Scriptural Vitality

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Scriptural Vitality

Rethinking Philology and Hermeneutics

HINDY NAJMAN

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For my mother

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A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness.

Endymion, John Keats

Preface

This book focuses on rethinking methodological presuppositions that are central to the field of biblical studies. It engages particular texts, concepts, and scholarly assumptions in the discipline with the goal of opening new trajectories for thinking about biblical studies across many subfields: textual criticism, hermeneutics, philological method, and philosophy.

A central theme of the book is the importance and centrality of the Hellenistic period for understanding the vitality of Judaism. I claim that the Hellenistic period is one of the most important and formative periods for the history of Judaism. The language that I employ across the monograph is that of vitality. This is intended to signal a transformative and life-giving dynamic to a Judaism that continued to configure itself and its texts over time and in the face of great loss and the threat of destruction. This dynamic and resilient nature is exemplified in a whole host of texts across the Second Temple period.

My claim runs counter to the long-standard idea that Second Temple Judaism is 'Spätjudentum' or late Judaism.[1] This now rarely encountered term signified that Second Temple Judaism was in a state of decline or decay, awaiting the coming of Christianity. The term has been replaced by 'Frühjudentum' or early Judaism. I would argue that the underlying attitude expressed by the term 'Spätjudentum' is still detectable, and the prolific productivity of the Second Temple period has not been acknowledged.

This focus on vitality instead of 'late Judaism' is nothing less than a re-orientation of scholarship and culture intended to redirect the narrative about the Hellenistic period towards a discourse of creative and dynamic production of new texts, cultural invigoration, and innovative practices of ritual, reading, and reflection. This is not meant as a primarily evaluative statement with respect to vitality, but it is an important descriptive claim.

This book argues against four lines of current thinking in the field of ancient Judaism and biblical studies. I argue that the reconstruction of an original archetype is not the only or even best way to study the history of the development of a text.

[1] See the full discussion in Konrad Schmid, 'The Rise and Fall of the Notion of "*Spätjudentum*" in Christian Biblical Scholarship', in *Protestant Bible Scholarship: Antisemitism, Philosemitism and Anti-Judaism*, ed. Arjen Bakker et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 63–78. See also René Bloch, 'Antisemitism and Early Scholarship on Ancient Antisemitism', in *Protestant Bible Scholarship: Antisemitism, Philosemitism and Anti-Judaism*, ed. Arjen Bakker et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 41–62; Bernard M. Levinson and Robert P. Ericksen, eds, *The Betrayal of the Humanities: The University during the Third Reich* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022).

I problematize the search for the original moment because it can obscure the compositional history of a work that is not singular but rather pluriform. Additionally, I express critique of the need to reconstruct something prior or original as if that pretext or prior text redeems or gives us privileged information about the first or original moment of the text. In addition to originary moments, we can also consider the growth and development of textual traditions as part of the very fabric and essence of the text under critical evaluation. Secondly and relatedly, I problematize assumptions around methods that expose tensions within a text. Thus, it is not about finding tensions as ruptures in the text, but rather about reconstructing the conversation of compositional practices over time. Texts, ancient and modern, have complex histories and interactions within traditions as they are embedded within a single work. What constitutes an authentic work is thus the third point of argument. I also challenge forgery as a category that reifies what is authentic and pristine and original, versus what is part of a growing organism. That is, instead of looking for a singular original and deprecating what is not part of that, I am also not looking for what is or is not authentic with respect to forgeries. Rather I want to understand how traditions grow as they are attached to existing collections or works, but also associated with an earlier protagonist as an authoritative figure. Finally, I argue for including and incorporating the Dead Sea Scrolls into a larger discourse of ancient Judaism and biblical studies. By way of identifying the community of the *Yaḥad*, this is an explicit challenge against characterizing the Dead Sea Scrolls as sectarian. An overemphasis on particular so-called sectarian generic categories serves to isolate and interrupt the deep and continuous connections between the world of ancient Judaism and the Graeco-Roman world. The challenges raised in the work that follows are intended to create space for a new scriptural vitality which exhibits creative and innovative possibility.

Kandinsky's *Black Lines* introduces this project on the cover of the book. This painting captures the movement and brilliance of possibility through dramatic bursts of colour and movement. And yet there is order through the frames and circumscribed black strokes, which are at once precise and wild. Kandinsky's work was linked and engaged with dance, music, and poetry as essential to his own painting. It is this participation in culture along with a wild and dramatic innovation that I want to invoke in the preface of this book on scriptural vitality.

Judaism is framed by a past and future which is textual, especially but not only scriptural. The Scriptures themselves retrospectively create the pattern for the shaping of law, interpretation, and new conceptual innovation that is created through the new convergence of cultures in the Hellenistic period. It is also the case that the traditions of Scripture carry with them a rich past of text, tradition, and cultural convergences of the Babylonian and Persian periods. The Scriptures I discuss here are more expansive and flexible in this time period than what we might mean by Tanakh, or the Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament today. The emergence

of canon as such is a later development but, in this period, we are seeing Scripture and even canon in formation.

This book presents new pathways for thinking about biblical studies and interpretation, for examining these emerging Scriptures and their persistent vitality. In doing so, I take the reader through a philosophical and literary discussion. Instead of seeking a singular linear trajectory for its argument, this book builds its ideas across three main parts, introducing and revisiting texts, ideas, and thinkers. The first part offers a philosophical and methodological reflection on the field—the current state of work but also the new pathways I want to articulate here. The second part expands and illustrates these pathways with the book of Jubilees as a case study. The third part moves through further case studies to examine ways of thinking about knowledge, God, creation, and subjecthood, extending and deepening the discussions of the previous chapters and thinking through their implications.

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It is with much gratitude that I acknowledge the people who have helped contribute to this volume. Across the years in which I wrote this book, my students, both postgraduates and undergraduates in Oxford, have had a profoundly important role to play in my thinking and my writing. I acknowledge all of you for your input, insight, and the inspiration you have provided.

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Some of my colleagues and friends have also read and offered incisive comments and suggestions to improve my manuscript. The ways in which my colleagues have inspired the book is immeasurable. I have abundant gratitude for your conversation and generosity.

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During the period in which I wrote this book, my mother, Dr Sherrell Najman, was diagnosed with cancer. While I wrote of vitality, she battled for life with unparalleled determination and resilience. My mother redefined for me what vitality means not only in antiquity or in the space of the liminal and the revelatory, but also in this world. I dedicate this book to her and to her vitality.

Abbreviations

AS	Aramaic Studies
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BAR	Biblical Archaeology Review
BBR	Bulletin for Biblical Research
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation
BJRL	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library
BSPh	Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie
CI	Critical Inquiry
CRJ	Classical Receptions Journal
CurBR	Currents in Biblical Research
DSD	Dead Sea Discoveries
FO	Folia Orientalia
HeBAI	Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel
HS	Hebrew Studies
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
Int	Interpretation
IOS	Israel Oriental Studies
JAAC	The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism
JAJ	Journal of Ancient Judaism
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JHS	Journal of the History of Sexuality
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JJTP	Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy
JNS	Journal of Nietzsche Studies
JP	Jerusalem Perspective
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JR	Journal of Religion
JRA	Journal of Roman Archaeology
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies
JSem	Journal for Semitics
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods
JSP	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
JSQ	Jewish Studies Quarterly
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
Meg	Meghillot: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls
NLH	New Literary History
PHEN	Philological Encounters

Proof	Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History
RBL	Review of Biblical Literature
RevQ	Revue de Qumran
SPhiloA	Studia Philonica Annual
Text	Textus
ThLZ	Theologische Literaturzeitung
TWC	Transformative Works and Culture
VT	Vetus Testamentum
ZAC	Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity

Permissions

I have been working on this book project for some time, and to that end some of my earlier articles facilitated its completion. I thank the publishers for permission to republish parts of the previously published articles. In Chapter 1, I have re-used sections of 'Ethical Reading: The Transformation of the Text and the Self', *JTS* 68, no. 2 (2017): pp. 507–529. In Chapter 3, I have re-used sections of 'Textual Unities and Poetic Processes in Ancient Judaism', in *Congress Volume Aberdeen 2019*, ed. Grant Macaskill et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2022), pp. 266–90. In Chapter 4, I have re-used sections of 'Reading the Blood Plague (Exodus 7:14–25): The Hermeneutics of a Composite Text', co-authored with Konrad Schmid, *JBL* 141, no. 1 (2022): pp. 23–42. In Chapter 8, I have re-used sections of '*Imitatio Dei* and the Formation of the Subject in Ancient Judaism', *JBL* 140, no. 2 (2021): pp. 309–323 and 'Die Herausbildung des Subjekts im antiken Judentum', co-authored with Arjen Bakker, *ThLZ* 149, no. 5 (2024): pp. 367–382. In Chapter 10, I have re-used sections of 'Conceptualizing Wilderness: Poetic Processes and Reading Practices in the Hodayot and the Apostrophe to Zion', in *16th Orion Symposium* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2024).

PART I

PHILOSOPHY, PHILOLOGY, AND POETICS OF READING

1
Reading Practices

This book considers the ways in which textual traditions emerged and transformed across the Hellenistic period in ancient Judaism. Our understanding of these traditions has been dramatically changed by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls, unearthed in the 1940s and 1950s (scrolls from Qumran), and also the 1960s (including Masada), in the Judaean desert, surprised us all with the discovery of the earliest Hebrew scrolls of the Hebrew Bible as we know it, as well as hundreds of fragmentary texts along with objects that demonstrate and exemplify the life and breath of Judaism across the Hellenistic period leading up to the first century CE.

To be sure, the Dead Sea Scrolls transformed our understanding of biblical texts in the Hellenistic period (or the late Second Temple period). Not only were our earliest manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible discovered at Khirbet Qumran, but we are now also able to see the growth and expansion of the earliest interpretations of biblical traditions, contemporaneous with texts which came to be called the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament. These interpretations assume a variety of forms, including translations or even targum-like texts, commentaries such as pesharim, other rewritings and legal texts, and new liturgical collections.

The insights we gain from studying the Dead Sea Scrolls in all their complexity and variation have transformed the way we see the period. The Hellenistic period is bursting with innovation and creativity. Amongst the biblical scrolls we have almost every book from the Hebrew Bible,[1] but we also see various new compositions, commentaries, and interpretations.

Texts from Jewish antiquity—whether from the Hebrew Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, or other apocryphal or pseudepigraphical texts—are layered with history, internal as well as external dialogue, and revision. The entangled history and hermeneutics embedded within and beyond the Dead Sea Scrolls and related texts from this period (not least of all contemporaneous Jewish writings in Greek) elucidate a dynamic conversation of reception, hermeneutics, and innovation. Reception of earlier tradition, interpretation, and updating of such tradition, as well as the inclusion of new cultural insight and philological innovation through

[1] See Eugene Ulrich, 'The Bible in the Making: The Scriptures at Qumran', in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 17–33; Armin Lange, 'The Qumran Library in Context: The Canonical History and Textual Standardization of the Hebrew Bible in Light of the Qumran Library', in *The Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran and the Concept of a Library*, ed. Sidnie White Crawford and Cecilia Wassen (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 259–79.

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borrowing, influence, and poetic creativity all are part of the vitality of which I speak.

1.1 New Directions and Forward-Moving Philology

The goal then is to offer correctives within scholarship by suggesting new directions. This new direction is focused on a forward-moving approach to philology which is integrated into hermeneutics and the growth of works, collections, and even individual psalms or units of texts. A figure who has contributed a great deal to this line of thinking is Peter Szondi with his work on what he called 'poetic processes'.[2] I will return more fully to his writing in the final chapters of the book, in an extended reflection on philology and hermeneutics.

I argue here for an integrated approach to thinking about biblical texts that considers historical and cultural context within ancient Jewish works. That is, the Hellenistic period can help us understand how resilience, dynamism, and tenacity are expressed across texts and textual communities. I emphasize this point because of the way that the Hellenistic period has been systematically undermined and repeatedly overlooked. This is precisely because scholarship was focused on both the birth of Christianity as a replacement for a late or dying Jewish tradition ('*Spätjudentum*'),[3] and the recovery of an original text, or an Urtext. This influences both source-critical analyses but also textual-critical scholarly practices of reading.[4]

What I propose is an alternative focus that is forward-looking. This is a reading practice that does not consider the Hellenistic period a lesser, derivative, or artificial development of Hebrew, or to be a remnant of concepts and beliefs of an ancient Israelite religion. Instead, my focus is on the ways in which scribes, priests, and scholars render the inherited traditions comprehensible. We can no doubt already see signs of this development in the Persian period texts such as Nehemiah 8:8:

[2] Peter Szondi, *On Textual Understanding and Other Essays*, trans. Harvey Mendelsohn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986). See also my discussion in 'Textual Unities and Poetic Processes in Ancient Judaism', in *Congress Volume Aberdeen 2019*, ed. Grant Macaskill et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2022), pp. 266–90.

[3] Konrad Schmid, 'The Rise and Fall of the Notion of "*Spätjudentum*" in Christian Biblical Scholarship', in *Protestant Bible Scholarship: Antisemitism, Philosemitism and Anti-Judaism*, ed. Arjen Bakker et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2022), pp. 63–78.

[4] For further discussion of reading practices, please see my discussion in 'Ethical Reading: The Transformation of the Text and the Self', *JTS* 68, no. 2 (2017): pp. 507–29, doi:10.1093/jts/flx152; and my earlier discussion in 'The Exemplary Protagonist: The Case of 4Ezra', in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the Scriptures*, ed. Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), pp. 261–87. See also Peter Kivy, *The Performance of Reading: An Essay in the Philosophy of Literature* (London: Blackwell, 2006).

וַיִּקְרְאוּ בַסֵּפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים מְפֹרָשׁ וְשׂוֹם שֶׂכֶל וַיָּבִינוּ בַּמִּקְרָא׃

They read from the scroll of the Teaching of God, translating it and giving the sense; so they understood the reading.[5]

Here, in the text, the scribes and the priests are said to render comprehensible what is read from the Scriptures to the community. But one can also see it in a late Hellenistic-period psalm such as Psalm 119, which is overflowing with discussion of insight and wisdom and the understanding of Torah.[6]

In any event, practices of reading for comprehension and the dissemination of knowledge of tradition and Scripture in the Hellenistic period are inextricably linked to practices of reading and of performance of those scriptural traditions, and the interpretations as well—be they commentary, translation, new liturgies, or new rituals which build upon and instantiate old rituals.[7]

Reading practices thus perform and exemplify the inheritance of earlier textual traditions through explication and interpretation of those texts by the dynamic enlivenment of those traditions in the context of history and culture, and by the communities and writers who are first readers. All of these aspects constitute *reading*: editing and refinement, interpretation and expansion, and transmission and reception. To read is to perform and to change, but it is also to repeat and authorize a text. Reading is part of a larger dynamic that is at once oral and written, past and present, expansive and refining. To inhabit a new text is to create a new context for reading and thinking. Reading in antiquity concerns liturgy, study, and establishing community.[8] Expressions of all of these aspects of reading are extant across the body of ancient Jewish texts.

Already then, in this first chapter, I am focused on reading as a forward-moving practice. This is a practice which characterizes the growth, development, and dynamic processes of textual composition and revision.[9] The texts of ancient Judaism

[5] All translations of the Hebrew Bible are from Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 2nd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[6] On dating Psalm 119, see Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150*, ed. Klaus Baltzer and trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), pp. 262–3.

[7] On tradition and pluriformity see George J. Brooke, 'The Formation and Renewal of Scriptural Tradition', in *Biblical Traditions in Transmission: Essays in Honour of Michael A. Knibb*, ed. Charlotte Hempel and Judith M. Lieu (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 39–59 (see esp. page 47). For further discussion of the term "tradition" see the discussion by John J. Collins, 'Tradition and Innovation in the Dead Sea Scrolls', in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Transmission of Traditions and Production of Texts*, ed. Sarianna Metso, Hindy Najman, and Eileen M. Schuller (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1–22.

[8] On continuous study and prayer, see Arjen Bakker, *The Secret of Time: Reconfiguring Wisdom in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 2023) and his article 'The Praise of the Luminaries in the Similitudes of Enoch and Its Parallels in the Qumran Scrolls' (Hebrew), *Meg* 13 (2017): pp. 171–84, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26606700.

[9] Søren Kierkegaard wrote: 'Philosophy is perfectly right in saying that life must be understood backwards. But then one forgets the other clause—that it must be lived forwards', in *Diary of Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. Peter P. Rohde and trans. Gerda M. Anderson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1960), p. 111. See a discussion of this quotation in my essay 'Configuring the Text in Biblical Studies',

emerge and grow within discrete collections. New texts in the Hellenistic period thus inherit a past and create a new present. While I am interested in ongoing compositional practices, I also trace innovative and influential ways of thinking about textual traditions concerning knowledge, deity, law, creation, and humanity in specific texts from the Second Temple period (which encompasses the Persian period and the Hellenistic and early Roman periods). I will consider these concepts across the book as a whole.

There is a deep past embedded in the texts which I explore in this book. By *past*, I mean that the texts themselves carry and exhibit their own innovative practices of reading, interpreting, and transforming the texts that are inherited into a new context. The ways in which texts of the past are read vary even within a single text or hymn. There can be citation, allusion, or simply invoking a concept or a figure that is part of that past. It is important to highlight the variegated ways in which past texts are invoked and leveraged to fully represent the creativity with which ancient Jewish writers participated in a variety of practices of reading. This will be emphasized especially in the second part of the book, as exemplified by a study of the book of Jubilees.

