamar, Bathsheba, Abishag, Vashti and Esther.[19] Their beauty most frequently provides or facilitates a key aspect of their role in the narrative. So, while the young Rebekah is described as beautiful, Ruth is not. We can conclude that patent beauty is not a pre-requisite of being sexually attractive—as Ruth apparently was.

It appears, then, that Dinah's physical appearance would not necessarily make a great difference to her physical desirability. Nor would her clothes, if we may deduce that Ruth would look rather poorly dressed in her gleaning clothes while still attracting rather too much male attention. We certainly infer later on that Ruth had other cleaner, or more attractive, clothes in which to visit Boaz on the threshing floor.[20] Perhaps, therefore, what we should see in our mind's eye is a Dinah who would have appeared young, clean, probably healthy and well enough dressed to catch the eye of Shechem. But what age we envisage her as being remains a moot point and, hence, open to each reader to imagine—as also the amount of nous and social awareness we should credit her with.

What Did Dinah Do?

She left the confines of her home and, as far as we can tell, walked out into the neighbouring countryside. We do not know how far she went nor if there were any signs of habitation or agricultural activity nearby that she could be aiming towards.

What Were Dinah's Motives for What She Did?

Readers might imagine Dinah dawdling along the path outside of her home in a somewhat desultory way, hoping to meet some of the local women. Any

19. Sarai (Gen. 12.11), Rebekah (Gen. 26.7), Rachel (Gen. 24.16), Abigail (1 Sam. 25.3), Tamar (2 Sam. 13.1), Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11.12), Abishag (1 Kgs 1.3), Vashti (Est. 1.11) and Esther (Est. 2.7). Among men, only two are so described: Joseph (Gen. 39.6) and David (1 Sam. 16.12).

20. Ruth 3.

motive she might have had would have been determined only afterwards, through drawing conclusions from what had 'happened', by means of hindsight?, motives imputed by either characters in her story or by readers today, that is could she perhaps have been suffering from boredom, or loneliness, or both? We know she had no sisters,[21] and appeared to be the only woman of her age or generation in Jacob's homestead. We learn nothing of wives of the brothers, and so have no idea if they could be her friends or whether they would ignore her, even if they lived there at that time.[22] Possibly, however, there might have been wives of the three oldest of her brothers, Reuben, Simeon and Levi; Simeon and Levi at least were old enough to exact revenge on the Hivites.

However, the text, by stating that she went out to 'see' the 'daughters of the land', implies more purpose to her actions than that. The statement is in itself not very clear. Does 'seeing' them imply observing from a distance, or meeting and talking with them, learning their customs, looking at, perhaps touching, their clothes and possessions? Do we also assume there would be a common language of sorts? Can we imagine some sort of innocent encounter between Dinah and such 'daughters of the land' that she could have in mind? If we imagine the young Dinah as a curious, or even rebellious, teenager, we can imagine her having no notion of how far astray her independent action would take her. In our minds she would be 'an innocent'.

If, on the other hand, we imagine her as being of Ruth's age, while the encounter would be similar, the content of the conversations would be somewhat different, concomitant with Ruth's status as a childless widow. Ruth's understanding of where the outing might lead would, also, have been more developed; it would have possibly included imagining some difficult or tense scenarios. Like Ruth, Dinah was a woman from 'abroad' and hence, could expect to arouse some curiosity and interest from any women, of whatever age, whom she encountered.

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21. Nothing is said however about whether the two maids, Zilpah and Bilhah, bore daughters.

22. Genesis 46 lists all the sons of all the brothers. Reuben had four sons: Hanoch, and Pallu, and Hezron and Carmi, which would imply at least one wife for Reuben. Similarly, Genesis 46 lists six sons for Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar and Shaul; three sons for Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari; three sons for Judah: Er, Onan and Shelah (apart from Tamar's twins: Perez and Zerah). Then for the younger brothers, Genesis 46 lists four sons for Issachar: Tola, and Puvah, and Iob, and Shimron; for Zebulun three sons: Sered, Elon and Jahleel, for Gad, seven sons: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi and Areli; for Asher four sons: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi and Beriah; for Dan one son, Hushim; and for Naphtali four sons: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem. Serah, the only daughter named, is likely to have been far younger than Dinah.

Was Dinah Alone or Accompanied?

Did Dinah go out alone or with companions? Here also there is silence. We could imagine our answer either way. It is unlikely that a young woman would go out alone except—as Rebekah did—to public places, where she would be able to call for help or, at least, be under general scrutiny. So, it is a surprising action and some have questioned Dinah's character because of it. Rebekah and Ruth did go out alone, but not to lonely places, except when Ruth made her evening excursion to the threshing floor. Perhaps, however, that question is less relevant than my next question, for even if she had set out accompanied by another young woman or several female companions she could later have become separated from them either by accident or by the intentions of herself or of her new acquaintance, Shechem. It is, therefore, of more importance to consider possible locations for their sexual encounter. We certainly do not envisage an audience of either female voyeurs or other witnesses.

Where Did the Sexual Encounter Take Place?

The actual scenario we envisage for the intimate scene between Dinah and Shechem will also alter our evaluation of it. Perhaps they first met on the road, perhaps more of a lane or track. Perhaps both were on foot. Perhaps he drove a chariot or rode on a donkey or mule. We have absolutely no idea but nevertheless we tend to imagine something of how and where they met. Otherwise the story cannot unfold in our mind's eye. Did the intimate moment occur where they first met? Not immediately, surely. Or did they walk and talk together first and then stop somewhere else? That seems more likely.

So, possible final locations include: under a shady tree by the roadside. Certainly, the lovers in the Song of Songs appear to make love in many sites in the open air. Another possible place for them is within a room in Shechem's home. We are clearly told that Dinah went, or was taken, to Shechem's house, for she was there two days later when her brothers came to wreak slaughter on the Shechemites. We do not know how she was lodged, whether with honour and tender care, in a room of her own, as would befit a welcome visitor or merely put in Shechem's room with him. But she was there in the house, with him all the time, and Shechem was keen to marry her, even becoming circumcised as a token of his good faith to her brothers. This acceptance of their proposal suggests solicitude and commitment to Dinah's wellbeing, but would not have been an easy choice for him to make for himself, let alone recommending the action to his countrymen. She would no doubt be free from sexual activity once Shechem had been circumcised but there could have been time for additional sexual encounters, additional to that reported in v. 2, before that took place.

Nonetheless, it always rings a little off key to me that her brothers preferred to take home a possibly pregnant, unwed sister rather than allow her to marry the local chieftain's son. Shechem seems to me to show more care for her than her brothers do, for all their bluster.

Again, Can Dinah's Actions Be Compared to Those of Other Biblical Women?

As a means of further considering answers to this somewhat unexpected turn of events we can first look at the story of Rebekah. She had gone out to gather water for the family home and yet she stopped to talk to a stranger and to carry out the lengthy task of watering his camels. She is portrayed as being polite but perhaps she was also curious to speak to the stranger and prolong the encounter. Her curiosity is, however, allowable under the umbrella of a legitimate economic activity. It is likely that the gold jewellery he offered, which seems to be an overly large gift to a chance-met young woman, could represent advance payment for the proposed food and lodging for himself and provender for his camels. If that were the case, then Rebekah would have been bringing home a guest who was paying handsomely for her family's hospitality. She would have been acting like the receptionist of a hotel: the gold was not a gift to her but rather a payment to the family establishment. She would be acting as an agent of the family in a business sense, not taking an independent step towards changing her own life. Of course, had the gifts of gold been thought similar to Judah's gifts to Tamar, Rebekah would be regarded very differently.

Then again, she actually put on the ring and bracelets, which could look very acquisitive of her, especially if readers imagine her expression as she puts them on: gloating or delighted perhaps. Still, wearing the jewellery could have been the safest way to carry the items home without dropping them. But no bad conclusions are drawn about Rebekah, for she is rendered innocent by the narrator at the end of his story and, perhaps also, by expectations that she will be the 'lucky bride', already recognized by the readers through the hints given in the prequel to this story.[23] The gold jewellery does indeed turn out to be part of an advance bride price, possibly also covering the food and lodgings of Abraham's servant and his camels. Dinah's actions, however, have no such cloak of economic respectability or retrospective innocent explanation, and she can be regarded as blameless only if her motives were either loneliness or curiosity about her neighbours.

Similarly, we can draw further comparisons with the story of Tamar and Judah.[24] They met in what was probably a fairly public place, the

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23. Gen. 24.1-10.
24. Genesis 38.

gate of Enaim. There, she had seated herself to wait—actually for him only—but she was indicating to him and others that she was there in order to do business. The fee and tokens were arranged and exchanged there, but the location of the intimate act is not recorded. As far as we can tell, Tamar could have had no premises where she could take Judah, so that we assume that they used some secluded spot somewhere in the open nearby. Perhaps such a spot is what many readers imagine for Dinah's encounter with Shechem.

Similarly, Boaz's voiced anxiety about the possible molestation of Ruth while she was gleaning suggests that he believed his fields could provide such seclusion.[25] Naomi's instructions to Ruth when she goes to encounter the sleeping Boaz at the threshing floor imply something would take place there but also imply that Boaz would act properly, whatever that might portend, when he finds Ruth lying at his 'feet'.[26] Perhaps, Naomi's confidence rests on the circumstance that Ruth has already had two conversational exchanges with Boaz that indicated his willingness to protect her so that this, the third of their encounters, should be similarly 'safe'.[27]

Or, we can look at the story of the other Tamar. Here we are told that the encounter took place within a room in Amnon's house, a house of which the door could then be bolted shut after Amnon's servants had thrust her outside.[28] Not for her the continued lodging and 'protection' that Dinah enjoyed, nor the chance of marriage to the man who took her virtue. Possibly, then, Shechem took Dinah to his home for privacy and/or comfort, and her deflowering took place there. If we believe that scenario, then it speaks again of Shechem's care for her. The act would accordingly be more of an initiation into love-making and points less towards than a desperate ravishment driven by uncontrolled lust at the roadside.

Other biblical women who took independent action in their stories are Abigail, Rizpah and the woman of Shunem.[29] All these women were, however, wives of mature years and of a high social standing—two characteristics that seem to have permitted them the freedom to act in the outside world.

Who Do We Imagine Provided the Driving Force towards Sexual Activity?
In the story of Tamar and Judah, Tamar clearly provokes the action, even though she suspected that Judah might be keen to find sexual release after his time at the shearing. In the story of Tamar and Amnon, Amnon is clearly the aggressor, although his possible point of view might be that Tamar's

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25. Ruth 2.8-9.
26. Ruth 3.3-4.
27. Ruth 2.8-9, 14.
28. 2 Sam. 13.7-18.
29. 1 Samuel 25; 2 Samuel 21; 2 Kings 4.

beauty had driven him to distraction. As far as Ruth's visit to the threshing floor is concerned, she initiated the meeting at Naomi's instigation but does no more to stimulate any action than presenting herself physically, washed and anointed and lying at Boaz's 'feet', perhaps acting as a passive aggressor. These women had hoped-for outcomes when they encountered the men: Tamar wished to conceive from her husband's family line, her namesake was hoping to help in the healing of her brother, and Ruth was hoping for marriage.

To me, Dinah is clearly as innocent as David's daughter Tamar, but she could also be regarded as being in a situation reminiscent of that set up by the other Tamar, even if Dinah did not arrange matters so. Dinah is out and about, perhaps alone, and Shechem could have had as many physical urges as Judah had.

What Was Shechem's Social Standing?

As Scholz notes, Shechem is identified to the reader by three indicators, as was Dinah. Yet, in contrast to her, his are all male in reference: Dinah's female vulnerability is reinforced, her mother Leah provides the authentication of her social background, while Shechem's maleness and power is authorized via his father's status.[30] His social standing is of the highest in the surrounding area. Perhaps Dinah would have been honoured to attract his notice if she was of an age to understand such things. Again, on this aspect, the text is silent.

How Old Was Shechem?

If we imagine Shechem to be in his teens also, we have a very different image of the story to what we see if we think he was in his mid-twenties or older. The younger age presents a picture of a young prince discovering the delights of love with too little thought for the effect on his young partner and her future. The older age presents us with a more cynical picture of a man keen to find another sexual partner, perhaps to add a further wife to his household. The two pictures are quite different and lead readers' thoughts in quite different directions. Readers do not know whether to regard him as desiring Dinah to become the bride of his youth,[31] or simply to be an additional wife in his harem. King David certainly had a wide range of wives, and it is possible that readers imagine Shechem to be like him.[32]

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30. Scholz, 'What "Really" Happened?'.
31. Prov. 5.18.
32. Michal, Ahinoam, Abigail, Maachah, Haggith, Abital, Eglah, Bathsheba and two unnamed women (combining sources in Samuel, Kings and Chronicles).

What Was the Nature of the Sexual Act between Shechem and Dinah?[33]
There seems to be general agreement on one point: before the incident Dinah
was a virgin and after the incident she was not. Scholars analysing the event
usually name the action rape/ravishment, deflowering or seduction. The use
of 'rape' considers the act to be one of violent lust exercised by a male *against*
a female; the use of 'deflowering' concentrates on the outcome of the event—
the change in Dinah's status in the marriage mart—without focussing on
its nature, leaving the nature of the interaction equivocal, while the use of
'seduction' implies a wide range of circumstances from a tender introduction
to the act of lovemaking, through the idea of young persons being overtaken
by burgeoning passion, to a similar picture but with a bit of pain and coercion,
perhaps, near the climax. A strong proponent of regarding the interaction as
rape is Susanne Scholz.[34] Caroline Blyth tends to a similar opinion, astutely
observing that the narrator's use of the three verbs (took, laid, humbled) in a
staccato phrase gives a sense of the hurried violence of the act.[35]

  Nevertheless, Ellen van Wolde, applying a semantic analysis to the word
hn[, the word translated as 'raped' by some, or 'humbled' or 'debased' by
others, studied a variety of Hebrew Bible texts where women are the object
of the verb, and found that the meaning conveyed is that of a lowering in
the social status of the woman, of her value to the family; so in her view the
meaning 'debased' the most appropriate.[36] Similarly, the feminist approach
of Ilona Rashkow regards Dinah as being dehumanized into a mere tool of
gain by her brothers, who are her destroyers.[37] I have considerable sympa-
thy with this view.[38] Rashkow focusses on the brothers' sense of honour—
whether applied ignobly or not—and marginalizes the nature of the sexual
event. In similar vein, Irmtraud Fischer considers the marriage offer and
contracts to be the normal, biblical recompense for pre-marital sexual acts;
she too does not focus on the 'rape' event.[39]

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  33. Some scholars read the story as allegorical, referring more to tribal conflicts and
disputes over territory and/or intermarriage. I will not consider such approaches in this
article. See, for example: Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia:
Westminster Press, 3rd rev. edn, 1972), p. 329; Lyn Bechtel, 'What If Dinah Is Not
Raped? (Genesis 34)', *JSOT* 62 (1994), pp. 19-36.
  34. Scholz, 'What "Really" Happened?'.
  35. Blyth, *Rape in Genesis 34*.
  36. Ellen van Wolde, 'Does *'innâ* Denote Rape? A Semantic Analysis of a Contro-
versial Word', *VT* 52 (2002), pp. 528-44.
  37. Ilona N. Rashkow, *The Phallacy of Genesis: A Feminist-Psychological Approach*
(Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), pp. 105-106, cited by Scholz.
  38. Heather McKay, 'Setting 'Em Up: "Grooming" for Sexual Abuse in Hebrew
Bible Narratives', SBL International Meeting, Vienna, 2007, referring to the Hivites
(rather than to Dinah).
  39. Irmtraud Fischer, *Gottesstreiterinnen: Biblische Erzählungen über die Anfänge
Israels* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1995), p. 136, cited and translated by Scholz.

Susanne Scholz presents our options succinctly:

- Will we ever be able to know conclusively what really happened to Dinah?
- Was she raped?
- Was she a willing participant in a youthful 'adventure' with Shechem?
- Did Shechem rape her first and then fall in love with her?
- Did the brothers 'castrate' Dinah by killing her innocent and virtuous lover?
- But she is sure it was rape.

Were There Any Witnesses?

Clearly there was or were a witness or witnesses, either to the event itself or to circumstantial evidence (embarrassment or dishevelment), for we learn that 'Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter. The sons were 'with his cattle in the field' and that 'Jacob held his peace until they came',[40] possibly feeling engulfed in what Blyth refers to as a 'diplomatic nightmare'.[41] But who it was that witnessed the event or its aftermath remains a mystery, as does the means by which it reached Jacob's ears. Possibly, all that was reported to Jacob was that Dinah was now in Hamor's house.

What Was Dinah's Role and Position in the Family?

Scholz points out that the very means of introducing Dinah to the reader hints at her marginal state within the family. She is introduced by name, then by her mother's name, then by a reminder of the fruitful Leah's bearing of six sons to Jacob and a daughter as her final child. The verse contains six female grammatical markers which would leader to expect a feminine focus in the narrative.[42] Yet such is not the case. The story quickly reverts to its main focus: the deeds of the Hivites and the triumphs and successes of Jacob's sons. Dinah is used, even abused, by her brothers' actions.[43]

What Are the Aspects of Oppression Acting on Dinah?

Evidently, she suffers because of her gender, but also because of her age and marital status. Race or ethnicity does not seem to be involved in her story save for the fact that her brothers persuade the Hivites to become

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40. Gen. 34.5.

41. Blyth, *Rape in Genesis 34*, p. 114.

42. Such verses are rare in the Hebrew Bible but here are five such markers in Ruth 4.13.

43. Heather A. McKay, 'Writing the "Wrongness" of Women: A Literary Device to Teach Men to Be Better?', in *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies: Division A. The Bible and its World* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1999), pp. 115*-27* (English section).

circumcised, indicating some difference in culture. Her silence is further evidence of her suppression as an autonomous being in her story.

What Should Be the Afterlife of Dinah?

Dinah is 'remembered' as the innocent victim of rape and as the innocent excuse for mass slaughter and plunder. In my opinion, however, she should be remembered more as the victim of abuse by her brothers and father. For all the reader knows, those few days in Hamor's house may have been the happiest days of her life.

Rizpah

Rizpah is more rarely studied by biblical scholars yet she figures frequently in various types of works of art: paintings, novels, poems and dramas.[44] Rizpah's story is presented in two texts, the latter of which presents several scenes immediately succeeding each other.

Scene 1: 2 Samuel 3

[7] Now Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah daughter of Aiah. And Ishbaal said to Abner, 'Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?'

Scene 2: 2 Samuel 21

[8] The king took the two sons of Rizpah daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Merab daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite; 9 he gave them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they impaled them on the mountain before the LORD. The seven of them perished together. They were put to death in the first days of harvest, at the beginning of barley harvest.

Scene 3: 2 Samuel 21

[10] Then Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it on a rock for herself, from the beginning of harvest until rain fell on them from the heavens; she did not allow the birds of the air to come on the bodies by day, or the wild animals by night.

Scene 4: 2 Samuel 21

[11] When David was told what Rizpah daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done, 12 David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan from the people of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hung them up, on the day the Philistines killed Saul on Gilboa. 13 He brought up from

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44. See, for example: Brenner, 'Rizpah [Re]membered'.

there the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan; and they gathered the bones of those who had been impaled. 14 They buried the bones of Saul and of his son Jonathan in the land of Benjamin in Zela, in the tomb of his father Kish; they did all that the king commanded. After that, God heeded supplications for the land.

I shall explore the biblical material about Rizpah by asking more or less the same questions as I asked about Dinah.

What Do We 'Know' about Rizpah?

What Was Rizpah's Age?
Rizpah was a secondary wife of Saul and had two sons by him: Armoni and Mephibosheth. The sons were both old enough to be taken captive and impaled to death. When the remains were finally collected for burial, they are described as 'the bones of men', which would imply that her sons were youths old enough to fight. Hence, the youngest Rizpah is likely to have been is in her late twenties and she was probably a good bit older, say up to 40 years old, if we imagine both her sons to be of an age to represent appropriate expiation to the Gibeonites. As she was, apparently, sexually appealing to Abner,[45] we should probably imagine her to be somewhere in the younger end of that age band.[46]

Was Rizpah Beautiful?
We know absolutely nothing about Rizpah's appearance. We are told that Abner, the captain of Saul's army, took the chance of lying with her, although his motives for so doing remain unclear.

What Was Rizpah's Role in Saul's Court?
Rizpah was a secondary wife, but she had borne two sons to Saul. That would make her important enough for Abner to consider taking her sexually—as a power move, rather than merely for pleasure. She was not totally unknown or insignificant, witness Ishbosheth's question to Abner.

Was Rizpah Alone or Accompanied in her Actions?
The text makes it plain that Rizpah carried out every action determinedly on her own. No one else took any risk of censure or partook in the unpleasant tasks of sitting close to the rotting bodies of seven young men and driving off the birds of prey and carrion-eating mammals. Indeed, no one else was given any credit for the final, successful outcome. However, she must have been visible on site, as it were, for her actions were reported to David and

45. See further below.
46. 2 Sam. 3.7.

produced in him enough interest and, perhaps also, guilt, for him to relent and arrange to have the bones of the dead men buried. The fact that only bones are left behind and without the intervention of predators suggests a significant length of time for Rizpah's vigil.

Where Did her Actions Take Place?

The site is named as 'the mountain of the Lord', seemingly at Gibeah, Saul's home, and therefore, not far from where Rizpah was living.

How Long Was She Stationed on the Hillside?

The text indicates that she was there from the time of the barley harvest to the time of the autumnal rains: from mid-April till October–November.[47]

What Did Rizpah Not Do?

Rizpah does not speak, weep, wail, upbraid people or the deity. She sends no messengers, courts no favours from David or anyone else. She would have been too lowly, or to be more precise, too socially distanced, a person to address David directly or to confront him in any way; being a woman and mere secondary wife of Saul, recently David's enemy, would preclude her petitioning him.[48] So while Rizpah was almost, but not quite, 'offstage' with respect to David's court circles, she was 'centre stage' on that hillside.

The text is similarly silent as to how and when she ate, drank, washed herself, changed her clothes, etc.; she must have done those things over a period of several hot months from the barley harvest to the autumn rains. We may postulate that she had helpers who would bring her food and water, for otherwise she could not survive the length of time it took for the bodies to become mere bones without the intervention of marauding animals or birds. There is no word, however, of the exclusion of insects from the corpses, so full decomposition would be likely within the period specified.

What Did Rizpah Do?

Rizpah created an interaction between herself and David, at a distance, and with no words. She achieved that by putting mourning sackcloth on a rock beside the dead remains and stationing herself ostentatiously beside it. This was not usual behaviour for a woman. In the Hebrew Bible mourning was the duty of the males of a family,[49] so wearing sackcloth herself seems not

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47. Brenner, 'Rizpah [Re]membered'.

48. McKay, *Wrongness*.

49. Of the 48 references to sackcloth in the Hebrew Bible (in 46 verses) only four (Isa. 3.24; 32.11; Jer. 6.26; 49.3) refer unambiguously to women wearing sackcloth and in each case it is not a description of an existing situation, but a prophetic declaration of future doom. The other texts refer to males, or possibly the mixed community—the

to have been an option for Rizpah. It is also possible that all the males in her family were now dead and she, therefore, was driven to take the mourning role upon herself. Admittedly, the 'mourning rock' would not move or interact with others to display mourning, but it would present a constant sign to any who could see the hillside.

What Were Rizpah's Motives for What She Did?

Commentators speak of her devotion[50] and her piety,[51] and of her desire to see proper Israelite burial practices enacted. But to me, her actions speak of dogged determination and implacable will to draw what she regarded as an abomination to the forefront of David's consciousness, from which it had been ruthlessly expelled.[52] This was ostentatious behaviour. She did not merely elicit recognition of her mourning role from David; she prompted the king to lay to rest in the time-honoured way his erstwhile monarch and mentor, Saul, and his friend Jonathan, on their patrimonial holdings.[53] Through her silent 'protest', particularly by her solidarity with the dead men, she shamed David into appropriate and honourable action.[54]

Were There Any Witnesses?

It would seem so, for we learn that 'it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done'.[55] A sackcloth-covered rock on a hillside with birds of prey circling above it and jackals howling at night would certainly draw someone's attention. Yet, while Rizpah remains 'off stage' and 'out of the frame', she, nonetheless, causes David to change his mind by her purposive, perhaps even flaunting, actions whose details are brought to his attention, presumably put into words by men.

Can Rizpah's Actions Be Compared to Those of Other Women in the Hebrew Bible?

Tamar wove a scenario in which she could achieve impregnation by Judah by disguising herself as a prostitute. Her father-in-law could not have sex

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involvement of women is not specified. The only text that refers to a woman wearing sackcloth in mourning is Jdt. 8.5.

50. Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2011).

51. A. Graeme Auld, *I and II Samuel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 574.

52. Brenner, 'Rizpah [Re]membered'.

53. McKay, 'Wrongness'.

54. Gerald West, 'Reading on the Boundaries. Reading 2 Samuel 21:1-14 with Rizpah'*, Scriptura* 63 (1997), pp. 527-37.

55. 2 Sam. 21.11.

with Tamar in her own persona but could easily avail himself of a prostitute's services. A prostitute offered no social threat to a man of Judah's standing. The perceived unequal societal status between them at Enaim facilitated the transfer of the necessary and appropriate genetic material to Tamar. She created a scenario where Judah would be forced to act honourably by her. In that aspect, her actions and Rizpah's are comparable.

Similarly, the Wise Woman of Tekoa, although she acts as Joab's agent, manipulates David's mind by creating a false scenario in which he will act honourably. Here, also, the woman is of such a low social standing—a sonless widow—that David has no fear of losing face. While acceding to her request, he realizes he must forgive Absalom.

The key features of these stories are that the woman *apparently* present no threat to the more powerful male but, nonetheless, manoeuvre the men into honourable action.

What Are the Aspects of Oppression Acting on Rizpah?
She, as Dinah, suffers because of her gender and marital status, being a secondary wife rather than a full wife, but not particularly because of her age. Race or ethnicity does not seem to be involved in her story save for the fact that the Gibeonites' means of expiatory death is apparently distressing to her. Her silence is evidence of her suppression as an autonomous being in her story.

What Should Be the Afterlife of Rizpah?
Rizpah is 'remembered' as a devoted mother with a high standard of expectation of her king, such that her example causes him to behave honourably. She took on an apparently lowly and unpleasant role, but with such tenacity, that her action became prominent in David's mind. In my opinion, she should be 'remembered' for her implacable will which, through blatantly exhibited fortitude and persistent mourning, *drove* David to change.

Conclusions

Did These Women Make a Difference in their Stories?
Being totally pragmatic about Dinah's story, the differences she made are that the Hivites were slaughtered and plundered, while her brothers became richer. The difference made to Dinah's life thereafter is not depicted in the text.

In Rizpah's story she made a difference to the location of, and respect accorded to, the bones of nine men: Saul, Jonathan, her two sons and the five sons of Merab. The difference made to Rizpah's life thereafter is not recorded in the text.

Do the Women Make a Difference in Biblical Scholarship or Female Consciousness?

The story of Dinah often produces in readers a sorrow for Dinah's damaged life and anger about the power of men to rape women. The story does not often produce an equal anger against Dinah's brothers for their self-serving actions.

Dinah is rarely compared with the young Rebekah. That comparison can lead to fruitful insights with respect to 'hindsight' and to the judgements of the biblical narrator in determining how readers interpret the motives and value of characters. Rebekah's character is completely vindicated by the successful outcome of marriage to Isaac. Without that overlay, the young Rebekah appears to be much more 'forward' in her behaviour than Dinah.

Rizpah is often accorded motives that accord with the worldview of the narrator of the texts in which she appears. That view upholds the rectitude of David in spite of his many faults and failings as an honourable person. The role of Rizpah, and other women characters,[56] in prompting and manoeuvring David into his important changes of heart is usually ignored in any comment by the narrator, or by scholars.

What Should Women Readers, in Particular, and Other Sensitive Readers Take from This Review of These Stories?

First, all readers should note the role of the narrator's voice in creating not merely the story but also how readers are *supposed* to interpret it. Secondly, readers should note how their own imaginations fill in the action between the somewhat static tableaux presented by the narrator, and realize that there are several possible ways to move on to the next tableau. Thirdly, and changing my metaphor to one of audition rather than vision, readers could learn to become accustomed to there being several versions of each story running concurrently in their minds, functioning like the soprano, alto, tenor and bass lines in an oratorio to create an overall effect in which each voice has a vital part to play.

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56. McKay, 'Wrongness'.

Blood in the Post-Flood World

David L. Petersen

When reading the Priestly portion of Genesis 9, interpreters are often struck by the prominence of blood in the deity's post-flood speech. However, those wrestling with the Hebrew text are confounded by the difficulty of translating phrases used in Gen. 9.4, *bᵉnapšô dāmô*, and Gen. 9.5, *dimᵉkem lᵉnapšōtêkem*. The phrases are not easy to understand. The translators of the KJV accurately captured the difficulty when rendering respectively, 'the life thereof, which is the blood thereof' and 'your blood of your lives' (cf. NRSV, 'its life, that is, its blood,' 'your lifeblood'; JPS, 'its life-blood in it,' 'your own life-blood'). And though the phrase 'lifeblood' does appear regularly in many translations, particularly in v. 5, that word is more of an interpretation than a translation, i.e., suggesting that blood is that which animates a creature. The English word—or words—'lifeblood' were in use when the KJV was made.[1] However, in their attempt to offer a reasonably literal translation, those who produced the KJV apparently did not think the word 'lifeblood' conveyed what they thought the Hebrew text conveyed.

These verses present not only philological difficulties, but traditio-historical and redaction challenges as well. The first of the two Priestly post-flood speeches (9.1-7) accomplishes several tasks: it reiterates the mandate for humanity to be fruitful and multiple, it enhances their diet, and it explains a new and difficult relationship between humanity and animals (vv. 1-3). Verse 4 then offers a prohibition. One might characterize it as a law, requiring that humans not eat the blood of the animals, fish, and fowl that people are now permitted to consume. Then, in what appears to be a tangent, v. 5 provides a segue between animal blood and human blood whereupon v. 6 addresses the administration of human justice concerning bloodshed and its theological rationale. The text has moved from the issue of the consumption of animal blood to the punishment of the person who kills another human.

How is one to understand this conjunction of diverse topics, all of which involve blood? By the end of this essay, I will have suggested that the diction

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1. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Spenser included them in a poem in 1579.

of shedding blood (v. 6) stems from a different tradition than that involving the consumption of blood and that the juxtaposition of the two topics in one text is due to a post-Priestly redaction.

<div align="center">I</div>

At the outset, I propose to discuss the diction about the relation of blood to life in two other biblical texts: Lev. 17.10-17 and Deut. 12.23. Both of these pentateuchal texts include the prohibition of consuming blood, which is but one portion of the mosaic concerning blood found in Genesis 9.

Deuteronomy 12.2-28 is a lengthy section devoted to the centralization of Israel's ritual life at 'the place that the Lord will choose to place his name.'[2] It involves related concerns, such as destroying other shrines and care for the Levites, identifying who can eat meat.[3] One proviso of this section involves the permission to slaughter livestock or kill a wild animal when one wants to eat meat. Whenever that is done, 'The blood, however, you must not eat; you shall pour it out on the ground like water' (Deut. 12.16). These same permissions and prohibitions are reiterated in Deut. 12.20-24, though there more is said about the reason for the prohibition. 'Only be sure that you do not eat the blood; for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the meat. Do not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water.' The final reference to blood in Deut. 12.2-28 involves the presentation of burnt offerings at the altar. The animal is to be slaughtered at the central shrine and the animal's blood is to be poured on the altar (v. 27).

Deuteronomy 12.23 presents a stark equation: 'because the blood is the life (*kî haddām hû' hannāpeš*'). And yet what is the significance of that equation? As William Gilders has demonstrated, the meaning is not self-evident. Some have offered a theological explanation of the equation, namely, that life is conferred by the deity and that a human should not consume something that belongs to the deity. There is some warrant for this approach, since, when the slaughter takes place at the central shrine, the blood is presented to the deity, by pouring the blood on the altar. However, the situation of a 'secular' slaughter (Deut. 12.16), which takes place at a distance from the central shrine and in which the blood is poured out onto the ground, seems palpably different. In neither case, however, is the human to consume the blood along with the flesh. This is the case because of some integral relationship between blood and life.

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2. I follow the scholarly consensus in thinking that Deuteronomy 12 is likely to be the earliest of these texts and therefore turn first to it.

3. The text allows both the clean and the unclean person to eat meat; one supposes that the distinction involves only Israelites.

