

Purity in the Bible," "Languages of the Bible," "The Development of the Masoretic Bible," and "Reading Biblical Poetry."

In the final section of this volume, following "Tables and Charts," the "Translations of Primary Sources" and the "Glossary" are of particular importance. The Translations offer an introductory English bibliography of many primary sources mentioned in the annotations and the essays, including ancient Near Eastern, early postbiblical, classical rabbinic, medieval, philosophical, and mystical works. The Glossary explains both Hebrew and Jewish terms, as well as technical terms used in modern biblical scholarship. The material in all five sections following the annotated biblical books—the essays, charts, and other supplementary materials—is intended to inform the reader, concisely but without sacrificing high academic quality, about the Bible and its world, from both Jewish and academic perspectives.

[ADELE BERLIN AND MARC ZVI BRETTLER]

JEWISH INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

Inner-biblical Interpretation

The interpretation of the Bible begins in the Bible itself. Biblical authors frequently commented on other biblical texts; they revised them, they argued with them, and they alluded to them. In so doing, they conveyed an understanding of the texts they utilized—in short, they interpreted earlier biblical writings. This tendency became especially prominent at the end of the preexilic period and during the exilic and postexilic periods, in other words after an early protocanonical set of texts became sacred. These reader-writers understood older texts in original ways, applied their principles to new situations, or borrowed from their prestige. In this respect the biblical authors resemble later Jewish (and Christian) writers, who constantly look back to biblical models as they create new texts, ideas, and practices. Thus the religion that generated the Bible foreshadows the religions generated by the Bible: Israelite thinkers, like those of various forms of Judaism and Christianity, constructed their works by recasting language and themes found in earlier ones. Biblical authors bequeathed their successors not only a text, but ways of relating to that text, reacting to that text, recreating that text, and allowing that text to remain alive.

It will be helpful to discuss both the forms that inner-biblical revision takes and the effects of those revisions at the level of ideas—both *how* and *why* biblical authors borrow from their predecessors. In examining both these issues, this essay will also compare the ways biblical authors used biblical texts with the ways postbiblical authors did so.

To begin, then, with the rhetoric of reuse and rereading: Biblical authors utilized the

work of their predecessors in several ways. Some biblical passages use a formula when they quote an older text, thus making the borrowing explicit. (This practice resembles the modern footnote.) 2 Kings 14.5–6 tells us of King Joash, "Once he had the kingdom firmly in his grasp, he put to death the courtiers who had assassinated his father the king. But he did not put to death the children of the assassins, in accordance with what is written (*kakatuw*) in the Book of the Teaching of Moses (*torat moshe*), where the LORD commanded, 'Parents shall not be put to death for children, nor children be put to death for parents; a person shall be put to death only for his own crime.'" The formula "in accordance with what is written" (or, more simply, "as it is written") introduces a nearly word-for-word quotation from Deut. 24.16. In other instances this formula introduces quotations or refers to ideas found elsewhere in the Torah (1 Kings 2.3; Ezra 3.2; 2 Chron. 23.18). This formula (*kakatuw* or *kemo shekatuw*) is also used to introduce quotations from Scripture in rabbinic literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and (in Greek translation) the New Testament.

In a much larger number of cases, however, biblical texts borrow phrasing or imagery without citing the source explicitly; rather, the shared items help the knowledgeable reader identify the source. The prophet responsible for the latter part of the book of Isaiah (see the introduction to Isaiah) comforted Judeans after the destruction of Jerusalem with these words:

The LORD comforts Zion, comforts all her ruins. He makes Zion's wasteland an Eden;

her desert, a garden of the LORD . . . Listen to Me, My people, and My nation, give ear! For teaching goes forth from Me, and I will give My judgment as a light of the peoples . . . My arms will judge peoples. Islands will look eagerly to Me, and in My arms they will have hope. Lift up your eyes towards heaven and look at the earth below! For the heaven can melt away like smoke, and the earth can wear out like a garment . . . But My salvation will endure forever. (Isa. 51.3-6, author's translation).