The traditions on which we will focus are about reading the past, but not to the exclusion of the present. These texts also participate in the incorporation of new insights from their own present. These new insights model innovative ways of thinking about their present. Innovations of this kind are of particular importance because of how they exemplify cultural exchange. A key piece of my argument is that we can trace ways in which texts of the Hellenistic period both inherit a past in their reading and draw from their context philosophically, literarily, and theologically. This is particularly exciting: we can see the integration of Greek and Hebrew thinking already while the texts we come to know as Scripture, or, biblical texts, were being produced. This will be especially emphasized in the third part of the book.[10]

Across this book, then, we are considering a reading practice which is a kind of forward-moving trajectory. Thus, the overarching hermeneutic of the texts we consider both inherits and innovates in ways that create a legacy and tradition that move forward, beyond the past and the present. This forward-moving trajectory is part of what is meant by vitality throughout this book.

My focus on vitality is part of a larger commitment to rethink the direction of textual work for the study of the ancient world. Instead of reconstructing the archetype or the originary moment, I am focused on a forward-moving gesture that

in *A Teacher for All Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. VanderKam*, vol. 1, ed. Eric F. Mason et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 3–4.

[10] This integration is exemplified in works such as the writings of Philo of Alexandria, Ben Sira, and Ezekiel the Tragedian. See the recent discussion of Ezekiel the Tragedian by Elizabeth Stell in her dissertation: 'Hermeneutical Philology for Dream and the Fragments of the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel' (DPhil dissertation, University of Oxford, 2024).

considers convergence between Hebrew and Greek (in a larger interdisciplinary context of language, culture, and philology). Thus, to study vitality within the texts of antiquity is to practice a philology that is forward-moving, and which participates in new composition, expansion, and poiesis. This is true of the Appendix Vergiliana as a continuation of Vergil's own works, and the Homeric hymns as a continuation of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.[11] In classics, the idea of forward-looking rewriting is rooted in the tradition of classical scholarship and now called 'reception'. This framework has enabled the field of classics to grapple with the importance of thinking about tradition as forward-looking. It is also a framework that reinstates the canonicity of texts.[12] So too, we can draw analogies to the Mosaic, the Jeremianic, and didactic and liturgical poetic collections. While forward-looking aspects of textual innovation and rewriting and rereading are accepted in classics, in the biblical scholarly tradition, this approach is less common. This has a great deal to do with canonical strictures and impositions on biblical studies. I argue that the ongoing growth and expansion of biblical traditions are not a byproduct of studying a text but are rather what sustains the life of textual traditions through interpretative communities.

This forward-moving orientation is intended as a corrective to scholarship which has traditionally sought to reconstruct the earliest layers or originary moments of a textual tradition as the preferred or even singularly correct mode of textual criticism.[13] This is not because recovering earliness is wrongheaded, but rather because it is not the *only* way to understand textual traditions. I am thus problematizing the impulse to retrieve earlier layers of a textual tradition as a better or privileged mode of understanding textual history.

To be sure, there is great and important use for reconstruction and understanding the original. This is true for the history of the text, or the reconstruction of a fragment and the history of a particular textual tradition or an iteration of that tradition. It can still be valuable to trace a text's history where we are able to see versions that might have existed and the contexts that produced them. This is true for the history of the text, or the reconstruction of a fragment. *Reconstruction and recovery are not the only way to read a tradition.* Textual traditions require

[11] Irene Peirano Garrison discusses the growth of the Virgilian corpus in *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[12] See especially, Peirano Garrison's discussion of rhetorical anachronism as a mode of interpretation in ch. 5, 'Recreating the Past', in ibid., pp. 205–41. See also on this point, Irene Peirano Garrison, 'Source, Original, and Authenticity between Philology and Theology', in *Classical Philology and Theology: Entanglement, Disavowal, and the Godlike Scholar*, ed. Catherine Conybeare and Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 86–109; Catherine Conybeare and Simon Goldhill, 'Philology's Shadow', in *Classical Philology and Theology: Entanglement, Disavowal, and the Godlike Scholar*, ed. Catherine Conybeare and Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 1–11.

[13] Yii-Jan Lin, 'Who Is the Text? The Gendered and Racialized New Testament', in *The Oxford Handbook of New Testament, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. Benjamin H. Dunning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 137–56.

what I have called forward-moving practices. And so, we will trace how texts are developed through practices of reading forward in time. As a tradition is read it is also refined, expanded, contracted, and interpolated. That is precisely how texts are read and formed over time. This is part of what keeps the texts alive and relevant. What I am describing here is the way compositions grow forwards through editing, supplementation, and rewriting, through what has been called 'reception' in classics.[14]

What I said above about practices of composition, can also be said about language. As languages come into contact with other languages, and as they are both spoken and written, they dynamically change and emerge over time.[15] These shifts in language are also entwined with the performance of new reading. These various dynamics are the life and breath of a tradition that has been resilient and consistent. Innovation does not happen at the cost of continuing existing traditions or texts, but it rather allows them to persist in new ways.

1.2 Beyond Originary Moments

For the purposes of this book, the discussion of vitality is formulated not only around forward-moving developments, but also a critique of scholarship in biblical studies at its nascent stages, in the nineteenth century and beyond, which focuses on a single fetishized, uniform, and retrospective moment for texts and concepts. It is worthwhile asking why is it that scholarship has been so preoccupied with recovering an original or prior text or pretext in the name of history instead of a forward-moving and emerging dynamic of development?

The discipline of biblical studies has privileged early, originary moments or expressions of ancient Israelite religion, as well as the Urtext. This is part of a long history of recovery and reconstruction which is sometimes formulated in theological

[14] The classics framework supports the idea of an original moment: a text is produced and then realized at the moment of reception as a cultural and interpretative product.

[15] Here I am critiquing the arguments for late biblical Hebrew which is said to be artificial and diminished. On the debate about Hebrew as a vital language in late antiquity please see Kutscher's discussion of and critique of Geiger: Edward Yechezkel Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982), p. 117. See also Moshe Bar-Asher, 'Mishnaic Hebrew: An Introductory Survey', *HS* 40 (1999): pp. 115–51. See Harald Samuel on the problematic language of a 'golden age' of Hebrew leading to a concept of subsequent language decay into 'late biblical Hebrew'. This is part of a larger critique that Harald Samuel develops in his forthcoming monograph *Linguistic Dating: Fallstudien zu einer umstrittenen Methode* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025), forthcoming. Special attention is given to the topic in chs 1 and 2 of his book. For an alternative view which I am arguing against, see e.g. Edward M. Cook, 'The Aramaic Influence on Mishnaic Hebrew: Borrowing or Interference?', in *Hebrew Texts and Language of the Second Temple Period*, ed. Steven Fassberg (Leiden: Brill, 2021), pp. 25–6. I acknowledge Hallel Baitner for his suggestions. See also, Geoffrey Khan, Hindy Najman, and Ishay Rosen-Zvi, 'Hebrew Philological Practices from Antiquity to the Middle Ages', *Marginalia Review*, 4 December 2020, https://themarginaliareview.com/hebrew-philological-practices-from-antiquity-to-the-middle-ages/.

terms (e.g. to get at *ipsissima verba*, the very words that God uttered or were part of the original, historical prophet's message). Not only this, but, paradoxically, for related theological reasons, this Urtext is then said to be superseded through early Christianity.[16] I critique these theological presuppositions for reading and thinking about this history of scholarship of ancient Israelite religion as well as scholarship on ancient Judaism.

The problem is not limited to nineteenth-century historicism. For biblical studies and ancient Judaism, these methods for reading and for creating textual editions moved from academic trend to dogma as literary analysis, ultimately becoming caught up in a supersessionist and decidedly pejorative agenda against Judaism. So later forms of biblical thinking, rabbinic interpretation, and law were presented as *Spätjudentum*, as derivative, inauthentic, and bereft of spirit. It is essential to name this explicitly in order to understand why Hellenistic Judaism was undermined as a period of failing or loss of spirit. I am explicitly challenging a narrative of Jewish borrowing from Greek traditions, and instead argue for a more integrated and converged tradition of vitality. Moreover, it is worth noting the way that this kind of thinking has been pervasive even in secularized scholarship, for example in classical traditions, making the need to recognize this vitality all the more necessary.

I also want to point out that Jewish and Christian scholars alike have participated in a nefarious undermining of the vitality of Judaism in the Hellenistic period, even after the findings of the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is not the goal of this book to assign intention to this kind of backwards reading, but rather to offer a corrective which is compelled by textual evidence, as exemplified by the Greek and Hebrew as well as Aramaic materials of this vibrant period.

My alternative is a forward-moving philology which embraces pluriformity of texts and diverse manuscript traditions and textual versions over and against a uniformed archetype which presupposed rupture and replacement as a one-time occurrence. There are continuums of transition in culture, language, and concepts. In each case, new ideas or elements arise that add nuance to or contextualize new existing features. Such continuums are not linear or teleological in their development but demonstrate the constantly shifting vitality which I highlight. This is true for culture, for language, and for concepts.

The term *vitality* is thereby an essential part of this critique of the history of scholarship (both Protestant biblical theology and historicism), and also a proposal that ancient Judaism should be studied as a forward-moving organism.

[16] Schmid, 'The Rise and Fall of the Notion of "*Spätjudentum*"'; Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993); See also a volume that focuses on subsequent developments in the German academia in the 1930s and 1940s. Bernard M. Levinson and Robert P. Ericksen, eds, *The Betrayal of the Humanities: The University during the Third Reich* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022).

I rethink and challenge the inherited assumptions that shaped the reception and articulation of biblical studies in its formation in the nineteenth century. Through various manifestations of creativity and innovation through late antiquity, texts, manuscripts, scrolls,[17] mosaics,[18] prayer,[19] ritual objects,[20] amulets,[21] and magic bowls,[22] this book argues that Judaism has been, throughout its history, alive and dynamic to its past, its future, and its present, and that Hellenistic Judaism is part of that vital history. We cannot draw a singular, one-dimensional line from text to translation, or from the Persian period to the Hellenistic period. The interactions across cultural and chronological lines are complex and interrelated. Texts grow across chronological, cultural, and linguistic borders—between the biblical and the extra-biblical, between the Hebrew and the Greek—and they demonstrate ongoing and resilient recreating of the past in ways that carry the past into the future.

My point regarding the Hellenistic period is not an argument for influence, direct borrowing, or imposition of the Greek culture onto Hebrew culture. Rather,

[17] With a particular emphasis on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

[18] Rina Talgam, *Mosaics of Faith: Floors of Pagans, Jews, Samaritans, Christians, and Muslims in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2014).

[19] Esther G. Chazon, 'Liturgy before and after the Temple's Destruction: Change or Continuity?', in *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple*, ed. Daniel R. Schwartz and Zeev Weiss (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 371–92; Arjen Bakker, 'Early Configurations of Jewish Prayer: Translating Sacrifice in the Second Temple Period', *JSJ* 55, nos. 4–5 (2024), 459–489; Judith H. Newman, 'The Composition of Prayers and Songs in Philo's *De Vita Contemplativa*', in *Empsychoi Logoi—Religious Innovations in Antiquity: Studies in Honour of Pieter Willem van der Horst*, ed. Alberdina Houtman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 457–68; Jutta Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); Menahem Kister, 'Liturgical Formulae in the Light of Fragments from the Judaean Desert' (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 77, nos. 3–4 (2008): pp. 331–55, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23607019; Daniel K. Falk, *Daily, Sabbath, and Festival Prayers in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); idem, 'Liturgical Texts', in *T&T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. George J. Brooke and Charlotte Hempel (London: T&T Clark, 2019), pp. 423–34; Eileen M. Schuller, 'Prayer, Hymnic, and Liturgical Texts from Qumran', in *The Community of the Renewed Covenant: The Notre Dame Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Eugene Ulrich and James C. VanderKam (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), pp. 153–71.

[20] Lawrence H. Schiffman, 'Phylacteries and Mezuzot', in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol. 2, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 675–7; Yonatan Adler, 'Identifying Sectarian Characteristics in the Phylacteries from Qumran', *RevQ* 23, no. 1 (2007): pp. 79–92, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24663023; Yehudah Cohn, 'Reading Material Features of Qumran Tefillin and Mezuzot', in *Material Aspects of Reading in Ancient and Medieval Cultures: Materiality, Presence and Performance*, ed. Anna Krauß et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 89–99.

[21] Rivka Elitzur Leiman and Uzi Leibner, 'An Amulet from Khirbet Wadi Hamam', *IEJ* 66, no. 2 (2016): pp. 220–31, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44474007; Hanan Eshel and Rivka Elitzur Leiman, 'Jewish Amulets Written on Metal Scrolls', *JAJ* 1, no. 2 (2010): pp. 189–99, doi:10.30965/21967954-00102007; Shaul Shaked and Rivka Elitzur Leiman, 'An Aramaic Amulet for Winning a Case in a Court of Law', *JSQ* 26, no. 1 (2019): pp. 1–16, doi:10.1628/jsq-2019-0002.

[22] Avigail Manekin Bamberger, 'Jewish Legal Formulae in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls', *AS* 13, no. 1 (2015): pp. 69–81, doi:10.1163/17455227-01301006; Dorota Molin, 'The Bible in the Aramaic Bowls: Between Memorization, Orality, and Writtenness', *JBL* 142, no. 4 (2023): pp. 609–31, doi:10.15699/jbl.1424.2023.4; eadem, 'Biblical Quotations in the Aramaic Incantation Bowls and Their Contribution to the Study of the Babylonian Reading Tradition', in *Studies in Semitic Vocalisation and Reading Traditions*, ed. Aaron D. Hornkohl and Geoffrey Khan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 147–70.

I prefer to speak of convergences. Moments of convergence between texts allow us to see signs of life, continuity, breath, and memory within new manuscripts of pre-existing texts and in the reception of those texts.

In the Hellenistic period we can already chart the writing and expansion of biblical traditions across linguistic, cultural, and chronological divides. It is also the case that the biblical corpus, from its earliest discernible historical contexts, exhibits vitality through language. These biblical traditions have rich histories. However, this reception goes well beyond the confines of what one might call the canonical. We might broaden our focus to both the biblical and beyond the biblical to understand how we have come to read and transmit the biblical texts.

1.3 Wholeness, Canon, and Composite Complexity

It is important to emphasize that to talk about the Jewish literature composed during the Hellenistic period is to step beyond the canonical. The collection of biblical traditions in the Hellenistic period is not stable, despite repeated references to the Law and the Prophets. Or, in the case of Ben Sira, the Law, the Prophets, and other works.[23] There is a dramatic growth of textual traditions within and beyond the Hebrew Bible.

The period of Hellenism in Jewish antiquity (encompassing parts of the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism, and Rabbinic literature) is thus definitively not to be characterized as a period of lateness, afterthought, or failure. Rather, it should be understood as an innovative and surprising vitalization of ancient Jewish thinking which is integrated and reoriented in the face of Graeco-Roman philosophy and culture. Yet, it does not only generate its vitality from Graeco-Roman culture; rather, as mentioned already, I talk instead of a convergence in thinking through these texts. Instead of lateness, we can speak of younger traditions that are participating in the lifegiving impulses present in subsequent centuries of hermeneutics. This can be expressed in a number of different ways. There are texts that rework earlier biblical narrative as new performance and articulation of a past such as Deuteronomy, 2 Kings, Chronicles, and Jubilees. Others create new liturgies which develop and build on different categories, previous prayer collections, and rituals, including particular texts such as Nehemiah 9 and Daniel 9. Still other texts are legal in character and form, and expand upon earlier Jewish law such as Jubilees, the Rule Texts, and the Temple Scroll.

[23] See the Prologue to Ben Sira verses 1–10 and the discussion of the prologue where mention is made of the Law and the Prophets in Benjamin G. Wright III, 'Why a Prologue? Ben Sira's Grandson and His Greek Translation', in *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov*, ed. Shalom M. Paul et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 633–44.

For this aspect of vitality that pertains to the rewriting of biblical texts, I want to consider the construction of literary wholes that do not necessarily presuppose the canonical whole. The goal is not to reconstruct the development of the text in order to recover the earliest layers. Rather, history and composition provide the focus. Scholarship has suggested that the reader is expected to engage in a practice of exegesis that can overcome the gapping or interruption due to the compositional history of the text.[24] In other words, readers are challenged by the text to make sense of contradiction in a way that forces them to inherit multiple traditions through exegetical strategies that involve making sense of scriptural tradition. To be sure, often inconsistences or other textual problems motivate the performance or reperformance of a text or a story.[25]

I emphasize this complexity in the extant texts as a clear challenge to claims that ambiguity or contradiction in a text or a tradition renders it unreadable or even 'sick'.[26] The goal of unambiguousness and the standards by which we reckon a text coherent or incoherent, readable or unreadable are largely based on our own modern focus. We do not need to assume that these ancient texts shared such goals or aesthetic judgements.[27] This is not only a critique of the anachronistic standards or expectations modern scholars place on ancient texts. Rather, it is essential to recognize that when we critique the tradition of ancient Judaism for being unreadable,[28] we also participate in a long and nefarious tradition of undermining Judaism and Jewish contributions to antiquity. This is part of the larger ambition of *Spätjudentum* and theologies of replacement which took the study of the Old Testament hostage until the twentieth century.

[24] On gapping, see the discussion of Daniel Boyarin in *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 20, 41.

[25] I thank Irene Peirano Garrison for her thoughts on this point. See James J. O'Hara, *Inconsistency in Roman Epic: Studies in Catullus, Lucretius, Vergil, Ovid and Lucan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) for a study of generative inconsistency in Roman poetry. On Alexandrian scholarship, see René Nünlist, 'What Does Ὅμηρον Ἐξ Ὁμήρου Σαφηνίζειν Actually Mean?', *Hermes* 143, no. 4 (2015): pp. 385–403, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43652974.