II

Leviticus also addresses the consumption of blood and in more than one place. In Lev. 3.16-17, an author prohibits the consumption of both fat and blood when a sacrifice of 'well-being' is made. And in Leviticus 7, an author, after condemning the consumption of fat and the offering of a ritual to address the plight of those who do, forbids the consumption of either avian or animal blood. These statements are characteristic of the Priestly source's view of sacrifice. However, it is Leviticus 17, which is part of the Holiness Code, that addresses the consumption of blood at length.[4] Leviticus 17.1-7 is devoted to the slaughter of domestic animals by Israelites and to the necessity of doing so at the central shrine. Verses 8-9 move to include resident aliens as well as Israelites in this mandate for offering a burnt offering or a sacrifice at the shrine. Verse 10 maintains this focus on Israelites and resident aliens, but turns to a new issue, the prohibition of the consumption of blood. The reason: 'the life of the flesh is in the blood (*kî nepeš habbāśār baddām*)', a formulation strikingly similar to that found in Deut. 12.23. Both phrases are formulated as rationales, each beginning with a *kî* clause. Both formulations refer to life, flesh, and blood. Then, in v. 11, authors of Leviticus 17 proceed to offer the reason for the deity's having made blood available to humans—so they could atone 'for their lives.' It is almost as if the word 'life' in the earlier sentence offers a segue to 'their lives' in the ensuing clause. The issues are different though the words are the same. The 'life' of animal blood someone can somehow 'cover' or atone for the life of humans. Then, v. 13 addresses the slaughter of game. It can be eaten, but its blood must be poured out and then covered by earth, not just poured onto the ground, as was the case in Deut. 12.23. According to the Holiness Code, domestic animals that are slaughtered at a distance from the shrine cannot be treated in this way, in contradistinction to Deut. 12.15.

Leviticus 17.14 rehearses the integral relation between life and blood, but to a new end, 'for the life of every creature—its blood is its life; therefore I have said to the people of Israel: you shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats of it shall be cut off.' The diction of punishment—cutting off—inheres in the exposition of Leviticus whereas it is absent from Deut. 12.2-28, suggesting that one is dealing with something akin to a law in Leviticus.

At this point, one may draw back and observe both similarities and differences between these two pentateuchal texts. They differ in their views about the permissibility of slaughtering domestic animals at a place other

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4.   On the different views of blood in P and H, see W. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), pp. 178-80, 188-90.

than the central shrine. Deuteronomy allows it; the Holiness Code forbids it. They differ in the ways that the disposal of blood is addressed. Deuteronomy requires pouring it onto the ground; the Holiness Code requires that it be poured out and then covered with earth. Deuteronomy is concerned with Israelites (including their servants) whereas Leviticus offers mandates for both Israelites and resident aliens. Deuteronomy talks in generic terms about the ritual manipulation of blood, whereas Leviticus refers more specifically to 'atonement.'

As for similarities, both texts address the consumption of two types of meat: that of domestic animals and that of game. Both refer to blood ritual at the altar. And both affirm an integral relationship between the 'blood' and the 'life' of an animal. Further, in neither text is there any reference to the blood of humans or to the shedding of human blood. One may infer that there is a tradition about the prohibition of consuming animal blood and a theological rationale for that prohibition, the life–blood equation, which is distinct from concern about human blood.

<div align="center">III</div>

The prohibition of consuming blood also appears in Israel's primeval history, but there it is linked to an issue not present in Leviticus 17 and Deuteronomy 12, namely, human blood and bloodshed. How is one to understand the presence of this motif in Genesis 9 when it is absent from Leviticus 17 and 12? To answer this question, one must examine the character of Gen. 9.1-17.

These verses belong to the Priestly post-flood scene, which in the pre-Priestly version implicitly involved blood, since burnt offerings were made (Gen. 8.20). This scene was something Israel inherited from its ancient Near Eastern neighbors. According to the Gilgamesh epic, Utnapishtim offered a sacrifice after disembarking from the ark. Though the Atrahasis myth is fragmentary at that point in the narrative, there is almost certainly a similar offering. Hence it is not surprising to find reference to the manipulation of blood in the scene immediately following the end of the flood in the Israelite version of the flood story. The ritual manipulation of animal blood was a part of the common ancient Near Eastern tradition.

The Priestly post-flood scene had, however, a larger agenda than either the common ancient Near Eastern tradition or that of the pre-Priestly writer. The Priestly writer had to rehearse some of that which had been accomplished in the Priestly narrative of creation. Though the structure of the cosmos remained intact after the flood, humanity had been decimated; that, after all, had been the goal of the flood. Hence, the deity reaffirms that which was commanded in Gen. 1.28, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.' However, the set of imperatives in 9.1 is not as long as

that in Gen. 1.28—the command to 'subdue' has been omitted, though, presumably that command has not been abrogated. It has been replaced in Gen. 9.2 with indicative language; animals will be in 'fear and dread' of humans. Humans are not ordered to terrorize animals. Instead, that which is allowed in v. 3—the consumption of animal flesh—will naturally mean that animals will fear humans, since humans will be killing them—at least those permissible to eat or those who were deemed dangerous. Though the Priestly writer knew that humans were permitted to kill and consume only certain animals,[5] that writer also suspected all animals would fear that such would be their fate. Hence, Gen. 9.2 likely refers to all animal life, not simply those that humans will eat. Further, one senses that the Priestly writer is describing in this scene a time before the ritual torah had been provided. As v. 3 puts it, 'every moving creature' can be consumed.[6] The Priestly writer may here, as well, be thinking that non-Israelites who do not live in proximity to Israelites are permitted to eat foods that Israelites will not be permitted to eat.

In this first speech (9.1-7), the deity announces a new state of affairs within the created order. The relationship between humans and the animal kingdom will change. Humanity is no longer viewed as a benevolent ruler, the image conveyed in Genesis 1. Rather the animals will dread their human overlords. The careful reader of v. 2 will, however, recognize that the diction of 'fear and dread' and 'authority' have been used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. 'Fear and dread' describe the terror that the 'the nations' will experience when Israel enters the land (so Deut. 11.25). Moreover, the literal phrase 'into your hand,' translated 'authority' above, appears in texts that describe Yahweh giving control of the local population to the conquering Israelites (e.g., Josh. 10.19; Judg. 3.28). From the perspective of the animals, humans are now enemy troops. From the perspective of the Israelites, animals are there to be killed, just as were their human enemies.[7] The reason for this changed relationship appears in v. 3. Humans can now kill animals as a source for food. No animal is forbidden, yet. That will come with the Priestly torah (Lev. 11; cf. Deut. 14.3-21). But there is a hint of that torah in the phrase 'every creature that is alive/lives.' Leviticus 11.39 and Deut. 14.21 recognize that humans might eat the flesh of an animal that they did

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5. See Lev. 11.2-23 for the list of permissible animals: the basic categories are land animals, fish, fowl, and insects.

6. One may theorize that the Priestly writer thought that the provision of animal flesh as a foodstuff would help humans fulfill the obligation to be fruitful and multiply.

7. N. Lohfink understood this new situation well. 'The peace between human and animal that was characteristic of Paradise is replaced by a new order of war: note, a war between human and animal, not between human beings' ('God the Creator and the Stability of Heaven and Earth', in his *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of the Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984], p. 124).

not kill. Those who do such will become unclean and must undergo a rite of purification. However, at least according to Deuteronomy 14, such flesh can be consumed by an alien or a foreigner without such a penalty. Here again, the post-flood period is not the same primeval history as before the flood. Israelite particularities are beginning to appear.

As soon as animal flesh is offered as a source of food, there is a corresponding prohibition: humans may not eat the blood that would have been found in a freshly killed animal. If v. 3 hinted at Priestly torah, v. 4, in which imperative discourse resumes, derives from it. The Priestly writer advocates that humans may not eat flesh with blood still in it. According to Lev. 17.10, 13-14 and Deut. 12.23, this stricture was laid only on Israelites and those living with them. In Genesis 9, it has been universalized. One might imagine that v. 4 was inserted by a Priestly scribe, someone interested in placing that mandate in an early and prominent place.[8] The rationale for this prohibition hinges on the close association between blood and life, so Lev. 17.11, 14 and Deut. 12.23. The verse presumes a question—can one consume the blood of a slaughtered animal?—created by the new condition in which humans can now eat the flesh of animals. God solves that problem with a new command for all humanity.

Verses 5-6 seem, at first glance, unrelated to the prior verses in the post-flood account. However, there are two connections. The first link is provided by two words in v. 4 that are repeated in v. 5: 'blood' and 'life.' It is as if a redactor writer thought, 'since those words have been under discussion, there are some other related issues that need to be addressed.' And now they are. Second, both vv. 4 and 5 commence with the same particle (*'ak*). This particle never appears in such a repeated fashion elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. One has the sense that a scribe repeated it here in order to introduce information that he deemed appropriate. The scribe introduced a new issue, namely, the killing of a human. However, this topic is linked to the foregoing verse by citing the relation between life and blood. The expansion highlights the inestimable value of a person's life. If someone is killed—whether by another human or an animal (on which see Exod. 21.28-32) and presumably apart from war, the deity seeks recompense.

Verse 5 is highly repetitive; it is possible to imagine a poetic structure of three parallel lines, with each one including the verb 'demand' (*drš*). The repetition of that verb presses the interpreter to ask: what is the deity demanding and why? The law regarding an ox that gores a human makes clear that the animal is to be killed. Moreover, if the animal has behaved that way in the past, the owner will also be put to death. Does that mean a

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8. Cf. S. McEvenue, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer* (AnBib, 50; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), pp. 68-69, who thinks 9.4-6 is a layered interpolation and cannot be used to characterize the literary style of the Priestly author.

human who kills another human should routinely be executed? Verse 5 does not answer that question; v. 6, however, does.

In v. 5, the redactor offers a major 'hermeneutical' move. It builds on the notion of the association of blood with life in animal flesh and makes a similar claim about the relationship between blood and life for humans. Though the topic is different (killing as opposed to the consumption of blood), the same basic claim is made for humans, namely, their lives are also intimately associated with their blood. I doubt if the author of this verse was making a claim about the consanguinity of humans and animals, yet it does seem clear that they share an essential feature of their beings. For both, life and blood are inextricably linked.

If v. 5 is poem-like, v. 6 is clearly poetry. It is printed as such in most English translations and in the Masoretic text. If v. 5 is an addition to v. 4, v. 6 is probably an addendum to v. 5. And then v. 7 functions as part of an envelope, rehearsing and expanding the mandates found in the very first line of this speech (v. 1). The diction in v. 7 is odd, since *šrṣ* is most often used of animals. Still, the same basic mandate is given at both beginning and end of this scene: humans are to become more numerous. In contrast, animals, creatures that had been on the ark with humans, die in both biblical post-flood accounts. In one case (Gen. 8) they are sacrificed—they become food for the deity; in another case (Genesis 9), they are killed— they become food for humans.

There is a certain logic to the redactional growth evident in Genesis 9. Such growth is concerned with the killing of humans. If people kill each other, they will have a difficult time propagating and filling the earth. That same issue, human propagation, was addressed at the end of the flood account in the Atrahasis myth. The texts could, however, not be more different in their views about human propagation. Atrahasis seems interested in limiting the growth of the human race whereas Genesis 9 concerns the need for propagation and a limitation upon the killing of humans.

In Genesis 9, then, biblical authors have taken the prohibition of consuming animal blood and built upon it. The mandate to avoid consuming blood is incumbent on all humans, not simply Israelites and those who live with them in the land, which was the position the authors of Genesis 9 inherited. Further, a redactor of this first post-flood scene has extended the notion of the life-blood nexus to include humans. In none of the earlier texts (Leviticus 17 and Deuteronomy 12) was the focus on the life-blood of humans. This was a major innovation. An earlier account of the creation of humanity conceived the animation of humans by the introduction of breath into the earth creature's nostrils (Genesis 2). In Genesis 9, however, it is the presence of blood that is constitutive for human life. Further, this innovation allowed a Priestly writer to work out his concept of a life force that humans shared with some other animals. One may therefore properly speak of a

theology of blood in Genesis 9 that is distinct from the one present in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. According to Genesis 9, humans as well as animals share in the blood–life nexus. And when the blood of either humans or animals is shed, specific, though different, requirements ensue.

<div align="center">IV</div>

The connection between human blood and animal blood found in Gen. 9.4-6 is unusual. One might even say that texts regarding these two sets of blood belong to different worlds and that the few places in which they are linked represents a relatively late conjunction of originally separate traditions. In one tradition, that attested in Leviticus 17 and Deuteronomy 12, the concern is with the consumption (*'kl*) of blood, animal blood. In another tradition, the concern is with the spilling (*špk*) of blood, human blood.

When examining legal collections in the Hebrew Bible, one discovers a relative paucity of references to the spilling of human blood. There is, of course, other diction for the killing of one human by another (e.g., *rsḥ*). And the word 'blood' occurs as a way of referring to cases in which blood has been shed, even though that or a similar verb does not appear, e.g., Deut. 17.8. Deuteronomy 19.10 does refer to the shedding (*špk*) of innocent blood (*dām nāqî*) and the need for cities of refuge. And Deut. 21.7 specifies an oath regarding the shedding of (innocent) blood in the case of an unsolved murder. This is the extent of overt references to the shedding of human blood in the deuteronomic law code. The situation is much the same in the Holiness code. There is one formulation that prohibits a person from 'standing'—perhaps 'profiting'—'by the blood of your neighbor' (Lev. 19.16). Finally, there is no reference to the shedding of blood in the Book of the Covenant. There, as was the case elsewhere, other diction is used for killing, e.g., *nkh* (Exod. 22.1).

If the phrase 'spilling blood' is infrequent in legal collections, it is prominent in other contexts. It is used in a generic fashion within the Dtr. history to describe the perpetration of violence (2 Kgs 21.16; 24.4—both texts allude to the reign of Manasseh) as well as in Psalmic and wisdom literature to a similar end (e.g., Pss. 79.3; 106.38; Prov. 1.16). However, the most prominent corpus in which this language is used is that of prophetic literature (e.g., Isa. 59.7; Jer. 7.6; 22.3, 17; Ezek. 16.38; 18.10; 22.3, 27; 23.45; 36.18; Joel 4.21; Zeph. 1.17). Significantly, none of these texts derive from much before 600 BCE. (And that may be true for the other biblical texts just cited in this paragraph.) Further, many of these texts refer to the spilling of 'innocent' blood. It appears that the phrase 'shedding of blood' inheres in the figurative language of prophetic and related literature and not in the legal literature, though it does appear there sporadically. With only one exception, none of these texts refers to both human and animal blood. As

a result, one may infer that this diction present in the prophetic litera-
ture belongs to a way of describing human violence that is not rooted in
legal discourse, which typically focuses on the killing of one individual by
another. In contrast, reference to shedding (*špk*) blood regularly refers to the
slaughter of many people, either by one individual or, more often, by a num-
ber of individuals, the larger society, even foreign nations.

Genesis 9.4-5 and Ezek. 33.25 are two of the very few places, if not the
only two places, in which for human and animal blood appear together.
Since diction about blood is so important in Ezekiel, one may infer that
Ezek. 33.25 is the first place in which the human–animal blood nexus
appears. 'Thus says the Lord God: You eat flesh with the blood, and lift up
your eyes to your idols, and shed blood …'. This author linked two forms
of malfeasance, one involving the consumption of animal blood, the other
involving the shedding of human blood. One may theorize that someone
familiar with this formulation then used that nexus in the redactional formu-
lation present in Gen. 9.4-5.

<center>V</center>

That the diction about the shedding of blood does not appear much before
the end of the monarchic period helps explain the paucity of texts that link
the consumption of blood and the spilling of blood. That nexus was a rel-
atively late development, first present in Ezek. 33.25. Sometime after the
book of Ezekiel was composed, a redactor expanded the post-flood scene,
which originally involved the consumption of blood, by adding vv. 5-6,
which concern killing described as shedding blood. What had originally
been a mandate regarding the non-consumption of blood by Israelites (and
those who lived with them) as expressed in Leviticus 17 and Deuteron-
omy 12 and those who lived with them, became universalized, by including
the prohibition of consuming blood within the primeval history. After that
development, the sin of consuming blood was linked to the sin of shedding
blood and to reflection about the implications of that second sin: what sort
of punishment is appropriate for someone who sheds human blood and why
it is heinous to do so. The redactor provided a legal answer to the first ques-
tion and a theological answer to the second one.

Farewell to 'Mr So and So' (Ruth 4.1)?

Jack M. Sasson

In her magisterial JPS Bible Commentary to *Ruth* (2011: 71) our honoree Tamara Eskenazi annotated a phrase occurring in Ruth 4.1 as follows:

> **So-and-so!** Hebrew *ploni 'almoni*, an expression used when a name (of a person or place) is immaterial to the narrative (see I Sam. 21.3). Here, however, the term is intentionally and conspicuously used to avoid naming the character. The purpose for the anonymity of the man remains a mystery. As scholars note, it is not likely that Boaz does not know the man's name. If the name were insignificant to the author, the designation could simply have been eliminated. Some Rabbinic sages, as well as modern scholars … suggest that not naming implies measure-for-measure justice: the one who refuses to 'preserve the name' of a kin … deserves to have his own name vanish. Others argue that the narrator may wish to protect him from the embarrassment resulting from his inability or unwillingness to undertake responsibility for Ruth and Naomi … Some Rabbinic sources suppose that the man's name was Tov (as per 3.13). The Targum, however, has: 'you, whose ways are secret.' The same notion is reflected in some Septuagint manuscripts, as well as suggested by Rashi. Rashi also explores the etymology from *'alman* (a play on *'almoni*) which means 'widower' and 'a mute', a reference to the man's lack of awareness that exclusion in Deut. 23.4 applies solely to males.

I have cited a good portion of this annotation not just to remind us all of Tamara's fine capacity to distill issues raised in the literature, but also because her words contain a potential solution to a little crux that has been with us for at least two millennia. I am happy to offer her a suggestion and I hope she finds merit in it.

Names

The scene to which this annotation applies is too well known to deserve extended background. Boaz had earlier assured Ruth that he will assume the redemption of Naomi's land, but that there was another Bethlehemite who has priority to do so. Here is what happened on the morrow of his promise (Ruth 4.1): 'No sooner had Boaz gone up to the [city's] gate to wait there, than the redeemer mentioned by Boaz chanced by. He hailed him, "Come

over and sit here, *pĕlōnî ʾalmōnî*!" He came over and sat.' Boaz assembles witnesses and manages to shift to himself the responsibility of redemption.

The puzzle here is *pĕlōnî ʾalmōnî*. The phrase's grammar has been analyzed extensively: It is a *farrago*, a (rhyming) medley of words that gains meaning through context.[1] But what does it mean? Is it a substitute for the expected name of the potential redeemer? What is odd is that Ruth is not a book to shy away from naming the living as well as dead. Practically every single character of any note gets one.[2] The absence of a recognizable name at this crucial juncture, therefore, is so jarring that, since the Greek translation of Scripture, a rich assortment of renderings has been offered prompting a largely circular hunt for an etymology for each of the two components of the idiom.[3] Most translations, if they do not simply ignore the phrase, craft a circumlocution for it, among them, '(Mr) So-and-so; Mr X; (my) friend; Such a one; Hey you (Eng.)', 'Toi, un tel (Fr.)', 'Eh, fulano (Sp.; from Arabic *fulān*)', 'du, der und der; du Soundso (Ger.)', 'gij, zulk een! (Dutch)', 'O tu, tal de' tali (Ital.)'.[4] In so doing, they foist on the narrator intentional effacement rather than narratological parsimony, and so encourage speculation on the narrator's motivation, sometimes imaginatively but most often frivolously.[5]

Anonymity

At the heart of most speculations on the phrase *pĕlōnî ʾalmōnî* is the issue of anonymity of characters. In Scripture, it is so widely featured that a very fine monograph has been written about it (Reinhartz 1998). While Hebrew narratives are full of characters with bit parts, many among them bearing no distinctive label let alone names, anonymity is hardly ever insignificance and certainly not necessarily equivalent to the state of being unknown or

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1.   *tōhû vāvōhû* ('mish-mash') of Gen. 1.2 is another such form. The rhyming element of the phrase rehearses an earlier display when Mahlon and Chilion (*maḥlôn vĕkilyôn*) are introduced as the doomed sons of Elimelech and Naomi (Ruth 1.2). While by no means obscure etymologically, the last names are singularly inappropriate ('Sickly' and 'Languishing') in all ways but as cues to what is about to happen.

2.   An exception is Boaz's supervisor in Ruth 2. Members of a group (elders, citizens of Bethlehem, neighboring women) also do not, for obvious reasons. Nice comments on the names of characters are in Saxegaard 2010: 55-73.

3.   See Hubbard 1988: 233-34 n. 10. Fine annotations of issues raised by the Greek in Assan-Dhôte and Moatti-Fine 1986: 102-103.

4.   A notable exception is Luther's 1545 Bible, 'Komm und setze dich etwa hie oder da her'. Josephus is too expansive to be useful here.

5.   Tamara has surveyed some of the suggestions; but they can easily be multiplied by visiting Ruth commentaries. The most sustained discussion is offered by Campbell 1975: 141-43. Trible (1978: 190) has the most succinct reaction: 'anonymity implies judgment'.

hidden (Reinhartz 1998: 11). Anonymous characters can propel plots, as does the man Joseph encounters when searching for his brothers (Gen. 37.15). They can be major players, as is the servant who finds a bride for Isaac (Gen. 24). They can set in motion major events, as does the raped woman of Judges 19. They can also quicken commemorative acts, as has Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11). And when many of them are aligned in a rather constricted interlude, as do the many unnamed *mothers* in Judges (of Sisera, Abimelech, Jephthah, Samson, Micah), the effect stimulates curiosity, as it has for me when writing the *Anchor Yale Bible* commentary to that book.

An aspect of this anonymity of characters is especially interesting for our context. It has to do with the occasions in which characters (some of them anonymous) in narratives make pronouncements in which they themselves invoke an unnamed character.[6] An interesting illustration occurs at 2 Kings 5. Commander Naaman of Aram, though mighty, has leprosy. An unnamed Hebrew slave to Naaman's wife tells her mistress, 'Would that my master come before the prophet, the one in Samaria; he would certainly cure him from his leprosy' (5.3). The narrator had made it clear that the slave had been taken captive from Israel as a young girl; so her loss of specific memory might be excused. As set within a series of wonders attributed to Elisha, the allusion to the prophet in Samaria could hardly be anonymous; but even if the anecdote had once been independent or self-contained, the narrator might have had less interest in demonstrating the slave's mental acuity than in showing why, in a court overflowing with prophets, the unnamed prophet could only be Elisha. Elisha divines Naaman's true mission when neither the king of Aram nor that of Israel had made a clue of it in their correspondence and reaction. The story moves to the transfer of the leprosy to Gehazi, displaying Elisha's capacity to hurt no less than to heal.[7]

Legalistic Setting

Ruth 4.1 is an example of this rarified rhetorical device in which a character ostensibly addresses another, but not by name. The difference from

6. This phenomenon is to be differentiated from its occurrence in special genres of literature, where an anonymous name is supplied as a prototype for substitution. Thus in Akkadian *ikrib*ū prayers and in incantations, one finds *annanna mār annanna* ('So-and-so, son of So-and-so'), where the reciter is invited to insert the relevant name of the person to be affected, for good or ill consequences.

7. In Jonah 3, the king of Nineveh makes a proclamation in which he cites 'the king and his nobles' as authority. This is a matter of known attribution rather than anonymity. The same can be said for the Rabshakeh's citation of 'the Great King, king of Assyria' (2 Kgs 18.19).

the above instance is in the texture of the narrative. Despite its historicizing setting ('In the days when judges were ruling …') and its temporal precision (after its initial setting, the story unfolds between the barley and wheat harvests), Ruth remains a fine calque of a folkloristic tale (see my commentary). However, the intricate subplot (how Ruth kept to her oath of allegiance to Naomi even when marrying Boaz) secures plausibility through juridical anchoring. The narrator takes pain to shape a context in which no transaction, least of all anything affecting the legitimacy of Boaz's descendants, can be questioned. At the city gate (so a public setting) Boaz assembles the requisite legal forum. There is legal dialogue of the type that readily occurs when civil matters are to be decided, with precise articulation of the issue at hand and detail of the reaction of interested parties. There is an official declaration of intent that forces one party to retract its earlier decision. There is harking back to customary act of validation, illustrated by a symbolic act with legal ramification. There is affirmation by the witnesses.

It is true that Boaz summons his rival before constituting a legal unit; nonetheless, with all this effort toward juristic verisimilitude as well as with the record of generous deployment of personal names throughout the book, having Boaz coyly avoid citing his rival by name by using *pĕlōnî 'almōnî* is not just puzzling but uncharacteristic of the narrator's current style.[8] In fact, in one of his earlier statements (3.12-13), Boaz did not cite his potential rival by name, but referred to him only as the *gō'ēl*, 'redeemer'; and so does the narrator (at 4.8). The man, therefore, was addressed by his legal status and it is not surprising that Ruth (at 3.9) used this label for Boaz himself, as did later the neighboring women (at 4.14).

A Suggestion

All this is to say that in Ruth 4.1 Boaz (and by extension, the narrator) may never have needed to cite the redeemer by personal name, but only by his function. If so, we will need to get back to what Tamara has to say about *pĕlōnî 'almōnî*. Along with other commentators on the phrase, she observes that the phrase substitutes for the name of person or place, keeping it indeterminate. Without getting mired in the murky search for an acceptable etymology for its components, it can be said that the two other occurrences of the full phrase do not refer to a person while the single possibly contracted version (*palmōnî*) does.

8.   This is one reason why rabbinic authorities supplied a name for him: Tov or Yig'al (derived from Ruth 3.13). Joüon (1986: 80), comments, 'ces mots, bien entendu, ne sont pas de Booz'.

1. David answering Ahimelech, the priest (1 Sam 21.3 TNK [RSV 21.2]): 'The king has ordered me on a mission, and he said to me, "No one must know anything about the mission on which I am sending you and for which I have given you orders". So I have directed my young men to such and such a place (*'el-mĕqôm pĕlōnî 'almōnî*).'[9] I do note here that were it not for the insertion of the word *māqôm*, translators might conceivably have rendered 'to So-and-So'.

2. 'While the king of Aram was waging war against Israel, he took counsel with his officers and said, "I will encamp in such and such a place (*'el-mĕqôm pĕlōnî 'almōnî*)"' (2 Kgs 6.8 TNK).[10] In this case, *māqôm* seems superfluous, as *pĕlōnî 'almōnî* can only apply to place.

3. '…another holy being said to whoever it was (*lappalmōnî*) who was speaking, "How long will what was seen in the vision last…?"' (Dan. 8.13 TNK). This concoction must apply to a person and not a place.

Spare though they may be, the references to the full phrase do suggest that we might be dealing with a circumlocution for an unidentified or unspecified place. This notion is sharpened by pre-placement of a locus (in the Samuel and Kings passage, *māqôm*), presumably because without it the application of the phrase might not be as clear. So when in our context Boaz asks the rival to sit 'here' (*pō͟ʰ*), use of the the adverb should encourage the following translation of Ruth 4.1, 'No sooner had Boaz gone up to the [city's] gate to wait there, than the redeemer mentioned by Boaz chanced by. He hailed him, "Come over and sit here, at such and such spot". He came over and sat.'[11]

Let Tamara assess this suggestion in the second edition of her fine commentary.

9. The Greek here offers a translation as well as a transliteration: '…in a place called Faithfulness of God, Φελλανι Αλεμωνι'.

10. The Greek solves the mystery with 'I will encamp at this certain place, Elmoni (ελμωνι)'.

11. A while ago, my Vanderbilt colleague Douglas Knight came to my office to discuss this passage and how to treat *pĕlōnî 'almōnî*. As we reviewed the context, the solution offered above promptly dawned on us. He incorporated the insight into a book he has co-authored with another colleague, Amy-Jill Levine, where this statement is offered (Knight and Levine 2011: 115), 'Boaz invites [the nearest living kin] to sit down with a rather odd phrase, *peloni almoni*, translated in the NRSV with the neighborly touch of 'friend', but in the JPS as 'So-and-so!' It seems a rather dismissive way of speaking to a relative. A better translation connects *peloni almoni* to the word 'here': 'Come over, and sit here somewhere'.

For the arguments and philology offered above, however, I remain responsible.

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Rendering the Rending of the Veil:
What Difference Does It Make?[1]

Jesper Svartvik

In addition to being an outstanding scholar in the fields of the reconstruction of Jewish life after the Babylonian exile, women in the biblical world, the interplay of biblical and Levinas studies, feminist exegesis, and other subjects, Tamara Cohn Eskenazi has made a difference in my own field: interreligious relations (e.g., Eskenazi 2011). As a token of my admiration for an exceptional scholar and my gratitude for many thought-provoking and inspiring conversations with a much-appreciated colleague, I offer these reflections on the interpretation of the New Testament narratives of the tearing of the Temple veil on Good Friday (Mt. 27.51; Mk 15.38; Lk. 23.45).

It is difficult to think of a subject matter more distressing and tortuous in the two-millennia-long history of Jewish–Christian relations than Christian orations and sermons on the Good Friday motif, interpretations that have been anything but beneficial for the people that Jesus knew as his own. Even a cursory glance at the evidence in history books leaves us in no doubt that various Christian theologies of the cross have provoked a distinctly Christian form of anti-Judaism. In the words of S. Mark Heim (2006: 211):

> … few can be unaware that the cross has been the cornerstone of Christian anti-Semitism. The libel that charges Jews with the collective responsibility for Jesus' death draws its virulent strength from the companion assumption that this death was uniquely horrible and uniquely important.

In many places and times, Jews have feared for their lives during Holy Week. To cut a long story short, Good Friday has been a *bad* Friday for the Jewish people.

How do Christian members of the scholarly community react to this fact? Will Christianity ever rid itself of its antisemitism? Will Christian proclamation remain in the future what it has become in history: 'a gospel of Christian love and Jew hatred', to use Kaufmann Kohler's haunting phrase (1905: 251)?

For us who believe that it is not 'too late to seek a newer world', the very first step must be to recognize that we know the tree by its fruits. Christians cannot forswear the consequences of what they say. It would be unworthy indeed for the followers of him who washed his disciples' feet to imitate him who washed his hands.

How, then, have Christians interpreted the narratives of the rending of the Temple veil ? All three Synoptic Gospels mention that this curtain was torn at the time of the death of the protagonist in the New Testament. This event figured prominently as Christians began to formulate the theological consequences of his death. According to Daniel M. Gurtner, author of *The Torn Veil: Matthew's Exposition of the Death of Jesus*, the Greek word *katapetasma* was used exclusively, for several hundred years, when referring to and interpreting the event described in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Epistle to the Hebrews (2007: 76 n. 19).

First of all, we should note that there is an impressive scholarly concord here. A vast majority of New Testament scholars argue that the verb form used here for 'was torn' (*eschisthē*) should be interpreted as a *passivum divinum*. In other words, the grammatical passive voice indicates that it is God who is the agent (e.g., Brown 1994: II, 1100). In short, what happened is described as an act of God. The very same verb (*schizein*) is used when the Gospel writer describes what happened after the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan River: the heavens 'were opened' (*schizomenous*) and the Spirit came down in the form of a dove (Mk 1.10).

The focus in this article is not on whether the veil was ever torn at the time of the death of Jesus, but on the *theological* interpretations of this alleged historical event (cf. Aus 1994: 154f.). The question to be asked is how the event is to be understood. The most widespread interpretation is that the rending of the veil is an event that opens the way to God. But this is not the only interpretation (see, e.g., the inventory of recurrent interpretations in Aus 1994: 156f.). The main purpose of this article is to examine how Christians throughout the ages interpreted these texts, and how they can be interpreted today. If there are more interpretations, why should we prefer some and not others? Is it possible to formulate the characteristic features of a good interpretation? Given that the torn veil is perceived as an act of God, why does God *act in this way*—and how do readers of these New Testament narratives *re-act*?

Gurtner refers to two colleagues in order to demonstrate the wide variety of interpretations: Donald A. Hagner argues that Matthew did not need to explain the event because everyone understood what the rending of the veil meant (1995: II, 849), and Raymond E. Brown maintains that neither Matthew nor his readers understood this (Brown 1994: II, 1102). When discussing contemporary interpretations, we may agree with Brown that we do not know what the event meant. Yet we may investigate how readers over

time have chosen to interpret this event. The three narrative accounts of the rending of the veil in the Temple touch upon some interesting issues, four of which will be called to mind here:

(a) The overarching question is, of course, how did the Evangelists interpret the death of Jesus? In order to appreciate the Good Friday theologies of the three Evangelists, it would help to know if they viewed the event as an act of and a sign from God.

(b) This raises another problem: only three of the four New Testament Gospels mention this event, and the three Synoptic accounts contain important differences. In the Lukan account the rending of the veil takes place *before* the death of Jesus. In the Markan narrative it occurs immediately *after* his death. In the Matthean version it is followed by miracles: an earthquake and the resurrection of the dead in Jerusalem. If the most common interpretation were correct—that the rending of the veil is an indication that the way to God is now open—it would not have the support of the Lukan version, in which the veil was rent *before* the death of Jesus. Hence, we must ask: what is the relation between the four Gospel accounts and their interpretations of this event?

(c) Subsequently, this observation takes us to a more complex question: What is the relation between 'God's understanding' and the interpretations of the Gospel authors? In other words, since the four Evangelists do not concur, which version is to be preferred? Gurtner has written a monograph about the Matthean version. Had he written about the Markan or the Lukan version, would he have reached the same conclusions? Put differently, our choice of texts is also a choice of theology. How do we, as readers, cope with the fact that one event is accounted for in various ways by the authors in the Bible?

