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Literacy and the Creation of the Biblical World

INTRODUCTION—LITERACY AND LITERATURE

The Historical Context

Biblical literature, the attitudes and beliefs it embodies, the history that it supposes and narrates, is the legacy of the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel, always a separate entity, left no written record and contributed to the process of revelation only by its demise. The North was literate—a few inscriptions are evidence that its people could read and write—but it produced no literature and would not have left any mark if Judah had not created a world where they both belonged.

Northern Israel had belonged in fact to the world of the Phoenicians and Aramaeans and finally shared their fate. It was allied with the Sidonians and prospered as long as this bold and curious people, with the cooperation of Damascus and a coalition of Aramaean and Neo-Hittite allies, could maintain its commercial network that stretched from the Levant and northern Syria through the Aegean to the western Mediterranean. Israel was overrun and destroyed in the late eighth century when this network fell into the hands of the Assyrians and Samaria became an undistinguished province of the Assyrian empire.

Judaean literature began abruptly, after the fall of the North, and flourished for the next two hundred years. The fate of its ancient nemesis, of its brother Joseph, its sister kingdom whose capital was Samaria, was the immediate inspiration of its writers. Comparison of the two kingdoms and a sense of doom or destiny, especially among the prophets, was the constant theme and worry of their works.

The first hundred years of this literary flourishing, under the auspices of the Assyrian empire, were stable and secure. And under the aegis of the Tyrian empire, as it renewed ancient ties with Egypt, colonized the Mediterranean and traded with the world, they were years

of daring innovation. The second hundred years, under the Babylonians and Persians, were more austere and introspective. Judah was subdued, it finally shared the fate of Samaria, and its literature was dedicated to belaboring the fact or to searching out a meagre future for its people.

Both centuries were times of change and in both there were presentiments that the past was slipping away and would be lost without imaginative endeavors to preserve it for the future—presentiments that were realized in such ventures as the library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh, in the literary renaissance under the fabled king Nebuchadnezzar, and in the Bible. The literature of Judah flourished through its contact with this world, through the turmoil and excitement that it engendered, through the effort of wit, will and imagination that these amazing centuries encouraged or required. But left to its own resources and traditions by the magnanimous Persian empire its inspiration dwindled and was soon extinguished.

The Literary Matrix

Judaean literature appears, without antecedent, vigorous and fully formed. It is the product of a literate society that fed on borrowed literary models and indigenous traditions. It is written and not oral, not the residue of an oral society, or the product of oral composition, or the result of oral transmission, but the creation of an educated people who did not compose literary works until the time was right. Judaean literature was inspired by the sudden coincidence of opportunity and necessity, the necessity dictated by the fall of the North, the opportunity offered by the spectacular political, economic, social and religious changes in the South.

The historians of Judah, from the very first, relied on the classics of Babylonian literature, law and science, copied contemporary Assyrian political and historical works, borrowed from the Greeks some of their legends and the idea of a national epic, took from the Phoenicians the narrative forms that they, in turn, may have learned from the Egyptians, and mimiced the tales of their Transjordanian neighbors. The prophets vied with them for the attention of the people, fumed against the intrusion of foreign and worldly fashions and, by appealing to familiar ideas, images, themes and beliefs, constructed indigenous traditions to compete with the new and bewildering his-

torical interpretations.

The historians were well-read and studious. The prophets were the singers, orators, dramatists and entertainers of their time. These writers thrived on their diversity and disagreements and together wrote the history of their people by understanding their past, putting their own times in perspective and assuming responsibility for their future. Judaean literature waned when, chiefly under the pressure of historical theory, the choices were limited and conformity was required.

THE EVIDENCE FOR LITERACY

The evidence for such a literate society is the literature itself. The specific evidence that its literature was written and read is first, the interaction of individual editors and authors, secondly, the development of distinctive but mutually dependent historical and prophetic traditions and third, the extinction of literary inspiration by an emerging book culture that revised and canonized the traditions and made classical Judaean literature both exclusive and conformist to suit an orthodox and provincial point of view. The society remained literate, as it had been in the beginning, but its literature was a thing of the past.

I. Literacy: The Interaction of Individual Authors and Editors

The simplest evidence for literacy is the relationship of edited to original literary works. The originals were written by individual authors with distinctive styles, interests and aims. They were composed as continuous and complete works and have been preserved as such in the Bible. The revised versions are second, or in some cases, third or fourth editions of the same works. These editors were authors in their own right, some of them more gifted than others, who reorganized and rewrote the originals and ensured their continued usefulness by relating them to current issues, trends and opinions. The efforts of these editors were not trivial or merely pedantic. Their works sometimes doubled or tripled the size of the originals that they incorporated, and they regularly contributed the most striking or memorable part of the book.

A. Authorship—The Evidence for Writing and Texts

1. *Reflections on Writing*

a. The Historians: The earliest literature, as if entranced by its
novelty, is eager to explain how and why it came to be written. The
first historians refer to the fact that their works, or significant parts
of them, were written. They generally note that what was written
had first been spoken, and they are careful to identify the speaker,
the writer and the contents of their texts. Since it was customary for
legal and commercial documents to be inscribed and witnessed, it is
not surprising that these historians single out the significance of their
written laws and covenants, written they maintained by Moses or by
God, witnessed by the people and meant to be the basis of belief and
practice. There were prosaic uses for writing, but written literature
was new in Judah, and these historians reflected on their writing and
defended their craft by including its authorization and by noting in
advance its general acceptance by a believing audience.[1]

b. The Prophets: In prophetic texts, the fact that the histories
were written is acknowledged, but writing is considered a new and
very dubious enterprise. It is normal, from the prophetic perspective,
to speak and listen, to listen and know, to understand and act. But
written texts, the prophets said, ruin this process and preclude hear-
ing, comprehension and proper behavior. Hosea complained that
the covenant had been broken and the laws neglected, and sadly
concluded that even if the laws were written ten thousand times
the people would not understand but would consider them strange.[2]
Jeremiah quoted the people as saying that they did understand and
observe the law, but not the written law that the scribes had falsified.[3]
Isaiah protested that the people refused to listen to him and then went
on to describe their refusal to listen and understand as giving an ed-
ucated person a sealed book to read, or giving an illiterate an open
book, that neither could read or understand.[4] But literature was here
to stay and even the prophets wrote in the hope, as Isaiah said, that
someday when the people were ready to listen they would read and
understand.[5] Writing soon became the accepted norm and within a
century Habakkuk, commenting on this text, could remark that the
people would not believe if they were told, but would get the mes-
sage only if it were written.[6]

2. Reflections of the Writing Material

That the authors wrote their material, even when it was to be sung, recited or performed, is evident as well in the form and organization of their works. Their writing instruments included pens and brushes, styluses and chisels and they could write on waxed boards, on clay, stone, leather, or on papyrus scrolls. What they wrote, not unnaturally, sometimes reflects the features of the material they used.

Triptychs, three writing boards bound by hinges, seem to have been in common use among the prophets, at least among those whose works were lyric or dramatic. The earliest prophecy is composed in two matching parts, each with three equal sections.[7] The format is compatible with their inscription on two triptychs, and this analogy is reinforced by the prophecy's episodic style, by the discontinuity and literary separation between the sections and the parts. Another prophecy can be seen as composed of four triptychs, whether in fact or in imitation of available writing material, and the consequent disjunction of the separate sections and parts has baffled commentators ever since.[8] At the end of the seventh century prophecies tended to be composed in lyric genres. One prophet wrote a text composed of a hymn, a ballad and an ode. Another wrote a psalm, with the tripartite structure of lament, expectation and praise. A third prophecy is a speech composed of an exordium, an exhortation and a valediction. All of them have the form of a triptych, and the triptych's physical structure may account for the combination of genres and the odd inconsequence of their parts.[9]

Scrolls and tablets were written in columns. The evidence for their actual use or for their influence on the organization of texts is the position of editorial annotations and comments. The earliest history is written in episodes, each containing a number of incidents, and conceivably has the format of a scroll written in columns. The second edition of the work was composed by interspersing comments, but usually by adding complementary or alternative material before and after each episode in the manner of encompassing columns, or by inserting column-length material between the original incidents. The third edition consisted of expanding the editorial comments into column-length incidents, or of inserting other columns of its own.[10]

Prophetic texts were often written in columns. One of them[11] was edited by writing a different but mirroring version in the middle or

at the end of most of the original columns, matching half-column with half-column or whole column with whole. Another, originally written in two columns, was edited by appending two more columns at the end that simply retold the same story in the opposite order and from another point of view.[12] A significant aspect of editing was reorganization of the original work, and the practice of writing in columns made it easy and natural to redistribute the original parts simply by writing more columns.