[26] Konrad Schmid and Hindy Najman, 'Reading the Blood Plague (Exodus 7:14–25): The Hermeneutics of a Composite Text', *JBL* 141, no. 1 (2022): pp. 23–42, https://doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1411.2022.2; Konrad Schmid, 'The Neo-Documentarian Manifesto: A Critical Reading', *JBL* 140, no. 3 (2021): pp. 461–79, doi:10.15699/jbl.1403.2021.2. See also Joel S. Baden, 'Why Is the Pentateuch Unreadable?—Or, Why Are We Doing This Anyway?', in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, ed. Jan Christian Gertz et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), pp. 243–51; Baruch J. Schwartz, 'The Documentary Hypothesis', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Pentateuch*, ed. Joel S. Baden and Jeffrey Stackert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 165–87.

[27] See Thomas Bauer, *Die Vereindeutigung der Welt: Über den Verlust an Mehrdeutigkeit und Vielfalt* (Leipzig: Reclam, 2018). See also Michael A. Lyons, 'Standards of Cohesion and Coherence: Evidence from Early Readers', *HeBAI* 9, no. 2 (2020): pp. 183–208, doi:10.1628/hebai-2020-0011; D. Andrew Teeter and William A. Tooman, 'Standards of (In)coherence in Ancient Jewish Literature', *HeBAI* 9, no. 2 (2020): pp. 94–129, particularly pp. 108–12, doi:10.1628/hebai-2020-0009.

[28] See Schwartz, 'Documentary Hypothesis', p. 178; also Idan Dershowitz, *The Dismembered Bible: Cutting and Pasting Scripture in Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021).

The emphasis on biblical traditions as unreadable or needing to be reconstructed into pretexts does not attend to a complex literary history which is part of reading within and beyond the biblical traditions. Our texts from biblical and Jewish antiquity have embedded compositional histories that are left transparently at the surface for all to see and engage in a variety of ways. No attempt is made on the part of the biblical or extra-biblical authors, editors, or compilers to erase the complexity of composite works.[29] And so, to *read these texts*, even today, is also to participate in the history of the text because one must participate in a practice of exegesis as a way of preserving the inconcinnities, the gaps, and the interruptions in the narrative. In sum, these inconsistencies are part of the artistry of the text and inherent to the compositional practices. The text participates in and is a product of a long and complex history of composition.

To compose in antiquity was to create tradition but also to read existing tradition and engage with it. The ancient writers and readers perhaps knew how these texts came about. If so, they were committed not to producing a seamless linear narrative, but to preserving differences. And hence, we can see pluriformity amongst the textual evidence of both extra-biblical and biblical traditions. Furthermore, within this model for an integrated mode of reading, we can come to better understand the complexity and innovation of texts from this period. The overarching goal is to contribute to understanding the whole of a literary work and thus pave the way to a new hermeneutic for reading biblical narratives.

To acknowledge vitality is to make a forward-moving gesture towards charting the growth and emergence of Scripture and related works that are not canonical today. The hope is to observe and engage the ongoing production and creativity.

[29] Nevertheless, a large amount of midrashic engagement seeks to resolve the very contradictions which are preserved within the texts themselves. So, the final composition generates new reading and complex grappling with internal contradiction. See for example Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, and Ishay Rosen-Zvi, 'The Mishnaic Mental Revolution: A Reassessment', *JJS* 66, no. 1 (2015): pp. 36–58, doi:10.18647/3210/jjs-2015.

2
Problematizing the Search for the Original

How are we to understand the preference for recovering the original form or the earliest text? This chapter raises important questions about this impulse as it asks whether or not moving towards the earliest or the first text is the right direction for reconstruction. My goal, building on the previous chapter, is to understand and to problematize this retrospective trajectory, but not to eradicate it.

It is productive to begin this problematization by considering again the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historicist impulse to reconstruct the earliest point in time. This presupposes that if you get to the earliest point in the history of the composition of a text, then insight and understanding about it is more precise. Precision is then inextricably linked to earliness or first-ness.[1] This can easily be traced onto the way scholars think about the linear development of manuscript traditions, the origin of particular ideas, literary forms, concepts, and even beliefs. It is important to emphasize that this kind of scholarship presupposes that to approach the earliest stage is, in some sense, the highest goal or even redemptive. This is often assumed and not questioned; the direction of scholarship presupposes that the goal is to identify the most original or the earliest manuscript. This work can also go hand in hand with the language of 'pure', 'pristine', or 'first' as a privileged state. After that original point of discovery, the tradition seems less interesting or even corrupt, compromised, or derivative.

The truth, as we must acknowledge, is that we cannot recover the earliest layer. In German biblical scholarship, 'Urtext' does not denote the earliest layer, but rather the alleged final shape before canonization. The work towards reconstructing and positing the original or earliest layer in antiquity is never complete. Despite that, it is still productive to trace the history of the development of ideas

[1] See Anna Kathrin Bleuler and Oliver Primavesi, eds, *Lachmanns Erbe*: *Editionsmethoden in klassischer Philologie und germanistischer Mediävistik* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2022). This book discusses texts as having no archetypes and questions the applicability of Lachmann's method to texts which had no archetype for various cultural reasons (e.g. medieval German lyric, where equally authoritative versions circulated). I acknowledge Tobias Reinhardt for this reference and comment. Here as in other Jewish liturgical settings there is ongoing fluidity and pluriformity within textual traditions. See also Kirsten M. Schäfers, '4QNum^{b} LXX vs. MT SP: Evidence for Non-Linear Processes in the Textual Development of the Book of Numbers from a Neglected Variant Pattern', in *Urtext–Fluidity–Textual Convergence? The Quest for the Texts of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Frédérique Rey, Stefan Schorch, and Sophie Robert (Louvain: Peeters, 2025), forthcoming. In this essay Kirsten Schäfers challenges linear models that seek to reconstruct a single Urtext. As an alternative, she offers a subtle and incisive alternative reconstructing originary moments by appealing to pluriformity in the context of a study of the textual criticism of the book of Numbers.

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and text traditions. But does the impulse to reconstruct as a goal in and of itself generate understanding? Does it provide historical evidence or context? It is unclear whether the earliest point of reference is the most important point for a given tradition.[2] Its dynamic development can be just as relevant to understanding a tradition over time as an expression of that tradition's vitality. This critique must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. But my overarching methodological critique stands. We need to ask: what is the goal of reconstructing pretexts, original texts, or the *first* expression of an idea?

Closely linked to the history of this search for the original is the romantic idealization of a mythical past, an idealization that persists to this very day across disciplines.[3] Here too, the assumptions are idealist and, fundamentally, about recovering ideas from the earliest points of antiquity—and there is even imitation of that idealized past, often without significant critique. Here too the idealization of that past is attractive. This idealization also has fed into trying to recover the original spirit or context for the performance and the composition of a single work. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discussions on the nature of Hebrew poetry are paradigmatic for the aspiration to retrieve originality and form an appropriate starting point for critically evaluating this aspiration while working towards an alternative model for understanding the growth and development of Scriptures.

2.1 Robert Lowth and the Complex Status of Biblical Poetry

There are many examples of idealization or Romanticism that fall into the trap (deliberately or inadvertently) of supersessionism. I want to highlight one such example of this idealization, of a romanticization of biblical Hebrew: the work of Robert Lowth.[4] As the fifth professor of poetry in Oxford from 1741 to 1752, Lowth contributed to the creation of the study of biblical poetry perhaps in an unparalleled manner in the early stages of biblical scholarship—inspiring not only his students and the English-speaking community but also figures such as Johann Gottfried Herder and Moses Mendelssohn in their engagement with the biblical and the ancient Jewish traditions.[5]

[2] See Robert Brody, *Mishnah and Tosefta Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2014). Brody doubts the conclusions of Friedman and Hauptman, not the quest itself.

[3] Friedhelm Hartenstein, 'The Beginnings of YHWH and "Longing for the Origin": A Historico-Hermeneutical Query', in *The Origins of Yahwism*, ed. Jürgen van Oorschot and Markus Witte (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 283–308.

[4] Bishop of Oxford from 1766 to 1777, and later in London where he was appointed a fellow of the Royal Societies. Our focus is on Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, 2 vols, trans. G. Gregory (London: Printed for Ogles, Duncan, and Cochran, 1816). See further John Jarick, ed., *Sacred Conjectures: The Context and Legacy of Robert Lowth and Jean Astruc* (London: T&T Clark, 2007).

[5] Clara Collier, '"Broken, Ardent Brevity": Moses Mendelssohn and the Construction of a Biblical Poetics' (BA dissertation, Yale University, 2018), passim esp. pp. 1, 6, 9–14, 20–3, 26–8, 32, 33; Michah Gottlieb, 'Aesthetics and the Infinite: Moses Mendelssohn on the Poetics of Biblical Prophecy', in *New*

In what follows I examine the complicated contribution of Lowth's work on biblical poetry to the field of biblical studies. Lowth did recognize the aesthetic values of biblical poetry, describing it as sublime, and demonstrated its merits as equal to Greek or Latin literature. Yet in his idealization of earlier biblical poetry, he neglected or even denigrated texts deemed later, thus contributing, albeit unwittingly, to supersessionist narratives and the erasure of the continuing vitality of Scripture.

Lowth brought many non-specialists to biblical texts and renewed an old but much forgotten respect for the biblical. In 1741, he delivered his *Lectures on Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* in Latin, which were later published in 1753, and in 1754 he was awarded a doctorate in Divinity in Oxford for these lectures. To celebrate the Hebrew Bible, Lowth realized that he would need to avoid imposing upon it categories developed in the study of other literatures:

> Each language possesses a peculiar genius and character, on which depend the principles of the versification, and in great measure the style or colour of the poetic diction. In Hebrew the frequent or rather perpetual splendour of the sentences, and the accurate recurrence of the clauses, seem absolutely necessary to distinguish the verse: so that what in any other language would appear a superfluous and tiresome repetition, in this cannot be omitted without injury to the poetry.[6]

In describing the 'peculiar genius and character' of Hebrew poetry, he also inspired a renewed understanding of the *sublime* in Hebrew poetry.[7] The sublime would shortly after also figure in Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, and a neo-Kantian synthesis of the sacred and the sublime re-enters biblical studies in the work of W. M. L. de Wette at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[8]

Directions in Jewish Philosophy, ed. Aaron W. Hughes and Elliot R. Wolfson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 352; Johann Gottfried Herder, *Selected Works, 1764–1767: Early Addresses, Essays, and Drafts; Fragments on Recent German Literature*, ed. Ernest A. Menze and Karl Menges (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991); Maike Oergel, *The Return of King Arthur and the Nibelungen: National Myth in Nineteenth-Century English and German Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1998), pp. 20–30; Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 169–75; Jacqueline Vayntrub, *Beyond Orality: Biblical Poetry on Its Own Terms* (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 45–54; Jordan Skornik, 'Between the Study of Religion and Literary Analysis: Robert Lowth on the Species of Prophetic Poetry', *JR* 99, no. 4 (2019): pp. 492–528, doi:10.1086/704796.

[6] Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 101.

[7] Vayntrub, *Beyond Orality*, pp. 45–54. See the wider intellectual history in Anthony Ossa-Richardson, 'Sublimity as Resistance to Form in the Early Modern Bible', in *The Edinburgh Companion to the Bible and the Arts*, ed. Stephen Prickett (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 69–87.

[8] De Wette was especially influenced by the anthropological post-Kantian Jakob Friedrich Fries. See John W. Rogerson, *W. M. L. de Wette, Founder of Modern Biblical Criticism: An Intellectual Biography* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992). See also, James Rasmussen, 'Language and the Most Sublime in Kant's Third Critique', *JAAC* 68, no. 2 (2010): pp. 155–66, doi10.1111/j.1540-6245.2010.01400.x.

In the eighteenth century, Lowth felt constrained to apologize for subjecting divinely inspired Scripture to the same sort of literary analysis that his contemporary scholars of Greek and Latin literature regularly applied to their texts. 'But how dare one compare these to Scripture?' he asked. And his answer was to turn this potential criticism to a fortiori (*qal vahomer*): if we already lavish our attention on the classics, should we not all the more so seek to lavish the same sort of attention on texts 'which boast a much higher origin, and are justly attributed to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit'?[9] Lowth continues:

> It would not be easy, indeed, to assign a reason, why the writings of Homer, of Pindar, and of Horace, should engross our attention and monopolize our praise, while those of Moses, of David and Isaiah pass totally unregarded. Shall we suppose that the subject is not adapted to a seminary in which sacred literature has ever maintained a precedence? Shall we say, that it is foreign to this assembly of promising youth, of whom the greater part have consecrated the best portion of their time and labour to the same department of learning? Or must we conclude, that the writings of those men who have accomplished only as much as human genius and ability could accomplish, should be reduced to method and theory; but that those which boast a much higher origin, and are justly attributed to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, may be considered as indeed illustrious by their native force and beauty, but not as conformable to the principles of science, nor to be circumscribed by any rules of art?[10]

Standing at the intersection of the sacred and the poetic is the idea of the sublime:[11]

> The word Sublimity I wish, in this place, to be understood in its most extensive sense: I speak not merely of that sublimity which exhibits great objects with a magnificent display of imagery and diction; but that force of composition, whatever it be, which strikes and overpowers the mind, which excites the passions, and which expresses ideas at once with perspicuity and elevation; not solicitous whether the language be plain or ornamented, refined or familiar: in this use of the word I copy Longinus, the most accomplished author on this subject, whether we consider his precepts or his example.

On Fries and anthropological post-Kantianism, see Paul Franks, 'Serpentine Naturalism and Protean Nihilism: Transcendental Philosophy in Anthropological Post-Kantianism, German Idealism, and Neo-Kantianism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Continental Philosophy*, ed. Michael Rosen and Brian Leiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 243–86.

[9] Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 44. There is a clear tension between aesthetics and poetics. In terms of lyric, Horace is especially problematic because his lyrics are full of sex and drinking (conversation with Irene Peirano Garrison).

[10] Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 44.

[11] James I. Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

> The sublime consists either in language or sentiment, or more frequently in a union of both, since they reciprocally assist each other, and since there is a necessary and indissoluble connexion between them: this, however, will not prevent our considering them apart with convenience and advantage.[12]

The union of language and sentiment is for Lowth the epitome of what poetry can achieve: a mystical connection between the heavens and the earth in a perfected imitation of divineness through language. It is the closest that language can get to perfection. Hebrew poetry is sublime insofar as it imitates the natural passions. Poetic *imitatio Dei* is impossible for Lowth, and that impossibility is precisely what creates an encounter with the sublime.[13] Here Lowth invokes pseudo-Longinus, from the first century CE. Longinus gives Genesis 1:3 as an example of the sublime.[14] Unlike Longinus, he links the unique details of biblical poetry in liturgical, wisdom, and prophetic collections to this foundational idea. Lowth writes:

> The greatness of the subject may be justly estimated by its difficulty; and while the imagination labours to comprehend what is beyond its powers, this very labour itself, and these ineffectual endeavours, sufficiently demonstrate the immensity and sublimity of the object. On this account the following passage is truly sublime. Here the mind seems to exert its utmost faculties in vain to grasp an object, whose unparalleled magnitude mocks its feeble endeavours; and to this end it employs the grandest imagery that universal nature can suggest, and yet this imagery, however great, proves totality inadequate to the purpose:
>
> 'O JEHOVAH, thy mercy extendeth to the heavens; Thy truth unto the clouds: Thy justice is as the mountains of strength; Thy judgment as the vast abyss!' (Psalm 36:6–7)[15]

Lowth celebrates the brevity and the elegance of the Hebrew literature, but he also engages in comparisons and ranks the quality of the poetic form. Ezekiel, for example, according to Lowth, is profound and horrific but not as elegant as Jeremiah:

> Ezekiel is much inferior to Jeremiah in elegance; in sublimity he is not even excelled by Isaiah: but his sublimity is of a totally different kind. He is deep, vehement, tragical; the only sensation he affects to excite is the terrible: his sentiments are elevated, fervid, full of fire, indignant; his imagery is crowded, magnificent,

[12] Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 307–8.
[13] Sanford Budick, *Kant and Milton* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 71–3.
[14] This is particularly interesting because Longinus is one of the few Greek authors who cites both Latin authors and Genesis (conversation with Irene Peirano Garrison).
[15] Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 353–4.

> terrific, sometimes almost to disgust; his language is pompous, solemn, austere, rough, and at times unpolished: he employs frequent repetitions, not for the sake of grace or elegance, but from the vehemence of passion and indignation.[16]

By invoking Longinus, who exalted the power of *sublimitas*, Lowth apologized for biblical poetry's blatant appeal to the emotions—saying things that were not factual ('O JEHOVAH, thy mercy extendeth to the heavens; Thy truth unto the clouds: Thy justice is as the mountains of strength' etc.)—while at the same time protecting his flank by saying Ezekiel goes too far and Jeremiah is much better.

Lowth engages prophetic texts as *poetic* texts,[17] and in so doing redefines prophecy in terms that make it seem like something an English poet could produce, until prophecy could become, in the nascent Romanticism that was just around the corner, that which would enable England's divine poets to build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land.[18] He crosses boundaries of collections or tendencies across the biblical corpus in his assessment of the poetic workings.[19] And so, here in his discussion of Ezekiel, he offers a particular account of the function of repetition in Ezekiel's prophecy. It is not the repetition of parallelism that has particular poetic effect, but rather what he calls the 'vehemence of passion and indignation',[20] which is characteristic of Ezekiel's terrific disgust. Here we see the depth and complexity of Lowth's engagement with the torment and complexity of Ezekiel.

We remember Lowth's legacy, especially as professor of poetry, *not* as professor of Jewish studies or the Hebrew Bible. His academic journey was one involving poetry and literature—with his earlier work on Horace, as well as his influential work on English grammar and Shakespeare. Lowth examined and explored the philosophical underpinnings of poetic discourse of the Hebrew language. In lecture two, on the *Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, Lowth writes:

> Since, then, it is the purpose of sacred Poetry to form the human mind to the constant habit of true virtue and piety, and to excite the more ardent affections

[16] Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 89–94.

[17] This is discussed in Skornik, 'Between the Study of Religion and Literary Analysis'.