(d) Finally, we should also reflect on the possibilities and risks of simultaneity as a hermeneutical key when reading these texts (Jammer 2006). To cite an analogy, the Berlin Wall fell on the very same day the *Reichskristallnacht* visited the Jews of Germany and Austria, the night of November 9-10. This simultaneity has led some people to regard November 9 as a day when the victims of the Nazis are remembered and honoured but also when other issues are addressed. Hence, in some political circles the focus of November 9 is on the Israeli separation barrier. Because of hermeneutics of simultaneity, the night of the pogrom of German and Austrian Jewry has become a day when the critique of the State of Israel is at the centre of attention! Now, it is important not only to note that these events took place on the same day, but also to reflect on why this particular simultaneity is emphasized. There are, of

course, other simultaneities that could be highlighted and empha-
sized. In 1938, the very year of the *Reichskristallnacht*, Bishop
Martin Sasse claimed that it was a good thing that the synagogues
of Germany were burning on the birthday of Martin Luther. Only
days after the pogrom, he published the pamphlet *Martin Luther
über die Juden: Weg mit ihnen!* (S. Heschel 2008: 76). This is also
simultaneity. Once more, what is important is not that it happened
on the same day, but to reflect on why we choose to emphasize a
particular simultaneity. It raises the question: why do so many
interpreters choose to emphasize the rending of the veil?

These four questions are left unanswered for now. But we will consider
them in the following discussion, as we examine three interpretations of this
event and relate them to three sentiments: wrath, joyfulness and grief.

1. *A Sign of Divine Wrath*

The first interpretation is to understand the rending of the veil as a conse-
quence of divine wrath in response to the betrayal and execution of Jesus.
Those who read the Gospel narratives notice that religious and political
groups related to both the Temple and the Roman administration cooper-
ated in order to get rid of him. But eventually the role of the Romans was
forgotten. In due course, the Jewish people would be described and under-
stood not as the people that Jesus knew as his own, but as his murderers.
This remarkable shift of emphasis can already be detected in the canonical
Gospels, but it is more palpable in the texts from the second century, such
as the Easter homily *Peri Pascha*.

This text was written by the influential Melito, bishop of Sardis (known
today as Sart Mustafa). His text explicitly accuses the Jewish people of kill-
ing Jesus. It is also characterized by a high Christology: not just anyone was
executed at the cross; God was murdered there (*Peri Pascha* 92-97):

> But you cast the opposite vote against your Lord.
> For him whom the gentiles worshipped
> And uncircumcised men admired
> And foreigners glorified,
> Over whom even Pilate washed his hands,
> You killed him at the great feast.
> …
> You killed your Lord in the middle of Jerusalem.
> …
> Listen, all you families of the nations, and see!
> An unprecedented murder (*kainos phonos*) has occurred in the middle of
> Jerusalem,
> In the city of the law,
> In the city of the Hebrews,

> In the city of the prophets,
> In the city accounted just.
> And who has been murdered? Who is the murderer?
> …
> He who hung the earth is hanging;
> He who fixed the heavens has been fixed;
> He who fastened the universe has been fastened to a tree;
> The Sovereign has been insulted;
> The God has been murdered;
> The King of Israel has been put to death by an Israelite right hand.
> O unprecedented (*kainou*) murder! Unprecedented (*kainēs*) crime!

We have here the first instance in Christian literature of the deicide accusation, i.e., the conception of God being murdered by the Jewish people collectively (Werner 1966: 209). Jeremy Cohen is one of those who have pointed out how astonishing it is that only Jews are singled out for this heinous crime. Non-Jews—described as 'Gentiles', 'uncircumcised', and 'strangers'—worshipped and honoured him, but the Jewish people killed him during the grandest of all Jewish feasts. Hence, on the one hand no group other than the Jews is singled out for this heinous crime and, on the other hand, all Jews are guilty: 'Though the gospel stories of the Crucifixion allot important roles to Pilate and his Roman soldiers, Melito gives them no mention. He condemns Israel and Israel alone' (2007: 59).

According to this first interpretation, the veil is torn because Israel not only blasphemed but also murdered God. This is an aggressive and condemning interpretation of the rending of the veil. God's wrath is upon the Jewish people for what they did. They did not see God in Christ, and therefore they lost the right to call themselves Israel (*Peri Pascha* 82): 'But you did not turn out to be "Israel"; you did not "see God"'. The background to this verdict is probably the popular—but without doubt etymologically incorrect—view that the Hebrew word *Yisrael* should be interpreted as *ish raah El* ('the one who saw God'; see, e.g., Philo, *De mutatione nominum* 81 [*ho de Israēl horōn ton Theon kaleitai*]; cf. Gen. 32.30).

Bishop Melito's Easter homily raises many questions: What were his sources? What were the relations between Jews and Christians in Sardis when he wrote his sermon? Was it actually a matter of living Jews or a question of rhetorical characters?

The Sources of Melito's Peri Pascha

Why did Melito direct his accusations only against the Jewish people, when it is so obvious in the New Testament Gospels that Roman soldiers actually crucified him? Othmar Perler (1964) has argued that there are good reasons to assume that Melito's homily is dependent on the *Gospel of Peter*, a text rediscovered in 1886–87 in a tomb in Akhmim in Egypt,

and thus that Melito's source is not the New Testament Gospels. If Perler is correct, then this apocryphal Gospel—although it was rediscovered as late as the end of the 19th century—has played a tremendously important role in the Christian tradition. For Melito's homily *Peri Pascha*, in turn, has inspired the so-called *Improperia* ('reproaches') in the Good Friday liturgy, blaming the Jewish people for the death of Jesus. In short, with the help of the Gospel of Peter and Melito's Easter homily, the inner-Jewish criticism of Mic. 6.3 ('O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me!') has been transformed into an anti-Jewish polemic.

What was found in the tomb in Akhmim was only a fragment of the original *Gospel of Peter*. The fragment commences in the middle of the trial against Jesus and concludes with the disciples going back home after the death of Jesus. What has been preserved, though, is enough for us to see the differences between this apocryphal Gospel and the New Testament Gospels. One of these differences is found in the very first sentence: '… but of the Jews none washed their hands, neither Herod nor any one of his judges'. Then the author goes on to tell the story of how *the Jews* tortured Jesus, put a purple gown on him and crucified him between two criminals. In other words, the Roman soldiers have totally vanished from the scene. Now it is 'the Jews' (*hoi Ioudaioi*) who carry out the execution.

It is most likely that Perler is correct. We have reason to believe that the *Gospel of Peter* is the source of Melito's Easter homily. Hence, Melito's homily must be seen as the first instance of the emerging *Improperia* tradition. Moreover, the tradition of reproaching Jews in the Good Friday service—all Jews, and only the Jews—would stem from an apocryphal Gospel, which was never included in the collection of canonical writings nor accepted by early Christianity. There is considerable tension between this apocryphal Gospel and the canonical Gospels. This observation should give us pause when we discuss the role of the *Improperia* in Good Friday services today.

Jews and Christians in Sardis

During the third century there was a heated discussion among Christians about when to celebrate Easter: was it necessary to celebrate it on the *day* in the Jewish calendar that Jesus died (i.e., the fourteenth in the month of Nisan) or should it take place on the *weekday* that he died (i.e., on a Friday)? The Quartodecimans argued that it was crucial for the celebration to be on the exact day in the same month, not on the weekday. Since Melito was such a Quartodeciman, his 'Good Friday' celebration (which was not necessarily always on a Friday) always concurred with the Jewish Passover meal. At the same time as Jews in Sardis were celebrating one of the most important feasts in their calendar, Melito and his fellow Christians

were commemorating and mourning the death of Jesus. Can we discern this simultaneity in the following passage?

> And you killed your Lord at the great feast.
> And you were making merry,
> While he was starving;
> You had wine to drink and bread to eat,
> He had vinegar and gall;
> Your face was bright,
> His was downcast;
> You were triumphant,
> He was afflicted;
> You were making music,
> He was being judged;
> You were giving the beat,
> He was being nailed up;
> You were dancing,
> He was being buried;
> You were reclining on a soft couch,
> He in grave and coffin (*Peri Pascha* 79f.).

This could be a reference to the fact that the Jewish *Pesach* and the Christian *Pascha* took place on the very same day in Sardis. What is mentioned in the last stanza ('You were reclining on a soft couch, he in grave and coffin') is in all probability a reference to the practice of eating the Passover meal while sitting or leaning comfortably, as a remembrance and a celebration of the fact that they are no longer slaves in Egypt. Jews are reminded of this to this day when singing the song *mah nishtanah ha-lailah ha-zeh mi-kol ha-leilot?* ('Why is this night different from all other nights?'). One of the questions posed by the youngest son is 'Why are all reclining at the table?'

Is this the principal rationale for the aggression in Melito's Easter homily? The fact that in the very same city, perhaps in directly adjacent homes, Jews were celebrating Passover, might have seemed to call into question the Christian Gospel. For as Cohen notes:

> For when the Jews of Sardis relived the Exodus at their Passover seder on the very night that the Quartodeciman Melito conducted the Easter vigil in his church, they implicitly declared that Christianity's New Testament had not replaced the Old (2007: 62).

In other words, the historical simultaneity was a theological challenge: 'For Melito, that amounted to nothing less than killing Christ on the cross, again and again and again' (Cohen 2007: 65). We could call this a 'socio-historical interpretation' since it emphasizes that *Peri Pascha* was influenced by the actual situation in Sardis when Melito wrote his homily. According to Daniel Boyarin, 'For these [Quartodeciman] Christians, Easter or Pascha was simply the correct way to observe the Pesah' (1999: 13).

Real or Rhetorical Jews?

However, this raises another question: are the 'Jews' and 'Israelites' that are described in *Peri Pascha* real people or are they primarily rhetorical figures? Needless to say, real Jews have been the victims when Christians have read sacred texts during the Holy Week, but the question posed now is a different one: is it sufficient to point to the socio-historical context of the text in order to understand the text? Several scholars, for example Paula Fredriksen (e.g., 1995), Miriam Taylor (1995: 8), Judith Lieu (1996: 199-240), Lynn Cohick (1998) and Adele Reinhartz (e.g., 2001), have questioned whether early anti-Jewish Christian texts primarily reflect actual conflicts between Jews and Christians. Cohick suggests that *Peri Pascha*

> … centers on defining Christianity over against a hypothetical 'Israel' that the unknown author has created largely for rhetorical purposes. […] this homily's anti-Jewish rhetoric is not the place to find evidence for Jews or Judaism of its time (1998: 372).

This highlights a problem with the socio-historical interpretation that constantly tends to seek a *historical* explanation for the *theological* outburst against Jews in the Christian texts. Fredriksen points out that

> [t]o place Christian anti-Jewish invective in such a context [i.e., various competitive encounters between Jews and Christians] is to rationalize it, to give it some sort of reasoned and reasonable explanation (1995: 322).

For example, many New Testament scholars have argued that the reason for the Johannine 'Jews' being described so negatively (see esp. Jn 8.44) is that the Jews whom the Evangelist met were behaving badly towards the Johannine Christians, as if the maxim 'where there's smoke, there's fire' could be the only rationale for Christian anti-Judaism (Cohick 1998: 365). In other words, the one who was *not* free from sin threw the first stone (cf. Jn 8.7). Some people act, while other people simply react.

In a similar fashion, some have argued that Melito's discourse in his Easter homily is due to Jews behaving badly towards their fellow-Christians in Sardis. Not discussing the question of how many Jews and Christians there actually were in Sardis at that time, nor the relations between these two groups, we need to point out that we can detect here a disturbing tendency to describe theological outbursts in a way that not only explains but also justifies them. Some people tend to excuse the texts of their faith communities by blaming the behaviour of the other group. To repeat: some people act, while other people simply react.

For numerous readers of the Bible the *imitatio Dei* is a virtue. If it is true that the veil in the Temple was rent because of divine wrath over 'the Jews' killing Jesus, then Christians should, according to this vicious logic, be no more forbearing than God. Thus, the main problem with this

first interpretation is that it easily leads to antagonism and perhaps even aggression against the Jewish people: 'By the fruit you shall know the tree' (Mt. 12.33 par.).

2. *A Reason for Joyfulness*

Karl Barth pointed out in his *Church Dogmatics* that there was a vast difference between, on the one hand, God's revelation and, on the other hand, religion. Likewise, according to Barth, there is an unbridgeable gap between Christianity (which, according to his atypical nomenclature, strictly speaking is not a religion) and various religious phenomena, between divine speech and human chattering. The revelation of God is the abolition of religion (Barth 1956: I.2.280-97). A consequence of this strict dichotomy is that religiosity is something negative: a religious belief or behaviour is not, as we might assume, an expression of a person's belief, but rather of his or her unbelief.

We must revisit this dichotomy in our discussion of various interpretations of the torn veil, because the Second Temple is often described in a Barthian way in theological literature. The torn veil is described as the end of religiosity. It reveals something completely different, which has nothing at all to do with the Temple.

According to this understanding, the Second Temple—the shrine that Jesus, according to the Evangelists, visited and in which his disciples 'always praised God' (Lk. 24.53)—becomes the symbol for humanity's vain efforts to reach out to God. The Temple is by definition defective. What we have in this approach is a dogmatically motivated inability to appreciate not only the Second Temple but also Second Temple Judaism.

The death of Jesus is understood as the end of the era of erroneous religiosity and the torn veil is a sign of this. Something new has taken its place. In other words, Judaism is religiosity with a capital R and piety *par préférence*. In his book *The Torn Veil*, Gurtner summarizes the reception history of this event with these words: '[O]ne of the few points of agreement among scholars who address the rending of the veil is that whatever else it means, it surely refers to the cessation of the veil's function' (2007: 47). He describes the traditional understanding as follows: '[T]here is a new *accessibility* to God created through the removal of the separating function of the inner veil' (2007: 188, emphasis added). The theological message is that there is now *a theological accessibility* which was not there before the veil was torn. Examples of this in the history of interpretation are legion. For example, in his *Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew*, published in 1868, William Kelly writes, 'Unrent, it had been the symbol that man could not draw near to God' (1868: 398). The Temple is accordingly a *theological obstacle*. The veil was torn because the Temple did not

facilitate, but hindered, true worship. The blunt bottom line is quite simply that only after Good Friday is it possible to make contact with God. We will now analyse this interpretation by addressing three issues: (a) the risk of anachronism, (b) the necessity to redefine a number of key concepts and, finally, (c) the problem of employing and applying the notion of revelation in this discussion.

The Anachronistic Fallacy
There is often an implicit ecclesiastical critique in this discourse of the torn veil. Numerous Christians believe that there is too much bureaucracy in their churches, that the liturgy is too complicated or old-fashioned, that church leaders hinder people from reaching God, etc. These Christians, therefore, believe and argue that something new is needed, but this Christian self-criticism is sometimes expressed as a critique of Second Temple Judaism. Still, there are several important objections to this influential and widespread interpretation. First and foremost, it should be pointed out that the Jewish Temple service was one of the few phenomena in Judaism that the surrounding cultures did not see as strange. Non-Jewish contemporaries saw Judaism as peculiar in many ways—but that had nothing to do with the Temple, nor with the sacrifices. It was more difficult to understand circumcision, food regulations and the Sabbath, as pointed out by Fredriksen: 'The thing most foreign to modern Western religiousness about ancient Judaism—the sacrifices and their attendant purity regulations—struck ancient observers as one of the few normal things Jews did' (1999: 52).

Anachronistic interpretations are widespread, not least on the Internet, which hosts a lot of simplistic interpretations of the torn veil. One example is the following text:

> The torn veil is the final verdict,
> Confirmed by the empty tomb three days later,
> The old ways are DEAD
> NO LONGER ARE WE SEPARATED FROM GOD
> Hallelujah!
> Rejoice!
> With the Torn Veil and the Empty Tomb GOD said it loud and clear:
> 'No mortal, No Institution, No rules or laws, No human frailty Will come
> between ME and My Children'
> 'You are free to seek Me EVERYWHERE!'
> Amen!
> (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SU1mSKuwNN0).

The Temple is understood here as an institution that was blocking the path between human beings and God. A similar theological understanding is expressed in the following text, which is even more explicit:

The curtain separated a holy God from sinful man.
Man created the veil by turning against God.
But he could not tear it down.
It was too high
and too thick.
It was said that even the strongest horses tied to each side …
could not pull the veil apart.
Only God could tear the veil.
…
The barrier between God & humanity was removed.
The veil was torn
(www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcpTiV_DzVE&feature=related; emphases
added).

This text takes us one step further; the veil is not only presented as a hindrance, but also as the very symbol of a people wilfully turning away from God. In short, the veil is portrayed as a manifestation of an averted humanity, which may present the reader of the Hebrew Bible with a problem, because God ordered the people to build the Tabernacle and gave quite exact instructions on how to build it. In Exod. 26.31-33 it says: 'You shall make a curtain of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim skilfully worked into it … and the curtain shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy'.

The supersessionist critique of the Temple is so important in this line of thought that it induces its advocates to neglect what is quite obvious in the Hebrew Bible, i.e. that *building the Tabernacle was an assignment by God and also instructed by God.* In the biblical narrative, the Tabernacle and the Temple are places for divine encounter, not symbols for the opposite; the 84th Psalm is one of the most distinctive examples:

> How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise.

Redefining Key Concepts

Another reason for caution is the need to reinterpret a number of key concepts. One example of this is when Gurtner wishes to describe the Matthean understanding of the Temple: 'This, however, is not a *rejection* of the temple, toward which Matthew has been so positive. Instead, it is an indication that the temple is superfluous: What it was intended to accomplish is surpassed by Jesus' (2007: 190). We have to ask ourselves, however, whether there is such a vast difference between these two statements—between, on the one hand, 'rejection' and, on the other hand, its being termed 'superfluous' and

'surpassed'. Can a person who drives on the left side of a road in a country with right-hand traffic, and is stopped by a policeman, get away with this behaviour by stating that he does not 'reject' the law, but simply regards it as 'superfluous' because the old system has been 'surpassed'? Who would be convinced by such an argument? Hardly anyone, especially if the very same person elsewhere describes the torn veil as follows (2007: 71):

> I can note here that the cessation of functions depicted by the *velum scissum* indicates, in some way, the cessation of the cultic necessity of distinctions between most holy and less holy, which therefore removes the need for such distinctions to be executed by a prohibition of physical and visual accessibility to God, and removes the cherubim that graphically depicts this distinction.

In the same book Gurtner described the Matthean Christology (2007: 198): 'For Matthew, Jesus is the true Israel and the people of God are defined by their relationship to Jesus'. A people accordingly no longer consists of individuals who together form what Benedict Anderson (1991) calls 'an imagined community'; instead, they are embodied in an *individual*.

Jesus is described in a similar way by N.T. Wright as '…a new David, who will rescue his people from their exile, that is, "save his people from their sins"' (1992: 386). This immediately raises the question of why the word 'exile' no longer means 'deportation' but is spiritualized instead. The obvious answer is that otherwise the theological scheme simply does not work. The sad irony is that Christianity concurred—once again, we are talking about simultaneity—not with the *end* of an exile of the Jewish people but with its *beginning*. As we all know, it was after the two revolts against the Romans that a new era of exile began for the Jewish people, almost at the same time as Christendom made its way to power in the Roman Empire. It is always disquieting when words no longer have anything to do with their established meanings; these interpretations of the torn veil constitute no exception.

The Problem of the Concept 'Revelation' in Religious Discourse

One of Ernst Käsemann's most famous *dicta* is that apocalypticism is the mother tongue of Christianity (1979: 102). Christians have begun to speak other languages as well, but the fact is that a central idea in the theology of many Christians is the apocalyptic motif, the theological revelation (*apokalypsis*). In this category we can place 1 Cor. 2.9, where Paul declares that he is proclaiming '[w]hat no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him'.[2]

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2.   It is interesting to note that the message is slightly different in the parallel text in the *Gospel of Thomas*, log. 17, which is directed towards the future: 'Jesus said, I shall give (Coptic: *tinati*) you what no eye has seen …'.

Hence, Paul argues that it is the Christian proclamation *per se* that is apocalyptic and revealing. Is this the reason why many Christians understand the torn veil as a revelation of the inefficiency of the Temple—as an *euangelion*, a message of joy, although it took place on the very day that Jesus was humiliated, tortured and executed? We have to ask ourselves whether it is possible that a theology that underscores the importance of revelation may have a tendency to become obtuse to the extent that it does not take suffering seriously, not even on Good Friday. We have therefore good reason to reflect on the meaning of the word 'revelation'. In the preface to his influential work *The Meaning of Revelation*, H. Richard Niebuhr refers to the three components that he believes are of importance when the concept of revelation is to be analysed (2006: xxxiv):

> The first is the conviction that self-defense is the most prevalent source of error in all thinking and perhaps especially in theology and ethics … The second idea is that the great source of evil in life is the absolutizing of the relative, which in Christianity takes the form of substituting religion, revelation, church or Christian morality for God. The third conviction … is that Christianity is 'permanent revolution' or *metanoia* which does not come to an end in this world, this life, or this time.

All three points are worth pondering in this context. Theology must not become apologetic, which he understands as 'the turning away from the object of faith to the subject' (2006: 20), since it fossilizes what is changing, which hinders intellectual *metanoia*. In other words, there is neither an interest nor an opportunity for theological self-criticism. Furthermore, Niebuhr argues that it is important for theology to admit—indeed, even to confess—its limitations. He does not understand revelation as the development or the elimination of natural religion, but as 'the revolution of the religious life' (2006: 99). We must ask ourselves if there is a risk that the concept of revelation, which may at times be regarded as a piece of property belonging to the believer, may be used as a weapon against other people and peoples in order to defend and extol one's own denomination, perhaps even the individual theologian (cf. Niebuhr 2006: 20, 92).

There is much to suggest that this second interpretation comprises such traits; it tends to extol itself at the expense of the other. It is not presented as 'divine self-disclosure', but as 'truths about God'. Niebuhr defines revelation as '… the moment in our history through which we know ourselves to be known from beginning to end, in which *we are apprehended by the knower*; it means the self-disclosing of that eternal knower' (2006: 80, emphases added).

In summary, revelation, as Niebuhr understands it, has very little to do with divesting Second Temple Judaism of its spiritual center, i.e. the Temple, and all the more with being known and apprehended by the 'eternal knower'.

Gurtner's book is an extremely valuable survey of the Matthean version of the torn veil. His principal conclusion, however, may be described as modest in terms of novelty: he asserts, in a nutshell, that the death of Jesus is the end of the Temple. We have already cited the passage in which he writes that this is an opinion he shares with a majority of New Testament scholars: '… one of the few points of agreement among scholars who address the rending of the veil is that whatever else it means, it surely refers to the *cessation* of the veil's function' (2007: 47, emphasis added).

Nevertheless, we ought to pose the question of whether this is the only possible conclusion. The Temple played an important role in antiquity and the Temple metaphors are still exceedingly important. Can adherents to this interpretation genuinely seek to understand and to appreciate the Jewish tradition? Or are the two traditions mutually exclusive? Is it necessary to think of it as a crossroads where by choosing one road you decide not to take the other? Must Judaism be furnished with a 'no entry' sign in order to allow Christianity to say 'welcome'?

In addition, the question that also remains is whether it is genuine joyfulness Christians are supposed to feel at the foot of the cross? If yes, what are the consequences today? What do Christians think about suffering in general, and especially about torture? Should they not be filled by emotions other than joy when encountering and pondering the pain and agony in our world? This takes us to the third interpretation: Should the torn veil be interconnected with grief?

3. *An Expression of Divine Sorrow?*

So far, we have presented two interpretations of the torn veil: it could either be understood as a sign of divine wrath or as a reason for human joy. In order to present a third possibility, we need to reflect further on what the torn veil represents.

Mourners Tearing their Clothes

As is well known, in Judaism there is an ancient tradition of tearing one's clothes when death appears: *qeri'ah*. Nowadays this is done before or just after the funeral, or at the gravesite; but earlier it was at the time of death or at the news of the death that the mourners tore their clothes (see, e.g., Klein 1992: 278f. and Ozarowski 1995). We have an example of this in 2 Sam. 13.30f.:

> While they were on their way, the report came to David that Absalom had killed the king's sons, and not one of them was left. The king rose, tore his garment (*wa-yiqra' begadaw*), and lay on the ground; and all his servants who were standing by tore their garments (*qeru'ei begadim*).

For multiple reasons 2 Kgs 2.12 is of special interest to us when pondering the New Testament passion narratives: first, it is about Elijah (who is mentioned in the passion narratives in the New Testament). Second, the mourner tears his clothes. Third, he tears them into two pieces. And fourth, a 'father' is mentioned:

> Elisha kept watching and crying out, 'Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!' But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces (*wa-yiqra 'em li-shnayim qera 'im*).

God, too, shows divine grief by tearing garments. In the words of Roger David Aus (1994: 151), '…it was natural for the rabbis to think that God in mourning rent His royal purple garment in heaven when His dwelling on earth, the Temple, was destroyed by the Babylonians'. Hence, the Jewish tradition of tearing one's clothes must be considered when interpreting the torn veil in the New Testament.

A Manifestation of Divine Presence—Not Divine Absence

In his seminal study *Heavenly Torah as Refracted through the Generations*, Abraham Joshua Heschel traces the influence of two rabbis: Rabbi Aqiba and Rabbi Ishmael. The former argued that the Divine Presence was particularly palpable on the Temple Mount. In contrast, the latter maintained that it was tangible everywhere but that the Temple was the place where it was particularly apparent to humans. Although the two rabbis had different opinions, they agreed that the Temple was the manifestation of *ha-Shekhinah*. The Temple was not something that separated humans from God. To the contrary: the Temple and its curtain were symbols of the presence of God. Jacob Milgrom writes about the holiness of the curtain (1990: 20): 'Since the inner Tabernacle curtains were anointed (Lev. 8.10), they theoretically had the same sacred status as the sancta (Exod. 30.29)'.

There is a connection in Jewish texts between the curtain in the Temple and the 'dome' that is mentioned in Gen. 1.6: 'And God said, 'Let there be a dome (*raqia '*) in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters''. As already noted, Gurtner argues that the curtain was a manifestation of the divine absence (because it separated humans from the divine). But it is also possible to interpret it in the opposite way: as the 'dome' is a sign of the presence of God in this world, the curtain can be considered a symbol of God's presence. If so, then it is not difficult to imagine that a *torn* veil could be understood as an expression of grief. God tore God's clothes when Jesus died. David Daube has pointed out that the word *pargod*, which in the Targum stands for the veil, may also denote a tunic. His conclusion is convincing:

> When we consider the stress laid in the New Testament on the complete splitting of the curtain into two—or, according to some readings, two

parts—from top to bottom, it is safe to find here an allusion to the rite prac-
tised as a sign of deepest sorrow (1956: 24).

Hence, in relevant Jewish texts there is a thematic connection between
the veil in the Temple and the dome that is described in the first creation
narrative in the book of Genesis. There is another interesting connection
that Heschel points out in *Heavenly Torah*. He quotes a mediaeval text
that highlights the similarities between the two words *qeri'ah* and *raqia'*;
indeed, *qeri'ah* is an anagram of *raqia'* (2005: 124; see also the editor's
note 46; the letter *he* is a feminine ending of the noun and not part of the
Hebrew root *qr'*). We might ask ourselves whether it is possible to find
a similar connection in the Matthaean version. In the hour of heavenly
grief, as God rends the divine garment in mourning (*qeri'ah*), the 'dome'
(*raqia'*) trembles. The latter is reflected in the reference to an earthquake
(Mt. 27.51f.).

According to this third interpretation, the rending of the veil may be
understood as an expression of divine grief over what is happening, as
has been suggested by several interpreters: David Daube (1956: 23-26),
Roger David Aus (1994: 147-57) and Rosann M. Catalano (2005: 195). The
first scholar to take this approach may have been Claude G. Montefiore,
although he saw it as the Temple mourning its own imminent destruction
(1927: II.388).

It may come as a surprise that yet another person who supports this the-
sis is actually Melito of Sardis. In his Easter homily, *Peri Pascha*, there is
another passage that is relevant to our discussion:

> For when the people did not tremble, the earth quaked;
> When the people were not terrified, the heavens were terrified;
> *When the people did not tear their clothes, the angel tore his.*
> When the people did not lament, the Lord thundered out of heaven and the
> Highest gave voice
> (*Peri Pascha* 98, emphases added).

In this antithetical presentation, one of God's angels fulfilled what the peo-
ple should have done. Melito contends that the veil was rent because God's
angel rends his clothes in mourning when Jesus dies (*tou laou mē peri-
eschismenou perieschisato ho angelos*). We nevertheless find this interest-
ing statement in Melito's indisputably reproachful text, which proves that
the third interpretation—emphasizing divine sorrow and grief—can be
traced all the way back to the second century.

4. *The Finality of Wrath, Joyfulness or Grief*

Paul writes in 2 Cor. 5.19 that God has entrusted him *ton logon tēs katallagēs*
('the word of reconciliation'). This is often regarded as a reference to the

Christian message about reconciliation. But could we also see in this concise expression an exhortation to explain the biblical texts and the biblical message in such a way that it deepens understanding and allows the messengers to promote reconciliation? If so, this should be valid to a high degree when interpreting what happened at the time of the death of Jesus. In other words, the content of the message must not be isolated from the reactions that it provokes among readers and listeners.

In his book *Holy Week*, Krister Stendahl writes that the emphasis should be on the consequences of the events: 'The mood is finality, not causality, as is the case so often in the Scriptures, and in the teaching of Jesus' (1985: 23). Those who emphasize *causality* concentrate on what led to the death of Jesus ('what did they do then and there?'), but those who instead underline *finality* investigate the consequences of his death: what does this mean for those who want to live as his disciples? In other words, he suggests that the readers should not ask so much about 'why' as about 'what for', not about 'whence' but about 'whither'.

Three words have been in the focus of this survey: wrath, joyfulness and grief. Is it possible to describe the 'whither' of these three interpretations? What are the consequences? Where do they take us? In the words of Catalanos: 'When Christians come to the foot of the cross of Jesus, they need a piety that honors God and all those whom God loves' (2005: 198).

(a) The first interpretation, which centres on *divine wrath*, triggers a loaded question: why is God so angry that the veil is torn, all the way from the top to the bottom? In addition, we may ask ourselves: what feelings arise within the reader? We all know that Holy Week has been anything but holy for Jews. For two thousand years this has been instead a Via Dolorosa, because Christians have been convinced that the Jewish people are collectively responsible for the death of Jesus. Those who argue that the wrath of God, demonstrated by the torn veil, is due to what happened during Holy Week, are likely to be as upset and angry as God. The reception history of the first interpretation reveals how problematic and dangerous it is.

(b) The second interpretation, focusing on *human joyfulness*, presents the Temple as an obstacle to people's relation with God. Quite astonishingly, the Temple that stood high at the time of Jesus is portrayed as the principal symbol of people's disbelief and lack of faith. This is a highly anachronistic interpretation. In antiquity, temples were places for holy encounters; shrines were like the horizon, that is, the place where heaven and earth meet. Another problem with this interpretation is that it tends not to take suffering and grief seriously. In other circumstances we do not cheer when we are confronted with suffering and death—why should we do it when

we read about suffering and death in the New Testament? Is there a risk that a theology that overemphasizes revelation tends to—or even attempts to—make us indifferent to suffering and death?

(c) The third interpretation suggests that the torn veil could be understood as an expression of *divine grief* over the death of Jesus. Readers' reactions to such an action will be radically different compared to the interpretation of divine wrath. If divine grief is at the centre, readers will ask themselves a very different sort of question: Why does God grieve so much? What occasions divine sorrow at this moment in the narrative? (Catalano 2005: 196). Quite evidently, one is reminded of *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 4.5: '…whoever saves a single human being, Scripture credits this person as though a whole world has been saved'. The reader who believes that *imitatio Dei* is the appropriate behaviour is thereby introduced to another way of thinking: mourn the death of a human being as if an entire world has died, and let this grief be transformed into caring for other people. Do not forget that every human being is a microcosm, a small world.

In one of Abraham Joshua Heschel's poems, we find a similar connection between, on the one hand, a God who expresses divine sorrow by a rending of clothes and, on the other hand, the exhortation to care for other people. These concluding words may serve as a reminder of the fact that theology should never be isolated from ethics (2004: 193):

> Like sparked logs lusting, thirsting for flames
> my eyes cry to You, God,
> Who rends His clothes in mourning for the world—
> Let us see how Your face is mirrored
> in the pupils of our eyes.
>
> And I have sworn:
> to let the pupils of my eyes be mirror to each sunset,
> my heart never sealed
> my eyes never locked!

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Eschatology in the Book of Ezekiel

Marvin A. Sweeney

I

The book of Ezekiel is one of the least understood books of the prophets. The bizarre imagery of his visions, such as the divine throne chariot borne through the heavens by the cherubim or the future Jerusalem Temple placed in the center of the restored tribes of Israel and creation itself, has both puzzled and provoked interpreters throughout the centuries. Rabbinic tradition indicates major questions about the book. R. Hananiah ben Hezekiah burned three hundred barrels of oil working nights to reconcile Ezekiel's contradictions with the Torah (*b. Šab.* 13b; *b. Ḥag.* 13a; *b. Men.* 45a), and *m. Ḥag.* 2.1 forbids exposition of the Chapter of the Chariot, i.e., Ezekiel's vision of the divine throne chariot in Ezekiel 1, unless the interpreter is a sage fully versed in Jewish tradition.[1] Modern readers have also had their difficulties with the book as many contend that the often bizarre imagery and concepts of the book indicate that Ezekiel was somehow impaired or influenced by psychological problems, mental illness, hallucinatory drugs, or even extraterrestrial visitors.[2]

Nevertheless, Ezekiel has come to represent a foundational element in both Jewish and Christian conceptions of eschatology and salvation. Medieval Jewish exegetes, such as Rashi and Radak, maintain that Ezekiel's vision of the Temple represents the future or third Temple of messianic times, particularly since its features do not correspond to either Solomon's Temple or the Second Temple.[3] Yhwh's designation of Ezekiel as *ben 'ādām*,

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1. For discussion of Jewish interpretation of the book of Ezekiel, see esp. A.J. Rosenberg, *The Book of Ezekiel* (2 vols.; New York: Judaica, 1991); Marvin A. Sweeney, 'Ezekiel', in *The Jewish Study Bible* (ed. A. Berlin and M. Brettler; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 1042-1138.