By the end of the biblical period authors and editors were skilled in the production of books and sometimes divulged the mechanics of their production. One editor described how the book was dictated by the author, written by a scribe, read out loud by a secretary, column by column, to the king, burned bit by bit by the king when three or four columns had been read, and finally rewritten in the same way but edited and greatly expanded by the inclusion of more of the same sort of material.[13] Another book, composed of speeches by Moses, was said to have been written by him and, after disappearing for centuries from history, was found in the library of the temple in Jerusalem.[14] Some works are actually composed on the model of libraries and contain numerous books with clear beginnings and ends and with repetitive links that keep them in order and assure their proper place on the shelf.[15] One work combines history and prophecy and seems to be modelled on the composition of an archive, with a mix of public and private documents arranged in chronological order and with dockets at the beginning of books and labels at the top of columns to organize and catalogue the diverse material. The Bible itself, if it could be reconstructed for this time, might be just such a library of prophetic and historical works.

B. The Editorial Process

1. *Editorial Techniques*

All of the original works were edited, some of them beyond imme-diate recognition. The original compositions, all of them in different styles and belonging to different genres, can be found by undoing the editorial process. This is technically simple, but literarily complex since the editing is not piecemeal but changed the old composi-tions into new literary works, with intertwined topics and themes, with intricate styles and genres, and with an amazing multiplicity of

meanings.

Editing consists in repetition and cross-reference. A text is edited by inserting another text that repeats parts of the original and that, by prolepsis or resumption, refers to other editorial insertions made elsewhere in the original work. Editing is not random, trivial or thoughtless. It consists in annotating texts in the original to comment on them both individually and in their original sequence, and it produces bit by bit a complete, discontinuous interpretation of an originally continuous text.

Editing is like footnoting, with the footnotes becoming part of the text. It begins by marking a critical spot in the original text with another text partly like it—like the footnote number or the bracketed reference in a contemporary text. It continues, in a near or distant context, with another usually more developed text that comments on the original and also elaborates, in a narrative, descriptive or explanatory mode, the meaning of the initial reference—like the footnote to a text or, depending on the stylesheet, like an excursus, or like the list of sources and references at the end of the work. Finally, editing produces a totally different interpretation that is pursued in an ongoing subplot or subtext, a text measured in paragraphs, columns, large parts of books or even whole books added to the original work, that gradually subsumes the original and gives it a new structure, form and meaning—like an appendix in a modern book that outlines topics or areas that have to be considered but cannot be included in the present work, or like a whole new book or critical series commenting on the first. The technique of editing is simple and indefinitely repeatable. Its effects are difficult and often astounding.

Repetition is literal or deictic.[16] Literal, or verbatim, repetition seizes on a few key words, sometimes no more than one or two, sometimes a whole sentence, from the immediate context. It occurs at the beginning or at the end of the inserted text and is either proleptic or resumptive, that is, it is taken from the original text that either follows or precedes.[17] Deictic, or demonstrative, repetition uses nominal, adverbial or proniminal substitutes for the original text and refers either to the preceding text in general or to specific elements in it. Personal pronouns and demonstrative pronouns or the definite article define the preceding topic and often introduce a parenthesis; for this reason they tend to stand out in their context and are the

equivalent of "that is" or the like. Nominal deictic reference is the use of proper names or titles, as vocatives or subjects of the clause that they introduce, in order to identify the subject or object of the preceding context. Adverbial deixis includes simple adverbs such as "there" or phrases such as "on that day," or "after these things," often to attach a variant, tangential or even irrelevant text to the original.

Editing is either obvious or unobtrusive. An editorial link may fit its context and stand out only by its reversal of the original word order, or it might repeat the terms of the original in an opposite or contradictory sense.[18] The interpolated text, similarly, can either imitate the language, style and mood of the original, or it can conflict with its context by introducing extraneous or inconsistent material,[19] by mixing genres and forms of expression,[20] or by disagreeing with the person,[21] number[22] or gender[23] of the original text. Unobtrusive editing works by drift and gradually changes the topic and the focus.[24] Conflicting editing signals an entirely different reference or point of view.

2. *Compositional Techniques*

All of the familiar stories in the Bible have been edited and often what is most appreciated is the edited form. Observing the editing technique, the kinds of repetition and the system of cross-referencing that they support, allows the stories to unfold and speak out and take their place in the history and literature of ancient Judah.

[a] The beginning of the Bible, the start of the earliest text, was the story of the garden of Eden. It began by mentioning, by the way, that "God made earth and heaven" but it did not pursue the topic and went on instead to talk about the garden. An editor prefixed the story of creation that the original version alluded to but omitted by repeating the opening words of the original in the opposite order. The original talked about "earth and heaven." The editor's story starts "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." At the end, this edition is careful to lead back into the original story by repeating twice that God created heaven and earth, once as a summary of its own version, once as a title of the original.[25]

It is the simplest kind of repetition involving two or three words of the original. It leads into an entirely different story, is developed in later comments, and becomes an entirely different interpretation.

The original supposed that once upon a time Gods and people were pretty much the same. The second edition, at this point and in later texts that are cross-referenced to it, changes once upon a time into real time and sameness into similarity. In this version's story of creation time begins with the days of the week. In the following story of the flood time stretches into the centuries that people like Methusaleh and Noah lived. In general in this edition time is the main distinction between God and the world and, in the Sabbath and the festivals, the main connection between them.

[b]   According to the original story God planted a garden for himself, put Man in it and, when he could not find a companion for Man among the animals, made Woman. The garden was in a never never land, watered from the fresh water ocean under the earth, and was notable for having two trees that provided knowledge and life. An editor found all this a little fanciful and filled the text with notes and cross-references to much more likely stories.

This edition situates the garden in the real world by saying that the garden was watered by a river with four branches, the Tigris and Euphrates running through Assyria and Babylonia, a third river marking the border of Canaan and another that flowed from Jerusalem and encircles Egypt.[26] The editor fits in this geography lesson by repeating at the end of it the statement that preceded it, but even this was changed: the original said that God put man in the garden; this edition says that God put man in the garden to till it.[27] The geography is more or less suitable and could even pass for original. But the real world that the editor is talking about is the land where Israel lived and the countries where it was driven into exile. This is not the world of creation but the world as it turned out to be at the end of the story.[28]

The original said that God made the animals and brought them to Man, thinking that they were suitable companions. The editor thought the whole thing was unsuitable and said instead that God brought the animals to man to be named. The insertion is sewn in by repeating at the end exactly what preceded it. Both texts are there to be read. One is from the legend of Gilgamesh and tells of Man's humanization by Woman. The second edition's text is part of an ongoing interest in origins and causes that becomes, in the rest of this story and by cross-reference throughout the edition, the

theory that sin entered the world through Adam and Eve and finally
destroyed it, that is, Israel's world, the world ruled by Egypt, Assyria
and Babylonia.

[c]   The Tower of Babel story is familiar only in its edited form. The
original was a story of divine aspiration, of building cities and high
towers that brought people in contact with their Gods. The editor, as
in the Eden story, was interested in history and ethnography and, by
repeating all the key parts of the original text, explained that the city
was in Mesopotamia, that the tower could be built because bricks
had been invented, and that the city was actually Babylon because
there people began to babble in different tongues.[29]

[d]   In the original story God, in the person of three men, visited
Abraham and announced that Sarah would have a son. She laughed
at the idea and God, to prove that nothing was too marvelous for
him, destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and everyone who lived in
them with an amazing rain of fire and brimstone. This was too
much for the editor who stopped God on his way to Sodom to argue
that indiscriminate destruction might be unjust.[30] The stop is a deictic
repetition: the original talks about the men; the new text identifies
one of them as Yahweh.[31]

In this edition, God left after the argument and so when the original
says that God rained fire and brimstone on the cities the editor has to
add, by repeating the text, that God rained fire and brimstone from
God in heaven.[32] In the original one of the people killed was Lot.
The editor thought differently and at the end of the story repeated all
its key words to state, in evident contradiction of the original, that
Lot escaped.[33] This of course fits with the editor's total rewriting
of the story and had to be so if, as the argument went, Abraham
had interceded and God was just. Lot's escape also lets the editor
introduce Moab and Ammon and so situate the story in real history
and geography.

[e]   Early in his life, according to the primary history, Moses saw
a burning bush. God spoke to Moses out of the bush, and the fact
that the bush burnt without being consumed is the first in a series
of amazing things that happened to Moses. This series, the reader
and editor know, will culminate in the covenant that God, whose
covenant name is Yahweh, makes with Moses and Israel when he
appears to them on mount Sinai. Two editors retold the story, not for

its own sake, but to dispute this new name of God and the covenant relationship that it implied.

The first editor began by repeating the original divine speech: in the original story Yahweh said that he had seen the affliction of his people and had heard their cries; the first editor reverses the order of the expressions, saying that God has heard their cry and seen their affliction.[34] This repetition lets the editor enter the text but is not at all the point the editor wanted to make. The gist of the editorial comment is that there was no covenant on Sinai and that the name Yahweh does not suit the traditional God of the Fathers.[35]

The second editor tried to smooth out the contradiction. This text is added at the end of the editor's remarks by deixis and repetition: the last sentence there had God talking to Moses and telling him to speak to the people; the second editor notes that God spoke to him *again* and told him to speak to the people. The point of this edition, which will go on to insist that there is only one true God, is that all the names of God are right and that Yahweh was in fact the God of the Fathers.[36] Both editors' remarks are substantiated as their versions progress. As often happens, they are not germane to the contiguous text that they purport to interpret but to the complete work that they are in the process of rewriting.