[18] On Lowth's influence on Romanticism, particularly through the lens of Orientalism, see Stephen Prickett, 'Robert Lowth's Biblical Poetics and Romantic Theory', in *Interpreting Scriptures in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Overlapping Inquiries*, ed. Mordechai Z. Cohen and Adele Berlin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 309–11, 315–16, 319–25.

[19] See James L. Kugel's concluding assessment in *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981; repr., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 286: 'Lowth's argument, as we have seen, was aimed largely at the Prophets; he wished to suggest that prophecy is a kind of "Divine Poesy." Revolutionary enough: but he could not confine poesy to the books he named precisely because "parallelism" was not an either/or matter; and so "biblical poetry" has spilled over from the poetical Isaiah and the semi-poetical Jeremiah to other books with their histories, genealogies, blessings, curses, speeches, and so on. In this way, more than any other, Robert Lowth changed the way we read the Bible'.

[20] It is worth noting that this language of sublime, lofty, or high emotions is very much taken from Longinus.

> of the soul, in order to direct them to their proper end; whoever has a clear insight into the instruments, the machinery as it were, by which this end is effected, will certainly contribute not a little to the improvement of the critical art. Now, although it be scarcely possible to penetrate to the fountains of this celestial Nile, yet it may surely be allowed us to pursue the meanders of the stream, to mark the flux and reflux of its waters, and even to conduct a few rivulets into the adjacent plains.[21]

This formulation reminds us not just of the rivulets and life that wisdom is said to generate in texts such as Ben Sira 24 and 4 Ezra chapter 14, but also of the genealogies and dynamic trajectories of textual traditions as exemplified by Horace in the coupling of *delectare* and *prodesse*.[22] Lowth demonstrates the importance of the formation of the subject, and of the interpretative communities that shape living cultures.

Although most biblicists know of Lowth as the theoretician of Hebrew parallelism,[23] he came to Hebrew as a brilliant generalist in poetics and considered Latin models—in particular Horace—as paradigms.[24] His measured, evaluative assessment of biblical poetry was always and already against the background of Greek but especially Latin poetry. His thinking engaged a plurality of canons. Lowth writes: 'Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, as far as relates to style, may be said to hold the same rank among the Hebrews, as Homer, Simonides, and Aeschylus, among the Greeks.'[25]

There is an evident tension here between the comparative perspective and the appreciation of unique cultural contributions. In short, the very thing for which James Kugel importantly criticized Lowth, namely the anachronistic imposition of metre and the Greek and Latin tradition onto biblical Hebrew, can also be said to be the very reason to appreciate Lowth's *Lectures*. Lowth placed ancient Hebrew

[21] Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 45–6.

[22] See Horace's *Ars poetica* l.333. I thank Tobias Reinhart for this reference and insight. See also Friedrich Nietzche's Inaugural Address: 'Homer and Classical Philology (Inaugural Address Delivered at Bâle University, 28th of May 1869)', in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, vol. 3, ed. Oscar Levy and trans. J. M. Kennedy (Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1910), pp. 145–70.

[23] Anna Cullhead, 'Original Poetry: Robert Lowth and Eighteenth-Century Poetics', in *Sacred Conjectures: The Context and Legacy of Robert Lowth and Jean Astruc*, ed. John Jarick (London: T&T Clark, 2007), pp. 25–47; Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, pp. 12–15, 57, 204. See also the work of Wilfred G. E. Watson on Hebrew poetics as an heir to Lowth: 'The Study of Hebrew Poetry Past—Present—Future', in *Sacred Conjectures: The Context and Legacy of Robert Lowth and Jean Astruc*, ed. John Jarick (London: T&T Clark, 2007), pp. 124–5, 128, 131.

[24] Christoph Bultmann, 'After Horace: Sacred Poetry at the Centre of the Hebrew Bible', in *Sacred Conjectures: The Context and Legacy of Robert Lowth and Jean Astruc*, ed. John Jarick (London: T&T Clark, 2007), pp. 62–82.

[25] Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 95. Lowth could be thinking about parallel stylistic histories of Greek and Latin literature such as Quintilian 10.1.

and ancient Greek and Latin literatures in conversation. Now the task is to continue this conversation without imposition, as Kugel writes:

> In order to relieve himself of the mental discomfort of something that was only inconsistently consistent—sometimes parallelism was regular in binary line after line, sometimes only an emphatic turn ending most lines, sometimes less than that—he treated it as evidence of a neat but irretrievable system such as Hebrew metre. Like a sheet thrown over a reportedly beautiful statue, parallelism's bulging and bunching now took on a most enticing allure: however irregular and ungainly an artifice it might seem on its own, did not its very irregularities now turn seductive in the suggestion of an infinitely rich and detailed harmony underneath?[26]

For Lowth, this is not about convergence of tradition or even about influence; rather it is a kind of comparative work to heighten the respect and status of ancient Hebrew in the academy. The approach is both apologetic and also genuinely an intellectual enterprise. There is no interdisciplinary work without the continuation of disciplines. Philology is a shared enterprise of the Latinist and the biblicist, the Sanskritist, and the Arabist for Lowth.

2.2 Biblical Poetry and Jewish Thought

In the Renaissance, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew were a trio of equals—the three languages of the Cross, which the Bible (John 19:20) presented side by side (thus providing a scriptural warrant for what came to be called trilingual education). By contrast, Lowth ranks Hebrew higher than the other two by dint of its origin, the Holy Spirit. Herder would quite consciously abandon this theological claim in favour of Hebrew's antiquity: Hebrew represents the untrammelled, vigorous youth of poetry, before poetry gradually succumbed to the rules of metre and rhyme. But Lowth's invocation of the Holy Spirit is complex, and not abstractly theological. In addition to extensive comparative discourses with the ancient

[26] Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, p. 286. Kugel describes the legacy of Lowth's imposition of metre: 'As a result, a sick symbiosis has grown from it. Some have continued in his belief that Hebrew poetry is metrical. At the same time, even those who reject this path have not been led to question the idea of biblical poetry, for Lowth's discovery has become, in their eyes, a substitute for meter.' Ibid., p. 75. See also the excellent monograph of Emmylou J. Grosser, *Unparalleled Poetry: A Cognitive Approach to the Free-Rhythm Verse of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023). I read this monograph only as my book reached completion. I nevertheless wanted to acknowledge this excellent book and Grosser's contribution to problematizing parallelism and also presenting a developed and sophisticated alternative through cognitive linguistics. I intend to engage Grosser more deeply in future publications.

Latin and Greek traditions, Lowth also drew on both rabbinic and patristic discussions of biblical poetry. He employed, praised, and critiqued both Christians and Jews in their characterization, analysis, and celebration of biblical poetry. For example, he criticized an overlooking of the beauty of Hebrew poetry in the work of Jerome:

> Indeed [Jerome's] reasoning evidently proceeds from a confused head, when he attempts to trace a sort of remote similarity between the Greek and Hebrew metres; and to explain by some coarse analogies a subject, which he appears to have very imperfectly understood: in treating of which, after all, he is not able to preserve even the appearance of consistency. For instance, after Josephus and Origen, he contends, that the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy is composed in Hexameter and Pentameter verse; in another place, however, he affirms that the very same poem consists of Iambic Tetrameters.[27]

Similarly, Lowth offers criticism of medieval Jewish authorities:[28]

> Abarbanel distinguishes three species of Canticles. The first is the *rhythmical*, or that with similar endings; in use among the more modern Hebrews (who learned it from the Arabic writers), but which was certainly unknown to the authors of the Holy Scriptures. The second was adapted to music, and sung either alone or accompanied with instruments: such are the songs of Moses, of Deborah, of David. The third species consists of parables, or proverbs; which species, says he (though by the way absurdly enough, as is not uncommon with the Rabbinical writers), is properly denominated *Shir*. From this class, however, he excludes the parables of the prophets, according to the distinction of Maimonides between prophecy and the Holy Spirit. (See *More Neboc*. ii. 45.)[29] He says they are not Canticles, because they are not the work of the prophet himself, but the mere effect of the prophetic inspiration. *Mantissa Dissert. ad Libr*. Cosri, p. 413.[30]

[27] Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 9.

[28] Lowth is referring to Isaac ben Judah Abarbanel (1437–1508), who, building on Judah ha-Levi's rejection of the idea of biblical metre, distinguishes between three kinds of poetry in his commentaries on Exodus 15 and Isaiah 5, arguing that biblical songs—belonging to the second kind—are so called, not because they have metre or rhyme, but because they are sung. See Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, p. 193. Lowth cites the Latin translation of Johannes Buxtorf the Younger, *Liber Cosri Continens Colloquium seu Disputationem de Religione* (Basel: Georg Decker, 1660), which includes extracts from Abarbanel's Hebrew commentaries pertinent to ha-Levi's *Kuzari*, written in Arabic in the twelfth century CE. For the holy spirit as a low level of prophetic inspiration, see Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), Part II, ch. 45.

[29] Reference to a larger passage from Maimonides. See *The Guide of the Perplexed*.

[30] Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 5, n. 1, citing Isaac Abarbanel's commentary on Exodus 15, from an extract translated by Johannes Buxtorf in the appendix to his translation of Judah ha-Levi's *Kuzari*.

The existence of 'three kinds of poetry' was widely known in medieval Jewish sources, though the three kinds kept changing. As Kugel discussed in *Idea of Biblical Poetry*, it all started as a misunderstanding of Aristotle's *Poetics*.[31] Lowth's critique of later Hebrew, however, fed the streams of supersessionism and antisemitism in later generations of scholars and society more generally.[32] In particular, his idealization of earlier pre-exilic texts in contrast to later texts was to emerge as a trope of Romanticism,[33] especially in the work of scholars who sought to undermine what they called *Spätjudentum*—'late Judaism'—taken to be a spiritless road leading away from original genius. Lowth writes:

> The Jews, by their own confession, are no longer, nor have been indeed for many ages, masters of the system of the ancient metre. All remembrance of it has ceased from those times in which the Hebrew became a dead language; and it really seems probable, that the Masoretes (of whom so little is known) who afterwards distinguished the sacred volumes by accents and vowel points, as they are now extant, were possessed of so trifling and imperfect a knowledge of this subject, that they were even incapable of distinguishing what was written in metre from plain prose.[34]

A corollary is the supposed decline of Hebrew:[35]

> The last of the prophetical books, that of Malachi, is written in a kind of middle style, which seems to indicate that the Hebrew poetry, from the time of the Babylonish captivity, was in a declining state, and being past its prime and vigour, was then fast verging towards the debility of age.[36]

[31] Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, p. 193, n. 48 and p. 196, n. 54.

[32] On Lowth's engagement with varied traditions: Stephen Prickett, 'Robert Lowth and the Idea of Biblical Tradition', in *Sacred Conjectures: The Context and Legacy of Robert Lowth and Jean Astruc*, ed. John Jarick (London: T&T Clark, 2007), pp. 51–2, 55.

[33] A similar kind of ambivalence is found in Herder, who was critical of European imperialism. But subsequent philology often gave way to racialized hierarchies, notably in the work of Ernest Renan. See Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion and Philology in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). Cf. Mark G. Brett, *Biblical Criticism in Crisis? The Impact of the Canonical Approach on Old Testament Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 88–109; Yehezkel Kaufmann, *Toledot HaEmunah HaYisraelit*, vol. 3 (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1957), pp. 5–15, 257–64.

[34] Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 6.

[35] In a private conversation, Irene Peirano Garrison pointed out that Lowth is using theories of decline like those found in Johann Joachim Winckelmann, for example. Not only is Lowth framing Hebrew as analogous to Greek and Latin but now applying the same models of growth instead as a decline. See also the critique of scholarship in chapter 1 above that criticizes the scholarly claim concerning the decline of Hebrew in the late biblical Hebrew corpus.

[36] Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry*, vol. 2, p. 100.

While some of Lowth's characterization of the failure of later Hebrew writers did not necessarily map onto an anti-Jewish bias, it would nevertheless resonate with later writers such as Michaelis and others who would indeed read texts in ways that were shaped by an anti-Judaism that had not only academic, but also political repercussions.[37] My claim is not that Lowth was participating in this violent political history of supersessionism, but rather, that he contributed to the idealization of an originary moment in textual production and poetic genius. The privileging of that moment, under certain conditions, can be understood to reject the validity and vitality of later forms of Judaism. The idealization of earlier periods, in Lowth's eyes, is evident not just in the poetic prophetic genius but also in the patriarchal blessings:

> The inspired benedictions of the patriarchs Isaac and Jacob are altogether of the same kind: and the great importance of these prophecies, not only to the destiny of the people of Israel, but to that of the whole human race, renders it highly probable that they were extant in this form before the time of Moses; and that they were afterwards committed to writing by the inspired historian, exactly as he had received them from his ancestors, without presuming to bestow on these sacred oracles any adventitious ornaments or poetical colouring.[38]

As I mentioned already, Herder and Mendelssohn would be touched by Lowth's idealization of biblical poetry and prophecy as sublime, full of beauty with a distinctive, even originary dimension.[39] But this Romantic road could also lead to the racialized philology of Ernest Renan.[40]

Biblical scholars tend to focus on the fact that Lowth articulated aspects of parallelism, but his legacy is far more extensive and relevant, but also problematic. He tried to achieve a kind of reciprocal recognition—across bodies of literature—of forms of beauty that emerge from an ancient 'other' but also prove illuminating for ongoing communities of scholarly interpretation. Maintaining the tension is crucial. He engaged with biblical literature, not in the service of interdisciplinarity, religion, or apology, but rather because he believed it essential both to learn *from* biblical texts and to *integrate* biblical poetry into a larger discourse across Latin and Greek texts in the Western tradition. While there are many precedents, e.g. in the medieval period, of liturgical poets and grammarians, Lowth was the first to do this as a neo-classicist and as a professor of poetry. He was prepared to learn from

[37] Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, The Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993).
[38] Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 94.
[39] Collier, 'Broken, Ardent Brevity', pp. 1, 6, 9–14, 20–3, 26–8, 32, 33.
[40] Olender, *The Languages of Paradise*, pp. 51–81. See also Guy Stroumsa on Joseph Ernest Renan: *The Idea of Semitic Monotheism: The Rise and Fall of a Scholarly Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

the other—be it Jewish, Graeco-Roman, or Christian, philosophical or poetic—in a self-critical manner.

That the reception of Lowth's work moved quickly into Romanticism—which itself took a national turn in the nineteenth century—is not something that Lowth himself could have anticipated. But it is incumbent on subsequent generations of scholars (linguists, historians, biblicists) to understand those later developments, for better and for worse. As Nietzsche rightly foreshadowed, any of the current divergences in the study of linguistics, poetry, philosophy, and cultural histories should be understood only as a matter of professional convenience—a convenience whose time has run out. Biblical studies requires critical reflection on the past and also new, as yet untaken pathways.

2.3 Traditionary Processes and the Growth of Biblical Tradition

The idealization of the earlier language, texts, and concepts in the Hebrew Bible, as illustrated in Lowth's writings above, is part of the protestantization of the disciplines of biblical studies and classics. After marking the impulse to reconstruct the earliest traditions, and the romantic idealization of that originary moment, the desire to reconstruct the original or first Scripture as a way of accessing the divine word has had an unparalleled impact on the history of the field of biblical studies. Thus, the search for, or reification of, the earliest or the original is part of a problematic impulse to recover the *ipsissima verba*, the original words, in contrast to a received and dynamic tradition that is ever growing in the hands of its tradents. So much so that later traditions have been disparaged. This disparagement and derogatory characterization of the later biblical periods have taken hold of the field in ways that have been the result of a mischaracterized collection of intertestamental texts (a term which is both historically incorrect and anachronistic as these texts are produced prior to the formation of the testaments—new and old—as they come to be known as part of canon). However, I am not uninterested in the past or what I have elsewhere called the retrospective.[41]

In their eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and even twentieth-century applications (and to be clear, ongoing applications in the twenty-first century without a doubt), techniques of textual philology were employed based on an assumption that many scholars have more recently repudiated, if not explicitly then implicitly. The assumption is that both fragmentation and redaction are processes of distortion, and that the goal of textual philology is to restore texts to their original wholeness. Thus, decomposition was employed to reconstruct the original and whole sources, in which the meanings of biblical traditions would be most clearly displayed.

[41] Hindy Najman, 'Ethical Reading: The Transformation of the Text and the Self', *JTS* 68, no. 2 (2017): pp. 516–17 and p. 524 doi:10.1093/jts/flx152.

Similarly, recomposition was supposed to restore the originary whole and thus the authentic meaning of texts that have been received only as fragmentary in either an epigraphic or semantic sense.

Now, these two aspects of textual philology—decomposition and recomposition—are of unquestionable value. Nothing is intended to question their worth. They are essential tools in the study of the historicity of texts, and they have properly become indispensable for biblical studies. However, it is not necessary to assume that textual meaning is authentically displayed only in originary wholeness, and neither operation depends on this assumption. I will not enter here into the religious and philosophical reasons why this assumption has seemed compelling to many.[42] My purpose is instead to indicate new ways in which textual philology in general, and biblical studies in particular, can operate—and have already begun to operate—without this assumption, to focus on the ongoing vitality and transformation of textual traditions.

These new versions of textual philology are not entirely new. They may be seen as renewals of the insights of some important nineteenth-century figures, who laid out paths not taken by philology—not taken, that is, until recently. The first such figure to mention is Friedrich Nietzsche, whose inaugural lecture at the University of Basel in 1869 questioned the search in textual philology for the origin.[43] Nietzsche focused his attention on tendencies in Homeric scholarship established by Friedrich August Wolf. However, Wolf's work was meant to do for the Homeric corpus what Johann Gottfried Eichhorn began to do for the Hebrew Bible. What Nietzsche said is therefore just as relevant to biblical studies as to classics. In addition to Nietzsche, I will also discuss the contributions of Friedrich Schlegel, especially in Chapter 4. They are certainly not figures often regarded as methodological pioneers by philologists. But perhaps they should be.