2. E.g., David J. Halpern, *Seeking Ezekiel: Text and Psychology* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), esp. pp. 7-38. For discussion of modern research on Ezekiel, see esp. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, 'Ezekiel among the Critics', *CR:BS* 2 (1994), pp. 9-24; Lawrence Boadt, 'Ezekiel, Book of', *ABD*, II, pp. 711-22.

3. Rosenberg, *Ezekiel*, pp. 342, 343 on Radak and Rashi; Rabbinic comments on

'Son of Man', better translated as, 'Human', appears in the Gospel tradition to designate the coming messianic figure (e.g., Mark 13). Kabbalistic tradition views Ezekiel's visions of God as an essential foundation of the Jewish mystical tradition.[4] Although the Gospels portray the downfall of the Jerusalem Temple, the Epistle to the Hebrews argues that the sanctity of the Temple must be internalized in every human being. The modern Israeli city of Tel Aviv was named after the Babylonian city identified with Ezekiel's vision in Ezek. 3.15 to symbolize the modern restoration of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. Both Judaism and Christianity look to Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37 as a foundational text for their respective understandings of resurrection.

Much of the confusion concerning the book of Ezekiel is rooted in the failure of interpreters to appreciate the prophet's identity as a Zadokite priest and the implications of that identity for defining his worldview and theological perspective even as he is exiled to Babylonia, a foreign land far removed from sacred precincts of the Jerusalem Temple.[5] The difficulties in appreciating Ezekiel's priestly identity are based in the theological perspectives of modern critical scholarship, which are in turn heavily influenced by Protestant theology's skeptical view of priesthood, temple, and formal ritual. But Ezekiel combines his identities as both a Zadokite priest of the Jerusalem Temple and a visionary prophet of the Babylonian exile to produce his unique visions and understandings of divine presence and holiness in the world of creation at large. His inaugural vision of the divine throne chariot by the banks of the Chebar Canal in Babylonia (Ezekiel 1–3), for example, is based largely on the imagery of the Ark of the Covenant that was housed in the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple. His vision of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in Ezekiel 8–11 is heavily influenced by the conceptualization of the scapegoat ritual for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, in Leviticus 16 in which the atonement of the nation is symbolized by the sacrifice of one goat as a sin offering at the Temple and the release of another goat into the wilderness to bear away symbolically the sins of the people.[6] His portrayals of the resurrection of the dry bones

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the differences between the First and Second Temples and Ezekiel's vision are sparse, see *b. Šab.* 13b; *b. Men.* 45a.

4. For discussion of the development of Jewish Hekhalot mysticism, see esp. Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (AGAJU, 14; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980); David Halpern, *The Faces of the Chariot* (TSAJ, 16; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988); Rachel Elior, *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism* (Oxford: Littman Library, 2005).

5. For discussion of Ezekiel's priestly identity, see esp. my 'Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile', in *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature* (FAT, 45; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2005), pp. 125-43.

6. See my essay, 'The Destruction of Jerusalem as Purification in Ezekiel 8–11', in

in chap. 37 and the burning of the bodies of the army of Gog from Magog in chaps. 38–39 are based in priestly concern with the contamination of the land and creation at large brought about by death and the need to purify the land so that the holy Temple might be restored at its center.[7] His vision of the restored Temple in chaps. 40–48 constitutes an ideal portrayal of the Jerusalem Temple and its ritual at the center of a restored nation of the full twelve tribes of Israel and a restored creation in which even the Dead Sea will come to life.[8]

Like its counterparts Isaiah and Jeremiah, the book of Ezekiel is fundamentally a book of theodicy that attempts to explain the disaster of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple together with the Babylonian exile as a righteous act of Yhwh. Ezekiel maintains that Yhwh's action is designed to purge the nation—and creation at large—so that the sanctity of both Israel and the world at large may be restored as they are reconstituted around the Jerusalem Temple. Such a perspective is inherently eschatological insofar as it envisions the fundamental transformation of Israel and creation throughout the book. Indeed, the Jerusalem Temple is always understood in Zadokite priestly thought as the holy center of creation,[9] and the Babylonian destruction of the Temple in 587/586 BCE constituted an overthrow of creation itself that calls for restoration in Ezekiel's eyes. The book of Ezekiel is therefore composed to portray the process and conceptualization of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile as an act of Yhwh to purge a corrupt creation and to restore the Temple and Israel at the center of a purified creation as the culmination of the book.

Some interpreters argue that the book is the product of extensive redaction that produced a classical tripartite theological scheme of judgment against Israel in Ezekiel 1–24, judgment against the nations in Ezekiel 25–32, and restoration of both Israel and the nations in Ezekiel 33–48.[10] Yet close attention to the contents of the book demonstrates that such a scheme does not account fully for the material contained therein. Ezekiel is

Form and Intertextuality, pp. 144-55. For discussion of the conceptualization of retribution and purification in Ezekiel, see now Ka Leung Wong, *The Idea of Retribution in the Book of Ezekiel* (VTSup, 87; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001).

7. See my essay, 'The Assertion of Divine Power in Ezekiel 33:21–39:29', in *Form and Intertextuality*, pp. 156-72.

8. See esp. Jon D. Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration in Ezekiel 40–48* (HSM, 10; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976).

9. Jon D. Levenson, 'The Temple and the World', *JR* 64 (1984), pp. 275-98; Levenson *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985).

10. E.g., Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Hermeneia; trans. R.E. Clements; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 1-2; Ronald M. Hals, *Ezekiel* (FOTL, 19; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 2-4; cf. Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20* (AB, 22; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), pp. 4-6.

less heavily redacted than Isaiah and Jeremiah,[11] and its literary structure is based on a sequence of chronological introductions to each unit of the book in 1.1-3; 8.1; 20.1; 24.1; 26.1; 29.1; 29.17; 30.20; 31.1; 32.1; 32.17; 33.21; and 40.1, which correlate the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and its ultimate restoration with the normal twenty-year period of service expected of a Zadokite priest of the Jerusalem Temple from the age of thirty to the age of fifty.[12] The book begins with the inaugural vision of Ezekiel in the thirtieth year, i.e., Ezekiel's own thirtieth year when he would have been ordained for service at the Temple altar, which in turn is identified as the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile, i.e., 592 BCE. Following the sequence of chronological markers, the literary structure of the book then culminates in the vision of the restored Temple in Ezekiel 40–48 which is placed in the twenty-fifth year of the exile, i.e., 572 BCE, the year that Ezekiel would have turned fifty and retired from active service at the Temple altar.

Altogether, the book portrays Ezekiel's visions concerning the purging of Jerusalem and creation as follows:

Ezekiel's Visions Concerning the Purging of Jerusalem and Creation

Ezekiel 1–48

I. Introduction: Ezekiel's oracles concerning his Inaugural Vision	1–7
II. Ezekiel's oracles concerning his vision of Yhwh's departure from the Jerusalem Temple and its significance	8–19
III. Ezekiel's oracles concerning the punishment of all Israel	20–23
IV. Symbolic actions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the punishment of neighboring nations	24–25
V. Oracles concerning Tyre and its rulers	26–28
VI. The first oracle concerning Egypt	29.1-16
VII. The second block of oracles concerning Egypt	29.17–30.19
VIII. The first oracle concerning Pharaoh	30.20-26
IX. The second oracle concerning Pharaoh	31
X. Oracle concerning Pharaoh and Egypt	32.1-16
XI. Final oracle concerning the nations and Ezekiel's role as watchman	32.17–33.20
XII. Oracles concerning the restoration of Israel	33.21–39.29
XIII. The vision of the restored Temple	40–48

II

The first major unit of the book of Ezekiel, the introductory oracles concerning his inaugural vision in chaps. 1–7, plays a key role in defining the

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11. See, e.g., Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, pp. 18-27; contra Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, pp. 71-74; Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, *Der Prophet Hesekiel/Ezekiel* (ATD, 22/1-2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996, 2001).

12. For discussion of the literary structure of Ezekiel, see my 'Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile', in *Form and Intertextuality*, pp. 127-32.

eschatological perspectives of the book. This material presents Yhwh's commission of Ezekiel as a prophet and priest who would teach divine Torah concerning the coming changes in Judean/Israelite life to the people in Babylonian exile.

The bizarre imagery of Ezekiel's vision often dominates discussion of the passage, but the essential function of the passage is to depict Ezekiel's commission by Yhwh to act as a prophet and to teach the people divine *tōrâ*.[13] Although the Hebrew word *tōrâ* is frequently and incorrectly translated as 'law', *tōrâ* actually means 'instruction' in the divine will.[14] Indeed, the fundamental task of the priesthood in ancient Israel and Judah is to instruct the people to distinguish what is sacred and profane and what is clean and unclean (Lev. 10.10-11). In priestly thought, such distinctions include both ritual and moral action. In order to carry out this fundamental task, Yhwh instructs Ezekiel to swallow a scroll with Yhwh's words written upon it so that he might instruct the people in the will of Yhwh. Such an understanding of Ezekiel's role is in keeping with his identities as both priest and prophet. According to Deut. 31.1-13, Yhwh's Torah or instruction would be deposited in the Ark of the Covenant to be housed in the Temple and taught by the priests to the people every seventh year. Insofar as the priest and prophet Ezekiel is now among the exiles in Babylonia, he would become a source for Yhwh's teaching in the Babylonian exile.

As noted above, the superscription to the book in 1.1-3 places the prophet's inaugural vision in his thirtieth year when he would normally have been ordained as a priest for service at the Temple altar. Although many interpreters might presuppose that visionary experience would be characteristic of a prophet rather than of a priest, readers should note that visionary experience is normally associated with temple sites in ancient Israel and Judah, the ancient Near East in general, and the Greco-Roman world for both priests and non-priests.[15] Indeed, the High Priest of the Jerusalem Temple would be a primary candidate for visionary experience. The High Priest would normally enter the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple only one time during the year, at Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement, to represent the people before Yhwh to appeal for divine forgiveness in conjunction with the scapegoat ritual of Leviticus 16. Leviticus 16.2-5 notes that Aaron (the first High Priest) should enter the Holy of Holies only at the

13. For discussion of the imagery in this passage, see my 'Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile', *Form and Intertextuality*, pp. 129-34; *The Prophetic Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), pp. 136-40; 'Ezekiel's Debate with Isaiah', *Congress Volume: Ljubljana 2007* (ed. A. Lemaire; VTSup, 133; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), pp. 555-74.

14. For discussion of the Hebrew term *tōrâ*, see esp. *HALOT*, IV, pp. 1710-12.

15. See Frances Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests: Jewish Dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras* (JSJSup, 90; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), pp. 256-64.

time of the presentation of the *ḥaṭṭā't* or 'Sin Offering' lest he die. The reason given is that Yhwh 'appears in the cloud over the cover' of the Ark, which indicates that the High Priest would be expected to have a visionary experience of Yhwh as part of the Yom Kippur ritual. Ezekiel's inaugural vision presupposes such experience, particularly since this vision initiates Yhwh's announcements of plans to purge and ultimately to restore the Jerusalem Temple, Israel as a whole, and creation at large throughout the book of Ezekiel.

The account of Ezekiel's vision in 1.4-28 draws heavily on the imagery of the Temple in general and especially the Holy of Holies of the Temple where the Ark of the Covenant was located. The initial references to the huge cloud, flashing fire, and gleaming amber in vv. 4-5 draw on the imagery of the Temple at a time when the liturgy is in process. The huge cloud represents the smoke that would fill the Temple from the burning incense of the ten incense burners located in the *hêkāl* or the 'Great Hall' of the Temple immediately before the Holy of Holies (see 1 Kgs 7.27-39). The flashing fire would represent the flashing lamps of the ten *mĕnōrôt* or 'lamp stands' that are placed in the *hêkāl* together with the incense burners (1 Kgs 7.49); when viewed together with the smoke from the incense burners that would fill the *hêkāl* during worship, the lights of the *mĕnōrôt* would appear to be flashing from within the thick cloud of smoke. Finally, the gleaming amber would represent the gleaming presence of the gold- and bronze-overlaid vessels of the Temple and particularly the overlaid Ark of the Covenant as the flashes of light from the *mĕnōrôt* would reflect from the polished metal surfaces. Such imagery would accompany the High Priest's entrance into the Holy of Holies.

The following imagery of the four *ḥāyyôt*, 'living creatures', later identified as Cherubim in Ezek. 10.20, represents the imagery of the Cherubim that would surround the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. Cherubim are composite animal/human figures from ancient Near Eastern mythology and art that typically guard the thrones of kings and gods as well as the gates of cities in the ancient Near Eastern world. Insofar as the Ark of the Covenant is conceived as the throne of Yhwh in ancient Israel/Judah, the appearance of Cherubim together with the Ark indicates that their function is to protect and bear the Ark as the throne of Yhwh. Although the description of the Ark of the Covenant in Exod. 25.10-22; 37.1-9 allows only for two Cherubim, 1 Kgs 6.14-26 indicates that the Holy of Holies of the Temple was built with Cherubim inside before the Ark of the Covenant was housed there. Once the Ark of the Covenant was placed inside, the number of Cherubim around the Ark would total four as in Ezekiel's vision. The description of the Cherubim in the Pentateuch is minimal, but Ezekiel's depiction includes four faces for each creature, which allows for the Cherubim to represent the four basic directions of all creation in keeping

with Temple symbolism as well as the various qualities of Yhwh (see, e.g., the four-horned altar which represents a similar conceptualization in Exod. 27.1-8; 38.1-7). The face of the human faces forward or east and represents divine intelligence or the capacity to know good and evil; the face of the lion on the right faces south in the direction of Judah, and represents divine sovereignty or royalty insofar as the lion symbolizes the royal tribe Judah; the face of the ox on the left faces north toward northern Israel, which employed the calf image for its own depiction of Yhwh's throne in the sanctuaries of Beth El and Dan, to represent divine power; and the face of the eagle on the back, which faces west toward the low-lying country and the sea, represents divine freedom to move and appear anywhere in creation. The description of the legs, feet, hands, wings, bodies, etc., of the living creatures or Cherubim takes up the various features typical of Cherubim in the ancient world.[16] The gleaming presence of their bodies represents the fact that the Cherubim around the Ark were overlaid with gold and perhaps later with bronze. Their movement, described in Hebrew as movement in the direction of each of their four faces at once (and each would move in the direction of its faces), is an attempt to convey the movement of the divine Presence in terms beyond the normal human comprehension of movement.

Other elements of the vision likewise take up Temple symbolism. The wheels next to each of the four living creatures or Cherubim would represent the rings built into the Ark of the Covenant so that the Ark could be carried by the Levites with poles (note, however, that David brought the Ark to Jerusalem on a wheeled cart in 2 Samuel 6). The eyes on the rims of the wheels would once again represent the flashing fire of the *měnōrôt* reflecting off the gold- or bronze-overlaid rims. The *rāqî'a* or 'expanse' over the heads of the living creatures represents the *kāpōret* or 'cover' of the Ark that is elsewhere depicted as sapphire in Exod. 24.10. This expanse in turn represents the expanse that separates heaven and earth in Gen. 1.6-8. Finally, the radiant Presence of Yhwh above expanse and the living creatures would represent Yhwh enthroned above the Ark of the Covenant. Altogether, Ezekiel's inaugural vision is a heavily mythologized and animated image of the Ark of the Covenant from the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple. Here it provides a means to depict the divine Presence of Yhwh manifested in Babylonia, a land in the farthest reaches of creation from the standpoint of a Jerusalemite priest such as Ezekiel.

Following the portrayal of the divine Presence, Ezekiel 2–3 then depict Yhwh's commission of Ezekiel *per se* in which he swallows the scroll with Yhwh's words so that he might convey them to the people. Upon his return to his home in the Babylonian city of Tel Aviv, Ezekiel is to wait seven

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16. For discussion of Cherubim in the ancient Near East, see T.N.D. Mettinger, 'Cherubim', *DDD²*, pp. 189-92.

days before he actually begins to speak. Interpreters note that Ezekiel's seven-day period of silence corresponds to the seven-day incubation period required for the ordination of priests (see Exodus 29; Leviticus 8; Numbers 8 for presentations of priestly ordination).[17] Because he is in exile far from Jerusalem, Ezekiel can no longer serve as a priest in the Jerusalem sanctuary. Instead, he will function as the watchman who will announce Yhwh's words and thereby oversee the sanctity of Israel, a role that is based on the priestly gatekeepers who ensure the sanctity of the Temple (1 Chronicles 26; cf. Ezek. 33.1-22). His prophetic career is therefore modeled on the patterns that his priestly career would have taken; in essence, he develops a new model as a visionary prophet of the exile to carry out his priestly task.

The following chapters then present the various means by which Ezekiel carries out his task to announce the transformation of Judean life to be brought about by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the Babylonian exile. Ezekiel 4–5 presents his symbolic actions to represent the coming judgment.[18] He constructs a model of Jerusalem under siege, and lies on his right side for three hundred and ninety days to symbolize the years of Israel's punishment and forty days on his left side to symbolize Judah's punishment. The three hundred and ninety years correspond roughly to the years from the foundation of the Israelite kingdom under Saul until the reforms of King Josiah beginning in 628–627 BCE, the twelfth year of Josiah's reign when he began to purge Jerusalem and Judah of illicit shrines (2 Chron. 34.3). The forty years would correspond to the years from the beginning of Josiah's reform until the time of the destruction of the Temple in 587/6 BCE. Ezekiel's eating of impure food symbolizes his impure state (and that of Jerusalem and the people) as a priest exiled to a foreign land. The cutting of his hair represents the fate of the people; one third will perish in fire, one third will be struck down by the sword, and one third will be scattered into exile. Ezekiel's preaching to the hills of Israel in chaps. 6–7 represents his attempts to address the land and people of Israel as a whole with the claim that the entire land has been corrupted by impure and immoral action necessitating Yhwh's actions to purge the land, people, and creation as a whole. Insofar as Ezekiel was born in 622 BCE, the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign when he began the restoration of the Temple (2 Kgs 22.22; 2 Chron. 34.8), Ezekiel's understanding of Israel's judgment and restoration appears to be rooted in the principles of Josiah's reform.

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17. Margaret S. O'Dell, 'You Are What You Eat: Ezekiel and the Scroll', *JBL* 117 (1998), pp. 229-48.

18. For discussion of Ezekiel's symbolic actions, see esp. Kelvin G. Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts: Rhetorical Nonverbal Communication* (JSOTSup, 283; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); cf. W.D. Stacey, *Prophetic Drama in the Old Testament* (London: Epworth, 1990).

The second major component of the book in chaps. 8–19, dated to the sixth year of Jehoiachin's exile or 591 BCE, portrays Ezekiel's understanding of the impurity of the Jerusalem Temple and Yhwh's actions to destroy it so that it might be purged and reconstituted.

The key sub-unit in this component is chaps. 8–11, which portrays Ezekiel's tour of the Temple to see its impurity and the means by which Yhwh destroys it.[19] The passage begins with Ezekiel sitting in his house in Babylonia with the elders of Israel arrayed before him, apparently to make oracular inquiry of the priest and prophet. When the hand of Yhwh falls upon him, Ezekiel is transported to the north gate in the wall of the Jerusalem Temple where his heavenly guide shows him in a vision the various abominations in the Temple that are driving Yhwh away from the holy precincts of the Temple. He begins with the so-called infuriating image, clearly understood to be a forbidden idol—most likely a Babylonian victory stele from Nebuchadnezzar's capture of the city in 598/7 BCE—and then commands Ezekiel to dig through the wall—much as Babylonian sappers might have done—to see the vile abominations practiced therein. A variety of images come into view, viz., creeping things, beasts, fetishes of the house of Israel, and seventy men of the elders of Israel led by Jaazniah ben Shaphan who claim that Yhwh has abandoned the nation. He also sees women weeping for the Babylonian fertility god, Tammuz, and twenty-five men facing east to worship the rising sun. Altogether, these abominations point to the corruption of the Temple that prompts Yhwh to destroy it.

Readers should note, however, that these images represent Ezekiel's perspectives of the Temple's sanctity in a vision, particularly after the exile of priests such as himself who would have overseen the Temple's sanctity. The presence of Jaazniah ben Shaphan is a particularly telling point since the ben Shaphan family were strong supporters of the priest and prophet Jeremiah and since Shaphan, the father of the family, was Josiah's officer responsible for the Temple renovation.[20] It is unlikely that the Temple wall decorations had changed, but to Ezekiel they were now abominations. The women weeping for Tammuz may well represent Judean mourning rituals for the late summer, and the men worshipping the sun may well represent a standard Judean morning service since Yhwh's daily manifestation in the world was associated with the rising sun in the east (Deut. 33.2; Judg. 5.4; Hab. 3.3). With the exile of the key Zadokite priests, Ezekiel would have viewed the Temple as corrupt—even if little had changed—since those

19. For the following, see my essay, 'The Destruction of Jerusalem as Purification in Ezekiel 8–11', in *Form and Intertextuality*, pp. 144-55.

20. See Jay Wilcoxen, 'The Political Background of Jeremiah's Temple Sermon', in *Scripture in History and Theology: Essays in Honor of J. Coert Rylaarsdam* (ed. A. Merrill and T. Overholt; Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1977), pp. 151-66.

priests left behind, e.g., Jeremiah, would be viewed as inadequate to ensure the Temple's sanctity.

Ezekiel's visionary portrayal of Yhwh's destruction of the Temple once again reflects his priestly perspective insofar as he portrays the Temple's destruction as a ritual act modeled on the scapegoat ritual of atonement for Yom Kippur (Leviticus 16). Ezekiel's heavenly guide calls for six men to emerge, each armed with a club, and another man dressed in white linen with a writing case at his waist. White linen is the characteristic dress of a priest officiating in the Temple. Yhwh appears—again enthroned upon the divine throne chariot of chap. 1—and commands the man dressed in linen to mark the foreheads of those men who moan and groan over the abominations of Israel. After they are marked, the six armed men are commanded to kill all old men, adolescent boys and girls, women, and children in the city because of its iniquity. Here one observes Ezekiel's sense of corporate identity and responsibility, viz., an entire generation of men were responsible for the impurity of the city in Ezekiel's eyes and the people at large, i.e., their elders, wives, and children, suffer death for such abominations whereas the men are kept alive to go into exile. Although such a portrayal appears morally arbitrary, it is in fact based on the conceptualization of the scapegoat ritual of Leviticus 16. Two goats are brought forward on Yom Kippur; one is offered as a *ḥaṭṭ'at* or sin offering on behalf of the people and the other is expelled to the wilderness to symbolically carry away the sins of the nation.

Once the slaughter of the old men, women, and children is complete, Yhwh commands that the man dressed in white linen take coals from between the Cherubim to scatter over the city in an act that resembles the lighting of the sacrificial altar of the Temple. Yhwh's throne chariot then ascends above the city as Yhwh prepares to depart from the now defiled Temple site. Before the throne chariot departs, however, Yhwh declares that some of the men marked earlier for survival will be taken into exile among the nations where they will ultimately form the basis of those would return to Jerusalem to restore the nation with its Temple at the center of creation. Such a portrayal represents Ezekiel's attempt to make theological sense of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. The demise of Jerusalem does not expose Yhwh's lack of power or morality; in Ezekiel's eyes the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple is an act of Yhwh designed to purge the city from its impurity so that it might be reconstituted as the holy center of Yhwh's creation. For Ezekiel, the destruction of the Temple becomes a holy act undertaken by Yhwh.

The balance of the material in chaps. 12–19 then takes up various aspects of Ezekiel's claims that the nation had become impure and that Yhwh was bringing punishment to purge the people. Ezekiel draws on the Passover/ Exodus tradition by calling on the people to take their staff in hand and carry baggage on their back to symbolize going into exile; he condemns

false prophets and diviners; he employs the allegory of a useless vine to portray Jerusalem; another allegory portrays Jerusalem as Yhwh's adulterous wife; a third allegory of the eagles, vines, and cedars portrays Jehoiachin's exile; his instructional speech points to his view that each generation is responsible for its own punishment for sin or life for its righteousness; and two dirges mourn the demise of the Davidic monarch.

A third block or oracles in chaps. 20–23, dated to the seventh year of Jehoiachin's exile or 590 BCE, takes up the punishment of all Israel. This block includes a lengthy assessment of Israel's past and future in which Ezekiel calls for a new Exodus into the wilderness so that Israel might be purged. His oracles concerning Yhwh's sword takes up the punishment of Jerusalem, Ammon, and later Babylon. The oracles concerning bloodshed in Jerusalem highlight the impurity of the city and the need for its purge.

A fourth block in chaps. 24–25, dated to the ninth year of Jehoiachin's exile or 588 BCE, presents Ezekiel's symbolic acts concerning Jerusalem's destruction, including the allegory of the pot with scum burned on its bottom, the death of Ezekiel's wife, and the oracles concerning Yhwh's judgment against Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia for their roles in Jerusalem's demise.

The oracles concerning these nations and those following point to Ezekiel's view that the purging of Jerusalem has implications for Yhwh's judgment against the nations of creation as well, insofar as Babylon will act as Yhwh agent of judgment. Consequently, the following blocks point to judgment against various nations that Ezekiel believes will fall to Babylon. Thus, the fifth block in chaps. 26–28, dated to the eleventh year of Jehoiachin's exile or 586 BCE, calls for the downfall of Tyre and the restoration of Jacob. The sixth block in 29.1-16, dated to the tenth year of Jehoiachin's exile or 587 BCE presents the first oracle against Egypt. The seventh block in 29.17–30.19, dated to the twenty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's exile or 570 BCE, presents a second set of oracles against Egypt. The eighth block in 30.20-26, dated to the eleventh year of Jehoiachin's exile or 586 BCE, presents the first oracle against the Pharaoh of Egypt. The ninth block in Ezekiel 31, dated also to the eleventh year of Jehoiachin's exile, presents a second oracle against Pharaoh. The tenth block in 32.1-16, dated to the twelfth year of Jehoiachin's exile or 585 BCE, presents further oracles against Egypt and Pharaoh. Readers should note, however, that despite Ezekiel's oracles against Egypt and Pharaoh, Babylonia was never able to conquer Egypt. The Persian empire, which conquered and succeeded Babylon, was finally able to conquer Egypt in 525 BCE during the reign of Cambyses son of Cyrus.

The eleventh block of material in 32.17–33.20, dated to the twelfth year of Jehoiachin's exile in 585 BCE, provides a transition between the preceding blocks with oracles concerning the nations and the following blocks

concerning the restoration of Israel and the Temple at the center of creation. The initial portions of the block focus on Egypt's descent into Sheol, the ancient Israelite netherworld, where the Egyptian Pharaoh will see all the nations that have preceded Egypt in death, i.e., Assyria, Elam, Meshech and Tubal, Edom, and the Sidonians, as a means to demonstrate the power of Yhwh over the nations. The second portion of the oracle focuses on Ezekiel's commission as the watchman of Israel, a role that is based on the priestly gatekeepers who ensure the sanctity of the Temple (cf. Ezek. 3.16-21; 1 Chronicles 26). Insofar as the following materials focus on the restoration of Israel and the Temple, Ezekiel's task is to announce the restoration and to oversee the righteousness of the people as the nation and Temple are reestablished.

The twelfth block of material in 33.21–39.29, dated to the twelfth year of Jehoiachin's exile in 585 BCE, then presents a sequence of oracles that outline Yhwh's efforts to purge the land and people of Israel and thereby prepare for the restoration of the future Temple at the center of Israel and all creation.[21] The introductory chronological formula in 33.21-22 notes the arrival of a fugitive from Jerusalem who announces the fall of the city to Ezekiel. At this point, the prophet's mouth is opened so that he may begin to speak the various oracles concerning the purge and restoration that follow. The first oracle in 33.23-33 begins with a warning to the people concerning their need to maintain sanctity in order to possess the land. The oracle quotes a proverb apparently circulating among the people concerning their possession of the land, viz., whereas Abraham was only one man and possessed the land due to divine promise, the current exilic community was many and therefore certainly would possess the land. Ezekiel answers by reiterating his teachings concerning the wickedness of each generation (chap. 18), viz., wickedness will only bring punishment and death, not possession of the land. The people must instead listen for Yhwh's teaching in order to sanctify themselves and prepare for life in the restored land of Israel. The second oracle in chap. 34 then takes up Yhwh's intentions to punish the leadership of Israel and to restore righteous Davidic rule. Ezekiel employs the metaphor of a shepherd who oversees flocks of sheep to make his point. Whereas past leadership failed to assume its responsibilities to care for the nation, Yhwh is bringing punishment to them to purge the leadership of Israel. Yhwh will take charge of the people instead and appoint a righteous Davidic ruler with a *bĕrît šālôm*, a 'covenant of peace', to oversee the people and ensure that they will not be exiled again in keeping with the covenant blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 28–30. The third oracle in 35.1–36.15 focuses on Yhwh's punishment of Edom and restoration of

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21. See my essay, 'The Assertion of Divine Power in Ezekiel 33:21–39:29', in *Form and Intertextuality*, pp. 156-72, for the following.

Israel. This oracle draws on the Pentateuchal tradition that Esau, the frater-
nal twin brother of Jacob, was the eponymous ancestor of Edom and that
Jacob was the eponymous ancestor of Israel. The conflicts and ultimate res-
olution of differences between the two brothers is well known from Genesis
25–35, but the conflicts resurfaced when Edom apparently played an impor-
tant role in assisting the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple
(see Isaiah 34; Jer. 49.7-22; Obadiah; Psalm 137). Ezekiel contrasts the fate
of Edom as Yhwh lays it waste and restores Israel never again to be threat-
ened by the nations. The fourth oracle in 36.16–37.14 takes up Yhwh's
plans to resanctify Israel. The first portion of the oracle focuses on the met-
aphor of Israel as a menstruating woman who is purifying herself at the con-
clusion of her period. Yhwh will grant the people a new heart and spirit so
that they will observe Yhwh's teachings. The second portion of the oracle
focuses on the restoration to life of the dead bones in the valley. Death is the
ultimate impurity in priestly thought and the vision of the dry bones meta-
phorically portrays the purification of the land and nation from death as the
bones, here representing the nation Israel, are brought back to life to recog-
nize Yhwh as L-rd. The fifth oracle in 37.15-27 metaphorically portrays the
reunification of the two sticks, i.e., Joseph or Ephraim and Judah. Such a
portrayal envisions the reunification of the northern kingdom of Israel and
the southern kingdom of Judah that broke apart following the reign of Solo-
mon. This scenario reiterates the ideals of Josiah's restoration that Ezekiel
would have known since his birth, particularly since it calls for the reestab-
lishment of the Davidic king and the placement of Yhwh's divine presence,
symbolized by the restoration of the Temple, in the midst of the restored
Israel.[22] Finally, the famous Gog from Magog oracle in Ezekiel 38–39 por-
trays the aftermath of Yhwh's defeat of this invading hoard. Although many
focus on the identity of Gog from Magog, the oracle simply employs myth-
ological categories to portray Gog from Magog as the enemy monarch and
nations that threaten Israel. Key to this oracle is the purification of the land
from the dead corpses of Gog's army when they are burnt and eaten by the
wild birds and beasts, viz., the animals of creation itself participate in the
purification of the land so that the holy Temple may be reestablished in it in
the following block of material.

The final segment of the book of Ezekiel, dated to the twenty-fifth year
of Jehoiachin's exile in 572 BCE, which would also correspond to Ezekiel's
fiftieth year when he would be expected to retire from active service as a
priest, presents Ezekiel's vision of the restored Temple in Jerusalem at the

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22. See my essay, 'The Royal Oracle in Ezekiel 37:15-28: Ezekiel's Reflection on
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* (LOTHBS, 446; ed.
B. Kelle and M. Moore; London and New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006), pp. 239-53.

center of the restored twelve tribes of Israel and restored and reinvigorated creation. Interpreters such as Rashi and Radak have long noted that Ezekiel's Temple varies from both Solomon's Temple and the Second Temple, prompting them to conclude that Ezekiel's Temple must refer to the third or future Temple that will be established to inaugurate the messianic age in Jewish tradition. Whereas Christian tradition focuses on the Davidic monarch as the key figure of messianic times, Jewish tradition focuses on the Temple and views the monarch as the leading figure among the people who worship at Yhwh's Temple in the world to come or messianic era.