In issuing this prediction, the exilic author borrows from a passage found in the work of two prophets who lived more than a century and a half earlier, (First) Isaiah and Micah:

In the future, the mountain of the LORD's House will be established as the greatest of mountains and lifted up above the hills. All nations will flow towards it, and many peoples will come and say, "Let us go up to the LORD's mountain, to the House of Jacob's God," . . . For teaching goes forth from Zion, and the LORD's word from Jerusalem. And God will judge the nations, . . . and they will beat their swords into plowshares and their weapons into pruning forks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and they will learn war no more (Isa. 2.2-4, author's translation; Mic. 4.1-4 is almost identical).

The author of Isa. ch 51 borrowed the items printed in italics above. In addition, *horvotaha* ["her ruins"] in Isa. ch 51 is an intentional pun, hinting at *harvotam* ["their swords"] in Isa. ch 2 and Mic. ch 4, a word that has a different meaning but sounds nearly identical. The passages share several images as well. The idea of peoples gathering appears in both passages, and both predict that the LORD will teach nations and judge them at His mountain. In both passages agricultural images (plowshares and pruning hooks in Isa. ch 2 and Mic. ch 4, gardens in Isa. ch 53) take the place of figures of destruction. The new text reworks the old one. It repeats the earlier prediction, but it shifts attention from the nations

who come in pursuit of instruction and peace to the benefits that Jerusalem will gain from her newly exalted position. The later author does not use a citation formula to tell the reader that the new text depends on the older one, but the many items they share indicate their relationship. We may characterize this relationship as a literary allusion. A great many biblical texts utilized their predecessors in this way, and some postbiblical writers continued the tradition of allusion. Based on similarity of vocabulary and phraseology, it is clear that many of the Dead Sea Scrolls borrow and rework texts from the Bible; the same is true of the New Testament. On the other hand, the central works of rabbinic literature (the Talmuds and the midrashim) allude to the Bible much less frequently. They tend instead to cite the Bible explicitly by using citation formulas like "as it is written" or "as it was said." Other rabbinic works, however, often borrow vocabulary and images from the Bible in a style that recalls the Bible itself; these rabbinic works include prayers found in the Siddur (prayerbook), moralistic books, and some mystical texts. Allusions to the Bible continue throughout the development of Hebrew literature; they are very frequent in medieval Hebrew poetry and in the work of modern Israeli writers such as Bialik, Agnon, Amichai, and others.

Some biblical works borrow whole sections from older texts. For example, the book of Chronicles repeats, more or less verbatim, large parts of Samuel and Kings. The legal collection in Deut. chs 12-26 includes laws similar to those in Exod. chs 21-23. According to most modern source-critical biblical scholars, the books of Genesis through Numbers incorporate several older texts that are no longer available to us in their original form. In all these cases, the new works make small but highly significant changes in the borrowed material. Thus the theological and historical outlook of Chronicles differs from that of Samuel/Kings, even as Chronicles reports the same events using many of the same words (see the introduction to Chronicles). Some

modern scholars maintain that a group of priests copied an older form of the festival law now found in Lev. ch 23, but they added verses 9-22 and 39-44 when they did so (see notes there). By making the additions, these priests radically altered the religious outlook of the original document. They acknowledged the validity of popular ritual observances deliberately shunned by the more elite priests responsible for the older version of the chapter. Revising a text by copying it with significant variations or additions remained a common form of Jewish writing in the period immediately following the completion of the Bible. Works such as *Jubilees* and some of the Dead Sea Scrolls retold the stories of the Torah or repeated and modified laws found there. These works were not preserved by later Jewish groups, however, and they did not continue to be studied, read, or chanted in Jewish communities. The Rabbis did not incorporate large sections of the Bible into new works that they wrote; instead, they typically compiled collections of interpretive comments on the Bible (known as midrashim), included interpretive comments in legal works (such as the Talmud), and, beginning with the Middle Ages, wrote verse-by-verse commentaries on the Bible.