There are three aspects of the quest for originary wholes. The first is that, since it is the original search, the philological gaze should always be retrospective, tracing texts and traditions to their sources. The second is that fragments should always be restored to wholeness. And the third is that the philological endeavour is to be understood entirely as *Wissenschaft*: as objective science that pursues the truth of its object.

[42] For discussions of the religious and philosophical reasons for hyper-validating the original as the source of meaning, see Simon Goldhill, 'Ad fontes', in *Time Travelers: Victorian Encounters with Time and History*, ed. Adelene Buckland and Sadiah Qureshi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 67–85; and idem, *Who Needs Greek? Contests in the Cultural History of Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[43] Nietzsche, 'Homer and Classical Philology'. See also James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Paul Franks, 'Desdemona's Lie: Nihilism, Historicism, Perfectionism', *JNS* 44, no. 2 (2013): pp. 224–45, doi:10.5325/jnietstud.44.2.0225; Christian Benne and Carlotta Santini, 'Nietzsche und die Philologie', in *Handbuch Nietzsche und die Wissenschaften: Natur-, geistes- und sozialwissenschaftliche Kontexte*, ed. Helmut Heit and Lisa Heller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), pp. 173–200.

First, the retrospective and the prospective aspects entail wholes presumably composed by, or at some point attributed to, some idealized exemplar (Moses or Homer). Decomposition of the received whole into its sources would ideally be followed by recomposition in the sense of reinsertion into a linguistic and cultural context. The quest was for the original texts and their original authors. Like Eichhorn, however, Wolf acknowledged that this ideal was in practice unattainable. The most one could hope for was what came to be known, thanks to the work of Jakob Bernays and Karl Lachmann, as the reconstruction of the *archetype*, the exemplar from which received copies had been derived. Nevertheless, the questionable assumption remained in place. Every variation that emerged after the exemplar was regarded as an error or as a corruption.[44]

In my view, we should stop thinking exclusively in terms of compositional and redactional processes that culminate in the production of fixed texts. Instead, we should think in terms of what I call traditionary processes that encompass both textual formation and textual interpretation, as well as a variety of text-involving practices, individual and communal. From these traditionary processes, texts with less fixity sometimes precipitate out, just as, in chemistry, separable solids sometimes form within a medium that remains liquid. Once we think in terms of traditionary processes, we are free to understand them either backwards or forwards. We may take a retrospective approach, seeking to reconstruct an archetypal text or family of texts, and this is a very valuable pursuit. Alternatively, we may take a prospective approach, studying the interpretative, religious, and cultural developments that precede, succeed, and intervene in the formation of texts.[45]

If we take a prospective approach, we will not see textual variation and proliferation as error and corruption. We will see them instead as signs of

[44] On the history of classics and methods in textual criticism see Irene Peirano Garrison, *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), esp. pp. 241–63; Richard Tarrant, *Texts, Editors, and Readers: Methods and Problems in Latin Textual Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Richard Hunter and S. P. Oakley, eds, *Latin Literature and Its Transmission: Papers in Honor of Michael Reeve* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Michael Reeve, '*Cuius in Usum*? Recent and Future Editing', *JRS* 90 (2000): pp. 196–206, doi:10.2307/300207; Roy K. Gibson and Christina Shuttleworth Kraus, eds, *The Classical Commentary: Histories, Practices, Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Christina Shuttleworth Kraus and Christopher Stray, eds, *Classical Commentaries: Explorations in a Scholarly Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Sean Alexander Gurd, *Iphigenias at Aulis: Textual Multiplicity, Radical Philology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[45] See further discussions in some of my publications: 'Configuring the Text in Biblical Studies', in *A Teacher for All Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. VanderKam*, vol. 1, ed. Eric F. Mason et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 3–22; 'The Vitality of Scripture within and beyond the "Canon"', *JSJ* 43, nos. 4–5 (2012): pp. 497–518, doi:10.1163/15700631-12341237; *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003). For a collection of essays on the idea of reconstructing the physical remains of antiquity and the role that readings of Pausanias have played in the formation of art history in Graeco-Roman antiquity, see Jaś Elsner, ed., 'Receptions of Pausanias: From Winckelmann to Frazer', a special issue in *CRJ* 2, no. 2 (2010). Here is an example of how art history and its textual interaction can be achieved. See also Emily Greenwood, 'Afterword: Omni-Local Classical Receptions', *CRJ* 5, no. 3 (2013): pp. 354–61, doi:10.1093/crj/clt025.

life—as manifestations of the vitality of the traditions that we are studying. Nor is this second-best to an ideal recovery of the original. The recovery of archetypes is a valuable part of the study of the history of traditions. But so is the investigation of the vitality of traditions, of their growth and transformation and reception.

For example, it has long been noted by biblical scholars that traditions ascribed to or associated with prophetic or authoritative figures can be seen to develop and undergo transformation over many centuries. We see this within the Hebrew Bible as the deuteronomic Moses recapitulates but also transforms earlier Pentateuchal traditions; in addition to Isaiah, scholars have discerned Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah. But we also know now that these transformations continued during the Hellenistic period and through the medieval period.[46] Here it is worth noting that one can see this through Ben Sira, Josephus, Philo, Wisdom of Solomon, or Ezekiel the Tragedian. Equally, one can see this now through the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Ultimately, I am suggesting a reorientation is needed to understand how dynamic growth is part of how the traditions emerged and crystallized.

Nor do I think that these traditions have ever stopped. Even at a later point, when we may legitimately speak of canonical closure and textual fixity, textual traditions did not calcify. We can see their continuing growth in the New Testament, in targumim, in midrashim, and in other records of reading practices. This has continued through the various expressions of medieval biblical manuscripts. Oral traditions of vocalization and cantillation also are part of that dynamic tradition of ongoing change and performance. This has been demonstrated by many scholars working on these traditions. In particular, I have in mind the incisive and defining work of Geoffrey Khan on these later medieval manuscripts. Khan has demonstrated ongoing variation and distinctiveness across manuscript traditions. To

[46] Israel M. Ta-Shma, 'The "Open" Book in Medieval Hebrew Literature: The Problem of Authorized Editions', *BJRL* 75, no. 3 (1993): pp. 17–24, doi:10.7227/BJRL.75.3.2; Stefan C. Reif, 'The Cairo Genizah and Its Treasures, with Special Reference to Biblical Studies', in *The Aramaic Bible: Targums in Their Historical Context*, ed. D. R. G. Beattie and M. J. McNamara (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), pp. 30–50; Ra'anan S. Boustan, 'The Study of Heikhalot Literature: Between Mystical Experience and Textual Artifact', *CurBR* 6, no. 1 (2007): pp. 130–60, doi:10.1177/1476993X07080244; Ben M. Outhwaite and Siam Bhayro, eds, *'From a Sacred Source': Genizah Studies in Honor of Professor Stefan C. Reif* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Robert Brody, 'Canon: An Elusive Concept' (Hebrew), in *Uncovering the Canon: Studies in Canonicity and Genizah*, ed. Menahem Ben-Sasson et al. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2010), pp. 11–23. On Ben Sira see M. H. Segal, 'The Evolution of the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira', *JQR* 25, no. 2 (1934): pp. 91–149, doi:10.2307/1451708; Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 86–113; James K. Aitken, 'Ben Sira's Table Manners and the Social Setting of His Book', in *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Jarick (London: T&T Clark, 2015), pp. 418–38; idem, 'Biblical Interpretation as Political Manifesto: The Seleucid Setting of the Wisdom of Ben Sira', *JJS* 51, no. 2 (2000): pp. 191–208, doi:10.18647/2273/JJS-2000; Benjamin G. Wright III, 'The Persian Glosses and the Text of Manuscript B Revisited', in *Discovering, Deciphering and Dissenting: Ben Sira Manuscripts after 120 Years*, ed. James Aitken, Renate Egger-Wenzel, and Stefan C. Reif, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2018 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), pp. 125–45; idem, 'A Character in Search of a Story: The Figure of Ben Sira in Medieval Judaism', in *Wisdom Poured Out Like Water: Studies on Jewish and Christian Antiquity in Honor of Gabriele Boccaccini*, ed. J. Harold Ellens et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), pp. 378–96.

be sure, as Khan and I demonstrated in our joint article, these variations are not without fixity and may not look the same as the fluidity we see in the Hellenistic period, but they nonetheless are present and striking.[47] Indeed, these ongoing variations are precisely the life and breath of Judaism as represented in manuscript traditions but also in the context of performed texts. These performances are in between the written and the oral and participate in both. The error that scholars have made, to assume that with canonization textual fluidity ceases, has definitively been proven wrong by Khan and many others.[48]

We focus, then, on forward-moving emergence of textual traditions in a pluriform environment. Thus, this turn towards vitality is part of a larger commitment to rethink the direction of textual work for the study of Jewish literature and culture from the ancient and medieval worlds. In place of a retrospective orientation towards the original or archetypal, I am proposing a forward-moving or progressive philology, considering, in particular, the convergence between Hebrew and Greek.

'Progressive' is another useful way of capturing the proposal for the reading that I want to propose as being vital and dynamic. This use of progressive does not assume 'progress' in the sense of teleological or linear forward movement. The approach enables readers to consider the history of the document and, at the same time, to make sense of what it is *to read* the whole of a composite text. It is not a straightforward matter to read a text with a complex history of compositional layers. To be sure, scholars may acknowledge that all texts have histories so that even the most ancient readings reflect histories of editing, deletions, refinements, and accretions. But a text such as Exodus also preserves competing as well as parallel narratives that are embedded as part of a whole, or what one might call a *textual unity*.[49] Indeed, one must acknowledge the complexity of the text, but nevertheless, it is important to note that the ancient biblical texts are readable not only through an uncritical lens, but also through hyper-critical lenses. That is to say, to perceive an assembled whole, one can nevertheless attend to the interpretative traditions that make up the whole. Moreover, critical reading can be

[47] Geoffrey Khan and Hindy Najman, 'Performance in Ancient and Medieval Judaism', *DSD* 29, no. 3 (2022), pp. 259–91, doi:10.1163/15685179-02903004.

[48] Geoffrey Khan, 'Orthoepy in the Tiberian Reading Tradition of the Hebrew Bible and its Historical Roots in the Second Temple Period', *VT* 68, no. 3 (2018): pp. 1–24, doi:10.1163/15685330-12341327; idem, 'Some Features of the Imperfect Oral Performance of the Tiberian Reading Tradition of Biblical Hebrew in the Middle Ages', in *Studies in Semitic Vocalisation and Reading Traditions*, ed. Aaron D. Hornkohl and Geoffrey Khan (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2020), pp. 549–92; idem, 'The Role of the Karaites in the Transmission of the Hebrew Bible and Their Practice of Transcribing It into Arabic Script', *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 8, nos. 2–3 (2020): pp. 233–64, doi:10.1163/2212943X-20201013; idem, *The Tiberian Pronunciation Tradition of Biblical Hebrew: Including a Critical Edition and English Translation of the Sections on Consonants and Vowels in the Masoretic Treatise Hidāyat al-Qāri' 'Guide for the Reader'*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2020).

[49] Najman and Schmid, 'Reading the Blood Plague'.

generative for narrative and for meaning without having to ignore the complexity of the very history and contradiction that it identifies. The books of the Pentateuch may not only be rendered sick or broken through the study of the sources that scholars identify.[50]

The texts we study from antiquity exhibit a vitality which, through a forward-moving philology, we can acknowledge and understand in our reading and study of them. This is true for a range of ancient Jewish literature whether we look at particular texts (be it Deuteronomy or the book of Jeremiah) or larger groups of text (for example, those which participate in Mosaic discourse or more particular didactic and liturgical poetic collections). What I am describing here is the way compositions grow forward. Textual traditions as well as the traditions of vocalization and cantillation continue to grow and change in the hands and voices of those who receive and disseminate the texts.

There are many ways in which vitality is a meaningful concept. I have considered composition and hermeneutics as forward-moving and vital, pluriformity as an expression of ongoing and creative poesis, as well as articulation of narrative which reperforms and transforms foundation narratives for a people and for their ritual.

Reading practices, concepts, and practices are integrated into the ongoing production of new compositions that exemplify cultural transfer and philological creativity. As a corrective to considering the Hellenistic period as one of *Spätjudentum*, I want to think about this period as one of tremendous creativity and revivification. Konrad Schmid's important critique exposed the problematic and destructive dimensions of the term *Spätjudentum*, which is about disparaging Judaism.[51] Whether this category of *Spätjudentum* undermines a chronological time where rabbinic Judaism takes shape, i.e. the Hellenistic period, or whether Hellenism is depicted as corrupting the ideal of a pristine or idealized ancient Israel—an idealization that is only mythological and removed from the present—it is the case that this period is not at all late. It is a dynamic and illuminating era of Judaism which is explicitly interacting with philosophy, commentary, and a new literary and interpretative imagination. This is not to imply that philosophical thinking or commentary were new to Jewish thought or literature, nor that this beginning marked a revival after any lifeless period. Quite the opposite. It continues an ongoing vitality manifesting in new ways in convergence with Hellenistic thought

[50] Joel S. Baden, 'Why Is the Pentateuch Unreadable?—Or, Why Are We Doing This Anyway?', in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, ed. Jan Christian Gertz et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), particularly p. 250: 'If the text is sick, it requires surgery . . . . Our text is sick, and that illness is exclusively the literary contradictions on the level of the plot.'

[51] Konrad Schmid, 'The Rise and Fall of the Notion of "*Spätjudentum*" in Christian Biblical Scholarship', in *Protestant Bible Scholarship:, Philosemitism and Anti-Judaism*, ed. Arjen Bakker et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2022), pp. 63–78.

and culture. There is an ongoing inheritance of a rich past, but also alongside a dynamic present.

In earlier work, I wrote about linguistic border crossing as a way of showing how concepts from the Hellenistic period cross between Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.[52] I have also identified concepts that are represented by a whole constellation of words or phrases (or 'semantic constellations') such as repentance, archetype, inheritance, soul, subject, and nature.[53] All of these are concepts scholars have identified as Greek; however, they are also Jewish when they are participating in the same discourse. These concepts develop in Hebrew and Greek Jewish texts as the Jewish traditions emerge. Not as terms that are not indigenous to Hebrew or Jewish traditions, but rather as concepts that become an essential part of what it is to be Jewish philosophically and philologically. These terms become part of the narrative, and they exhibit what it is for Hellenism to be Jewish and for the Jewish communities in the Hellenistic period to be integrated and acculturated.[54] To be sure, this use of shared language and concepts would be true in later periods, but also in pre-Hellenistic times, we can observe and remark on Babylonian and Persian integration.

Examples of such concepts (and terms) in the Hellenistic period are paradigm, inheritance, imitation, nature, and mystery in the writings of Philo, Instruction, and Wisdom of Solomon. While they all have expressions in earlier biblical traditions, they come to have new meanings in the Hellenistic contexts. Instead of referring to this as imposition or as corrupting influence of the Greeks which is not indigenous, I prefer to think about this as a kind of vitality. A *vitality* which is generative for new words, for the development of Greek concepts in the Hellenistic period. But also, and perhaps even more importantly, it is generative for the ways the Jewish traditions (and here earlier biblical traditions) continue to be revised and transformed as tenacious and resilient expressions of vitality. Thus, not only linguistic contact but even the very act of translating generates new philosophical discourses.[55]

My point is that in the Hellenistic period there is a particular vitalization of an already vital Judaism, out of which is born early Jewish philosophical discourse. This is essential for the formative period of rabbinic Judaism, early Jewish mysticism, and what Solomon Schechter first called Jewish theology.[56] What we come to see

[52] See my discussion on linguistic border crossing in 'Philosophical Contemplation and Revelatory Inspiration in Ancient Judean Traditions', *SPhiloA* 19 (2007): pp. 101–11.

[53] Hindy Najman, 'Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Period: Towards the Study of a Semantic Constellation', in *Is There a Text in This Cave? Studies in the Textuality of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of George J. Brooke*, ed. Ariel Feldman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 459–72.

[54] On this point, see Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2002).

[55] See on this point Lucretius, who supposedly translates Greek Epicurean philosophy but in fact builds a very Roman conceptual apparatus. I am indebted to Irene Peirano Garrison for this insight. See David N. Sedley, *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[56] Solomon Schechter, *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, 2nd edn (New York: Schocken Books, 1961).

are new expressions that are, on the one hand, already part of the Jewish hermeneutical and religious imagination and, on the other, are developed and deepened in new dimensions. So, we come to see discussions of higher and lower practices of reading in order to understand the whole terrestrial and heavenly framework.[57] There is extensive discussion of natural phenomena in both Hebrew and Greek traditions. Finally, there are extensive engagements with scribal practices in the form of textual correction, and refinement which is also but not only in the context of emerging commentary traditions.[58]

My focus on vitality is not about a concern with the centre and periphery, the canonical and the apocryphal, the sectarian and the normative, or the apocalyptic versus the prophetic. These dichotomies and categorizations are not our focus here because to understand Jewish antiquity, they obscure more than they illuminate. Instead, I consider the textual evidence in Jewish antiquity for what it is, a vital and dynamic, ever-growing, and emerging tradition of creativity, resilience, imagination, and new ritual.

In matters of biblical composition, poetics, and hermeneutics, the field of biblical studies was stymied or even compromised by historicist and theological nineteenth-century assumptions. Approaches to reading and analysis were also burdened by anti-Jewish and supersessionist dogmatic theology and by historicist thinking.