[f] When Moses was on his way back to Egypt, before the exodus began, Yahweh tried to kill him. His wife Zipporah circumcised their child and touched his feet and said "Now you are a blood bridegroom to me" and he left him alone. The masculine pronouns are ambiguous but the original seems to have meant that Zipporah touched Yahweh's feet and took him as her groom and consequently Yahweh let go of Moses.[37] The editor was appalled at the physical presence of God and added, after the statement that Yahweh left, "it was then that she said 'blood bridegroom' because of the circumcision."[38] It was difficult to change the story of Yahweh trying to kill Moses,[39] but at least the editor could make it quite clear that Zipporah neither touched Yahweh nor spoke to him by suggesting that it was the child she touched and that it was Moses, after their son had been circumcised, to whom she declared that he was her bridegroom of blood.

In the original story Moses relived the heroic exploits of Adam and Jacob by encountering and, through the actions of a clever woman, overcoming God.[40] Adam and Eve became like God and Jacob, over-

powering a man with no name, became Israel. In this story, Yahweh
and Moses become kinsfolk in preparation for the formal declaration
of covenant that Yahweh is about to make to him and to Israel on
mount Sinai. The editor had little use for the covenant, none at all
for the belief in a blood relationship that the covenant subsumed and
embodied, and tried to negate or confuse the point of the original
story.[41] In the original the rite of circumcision established a physi-
cal bond and a family relationship between Yahweh and Israel. The
editor disagreed and accepted the standard Priestly explanation that
circumcision was a sign of Yahweh's covenant with Abraham ac-
cording to which, far from being in touch with the people, Yahweh
was their God and the transcendent source of all their blessings.

[g]   In the covenant on Sinai the original history records that Moses
wrote down the words of the covenant that Yahweh had spoken to
him.[42] However, there was an editor who did not believe in this
covenant and who thought instead that it was the decalogue that had
been revealed on Sinai. These ten commandments had been inserted
earlier in the text at an appropriate place,[43] and the editorial change
here consists simply in referring the reader back to them. Despite its
significance in the overall rewriting of history, the change is minimal
and is made by the use of the deictic definite article: the original
said that Moses wrote the words of the covenant; the editor adds
"*the* ten words."

[h]   The historians disputed how Israel got from Egypt to Canaan
and how long it took them. The earliest history said they went
directly from mount Sinai to the land and that Moses' Midianite
brother-in-law showed them the way.[44] One of the editors thought
that the journey was symbolic of Israel's course through history and
therefore explained that God went with them. Since the chief sign of
the presence of God, in this editor's view, was the Law, and since the
Law was kept in the ark of the covenant, this edition substituted the
ark for the Midianite. The original said that the people travelled for
three days from the mountain; the editor says that the ark travelled
three days' journey ahead of them and was instrumental in routing
their enemies.[45] Enemies and victory in battle are not germane to
either the original or the editorial versions of the journey from Sinai
to Canaan but they will become topical in the editor's account of
Israel's failure to conquer, except ritually and symbolically, all the

land that was allotted to the individual tribes.[46]

[j]   The story of David and Goliath is familiar only in its edited version. In the original David was the hero of Israel who met and defeated an unnamed Philistine champion in single combat. It is the editor who calls the Philistine Goliath and who describes him as a giant armed in good Indo-European fashion. This description is fitted in by the use of deictics, that is, by the use of the proper name Goliath, and by the repeated use of pronouns that identify him with the unnamed Philistine. The original said that the Philistine champion came out of the enemy camp to challenge Israel, and that his shield-bearer went ahead of him. The editor inserted the description of Goliath's armor between these two clauses by saying "*Goliath* was *his* name, from Gath, six cubits and a span was *his* height," and by going on to talk about *his* helmet on *his* head, the coat of mail that *he* wore, the greaves he wore on *his* legs, the javelin slung between *his* shoulders, and the great length of *his* spear.

The description is memorable and part of a monumental reworking of the original text. The peculiar thing is that it is not true and the editor knew it was not. Goliath's armor makes David's victory all the more amazing. The giant's name, however, and the insistence on his accoutrements, is just a way of marking the text so that the editor can correct it by cross-reference in a later context. Many chapters and more than a book later this editor gives a list of the warriors in David's heroic band and one of them, Elhanan, from Bethlehem, as David was, is credited with the victory over Goliath. David was a great leader, this editor thought, but he was not the warrior who met the Philistine in single combat. The original story was wrong but it would have been ruined by correcting it on the spot. It was kept, greatly improved and fitted with the elements of a theological treatise, but at the end of this part of the history, just before David dies, the editor points out that the original was mistaken and supplies the evidence that confused its author.

[j]   One of the histories ends with the Assyrian invasion and siege of Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah and the miraculous deliverance of the city because the king trusted in Yahweh and made Jerusalem the center of Yahweh's cult. The first reason is given to refute Isaiah.[47] The second reason reflects the basic theme of this history concerning the centralization of worship and it is supported in this episode by

recording that Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, was besieged and captured just because it did not worship Yahweh in Jerusalem. The editor who corrected the story of Goliath, the one with the mania for historical accuracy, also corrected the main thrust of this story and many of its details.[48]

This editor saved and embellished the story of deliverance because it was a chance to introduce the prophet Isaiah and to settle a dispute, evident in the original version, between Isaiah and the author of the story. But, remarkably enough, the editor also included another version in which Jerusalem was not saved but capitulated to the Assyrians and paid tribute. This version, which is also reflected in the Assyrian annals, is told in a paragraph that is inserted by anticipating in its first and last sentences words from the next sentence that it displaced. The original narrated that the *king of Assyria sent* an embassy to Jerusalem. The first editorial sentence uses the same words to say the opposite, that the *king* of Judah *sent* an embassy to the *king of Assyria*, and the last sentence says that tribute was paid to the *king of Assyria*.

This edition also wanted to substantiate its interpretation by including accurate historical and archaeological details, such as the fact that the Siloam tunnel had been dug in the reign of Hezekiah but, instead of spoiling the narrative, it simply marked the spot in the text and recorded the details at the end of the episode. The spot is marked by literal repetition: the original said that the Assyrian embassy *went up and arrived* at Jerusalem; the editor repeats the key words to say that they *went up and arrived* and stood by the spring and the tunnel; at the end of the episode the editor records, in a summary of his military prowess, that it was Hezekiah who dug the tunnel and the spring.

The author of the original narrative made a mistake in the chronology of Hezekiah's reign that affected the date of the fall of Samaria, and the editor went to incredible lengths to correct it.[49] First of all, the editor wrote another chapter before this one and included the correct date according to the chronology of the last king who reigned in Samaria. Secondly, where the author gave the wrong dates in the reign of Hezekiah for the siege and capture of Samaria, the editor added a synchronism with the reign of the last king of Israel, a cross-reference to the preceding chapter, that established the

correct dates.[50] The synchronism was inserted by demonstrative pro-
nouns: "In the fourth year of Hezekiah—*this* was the seventh year
of Hoshea—. . . . in the sixth year of Hezekiah—*this* was the ninth
year of Hoshea." The problem was that, although the dates in the
reign of the king of Samaria were correct, the synchronism itself was
wrong: it put Hezekiah about fifteen years too early and made a mess
of the chronology that the editor generally followed. The problem
was corrected by writing another chapter at the end of the episode.
This chapter—inserted artificially by the deictic link "Now in those
days"—narrates that king Hezekiah became mortally ill but miracu-
lously recovered through the intercession of the prophet Isaiah who
not only saw to his cure but had the wit to correct the chronological
discrepancy by prolonging the king's life and adding fifteen years to
his reign.

[k]   Isaiah was a prophet in the time of Hezekiah. His work was
edited twice, once in the time of Cyrus, a second time early in the
reign of Darius I. In a sequence that describes the Assyrian invasion
in the time of Hezekiah all three versions jostle for position. The first
editor added comments to the conclusion of each part of the original,
the second wrote brief introductions to each part of the original and
edited text. The editing is done in the usual way by repetition and
cross-reference. The complete text ends up with three completely
different interpretations of the causes and effects of the invasion.[51]

In one place the original quotes the Assyrian king's boast that he
has conquered the whole world. The second editor, simply by re-
peating the quotation marks—"he said"—anticipates the boast with
another. Apart from being boasts, however, they have nothing in
common and the second edition just uses the occasion to repeat and
develop its own ideas about piety.[52] The first editor, on the other
hand, merely reflects on the boasting and not on what the king pur-
portedly said. This reflection begins by repeating and paraphrasing
the beginning of the original: Isaiah began by saying that Assyria
was a stick that God used to discipline his disobedient children; this
editor begins by saying that Assyrian boasting is as perverse as pre-
tending that a stick wields the hand that holds it.[53] The only link
to the original is a couple of words repeated in the same order, but
with the image reversed, and then this edition goes on to pursue the
question of monarchic government that is its constant preoccupation.