Finally, some later comments on biblical passages occur within those passages themselves, at least in the text of the Bible that has been in use for the past two millennia. Like modern readers, ancient readers penned explanations or reactions to the text they were reading in margins or between the lines. Some of these marginal comments were subsequently inserted into the text itself by scribes who copied the scroll containing the marginal comment. (It is also possible that some of these comments were inserted to begin with by scribes who made them as they were copying a scroll.) For example, 1 Kings 15.5 originally limited itself to a comment praising King David, and one important manuscript of the ancient Greek translation of Kings preserves that original text. A later scribe found the fulsome praise of David inconsistent with the

story in 2 Sam. ch 11. That story is exceedingly critical of David for committing adultery with the wife of Uriah the Hittite (one of his own soldiers) and for having Uriah murdered to ensure that the adultery was not discovered. Therefore, the scribe added a qualification in 1 Kings 15.5: "except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." These words became part of the Masoretic Text, which thus contains both the original author's evaluation of David and a later reader's reaction to that evaluation. Similarly, Exod. 22.24 originally read, "If you lend money to My 'am," do not act toward them as a creditor; exact no interest from them." Now, the Hebrew word "am" usually means "people," but it can also mean "the poor" or "common folk, peasantry" (see Isa. 3.15; Ps. 72.2; Neh. 5.1). To make clear that in this case the second of these meanings was to be understood, a later scribe added the words "to the poor among you" immediately after "am." Since the meaning of "am" as "people" was more common, the scribe worried that without clarification the verse would be misread.

The goals of other biblical authors and scribes who borrowed material from older biblical texts were varied. As we can see from the scribal insertion in Exod. ch 22 just discussed, they sometimes wanted to explain a passage that seemed ambiguous, problematic, or somehow relevant to their own situation. In other words, they wrote an interpretation. A famous example occurs in Dan. 9.2: "I, Daniel, consulted the books concerning the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD that had come to Jeremiah the prophet, were to be the term of Jerusalem's desolation—seventy years." In this verse the author of Daniel cited a passage from the book of Jeremiah explicitly: Jeremiah wrote that passage shortly after the Babylonians deported many of Jerusalem's leaders in 597 BCE: "Thus said the LORD: When Babylon's seventy years are over, I will take note of you, and I will fulfill to you My promise of favor—to bring you back to this place" (Jer. 29.10). The author of Daniel wrote at a time when the Second Temple was being desecrated and Jerusalem's status as a

holy city was in peril (in the middle of the 2nd century BCE.) Therefore, that author felt that the redemption and favor promised in Jer. 29.10 had still not materialized, even though seventy years had long passed. How, then, to understand Jeremiah's prophecy as a true prophecy? Daniel reports that the angel Gabriel answered this question: "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city until . . . eternal righteousness [is] ushered in; and prophetic vision ratified" (Dan. 9.24). According to Gabriel's interpretation, Jeremiah's words were really a sort of code. When Jeremiah said "seventy (*shiv'im*) years" he meant "seventy weeks" or "seventy sevens" (*shavu'im shiv'im*) of years; the consonants *shv'ym* had to be read twice, with slightly different vocalization each time. As a result what seems like one word is really two. The redemption would occur not seventy years after Jeremiah issued the prophecy, but four hundred and ninety years afterwards. This interpretation of Jer. ch 29 confirms the prophecy as a true one, and makes it applicable to a current situation. The interpretation is certainly a novel one, and not what Jeremiah himself meant; it makes it seem that Jeremiah was speaking for the benefit of the audience at the time of Daniel, not for Jeremiah's own audience. Nevertheless, Daniel's reading of Jeremiah follows a recognizable logic. The word of God is not like the word of a human; divine speech is infinitely more meaningful. When a human utters the consonants of the word *shiv'im*, it means only one thing ("seventy"), but when God does so they have (at least) another layer of meaning, and thus they can be read twice in two different ways (*shavu'im shiv'im*), to mean seventy sevens. Precisely the same theory of divine language as supercharged with meaning underlies biblical interpretations found in postbiblical Jewish literature, such as the midrashim (see "Midrash and Midrashic Interpretation," pp. 1863-75). Indeed, this passage in Daniel is an early case of classical Jewish scriptural interpretation. Midrash, then, is not just a postbiblical invention used by the

Rabbis to revise the Bible as they saw fit. It is a biblical means of relating to the Bible, which the Rabbis inherited from the biblical authors themselves.