It is well known that classics was born as a sibling of biblical studies. Wolf and Eichhorn as two founding fathers were both essential for these two disciplines, but we can, in hindsight, recognize how the humanities have moved beyond the initial discourse of idealizing, even fetishizing, the originary moment of production in both classics and biblical studies. Even more, we can come to see how the establishment of Jewish studies continued to be constrained by older models of hermeneutics and historical reconstruction. This collaboration between classics and biblical studies dissipated through the divisions of the academy between theology and the humanities. I want to argue that much of what needs to be done is to remove layers of scholarly assumptions. This is the case as we can already see the discourse of establishing correct texts and interpretation across Hebrew and Greek manuscripts in the readings embedded as marginalia and scholarly debates around editions, which dates as early as the Hellenistic period.[59]

[57] Here I have in mind Philo of Alexandria, Wisdom of Solomon, Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, the Hodayot, and Instruction. All of these texts consider a heavenly and earthly expression of perfection and correspondence. With aspiration towards perfection, one can aspire to access heavenly insight and the law of nature or even participate with angels in prayer.

[58] See some of the discussion in Ronny Vollandt, 'Translations as Linguistic Commentaries? On the Interpretative Dimension of Early Bible Translations into Judaeo-Arabic', *PHEN* 3, no. 3 (2018): pp. 253–74, doi:10.1163/24519197-12340048.

[59] Maren R. Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

3
Canonical Expansion and Pluriformity

This chapter takes a different turn from the themes explored in the previous chapter: the idealization of the early or original and the accompanying reconstructive tendencies of biblical studies and classics. My argument, begun already in the last two chapters, is that we are participating in a forward-moving trajectory that exhibits variation across a single tradition. This variation is deeply engaged in hermeneutics, historically and theologically contingent transformations that grow out of an inherited past and a creative and innovative present. In this chapter, I turn to consider how the period of Hellenism can come to exhibit pluriformity and an open canon, as opposed to a fixed and singular text.

If we are to understand the authority of scriptural traditions and other religiously privileged corpora, we must seek to understand the generative vitality of these texts. This might require that we pay less attention to later boundaries between so-called canonical texts and the marginal texts to which they inevitably give rise.[1] It is to this idea of an autonomous life that the twentieth-century German literary critic, Walter Benjamin, relates:

> Just as expressions of life are connected in the most intimate manner with the living being without having any significance for the latter, a translation proceeds from the original. Not indeed so much from its life as from its *Überleben* [its survival, i.e. its excess of life]. Nonetheless the translation is later than the original, and in the case of the most significant works, which never find their chosen translators in the era in which they are produced, indicates that they have reached the stage of their continuing life (*Fortleben*).[2]

In other words, some texts have an excess of vitality that expresses itself in the fact that they provide the basis for translations, for new texts in languages other than the original, texts that purport to 'say the same' as the original text although they are self-evidently different. Again, I want to say the same about Scriptures: such texts have an excess of vitality that expresses itself in the fact that they might or can provide the basis for new texts, but not necessarily so. For example, they give rise

[1] Hindy Najman, 'The Vitality of Scripture within and beyond the "Canon"', *JSJ* 43, nos. 4–5 (2012): p. 518, doi:10.1163/15700631-12341237.

[2] Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), p. 71 (translation is modified).

Scriptural Vitality. Hindy Najman, Oxford University Press. © Hindy Najman 2025.
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to emulations that purport to 'say the same' as the original Scripture, although they are self-evidently different; or claim to be speaking in the voice of Moses, Jeremiah, or even the voice of the Teacher (from the Dead Sea Scrolls).[3] This claim to continuity is of great interest to me, but not because it is historically factual. Rather, such claims that purport to produce texts of long-dead authors or expansions of texts that are said to be parts of a prophetic or legal tradition are interesting because these claims teach us a great deal about how ancient writers understand their work as exegetes, prophets, scribes, and even lawgivers—or at the very least transmitters of traditions of reading, writing, and understanding.

Thus, Jubilees and the Temple Scroll even explicitly claim that they say the same as various Pentateuchal texts. So in the case of Jubilees, in the first chapter, the text claims to be speaking in the voice of Moses, or the voice of the angel dictating to Moses, or even in the voice of God.[4] Or, similarly, Josephus promises that he does not change the text of the biblical texts he is rewriting.[5] That is, he states that he is not interpreting or reworking the biblical texts, but merely transmitting them. We are fully aware that there is radical rewriting and reworking of the biblical literature in the context of his expositions. But in fact, the new texts come to have a life of their own even if they are inextricably connected to a text the authors purport to be rewriting. Thus, the new text is a new creative performance that both channels the text that is being reworked but also creates something new.[6] This is consistent with the kind of development of law and tradition of Moses that I have called Mosaic discourse.[7] But this is far more widespread than Pentateuchal, Mosaic, or law-related. This is part of what it is to participate in the interpretative Jewish communities of the Hellenistic period.

3.1 The Contribution of the Dead Sea Scrolls

The significance of vitality and progressive composition is, of course, visible in, for example, Gilgamesh or Virgil. But a radical transformation happened in the

[3] Florentino García Martínez, 'Beyond the Sectarian Divide: The "Voice of the Teacher" as an Authority-Conferring Strategy in Some Qumran Texts', in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Transmission of Traditions and Production of Texts*, ed. Sarianna Metso et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 227–44; Najman, 'Vitality of Scripture'.

[4] Hindy Najman, 'Interpretation as Primordial Writing: Jubilees and Its Authority Conferring Strategies', *JSJ* 30, no. 4 (1999): pp. 379–410, doi:10.1163/157006399X00064.

[5] See e.g. Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) and Timothy H. Lim, 'Implicit Criticism of Scriptures and Josephus' Rewritten Bible', *HeBAI* 11, no. 1 (2022): pp. 19–30.

[6] Elizabeth Stell, 'Hermeneutical Philology for Dream and the Fragments of the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel' (DPhil dissertation, University of Oxford, 2024); Khan and Najman, 'Performance in Ancient and Medieval Judaism', Najman, 'The Vitality of Scripture'.

[7] Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

uncovering and finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Hellenistic period exhibited intense philological activity as evidenced by the scrolls uncovered amongst the eleven caves of Khirbet Qumran and the proximate traditions from Wadi Murabbaʿat and Masada. The scrolls exhibited extensive rewriting, interpretations, commentaries, as well as a large number of new compositions (legal, sapiential, and liturgical).[8] These new productions are incredibly important for coming to understand the extensive innovative, literary, and poetic imagination of Jews in the Hellenistic period.

Even further, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has helped transform our appreciation for the period of Hellenism into one of the most important moments in the history of Judaism for understanding ancient Jewish and Israelite composition, revision, interpolation, interpretation, and practices of reading for scribes and for liturgical performance. The interpretative traditions that are embedded in the scrolls contribute to a larger project of activation and articulation of biblical traditions. So, it is not about text and interpretation or the biblical and extra-biblical, but ongoing dynamic activation and reactivation through practices of reading and creativity. This is what I mean by performance where compositional practices are liturgical enactments.

The scribal, orthographic, corrective, and expansive practices of the scribes of the *Yaḥad* provide us with a window into how scribes were working in the Hellenistic period.[9] These scrolls from the Dead Sea and beyond, all through medieval times, show us the activity of writing, correction, and supplementation that is part of what it is to perform and to ritually enact texts liturgically. Thus, new compositions are not obviously lost biblical books, but neither should they be relegated to a category of non-biblical texts or rewritings. This is due to the creative and surprising ways in which the texts are being reread but also transformed, all along integrating new materials that are not always or necessarily biblical.[10] This is yet another aspect of vitality.

[8] Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, 'The Scribes of the Scrolls', in *T&T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. George J. Brooke and Charlotte Hempel (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), pp. 524–32; idem, 'Dead Sea Scrolls', in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 163–80, reprinted in *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), pp. 204–27.

[9] Maren R. Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Pieter B. Hartog, *Pesher and Hypomnema: A Comparison of Two Commentary Traditions from the Hellenistic-Roman Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Yakir Paz, *From Scribes to Scholars: Rabbinic Biblical Exegesis in Light of the Homeric Commentaries* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022).

[10] For example, see the textual *plus* in 1 Sam 11:1 in 4QSam[a]. Note that this *plus* was even incorporated into English Bible translations (e.g. New Revised Standard Version and the Revised New Jerusalem Bible). For a discussion of this *plus*, as to whether it is original or secondary, see Frank Moore Cross, 'The Ammonite Oppression of the Tribes of Gad and Reuben: Missing Verses from 1 Samuel 11 Found in 4Q Samuel[a]', in *The Hebrew and Greek Texts of Samuel: Proceedings of the IOSCS Wien 1980*, ed. Emanuel Tov (Jerusalem: Academon, 1980), pp. 105–19 (arguing that the textual *plus* is original); Reinhard Kratz, 'Nahash, King of the Ammonites, in the Deuteronomistic History', in *Insights into Editing in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East: What Does Documented Evidence*

In effect, the corrective I return to is a forward-moving trajectory that traces the emergence and transformation of biblical traditions across the history of ancient Judaism. The point here is to recognize the intellectual, scribal, philosophical, and interpretative innovation that is part of this ever-emerging tradition. It does not mean that the traditions are linear or singular. Neither am I suggesting that there are no ruptures in the history of Judaism from antiquity until this present day. Rather my focus is on changing the direction of our gaze towards a future-oriented philology that traces what was to come as a way of understanding language development and compositional practices.

I suggest then that we are not only in a position to begin to understand practices of reading in biblical traditions, ancient Judaism, and even beyond. We can also begin to locate our Hellenistic Jewish texts in this ongoing conversation and the emergence of a larger body of new compositions that created new contexts for considering the innovative and integrated voice of the Hebrew Bible into a Greek-speaking Jewish world. This means that we can build on Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic texts to come to see the wide range and complexity of textual production in this period.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, in particular, are important for us to understand the interpretative practices of Hellenistic Jews which have illuminated developments in some of the latest works now in the Hebrew Bible as well as in the latest layers of earlier biblical texts. Additionally, scholars can contextualize the dynamic and important voice of Septuagint scholarship with both the findings of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the emerging framework for early biblical interpretation more broadly (from Enochic literature to the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel to the works of Philo). The Dead Sea Scrolls helped scholars uncover an even deeper interpretative dimension to the Hebrew Bible which asked the field to rethink and even critique text-critical practices of scholars such as Johann Gottfried Eichhorn and Karl Lachmann.[11]

The scrolls have transformed the way we think about interpretation, Hebrew language in the Hellenistic period, pluriformity, the vibrant and vital role of Jewish law, and also of the canon. While the first generations of scrolls scholarship emphasized sectarianism as a way of categorizing the Dead Sea Scrolls, this has been challenged in recent years.[12] Lately, scholars have argued that the many

Tell Us about the Transmission of Authoritative Texts?, ed. Reinhard Müller and Juha Pakkala (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), pp. 163–88. Kratz goes so far as to argue that the textual *plus* originated in redactional editing.

[11] Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, *Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament*, ed. Christine G. R. Reeve and trans. George Tilly Gollop (London: Spottiswood, 1888), p. 232 = *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 5 vols, 4th edn (Göttingen: Rosenbusch, 1823–4). On Lachmann, see Sebastiano Timpanaro, *The Genesis of Lachmann's Method*, trans. and ed. Glenn W. Most (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). In fact, as Timpanaro showed, it is questionable whether this is strictly speaking a method, since it hardly renders judgement redundant. It is in any event not the product of Karl Lachmann alone, or even principally.

[12] García Martínez, 'Beyond the Sectarian Divide'. See the critical discussion of sectarianism by Gwynned de Looijer, *The Qumran Paradigm: A Critical Evaluation of Some Foundational Hypotheses in the Construction of the Qumran Sect* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015). See also Jutta Jokiranta, 'Social

liturgical and literary texts which have been regarded as sectarian should not be labelled in this way or be siphoned off and set apart. Rather, they exhibit shared interpretative and liturgical insights with later Jewish traditions, through late antiquity and beyond. It seems most compelling to understand these texts as part of a broader emerging Judaism across Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic divides. But it is also a Judaism that transforms through new cultural influences and political frameworks.

The idea of a distinct sectarian canon may seem convenient because it leaves intact the older idea of a biblical canon, but it is not supported by the evidence, which calls for a radical rethinking of the biblical canon. On the contrary, the material evidence demonstrates that the archaeological site of Qumran participates in ritual and study that are part of Judaism in the Hellenistic period.

The presence of ritual baths (no less than fourteen identified *miqvaot*) as well as signs of study and prayer suggest continuity with later ritual practices that we read about across Judaism in late antiquity and beyond.[13] Thus, these texts are discovered in a context that participates in normative rituals. The argument for sectarianism at the very beginning suggested that the texts and the claims of this community did not cohere with what we would come to know about Judaism in the rabbinic period. Yet, from the textual evidence of the scrolls and the material culture that surrounds them, we see a breadth of ideas and practices including many that would become normative. Even language which has been called 'sectarian' is already participating in texts from the Hellenistic period. This is a period of tremendous variety and growth, and the evidence does not bear out a dichotomy between the normative and the so-called 'sectarian'. More importantly,

Scientific Approaches to the Dead Sea Scrolls', in *Rediscovering the Dead Sea Scrolls: An Assessment of Old and New Approaches and Methods*, ed. Maxine L. Grossman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 246–63; idem, *Social Identity and Sectarianism in the Qumran Movement* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Bakker, *Secret of Time*, pp. 18–31; Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, 'Classifications of the Collection of Dead Sea Scrolls and the Case of Apocryphon of Jeremiah C', *JSJ* 43, nos. 4–5 (2012): pp. 519–50, doi:10.1163/15700631-12341238; Najman, 'Vitality of Scripture'.

[13] Phylacteries, daily prayers such as the *Shema* are integrated into the discovered scrolls, as well as ongoing discussions of daily study of Scripture. On phylacteries, see Yehudah Cohn, *Tangled Up in Text: Tefillin and the Ancient World* (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2008); idem, 'Reading Material Features of Qumran Tefillin and Mezuzot', in *Material Aspects of Reading in Ancient and Medieval Cultures: Materiality, Presence and Performance*, ed. Anna Krauß et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 89–99; Ariel Feldman, 'On Amulets, Apotropaic Prayers, and Phylacteries: The Contribution of Three New Texts from the Judean Desert', in *Petitioners, Penitents, and Poets: On Prayer and Praying in Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Timothy J. Sandoval and Ariel Feldman (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 169–98; idem, *Tefillin and Mezuzot from Qumran: New Readings and Interpretations* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022); Bakker, 'Early Configurations of Jewish Prayer'. On *miqvaot*, see Ronny Reich, 'Design and Maintenance of First-Century Ritual Immersion Baths', *JP* 56, no. 1 (1999): pp. 14–19, https://www.jerusalemperspective.com/1786/; idem, 'The Great Mikveh Debate', *BAR* 19 (1993): pp. 52–3. See also Moshe Weinfeld, 'Grace after Meals in Qumran', *JBL* 111, no. 3 (1992), pp. 427–40, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3267260; Menahem Kister, 'Liturgical Formulae in the Light of Fragments from the Judaean Desert' (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 77, nos. 3–4 (2008): pp. 331–55, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23607019.

the so-called sectarian language is already part of Hellenistic texts, language, and textual traditions.

Arjen Bakker offers an important critique of the sectarian category's utility:

> At this point we should ask ourselves the question whether the categorizations we have developed for organizing the material are not blocking our access to the texts and forming an obstacle to academic discussion. In the case of generic categories scholars generally agree that these are not native concepts and that we should be careful not to use them as pigeonholes in which we deposit texts. But the risk that the sectarian/non-sectarian division causes us to straitjacket a rich variety of texts is even more serious, because we take these to be historical categories that correspond to an external reality that actually existed, namely the sectarian community that owned the scrolls. But first of all, the nature and organization of the groups or networks behind the manuscripts continue to be the focus of research and discussion, and there is nothing like a consensus in view. And second, the qualification sectarian is as much an anachronistic imposition as the concept of the biblical, which only gained meaning in a period, several centuries later, when there was a clear notion of what was *not* biblical.[14]

Bakker builds on the insight of Eibert Tigchelaar that the binary categorizations of biblical/non-biblical and sectarian/non-sectarian are interrelated, which helps explain why the sectarian category is problematic. Writings amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls, to a smaller or larger degree, reflect the authority that is later attributed to biblical writings. But there is no category of writings from Qumran that corresponds in any way to the texts that are considered *non-biblical* according to Jewish and Christian canonical notions of later periods. While some texts may have had an elevated status amongst the scrolls, we do not have texts to which such status is explicitly denied. Similarly, although we have writings of deeply devoted pious groups that engaged in polemical debates with others and amongst themselves (i.e. the Dead Sea Scrolls), we have historically filled the implied category of non-sectarian simply with texts that we deem to have a wider cultural context, often texts which are familiar from elsewhere. The term 'sectarian' remains hollow as long as we cannot give content to the non-sectarian category. Bakker points out that the communities behind the scrolls may have included features that sociologists associate with sectarianism.[15] But to label *texts* as sectarian implies an anachronistic value judgement. Instead of using existing scholarly categories such as sectarian which limit and circumscribe the Dead Sea Scrolls, I am increasingly

[14] Bakker, *Secret of Time*, p. 30.

[15] See Jokiranta, 'Social Scientific Approaches'; idem, *Social Identity and Sectarianism*. See also Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

convinced that the Dead Sea Scrolls need to be integrated into a broader biblical context and the context of ancient Judaism.

Thus, the Dead Sea Scrolls can serve to interrogate and problematize any residual discussion of canon in Second Temple scholarship. This is intended as an alternative to discussions of a sectarian corpus which is both uncompelling and unsubstantiated. Perhaps one might say that the discussions of library and sectarianism have been initially very important for the early research and analysis of the scrolls, but that Scrolls scholarship has grown well beyond any library, or a sectarian collection. The matter is less about whether the Dead Sea Scrolls reflect a community or a scriptorium, but rather what the scrolls themselves reveal about the state of biblical texts, interpretations, and other important textual traditions of liturgy and wisdom which are extant amongst the scrolls.