Later the first editor, eager to pursue this matter but unable to find a suitable link, created a nominal deictic link. In the original version the Assyrian king is at the gates of the city. The king is not named and the references to him are third person singular personal pronouns. The nominal deictic link is the name and title of God—"Behold, the Lord, the Lord of Hosts"—that interprets the pronouns as references, not to the king of Assyria, but to God.[54] The contradiction is plain and clearly marks the editor's text. It only makes sense by supposing, as the original said, that an instrument is an extension of the agent, specifically, that the Assyrian invasion was in the hands of God.

In another place the second editor interrupts the first to interject a favorite idea. The first edition was engaged in an involved and long-winded description of the decimation of the Assyrian army in some undisclosed future time that, it concluded, would leave so few troops that a child could count them and write down the number. The second editor took up this idea of a remnant to talk about the few pious people who would survive to worship God in Jerusalem. The texts are almost completely unrelated, and the second is linked to the first only by an artificial reference–"on that day"—to that indefinite future time.[55]

Conclusion

These editorial techniques were simple and could be used any number of times. Repetition is minimal. It comprises either very few words, written in an opposite order, or in an extraneous context or with an opposite intent, or it consists in deictic and sometimes irrelevant reflection on the adjacent text. Cross-referencing means essentially that editorial remarks are never isolated but belong to an intermittent but gradually developing interpretation of the whole original work. Most books were revised once. Some, such as the book of Isaiah or the first five books of the Bible, were edited two or three times. The editorial technique is always the same but the cross-references can become remarkably intricate, profound or even obscure.

The editorial process is the simplest and clearest evidence that the original works were written and read. It is an adjacent text, after all, that is repeated, repeated verbatim, and with an awareness of the order of the words and their meaning. It is an adjacent text as well that becomes the occasion for remarks, hung on it by de-

ictic repetition, that are impertinent, parenthetical, and sometimes simply outrageous but relate it to other works and to a developing literary tradition. Editing always breaks up the original text, but cross-referencing proves that the original was not disjointed or fragmentary but had been read by the editor as a complete text with a clear and cumulative meaning. The editing, in its turn, produces a complete work, a work done bit by bit, developing as it goes, a new book, a new stage in the growth of the tradition.

Editors used simple editorial techniques but were also intelligent and thoughtful and wonderfully skilled commentators. They could read and understand texts, not just in the literal way that editorial techniques required, but with all their nuances and their allusions to other writers and to a developing literary tradition. They could detect and imitate different styles and literary genres and the final editor of a complicated work could distinguish the original version from any and all of its rewritings. They recognized what sources the authors used, and often relied on the same source, or on a alternative source very much like it, to compose their own comments and reflections. Although editing consisted largely in distributing the original text in a new context and in this way distorted it, editors and commentators respected the integrity of the original compositions and regularly relied on other works as proof-texts or authorities for their new or critical opinions.

II. Literacy: The Development of Historical and Prophetic Traditions

The fundamental argument for literacy from the beginning of biblical times is the development of historical and prophetic traditions. It is not just that editors understood authors and rewrote their texts using their sources or some other equally reliable text, it is also that authors knew each others' works, that they did not compose their texts in a vacuum, or as a blind reflex of some real event, but expressed their own opinions with respect to other opinions and schools of thought.

The original works can be read by undoing the editorial process. It becomes clear in the process that, like their editors who repeated snippets of their texts in order to add comments and interpretations, the original authors quoted the words of their predecessors and contemporaries to develop their ideas, or fill their imaginations or give

credibility to brand new perceptions. Like their editors who overlay
their works with cross-references to the ongoing editorial subtext,
these authors dotted their works will allusions to the texts that they
quoted. By tracing these quotations and allusions it becomes clear
what each author had read and the relative chronological order of
their works is firmly established.

A. The Interweaving of History and Prophecy

Within this relative sequence of works there is a constant distinction
between prophecy and history. Prophets and historians know each
others' works, but historians rely mainly on historians and prophets
mostly on prophets, and each group is critical of the other. Within
each group there is the gradual construction of a tradition, each writer
referring in some way to the first in their group, later writers referring
not only to some individual predecessors but more and more to all
of them together. Prophecy and history were distinct, but they were
interwoven and mutually sustaining traditions.

The distinction between the two traditions is a combination of
many factors. These are all ultimately based on the fact that the
histories belonged to the world of learning, that history was a school
tradition, while the prophecies belonged to the world of the perform-
ing arts and involved the artist and the participation of the audience.
This distinction of genre and situation could be misinterpreted as
evidence for orality, for the assumption that biblical texts, espe-
cially prophecy, derived from oral tradition and were composed and
transmitted orally. But it is only evidence that there were separate,
interacting and vital traditions, some works written to be read and
understood, some written to be sung, declaimed, and performed.[56]

The distinction of historical and prophetic traditions is evident
from their form and content. The interweaving of the two traditions
becomes apparent in their reactions to each other. One is narrative
and eloquent, the other follows the common cadences of direct dis-
course. Prophecy is oldfashioned and conservative. History is the
source of constant innovation.

1. *Nation and People*

The histories, among other things, described Israel as a nation, a
single, if sometimes complex, political entity.[57] The earliest history

is ostensibly a family history: it strings out the story of Israel from creation to settlement in the land as if it occurred in a linear succession of generations, from Adam and Noah through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to the metamorphosis of Jacob as Israel. But it thinks of Israel as a unit, a single people, and tells the history of this people through the eyes of Moses, as if their history were coincidental with his life or, as the history itself says, as if he might have become a nation in their place.

The first and second editors of the history maintain this fiction of a unified Israel, the first concentrating on the institutions that unified it,[58] the second detailing the social and legal principles that united the people and made the fiction work.[59] A second history, composed as a sequel to the first and written in Jerusalem to magnify the Davidic dynasty, exaggerated the fiction to maintain that it was unnatural of the northern kingdom to break away from David and from the center of true worship in Jerusalem.[60] It was only the last historian who, under the influence of the prophetic perspective, described Israel as a conglomeration of tribes centered on Judah in the South and on Joseph in the North. But, to compensate for the facts, even this Historian felt obliged to construct a theory of the political and religious unity of an ideal Israel and struck on the idea of an amphictyony that was all the rage in the Mediterranean world at that time.[61]

The prophets, on the contrary, always thought of their audience as the people of God, a family, the children of God.[62] From the earliest prophet onward they took their distance from the government, from the prophets, priests, kings and judges who, they said, were moved by luxury and personal aggrandizement.[63] From the start they took the part of the poor and represented the people who lived in the city without intellectual, spiritual or political power.[64] They called them "my people," and opposed in particular the theories proposed by the historians, theories such as covenant and centralization of worship, that sapped the common will and perverted traditional ways of life.[65]

2. *Urban and Rural*

The historians, who sometimes betray their urban roots, were advocates of rustic endurance and promoters of the charms of primitive existence. The prophets, who were the champions of the people rooted in the soil, inveigh against the city. The earliest history, for

instance, portrays Abraham as a cattleman, Isaac as a farmer, Jacob as a herdsman, the sons of Israel as shepherds, the history of Israel as the journey they made with their flocks. The first editor had little to add but designed a tent to be the temple of God.[66] The second editor codified laws that concerned domestic and rural matters and promoted festivals that were based on the agricultural calendar.[67] The second historian was intent on the glory of Jerusalem and dealt mainly with events that had occurred in the city, but was intrigued nevertheless by the ideal of the shepherd-king who worshipped rustic ancestral Gods.[68]

The prophets, on the other hand, opposed the luxury of the city, the festivals that were financed by gouging the poor, the harm that city life did to institutions like the family.[69] For these prophets, the city was the problem and its destruction was the solution.

3. Secular and Religious

The historians magnified a secular international world. The prophets idealized local and regional religious values. The earliest historians described the relationship between Israel and its God in terms of an international treaty. The prophets opposed this notion of treaty with the traditional concepts of law and justice.[70] The historians spun their narratives out of myths, legends and ritual dramas and created a God who was superhuman and accessible in the elements of nature. The prophets created the angry God, the perplexed parent, the jealous husband, the just judge, the God who cared, admonished, argued, punished, wept and even repented.