One more case in which a biblical author explicitly interprets older biblical texts: Both Exodus and Deuteronomy provide regulations concerning the Passover sacrifice, but these regulations differ in several respects. According to Deut. 16.7, the Passover sacrifice should be boiled. The law concerning the Passover sacrifice in Exod. 12.9 takes issue with Deuteronomy on this point, warning its audience, "Don't eat it raw or boiled in water; rather, [eat it] roasted in fire" (author's translation; the NJPS translation obscures this point by translating the verb "cook" in Deuteronomy). That such a disagreement (*mahlaket*) occurs in this ancient Jewish literature is not surprising: Two groups in the biblical period agreed that the Passover sacrifice was important but disagreed on its precise details. Such disagreements over the precise requirements of a ritual are a regular feature of Jewish law in all ages. Classical rabbinic authorities, for example, agree that one should not eat dairy products for some time after eating meat but disagree concerning the exact length of the waiting period (some say it should be three hours; others, six); contemporary Jewish groups agree that communal prayers are important but disagree concerning whether women should be allowed to lead them. The authors of the book of Chronicles, however, cannot tolerate disagreement between two texts in the Torah; unlike most modern scholars, they view the Torah not as an anthology of differing opinions (comparable to the Talmud), or as a compendium of different sources, but as a single work, written by Moses (comparable to a law code such as Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*). Consequently, they deny that a legal disagreement or *mahlaket* can occur in the Torah. When narrating the Passover observances during the reign of the righteous King Josiah, Chronicles tells us that "they slaughtered the Passover sacrifice . . . according to what is written in

the Book of Moses . . . and they boiled the Passover sacrifice in fire, in accordance with the law" (2 Chron. 35.11-13, author's translation). Precisely what Chronicles means by the phrase "boiled in fire" is not clear. What is evident, however, is that Chronicles insists the sacrifice was performed in accordance with the Torah as a whole: somehow the priests simultaneously boiled it (as per Deuteronomy) and roasted it in fire (as per Exodus). The interpretive principle that the book of Chronicles advocates here is shared by classical rabbinic commentators: The Torah is a single document, and therefore what seem to be contradictions within it must be explained away through harmonization. (Rabbinic interpreters on these passages in Exodus and Deuteronomy devised several ways of showing that they do not really disagree with each other; see, for example, the Talmud's explanation in *b. Pes. 70b*.)

In the cases just examined, the goal of the later passage is to illuminate the earlier one. In many other instances of inner-biblical borrowing, however, the new text presents an innovative variation of the older text's ideas or even argues against it. Instead of saying, "Here is how you ought to understand the older text," the new composition tells the reader, "There are some ideas in the older text that need to be revised or extended or discarded. Here's my proposal for a replacement." Exod. 34.6-7 informs us that God sometimes punishes children for their parent's sin—indeed, even grandchildren and great-grandchildren can be punished:

The LORD! the LORD! a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of parents upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations.

According to this formulation (which appears in condensed form in Exod. 32.1-6, 34; Num.

14.1-20; 2 Kings 20.12-19; Ps. 99.8), God punishes children for the sins of their parents, apparently as a sign of mercy to the parents: When sinners repent, their punishment is deferred to their offspring. Other biblical writers, however, rejected this notion. Ps. 103.8-10, for example, notes: *The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness. He will not extend his anger forever, nor will He fight for all time* (author's translation).