Ezekiel's vision of the Temple begins in 40.1–43.12 with instructions concerning the building of the Temple structure. Ezekiel is guided by a heavenly figure, here described as a man who shines like bronze and who describes to him the various features and measurements of the Temple structure. He begins with the Temple walls, gates, and chambers in 40.5-47 to describe the outer and inner courts of the Temple. Ezekiel 40.48–41.26 focuses on the Temple structure itself, again built according to the three room pattern of Solomon's Temple (see 1 Kings 6), including the *'ûlām* or 'portico' that served as the entry-way to the Temple, the *hêkāl* or the 'Great Hall' that was the main room of the Temple, and the *qōdeš* or 'Shrine' of the Temple which would correspond to the *děbîr* or 'Holy of Holies' of Solomon's Temple where the Ark of the Covenant was once placed. In the absence of the Ark, the Shrine would remain empty now to symbolize Yhwh's invisible presence in the Temple and throughout creation. Ezekiel 42.1-20 describes the chambers built around the Temple structure, and 43.1-12 describes the return of Yhwh's divine presence in the form of the divine throne chariot from Ezekiel 1–3 and 10 to sanctify the Temple itself.

The second segment of Ezekiel's Temple vision appears in 43.13–47.12 with a detailed description of the Temple complex. This segment begins in 43.13-27 with the four-stepped altar like those of Mesopotamia (contra Exod. 20.21-23, which calls for a ramped altar) and the *ḥaṭṭā't* or 'sin offering' that sanctifies it for service. Ezekiel 44.1–46.24 follows with a series of regulations concerning holy service in the Temple, such as the closed eastern gate that is reserved for Yhwh and the ruler, the exclusion of alien idolaters, the role of the Levites in ensuring the sanctity of the Temple precincts, the role of the Zadokite priests who officiate at the altar and the Temple itself, the various offerings presented to Yhwh at the Temple, and the water that wells up from under the Temple to water the Arabah or region of the Dead Sea. The reestablishment of the Temple thereby restores creation when even the Dead Sea becomes a fertile area full of fish.

Finally, Ezek. 47.13–48.35 describes the reestablishment of the land and tribes of all Israel around the restored Jerusalem Temple. Each tribe is granted its own portion, with Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah to the north of Jerusalem, and Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun,

and Gad to the south. The tribe of Levi is placed around Jerusalem in the center, with special reserves for the Levites, the Zadokites, and the Davidic ruler. With the restoration of the Temple, creation at large, and the twelve tribes of Israel around the Temple, Ezekiel's vision concludes in 48.35 with the statement, *Yhwh šāmmâ*, 'Yhwh is there', to signify the restoration of sanctity to the world in the aftermath of the divine punishment designed to purge the world of its impurity through the Babylonian exile.

<p style="text-align:center">III</p>

Ezekiel's eschatological perspective is determined by a combination of factors, including his identity as Zadokite priest of the Jerusalem Temple, his birth and upbringing in the context of King Josiah's program of religious reform and national restoration, and his unexpected exile to Babylonia in 597 BCE. Overall, Ezekiel draws upon his background to construct a theological worldview that both embodies the principles of Josiah's reform and accounts for the very changed situation of Judah prompted by the early death of the king and Judah's subjugation to Babylonia. Ezekiel views Yhwh as the author and sovereign of creation and Yhwh's Temple in Jerusalem as the holy center of both Israel and creation at large. He accounts for Jerusalem's destruction and Judah's suffering during his lifetime by arguing that the nation had failed to observe Yhwh's Torah and thereby rendered the Temple impure. In order to restore the sanctity of creation, Ezekiel maintains that Yhwh would purge the Temple, Israel/Judah, and creation at large and restore the holy Temple at the center of a reconstituted twelve tribes of Israel and a reinvigorated creation.

Difference among the Distaff
A Reading of Exodus 1.1–2.10

Phyllis Trible

For better or worse, making a difference disrupts the status quo. Disruption gives rise to stories even as stories return the favor. This essay explores three stories in the book of Exodus (1.8-14; 1.15-22; 2.1-10). The explorations combine three approaches: literary analysis, theological reflection, and feminist perspective. The approaches correspond to scholarly interests of Tamara Eskenazi, in whose honor the essay appears.[1]

Egypt in the time of Israelite slavery provides the literary setting.[2] Beginning in an environment of men, the action moves to a world of women. Often the characters come in pairs, a device of biblical storytelling.[3] Comparison and contrast, compatibility and conflict make the difference—for better or worse—as the plots of the stories unfold.

Story One (Exodus 1.8-14)

A transitional paragraph prefaces Story One (1.1-7).[4] It links genealogically, productively, and peacefully the opening of Exodus with the ending

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1. The choice of these stories recognizes, in part, the work of Professor Eskenazi as Editor of *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* (New York: URJ Press and Women of Reform Judaism, 2008). My own interest in these stories has grown across decades, beginning with a paragraph in Phyllis Trible, 'Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41 (1973), pp. 30-48 (34).

2. Debate about the historicity of the Exodus stories is not a topic for this essay. But cf. Carol Meyers, *Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1-12; Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), pp. 48-71; Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), pp. 7-14.

3. On biblical storytelling, see, *inter alios*, Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), esp. pp. 13-92; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

4. On the genre of transition, see George W. Coats, *Exodus 1–18: The Forms of Old Testament Literature*, IIA (ed. Rolf P. Knierim and Gene M. Tucker*;* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 21-28.

of Genesis (50.14-26). The transition moves first from the sojourn of Jacob and his sons in Egypt to their deaths, particularly the death of Joseph (1.1-6). The closing words then move beyond these deaths to stress, through four verbs, not just continuing but abundant life for the Israelites (1.7).[5] They were fruitful (*prh*); they multiplied (*sr'*); they increased (*rbh*); and they grew (*'sm*). In time, these signs of vitality threaten the Egyptians, as Story One discloses.

This story features human characters; the divine does not participate. The characters include an unnamed Egyptian king, his people, and the Israelite people. Although references to procreation among the Israelites imply gender distinctions (1.10, 12), a male cast prevails. Women do not appear. Of the characters, the king alone speaks, but only once. Otherwise, the narrator tells the story.

Design and Structure. Following the introduction, four movements report the change that comes for the Israelites after the death of Joseph and with the ascendancy of the new king: royal discernment and decision; obedient response by the Egyptians; consequences for the Israelites and the Egyptians; the denouement of harsh work for the Israelites. A translation, modeled in part on Hebrew syntax, shows structure and content. It includes the underlining of repetitions.[6]

Narrated Introduction (1.8)

> And arose a new king over Egypt
> who did not know Joseph.

Direct Speech of Royal Discernment and Decision (1.9-10)

> And he said to his people (*'am*):
> 'Behold (*hinneh*), [the] people (*'am*), <u>sons of Israel,</u>
> [are] more numerous and powerful than we.

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5.   See U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1967), pp. 8-9.

6.   Features of Hebrew syntax that appear in translations throughout this article include the usual order of a verb preceding its noun subject; the use of parataxis, repetition, and inclusion. Overall, the translation principle used is formal equivalence (or correspondence) in contrast to 'dynamic equivalence'. On these matters, see Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), pp. 91-225 *passim*. On parataxis, cf. Hannibal Hamlin and Norman W. Jones (eds.), *The King James Bible after 400 Years: Literary, Linguistic, and Cultural Influences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 8-11; Robert Alter, *Pen of Iron: American Prose and the King James Bible* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 47-49, 146-83.

> Come, we must deal wisely (*hkm*) with him
> or he will increase (*rbh*) and he will be—if they call war –
> he will join, indeed he with those opposing us –
> and he will fight against us
> and he will go up (*'lh*) from the land.'

Narrated Response of the Egyptians (1.11a)

> And they put over him masters of slaves
> in order to afflict him with their labors.

Narrated Consequences for the Israelites and Egyptians (1.11b-12)

> And he built cities of storage for Pharaoh—Pithom and Rameses.
> But as they oppressed him, so (*ken*) he increased (*rbh*) and so (*ken*) he spread.
> And they dreaded the presence of the sons of Israel.

Narrated Denouement (1.13-14)

> And-**worked** (*'bd*) the Egyptians the sons of Israel *with harshness* (*parek*)
> and they made bitter their lives with hard **work** in mortar and in bricks
> and with all of **work** in the field –
> all of their **work**
> that they **worked** with them *with harshness* (*parek*).

Narrated Introduction (1.8). 'And arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph.' The introduction begins the pairing of opposites. The new king, unnamed, lives; Joseph, named, is dead. The new king holds absolute power; Joseph's limited power is no more. The new king does not know Egyptian history; the descendants of Joseph know their past.[7] Juxtaposed to the living monarch, the dead Joseph hovers over the story—perhaps even in the subsequent vocabulary of king and narrator.

Direct Speech of Royal Discernment and Decision (1.9-10). 'And he said to his people.' The narrator introduces the unnamed king who becomes the first character to speak in Exodus. The noun 'his-people' (*'am*) initiates another pairing of opposites, which the speech amplifies. Beginning with the emphatic particle 'behold' (*hinneh*), the king speaks to 'his-people' (*'am*) against '[the] people (*'am*), sons of Israel'.[8] (Given the male orientation of the story, the translation 'sons' fits the context better than the inclusive 'children'.) Contrast continues. People oppose people. To cite the

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7. Cf. Douglas A. Knight and Amy-Jill Levine, *The Meaning of the Bible* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), pp. 239-40.

8. On the particle 'behold' (*hinneh*), see Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), pp. 168-71; Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983), pp. 62-63.

danger posed, the king draws upon verbs from the opening paragraph (1.7). He asserts that the Israelites are 'more numerous (*rab*) and more powerful' (*'sm*) than the Egyptian people. 'Come' (*habah*), another emphatic particle, leads to his reasoning and decision. Dealing with 'him' (1.10), says the king, requires wisdom (*hkm*), lest 'he' increase more, join the enemies of Egypt, fight against the nation, and 'go up' (*'lh*) from the land.

Irony attends these royal words, along with conflicted reasoning. On the one hand, the king fears the growing number and power of the Israelites: resident foreigners who lack a leader but whose size and strength threaten the native population. On the other hand, the king finds their size and strength valuable for his building projects and so fears that 'he' may 'go up' from the land. (The verb 'go up' anticipates the exodus.[9]) Confusion and conflict mark the new king.

In addition to ironic and conflicted reasoning, the king's use of pronouns merits attention. With one exception, his pronoun references to the Israelite people occur in the singular form, 'him' or 'he'. Grammatically, this form has as its antecedent the singular noun *'am* (people), in contrast to its plural appositive, 'sons of Israel' (1.9). Although translations substitute the plural pronouns 'them' and 'they' throughout the king's speech,[10] his use of the singular may carry a nuance that reaches behind *'am* to the introduction. That nuance pertains to Joseph. For the new king to 'deal wisely' with the 'sons of Israel' is to take into account their ancestor Joseph whom the king knows not. Through the pronouns 'him' and 'he' echoes of Joseph may resound.[11] These echoes correspond to the pairing of the new king and Joseph. As opposites, they embody the conflict between Egypt and Israel.

Narrated Response of the Egyptians (1.11a). Reporting the Egyptians' response to their king's words, the narrator continues to use singular pronouns for the Israelite people. 'And they put over him slave masters in order to afflict him with their labors.' This response corresponds in form to the introduction (1.8). Between these reports come the king's words. They account for the change that turns resident foreigners into slaves. Consequences follow.

Narrated *Consequences for the Israelites and the Egyptians (1.11b-12).* For the Israelites, the consequences yield production, oppression, and progeny (the last a subtle acknowledgement of a female subtext). 'He' (i.e., the

9.   See Walter Brueggemann, 'The Book of Exodus', in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, I (ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 694.

10.   E.g., NJV and NRSV. But see Everett Fox, who translates the singular forms as 'it' (*The Five Books of Moses* [New York: Schocken Books, 1995], p. 259); cf. Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), p. 308, esp. n. 10.

11.   Cf. Terence Fretheim, *Exodus* (Interpretation; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1991), p. 27: 'Joseph is more than a reference to the individual; he is the one in and through whom God has preserved the people alive' (Gen. 45.5-7; 50.20).

people, descendants of Joseph) built for Pharaoh the store cities Pithom and Rameses. Though the title 'Pharaoh', meaning 'great house', enhances the king, the story suggests his ineptitude.[12] As royal oppression ensued, so 'he' increased and 'he' spread. For the third time (cf. vv. 7, 10) the verb 'increase' (*rbh*) occurs. Oppression has not halted procreation. Wise dealing remains in doubt.

So dire the situation, reports the narrator, that the king and his people 'dreaded the presence of the sons of Israel' (v. 12). The phrase 'sons of Israel' points in two directions: back to the beginning of the king's words (1.9) and forward to the beginning of the denouement (1.13). The first direction forms an inclusio. It encloses three motifs: the singular pronouns evoking the ancestor Joseph; Egyptian fear, power, and dread; and Israelite oppression, strength, and fertility. The second direction links, in sequential sentences, Egyptian dread of the 'sons of Israel' with Egyptian harshness toward the 'sons of Israel'. That link leads to the resolution.

Narrated Denouement (1.13-14). Through the literary devices of repetition and inclusion, the denouement emphasizes oppression. Five times the word 'work' (*'bd*), as verb and noun, underscores the forced labor of the Israelites in building and in the field. Reference to these two forms of labor suggests gender. Construction belongs solely to men; field labor may include women.[13] Underscoring the difficult work, the phrase 'with harshness' opens and closes the unit.[14]

But closure does not end the matter. After all, while working for a king who treats them 'with harshness', the sons (and daughters) of Israel have continued to increase in number and strength. The king's decisions have not made the difference he desires. His wish to 'deal wisely' carries its own folly. Trying again, he turns to murder—and seeks the help of women. This turn discloses the deeper fear of the new king.

Story Two (Exodus 1.15-22)

Story Two consists of two episodes (1.15-17, 18-19) plus conclusion (1.20-21) and postlude (1.22). Overall, attention shifts from the threat yet usefulness of adult slaves to the fruits of their reproductive power. Perhaps among

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12. On the meaning of the title 'Pharaoh' and the names Pithom and Ramses, see Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, pp. 18-20.

13. See Adele Berlin, 'Giving Birth to a Nation', in *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* (ed. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Andrea L. Weiss; New York: URJ Press and Women of Reform Judaism, 2008), p. 308.

14. Many commentators have observed these repetitions; see, e.g., Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, p. 12; Meyers, *Exodus*, pp. 14f. Cf. Fretheim, who writes, without explanation, that 'a chiastic structure overloads the sentence' (*Exodus*, p. 30).

the male babies of the Israelites a savior figure will emerge to become the leader they have lacked since the death of Joseph. Conflict intensifies, both interpersonally and theologically. The king continues to speak as new characters appear: women, who also speak, and God, whom the narrator invokes.

Episode One (1.15-17)

> And said [the] king of Egypt to midwives [of?] the Hebrews
> > whose name of the first Shiphrah
> > > and name of the second Puah.
>
> And he said:
> > 'When you help in childbirth the Hebrew women
> > > and you see the delivery-stool,
> > if a son (*ben*) he [is], then you kill him,
> > but if a daughter (*bat*) she [is], then let her live.'
>
> But <u>feared the midwives the God</u>
> > and did not do as he told to them, king of Egypt.
> And they let live the boys (*yeled*).[15]

Boundaries of class and gender meet as the king deigns to address midwives. Over against his anonymity (itself a slight), they bear proper Semitic names: Shiphrah ('Beautiful') and Puah ('Girl').[16] Pairing begins for the distaff. Whether the king goes to the women or summons them to come before him, the narrative does not specify. Whether the midwives are Egyptians or Hebrews, it leaves inconclusive. Ambiguous wording yields 'Hebrew midwives' versus 'midwives of the Hebrews'.[17] Either way, the king shrinks in stature as he speaks to them. Contrasts in status, class, gender, and perhaps ethnicity—all present within the first verse of the story—suggest that royalty does not control these women.[18] Royalty needs them.

The unnamed king orders Shiphrah and Puah to kill Hebrew sons (*ben*) upon their births. Daughters (*bat*) they may let live (v. 16). Familial language splits the pairing of offspring. Sexual identity determines death or life for Hebrew babies. The midwives say nothing. Instead, the narrator intervenes with a theological report of their disobedience, a report that substitutes the generic 'boys' (*yeled*) for the familial 'sons' (*ben*). 'But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt told them. And

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15. Depending on context and content, the meaning of *yeled* shifts from baby to boy to young man. Accordingly, translations of the word vary in this article.

16. See Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, p. 25.

17. On the identity of the midwives, see Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), p. 16; Meyers, *Exodus*, p. 36.

18. On the meaning of these Semitic names and on the ambiguity of their ethnic identity, see Berlin, 'Exodus', in *The Torah*, p. 309; Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, pp. 24-25. On class conflict, see Brueggemann, 'The Book of Exodus', pp. 695-96.

they let live the boys' (v. 16). This sentence pairs as opposites the God of the Israelites and the king of Egypt (though they do not interact). For the midwives, fear (worship) of 'the-God', who has neither spoken nor acted, negates the royal command, thereby affirming life, not death. The motif 'fear of God', with its consequences, completes the episode. (At the end of the entire story the motif reappears to form a theological inclusio.)

Similar to, yet different from, Episode One, Episode Two continues the exchange between the king and the midwives:

Episode Two (1.18-19)

> And called (*qr'*) [the] king of Egypt to the midwives,
>   and he said (*'mr*) to them:
> 'Why did you do this deed,
>   and let live the boys (*yeled*)?'

> And said (*'mr*) the midwives to Pharaoh:
>   'Because (*ki*) not like the women of the Egyptians
>   [are] the Hebrews;
>   because (*ki*) vigorous [are] they.
>   Before comes to them the midwife, they give birth.'

That the king 'called' the midwives before 'he said' to them suggests that this time they come before him, perhaps a nod to his royal stature (cf. v. 15). But his speaking directly to them, as in Episode One, tends to diminish his position while elevating theirs. 'Why did you do this deed and let the boys (*yeled*) live?' From the familial identity 'sons' (*ben*; cf. v. 16), the king switches to the generic description 'boys'.

To introduce the answer, the narrator switches the royal terminology from 'the king' to 'Pharaoh', a switch that occurred also in Story One (1.11).[19] Replying to Pharaoh, the midwives do not explain their behavior with the theological reason (fear of God), which the narrator gave earlier, but rather with a biological reason. It comes in no small irony. Acting and speaking in concert, these women pair through clever contrast, even opposition, two groups of women. Unlike Egyptian women, Hebrew women are 'vigorous' (*hayot*) and give birth quickly, before midwives arrive. The adjective translated 'vigorous' relates to life. Whether in this context it carries negative or positive nuances scholars debate. Are Hebrew women so physically fit that they do not require midwives? Are Hebrew women 'like wild animals' giving birth naturally?[20] Do the midwives belittle Egyptian women and lift up

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19. Source critics account for these changes in vocabulary as the blending of the J and E documents, with J using 'Pharaoh' and E 'the king of Egypt'. Cf. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, pp. 7-8.

20. On being in good physical condition, see Cassuto, *Exodus*, p. 15*;* Fretheim, *Exodus*, p. 34; on the analogy with wild animals, see Berlin, in *The Torah*, pp. 309-10.

Hebrew women or the reverse? Which group is being disparaged and which commended? However derogatory the comparison, for whichever group, it suggests a connection between women of different cultures. They know about one another (unless the midwives invented the retort). For these midwives, difference among the distaff yields division and connection, deception and cooperation, derision and compassion—all in the service of life.

The clever reply of Shiphrah and Puah stymies the Pharaoh. He says nothing, even as in Episode One (v. 17) they did not reply to his instructions. In both instances the narrator takes over to give the theological rationale. This time that rationale shapes the conclusion of the story. Not only does it repeat the motif of fear of God but it enlarges on the consequences for the people and the midwives.

Conclusion (1.20-21)

> And good was God to the midwives
>   and [God] increased (*rbh*) the people
>   and they grew more.
> And it happened because (*ki*) <u>feared the midwives the God</u>
>   that he made for them houses.

The verb 'to be good' (*tob*) colors the conclusion. It hails God's gift of progeny. Specifying the recipients comes in an imperfect but nonetheless chiastic order: midwives, people, people, midwives. In the first half, God was good to the midwives and God increased (*rbh*) the people. For the fourth time in the story the verb 'increase' (*rbh*) underscores the motif of progeny. The narrator used it in the transitional paragraph (v. 7); the king in speaking to his people (v. 10); the narrator in reporting on Hebrew labor (v. 12); and the narrator, this time with God as its subject (v. 20).

In the second half of the chiastic ordering, the focus begins with the people. They grew more (*'sm*).[21] Then the focus expands to the midwives. Completing a theological inclusio, the narrator repeats verbatim the motif that appeared in the ending of Episode One: 'and feared the midwives the God.' As reward for their fear (worship) of God, God 'made for them houses' (i.e., families). The attribution of 'houses' to these women counters the androcentric environment of the story.[22]

On emending *hayot* (lively) to *hayyot* (animals), see Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), pp. 25-26. On the problem of the emendation, see Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, p. 6 n.19 and the reference cited there.

21. Note that the singular noun 'the people' (*'am*) becomes the plural 'they grew' (*'sm*) in the next line. Cf. the discussion above on 1.9-10.

22. See Berlin, in *The Torah*, p. 310; Knight and Levine, *The Meaning of the Bible*, p. 241.

At the end of Episode One, the midwives let the Hebrew boys live; at the end of Episode Two, God makes for the midwives their own families. In both episodes the deeds and words of two women who fear God yield new life. Yet this theological conclusion does not end the story. Pharaoh—himself the 'great house' who is divine—will not give up. He gets the last word. It extends beyond Shiphrah and Puah to 'all his people'.

Postlude (1.22)

> And ordered (*swh*) Pharaoh to all his people, saying,
>   'Every son (*ben*) born…into the Nile you throw him
>   but every daughter (*bat*) you let live.'

Although these last words lie outside the literary and theological structure of the fear of God (1.17, 21), in the overall structure of Episode One they form an inclusio with the first words of 'the king of Egypt', words to the midwives (1.15, 16, 22). Royal words open and close the story. The verbs introducing these two direct speeches escalate from the ordinary 'said' (*'mr*, 1.15, 18) to the mandatory 'ordered' (*swh*, v. 22), even as the addressees expand from the midwives to 'all' the people. As Pharaoh hardens his word, he extends his orders.

In the postlude, as in the opening speech (v. 16), the familial language 'son' (*ben*) and 'daughter' (*bat*) returns. Though the verbs with 'son' as their object differ—'kill him' versus 'into the Nile throw him'—the intent remains the same: death for newborn sons. Though in the second instance the text does not specify that the intended sons are Hebrews, the context secures the reading.[23] As for daughters, in both instances 'let live' gives the royal decision (vv. 16, 22). The irony of it awaits the next story.[24] Meanwhile, in the land of Hebrew bondage, sexual identity continues to determine life and death for the newborn. Pharaoh's fear of a male rival persists. And beneath that fear lurks a deeper rivalry: Pharaoh versus the God of Israel.

Story Three (Exodus 2.1-10)

In Story Three the opposition that the midwives set up between Hebrew and Egyptian child bearers dissolves. Despite danger and the unknown, women again affirm life over death. Despite divisions of ethnicity, class, culture, religion, and politics, they work together. Despite a world dominated by men, they prevail. Overall, despite three stories that open and close with male references, women continue to spin the difference.

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23. The Septuagint and some other translations (e.g., NAB, NRSV) add the words 'to the Hebrews'. Cf. Childs, *Exodus*, p. 17.

24. On ironies that abound throughout this story, see Fretheim, *Exodus*, pp. 28, 31-35.

Unlike Stories One and Two, Story Three features not the king of Egypt (the Pharaoh) but his daughter. Like the first story, it does not invoke God; like the second, it highlights female characters (though unnamed). A preface (2.1), three episodes (2.2-4, 5-8a, 8b-9) and a conclusion (2.10) structure the story.

The preface announces a marriage.

Preface (2.1)

> And went a man (*'is*) from the house of Levi
> and took a daughter (*bat*) of Levi.

Though neither character is named, Levite identity assures a proper marriage and a proper lineage for any offspring. Beyond that commonality, however, differences surface. A noun of independent adulthood (*'is*, man) identifies the male; a noun of relational subordination (*bat*, daughter) identifies the female. He is the subject of two verbs ('went' and 'took') and she the object of one ('took'). Yet never again does the man appear in the story. The daughter endures. She acquires independent status.

Episode One (2.2-4)

In Episode One, the 'daughter' becomes 'the woman' (*ha-'issa*). Nine active verbs secure her presence, perspective, and action.

> And the woman **conceived** and **bore** a son (*ben*).
> And she **saw** him—how beautiful (*tob*) he [was] –
> and she **hid** him three months.
> And when not **able** any longer to hide him,
> she **took** (*lqh*) for him an ark (*teba)* of papyrus
> and **sealed** it with tar and pitch.
> And she **put** in it the baby (*yeled)*
> and **put** it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile (2.2-3).

These maternal actions move between life and death. In cradle or coffin (the ark), the living son waits on the waters decreed to drown him (cf. 1.22).[25]

A second female, identified by relational language, enters the story.

> And stood his sister (*'ahot*) from a distance
> to know what would happen to him (2.4).

Although the announcement of the son's birth, occurring just after the preface reports the levitical marriage, implies that he is the firstborn, his sister's

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25. Many scholars observe that the word *teba* occurs only here and in the story of Noah. For special links in meaning between the two arks, see, e.g., Cassuto, *Exodus*, pp. 18-19; Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, pp. 28-29; Meyers, *Exodus*, p. 43; Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible*, p. 27; Knight and Levine, *The Meaning of the Bible*, pp. 67, 241-42.

appearance shows that he is not. Moreover, the absence of the Levite man from the rest of the story raises further suspicion about the preface. Perhaps an editorial addition, it validates the priestly credentials of the son. Beyond that point, the story focuses on women. They care for the newborn baby (*yeled*).[26] Indeed, his sister becomes the link between 'a daughter of Levi' and her artistic counter, 'the daughter of Pharaoh', who now enters the story.

Episode Two (2.5-8a)
Paralleling in form and content the opening of Episode One, Episode Two secures the presence, perspective, and action of the 'daughter of Pharaoh'. Female attendants accompany her, even as the baby's sister attended the mother. As nine active verbs in rapid succession depicted the baby's mother (the daughter of Levi), so nine active verbs in rapid succession depict the daughter of Pharaoh. Verbally the daughters match. Yet, unlike the earlier depiction, this one concludes with direct discourse. The daughter of Pharaoh speaks first in the story, probably to her attendants.

> And **went down** the daughter of Pharaoh to **bathe** in the Nile –
>   her attendants walking along the bank of the Nile.
> And she **saw** the ark (*teba*) among the reeds,
>   and she **sent** her maid.
> And she **took** (*lqh*) it; and she **opened** it, and she **saw** him, the baby (*yeled*).
>   And behold (*hinneh*), the child (*na'ar*) crying.
> And she **pitied** him and she **said:**
>   'From the babies (*yeled*) of the Hebrews is this!' (2.5-6).

Paired in structure and content, two daughters counter each other. One is Hebrew; the other Egyptian. One slave; the other free. One common; the other royal. One poor; the other rich. One relinquishing; the other finding. One silent; the other speaking. One is one and one the other. Who will bring the twain together?

Structure and content give the answer. Mediating between the daughters is 'his sister'.[27] Although she too is a daughter, sororal language underscores her relationship to the baby. At the end of Episode One (2.4), 'his sister' appeared 'from a distance', just after a daughter of Levi placed the child in the river (2.2-3) and just before the daughter of Pharaoh discovered him, at the beginning of Episode Two (2.5-6). Now, at the end of Episode

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26. On the translation of *yeled* as 'baby', see above n. 15.

27. With reference to such texts as Exod. 15.20, Num. 12.1, and 1 Chron. 6.3, the 'sister' is usually identified as Miriam. See, e.g., Berlin, in *The Torah*, p. 311. For an exposition of Miriam's story, beginning with this unnamed 'sister', see Phyllis Trible, 'Bringing Miriam out of the Shadows', *Bible Review* 5 (February 1989), pp. 13-25, 34 (14-15, 34).

Two, 'his sister' reappears to initiate a conversation with Egyptian royalty. This 'sister', whose own life the Pharaoh has spared, works to save the life of her baby brother, whom the Pharaoh has ordered drowned.

Nuances in the sister's words show her as a skilled mediator.

> And asked his sister to the daughter of Pharaoh:
> 'Shall I go and call (*qr'*) <u>for you</u> (*lak*)
>   a woman (*'issa*) nursing (*ynq*) from the Hebrews
> and she nurses <u>for you</u> (*lak*) the baby (*yeled*)?' (2.7).

The sister's reference to 'the Hebrews' repeats the noun the princess used to identify the baby. The question the sister asks begins to shape his future, which in turn involves the future of his people. But the question does not disclose familial relationships. The sister neither identifies herself nor indicates that 'a woman' is the baby's own mother. By a shrewd choice of vocabulary—what she says and what she says not—the sister protects all the characters. She avoids arousing suspicion, reservation, or resistance on the part of Pharaoh's daughter. Using the interrogative form, she offers assistance to royalty while respecting its power to decide. Moreover, her question builds on the pity that the princess has expressed for the baby. By putting the phrase 'for you' immediately after the verbs 'call' (*qr'*) and 'nurse' (*ynq*), the sister expresses solicitude and offers servitude. In numerous ways, without offending the princess, 'his sister' seizes the moment. Well crafted, her words propose a perfect arrangement for the paired yet contrasting daughters. The succinct royal response, 'Go' (*hlk*, 2.8a), confirms the arrangement. Mediating between two daughters, a Hebrew slave girl has promoted her mother, protected her brother, and persuaded an Egyptian princess.

Episode Three (2.8b-9). Following the direct command, 'Go', the narrator reports the mediating action:

> And went the young woman
>   and called the mother of the baby (*yeled*) (2.8b).

Innovation and repetition play with vocabulary. 'Shall I go (*hlk*) and call (*qr'*) for you a woman (*'issa*) nursing from the Hebrews …?', his sister has asked (2.7). But now 'the young woman' (*'alma*)—not 'his sister' (*'ahot*)—went (*hlk*) and called (*qr'*). An independent description replaces a derivative identity, though the verbs remain the same. The object of 'call' changes, however, from the unidentified 'woman nursing from the Hebrews' to the specified 'mother of the baby'. The maternal noun signals the beautiful irony of the proposal. 'A woman nursing from the Hebrews' is the baby's own mother. Having completed her work, the young woman (his sister) leaves the story.

Two daughters meet to work out a plan. Whether Pharaoh's daughter knows that the woman is the baby's mother, the story does not say. Its

silence suggests that she does not, and her subsequent words tend to confirm the suggestion. With a request and a promise, she sets the terms.

> And said to her the daughter of Pharaoh:
>   'Cause to go (*hlk*) this baby (*yeled*)
>   and nurse (*ynq*) him for me,
>   and I (*'ani*), I will pay your wage' (2.9a).

In hiring a surrogate nurse, Pharaoh's daughter begins with the causative imperative of the verb 'go' (*hlk*), the verb that characters and narrator use repeatedly (cf. 2.7, 8, 8). The promise of wages she underscores with the independent, emphatic pronoun *'ani* (I). While apparent to the reader, the irony of offering money to the baby's mother eludes the princess.[28]

The daughter of Pharaoh sets the terms; the daughter of Levi carries them out. As in her earlier appearance, this second woman does not speak. Instead, the narrator reports her compliance, albeit with a change in vocabulary. The royal imperative 'cause to go' becomes the common indicative 'take'. As for the woman's receiving a wage, nothing is said.

> And took (*lqh*) the woman (*'issa*) the baby (*yeled*),
>   and she nursed (*ynq*) him (2.9b).

Here the verb 'take' completes its journey. First, the woman 'took' for her son an ark of papyrus (Episode One, 2.3). Correspondingly, the daughter of Pharaoh 'took' the ark and found the baby therein (Episode Two, 2.6). Now, after these two females collaborate, the woman 'took' back her baby and nursed him (Episode Three, 2.9). His journey has come full circle. Where he began, he is.[29] When next he appears, he is no longer a baby.

Much as the verb 'take' encircles the journey of the baby, the noun 'the woman' encircles his mother's activities. Occurring at the opening of Episode One and the ending of Episode Three, it forms an inclusio of fulfillment. Two sets of verbs enhance this structural and thematic connection. At the opening, 'the woman conceived and bore a son' (2.2). At the end, 'the woman took the child and nursed him' (2.9b). Within the inclusio she is called 'mother' once. Beyond the inclusio her appearance shrinks.

Conclusion (2.10). Passage of time leads to the conclusion. Beginning with the announcement that 'the baby grew' (i.e., was weaned), the narrator reports on the two women—until the last sentence, which the daughter of Pharaoh speaks.

> And grew the baby
>   and she brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh
>   and he became to her as a son (*ben*).

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28. On wet-nurse agreements in the ancient Near East, see Berlin, in *The Torah*, p. 312.

29. See Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible*, p. 28.

> And she called his name Moses.
>> And she said,
>>> 'for (*ki*) from the waters I drew him' (2.10).

Whatever fulfillment has come to the Hebrew woman yields to relinquishment. Having completed her nursing responsibility (cf. 2.8b-9), she shrinks to the single verb 'brought'. The birth mother brings her child (no longer a baby) to his adoptive mother. Following this action, she departs the story.[30] Thereupon, for the second time, the filial noun 'son' occurs. At the beginning (2.2), a daughter of Levi bore a son (*ben*); at the close (2.10), that son becomes 'as a son (*ben*)' to the daughter of Pharaoh. The loyalty of disparate mothers prevails. Both save the newborn. In their pairing and their parting, these females cooperate for life.