4. Belief and Action

The historians wrote prose, the prophets wrote poetry. The historians used genres of information and instruction and tried to influence public opinion and generate belief in the theories they propounded. The prophets tried to entertain and persuade, to move the audience from ignorance to understanding, from apathy to action. The historians were scholars who were content to be known by their writings, who talked about men and women in the past and in their own times but never alluded to themselves. The prophets identified themselves by name, included themselves among their dramatic characters, expected their audiences to listen to their songs, to become personally

involved in their plays, to respond to their orations. The historians were public figures, agents of the government, who created schools, or schools of thought, and who ultimately were responsible for the establishment of Torah and orthodoxy. The prophets were private individuals who, by trying to preserve traditional beliefs and practices against the radical innovations embraced by the historians, were a constant source of ferment and revolution.

B. The Development of the Traditions

The development of historical and prophetic traditions can be seen in the reliance of one writer on another, of any writer on all those who had written before, and particularly in the way that the first writer in each tradition became the model and the inspiration of all the rest. The first history is the source and basis of the others. The first prophecy intrigued every prophet who followed. Even in the interweaving of traditions, as prophets criticized historians and historians tried to deal with prophecy, origins were determinative, and the beginning always exerted the dominant force.

1. *Historical Tradition*

The first history is a prose epic that follows the journey of God and his people from the garden of Eden to a visionary paradise on the borders of Canaan. Its epic characteristics are its episodic structure, its timelessness, its creation of a world shared equally by God and his people, and its use of myth, legend and ritual to establish its interpretation.[71] These features, in turn, were taken up by the historian of Jerusalem and became the framework of historical revision by later editors and authors.

a. Episodes: The episodes are a series of complete stories, each with a beginning, a middle and an end, about heroes and heroines of the distant past. They are related to each other by the development of common themes but otherwise have no narrative connection. The episodes—the stories of creation, the flood, Abraham and Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses—are terse and allusive and presume that the reader already knows about the heroes and heroines and is familiar with one or more versions of the story. Their central theme is the similarity that exists between God and the people he created. It is stated clearly in the first episode, illustrated in the next four and

thematized again in the last.

Each episode begins with a mythical or legendary incident that, in the manner of a title, docket or endorsement, serves to identify it. The first episode begins with an allusion to the old story of creation that it does not tell.[72] The second episode begins with an allusion to the legends of the demigods.[73] The third alludes to mythical themes in the Babylonian story of the flood.[74] The fourth alludes to the Canaanite myth of fertility.[75] The fifth alludes to the legend of Adonis.[76] The last begins with a nod to the legend of Sargon of Assyria[77] where the abandoned child grows up to be the virtuous ruler. Each of these incidents is a variation on the story that is actually told in the episode and is both traditional and, in varying degrees, peripheral to the epic's original telling.

The editors who rewrote the epic recognized its episodic structure, added the information that the epic presumed known but failed to include, and inserted their versions of the stories that the epic told and of the myths and legends to which it only alluded. The story of creation gets told.[78] The demigods are cut down to size and overshadowed by the remarkable stories of the antediluvian heroes.[79] The allusion to the Babylonian theory that the flood was caused by noisy people who disturbed the Gods is put into perspective by identifying these people on a map of all the nations of the world.[80] The allusion to the Canaanite myth of fertility is preceded by the story of Rebeccah's barrenness, her miraculous conception of two nations, and the marvelous birth of her children.[81] The allusion to the legend of Adonis is filled out in all its details.[82] The legend of the abandoned child is developed into the story of the man who supplants his father.[83]

b. Timelessness: The timeless quality of the epic is partly its lack of any chronology and partly its compression of events. The editors were eager to remedy both. The epic alludes to the day that God made heaven and earth, and the first editor turns it into a week. The eating of the forbidden fruit seems to take place the afternoon of the same day—God finds out about it in the evening—but an editor suggests the passage of time by recounting the marriage of Adam and Eve. The flood follows almost immediately but the first editor separates creation and the flood by the thousands of years that the antediluvians lived.[84] In no time at all the Tower of Babel is built and as soon as it is abandoned Abraham leaves for the West,[85] but the first

editor separates these events with the story of the birth of nations and the genealogy of Abraham's ancestors.[86] Isaac is just born at the end of the third episode but is already married by the beginning of the fourth.[87] All the editors account for the passage of time by including the story of the binding of Isaac when he was a young man, an account of the death of Sarah, and the story of Abraham's death in advanced old age. Jacob is barely back from Harran when Joseph gets sold into Egypt, but again genealogies intervene to let time slip away, and one of the editors notes that Joseph was then seventeen.[88] The last episode begins with the Pharaoh who did not know Joseph, but the later versions mention how long Jacob had lived in Egypt and how old Joseph was when he died.[89]

The second history follows exactly the episodic pattern of the epic and has a similar feeling for mythical time. The editor of this history, who was also the last editor of the epic, filled out the episodes and added a precise and detailed chronology. It is this history that has the battle of Jericho and the idea that the whole land was conquered all at once, but the editor explains that the land had not been completely conquered even when Joshua died.[90] It is also this history that puts Saul and David right after the time of Joshua, but the editor introduced the era of the judges to account for the hundreds of years that supposedly separated them. This is also, like the epic, a history of great heroes of the past but it ends, annalistically, at the time of writing, with Hezekiah still on the throne of Judah, and with an impossible temporal crasis that makes king Tirhaqah of Egypt a contemporary of Sennacherib instead of an adversary of his son Esarhaddon. The editor corrected the chronology but the author's disregard for real time and the editor's fanciful correction have perplexed scholars and exegetes ever since.

c. **One World:** The epic describes a world where God and people mingle and are so similar that they are sometimes confounded. The Jerusalem historian made Yahweh a resident of the city. The first editor reacted by separating God so entirely from the world that the second editor was obliged to introduce an encompassing theory of divine providence to fill up the gap.[91] The last editor thought that God was in heaven and let the world be governed vicariously by fate and destiny in the guise of the law and the prophets.[92]

In the first episode God and man share the garden of Eden, the

man and woman eat the forbidden fruit and God just chances to
discover it when he is out walking in the garden, and the man and
woman have to be sent out of the garden to maintain a distinction
between them and God. In the second episode the sons of God marry
the daughters of man and among their offspring are included such
immortals as Noah. In the third episode, the tower of Babel had to
be abandoned before people could ascend to the domain of the Gods,
but God directs Abraham to the land where he lives and comes to
visit him in Canaan in the guise of three men. In the fourth episode
Jacob wrestles with a man who tells him that he has wrestled with
God and won. In the fifth episode God does not appear among the
dramatic characters and his place is taken by Joseph who dies and
descends into Egypt where he lives to become the dispenser of grain
to the whole world. In the sixth episode, in a wonderful redoing of
creation, God tries to kill Moses but is outwitted and subdued by a
woman. At the end of the epic God is living among his people in a
land like the garden of Eden.

The symbol of this symbiosis, and the climax of the epic, is the
covenant between Yahweh, Moses and Israel on mount Sinai. The
implications of the covenant were detailed in the sequel that located
the paradise where God and people lived together not in the distant
past or in the land of a unified Israel but in the contemporary city
of Jerusalem. The editors of both historical works were repelled by
the symbol and its political implications and were forced to invent
acceptable alternatives. For one it was to create a secular world,
governed by time, independent of God, where people, from time to
time, tried to be like God in holiness and rest. For another it was to
suppose that God lived in heaven and that people lived reasonable
lives under the law. For the third it was to describe the history and
mechanics of a community of tribes dedicated to the worship of God.
For all of them the basic solution was to jettison the covenant and
the kinship that it implied in favor of a kinship of flesh and blood
and political reality.

d. Myth, Legend and Ritual: The epic was a powerful synthesis
of myth and reality that represented and reinterpreted everything that
people in Judah at that time knew and believed. It was written to
show that Yahweh, the God of Israel, was God. The myths of the
world were applied to the history of this people to prove that Yahweh

could take his place at the head of the great Gods just as Israel could assume its distinguished place among the nations of the world. Those who rewrote the epic acknowledged that it had achieved its purpose and rewrote it for that reason. Some were reticent toward the name and merely said that God was God. Some magnified his name with the epithets and attributes of all the Gods and cast the other Gods as useless idols. Some had a more humble attitude toward Israel. All of them had to come to terms with the epic's discovery of an historical and religious world and propose an alternative of their own.

2. *Prophetic Tradition*

Among the prophets Isaiah held the place that the epic had for the historians. He was a lyric poet, a singer as he himself suggests. Others were orators or dramatists. He wrote his words in a book for a later day. They all tried to deal with this day, with the reasons and circumstances of its coming, with possible remedies, or with what might be done when the day was past. As the historians created the world of Judah, taking the country out of relative obscurity into the light of mythical and historical time, so the prophets at first undid the world of Judah and then wondered how the people might survive more simply, according to their ancient customs, in an alien and constricting world.