The psalmist quotes the text from Exod. ch 34, which was already an authoritative and holy text, but revises the morally troubling part: Where the older text informed us that God punishes a sin for generations, the psalm maintains that God does not contend forever. A similar quotation with revision occurs in Deut. 7.9-10, Jonah 4.2, and Joel 2.12. These texts do not attempt to tell us how to read Exod. ch 34; that is, they do not argue that Exod. ch 34 somehow means something other than what it seems to say. Rather, they repeat it while also disagreeing with part of it. The same phenomenon occurs in rabbinic liturgy. During the introduction to the Torah service on festivals and throughout the Yom Kippur service, the first part of the statement from Exod. ch 34 is quoted, but the section at the end describing the intergenerational punishment is omitted. In purposefully misquoting the scriptural passage, then, the Rabbis who created the festival liturgy follow a scriptural precedent.

Sometimes it is difficult to be sure whether a later biblical author means to interpret an earlier text or to revise it. Exod. 23.9 reads, "Do not oppress the foreigner. You experienced the life of the foreigner, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt" (author's translation). Deut. 10.19 echoes but amplifies the verse from Exodus: "Love the foreigner, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt." Does Deuteronomy intend to explain that "not oppressing" really means "loving," and that Exod. 23.9 at a deeper level commands us to love the foreigner? Or does Deuteronomy rather mean to say that not only is what Exodus commanded right, but we should go further and actively

love the foreigner? It is difficult to be sure, but given the many other cases in which Deuteronomy clearly disagrees with Exodus (for example, the law of the Passover sacrifice discussed above, or the law of the slave in Deut. 15.12-18, which revises Exod. 21.2-7), the latter explanation seems more likely.

Biblical writers often use older texts to bolster their own writing or to help make some claim in a particularly clear or lively fashion. According to Jer. 2.3,

Israel is the LORD's holy item, the first-fruits He produced. All who consume Israel will incur guilt; disaster will befall them (author's translation).

In making this assertion, Jeremiah relies on the ritual law found in Lev. 22.14-16:

If a man consumes a holy item by mistake he must give a holy item to the priest plus one fifth of its value. The priests must not let the holy items donated to the LORD by the Israelites be defiled, nor may they allow the Israelites to incur punishment by consuming holy items (author's translation).

Jeremiah suggests an analogy in order to make his own point more vivid: According to ritual law, certain agricultural products (especially first-fruits, according to Num. 18.11-13) are holy items. They belong to the Temple and cannot be consumed (i.e., eaten) as regular food; those who do so incur guilt. So too the nation Israel is sacred to the LORD; the nation is, metaphorically, a holy item. Therefore, any who would consume (i.e., attack or destroy) that nation will incur guilt and suffer disaster. This sort of literary allusion differs from the examples of inner-biblical interpretation and revision we saw above. Jeremiah neither explains the passage from Leviticus nor repeats it while modifying its message. He does not claim that the older passage is really a geopolitical warning to Israel's enemies rather than a law concerning the sacrificial rites. Nor does he suggest that the text ought to be such a warning and needs to be rewritten. In fact, Jeremiah's statement does not affect the

meaning of the older text at all. Rather, Jeremiah evokes the law from Leviticus in order to make his own message readily understood by analogy. In so doing, he also aligns himself with an authoritative text and thus bolsters his own status as prophet.

The following case of inner-biblical allusion, on the other hand, at once enriches the text that makes the allusion and illuminates the source. When two Israelite spies venture into Jericho at the outset of the book of Joshua, the Canaanite harlot Rahab allows them to hide in her house, thus disobeying an edict of her own Canaanite king. She explains her reasons to the Israelite spies:

I know that the LORD has given you the land. Indeed, fear of you has overtaken us, and all the inhabitants of the land are trembling because of you (Josh. 2.9, author's translation).

Rahab's words closely resemble a line from the song Moses and the Israelites sang at the Reed Sea after they escaped from Egypt:

All the inhabitants of Canaan will tremble; fear and terror will overtake them (Exod. 15.15-16, author's translation).