Present, past, and future intertwine as the adoptive mother takes over. The narrator reports that she named her son 'Moses'.[31] Lack of names for all the other characters highlights this present act as it testifies to the power of the princess. Derived from an Egyptian word meaning 'to beget a child', the name Moses plays in sound upon the Hebrew verb *mashah*, meaning to 'draw out'. But the association is skewed. An active, not a passive, voice, the grammatical form *mashah* means 'the drawer out'. This meaning does not fit Moses, 'the drawn out'.[32]

Speaking for herself, the princess explains the name through a causative clause that describes her past act: 'for [or because] from the waters I drew him.' She is 'the drawer-out'. Her explanation anticipates the future. Having delivered this 'son' from the reeds (*suf*) at the Nile River, the princess models what Moses will become when he delivers the Hebrew people at the sea of reeds (*suf*; cf. 14.21-31). Thereby emerges another pairing, from various angles: adoptive mother and adopted son; Egyptian and Hebrew; royalty and slave; deliverer and delivered. 'From the waters I drew him.' Having spoken the last words in the story, Pharaoh's daughter departs, even as the boy's sister and mother have done. Unlike them, however, she never returns.[33] From here on, Moses, son and brother, becomes the central human character. Irony abounds.[34]

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30. But cf. Exod. 6.20 and Num. 26.59 on Jochebed, the mother of Moses.

31. On the naming formula and the power of the namer, cf. Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 98-100, 133-34.

32. Cf. Cassuto, *Exodus*, p. 20; Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, p. 32.

33. See above nn. 27 and 30.

34. On the nature and number of ironies in Stories Two and Three, see Fretheim, *Exodus*, pp. 31-38.

Summary Reflections

Three stories report the plight of the Israelite people in Egypt after Joseph and his generation have died. Not surprisingly in an androcentric world, each of them opens and closes with male characters. The first begins with a new king and ends with the hard labor of male slaves. The second begins with the king speaking and ends with Pharaoh commanding. The third begins with a man from the house of Levi and ends with the grown son Moses. Yet surprisingly, within the male enclosures of Stories Two and Three, women take charge.

Shiphrah and Puah, a Levite daughter, the sister of the newborn baby, the daughter of Pharaoh and her attendants: these women disrupt structures and strictures of male dominion and might. They cross racial, ethnic, class, cultural, religious, and political boundaries. They trick, deceive, and defy. They plan, negotiate, and prevail. The politics of the empire they undercut. Though these women do not overthrow patriarchal rule (an impossible feat), neither do they allow this rule to overthrow them. Within the limits imposed, they persevere for more excellent ways. Through acts that move toward subversion, they make a difference. If Pharaoh had recognized the power of women (including his own daughter), he might well have reversed his decree and had daughters killed rather than sons. But God, the counter to Pharaoh—whether present (1.15-22) or absent (1.8-14), whether active (1.21) or inactive (2.1-10)—God moves in mysterious ways.[35]

From a human perspective, the Exodus narrative of deliverance owes its beginnings to this motley group of women. Differences among the distaff make the difference for life. And despite the dominance of male rule to this day, that difference persists. It disrupts the status quo, for the better. Accordingly, in the company of those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, we honor the contributions of Tamara Eskenazi to biblical interpretation.

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35. For positive feminist readings of the 'twelve daughters' who intervene to save Moses, see Ulrike Bechmann, *Zwölf Frauen um Moses* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibel-werk, 2008); see Jopie Siebert-Hommes, 'But If She Be a Daughter … She May Live! "Daughters" and "Sons" in Exodus 1–2', in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 63-74. For a feminist switch from a positive to a negative reading of the stories studied here, see the two articles by J. Cheryl Exum: '"You Shall Let Every Daughter Live": A Study of Exodus 1.8–2.10'', and 'Second Thoughts about Secondary Characters: Women in Exodus 1.8–2.10', in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, pp. 37-61, 75-87. But cf. Meyers, *Exodus*, p. 37 n.16. For positive readings of midrashic interpre-tations, see Naomi Graetz, 'Did Miriam Talk Too Much?', in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, pp. 231-42; also Shera Aranoff Tuchman and Sandra Rapo-port, *Moses' Women* (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 2008), pp. 9-86.

AMOS AND THE CULT

Gene M. Tucker

Few could argue with the proposition that the biblical prophets and certain texts in particular have made a difference throughout the history of Western culture. Prophetic words have served as calls for social justice, even defining movements such as the Social Gospel and the civil rights movement under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Some prophetic texts have supported criticism of ritual, the practice of worship, and the priesthood, and have shaped beliefs and practices in both Christianity and Judaism. In the popular mind, the biblical prophets are seen as opposed to ritual and the priesthood. And in many instances they were. But to what extent does Amos reject religious practices?

Our goal here is to examine the perspective of Amos in particular toward the cult. Given the history of the development of the book of Amos, we will need to distinguish when possible between the perspective of the prophet and the point of view of the book in its final form. More accurately: We will attempt to distinguish between the earliest tradition of the prophetic words and the subsequent additions to that tradition. In that earliest discernible tradition, the words of a prophet from Judah were addressed to and against Israel. So it is the religious practices of the Northern Kingdom that the prophet has in view. Several texts in particular express the prophet's critique of particular cultic practices.

Amos 4.4-5

> Come to Bethel—and transgress;
>> to Gilgal—and multiply transgressions;
> bring your sacrifices every morning,
>> your tithes every three days;
>> bring a thank offering of leavened bread,
>> and proclaim freewill offerings, publish them,
>> for so you love to do, O people of Israel
>>> says the Lord God.

These verses are set off sharply from what precedes in vv. 1-3 but not so clearly from what follows in vv. 6-12. Verse 4 marks a sudden shift in genre, subject matter, and addressees. There is a turn from indictment of injustice

against the 'cows of Bashan' (4.1-3) to implied criticism of the cult, from an address to a specific group to a general call, and from announcement of punishment to ironic calls to worship. Moreover, the geographical focus moves from Samaria in vv. 1-3 to the ancient cult centers of Bethel and Gilgal. Not all commentators, however, are agreed that these two verses stand alone. Wolff (1977: 211-17), Brueggemann (1965), and Vollmer (1971: 9-20) take vv. 4-5 as the initial part of a unit that concludes with 4.12 or 4.13, primarily on the grounds that vv. 6-12 have no proper beginning. (Barstad, on the basis of a distinctive but ill-founded interpretation of Amos 4.1 in terms of the Canaanite cult, takes 4.1-13 as a single unit attacking pagan religion [37-75].) But vv. 4-5 constitutes a self-contained and complete address, different in both form and content from what follows. It seems likely that at some point during the process of collecting and organizing the Amos tradition, the material in vv. 4-5 was made to serve as the introduction to the speech fragment in vv. 6-12. This is consistent with the view of Jeremias (1988: 220), who sees an originally independent speech used in the redaction of the book as the introduction to 4.6ff.

With the exception of the concluding prophetic utterance formula that identifies the speaker as Yahweh, these two verses are in the form of direct address (second person plural). The last words of the speech identify the addressees as the 'people of Israel'. The first major part of the address is a series of six cultic calls in three parallel lines. The first two are the radically modified invitations to the cultic centers at Gilgal and Bethel; each of the others is a summons to bring one kind of offering or another. The ironic and even sarcastic tone emerges with the first lines, 'Come to Gilgal and transgress; to Bethel, and multiply transgression', and is emphasized with the conclusion, 'for so you love to do, O people of Israel'.

This unit is a prophetic address that uses cultic language to indict an Israelite audience for its cultic behavior. Thus genre and setting may be considered on two levels, that of the prophetic address itself and that of its cultic background. In addition there is the literary context within the book of Amos, particularly the relationship of these verses to those that immediately follow.

Although it is obvious that the prophet here employs cultic forms of speech, this language has been explained in various ways. Wolff, following Begrich (1964: 247-48) is more precise than the evidence allows in identifying the lines as a parody of the priestly torah (1977: 211), if that genre is understood as a priest's response to a question from the laity concerning distinctions between sacred and profane. To be sure, the injunctions are in the general style of priestly instructions to laity. More particularly, however, they resemble calls to participate in various aspects of worship. The first two injunctions (v. 4a) are not based on a pilgrim song but on calls to pilgrimage. Similar summons are found in Pss. 48.13; 95.6; 100.4 (cf. Weiser

1929: 161). The background of this language is not difficult to reconstruct: Such calls presume cultic observances that included religious specialists who instructed and led the participants in pilgrimage to sacred places, in offerings, tithes, and sacrifices of various kinds.

As it stands before us, however, the unit is not priestly talk but a prophetic address. By means of irony and sarcasm, the prophet uses the cultic expressions to accuse and indict those who participate in worship. In terms of its function, the unit is comparable to the reasons for judgment in prophecies of punishment such as the one in 4.1-3. However, there is no reason to suppose that we have here only a torso of such a prophecy. The verses are self-sufficient as an accusation or indictment. On this point most commentators are agreed, using such terms as *Mahnwort* or *Scheltwort* (Markert: 6-8, 116-19). This is not an admonition or exhortation, since it does not explicitly call for change in behavior. Attention focuses entirely upon cultic activity as rebellion against the Lord, and upon the attitude of Israelite worshipers.

The concluding prophetic utterance formula identifies the speech as the words of the Lord, communicated by a prophetic voice. It is thus related to the occasions when prophets gave public speeches. Although it is never possible to know for certain that individual words originated with Amos in the eighth century BCE (cf. Wolff 1977: 212), the allusions to Gilgal and Bethel, the references to these particular ritual activities, and the fact that this speech is consistent with other parts of the book (e.g., 5.21-24) support the conclusion that these lines stem from the earliest Amos tradition. They could have been delivered at the sanctuaries they refer to or in Samaria itself.

This speech indicts and criticizes those who participate in ritual activities. There is an element of indirection characteristic of irony: The initial words do not mean what they seem to say. But the prophet is far from subtle. In the initial two lines, the people's expectations are reversed abruptly and forcefully. This rhetorical device of ironic reversal is not simply a dramatic way of making a point—although it is that. It also evokes a reaction in the audience. They are forced to reconsider their assumptions about sacred places and practices. Then in the next four summonses, the prophet withholds the reversal until the end, concluding sarcastically. He criticizes ritual activities in two ways: First as 'rebellion', that is, the rupture of the social fabric, and second as what the people—and implicitly not the Lord—'love to do'. What the people love is what Amos elsewhere hears the Lord saying he hates: 'I hate, I despise your feasts …' (5.21-24).

Amos 4.4-5 is polemic against worship (cf. 5.5-6; Weiser: 161), but it is remarkable how much is left unsaid. What, specifically, is wrong with worship, or with the worshipers? There is no justification for the conclusion that Amos is railing against corrupt or foreign cultic practices, as

Kapelrud suggests (37). The sacred places (Gen. 28.10-22; 35.1-7; Judg. 1.22-25; 1 Kgs 12.26-33; Josh. 3–4; 1 Sam. 11.14-15) and ritual activities would have been legitimate Yahwistic centers and practices in eighth century Israel. Why then is Amos so uncompromising, identifying pilgrimage with rebellion and worship with satisfying oneself? One must look elsewhere in the Amos tradition for explanations.

Amos 5.4-6

> For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel:
>> Seek me and live;
>> but do not seek Bethel,
>> and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beer-Sheba;
>> for Gilgal shall surely go into exile,
>> and Bethel shall come to nothing.
> Seek the Lord and live,
>> Or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire,
>> and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.

These verses are distinguished clearly from what precedes and follows on the basis of genre and content, but, 5.4-6 is part of a larger compositional unit (Amos 5.1-17). Specifically, the addressee of this speech is the same as 5.1-3, and, as Wolff has noted (1977: 232), these two units are related antithetically by the themes of death (vv. 1-3) and life (vv. 4ff.). In terms of genre and specific vocabulary, 5.4-6 and 5.14-15 belong together, and many commentators (e.g., Soggin: 83-88) analyze them as a single unit. Hunter goes further, taking vv. 4-6, 14-15 as an original discourse that was split into two parts at the level of the collection and editing of the words of Amos (96-102). Although it may be simpler to take up the material on the basis of a reconstruction of a supposed—and possibly accurate—earlier stage of transmission, we must take account of the way the material is organized in the text before us.

There are signs of both unity and disunity within these three verses. The tone throughout is parenetic, with positive and negative calls followed by motivations or results, and each admonition or warning employs a form of the verb דרשׁ, 'to seek'. But the first admonition (vv. 4b-5) is a speech of the Lord and the second (v. 6) a prophetic speech that refers to the Lord. The first has both a positive and a negative call while the second has only a positive one followed by a threat of judgment against 'the house of Joseph'—not the 'house of Israel' as in v. 4. The first warned against seeking Bethel, Gilgal and Beer-sheba while the second mentions only Bethel. Consequently, many interpreters have taken v. 6 (as well as 5.14-15) as secondary (Weiser: 183; Markert: 136-40; Wolff 1977: 232; Soggin: 85). However, although it seems unlikely that these two admonitions were delivered as a single speech but rather were linked because of their similarity (Mays: 87; cf. Tångberg: 43), there is insufficient evidence to conclude that v. 6 does not stem from

the early Amos tradition. As these verses appear before us, there is a definite progression from a summons that leads to life ('and live' in both vv. 4 and 6 are final or result clauses, cf. Hunter: 73) to a radical warning of judgment, presumably if the admonition to seek Yahweh is not followed.

On the surface, the genre of this unit seems obvious. An audience is addressed with calls to behave in a certain way, and the calls are buttressed with motivations, reasons and even threats. Both tone and content are parenetic, admonishing and exhortatory, suggesting that the genre is admonition (cf. Markert, Tångberg). Wolff recognized that the motivations are unlike those in the priestly torah, which appeals to the ancient will of God, and wisdom, which motivates in terms of the consequences of actions. What is distinctive here is that the motivation is a future event, and therefore we have a distinctive new genre, the prophetic admonition (Wolff 1977: 232).

If pilgrims to the sanctuaries at Bethel and Gilgal heard these words, one could understand if they were confused. The condemnation and the announcement of disaster against these centers are clear enough. But what did it mean to 'seek the Lord' instead of 'seeking' Bethel or entering Gilgal? Worshippers certainly would have believed that by going to worship at the sanctuaries they were in fact 'seeking' the Lord. The specific meaning of the key verb here, דרשׁ, is open to question. Broadly, it means 'to look for', or 'try to find'. Consequently, it commonly is taken as a spiritual injunction, a call to turn one's face to the Lord, instead of to the sanctuaries. But the language is rooted in priestly functions, specifically, the priest's instruction to seek and find the Lord in the sanctuary (cf. Pss. 27.9; 24.6; 105.4; Mays: 87). Behind this use is the consulting of an oracle, or seeking a divine word from a religious specialist (cf. Mays: 88; Paul: 162). In any case, once again Amos uses the language of the cult to reject particular religious practices.

Amos 5.21-27

> I hate, I despise your festivals,
>> and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
> Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
>> I will not accept them;
> And the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals
>> I will not look upon.
> Take away from me the noise of your songs;
>> I will not listen to the melody of your harps.
> But let justice roll down like waters,
>> And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
> Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god, your images, which you made for yourselves; therefore I will take you into exile beyond Damascus, says the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.

This is the classic text used to argue that the prophets were in conflict with and highly critical of worship. On the surface, and especially if one considers only vv. 21-24, it appears that Amos hears the Lord completely rejecting the cult in all its forms. And many readers and some commentators take that to be the force of the unit. But is that how the address should be understood?

The extent of the unit is a major question that has a bearing on our issue. There is no doubt that v. 21 is a new beginning, as is 6.1. In v. 21 there is an abrupt shift from a woe oracle in which the speaker refers to the Lord to direct divine speech. Only in the concluding oracle formula (v. 27b) does the prophet speak. Then follows a new unit, another woe speech (6.1-3), part of a series of such speeches. At the level of the book in its present stage, 5.21-27 is one unit, and requires to be read as such. But, as many commentators have argued persuasively, all or parts of vv. 26-27 are secondary to a presumed earlier discourse that goes back to the earliest Amos tradition, if not to the prophet himself. Consequently, the unit should be read on at least two levels. A major question concerns whether or not to take the final verse (27) as part of the earlier tradition, as Wolff (1977: 266) and others do.

Taken as it now stands in the book, the unit consists most broadly of two parts, a first person speech of the Lord (vv. 21-27a) and the expansive oracle formula (v. 27b) that explicitly identifies and praises the speaker. The divine speech includes two distinct parts on the basis of both style and content. The first section (vv. 21-24) is poetry expressing the Lord's rejection of Israel's worship and calling for justice and righteousness. The second section (vv. 25-27a) is prosaic and ironic, stating the Lord's rejection of idolatry in the form of a rhetorical question and concluding with an announcement of judgment in the form of exile 'beyond Damascus'.

Wolff considers that pronouncement of judgment (v. 27b) to be part of the original Amos speech and thus takes the unit to be a modified form of the typical prophetic judgment speech, with vv. 21-24 functioning as the reasons for that judgment and v. 27 as the announcement (1977: 261). But this interpretation is a stretch, forcing the material into a preconceived notion of how prophets speak. Once one has concluded that v. 26 is part of a secondary (Deuteronomistic) addition, the indictment that is the basis for the announcement of judgment disappears from the early Amos tradition. All of vv. 25-27 is secondary. Only in the final edited form of the tradition has the unit become a prophetic judgment speech.

When we view vv. 21-24 as a unit of speech from the earliest Amos tradition, we hear a quite distinctive address with the prophet speaking in the voice of the Lord.

The speech consists of two parts. The first is the rejection of a series of cultic activities (vv. 21-23) and the second (v. 24) is the call for justice and righteousness. The rejection of worship includes an extensive catalogue: 'festivals', 'assemblies', 'burnt offerings', 'offerings', 'offerings of

well-being of your fatted animals', 'songs', and the 'melody of … harps'. Certainly other forms and aspects of worship could have been mentioned, but this list is sufficient to show both that the prophet's audience was seriously engaged in worship, and that the Lord disapproves of that worship in the strongest possible terms.

The question always has been why, and what does that apparently unambiguous rejection mean? The answer to the question of the meaning of this attack on cultic practices lies in its context, first in the remainder of the speech, then in the book of Amos, and finally in the broader context of the Hebrew Scriptures.

It would be easy to take the second part of the speech (v. 24) as stating the alternative to the practices of worship: The Lord desires justice and righteousness instead of the cult. Shalom Paul is among the modern commentators who favor that interpretation of this text. 'His intention is to destroy all of their "idle worship". To all of this ritual mayhem (v 23, המון) he replies that God demands justice and morality and not the minutiae of the cult: Not rite but right is demanded: devotion not devotions' (p. 188). That is the reading most common in the popular mind, especially in Protestant Christianity.

As many commentators have pointed out, there is a strong and close parallel to this address in Isa. 1.10-17 (S. Paul notes even a remarkable similarity of vocabulary to the Amos text, p. 189). Although the unit in Isaiah is longer and more detailed, it exhibits the same basic outline as Amos 5.21-24. Following a summons to hear that is addressed to 'you rulers of Sodom … you people of Gomorrah' (v. 10), beginning in v. 11 the words of the Lord are quoted directly in a two-part speech, first the negative and then the positive, stating what the Lord rejects and then what the Lord requires. A ringing rejection of cultic practices is followed by a forceful plea for justice. The speech moves from the rejection of specific cultic practices in the form of rhetorical questions (vv. 11-13a) to a rejection of religious practices with reasons (vv. 13b-15) to a series of positive instructions (vv. 16-17). As in Mic. 6.6-8, the language reflects the tone of the courtroom (Tucker 2001: 55).

But stronger than the tone of the courtroom is the technical language of the cult. Just as in Amos 5.21-23, the prophet catalogues the religious practices rejected by the Lord. Again, it is a comprehensive if not exhaustive list. But here the positive instructions begin with the command to 'wash yourselves; make yourselves clean' (v. 10), a rich and complex expression. It refers at the same time to the literal cleaning of bloody hands, and to ritual purification, cleansing in preparation for prayer. Next comes the command to transform one's life: 'cease to do evil'. The instructions that follow move from the general to the specific, making it perfectly clear that learning to do 'good' and seeking 'justice' are not empty abstractions, nor do they refer simply to changing one's attitudes. To seek justice is to care for

the powerless members of the society, the oppressed, the orphan and the widow. The aura of the courtroom, of legal process, and of justice in society initiated in 1.1-2 recur not only in the call for justice but also in the terms 'defend' and 'plead for'. Thus the prophet instructs the leaders in particular and the people in general to use the courts for their fundamental purpose, to protect those least able to protect themselves.

Both Isa. 1.10-17 and Amos 5.21-24 not only make explicit references to cultic practices but also follow patterns of cultic discourse. It has long been recognized (Begrich; Wolff 1977: 261; Mays: 109) that the prophets have adopted the form of the priestly instruction to the laity.

Such instructions could include language similar to that of the prophets. A classic example is the response to the question of worshippers approaching the temple, 'Who may enter?' The priestly answer is:

> Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
> Who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
> And do not swear deceitfully (Ps. 24.4).

Such qualifications are spelled out even more fully in Psalm 15, describing behavior consistent with justice and righteousness.

Whether the discourse of Amos mimics the priestly torah (Begrich, Wolff), or this perspective stands in a tradition that goes back to 'the pre-monarchical period when the celebration of Israel's relation to Yahweh emphasized the proclamation of Yahweh's will as the central concern in the relationship' (Mays: 109), it is clear that the prophet's judgment of the cult in fact comes out of the cult. Consequently, the Lord hates Israel's worship because it has lost its heart: attention to justice and righteousness.

There is every reason to conclude that מִשְׁפָּט, 'justice', in Amos includes all major understandings recognized in contemporary thought: retributive, distributive, and substantive justice. When the prophet hears the Lord announcing judgment on Israel because of its sins and crimes, he has in view justice as retribution. When he attacks the powerful for taking advantage of the weak by trampling them by taking 'levies' to build for themselves 'houses of hewn stone' (5.11), distributive justice is in view. The substance, the definition, of justice lies in the understanding of the Lord as just, and one who has established laws to guide all interactions among the people. Moreover, this understanding of justice in ancient Israel has nothing to do with the rights of individuals. On the one hand, the prophetic perspective is based on attention to the community. On the other hand, understanding of individual rights became widespread only following the Enlightenment. Rather, biblical justice has to do with responsibilities, first in response to the God remembered as the one who brought the people up out of Egypt, and then in response to the circumstances of other members of the community.

Conclusions

Although Amos was a southern prophet addressing Israel in the north, in no sense can we conclude that the indictment of the cult in Israel is specifically from the perspective of the cult of Judah. To do so would impose subsequent Deuteronomistic views on the eighth-century prophet. The possibility of such a reading of Amos could arise from the motto in 1.2 ('The Lord roars from Zion …'), but that verse is a summary of the book supplied by a subsequent editor and based on material in the book concerning the background of the prophet (Tucker 2009: 274; cf. Tucker 1977). On the contrary, except for later additions such as 5.25-27, Amos appears to presume that Israel and Judah share common traditions about the relationship between the Lord and the people.

Amos (along with Isaiah and Micah) indicts the cult and a full range of cultic activities, but at the same time exhibits a deep awareness of the cultic traditions, using them in both the accusations and proclamations of punishment upon those who practice those traditions. They are, to him, corruptions of the fundamental expectations passed down for centuries. The prophet had come to see cultic activities as a substitute for or an impediment to that justice and righteousness expected as most fundamental to the relationship to the Lord (5.24; 6.11-14; 8.4-6; 2.6-8). According to at least some priestly traditions as well as the prophets, the practice of justice and righteousness is the pre-requisite for worship, not its alternative.

It should come as no surprise that Amos pronounces judgment on the cult, its practices, and its practitioners. He has the same word for all the institutions, and virtually all the inhabitants, of Israel. That is the context within which his perspective toward the cult should be viewed.

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Motives behind Biblical Mixed Metaphors

Andrea L. Weiss

1. *Introduction: Mixed Metaphor in Biblical Poetry*

In his article on 'The Theological Significance of Biblical Poetry', Patrick Miller asks: '[W]hat does poetry mean *theologically*, or what does it mean theologically that we have poetry in the Bible? What does poetry do or not do as part of the Bible's claim to speak about God?' (Miller 1994: 214). One of the most prominent ways the Bible speaks about God is through metaphor, by envisioning God in human roles such as king or shepherd, or as animals and inanimate objects, like a lion, rock, or dew.[1] Often, different metaphors or similes[2] for God appear side by side within a particular literary unit. While arbiters of English grammar and usage may decry so-called 'mixed metaphors',[3] authors of the Bible, particularly its poetic sections, clearly had a penchant for juxtaposing varied images of God, Israel, and other referents.

This observation raises the question: What motivates the amalgam of analogies often found in the Bible? Whereas prior studies have focused on theological or rhetorical reasons for bringing together diverse divine metaphors in a given passage, this article considers the poetic impetus behind this trend. In particular, this study will investigate the role of poetic

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1. My interest in this topic dates back to the fall of 1990, when I was a student in Tamara Eskenazi's Prophets course at the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles and wrote a paper on female imagery for God in Isaiah 40–66 (subsequently published with Tamara's guidance; see Weiss 1994). I am grateful for the influential role Tamara Eskenazi has played as my teacher, mentor, and now colleague.

2. In this article, I use the term 'metaphor' broadly to include both metaphors and similes, in line with those scholars who appreciate the potential of similes to 'awaken fields of associations the same way metaphorical statements do' (Löland 2008: 48). For a discussion of the similarities and differences between these two tropes, see Weiss 2006: 161-77 and Löland 2008: 47-51.

3. Biblical passages that juxtapose different metaphors for a given entity tend to differ in various respects from typical English examples of 'mixed metaphors'. As a result, biblical scholars have proposed alternative terminology for this phenomenon: 'adjacent analogies' (Weiss 2012), *Mischmetaphor*, 'complex-metaphors', or 'combined-metaphors' (Strawn 2005: 271).

parallelism in the creation of mixed metaphors. According to Adele Berlin, poetic parallelism in the Bible involves an interplay of equivalence and contrast on the word and line level, and in grammatical, lexical-semantic, and phonological aspects of any parallel unit (Berlin 1985: 27-30). While parallel elements commonly display a certain degree of linguistic or grammatical equivalence, they often contain elements of contrast as well (Berlin 1985: 12-13, 140). Given the fact that parallelism joins together different lexemes in a given poetic unit—some nearly synonymous, but others markedly distinct—to what extent does this phenomenon foster the formation of mixed metaphors in biblical poetry? To begin to answer this question, this article will analyze nine passages from Jeremiah and Isaiah 1–66 in which multiple metaphors for God appear within the same verse or in two sequential verses within a unified literary passage.[4] This research aims to examine what these texts can teach us about how and why biblical poetry depicts God metaphorically.

2. *Semantic Equivalence and Contrast within Word Pairs*

An investigation of the texts under consideration yields a number of noteworthy patterns. First, the examples that contain two metaphors linked as word pairs within a bicolon or tricolon display varying degrees of semantic equivalence and contrast. At one end of the spectrum, two fairly synonymous terms create a single analogy. For example, in Isa. 31.4, the prophet characterizes God as a lion growling over its prey that is not frightened by the sound of approaching shepherds. In this comparison ('As the lion growls or a young lion over its prey…'), the prophet pairs the more general אריה with the more specific כפיר, usually understood as a young lion (Strawn 2005: 304-10).[5] Both nouns point to the same metaphor: God as

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4.   This collection of nine texts (Isa. 8.14-15; 31.4-5; 42.13-14; 45.9-10; 64.7; Jer. 2.31-32; 3.19-20; 14.8-9; 25.30) was culled from an initial survey of selected prophetic books (Isaiah 1–66, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Amos). This project builds upon a prior study of fourteen passages in Hosea in which different metaphors for God or Israel are joined as word pairs (Weiss 2012).

5.   Frequently, an initial more general or more common term parallels a second more specific or more unusual term, a tendency Robert Alter refers to as an 'impulse to intensification' (Alter 1985: 13). Likewise, James Kugel asserts that the B term in two parallelistic lines often particularizes or expands the meaning of the more general A term (Kugel 1981: 8). This reading follows the line division in *Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia* (*BHS*), which separates אריה and כפיר as word pairs in subsequent cola. In contrast, the Jewish Publication Society *Tanakh* (JPS) places both nouns on the same line and presents the second as a modification of the first: 'a lion—a great beast—'; other translations juxtapose the two as alternative terms: 'a lion or a young lion' (NRSV) and 'the lion or the lion cub' (Blenkinsopp 2000: 425).

lion.[6] In Isa. 42.13, the prophet uses two terms with a similar meaning to depict God as a warrior charging into battle with tremendous commotion: 'warrior' (גבור) in the first colon and 'man of war' (איש מלחמות) in the sec-ond.[7] Likewise, in Isa. 8.14 two semantically equivalent phrases describe God as a rock:[8] first a 'stone for[9] striking' (אבן נגף) and then a 'rock for stumbling' (צור מכשול).[10]

In other cases, the two components of the word pair exhibit a greater degree of semantic contrast. In Jer. 14.8, the people accuse God of being 'a sojourner in the land' and 'a traveler who turns aside to lodge'. Although a sojourner (גר) who temporarily resides somewhere differs from a traveler (ארח) who only stays overnight, both analogies express the same expe-rience of the Divine: a sense that the people do not feel God's sustained presence.

In Jer. 2.32 the prophet poses a rhetorical question in order to illustrate the extent to which the people have neglected their deity: 'Shall a young woman forget her עדי', referring to some sort of ornamental jewelry, 'a bride her קשרים', a type of decorative garment like a knotted cord or a sash?[11] These nouns refer to two different objects and, unlike the first group of examples discussed above, cannot be considered synonymous terms for a single referent. Nonetheless, both fit within the same semantic category of finery worn by women on a special occasion; and both form a related met-aphor, comparing God to precious apparel that presumably one would not neglect or forget.

Similarly, Isa. 45.10 pairs two separate but related divine images, one masculine and the other feminine, when the prophet warns: 'Woe to the one

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6. For other examples of God depicted as a lion, see Hos. 5.14; 13.7-8; Jer. 25.38; Lam. 3.10.

7. For other examples of the metaphor of God as a warrior, see Exod. 15.3; Ps. 18.11-16; 24.8.

8. For other examples of God portrayed as a rock, see Deut. 32.4, 15, 18, 30, 31; Ps. 18.3; 19.15.

9. These two construct phrases are understood as having a causational relationship (Waltke and O'Connor 1990: 146): the rock causes one to strike one's foot and stumble.

10. Rashi stresses the synonymous nature of these two phrases: שהצור הוא אבן. This verse contains another example of two semantically related words that form a single metaphor, but in this case the nouns are adjacent and not word pairs in parallel lines: 'He will be … a trap (לפח) and snare (ולמוקש) for the inhabitants of Jerusalem' (Isa. 8.14). Both of these apparatuses serve the same function of capturing the desired victim (see Ps. 140.6).

11. Translations of this term vary, from the more general 'adornments' (JPS) or 'attire' (NRSV) to the more specific 'ribbons, breast-sashes' (*Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [*HALOT*] *s.v.* קשרים) or 'knotted cords' (Lundbom 1999: 292). In Isa. 3.20, the noun appears as part of a list of twenty-one items of women's finery (Isa. 3.18-23).

who says to a father, "What are you begetting?" or to a woman,[12] "What
are you laboring to give birth?"' While there is a clear difference between a
father and mother, the nearly identical quotations and the emphasis on cre-
ation in the larger context of vv. 9-13 highlight the shared features of these
analogies, calling attention to the role both figures play in the process of
childbirth. These metaphors enable the prophet to make the point that just as
one would not question what a parent brings to life, so one should not ques-
tion God's plans for the people Israel.

   Isaiah 64.7 exhibits a more pronounced degree of semantic contrast when
it depicts God as both parent (אבינו) and potter (יצרנו).[13] In contrast to a
synonymous word pair like 'rock' and 'stone' (Isa. 8.14) that projects a sin-
gle analogy, the two nouns in Isa. 64.7 evoke two independent metaphors.
Note, however, that again common characteristics link the two analogies, as
the third line of this tricolon makes clear: 'and we are all the work of your
hand'. This trend will be seen in the other metaphors examined below.

3. *Adjacent Analogies in Single or Subsequent Verses*

Several of the passages under consideration combine diverse divine met-
aphors, not as word pairs in a bicolon or tricolon, but as adjacent analo-
gies within the expanse of a larger verse or two sequential verses. Two of
the nine passages juxtapose two discrete metaphors within a one- or two-
verse unit: God as father and lover/husband in Jer. 3.19-20 and God as lion
and grape treaders in Jer. 25.30. Jeremiah 3.19 introduces the analogy of
God as father and Israel as daughter[14] in order to express the expectation
that bestowing prized land to Israel will engender her loyalty and obedi-
ence: 'And I said, '"My father" you will call me, and you will not turn
back from following me'. The emphatic exclamation אכן ('surely') at the
start of v. 20 highlights the contrast between expectations and reality: Israel
has turned back and been disloyal to God. To communicate this sentiment,
the prophet shifts metaphors and portrays Israel in a different female role:

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12. Note that Isa. 45.10 pairs 'father' (אב) and 'woman' (אשה), not 'mother'. Deu-
teronomy 32 contains a similar combination of maternal and paternal divine imagery,
though not in such close proximity: v. 6 refers to God as 'Father', while vv. 13 and 18
depict God as giving birth to and nursing Israel.