Isaiah introduced, in more or less developed form, all the major themes of prophecy. The prophets who followed him presented them in increasingly elaborate detail. He was the first to stand up against the historians and defend traditional values. They all quoted from the histories and carried on the debate. He was the first to oppose the covenant, its implication that no matter what happened God was on Judah's side and all was well, its contempt for ordinary justice, its insistence on the blessings of the good life, its provision for rollicking urban festivals that despoiled the countryside, its encouragement of international alliances and reliance on arms, its attempt to persuade the people that they did not have to listen to prophets like himself. He was the first to insist on education, ridiculing the supposed learning of the leaders of Jerusalem, describing God as a parent who was trying to educate his children, who was willing to reason but would use physical punishment to discipline them, who would one day abandon them to their enemies until they learned their lesson. Above

all, he foresaw that someday Jerusalem would be destroyed in order to be rebuilt on the firm foundation of truth and justice.

All of this was presented in a lyric and primitive dramatic form. The form required response, and the foretelling was too assured and specific to be avoided. The prophets who followed him were inspired by his insight and daring. Amos concentrated on the day that he had predicted and, in a cycle of melancholy orations, pointed out that none of the covenant festivals, financed as they were by fraud and injustice, would be able to delay it. Hosea concentrated on their belief in the mythical God proposed by the epic, on their unwillingness to listen to the prophets and learn, in an elaborate drama in which God, the prophet and the people all got to play their parts. The prophets who followed quoted the words of Isaiah, and continued this dramatic presentation of the the words of God and the response of the audience. Micah wrote an update of his prophecy that imitated its structure and style. Jeremiah quoted all the prophets who preceded him and wrote a drama in which God, the prophet and the people shared the stage and the people finally abandoned the illusions concocted by the historians and agreed with the prophetic tradition. In the end, of course, Isaiah's prediction was fulfilled. Just before it was, Habakkuk was inspired to repeat his prediction and compose a lament to accompany its fulfillment.

The fact that the historians had created a world for Judah, an inflated and pompous world that did not correspond to common perceptions, becomes evident in these prophetic texts. Isaiah had predicted almost complete destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. The next prophet thought of it as destiny and doom and the undoing of sacred times. The next thought of it as death, the end of the natural cycles of fertility. The next predicted that Jerusalem would be ploughed like a field and urban culture would be reduced to its agricultural roots. The next described this as the undoing of creation, the very opposite of what the historians described. The last prophet to write before the fall of Jerusalem thought of it literally as the end of the world.[93]

III.　Literacy: Orthodoxy and the End of Literary Inspiration

Literacy and literature are not coeval. Judaean literature began suddenly, after the fall of the northern kingdom, in a time of great

prosperity and change, under the impetus of foreign models and native inspiration, and developed through the constant struggle of prophets and historians to find the truth. Literacy did not disappear, but literature did when these conditions no longer prevailed, when the struggles ceased and the truth seemed certain.

The indirect evidence for literacy, then, for the origin of the Bible in literary endeavor, is that the ability to read and write was not sufficient inspiration for literature. It was, in fact, because of the development of literary traditions, because of the ability to read and write, because of the habit of editing the classics of Judaean literature, that inspiration finally came to an end.

Literacy produced great literature in Judah as long as the prophetic and historical traditions remained distinct and could thrive on each other's creativity. But the pressure of events and the interpretation they received conflated the two traditions and soon reduced them to an orthodox sameness. Historical tradition had magnified Judah and its God and no longer corresponded to the reality of a captured client state. Prophecy had come true and there was little left to do but touch it up with more hopeful predictions for the future. In the sixth century prophecy began to be written in prose, as if it were history, or succumbed to its inherent biographical tendencies, or neglected the future to deal with contemporary civic and religious problems, or projected old interpretations of past events into a dreary apocalyptic future. Some history was written in poetry, as if history were prophecy and prediction, and some set out to write the story of prophectic intervention to prove that prophecy once determined a happier course of events. The turning point in the extinguishing of the spirit of historical inquiry and prophetic prediction was the publication of a comprehensive history of the world of Israel that synthezied the traditions and made prophecy the servant of a scientific historical theology.

This History was the work of the author who composed most of the Torah and the Former Prophets, the Bible from *Genesis* to the book of *Kings*. It included all the earlier histories, edited and interpreted in the usual way, and a distillation of the prophetic tradition. The histories were edited to resemble and agree with each other. The prophetic tradition was absorbed into the history either by direct quotation or allusion to the prophetic texts, or by writing caricatures

of the prophets, or by developing a theory of prophecy that made it subservient to the Law. This History succeeded in provoking belief, as the histories had before it, by creating a world. But the History was universal and definitive, and the world it created was immutable and self-contained where everything had its reason and its place and nothing did not fit.

This History, like the work of the earlier editors, was inspired above all by the epic. But instead of episodes it was made up of books. In place of timelessness the author invented eras that succeeded and yet matched each other and produced a cycle that became a model for all time. Instead of a world where God and Israel were equal it described two worlds meeting on the tangent of the Law. In place of myth, legend and ritual, which had seduced the readers of the epic and persuaded them to believe even less credible things, there was fact, evidence and sustained historical theory.

It was the theory that made the History convincing. This was, essentially, that the world was governed by an eternal Law that became evident in historical events and was finally revealed to Moses, that violation of the law was sin, that sin would not go unpunished, that the universality, inviolability and absolute autonomy of the law proved the unique transcendence of God. The theory was constantly verified in the History, beginning with Cain and Abel, and it was absolutely confirmed in the end when Judah and Jerusalem were destroyed for their sins.

The theory destroyed the prophetic impulse and made prophecy redundant by identifying the prophets as purveyors of this Law. Prophets became a mostly anonymous band called "my servants the prophets" who lived on the fringe of society and interfered in the affairs of the kingdom. Prophecy was stereotyped and became a routine proclamation of the transcendence of the God of Israel, summons to repentance, condemnation of the worship of other Gods, and prediction of punishment for sin. True prophets were named but, by definition, were those who had failed in their mission and had not averted punishment. The prophets who had succeeded or who had said or done differently were excluded from prophetic or historical tradition. Some of them were vilified in unflattering sketches, but the majority were conspicuous by their absence from a History that, superficially at least, gave preeminence to the prophetic word.

A few prophets and historians protested against the theory. Jonah portrayed a God who was interested in forgiving sin, not in exacting punishment for it. Joel described the fall of Jerusalem as a natural calamity unrelated to sin or guilt. The writer of the book of *Jeremiah* proved in excruciating detail that prophets did not fit the History's stereotype and that Judah and Jerusalem were ruined not by sin and necessity, as the Historian claimed, but because specific kings had not listened to Jeremiah's bold advice. The *Chronicles* written at the end of the century showed that the prophets had had a positive effect on the course of events. But the will and the occasion were erased and these same *Chronicles* portray the prophets as singers and ministers in the temple. The protest ended and with it died the inspiration of the prophets.

All of the prophetic works were revised in the light of the definitive History. All the editors agreed with the theory. A few precisions were added because it seemed unjust that presumably innocent people in Israel, Judah or Jerusalem had been punished, or because truly guilty aliens, such as the Babylonians and their Edomite allies, had not been included explicitly in the History's theoretical scheme. But every one of the editors referred to the History and revised the prophetic works to take account of it. In the process the original prophecies became riddled with prophetic stereotypes, and with awkward historical references and arguments taken from the History, and prophecy gradually acquired the cast of the historical tradition it was originally written to resist.

In the end history won out over prophecy and prophecy ceased. When the protests died away history itself became less speculative and tried to be an accurate analysis of recorded events. The definitive History was a fantastic reconstruction of the past and a reliable program for the future that gave Israel a secure place in the world for all time. From the first it had commanded attention and assent and, to this day, it is considered by many not only credible but almost literally true.

CONCLUSION

Literacy involves the ability to read and write. Reading can be more or less proficient but can be done without understanding. The ability to write is varied and the skill has numerous uses. In biblical

times it had political and economic uses, it served civic and legal purposes, it was crucial in times of war for communications between prophets, kings and military officers, it was used by individuals for religious, commercial, and academic purposes, and it could mark the months and the seasons. It was an occasional skill without literary or historical pretensions.

A particular kind of literacy is the ability to create a society and culture characterized by learning, rationality and imagination. It is the ability to produce a literature that is meant to be understood and that actually has an impact on its readers. This kind of literacy flourished in Judah and Jerusalem from the fall of Samaria into post-exilic times. It fell into abeyance when the monarchy that fostered it crumbled and was repudiated, and when the people were turned in on themselves and decided to rebuild Judah and Jerusalem along the lines prescribed by the History and according to the conformist interpretations of the always conservative prophets.

The end of the literary traditions was marked by changes in the language itself. The Hebrew script began to be abandoned. The writings began to reveal the local and regional differences that a self-confident culture had suppressed. Speech, particularly in the poetic tradition of prophecy, became inflated with archaisms and paralyzed by a repetitive parallelistic style. Judaean words were replaced by borrowed words, and grammar and syntax became more influenced by the speech of their foreign administrators and of their neighbors. The language of the classics, in a generation or two, would no longer be understood by the people for whom they were originally written.