The allusion in Joshua (which was written after the poem in Exod. ch 15) works on several levels. It establishes a link between the events described in the first chapters of Joshua and the exodus from Egypt, a link that other passages in Joshua strengthen. (For example, the crossing of the River Jordan in Josh. chs 3-4 reenacts the crossing of the Red Sea in Exod. chs 14-15.) This brief allusion helps the author make a central point: The grand act of salvation that the LORD performed for Israelite slaves in the past was not the last such act; in each and every generation Jews should see themselves as participating in that miracle, because similar miracles may well save them, too. By repeating vocabulary from Exod. ch 15, the author of Joshua forges a parallel between two moments in time and hence expresses a philosophy of history: History repeats itself, and the activities of earlier

generations are a sign for what will happen to their offspring. At the same time, this allusion also tells us something about the song in Exodus. It is possible to read that poem as prophetic, and to view the line describing the Canaanites' fear as a prediction made by Moses well before the Canaanites actually heard of the Israelites' good fortune. By paraphrasing that line in the past tense, the author of Joshua confirms the accuracy of the older prediction and thus reinforces Moses' prestige. Allusions to biblical texts occur with enormous frequency in later Jewish literature. One cannot move through a page of the Dead Sea Scrolls' *Community Rule*, a paragraph from the rabbinic liturgy, a poem by Yehudah Halevi or Nathan Zach or Dan Pagis, or a novel by A. B. Yehoshua or Amos Oz without finding vocabulary and images that evoke particular passages from the Bible. Indeed, the constant reworking of biblical material is a hallmark of Jewish literature, a hallmark that is already prominent in the Bible itself.

It is often stated that postbiblical Judaism is a religion of the Book, and that interpretation and debate are quintessentially rabbinic activities. In light of the phenomenon of inner-biblical exegesis and allusion, it becomes evident that these characteristics of Jewish creativity did not begin with the Rabbis. Biblical authors themselves regarded older biblical texts as authoritative, sacred, and worthy of

study. Close examination of some biblical documents, especially those composed toward the end of the biblical period but including some from the preexilic era, shows something extraordinary: Priests and prophets, psalmists and scribes composed Scripture by recycling Scripture, by turning it and turning it to find new truths in it. For many biblical writers, new words from God emerged from intense examination and reordering of old ones. The interpretation of a sacred text could yield revelation, as much as revelation yielded a sacred text. If this is so, then the gulf that separates the Bible or *Torah shebikhtav* ("Written Torah") from rabbinic tradition or *Torah shebe'al peh* ("Oral Torah") is smaller than one might think. The Rabbis stand alongside their biblical forebears when they interpret the Bible, even when they interpret the Bible in surprising or radical ways. It is perhaps for this reason that they portrayed biblical figures as the first biblical commentators. "Moses wrote many things in an obscure way [in the Torah], and then came King David [in the book of Psalms] who explained them," we read in a midrash on Exodus (*Exod. Rab.* 15:22). By reading and revising, explaining and debating, the authors of the Bible as well as those who follow them demonstrate that many different texts, biblical and otherwise, contain the living words of God.

[BENJAMIN D. SOMMER]

Early Nonrabbinic Interpretation

A variety of extrabiblical texts preserve ancient interpretations of biblical law and narrative. Many motifs from these interpretations are found in later rabbinic (as well as Christian and Islamic) sources. But the interpretive texts were, for the most part, not preserved within rabbinic corpora and libraries, and they often represent legal and theological views that diverge sharply from those found within rabbinic Judaism. Scholars use these texts—recovered from Christian libraries and

from the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran—both to reconstruct the diverse character of the Second Temple community before the emergence of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity, and to illuminate later interpretations. (For an explanation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the ways in which they are named and referenced, see "The Bible in the Dead Sea Scrolls," pp. 1920-28.)

These interpretive texts vary greatly in the way they present their relationship to the bib-