13. For other examples of God depicted as a father, see Deut. 32.6; Jer. 31.9; Hos.
11.1-7; Ps. 103.13; for God as a potter, see Jer. 18.6; Job 10.8-9. The description of Israel
as clay in Isa. 64.7 clarifies that the noun יצר refers specifically to a potter and not the
more general designation 'Maker'. Isaiah 45.9-13 refers to God three times as יצרו,
twice with the sense of God as 'Maker' (vv. 9, 11) and once with a clear metaphoric
usage of God as 'Potter' (v. 9).

14. The feminine singular grammatical forms in v. 19 indicate that the metaphor envi-
sions Israel as a daughter.

Israel as God's unfaithful lover or wife.[15] The first half of v. 20 establishes the analogy and the second half explicates it: 'Surely, as a woman betrays her lover so you have betrayed me, house of Israel'. These two verses thus present two different metaphors for God and Israel side by side, with no apparent need to explain the shift or smooth the transition from one analogy to the next. In this case, the verbs (תּשׁוּבִי in v. 19 and בגדה in v. 20) call attention to common characteristics shared by these metaphors: just as a daughter might rebel against her father, so a woman might prove unfaithful to her husband/companion. The expectation of love and loyalty as defining features of both relationships makes the act of betrayal even more distressing and disappointing.

A similar pattern unfolds in the two metaphors found in Jer. 25.30, which begins with the metaphor of God as a lion. The word pair ישׁאג ('will roar')[16] and יתן קולו ('will utter his voice') draws attention to the associated commonplace that drives this analogy: the use of the lion's powerful vocal prowess to portray the way God will pronounce judgment upon the nations. To further emphasize this point, the prophet repeats the root שׁאג twice more in the following cola and then adds a simile: 'He will roar mightily (שׁאֹג ישׁאג) against his pasture, a shout like that of the grape treaders will ring out to all the inhabitants of the earth'. The verse thus combines two contrasting metaphors: one animal and one human, the first singular and the second plural. Nevertheless, the wording of the verse makes explicit the shared quality that connects these two analogies, namely the loud sounds associated both with lions and grape treaders.[17] Unlike metaphors joined through poetic parallelism as word pairs, in this example the main metaphor gives rise to an auxiliary analogy, one that differs markedly from the first comparison but for one key characteristic.

In contrast to the prior two examples, three of the nine texts under consideration contain two pairs of metaphors side by side in a single unit. In Jer. 14.8-9 the people cry out to God:

> [8] Hope of Israel,
> Its rescuer in times of trouble,
> Why are you like a <u>sojourner</u> in the land,
> and like a <u>traveler</u> who turns aside to lodge?

15. The noun רע refers metaphorically to the lovers of the adulterous wife in Jer. 3.1. Lundbom argues that in 3.20 'the "companion" in all probability is the woman's husband' (Lundbom 1999: 318). NRSV interprets the verse the same way and translates אשׁה as 'wife' and רעה as 'husband' (in contrast to JPS 'woman' and 'paramour'). For other examples of the metaphor of God as Israel's husband, see Hosea 2; Jer. 2.2; Isa. 54.6-10.

16. For other examples of this verb used to paint a picture of God as a lion, see Amos 1.2; 3.8; Joel 4.16; Hos. 11.10.

17. Isaiah 16.10 and Jer. 48.33 confirm that joyous shouts and songs accompanied the treading of grapes as part of the production of wine.

> [9] Why are you like a <u>helpless man</u>,
> like a <u>hero</u> who cannot rescue?
> But you are in our midst, Yhwh,
> and your name upon us is called.
> Do not leave us!

As discussed above, the first metaphoric pair uses two somewhat different images to depict the same general notion of God as a wayfarer, a person whose presence is transient. The second pair joins the more general noun, אִישׁ, with the more specific term, גִּבּוֹר; the modifying phrases 'helpless' and 'who cannot rescue' express a similar sentiment, envisioning God as a valiant hero who does not live up to expectations and cannot rescue those in need.[18] Together, vv. 8-9 cast God in two different human roles, both of which reveal the people's anxiety about not experiencing God's lasting, efficacious presence. Interestingly, both metaphoric questions undermine the non-figurative statements that frame these two verses. Although the people describe God as their 'rescuer in times of trouble' (v. 8), they fear that God 'cannot rescue' (v. 9). Although they bemoan God's ephemeral nature (v. 8), they assert with confidence that God is in their midst (v. 9).

Jeremiah 2.31-32 presents a set of unique and contrasting divine metaphors, comparing God to the wilderness and women's finery. This passage, like the prior example, contains a sequence of questions:

> [31] Have I become like a <u>wilderness</u> for Israel,
> or a <u>land of darkness</u>?
> Why do my people say, 'We roam freely[19]
> and we will not come again to you'?
> [32] Shall a young woman forget her <u>jewels</u>,
> a bride her <u>sashes</u>?
> But my people have forgotten me,
> days without number.

On the surface, these seem like opposing divine metaphors. The first metaphoric pair compares God to a place, the second to a material object. The first pair carries negative associations, suggesting that God resembles the dark, desolate wilderness; the second connotes the positive associations of treasured accessories and apparel. But note that the rhetorical questions create an implicit connection between these two markedly different analogies,

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18. While a certain degree of uncertainty surrounds the hapax legomenon נִדְהָם, Lundbom argues persuasively that the expression refers to 'a helpless man'. He explains: The verb 'is commonly taken to mean, "be astonished, surprised", based largely on a comparison with Arabic. But the word has shown up on a late seventh century ostracon from Yavneh-Yam, in the N-stem, where the meaning appears to be "helpless (to save)", the exact opposite of savior' (Lundbom 1999: 702).

19. This translation of this problematic root follows Lundbom (1999: 292) and *HALOT* (*s.v.* רוד).

for they raise the unexpected possibility that a woman might forget or neglect her wedding finery, just as people avoid or neglect inhospitable territory. The passage ends with a straightforward statement that summarizes the point of these heterogeneous metaphors: 'But my people have forgotten me, days without number'.

Isaiah 8.14 also joins together two pairs of metaphors in close proximity, with four nouns creating two metaphors:[20] God as a rock and God as a trap. Although these analogies involve two distinctly different objects, they share certain features: both can be placed on the ground and have negative consequences for those who encounters them. The propositional phrases that follow each metaphoric pair further unite these metaphors, referring first more broadly to Israel and Judah and then more specifically to Jerusalem: 'He will be … a <u>stone</u> for striking and a <u>rock</u> for stumbling *for the two houses of Israel*; a <u>trap</u> and a <u>snare</u> *for the inhabitants of Jerusalem*'. Moreover, the five verbs in the subsequent verse augment the link between the two metaphors, describing the repercussions for Isaiah's audience as a sequence of related events: 'Many shall stumble on them[21] and they shall fall and be broken, and they shall be snared and captured' (Isa. 8.15).[22]

Three other passages examined in this study bring together diverse divine metaphors, but in these cases a single analogy contrasts with a metaphoric word pair. Isaiah 42.13-14 juxtaposes the image of God as a warrior, גבור in the first colon and איש מלחמות in the second (v. 13), with depiction of God as a woman in labor, יולדה (v. 14). The prophet makes explicit the connection between these seemingly contrasting similes by emphasizing the noise made by each figure: the shouts of a solider charging into battle and the panting and gasping of a woman giving birth. Similarly, Isa. 45.9-10 compares God to humans of different genders and different societal roles when the prophet depicts God as a potter in one verse and a father and mother in the next. Here, too, the surrounding language highlights the common features shared by these three diverse analogies, namely the fact that a potter, father, and mother all function as creators, which is precisely what makes them a fitting vehicle for speaking about God. Likewise, Isa. 31.4-5 juxtaposes two different animal analogies: God as 'lion'/'young lion' guarding its prey in v. 4 and God as birds hovering overhead in v. 5. The string of four verbs in v. 5b (protect, deliver, spare, rescue) calls attention to the

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20. Isaiah 8.14 begins with an additional metaphor: והיה למקדש. Perplexed by how the image of God as 'sanctuary' fits with the rest of this unit, alternatives have been proposed, such as מוקש (HALOT, *s.v.* מקדש) and מקשיר (BHS).

21. Interpretations of this prepositional phrase vary. Some view it as modifying the people who stumble (e.g., NRSV 'And many among them shall stumble'); others read it as referring to the rocks (e.g., JPS 'The masses shall trip over these').

22. Linguistic links between these two verses enhance the connection: מכשול (v. 14) and וכשלו (v. 15) as well as מוקש (v. 14) and ונוקשו (v. 15).

associated commonplace shared by these two similes and their function: to communicate God's promise to protect Jerusalem.

The eight examples discussed in Section 3 thus reinforce an observation made in Section 2 about the word pairs that exhibit a recognizable degree of semantic contrast and hence two distinct metaphors: shared characteristics frequently unite divergent metaphors. This tendency corresponds with Cornelia Müller's conclusions about mixed metaphors in her book *Metaphors Dead and Alive, Sleeping and Waking*. She asserts that when speakers produce mixed metaphors, they selectively focus on specific aspects of the metaphors and disregard other semantic implications. Because 'the focal attention responsible for selecting and combining semantic and syntactic information may be very restricted and selective and may suppress all kinds of aspects of meaning', language users are more likely to concentrate on the points of intersection between the different metaphors and ignore or discount the incongruous aspects of the metaphoric pairing (Müller 2008: 153).[23] In many of the above biblical passages, the wording of the metaphors draws attention to these points of intersection between adjacent analogies.

4. *Structural Links between Adjacent Analogies*

So far, this study has concentrated on the semantic contrast and connections between different divine metaphors. However, many of these nine prophetic passages contain grammatical or syntactic features that reinforce the links between the metaphors. Such patterning creates a sense of structural coherence that goes alongside the semantic equivalence and contrast at play in these metaphoric groupings.

For example, in Jer. 14.8-9 the two metaphoric pairs each begin with the same interrogative, followed by the identical verb, and then the same particle introducing the simile: 'Why are you like (למה תהיה כ) a sojourner … Why are you like (למה תהיה כ) a helpless man?' Likewise, Isa. 45.9-10 frames its three metaphors with a similar syntactic pattern. Verse 9 begins: 'Woe to one who argues with his Maker (הוי רב את יצרו)…' The prophet then poses a rhetorical question that contains two quotations: 'Shall clay say to its potter, "What are you doing?" or "Your work has no handles"[24] (האמר חמר ליצרו מה תעשה ופעלך אין ידים לו)?' When the prophet moves from the potter analogy to the two subsequent parental metaphors in v. 10, he combines the interjection הוי plus a participle with the question formula

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23. For more on Müller's work and its applicability to biblical metaphors, see Weiss 2012.

24. This translation follows JPS and NRSV. Alternatively, Blenkinsopp renders the utterance as 'He has no skill', explaining that the expression 'may be an idiomatic way of saying that a person is clumsy—as we say that someone is "all thumbs"' (2002: 251).

found in v. 9b: the verb אמר, the ל before the noun that introduces the analogy, the pronoun מה, and then a second person imperfect verb: 'Woe to the one who says to a father, "What are you begetting?" (הוי אמר לאב מה תוליד) or to a woman, "What are you laboring to give birth?" (ולאשה מה תחילין).'[25]

Even in Jer. 2.31-32, where the metaphors exhibit a more pronounced semantic contrast, a number of structural features knit together the diverse divine analogies. Both pairs of metaphors (wilderness and women's finery) are phrased as questions and begin with an interrogative ה (המדבר ... התשכח). In both cases, the metaphoric pair in the first half of the verse is followed by a non-figurative statement that explicates the analogy; and the phrase 'my people' (עמי) repeats in the second half of each verse. These syntactic patterns enhance the semantic links often observed in poetic passages that combine distinctly different metaphors.

5. *Conclusion: Motives for Mixed Metaphors*

This article commenced with Patrick Miller's question: 'What does poetry do or not do as part of the Bible's claim to speak about God?' The analysis of metaphoric word pairs supports the thesis that poetic parallelism fosters the creation of mixed metaphors because of the way it joins together lexemes with varying degrees of equivalence and contrast.[26] The examples in Section 2 above show that when a word pair is comprised of fairly synonymous terms for the same referent, one analogy results; but when the two halves of a word pair contain a greater degree of semantic contrast, the poetic unit produces two distinct metaphors. However, the texts in Section 3 demonstrate that the tendency to mix metaphors appears not only in parallel word pairs, but also in larger poetic units. These examples suggest that other factors, in addition to the mechanics of poetic parallelism, motivate the juxtaposition of different metaphors for a single referent, whether that be God, Israel, or other topics approached metaphorically.[27]

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25. Note that v. 10 also contain two quotations, one attributed to each metaphoric figure.

26. Further support for the link between mixed metaphors and poetic parallelism comes from research on metaphoric trends in biblical prose. A survey of metaphors in the prose passages in 1–2 Samuel reveals that three-quarters of a sample of twenty metaphors occur in isolation, meaning that each utterance contains a single metaphor, such as in 1 Sam. 17.43 when Goliath chides David: 'Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?' (other examples include 25.16; 2 Sam. 21.17). In contrast, multiple metaphors appear with considerably less frequency, as when David confronts Saul in the cave: 'After whom does the king go out? After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog? After a single flea?' (1 Sam. 24.15; also see 25.29; 26.20; 2 Sam. 18.8).

27. I thank Adele Berlin for pointing out a worthwhile question for further study:

On a rhetorical level, encountering seemingly unrelated analogies side by side sparks the listener's or reader's attention and curiosity: Why would someone bring together such disparate images as a warrior and a woman in labor (Isa. 42.13-14)? How do these two entities differ, and what do they have in common? For the biblical writers and those who receive their words, discovering unexpected connections between different metaphors produces a certain degree of delight and surprise. Dwelling upon such metaphors and analyzing their similarities and differences inevitably leads to new insights about the subject at hand.

On a theological level, prior studies have pointed out a number of possible reasons for combining diverse divine metaphors. Marc Brettler concludes that the seemingly 'incompatible metaphors' for God in Isaiah 40–66 allow the prophet to evoke a more multifaceted image of God, which one metaphor alone could not depict. He notes that while there is often tension between various metaphors—such as God as Israel's husband, father, and mother—these metaphors 'work side by side to fill in different aspects' of the relationship between God and Israel (Brettler 1998: 119; 1999: 224-25). In a more expanded study of God as father and mother in Deutero-Isaiah, Sarah Dille shows how the interaction of male and female divine metaphors creates innovative characterizations of God. She argues that the weaving together of these metaphors calls attention to their shared entailments and enables the prophet to express the range of emotions associated with the exile (Dille 2004: 16, 19, 176-77). In a book on leonine imagery in the Bible and ancient Near East, Brent Strawn concludes: 'One metaphor alone by itself … cannot, in the words of Brueggemann, get this God said right. The elusive nature of Yahweh is, in fact, what leads to the use of metaphorical language … in the first place' (Strawn 2005: 271). Reflecting on metaphors in Hosea, Göran Eidevall posits another factor involved in the joining together of metaphors that at times seem to 'collide, but more often … collude'. He writes: 'By juxtaposing different metaphors … the author/redactor(s) of Hosea 4–14 achieved more than stylistic variation. The effect is a radical relativization. No model is given a monopolistic position.' Quoting Hosea's own words, Eidevall asserts that 'all kinds of "anthropomorphism" are, in the final analysis, hopelessly inadequate as representations of the deity: "for I am God, and not human" (11.9)' (Eidevall 1996: 229).

In Isa. 40.25, God asks: 'To whom can you compare me?' The biblical prophets present numerous comparisons for God, some more conventional and others rather innovative. The proliferation of multiple divine metaphors and their placement near one another help us better understand the nature of the Divine and the complex relationship between God and humanity. Poetic

'Does talking about God generate more mixed metaphors than talking about other subjects?' (private correspondence, October 25, 2010).

parallelism encourages us not just to find synonymous ways to express any given metaphor, but to collect and connect diverse analogies. The quantity of divine metaphors in biblical poetry and qualitative differences between them remind us that no one metaphor alone can capture all aspects of the one God.

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SCRIBE AND SCROLL
REVISITING THE GREAT ISAIAH SCROLL FROM QUMRAN

H.G.M. Williamson

There is a pleasing sense of symmetry that accompanies the recent publica-
tion of the two large Isaiah scrolls from Qumran (Ulrich and Flint 2010 [in
fact, 2011], two vols.). These texts were among the very first of the Dead
Sea Scrolls to be published (Burrows 1950; Sukenik 1954), so that in one
sense they are extremely well known and they have been frequently studied.
An improved edition of the A scroll was published by Parry and Qimron in
1999, and additional fragments of the B scroll have been published in sev-
eral articles in the decades since Sukenik's original work. The amount of
other secondary literature devoted to them both is probably more extensive
than could now be comprehensively listed. At the same time, this first full
critical edition marks the conclusion of the publication of all the Dead Sea
Scrolls in the official *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* series, so that we
may pleasingly celebrate the conclusion of this major enterprise by revisit-
ing the texts which separately were in at the start of the whole saga of Dead
Sea Scrolls research.
  Needless to say, it is unlikely in these circumstances that any comments
from me will be wholly novel. Nevertheless, confronting the coloured
plates of the A scroll for the first time has prompted one or two reflections
that are not, perhaps, as widely considered as they might be by scholars
working on the text and composition of the book. The chronological gap
between the scroll itself and the time when it may be theorized that the
book of Isaiah was brought to completion is a crucial one in consideration
of the relationship between composition, or at least final redaction, and
what has traditionally been termed textual criticism. Of course, at the sim-
plest level, the first translation into Greek falls into this period, so that its
witness too is of potentially considerable importance. Beyond that, how-
ever, voices are increasingly raised in defence of the view that some ele-
ments in the composition of the book may in fact be of later date than the
point at which textual criticism in its narrower definition began. In the
case of some other books of the Hebrew Bible the evidence for this opin-
ion is indeed strong. The question is whether the same may be applied to
Isaiah.

It has long been noted, and the present editors helpfully summarize, that there are some spelling conventions that distinguish the first from the second half of the scroll (the fullest study, followed in summary form by most scholars since, is Martin 1958: 207-321, 363-81; see before him, for instance, Barthélemy 1950: 543-44; Kahle 1951: 72-77; and subsequently Cook 1989–90; 1992; less convincing, in my opinion, is Giese 1988). The scroll divides at the end of column 27 (equivalent to the end of Isaiah 33), where there is an otherwise unparalleled space of three lines. Since the scroll has a total of 54 columns, the division comes at exactly the half-way point, and indeed the stitching shows that column 28 started on a new skin. As examples of the distinctions between the two halves may be mentioned that the long form of the second person masculine singular forms of the nominal suffix (כה-) is much more frequent in the second half than the first (91% versus 15%), that the spelling of כי with an *'aleph* occurs in 22% of appearances in the first half but 98% in the second, that 'Jerusalem' is spelt with a *yod* in 38% of its occurrences in the first half but 96% in the second, and so on (for a number of other similar examples, see Abegg in Ulrich and Flint 2010: II, 40).

Although a few scholars in the past have suggested that this evidence points to the text having been copied by two scribes (e.g. Noth 1951; Kuhl 1952: 332-33; Tov 1997: 498-99; 2004: 21), our editors are convinced that the standard view is correct which detects only one scribal hand for the whole of the main part of the text (Ulrich and Flint 2010: II, 63; see previously and in much greater detail Martin 1958: 65-70).

Their explanation for the difference between the two halves of the scroll is unsatisfactory, however. They suggest that the use of 'later' orthographical and morphological forms in the second half 'may perhaps be attributed to the fact that Second Isaiah was originally a separate work and that the basic composition of the latter half is noticeably later than that of the first half, when *matres lectionis* were less plentiful' (p. 63).

This solution to the problem should be rejected for several reasons, however (quite apart from the question whether they are correct to regard the second half of Isaiah having ever been a separate work). First, the division in the scroll comes at the end of Isaiah 33, not 39. While the case has occasionally been advanced for seeing Isaiah 35, and perhaps even 34, as the work of Deutero-Isaiah or a disciple, this cannot be said for the narratives in chaps. 36–39, which treat the reign of Hezekiah and hence would make little sense in the corpus of Deutero-Isaiah. The variations in spelling thus do not coincide with the proposed composition history. Second, there are substantial parts of the first half which were every bit as late as, if not later than, Isaiah 40–66. The so-called Isaiah Apocalypse in Isaiah 23–27 is an obvious substantial example of this, but many other shorter passages, such as 1.29-31 or 4.2-6, come into the same category. In other words the

variations in spelling do not match the probable sequence of composition. And third, the forms of *matres lectionis* and the like that are characteristic of the second half of the scroll are not attested as early as Deutero-Isaiah in any case; they must be due to the scribal preference of a considerably later date.

The upshot of these observations, therefore, is that if there was only one scribe responsible for 1QIsa[a], he must have been dependent on some form of a *Vorlage* that already included these variations, as was argued long ago by Brownlee 1952 (see also the early observations of Kahle 1951: 76; Martin 1958: 67, 388-89). To me, the most natural explanation for this is that he was, in fact, copying from two different scrolls and that one of these already showed a strong preference for these later forms. That a book as long as Isaiah should often have been included in two scrolls is plausible, and Brooke 2005 has pointed out several other arguments to support this conclusion, including especially that the large majority of the Cave 4 fragments of Isaiah relate exclusively to one half of the book or the other. This is admittedly not universally the case, as 4QIsa[b], 4QIsa[c], and 4QIsa[e] (assuming its final fragment has been correctly identified) demonstrate. For study purposes, however, two smaller scrolls would have been infinitely more convenient, so that it is entirely reasonable to hypothesize that our scribe was working on that basis.

It follows as a consequence, however, that, since the differences between the two halves of the scroll are not ironed out, he must have been relatively careful in his copying practices. The impression is sometimes given that scribes exercised considerable freedom in their work, and 1QIsa[a] has itself often been criticized for apparently bad practices in regard to a number of matters that come under what might be called the transmission history heading. The evidence presented here, however, suggests that these should not be laid at our scribe's door but, if anywhere, at that of his predecessors.

The argument presented so far should inevitably lead us to look with greater care at the evidence in this scroll for corrections and additions. Corrections of simple slips, such as the adding back of a letter originally omitted by mistake, reinforce the impression of a scribe who worked with great care to ensure that his copy was a faithful reflection of his *Vorlage*. The more interesting cases arise when there appear to be corrections (or whatever) made by a later hand.

According to Ulrich and Flint 2010: II, 64, beyond the original scribe 'at least three, and possibly as many as seven, distinctive hands can be discerned contributing to the transmission of the scroll', and they estimate that this activity may be spread over as much as a century.

Given that several of these passages appear to be additions to or insertions into the text, Ulrich has previously argued at length that several of them represent 'a sentence or two inserted into the text by some scribe (for

want of a more precise term) that was deemed apropos' (Ulrich 2001: 304). Furthermore, the 'fact that our *extant* manuscripts witness at times to both the earlier unexpanded text and the later expanded text suggests that those expansions are relatively late, perhaps from the third or second or even first centuries BCE'. Needless to say, if that were the case it would furnish extremely valuable evidence not only for the growth of the present Hebrew text of the book of Isaiah, but also potentially for the growth of biblical literature as a whole.

In seeking to evaluate Ulrich's proposal it seems to me that there are one or two other factors that should also be taken into consideration and that these have the effect of further complicating the situation.

In the first place it is disconcerting that the list of passages added to the Isaiah scroll does not coincide with the short list of passages that are not represented in the LXX. Although the two do agree in the case of Isa. 40.7-8 (see further below), they do not in the other passages found in the Hebrew text but not in the LXX: 2.22 and 56.12 in the case of complete verses, and 22.10, 51.9-10, and possibly 47.9 (absent from the B text of the LXX, at least); cf. Ziegler 1934: 46-48. Ulrich 2001 makes a virtue of this: in the case of 40.7-8, he cites the agreement of the scroll and the LXX as 'providing double attestation' (p. 301), but given that all the other examples he discusses include the 'double attestation' of LXX and MT, it is difficult to know how much weight to put upon this. Conversely, his broader conclusion (p. 301) implies that varied attestation points towards the lateness of the additions, presumably because they were as yet attested in only one of the textual witnesses. That would seem to imply that there would be greater need to scrutinize each passage in turn to see whether the odd one out should not be explained on other grounds. Indeed, Ulrich repeatedly claims that the passages in question are unlikely to have been omitted by the primary scribe of the scroll because there is no obvious mechanical trigger for parablepsis, but of course there are other reasons for failing to include material from one's *Vorlage*, and the physical appearance of how our scribe operated suggests to me that we should also explore these alternatives.

I have already indicated that there is evidence for the conservatively careful nature of the way our scribe set about his work. Although he mentions the fact from time to time and even calls it 'puzzling' (Ulrich 2001: 301), Ulrich does not pay adequate attention, in my opinion, to the evidence of spaces left in the scroll by the original scribe. (This is a relatively common oversight; Schmid 2011: 50, for instance, refers to several of the passages I shall discuss as 'versehentlich ausgelassen'.) That these may be significant can be suggested first by an uncontroversial small example which is seemingly too insignificant to feature in the main discussion. At Isa. 40.20 the first two words are obscure and they caused considerable difficulty to ancient copyists and translators as well as modern commentators (see the

survey in Williamson 1986). In the scroll, at col. 33, line 19, it is clear that
the words were written by a different scribe from the main text, but that the
original scribe had left sufficient space for these two words to be added in.
Ulrich and Flint 2010: II, 111 acknowledge this with their comment on this
passage: 'The original scribe left a small space of 25 mm within the line,
possibly for confused or missing text; cf. 𝕲. An early Herodian scribe, pos-
sibly the same as in line 14–16, subsequently inserted תרומה המסכן'. In
my opinion the small minority opinion that these words are a later gloss
on 'a tree (that) will not rot', which immediately follows, is most unlikely.
If, as is now widely agreed, המסכן is a species of valuable tree known in
Babylon and elsewhere (*Dalbergia sissoo*), then it is most unlikely that this
would have been added later, long after the time when the book of Isaiah
was being brought to completion in Judah; rather, the more plausible sce-
nario is that the words 'a tree (that) will not rot' were added to explain an
unusual word whose meaning was in danger of being forgotten (the line is
certainly overloaded from a poetic point of view). If that is agreed, then it
must be concluded with Ulrich and Flint that the main scribe of the scroll
was aware that something should go in the text at this point but that for
some reason he was unable himself to copy it. Was his *Vorlage* damaged
at this point? It is possible, but it would be a striking coincidence that this
should coincide with such an obscure term. More likely he did not recog-
nize the words or did not trust his reading of them and so left a space so that
they could be filled in later. Evidently he did not do this himself, for what-
ever reason, but a much later scribe was able to supply the missing words.

While obviously we cannot be sure about the precise circumstances here,
it is certainly clear that our scribe was sufficiently alert to leave a space to
supply something that he knew should be there but which, for whatever rea-
son, he was not able to supply himself. It is very much of a piece with what
I have already suggested was his extremely cautious procedure.

We may now turn with this example in mind to some of the other pas-
sages that Ulrich has discussed.

Staying for the moment within Isaiah 40, there is a significant addition
by a separate hand comprising 40.14b-16 (col. 33, lines 14-16). Ulrich notes
that there is no obvious cause for parablepsis to account for the minus of the
text as copied by the original scribe, 'whereas the extra text as in MT LXX
can be seen as expansions on the two themes of 14a and 17' (2001: 301).
Needless to say, in a continuous text it is not unlikely that material will be
coherently developed by an author, so that this explanation has no proba-
tive value; it is simply a means to arrive at the conclusion that Ulrich wants
for other reasons. Furthermore, it suffers from the disadvantage of having
to postulate that a later editor added some material which amplified the text
both before and after the point of addition. I am not aware that this was ever
a regular practice.

There is another, more important feature of this addition, however, of which Ulrich is well aware but from which he seems strangely reluctant to draw the obvious conclusion. By labelling this material an 'addition' I may have given the impression that it was somehow fitted in between the existing lines or down the margins—something which has precisely happened just earlier in the scroll at Isa. 40.7 (col. 33, between lines 6 and 7). In fact, however, the original scribe left about half of line 14 blank and then left two completely blank lines. The addition more than comfortably fits into this space of two and a half lines, in fact leaving a substantial *vacat* at the end of line 16 before the text is resumed by the original scribe at the start of line 17.

The use of spaces and the like has been studied in detail by a number of scholars (e.g. Bardtke 1953; Oesch 1979: 197-248; 1983; Olley 1993; Steck 1998; Tov 2004: 135-63) and their importance for understanding how the text was divided is generally agreed, although there are different opinions about the details. Regardless of the details about this, however, the situation as found in our passage is unparalleled. As already indicated, there are three blank lines at the end of column 27, but we have seen that there were particular reasons for this. Otherwise, in the scroll as we now have it in its complete form (but see further below) there is no example of two blank lines, and in fact only one example of a single blank line (at col. 34, line 16, to which I shall return later). It follows that the two lines must have been left blank by the original scribe precisely because he knew that there was material that needed to be included here.

Why, then, did he not include the missing material himself at the time? One possibility is that his *Vorlage* was damaged in some way so that the text was illegible at this point. He therefore left enough room for the damaged material to be added in later. If that were the case, it could obviously tell us nothing about the compositional history of the book, and I am surprised that Ulrich does not even mention this possibility. As we shall see, the circumstances relating to the inclusion of these additions varies from one place to another, suggesting that we should not try to force them all into a single mould.

Another possibility is that, although the scribe's *Vorlage* was complete at this point, the scribe was aware that in a different textual tradition there was more material which should be included. We know from a text like the Habakkuk commentary that there were occasions when the commentator was aware of more than one textual form. There are examples where he cites a form in his lemma which differs from the MT but that in his commentary upon it he manages to work in a reference to both forms of the text. This, however, relates to the reading of individual words (e.g. והרעל at 1QpHab 11.9, whereas the commentary's כיא לוא מל את עורלת לבו (line 13) reflects knowledge of והערל, as found now in MT Hab. 2.16). This is the approach that Ulrich favours, but we may question whether it is more

probable. We have already seen that there is reason to question whether the 'added' text is likely to be chronologically secondary and noted that if so it is behaving in an unusual manner. Furthermore, there seems to me to be a major distinction to be drawn between knowing that two forms of a single word were current for a particular passage on the one hand and knowingly allowing for the inclusion of two verses or more of text on the other. Given the close manner in which I have already argued the scribe kept to the orthographic peculiarities of his (hypothetical) two *Vorlagen*, it may be questioned whether he would have made such allowance for material apparently not represented in the text he was following at all.

A look at some other examples may further help us to decide between these possibilities. The one example of a single blank line, just mentioned, is quite telling in this regard. The gap starts at the end of Isa. 41.11 (though the scroll has in fact omitted two words—יהיו כאין—from slightly earlier in that verse as well). The resumption is not at the start of v. 12, however, but rather its fourth word, thus not including the words תבקשם ולא תמצאם that are now present in MT. The four lines of vv. 11-12 in MT are obviously written as a complete and rigidly balanced unit, with a 3-stress description of the fate of the enemy in the first half of each line followed by a 2-stress reference to the enemy in an increasingly strengthened manner in the second. The slightly shorter text of the primary hand in the scroll is therefore obviously incorrect, but just at the point where some words appear to be missing the scribe has left a blank. It is impossible not to conclude that the intention was to allow for the accommodation precisely of what is now found in MT. The tight structure of the passage does not allow for any other conclusion. It is certainly the case that he left a larger space than was necessary and one might wonder why. We have noted, however, that he also omitted some words from v. 11. There is no suggestion that they could also have been included here, of course (they do not come at this precise point), but their omission is perhaps a further pointer to the damage that his *Vorlage* might have suffered. In that case, he might not have been aware precisely how much text was damaged and so have left enough space to cover any eventuality (contrast Fohrer 1955).

At col. 28, line 18, the main scribe has concluded his copying with the words עד־עולם in the last line of Isa. 34.17 (the last verse of the chapter). As it happens, these words come more or less at the end of the line in the manuscript, but the next line was left blank, the text resuming with the start of Isa. 35.3. Thus the end of 34.17 and the whole of 35.1-2 were omitted. The next word in 34.17, ירשוה, was added by a different scribe above the line (and into the margin) at the appropriate point at the end of line 17, while probably by yet a third scribe (cf. Ulrich and Flint 2010: II, 108) the whole of 35.1-2 were written in smaller script in one and a half lines in the one-line gap that the first scribe had left.

Ulrich (2001: 294-95) thinks that the text as copied by the first scribe could have been the original and that the material added by the two later hands 'represents a two-stage insertion into the developing text of Isaiah'. He thinks that עד־עולם might have been the conclusion to what precedes, that the remainder of the present verse 34.17 was expanded under the influence of 13.20 and Jer. 50.39, and that 35.1-2 is a secondary addition to chap. 35 to anticipate 35.8-10 with influence also from 40.3-4 and 9-11.