What is particularly significant for our discussion about vitality is that the scrolls have actually transformed the way we understand the growth and development of Judaism already in the Hellenistic period. What we can come to know from Masada to Herodium, and from the surrounding culture and community of the first century BCE through the first century CE, is that the Dead Sea Scrolls participate in our earliest forms of *midrash*, our first commentaries in Hebrew, and our earliest Jewish liturgies. What we see are dynamic and growing traditions of Jewish thought and interpretation which inscribe these scrolls into the world and life of ancient Judaism.[16] Indeed, the traditions of the Masoretes have their precedents in the scribal creativity and preservation across the corpus.[17]

What biblical scholars have learned about philological practices from the Dead Sea Scrolls has been nothing less than a paradigm shift for both biblical studies and ancient Judaism. The field of biblical studies has *yet* to fully integrate that transformation into our teaching and writing. Integrating these new findings also involves a critique of methods that have not focused on vitality or a forward-moving account

[16] See parallel developments in the Hellenistic world, e.g. Tim Whitmarsh, *Beyond the Second Sophistic: Adventures in Greek Postclassicism* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020).

[17] On this point see Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd edn (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), pp. 107–9; Geoffrey Khan, 'Orthoepy in the Tiberian Reading Tradition of the Hebrew Bible and its Historical Roots in the Second Temple Period', *VT* 68, no. 3 (2018): pp. 1–24, doi:10.1163/15685330-12341327; idem, 'Some Features of the Imperfect Oral Performance of the Tiberian Reading Tradition of Biblical Hebrew in the Middle Ages', in *Studies in Semitic Vocalisation and Reading Traditions*, ed. Aaron D. Hornkohl and Geoffrey Khan (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2020), pp. 549–92; idem, 'The Role of the Karaites in the Transmission of the Hebrew Bible and Their Practice of Transcribing It into Arabic Script', *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 8, nos. 2–3 (2020): pp. 233–64, doi:10.1163/2212943X-20201013; idem, *The Tiberian Pronunciation Tradition of Biblical Hebrew: Including a Critical Edition and English Translation of the Sections on Consonants and Vowels in the Masoretic Treatise Hidāyat al-Qāri' 'Guide for the Reader'*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2020); Najman, and Rosen-Zvi, 'Hebrew Philological Practices'; Tigchelaar, 'The Scribes of the Scrolls'; Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

of compositional practices. The important dimensions around pluriformity and interpretation are essential for understanding the nature of reading practices in the Hellenistic period. This is precisely the corrective that I am advocating in the previous chapter.

It is essential to integrate and absorb the radical and important transformation that the scrolls have gifted to the study of the Hebrew Bible. To be sure, it is well accepted that the Dead Sea Scrolls completely changed the way we understand interpretation in Jewish antiquity—especially and already in the Hellenistic period. That is, the Dead Sea Scrolls are engaged in the application of a variety of hermeneutical practices. There is interpretation, but also political and historical engagement with the present, and of course theological and philosophical transformation for how ideas and concepts from the Hebrew Bible are understood.

However, the contribution of the scrolls with respect to the texts that became biblical is not just about an innovative reading of the Dead Sea Scrolls, nor is it reducible to interpretation. Scribal contributions which are both lexical and grammatical, as well as hermeneutical, must not be overlooked. The self-conscious and articulated agenda of many of the scrolls discovered in the caves (implicitly and explicitly) perform history, liturgy, other rituals and practices of study. We can discern patterns of reading within the Dead Sea Scrolls. By this I mean, as scholars we can trace how the scribes are working with texts from earlier periods.

Indeed, even as we trace some of these interactions, we can only know of some of the resources these scribes employed beyond the biblical traditions themselves. There are biblical but also pseudepigraphical traditions that are being read and integrated. We can also see parallels and shared traditions between the Hebrew and Greek as well as Aramaic and Greek and later Latin traditions which are incorporated and integrated. I have in mind works such as 4Ezra, 2Baruch, Wisdom of Solomon, the Letter of Aristeas, Josephus, Philo of Alexandria, and Pseudo Philo. This is not by any means an exhaustive list, but rather just a starting point. These are texts from the Hellenistic period and late antiquity that share interpretations, reading practices, and innovative philosophical insights into how to understand, read, and interpret anything from the cosmos to time, creation, history, and the presence of evil in the world. In addition, there is a growing sense that the larger world of Greek literature can already be suggested as informing the literature of the Jewish Hellenistic period, but not only the Greek materials. The texts from the Hellenistic period are struggling to make sense of a new present and promise a sustained future.

The texts of which I speak are thereby interpreting but also incorporating traditions from within and beyond Judaism. This generates new textual transformation, even deleting or changing an earlier text. This is relevant with respect to text-critical practices, as well as interpretative practices, and even the creation and production of new traditions that purport to have scriptural status. These practices

are also important for understanding subsequent rabbinic interpretation in late antiquity and beyond.[18]

New texts are composed with an integration and engagement with earlier materials invoked and repurposed in new ways. By this, I mean that the readings themselves are part of a new composition that takes other textual traditions into account. So, for example, a collection like that of the Hodayot (the Thanksgiving Hymns), to which we will turn in Part III, represents a collection of which the history of Judaism had no knowledge prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These hymns are participating in the scriptural through interpretation, but fundamentally creating something new.

However, that newness is part of new Scriptures that are composed in new contexts. These innovative and creative compositions open up new possibilities for reading, for understanding how ancient Jews are thinking about their own heavenly and terrestrial worlds, and, fundamentally, about how they are thinking about goodness and perfection. Thus, by vitality, I also mean that I want to consider new compositions in the context of Hellenism. This is particularly important when we think about the central ideas in the scrolls such as reflection on human essence, knowledge, perfection, creation, and meditation. The very reading of the human involves practices of reading and includes text, the reading of the soul, and the scholarly practice of unravelling. Reading of the soul, reading of texts, and scholarly reading of the texts which is also a level of reconstruction and preservation. The repeated patterns of language and ideas might be suggestive of a kind of spiritual exercise of the kind that Pierre Hadot has described.[19] This developmental

[18] James L. Kugel, 'Early Interpretation: The Common Background of Late Forms of Biblical Exegesis', in *Early Biblical Interpretation*, ed. James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), pp. 11–106; idem, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); idem, 'From Scribalism to Rabbinism: Perspectives on the Emergence of Classical Judaism', in *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. idem (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 64–78; Ishay Rosen-Zvi, 'Structure and Reflectivity in Tannaitic Legal Homilies: Or, How to Read Midrashic Terminology', *Proof* 34, no. 3 (2014): pp. 271–301, doi:10.2979/prooftexts.34.3.01; idem, 'Joining the Club: Tannaitic Legal Midrash and Ancient Jewish Hermeneutics', *SPhiloA* 17 (2005): pp. 153–60; Moshe Halbertal, 'If the Text Had Not Been Written, It Could Not Be Said', in *Scriptural Exegesis: The Shapes of Culture and Religious Imagination: Essays in Honour of Michael Fishbane*, ed. Deborah A. Green and Laura Suzanne Lieber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 146–58. See also Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); David Stern, 'Moses-cide: Midrash and Contemporary Literary Criticism', *Proof* 4, no. 2 (1984): pp. 193–213, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20689091; idem, 'Midrash and Indeterminacy', *CI* 5, no. 1 (1988): pp. 132–61, doi:10.1086/448477; Haggai Ben-Shammai, 'The Tension between Literal Interpretation and Exegetical Freedom: Comparative Observations on Saadia's Method', in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 33–50.

[19] See Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Michael Case and ed. Arnold Davidson (New York: Blackwell, 1995) = Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1987); idem, *What Is Ancient*

dimension through reading and performing could be seen to go hand in hand with liturgical readings of Torah as well.[20]

3.2 Authorship and Anonymity

Scholars, then, in a sense are the first readers,[21] because scholars are compelled to understand for the first time in the history of scholarship the nature and the contribution of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the face of the twentieth-century discovery. I believe that we need to rethink the way the collection was constructed and deconstructed. Also, and importantly, scholars need to continue to think and rethink the way the Dead Sea Scrolls have transformed the way Jewish antiquity is reconstructed.

In particular, one of the ways in which scholars have sought to understand textual construction is through the identification of the author. To be sure, this has been the focus of the first generation of Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship, with questions like, 'Who wrote these? Why? When?' As scholars, we often tend to identify the author where there is no named author.[22] This practice has led to extreme constructions of the author's function which I want to question. Foucault, and Nietzsche before him, have problematized the search for the author or attribution in an environment where authorship seems not to be at stake at all. Rather, what is essential is tradition associated with a tendency such as law or tragedy, or a discourse tied to a founder.[23] Still more radically, I propose here that this anonymity, the lack of named authors, is meaningful for reading the Dead Sea Scrolls. I have become more aware that Foucault's *What Is an Author* does not provide us with enough options with respect to rethinking author function for antiquity.[24]

Philosophy?, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2002); Stanley Cavell, *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Hindy Najman, *Past Renewals: Interpretive Authority, Renewed Revelation and the Quest for Perfection in Jewish Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); idem, 'La recherche de la perfection dans le judaïsme ancien', in *Les élites dans le monde biblique*, ed. Jean Riaud (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006), pp. 99–116; Elisa K. Uusimäki, *Lived Wisdom in Jewish Antiquity: Studies in Exercise and Exemplarity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).

[20] See Bakker's recent argument on this point from column 6 of 1QS in *Secret of Time*, pp. 43–9.

[21] Hans Robert Jauss and Elizabeth Benzinger, 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory', *NLH* 2, no. 1 (1970): pp. 7–37, doi:10.2307/468585.

[22] Sonja Ammann, Katharina Pyschny, and Julia Ryder, eds, *Authorship and the Hebrew Bible* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022); Mroczek, *Literary Imagination*; Najman, *Seconding Sinai.*

[23] See Michel Foucault, 'What Is an Author?', in *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, vol. 2, ed. James D. Faubion and trans. Donald F. Bouchard (New York: The New Press, 1998), pp. 205–22, and my discussion of this concept in 'Mosaic Discourse', in *Seconding Sinai*, pp. 1–40. See also Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image-Music-Text,* trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 142–8.

[24] On this point see the critique of Alexander Nehamas and his response to Foucault on the author's death and the need for an author function: Alexander Nehamas, 'What an Author Is', *Journal of Philosophy* 83, no. 11 (1986): pp. 685–91, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2026619.

There are no named authors amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls, and yet scholars have repeatedly sought to identify the author function for the Dead Sea Scrolls and have also sought to locate those authors in historical time.[25] I suggest instead that we locate this anonymizing practice in a larger context alongside pseudepigraphic literature. Pseudepigraphic literature is, after all, a subgroup of non-named or named texts which are, in their essence, anonymous. The so-called 'pseudonyms' we find in texts that speak with the voice of a named figure are not authors. They are protagonists or figures from a remote past that are summoned to facilitate a new context. Here I have in mind Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Solomon, and more. These are works that are said to be authored by people who are long dead but have somehow continued their posthumous legacy.

I want to suggest that the Dead Sea Scrolls are participating in a larger context and history of anonymity, including what will become the biblical books. By recognizing how little we know of the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls and by recognizing that these are not reducible to 'early midrash' or to 'sectarian contributions', we can open ourselves to reading the texts in a new light. Rather, these are anonymous texts that use a protagonist (or multiple protagonists) to construct something which, in contemporary terms, might have some affinities with fan fiction, as I will suggest below.

It will also be important here to note that, for many of these so-called pseudepigraphic texts, the present (whether in a cave, in Jerusalem, or in conversation with God) is timeless. That in itself defies locating these texts (whether they be scrolls or amulets) with single historical authors. That is, these texts place themselves out of time, a practice which we ought to take seriously in our reading. Instead of assuming we can identify an underlying or original author, I propose instead to try to understand a reading practice that is fundamentally anonymizing. The author function is socially conditioned by scholarly and legal practices of ascription. Thus, if the practices of author function do not exist, or if the writer is not participating in those practices, then there is no 'author'. This is not to say that there were no authors. Rather, there are authors, but their identity and their achievement are not the focus of these works.

It is helpful, perhaps, to rehearse an important challenge to scholars who are still using the language of forgery instead of pseudonymous attribution or even anonymity to assess so-called pseudepigraphic texts. I, along with my colleague Irene Peirano Garrison, have already challenged the language of 'forgery' in this context. We argued against Ehrman[26] who maintains that the ancients had a

[25] See Florentino García Martínez, 'Qumran Origins and Early History: A Groningen Hypothesis', *FO* 25 (1988): pp. 113–36, reprinted in *Qumranica Minora I: Qumran Origins and Apocalypticism*, ed. Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 3–29. References are to the 2007 print. See also Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar's discussion in 'Classifications of the Collection of Dead Sea Scrolls'.

[26] E.g. Bart D. Ehrman, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God—Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are* (New York: HarperOne, 2012).

notion of forgery. Our alternative was to consider instead pseudepigraphy as an interpretative construct.[27] But somehow, that is still not sufficient to help step away from what, drawing on Nietzsche and Foucault, I call the post-Enlightenment author function. What I mean by this is that at some point in recent history—say, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—it became possible to make a living by commercializing the product of one's writing.[28] This required the development of various literary and legal conventions, associated with printed works, rendering an individual the legal owner of a written work and protected against the property claims of others. Of course, the association of individuals with written works is much older than this, but it is the post-Enlightenment proprietary relationship that has anachronistically been retrojected onto ancient texts.

I want to suggest that at the heart of the question of authorship is the matter of anonymity. The texts we consider in this book, particularly our examples of Jubilees in Part II and the Hodayot in Part III, have no named author function. We can instead identify a creative extension of biblical tradition which enabled the growth and emergence of multiple literary works associated with the two central tendencies, or genres, and figures such as Moses, or David.[29]

I want to think of the pseudonym as a special kind of invocation of naming, without assuming that the named person is that author. Rather, it represents a kind of participation in an already-growing set of ideas and concepts that are associated with a variety of characters. Despite my plea to go beyond the question of 'the author' in our field of ancient Judaism and biblical studies, this has not happened in our discipline. My suggestion here is to move beyond my argument about pseudepigraphic attribution to Ezra in 4Ezra, where I focused on the figure of Ezra doing the work of therapeutic integration of traumatic memory. So, what the community could not yet integrate, the second destruction, was instead recalled as prior trauma, the first destruction. Hence, Ezra was a great candidate for such pseudepigraphic attribution. However, there are many ways in which attribution is used

[27] Hindy Najman and Irene Peirano Garrison, 'Pseudepigraphy as an Interpretative Construct', in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Fifty Years of the Pseudepigrapha Section at the SBL*, ed. Matthias Henze and Liv Ingeborg Lied (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), pp. 331–55.

[28] Scott McGill, *Plagiarism in Latin Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[29] Michel Foucault, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?', *BSPh* 63, no. 3 (1969), pp. 75–104; Tom Geue, *Author Unknown: The Power of Anonymity in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019); Irene Peirano Garrison, *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); idem, 'Authenticity as an Aesthetic Concept: Ancient and Modern Reflections', in *Aesthetic Value in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Ralph M. Rosen and Ineke Sluiter (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 215–42; idem, '"Newly Written Buds": Archaic and Classical Pseudepigrapha in Meleager's *Garland*', in *Authorship and Greek Song: Authority, Authenticity, and Performance*, ed. Egbert J. Bakker (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 222–38; Markus Hafner, 'Der Dichter und sein Richter—die Autorität des Dichtungskritikers in den kommentierenden Scholien zur κρίσις ποιημάτων des Dionysios Thrax', in *Sicut commentatores loquuntur—Autorproblematik und antike Dichterexegese*, ed. Ute Tischer et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2023). See also my discussion of author function in *Seconding Sinai*.

throughout that work. The protagonist is not a single figure, but neither is the matter of authorship discernible.[30]

I want to explicitly reflect on *anonymity* as an important feature of these textual traditions. To be sure, there are no named authors, with very few exceptions.[31] To some degree many of our texts from the Hellenistic period invoke the past, using biblical form and language that refers extensively to biblical figures (especially to prophetic figures such as Moses, Jeremiah, and Daniel). The protagonist in 4Ezra is named in multiple ways, but in the most important way he is never named. So, he is Job, Jeremiah, Moses, Ezra, the daughter of Zion, and Daniel. But he is also the voice of a new Ezra, or an angel who is charged to create a new pathway after destruction. The Teacher of Righteousness, mentioned across the Dead Sea Scrolls, is also never named in a particular way. Many of the extant texts from Jewish antiquity through the Persian and Hellenistic periods do not provide named authors in the post-Enlightenment sense described above, but rather they use figures from the past or concepts to create a new present. At times it seems that this is in the context of a new and renewed radical hope; at other times it serves as the authorization for practices of writing for a reconstituted interpretative community. At the end of the day, any methodological framework for understanding a text is as productive as its payoff for reading the text at hand. So, if we suspend talk of pseudonyms and instead consider this as one of a series of examples of anonymous literature, how does this help us understand reading strategies in the Hellenistic period?

My suggestion is that by recontextualizing this anonymizing strategy, we might be able to integrate the particularities of pseudonymity as part of the overarching framework as practices of reading the past and the promised future onto a present. In recent times I have turned, along with some colleagues in classics, to consider fan fiction as a helpful and illuminating analogy to what we see with texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls and other related contemporaneous literature from ancient Judaism in the Hellenistic and late ancient periods.[32] We must develop a far more complex and variegated understanding of the way figures are named as having

[30] Hindy Najman, 'The Exemplary Protagonist: The Case of 4 Ezra', in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the Scriptures*, ed. Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), pp. 261–87; idem, *Losing the Temple and Recovering the Future: An Analysis of 4 Ezra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[31] And even in that case, see the article by Ben Wright and Eva Mroczek on Ben Sira and the question of authorship: 'Ben Sira's Pseudo-Pseudepigraphy: Idealizations from Antiquity to Early Middle Ages', in *Sirach and Its Contexts: The Pursuit of Wisdom and Human Flourishing*, ed. Samuel L. Adams et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2021), pp. 213–39. See also the discussion of Stell, 'Hermeneutical Philology'.