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NOTES

1 Cf. Exod 31:18; 32:15–16; 34:27–28; Deut 6:4–9.
2 Hos 8:1, 11–12.
3 Jer 8:8–9.
4 Isa 29:11–12.
5 Isa 30:8.
6 Hab 1:5; 2:1–3.
7 The three sections of the first part are Isa 1:1a, 2–6, 7abA, 8, 18–20; Isa 5:1–2, 4–5, 11–12, 18–19, 26–29; Isa 10:5–7, 13–14, 28–32. The second part includes Isa 28:9–19; 29:1–4, 9–14; 30:1–4, 8–17. Cf. B. Peckham, "The Function of the Law in the Development of Israel's Prophetic Traditions,"

Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel (JSOTSS 124; ed. B. Halpern and D.W. Hobson; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 108–146.

8 Cf. Brian Peckham, "The Composition of Hosea," *HAR* 11(1987) 331–353.

9 Nah 1:1a, 2–8; 2:2, 4–11; 3:1–4,8–11; Hab 1:1–3a, 5–6, 8–10, 12, 13a; 2:1–3; 3:2–12, 15–19a; Zeph 1:1a, 2–3abB, 14–18; 2:1–6, 12–15; 3:1–8. Cf. B. Peckham, "The Vision of Habakkuk," *CBQ* 48(1986) 617–636.

10 Cf. B. Peckham, *The Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (HSM 35), Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985.

11 Cf. W. Zimmerli, "Das Phänomen der 'Fortschreibung' im Buche Ezechiel," *Prophecy. Essays Presented to Georg Fohrer on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday, 6 September 1980* (BZAW 150; ed. J.A. Emerton; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980) 174–191.

12 Joel 1:1–20; 2:1–27 and Joel 3:1–5; 4:1–21.

13 Jer 36.

14 Deut 31:9, 24–26; 2 Kgs 22:8, 11.

15 Cf. B. Peckham, *The Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (HSM 35; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985) 21–68.

16 The use of deictic elements was pointed out by M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 44–55.

17 Resumptive repetition occurs at the end of the editorial addition and repeats the material that preceded it: cf. C. Kuhl, "Die 'Wiederaufnahme'—ein literarkritisches Prinzip?," *ZAW* 64 (1952) 1–11. Proleptic repetition occurs at the beginning of the editorial addition and anticipates the material that follows it.

18 Cf. P.C. Beentjes, "Inverted Quotations in the Bible. A Neglected Stylistic Pattern," *Bib* 63(1982) 506–523.

19 Cf. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 43.

20 Cf. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 144.

21 The third person singular in a first or second person singular *legal* context (as Deut 15:2 in 15:1–3; Deut 19:4–6, 11–12 in 19:1–13) is not a sign of editing but marks a specific, non-verbatim, use of a precedent from another legal text (cf. Exod 23:11 and 21:12–14); cf. W. Morrow, "The Composition of Deut 15:1–3," *Hebrew Annual Review* 12(1990) 115–131. The principle is observed in the Yabneh Yam inscription where the plaintif refers to himself as "his servant" according to epistolary conventions, but as "your servant" when appealing to the book of the law (Exod 18, 22), and as "I" when demanding redress.

22 Cf. Fishbane, *Bliblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 47. Alternation between second person singular and plural occurs frequently in *Deuteronomy* and is a recognized editorial feature: cf. N. Lohfink, *Das Hauptgebot. Eine Untersuchung literarischer Einleitungsfragen zu Dtn 5–11* (AnBib 20; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1963) 241; C. Begg, "The Literary Criticism of Deut 4,1–40. Contributions to a Continuing Discussion," *ETL* 56(1980) 10–55, p. 22; P.E. Dion, "Deuteronomy 13: The Suppression of Alien Religious Propaganda in Israel during the late Monarchical Era," *Law and Ideology in*

Monarchic Israel (JSOTSS 124; ed. B. Halpern and D.W. Hobson; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991, 147–216) 175. However, the technique is common to the author and the editor and is as much a feature of composing as it is of editing. The author uses change of number to mark quotations from other works or cross-references to the author's own texts: e.g. Deut 5:6–7, 9b–11 is singular in a plural context (5:4–5, 24–27*) to mark it as a quotation, with a change in word order, from Exod 34:6–7, 14; conversely, Deut 11:18–20 is plural in a singular context to mark it as a cross-reference, verbatim but with changes in word order, to an earlier exhortation (6:4–9). The editor uses change of number to mark critical comments on the author's text, cross-references to the edited text, and quotations from the author's text or from its sources in their original or edited form: e.g. Deut 12:16 is fitted in by verbatim repetition (*raq*, cf. 12:15) but is plural in a singular context to mark it as the beginning of a critical commentary on 12:15 (cf. 12:21–25, 27–28); Deut 1:31aA, singular in a plural context, is a cross-reference to the editor's text (1:19 plural) but 1:31aB, also singular in a plural context, is a quotation from Num 11:12 (with a change of gender: Num 11:12 refers to a woman carrying her child but Deut 1:31aB refers to a father carrying his child); Deut 6:14 is plural in a singular context to mark it as a quotation from the author's text (Deut 5:7), but 6:16 is plural in a singular context to mark it as a quotation from Exod 17:7; Deut 7:4bA and 7:5 are plural to mark them as quotations from the texts that prove and illustrate them (Exod 34:13; Num 25:3b).

23 Change of gender, like change of number, is a feature of composition and editing. Lot is warned not to look back, and when his wife does look back the connection between the two texts is emphasized by saying that "she looked behind *him*" (Gen 19:17, 26). When the dominance that skews the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:16b) is transformed into a theory of resistance to sin and temptation all the genders are reversed (Gen 4:7b). In Zephaniah's prophecy the seashore where the Philistines are to be massacred is feminine (Zeph 2:6); in the editor's version the seashore is reserved for the remnant of Judah and, to mark the editorial change, the word is masculine (Zeph 2:7). Nahum (1:7–8) quotes from Isaiah (28:17–19) and Jeremiah (5:10aB; 30:11) words of Yahweh concerning the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem and to mark the quotations uses a feminine suffix when referring to the city as Yahweh's place (*meqomah*). Ezekiel's description of the animals with human likeness who presaged the vision of the glory of God remodels the Priestly story of creation (Gen 1:24–26) and the allusion is marked by using masculine suffixes to refer to the animals in human form (Ezek 1:6 [*lahem*], 10aA, 22–24a, 25a, 26) and feminine suffixes to refer to the animal form of the human creatures (Ezek 1:10aBb–11). His editor followed the same principle of making the gender of suffixes correspond to their referent instead of to their antecedent but also used opposite gender to mark editorial additions (e.g. 1:24b, 25b) or cross-references to the edited text (e.g. 1:9, 12, 17 [*blktn*]): this produced a strange and difficult text that the editor explained

in a later chapter (Ezek 10; cf. D.I. Block, "Text and Emotion: A Study in the 'Corruptions' in Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision [Ezek 1:4–28]," *CBQ* 50[1988] 418–442; G.A. Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew* [American Oriental Series 72; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1990] 48). In a similar vein, Ezekiel's diatribe against the prophets (Ezek 13:1–16) is matched by an editorial harangue on the prophetesses (Ezek 13:17–23).

24 All editing, no matter how unobtrusive, is marked and kept separate from the original text since this not only preserved the original but highlighted the editor's interpretation which had no meaning apart from it. Fishbane allows for some unmarked editing but the examples that he gives, as he himself often notes, are marked by repetition. For instance, when the word "runnels" is defined as "watering troughs" (Gen 30:38) the editing is not "an unmarked pleonasm" (*Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 65) but is marked by repetition or by what Fishbane defines more precisely as a 'disruptive redundancy which is also explanatory in nature' (p. 64): the original said "*in* the runnels" and the editor said "*in* watering troughs;" the original said "in front of the sheep . . . when they came to drink" (*hasso'n . . . bebo'am listot*) and the editor partially reversed the word order to say "where the sheep came to drink" ('*aser tabo'na hasso'n listot*). It was clearly marked because it was not just a lexical comment but an editorial cross-reference to another act of divine providence, as the parallel text described it (Gen 31:4–13), in a similar situation in the same country in the time of Abraham (Gen 24:20).

25 The original began in Gen 2:4b. The editorial repetitions are in Gen 1:1 and 2:1, 4a.

26 Gen 2:10–15.

27 Gen 2:15 = 2:8. Since 2:9 and 2:16–17 focus on the trees in the garden, the description of the world rivers (2:10–14) falls into a proleptic and resumptive frame or *Wiederaufnahme* (2:8–9, 15–17) that often marks editorial insertions.

28 At the end of the story (2 Kgs 17, 25) Jerusalem is sacked and the people of Israel and Judah, apart from the few left in the ancestral land of Canaan, are dispersed in Assyria, Egypt and Babylonia.