This hypothetical scenario seems most unlikely to me, and that for several reasons. First, by general consent (see recently, for instance, Blenkinsopp 2000: 454), if anything is a late redactional addition in this context, it is 34.16-17 as a whole. The lines of these two verses are certainly longer than what precedes, so that one would need to be careful in arguing on the basis of poetic conventions. Nevertheless, in the MT as it stands, עד־עולם clearly belongs with what follows, where we have a parallel in לדור ודור and where יירשוה is paralleled by ישכנו־בה. The notion that this result should be attained by a two-staged development, first of a single word and then of an additional half line, seems remote. Second, it may be questioned how suitable עד־עולם would be to what precedes. The first half of the verse is also a well-parallelled pair of half lines that do not require 'for ever' to complete them in any way: 'He has cast the lot for them; his hand has portioned it out to them with the line'. Third, although there are connections between chaps. 34 and 35, there is no reason at all to suppose that the final half line of 34.17 was in any way directly associated with 35.1-2, so that on Ulrich's view it would probably be necessary to postulate yet a separate addition (for which there is no possible independent evidence from the scroll). In this, however, his correct recognition of links with the early verses in chap. 40 rather tells against his suggestion, because as Steck 1985 has well shown, the connections with that chapter extend further than just the first two verses. Whether or not we agree with Steck's redaction-critical proposal at this point, he is certainly correct to show that the connections with Isa. 40.1-11 concern the whole of chap. 35, not just the first two verses. Finally, this proposal would be another where a gap has to be filled by a double redactional element, one relating to what precedes and the other to what follows. It would be strange for this coincidence to be known to the scribe who left the gap. In short, Ulrich's proposal postulated two redactional elements at this point for neither of which does there appear to be any sound reason.

Another addition in a space in the manuscript occurs in col. 30. The first four words of line 10 reach as far as the end of Isa. 37.4 (baring the last letter, where this represents in any case a very slight difference from the text now found in MT). The rest of the line comprises the last letter of the final word of v. 4 and continues with v. 5; the rest of v. 5 together with vv. 6-7 are then included in two further lines written in small letters, these being fitted

into a gap of apparently one line that was left by the original scribe. In fact, there was not quite enough space in this gap to complete v. 7, and the last two and a half words are written down the left-hand margin (interestingly to the left of the sewing, indicating that the insertion was made after the skins of the scroll as a whole had been sewn together).

Ulrich finds little evidence for a mechanical omission of this added material and suggests instead that it 'can be suspected as a prophetic word secondarily inserted here to correspond with the conclusion of this narrative in 37:36-38' (p. 297). The difficulty with this theory is that the material in question occurs not only here in MT and LXX Isaiah but also in 2 Kgs 19.5-7 (MT and LXX) as part of the lengthy parallel account of Sennacherib's invasion and related matters in 2 Kings 18–20 and Isaiah 36–39. I have sought elsewhere to support at length the commonest view that the chapters in Isaiah were taken (with some modifications) from 2 Kings (Williamson 1994: 189-211). It follows that the redactional addition that Ulrich postulates must have taken place first in 2 Kings and that it was already present in the form of the text that was copied into Isaiah. The likelihood that a scribe of Isaiah should have been aware of a form of the text that lacked this material is remote in the extreme. And indeed most commentators see these verses precisely as the necessary key to lead up to the denouement in 2 Kgs 19.36-37 = Isa. 37.37-38, not as a later secondary assimilation to it.

An unusual situation obtains at col. 32, lines 12-14. Here we are dealing with the close of Hezekiah's prayer (absent from 2 Kings) which is followed in MT and in this addition by two verses which are taken in a somewhat different form from earlier in the 2 Kings parallel, namely 2 Kgs 20.7-8. Furthermore, there is room for some disagreement over precisely where the added material begins. After the equivalent of the first two words of Isa. 38.20, the equivalent of v. 19 is repeated in the scroll together with the whole of v. 20, and it is not entirely clear whether this was all the work of the first scribe or not. However, it seems clear enough that a different hand started to copy v. 21 in the space left at the end of that line but that there is no gap of a whole line, such as we have seen previously, so that v. 22 in its entirety had to be written down the left-hand margin. Here, then, is a case where material that has clearly been moved redactionally at some point in the composition of Isaiah 38 has not been included by the first scribe of the scroll and moreover that he did not leave a gap sufficient for it to be included, as we have seen he did several times elsewhere. Ulrich's case is thus superficially stronger at this point.

I do not propose to discuss this particular example at length because it has already been subjected to an exhaustive analysis of some 35 pages by Stromberg 2009. He shows that on this occasion Ulrich was anticipated by a considerable number of other scholars, starting with Talmon (1975: 330-32), but he maintains despite this that in fact the positioning of vv. 21-22 at

this point in the text of Isaiah was a deliberate redactional move that is asso-ciated with several other features in the surrounding text; it would therefore be a mistake to regard the addition of these verses as some isolated, later and arbitrary move. If he is right, then of course Ulrich's case collapses. The strength of his arguments may be judged separately elsewhere on their mer-its, but for the purposes of the present discussion we need to note secondly that there is a very good mechanical reason as to why the verses might have been omitted from the Scroll (or its *Vorlage*), namely the likelihood that there was a case of paraplepsis from בית יהוה at the end of v. 20 to the use of the same two words at the end of v. 22. As we have seen, Ulrich often defends his position elsewhere with the observation that there is no such evidence apparent. It is therefore striking that he fails to mention the matter in the present instance. Given that, unlike his usual practice elsewhere, the scribe did not leave a proper gap here for the added material, the probability must be that its omission by the first scribe or his *Vorlage* was accidental.

The same consideration, we may now observe, probably accounts for the situation at col. 33, line 7. In this frequently discussed example (see at length Koenig 1983), part of Isa. 40.7-8 is missing from the original copy. Again, no space was left by the first scribe but a different hand has added the material between the lines and down the margin. In this case it is also important to note that the LXX more or less coincides with the shorter form of the text. Many commentators take the view that this is indeed the origi-nal form of the text and that the material added in the scroll and found now in the MT is secondary. For what it is worth, I happen to be of the opinion that the longer form of the text is far more satisfying rhetorically and is thus likely to be original (Williamson 1994: 255-56), but that is not relevant for the present discussion. Here again, there is every reason to suspect that we may be confronted with an example of paraplepsis, from the first example of יבש חציר נבל ציץ to the next and that this may have occurred early in the textual transmission of Isaiah, since it is attested by both LXX and 1QIsa[a].

At any rate, it is striking to note that these two last cases discussed have in common both that paraplepsis is a strong possible explanation and that the first scribe did not leave a gap for the material to be supplied. It would be a mistake to think that these two similar circumstances are unrelated.

I have now looked briefly at all the passages discussed by Ulrich that include evidence of two or more hands in the Qumran scroll. The other pas-sages he discusses, though each interesting and worthy of study in their own right, cannot contribute to our immediate purpose. At Isa. 2.9-10 and 63.3 the scroll lacks material now included in MT and LXX. At 2.22 and 36.7 the scroll agrees with MT against LXX, and at 51.6 the scroll has a significantly variant form of text by comparison with MT and LXX. In none of these cases, however, is there any evidence that the scribe who copied our scroll was aware of these differences. There are no gaps left or corrections entered, so

that they cannot be used in an analysis of the scribe's knowledge, or otherwise, of variant texts. We must assume that the scribe copied his *Vorlage* in good faith at these points and that nobody saw reason to correct his work.

There remains one observation to be made about the passages that I regard as relevant, and that is that they all occur in the second half of the scroll. This was noted early on by Brownlee 1952, but it has only been picked up by one or two scholars since (e.g. Brooke 2005). In fact, briefly anticipated by Skehan (1952: 82), Brownlee goes further and notes that the places where the first scribe left a gap of a line or two all occur at more or less the same point in the columns. He therefore postulated that for this second half of the book the text that the scribe was copying must have been damaged in some consistent manner, probably by having been damaged along its foot. At these points he would have therefore seen that the text needed to be completed and he left a line or two (according to his judgment) to allow this to happen in due course. Furthermore, since the first gap (col. 28, line 19) is only just half a column after the division at the end of col. 27, it cannot be that the *Vorlage* itself also began at Isaiah 34. Brownlee therefore hypothecated that the scribe copied an undamaged *Vorlage* that covered chaps. 1–33 and that, since this ended at that point, he had to move to a complete but less well-preserved scroll for the remainder.

Brownlee's suggestion remains at best an intelligent hypothesis to explain a combination of careful observations. (As an alternative, one might consider the possibility of damage by the central tie.) The starting point, however, namely that all the examples are in the second half of the scroll, for which we have seen there is already strong alternative evidence to indicate that the scribe was following a different *Vorlage* from that which he used for the first half, seems to me to be more than a coincidence and it strengthens the conclusion that these phenomena should be explained by considerations relating to the physical features of the scrolls in question and not to questions relating to redaction-history.

My arguments may be simply summarized, therefore, under three headings. (It should be remembered that for this I accept the expert opinion of the editors, as argued previously in greatest detail by Martin 1958, that a single scribe was responsible for the main text of the whole of 1QIsa[a].) (1) The evidence from orthography and morphology which has already led to the wide-spread conclusion that the scribe had two separate *Vorlagen* is strengthened by the observation that all the gaps that he consciously left for later completion occur in the second half of the scroll. The alternative suggestion that the differences reach back to the time of original composition is misguided. (2) Where he left gaps, there is no independent evidence that redactionally variant texts were in existence and the evidence that the material which has been added can be explained on that basis is weak. (3) The two places where material has been added by a later hand without the first

scribe having left a gap both have a stronger independent claim to being passages which, in terms of earlier composition history, have a greater claim to being additions to the 'original' text, though this is certainly not agreed by all commentators. Perhaps significantly, however, in both these cases there is a strong case to be made for the claim that the gap was caused in the history of textual transmission by parablepsis. Thus it would be hazardous to use the narrowly textual evidence in these two cases to argue for compositional conclusions; that needs to be done on its own merits and according to the usual criteria.

My conclusions are close to those of scholars who first studied this scroll in the earliest days of Dead Sea Scrolls research. While enthusiastically joining in this well-deserved tribute to Tamara Eskenazi, whose scholarship has certainly 'made a difference' that will endure, I note the slight irony in my opinion at this point that while we have learned (and continue to learn) a great deal from this scroll about many topics relevant to the textual history of Isaiah, it seems that in the particular aspects studied here the first impressions of an earlier generation of scholars have not been overturned by subsequent hypotheses.

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BETWEEN NATION AND STATE IN THE BOOK OF SAMUEL: THE CASE OF ITTAI THE GITTITE

Jacob L. Wright

Along with numerous other junior colleagues, I have benefited directly from the scholarship and inspiration of Tamara Cohn Eskenazi. Many of our conversations have focused on Ezra–Nehemiah. But another biblical work near and dear to Professor Eskenazi is the Book of Samuel—especially its narratives of a multitude of oft-neglected minor figures. The following reflections on one of those figures, Ittai the Gittite, owe much to Professor Eskenazi's own contemplations.

I

The passage related to Ittai the Gittite (2 Sam. 15.18b-22) is embedded in the account of David's departure from Jerusalem after relinquishing his throne to Absalom. As the king leaves, his followers march in procession past him. The cavalcade includes the foreign troops who serve in his employ: the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and the Gittites. The latter are described as '600 men who came to [David's] side from Gath' (v. 18).[1] David urges Ittai to take his men and their families back to Absalom:

> Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite: 'Why should you too go with us? Go back and stay with the king. For you are a foreigner, an exile from your place. You came only yesterday; should I make you go with us today? I must roam about. But you, return, and bring back your comrades with you. May mercy and truth be shown to you (2 Sam. 15.19-20).

The phrase 'with us' in the first line (*gam-'attâ 'ittānû*) is likely a play on the name of Ittai (*'ittay*), which in unvocalized Hebrew appears the same as 'with me'.[2] Ittai should return, instead of 'going with' David, because he

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1. 600 is the conventional size for a military regiment in both biblical and extra-biblical sources.

2. Contrast the different word for 'with us' (*'immānû*) in v. 20, where Ittai's name does not appear. See Nadav Na'aman, 'Ittai the Gittite', *BN* 94 (1998), pp. 22-25. The earliest reference to Ittai the Gittite is likely to be found in 2 Sam. 17.2.

is 'foreigner' (*nokrî*). He is not a member of the people in whose land he and his troops dwell. As one who lacks longstanding ties to his new place of residence, he is not expected to display the same degree of devotion as natives. In addition to being a foreigner, Ittai is also 'an exile (*gôleh*) from [his] place'. The combination of 'exile' and 'place', instead of 'land/country', is unusual. It underscores the similarity between Ittai's identity and David's plight. The latter is now also 'an exile from his place' (i.e. the palace). Pushed out by Absalom, he must return to a life of wandering, the mode of existence he had adopted before ascending the throne.[3]

One might suppose that issues of belonging posed by a particular population prompted the composition of the account of Ittai the Gittite. When Ittai speaks, he represents the large host of Gittite men and their families who accompany David in this scene of 'forced migration'. The city of Gath has a long history in relation to polities in the central hill country, and Gittites may have actually served in the armies of Judah or Israel.[4] Yet what prompted the composition of this account was likely not an issue posed by a population (Gath or the Gittites) but rather a more fundamental principle of statehood.

Whereas the account of Uriah (2 Samuel 11–12) portrays what happens when a state becomes an end in itself, this passage depicts the special type of allegiance that is indispensable to the exercise of state power. Uriah expresses his solidarity with the nation and thereby places himself in a certain opposition to the king, while Ittai is concerned with the welfare of the king. Both are foreign mercenaries; yet whereas Uriah is part of the people of Israel, Ittai pledges his life and loyalty solely to the king.

In contradistinction to the callously self-indulgent monarch who willingly sacrifices the lives of his people for the sake of triumph and territorial expansion, Uriah represents what today we would call the republican virtues of the citizen-soldier. At a pivotal point in the narrative, he takes an oath (on the life of the king!) that he would not abandon his lord, the general Joab, and his comrades-in-arms. The decisive criterion for belonging, according to this account's authors, is embodied by a Hittite soldier: complete loyalty to one's people in a time of war. In his speech (11.11), Uriah could have appealed to a yet unachieved victory by declaring: 'I will not go to my home as long as Rabbah has not been conquered'. Yet he eschews the statist concern with name-making and triumph. Instead he thinks only of

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3. Notice the similarities in formulation to 1 Sam. 23.13, where David wanders with his 600 men.

4. Several LMLK handles (eighth century BCE) have been found at Gath. Some scholars maintain that Judah controlled the city before Sargon or Sennacherib conquered it. See discussion of the most recent research by Yigal Levin, 'The Status of Gath in Micah's Lament for the Cities of Judah', in *Studies in Bible and Exegesis*, X (ed. Moshe Garsiel *et al.*; Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2012), pp. 223-37 (229-35) [Hebrew].

the Ark of Yhwh, the people of Israel and Judah, and his commander Joab. Self-sacrifice and battlefield death is the defining gesture.

Lacking Uriah's noble solidarity, David sends off the troops to fight his wars while he, in an act of statist hubris, stays behind to enjoy the security—and pleasures—of Jerusalem. This spatial division between palace and people precipitates a spiral of transgressions that results in the gratuitous loss of Israelite lives and in the imperilment of the throne itself. By selecting a Hittite soldier to display the civic virtue that defines a sustainable form of nationhood, the biblical authors have thrown into sharp relief the degeneracies of a state that detaches itself from the plight of the people. As I will seek to demonstrate in the following pages, the account of Ittai the Gittite differs from the account of Uriah the Hittite inasmuch as it defends the need for professional soldiers who are firmly devoted to the state. And this fact reveals much about the message of the Book of Samuel.

<div align="center">II</div>

The fact that Ittai is not an Israelite makes his allegiance all the more meaningful. As a soldier of fortune, he is expected to go where the fortune is to be made. Hence David enjoins him to return to 'the king' (Absalom). But Ittai represents more than just a self-serving *condotierre*. He is the paragon of a faithful vassal who, like a noble knight, pledges to protect his liege with his life: 'Ittai replied to the king, "As Yhwh lives and as my lord the king lives, the place my lord the king is, there your servant will be, whether for death or for life!"' (v. 21). Ittai uses David's word 'place' in order to drive home his point. As an exile from his own place, he swears to accompany the king to whatever place the king's fate brings him, even if it means that he, his men, and their families must abandon the assured alimentation of the royal table for the destitute life of asylum-seekers.

We can identify other significant analogies between David and Ittai. During his earlier days as a wandering fugitive, David led a band of 600 warriors (and their families).[5] In this capacity, he entered the employ of none other than the Gittite ruler Achish. The question of David's loyalty as a mercenary is at issue in many sections of that account. After witnessing the devotion of his Bethlehemite mercenary (28.2), Achish promises to appoint him to be his bodyguard in perpetuity. Later, in keeping with his trust and confidence in David (1 Sam. 27.12), Achish expects his mercenary to take the field against Israel with his forces along with the other Philistine alliance partners and their respective armies (28.1-2 and 29.2). When asked if he'd be prepared to fight against Israel, David declares his allegiance: 'You

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5.   Compare 1 Sam. 27.1; 30.1-5; 2 Sam. 2.1-3.

know what your servant will do!' (28.2). Sure enough, he follows through on his promise (1 Sam. 29.3).[6]

The other Philistine leaders are, however, suspicious of David's loyalties. Their concern is not that David secretly harbors love for his *people*, but rather that he might decide to return to and seek the favor of his former *master*, King Saul of Israel. Hence they demand that he be sent home: 'He shall not march down with us in battle, or else he may become an adversary to us during the fray. For what would be a better way for this guy to reconcile himself with *his lord* if not with the heads of the men here?' (1 Sam. 29.4). The argument turns on evidence of past behavior: Whereas Achish claims that he found no fault in David since the time he defected and entered his employ, his confederates remind him that David has the reputation for being a great warrior in Saul's army: 'Remember, he is the David of whom they sang as they danced, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his myriads"' (29.5). Contrary to harmonistic readings of this text, the Philistine leaders refer to the ditty, which first appears in the Goliath account, not because it alludes to David's history of killing Philistines or because it presents him fighting bravely for his Israelite kin. The reason is rather that the lyrics identify David with *Saul*, and hence raise the prospect that David might look for an opportunity to demonstrate his abiding allegiance to this king by offering him a pile of Philistine heads.[7] The Philistines correctly perceive that what motivates David is not *national loyalty* but rather *mercenary allegiance*. Yet Achish is convinced that David had demonstrated his devotion. He avers that if it were not for the objections of his coalition partners, he would include David in his forces (29.6-7).

Here David, like Ittai, represents the virtues of an exemplary mercenary or vassal, willing to 'fight against the enemies of my lord the king' (1 Sam. 29.8). As true soldiers of fortune, David and his men will serve faithfully the one who offers the best conditions of reward. The mentality David represents here pays no heed to national allegiance. Belonging is instead a matter of the personal bond between a servant and his master, which requires that one make the enemies of his lord his own enemies—a recurrent *topos*

6.   Without chap. 29, the remark leaves the reader wondering whether David would actually fight against Israel's forces (compare 27.8-12). In a forthcoming book, *Commemorating King David: War, Memory, and the Politics of Judahite Statehood*, I argue for originally independent Saul and David narratives before editors combined and amplified them with texts that synchronize the actions of Saul and David (e.g. 1 Samuel 29 and 2 Samuel 1).

7.   Both 1 Sam. 21.11-16 [10-15] and 1 Samuel 29 appear to be unaware of the tradition that David killed Goliath. Not surprisingly, the Goliath account seems to have been interpolated between 1 Sam 18.5-9* (without 'and David returned from killing the Philistine' in v. 6) and the account in 14.52+16.19-22.

in ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties.[8] The fact that both Ittai and David serve their lords as *foreigners* is by no means coincidental. In antiquity, as in more recent history, one recognized the benefits of an elite guard composed of non-natives. Standing outside local familial and political networks, they could be trusted to protect the king from the reach of local nemeses and to execute their assignments professionally, which explains why so many monarchs throughout history have employed foreign mercenaries in their royal guards. Within the Bible, the accounts of Solomon's accession (1 Kings 1) and of the Joash putsch (2 Kings 11) refer to foreign warriors.[9]

Elsewhere the book of Samuel describes the devotion of the multiethnic troops in David's elite corps. Thus we read how he once expressed *en passant* a thirst for water from his hometown of Bethlehem, which was in the meantime occupied by Philistine forces. To prove their devotion, three of his men imperil their lives by entering Bethlehem in order to bring him water (2 Sam. 23.13-17; see also the account in 21.15-17). The devotion of these men to their lord David corresponds in turn to the devotion of David to his lord Achish. In the same way, the 600 Gittites fight faithfully in the ranks of their lord Ittai, and Ittai in turn swears to accompany David in death and life.

Now some would challenge the division I draw between *personal* bonds of allegiance and larger *national* or *collective* solidarity. One could argue that it is anachronistic to analyze these texts in terms of 'extended kinship' and 'national loyalty'—especially between Judah, Benjamin, and Israel in the tenth century BCE. The Bethlehemite David may well have felt no more akin to the Benjaminite Saul (and Israel) than to the Gittite Achish; the same goes for Ittai's relationship to David. After all, Gath was located closer to most of Judah than the borders of Saul's kingdom. Moreover, Gath was an immensely powerful state, exerting its influence over a very wide territory to the west and south.

Yet while we may doubt, with good reason, whether a Bethlehemite in the tenth century BCE would have affirmed solidarity with a Benjaminite ruler, it is important to remember that these texts emerged in a later and much different period. Their authors were concerned to affirm the irreproachability of David and his dynasty vis-à-vis a great figure in Benjaminite and Israelite history. Likewise, and more importantly for our purpose, they addressed the problem of political consolidation and an emerging sense of kinship—a problem embodied by mercenary warriors.

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8. Thus Niqmaddu declares to Šuppiluliuma: 'With the enemies of my lord, I am enemy; with his ally, I am ally' (RS 17.340.13).

9. The same rationale informs the use of eunuchs in palaces; see Jacob L. Wright and Michael Chan, 'King and Eunuch: Isaiah 56:1-8 in Light of Honorific Royal Burial Practices', *JBL* 131 (2012), pp. 99-119 (103-11).

   The image of David the authors paint is not one of a devoted champion of Israelite national unity. Instead, they present a sophisticated critique of state power by portraying a ruler determined to maintain power. On the one hand, they affirm that David consolidated Judah into a state, and on the other, they reveal how this iconic figure in Judahite memory was also a political opportunist who had long aspired to be great. His unsavory personal ambition in the end proves to be beneficial to Judah, yet he himself deserves little credit. This duality characterizes the David traditions in the Book of Samuel from the earliest texts to the final form. And it stands in stark contrast to Chronicles' resistance to any criticism of this figure.

<div align="center">III</div>

In order to grasp the significance of Ittai's pledge of allegiance, we may compare it to the vow Ruth declares to her mother-in-law Naomi, as Tamara Cohn Eskenazi has done in her recent prize-winning JPS commentary on Ruth.[10] Whereas Orpah takes leave of Naomi, Ruth 'clings' to her. Just as David urges Ittai to return to Absalom 'in true faithfulness' (*ḥesed*), Naomi pleads with Ruth to follow Orpah back to her people and her gods (both times with *šûb*). Yet Ruth resists:

> Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you dwell, I will dwell; your people shall be my people, and your god my god. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus and more may Yhwh do to me if anything but death parts me from you (Ruth 1.16-17).

The intertextual overlap between this scene and our account underscores the significant differences between Ruth's and Ittai's responses.[11] By means of her profoundly personal pledge, Ruth expresses a determination to join Naomi's *people*. This transformation involves the worship of a new god and a new place of interment. Ittai, like Ruth, insists on accompanying David wherever he goes. Yet he says nothing about adopting David's people as his own or making David's god his god.[12] Instead, he pledges, in keeping with his role as a vassal and royal guard, to protect *the king* in both death and life.

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   10. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Ruth* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2011), pp. 18-19: 'In both these instances, a foreigner leaves the comfort of home and joins a wandering Judean. The comparison suggests an altruistic motive for both. Each places the welfare of the other person ahead of self-interest.'

   11. Note also the commonalities between the conclusions to these passages: 2 Sam. 15.22 and Ruth 1.18-19.

   12. Ittai's oath on the life of Yhwh does not imply worship of this deity any more than Achish's oath on the life of Yhwh (1 Sam. 29.6).

Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *z'l*, compared Ruth's pledge to expressions of fraternity between partners of international treaties and military coalitions.[13] The similarities between the vow of the Moabite woman, on the one hand, and the formal declarations of kings forming war alliances in 1 Kgs 22.4 and 2 Kgs 3.7, on the other, are duly noted. Yet the asseverations of rulers that Frymer-Kensky cited may be more reminiscent of *Ittai's* oath of allegiance. In both cases, we have coalition-partners or vassals representing armies and pledging military assistance. Moreover, when the kings affirm that their 'people' will be one, they are referring to their armed forces. not to the populations of their countries, as in Ruth's vow. Likewise, the excerpts from other vassal treaties that have been catalogued by Mark S. Smith are much more similar to both the context and substance of Ittai's pledge than they are to Ruth's.[14]

The differences in the formulation between Ruth's and Ittai's oaths correspond to the ubiquitous tension between peoplehood and statehood in the Hebrew Bible. Whereas Ruth expresses the willingness to become a member of Naomi's people, Ittai swears allegiance to the person of King David. In a very real sense, an ancient state, insofar as it was indistinguishable from the body of the ruler, rested on the political foundation furnished by vassal oaths. It is fitting that such oaths, and the quasi-feudal structures they undergird (600 men > David > Achish or 600 Gittites > Ittai > David), are depicted in the accounts of the life of David, since this figure embodies, in the books of Samuel and Kings, the statist tradition that characterizes Judahite politics.[15]

IV

Within the so-called Enneateuch (Genesis–Kings), the Book of Samuel depicts a political transition: from a people in the Land without a centralized state (days of Samuel), to a king who unifies the people but fails to vanquish the nation's enemies (days of Saul), to finally a strong-armed ruler who brings real security but also inflicts great bloodbaths upon the nation (days of David). The evolution is viewed ambivalently, for the monopoly of power by the palace necessarily competes with the more horizontal-demotic strategies that the biblical authors view as indispensable to the survival of their people after the destruction of the state. In the Enneateuch, we can

13. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of their Stories* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), p. 241: 'She did not need to invent her lines, for they resonate with Bible's cadences of covenant and contract'.

14. Mark S. Smith, '"Your people shall be my people": Family and Covenant in Ruth 1:16-17', *CBQ* 69 (2007), pp. 242-58.

15. The Bible's demotic or national ideals, which promote a broad horizontal participation of the people in the political process, have their origins in the society and political history of Israel, not Judah.

study the fundamental tension created by a strong centralized state that guarantees security from enemies abroad but also runs the risk of suffocating the nation. The Enneateuch concludes by portraying a horrific vacuum created by the eradication of the last remnant of the people who figure so prominently in the centuries of history prior to the establishment of the centralized state.[16]

The transition to a strong state is not immediate. Saul's kingdom is unified, but it's also weak. Beginning with his first campaign (1 Samuel 11), he mobilizes the entire nation, *kol-yiśrā'ēl*, for a military campaign, and thereafter he consistently makes use of conscripted irregular troops, with moderate success. Early readers of the Saul account transformed this king's 600 soldiers, like Gideon's 300, from a private army into the number of men that remained from Israel's tribal levies who voluntarily rally to his call.[17] Tellingly, such redactional work was not undertaken with respect to David's 600. Throughout the book of Samuel, David represents the powerful state that employs strong-arm methods and elite corps of professional warriors—many of whom are non-natives—not only to more effectively vanquish Israel's enemies and establish strong borders, but also to enforce its will upon the people within these borders.

Although one has often claimed that David established a grand United Kingdom of Israel, the authors of Samuel depict him tearing asunder the unified state Saul established. David greases the palms of the Judahites with the spoils of his raids, and then Judah's elders predictably come and appoint him their king (1 Sam. 30.26-31; 2 Sam. 2.1-3). David therefore becomes king only at the cost of Judah's *secession* from Israel, and the agonizing discord between these two polities persists throughout the rest of the history depicted in Samuel and Kings.

If David manages to mend and hold together this political polarity, it is by means of raw force, not by appeal to corporate interests. Instead of allowing Absalom to rule the people of Israel, whose hearts he had won (2 Sam. 15.2-6, 13; 17.1-4), David deceptively induces him and 'all Israel' to appear on the battlefield (17.1-14), where David's smaller army of professional troops—one third of whom he places under the command of

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16. See Jacob L. Wright, 'The Deportation of Jerusalem's Wealth and the Demise of Native Sovereignty', in *Interpreting Exile* (ed. Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ames, and Jacob L. Wright; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), pp. 105-33 (107-10).

17. Witnessing to the tight nexus in the book of Samuel between kingship and military organization, an older Saul tradition in 1 Samuel 13–14 begins by reporting that the king chose 3,000 men from Israel for his army while sending the 'rest of the people/ militia' back home (13.2). Later he has a cohort of 600 men (13.15; 14.2), a conventional number of troops in professional military units. By claiming that 'the rest' went in hiding (13.6-7, 15), the narrator identifies these troops as those who remain from the national militia whom Saul had mustered.

Ittai the Gittite—eliminates Absalom and forces all Israel to flee 'to their tents' (18.1-17). On David's way back to the throne, even before arriving in Jerusalem, the people of Israel, due to a blunder on the part of David (19.8-15, 41-43), secede again. David initially petitions Amasa to muster the conscript troops of Judah in order to take the offensive against Sheba ben Bichri, the instigator. In reporting that Amasa had trouble mobilizing these irregular forces, the narrator suggests that not even the people of Judah stood fully on David's side. We are told that the king therefore commissioned his 'servants'—his elite troops with the Cherethites and Pelethites—to quash the rebellion.[18]

In the end, David preserves the integrity of his kingdom with the help of his professional warriors whom he wields against the general will of the people. The Absalom account reports that the 'servants of David' performed a 'massive slaughter' of 20,000 members of Israel when quashing the rebellion. Perhaps David can boast of Israel's love, and perhaps his extraordinarily violent actions prevent the disunion of Israel and Judah. But as depicted in these tales, David is no Abraham Lincoln. We are never told that he harbored deep anxiety or remorse about the great Israelite bloodshed caused by his actions during these civil wars. Indeed, he wages battle for his *own* interests. The book concludes by presenting David choosing a plague of death for the entire land instead of an enemy who would pursue him alone; in the end, 70,000 must die (2 Sam. 24.13-15).

The success of the mature David, epitomizing the effective yet ruthless leader, is due to the proficient use of private troops rather than any capacity to persuade the people. In contrast, he enjoyed great popularity during his early days. By registering the names of David's warriors and recalling his exploits with them, the texts surrounding David's final words (2 Sam. 21.15-22 and 23.8-39) suggest that this leader's greatest moments in life were the days he spent in the camp with this corps of fighters.[19] As the narrative continues in the first chapters of Kings, Solomon succeeds in assuming the throne not least because he has David's 'warriors' and elite units of foreign mercenaries (the Cherethites and Pelethites) on his side.

As a foreign mercenary who swears loyalty to the person of the king, to protect him in both death and life, Ittai the Gittite is emblematic of the type of unmitigated allegiance that successful statehood demands. Yet a king and his loyal royal guard often behave at odds with the interests of the nation. While the biblical authors recognize that the relationship between state and nation is inevitably a vexed one, they demand that the state serve

18. These secessions anticipate the final division of the kingdom in the days of Rehoboam (1 Kings 12).

19. These texts likely predate 2 Sam. 9.1–21.14 and may belong to an independent account of David's reign.

the interests of the nation. Herein they anticipate the nationalist principles of modernity, while departing from the political norms of antiquity, both in Israel and abroad.

V

In all these accounts we witness how David, like many other rulers from the ancient world, willingly subjects his people to death for *raisons d'état*, with the *état* being identical to his own rule. David's biography, from his glorious early ideal days as a soldier fighting alongside his men to the later time when he no longer marches out with the others, replicates Israel's history as depicted by the biblical authors. The transition in polity to centralized statehood—from 'a people without a state' to 'a state with a people'—coincides with a transformation from a citizen's army in Israel's early days to the standing forces of professional troops, who fight the wars of the kings. In both cases, the second phases mirror typical rulers/states that the biblical authors seek to contextualize.

By imagining the emergence of a centralized state, the Book of Samuel presents an alternative. On the one hand, the kingdom of Saul, with its national army of 'all Israel', is characterized by internal unity yet also insecurity on its borders. On the other hand, the kingdom of David, which relies on a standing army and contingents of foreign mercenaries, is characterized by foreign security yet also deep internal divisions. Likewise, the final form of Genesis–Kings identifies in the history of Israel a deep tension between a vibrant sense of peoplehood, on the hand, and a strong state that provides security, on the other. Instead of seeking to resolve this tension, the biblical authors present it as a problem for their readers to confront as they endeavor to create a sustainable form of self-governance—both before the catastrophe of 586 BCE and thereafter. In their account of Ittai the Gittite, they acknowledge the place for, and commemorate the loyalty of, devoted foreign mercenaries who facilitate royal rule and statehood.

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