29 The original (Gen 11:1, 4–7, 8b, 9b) was modified at the beginning (11:2–3) and the end (11:8a, 9a) by literal repetition: Gen 11:2 "Now . . ." = 11:1; Gen 11:3 "They said . . ." = 11:4; Gen 11:8a "Yahweh dispersed them . . ." = 11:9b; Gen 11:9a "the speech of the whole world" = 11:1.

30 Gen 18:17–33.

31 In the original God is the three men (cf. Gen 18:9, 13) and after their conversation Abraham goes with *them* to send *them* on their way (Gen 18:16). The editor identified *them* as God and two angels: the editorial text begins "*Yahweh* said . . ." (Gen 18:17), and, after Yahweh has left (Gen 18:33), continues with "*the two angels*" travelling to Sodom (Gen 19:1).

32 Gen 19:24b.

33 Gen 19:29 = 19:25.

34 Exod 3:9–10 = 3:7–8.

35 Exod 3:9–14, cf. Exod 34:6–7, 10.

36 Exod 3:15.

37 Exod 4:24–26a.

38 Exod 4:26b.

39 In fact the editor tries to squelch the magic and mystery of the original by surrounding it with two other stories about Moses that develop its themes in a positive and practical direction. The first (Exod 4:20b–23) precedes the original and consists of a conversation in which Yahweh commissions Moses to work miracles in Egypt and previews the plagues that will end with the death of the firstborn sons of the Egyptians and the redemption of Israel who is the firstborn son of Yahweh. The second (Exod 4:27–31) follows the original and tells how Aaron met Moses on his way back to Egypt and how, because of his magic skills, everyone believed that Yahweh had visited the sons of Israel. In these two stories the original sinister encounter is replaced by friendly meetings, mystery is replaced by miracle, blood relationship with Yahweh by divine or tribal sonship, the threat of Moses' death by the promised death of the Egyptians, and a fearless and unselfish woman by timid and selfcentered men.

40 In the story of the garden of Eden (Gen 2–3) the woman first makes a man out of Adam (Gen 2:25) and then, by sharing with him the fruit of the tree of knowledge, makes him like God (Gen 3:22). Jacob, like Moses, is visited at night and by struggling with a man is transformed into Israel (Gen 32:25, 26aA, 27–30). Moses, like Adam, through the power of a woman becomes familiar with God and, like Jacob, becomes a surrogate of Israel (cf. Num 14:12).

41 The familial origins and political developments of treaty and covenant are described in "Kinship and Covenant," a paper read by F.M. Cross at the annual meeting of the *Biblical Colloquium*, San Diego, October 26, 1991.

42 Exod 34:17–18abA.

43 Exod 20:2–17. The decalogue was inserted by deictics that identified "God" who spoke in the original (20:1) as "Yahweh your God" (20:2). At the end of the insertion, after Moses has been made the mediator of the Law, the editor adds another statement that defines the original "these words" of God (Exod 20:1) as the "these ordinances" of Moses (Exod 21:1).

44 Num 10:29–33a.

45 Num 10:33b–36.

46 Cf. Num 14:44; Josh 1–8.

47 Compare 2 Kgs 18:19–32 and Isa 28:9–19; 29:1–4; 30:1–5, 8–17.

48 Cf. B. Peckham, "The Function of the Law in the Development of Israel's Prophetic Tradition," *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel* (JSOTSS 124; ed. B. Halpern and D.B. Hobson; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 108–146.

49 2 Kgs 18:9–12.

50 2 Kgs 18:9aB, 10b; cf. 2 Kgs 17:5–6.

51 To Isaiah's text (Isa 10:5–7, 13–14, 28–32) II Isaiah added 10:15–19, 24–27,

33–34 and to their combined texts III Isaiah added 10:1–4, 8–12, 20–23.

52 In Isaiah's version (Isa 10:13–14) the Assyrian king spoke of his invincibility. In III Isaiah's version the king attributed his invincibility to the fact that the defeated nations, notably Israel and Judah, worshipped idols (Isa 10:8–11). The writer also added that Yahweh would purify the cult in Sion (10:12a) and, with a nod to II Isaiah (10:15–19, 24–27), that the Assyrian king would be humiliated (10:12b).

53 Cf. Isa 10:5–7 and 10:15–19.

54 Cf. Isa 10:33–34 and 10:32.

55 Cf. Isa 10:15–19 and 10:20–23.

56 The relationship of prophecy to the performing arts has been explored by Joyce Rilett Wood (*Amos: Prophecy as a Performing Art and the Emergence of Book Culture*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1992) and the following remarks depend on her work and reflect our frequent conversations on the subject.

57 The material belonging to each of the histories is listed in B. Peckham, *The Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (HSM 35; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985) 95–140.

58 The Priestly institutions are related to time and natural occurrences and revolve around the covenants with Noah (rainbow), Abraham (circumcision) and Israel (Sabbath).

59 The Elohist considered the law (Exod 18*, 21–23*) a concrete and tangible form of a universal divine providence that was most evident in the constant guidance of the Angel of God.

60 Cf. B. Peckham, *The Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (HSM 35; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985) 3–6.

61 The amphictyonic model was proposed by M. Noth (*Das System der Zwölf Stämme Israels*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1930) and was understood to reflect the realities of premonarchic Israel. It is rather a Deuteronomistic interpretation of the ideal structure of Israel under the kingship of Yahweh which, this writer thought, could be implemented in any period of Israel's history, including the exilic period when, on the model of the Greek leagues, it was elaborated for the first time.

62 For instance, Isa 1:2–3; 30:9; Amos 3:1; Hos 1:2–4, 6, 8–9; 5:7; 9:11; 11:1–4; 13:13.

63 For instance, Isa 5:11–12; 28:14; Amos 6:1–7; Mic 3:1–12.

64 For instance, Isa 28:17; 30:12; Amos 2:6–8; 5:10–12; 6:12–13; 8:4–6; Hos 12:1–3, 8–9; Mic 6:9–16; 7:1–7.

65 For instance, Isa 28:14–19; 29:1–4; Amos 5:21–24; 8:9–10; Hos 1*–2*; Mic 6:1–8; Jer 6:18–21; 8:18–19.

66 Exod 25:8.

67 Exod 21:2–37; 22:1–8, 20a, 21–22, 24a, 25–28, 29b. The editorial elements were affixed by deixis (22:29a), by change of number (22:24b), by repetition with opposite word order (22:9–10, cf. 22:8) or by repetition with change of number (22:20b, 23). They rationalize the original (22:9–10, cf. 22:8;

22:11–14, cf. 22:6–7), complement it (22:15–16, cf. 21:7–11), or bring it into line with the laws, arguments and historical perspective of *Deuteronomy*. Cf. M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 172–187.

68 For instance, 1 Sam 1*, 11*; 2 Sam 5:1–4*; 15:7.

69 For instance, Amos 2:6–8; 3:9–12; 4:1–5; Mic 6:1–16; Nah 3:1–4, 8–11; Zeph 3:1–8.

70 For instance, Ex·id 34:10; Deut 5:2–3; Isa 28:15, 18; Hos 1:6, 8–9; Mic 3:9–12; Jer 6:16–21.

71 These characteristics of epic were discussed by Dennis Becker in "The Israelite Epic" (Unpublished: Toronto School of Theology, Biblical Seminar, March 19, 1992).

72 Gen 2:4b–6.

73 Gen 6:1–2, 4aBb.

74 Gen 11:1, 4–8a, 9a.

75 Gen 26:1aAb, 7–14, 16–17, 26–31.

76 Gen 37*.

77 Exod 2*.

78 Gen 1:1–2:4a.

79 Gen 5; 6:3–4aA.

80 Gen 10.

81 Gen 25.

82 The Elohist added many details of the legend (Gen 37*–50*), called Joseph "Lord" or Adonis ('*adon*, Gen 45:8–9) and toyed with the idea of his divinity (Gen 50:19). The Deuteronomist added an historical adaptation of the legend of the incestuous union from which Adonis was born (Gen 38).

83 Exod 3:16–12:51.

84 Gen 5.

85 Gen 11:1–9*; 12:1–9*.

86 Gen 11:10–32*.

87 Gen 21:1a, 2a, 3; 26:1aA, 6–9, 11–14.

88 Gen 36; 37:2*.

89 Gen 47:7–50:26.

90 Cf. Josh 11:23* and Josh 12; 13:1–7.

91 The Priestly writer made time the boundary between God and creation and invented seasons and occasions when they might meet. The Elohist made law and justice the structure of human discourse and the revelation of an omnipresent God.

92 In Gen 15, for instance, the Deuteronomist makes Abraham a prophet and paragon of the law and reveals to him the course of history, symbolized in exile and exodus, whose concrete details will be narrated in the following books. History, conversely, is just the unravelling of this plan and is inconsequential except for the wisdom and justice it reveals.

93 Cf. Amos 8:1–3a, 9–10; Hos 9:11–14; 13:12–13; Mic 3:9–12; Jer 4:23–27; Zeph 1:2–3aAb; 3:8.