[32] On fan fiction see Ika Willis, 'Amateur Mythographies: Fan Fiction and the Myth of Myth', *TWC* 21 (2016), doi:10.3983/twc.2016.0692; Anna Wilson, 'Immature Pleasures: Affective Reading in Margery Kempe, Petrarch, Chaucer, and Modern Fan Communities' (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2015); idem, 'Fan Fiction and Premodern Literature: Methods and Definitions', *TWC* 36 (2021), doi:10.3983/twc.2021.2037. See also Greta Parr, 'Trans!BTS: Trans BTS Fanfiction as (Re)presentations of Radical Trans Joy' (BA dissertation, Barnard College, 2022).

generated a text when it seems that the traditions themselves are evolving out of a much larger context.[33]

Source material can play a large role in the settings of pseudonymous compositions, but they can equally take place in a new reality and become a type of speculative fiction. Indeed, new compositions can take place in altered places, analogous to dream-like spaces or the altered state of the revelatory in a liminal realm (e.g. the space of angels).[34] The Dead Sea Scrolls, in fact like many cases in Jewish antiquity, are texts that are transposed into a different location, and different time, with radically changed and emerging figures. They have similarities with the texts and characters that are in the narratives but are also profoundly changed. What is fascinating is how uninterested and disengaged many of our ancient writers are from matters of authorship.[35]

Similarly to what I have elsewhere called *time collapse* in texts like 4Ezra, our texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls can be productively likened to the *alternate universe* realm of producing literature that goes beyond the here and now. To return to fan fiction, alternate-universe fan fiction consciously breaks the expectations set by the canon of the property on which it builds. This might, for example, often transpose familiar characters into new or unfamiliar spaces, allowing both characters and narratives to be subtly shifted or fully reimagined. Characters or narratives may be shifted into new settings whether mundane or extraordinary, whether from another media property or wholly original. Here I am particularly invoking the idea of speculative fiction mentioned earlier, where new and alternate universes are recreated and re-imagined.

By analogy, what we see in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other early Jewish literature is a similar openness to transposing or re-imagining familiar characters or narratives in new ways and new settings which are flexible with respect to existing canon and mundane reality. The very possibility of writing in a liminal space or from a cosmic perspective is just taken for granted in much of this literature. It does not have to be justified; rather it continues in a sense where texts like Ezekiel 1 or Isaiah 6 leave off, texts which already imagine the heavenly or visionary breaking in on the mundane. The traditions grow out of a space that is both located in the terrestrial but also dislocated in an alternative place and time, a kind of prophetic or dream-like state of mind. Perhaps some of what I am trying to get at here is that our group of texts is offering a different reality. But in these alternate universes different realities can emerge. These spaces can be redemptive, hopeful, and creative, but they can also be terrifying and destabilizing.

[33] See Frauke Uhlenbruch and Sonja Ammann, 'Fan Fiction and Ancient Scribal Cultures', *TWC* 31 (2019), doi:10.3983/twc.2019.1887.

[34] See for example 4Ezra, Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, the Genesis Apocryphon, and Ezekiel the Tragedian.

[35] On this matter in the context of the Tannaim, see Moulie Vidas, *The Rise of Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), forthcoming.

It is useful, all along recognizing that our texts often centre around named protagonists, that these names are not in any meaningful way authors. But they are nevertheless representatives for interpretative communities, or lawgivers, or even prophets. So Ezra in 4Ezra, the Teacher of Righteousness, Solomon in Wisdom or the person to whom a whole host of sapiential texts and collections of didactic and erotic poetry are attributed.[36] And perhaps, we should take a step back from calling traditions Mosaic or Jeremianic and reflect on the fact that no authors are named and instead multiple protagonists and literary tendencies serve to frame and authorize the texts as their authorizing principles. I am not abandoning the notion of a Mosaic Discourse; rather I am suggesting that more thinking must go into how we conceive of attribution and the construction of these protagonists.

Recognizing that texts from the Hellenistic period are participating in a new anonymous tradition by channelling an altered state and past figures that are part of a past that is not only remembered but now created anew, we can have very different perspectives on this tradition. The tendencies of anonymous works have a variety of forms. But it is precisely the possibility of creating new Scripture, and innovative perspectives on the present and the future—crossing between time and space—that we can come to appreciate, and even gain insight into the compositional practices exhibited by Hellenistic Jewish literature.

This impulse to identify the author has also forced the discovered scrolls into scholarly expectations about normative religion, theological assumptions, and scholarly constructs of genre. Perhaps the most widespread assumption about the Dead Sea Scrolls is that they exhibit the earliest biblical interpretations or even early midrash. Whilst this is not incorrect, it is an insufficient way of reading and thinking about the Dead Sea Scrolls. Fundamentally, interpretation is just the beginning of how to understand the transformative contribution that the scrolls make to how we think about Jewish antiquity.

3.3 Problematizing Intertextuality for Biblical Studies

Part of the correction that I am trying to implement is that the reading of the texts from the late Second Temple period should not be reduced to interpretation as a kind of intertextuality. This is problematic on many levels. To begin, I will offer some critical evaluations of intertextuality as a reading method and then consider an alternative path for understanding. Intertextuality has found its legacy—wholly unintended by Julia Kristeva,[37] to be sure—in biblical studies precisely because

[36] See Eva Mroczek, 'Moses, David and Scribal Revelation: Preservation and Renewal in Second Temple Jewish Textual Traditions', in *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. George J. Brooke et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 91–115.

[37] See Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez and trans. Thomas Gora et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) and her later

it fit in like *hand in glove* into what biblicists called exegesis within texts.[38] The classical foundations for our field were born in a time when historicism, *prima scriptura* and *sola scriptura* were assumed. But it was also founded on a presupposition that the goal was to get to a place that was ancient Israel, or before Judaism, to get at the earlier layers of the text.

Further, I want to suggest that intertextuality came to be used in conjunction with already-established practices of source-critical work whose aim was both to separate out the layers of the text and also to access the earliest layers. This theological charged practice had embedded within it a complicated and problematic relationship with Judaism in particular. But my problematization of this practice also speaks to how intertextuality came to be used: not, I want to suggest, as a reading practice which facilitated deep understanding and conceptual understanding but rather in a way that concerned further divisions of the text. The goal continued to be the disassembly of the text into its pre-texts instead of understanding interactions across textual traditions as a source of life. This is ironic as it was implemented by the very scholars who are associated with the work of early biblical interpretation.

Intertextuality was a way of naming how ancient Jewish writers composed. Walking backwards, scholars such as James Kugel built on the momentum of the 1960s and 1970s in literary theory and re-opened the world of biblical studies to theory.[39] The most current and exciting expression was, for them, through the application of Kristeva's term 'intertextuality'. The term, however, was de-centred from its original meaning and was applied in a variety of inconsistent ways.[40] My

move from 'intertextuality' to 'transposition', in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 59–60.

[38] e.g. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash.*

[39] e.g. James L. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[40] Glenn Most wrote (correspondence with Glenn Most, September 2019): 'Either the concept of intertextuality is trivial and hermeneutically useless or else it tends to fragment a text into constitutive elements and distract attention from how these elements have been put together into a coherent whole. If the term is used in its original Kristevan sense, it describes a feature of language in general and of all utterances of any kind, namely that every element is used elsewhere as well, and that no element is unique (this is what Derrida called citationality). This is quite true but has no consequences for the interpretation of any specific document and hence is hermeneutically useless. Of course, one need not restrict the application of this term to its first usage. But if it is applied to specific parts of certain texts that have a specifiable relationship to certain other texts, then doing so raises the danger that scholarship will concentrate too much upon the question of where these specific parts came from and not enough upon the question of how they have been put together into a new composition with its own dignity and coherence. Both approaches are necessary if the full meaning of a text is to be understood in terms of its place in the history of its culture; examining its intertextuality can only be a first step towards understanding how a text functions as a whole with the elements that have entered into it from other texts.' Furthermore, Most wrote: 'What counts as a case of intertextuality? An exact verbal coincidence? How many words is the minimum required? One? Two? Five? Ten? Nothing in the concept of intertextuality helps scholarship determine when and whether one is dealing with a case of intertextuality. And can only cases of exact verbal coincidence be counted? What about paraphrases? What about references? If

point is that intertextuality in biblical studies became obsessed with where instead of how texts interact in conversation across corpora.

For the purposes of our own work, how productive is intertextuality? To what extent does it truly do the hermeneutical work that scholars demand of it? Moreover, it has become a term that is used across a broad array of practices—both our own scholarly practices and ancient practices.

I want to explore these questions with a conceptual and philosophical framework which is deeply marked by scholars who have shaped my own thinking and have opened up pathways for me to read our texts from antiquity anew. To help me in this endeavour, I have employed the writings of Peter Szondi because of the way he introduces understanding, *Erkenntnis,* into poetic processes, Walter Benjamin for helping release the shackles of generic categories especially in his thinking in the *Trauerspiel*, Nietzsche for his work on ancient composition and figure, and Friedrich Schlegel for his capacious and provocative work on philology. Their questions and answers about hermeneutics, translation, and philology have helped me enormously in my work on these ancient texts and on the history of scholarship.

As I have been doing already in the preceding chapters, I am problematizing the impulse to reconstruct the original, as though one could arrive there, and the related impulse to redeem the text teleologically in some kind of end-time or final redemption, an impulse that replaces earlier expressions of religion and covenant. It is an aspiration often authorized as a standard scholarly practice, but without much critique. Why is a backwards-moving philology more authoritative or more rigorous than a forward-moving philological practice which considers multiple iterations of texts and manuscripts, and unfolds their performance over time in a dynamic and vital context?[41] Can we take a different path through a forward-moving philology which exemplifies a forward-moving and dynamic consideration of performance?

we limit intertextuality to cases of exact verbal coincidence, we shall exclude a large number of instances in which the concept of intertextuality is indispensable. If we do not limit intertextuality to those cases, where do we draw the line?' To be sure, Boyarin also focused on how corpora interacted with each other in *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*. See also these helpful works: Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*: *Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Lowell Edmunds, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Roman Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

[41] Najman, 'Vitality of Scripture'; idem, 'Configuring the Text in Biblical Studies', in *A Teacher for All Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. VanderKam*, vol. 1, ed. Eric F. Mason et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 3–22; Kugel, *The Bible as It Was*. For a congenial approach to the history of the Masoretic Bible, see the field-changing work of Geoffrey Khan and his conversation about dynamic traditions through philological and performative traditions. See most recently Khan, *The Tiberian Pronunciation Tradition of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 1–115.

3.4 Nietzsche's Critique and Biblical Philology

At the outset of his career Nietzsche offered a critique of his discipline:

> It is but right that a philologist should describe his end and the means to it in the short formula of a confession of faith; and let this be done in the saying of Seneca which I thus reverse: 'philosophia facta est quae philologia fuit' ['What was once philology has now been made into philosophy'; reversing Seneca's 'quae philosophia fuit facta philologia est' (*Epistles* 108.23)]. By this I wish to signify that all philological activities should be enclosed and surrounded by a philosophical worldview.[42]

Philology, as Nietzsche saw it, is concerned not only with the formation of individual texts and collections but also with the formation of individual subjects. And because philology is concerned with classical texts in Greek and Latin, to which special significance is ascribed, it deals with the texts that play a primary role in the formation of our culture. Consequently, philology should not be dry and dusty antiquarianism. Rather, it should be a place in which our own culture critiques itself. And philology can be such a place only if it avoids narrow disciplinary confinement and if it answers the call to critique itself by articulating and criticizing its underlying presuppositions and philosophical worldview. Rigorous philology is therefore inseparable from what I have elsewhere called *ethical reading*, a term I will revisit and reintroduce in the next chapter.[43]

In essence, the Bible is in a process of becoming throughout the centuries (across different linguistic registers for different audiences). It is constituted in dialogue with linguistic, philosophical, and religious discourses. Let us return to the nascent stages of what has come to be called 'biblical studies'. The earliest stages of this field were inspired, shaped, and authored, not by narrow specialists, but by philosophers, professors of poetry, and philologists (classicists, orientalists, and Hebraists).[44] The disciplinary contexts for these founders and their forebears

[42] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Homer and Classical Philology (Inaugural Address delivered at Bâle University, 28th of May 1869)', in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, vol. 3, ed. Oscar Levy and trans. J. M. Kennedy (Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1910), pp. 169–70 (translation revised by Paul Franks). The German reads: 'Auch einem Philologen steht es wohl an, das Ziel seines Strebens und den Weg dahin in die kurze Formel eines Glaubensbekenntnisses zu drängen; und so sei dies gethan, indem ich einen Satz des Seneca also umkehre "philosophia facta est quae philologia fuit." Damit soll ausgesprochen sein, dass alle und jede philologische Thätigkeit umschlossen und eingehegt sein soll von einer philosophischen Weltanschauung.'

[43] Hindy Najman, 'Ethical Reading'; idem, 'Configuring the Text'.

[44] John W. Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); Eichhorn, *Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament*; Friedrich August Wolf, *Prolegomena to Homer, 1795: Translated with Introduction and Notes*, trans. Anthony Grafton et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

were in the European university, for example, Robert Lowth, Thomas Hobbes, and Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, involving Germanists, philosophers, and classicists. It is important to mark new and renewed beginnings for biblical studies in the context not only of the scientific study of Judaism (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) but also of the very disciplines from which biblical studies and Jewish studies originated, from which students can continue to learn, and to which teachers can continue to contribute: philology, philosophy, and poetics.

Biblical studies, classics, and the study of ancient Judaism and early Christianity are not single disciplines, but a dynamic matrix of many disciplines within the humanities more broadly. Indeed, the topic of this book is born out of the sense that biblical studies should never be constrained or exhausted by a single discrete discipline, language, or approach.[45] This is not just a desire, but rather an essential condition for the study of the Bible in the academy. Approached as a single discipline, biblical studies will lose its place in the academy and along with that its cultural significance, retaining only the religious.

In general, biblicists readily agree that the biblical traditions in the academy must be contextualized historically, culturally, and religiously. But one can also consider rhetoric, material philology, the practices of reading, interpretation, criticism, and linguistics, since all these various disciplines inform the way biblicists read and think about antiquity and modernity. This means that scholars may need to consider the movements and the developments of the study of poetry and literature as well as history and linguistics—to be current and informed but also, and perhaps more importantly, to be open to learning from the other's disciplinary contributions and to be able to read old and ancient texts anew or afresh. Biblicists focus on creating conditions for biblical studies to thrive within and to contribute to a growing and dynamic environment for the humanities and the social sciences.

The humanities as a whole could not be more essential to the formation of biblical studies in the history of the European university, especially when scholars are reminded that the field of biblical philology was born as the twin of classical studies. Together, Eichhorn and Wolf forged philology for both classics, on the one hand, and biblical studies and Jewish studies on the other.[46] The relationship between the humanities and the social sciences is, of course, essential to our conversation, but there is an especially foundational and intimate relationship to classics which I want to highlight. In fact, *anyone* who studied biblical Hebrew at a university from the Renaissance onwards had already studied Greek and Latin as part of his/her ordinary earlier education. These two languages exercised a profound

[45] As anticipated in Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, 2 vols, trans. G. Gregory (London: Printed for Ogles, Duncan, and Cochran, 1816).

[46] Timpanaro, *The Genesis of Lachmann's Method*; Eichhorn, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, vol. 1, pp. 383–4 = Eichhorn, *Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament*; Wolf, *Prolegomena to Homer*; Najman, 'Configuring the Text'; James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

influence on the understanding and conceptualization of Hebrew grammar, biblical genres, etc. To be *between Hebrew and Greek* is precisely the place for the creation of philological discourses.

Across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one of the twins came to be privileged over the other. One might not want to reinforce an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century idealization of the Greek past. This is not an argument for returning to the elevation of Hebrew alongside Greek and Latin as part of a construction of 'Western culture', for example, to the exclusion or devaluing of other languages or cultures. Yet, one does need to understand how this negative evaluative assessment of Hebrew in particular continues to play a very important role in the world of biblical studies and classical studies.

These developments call for an ethical self-critique of the sort envisioned by Nietzsche in his challenge to classical philology. This can, perhaps, help illuminate our discussion about biblical studies. How do scholars come to know and understand practices of composition, reading, and transmission of knowledge? How are not only texts and collections but also the subjectivities of readers formed? These questions cannot be studied within a single isolated tradition but must be considered across linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary boundaries.

There is a reciprocal dimension to the work that is done in biblical studies. I want to call for an investigation of our texts and related concepts. The texts that are studied can, and even should, have a voice and can model beauty, aesthetics, and the ethical as well as the ugly and the compromised. Of course, there is always a temptation to dig in our heels and turn our texts inward so that they are the possession of the few, the domain of disciplinary specialists. Alternatively, one can take an outward-looking and inclusive approach to the humanities at large. What do biblicists mean when they speak of philology? On the one hand, when they speak of philological practices they speak of grammar, lexicography, and historical linguistics. However, there is a whole host of cultural assumptions that biblicists carry with them when they practice philology: for example, our institutional practices, as well as scholarly conceptions of language and its development within its register and across contemporaneous cultural contexts. But also inextricably linked to the practices of philology are scribal practices. Philology, of course, participates in the scientific knowledge of language and syntax, but along with that subject matter practices of reading texts and editing also demand investigation. To understand the compositional inner workings in the assembly of a text is also to understand that text across time both concerning production and with respect to development, in which I want to include revision, interpolation, refinement, and pluriformity. This I called, in the previous chapters, a forward-moving philology.

Philological practices in our tradition participate in the work of scribal activity and traditions of oral performance. Furthermore, scholarly practices of editing and interpretation are deeply engaged in the process of understanding and explanation. Philology then is inextricably linked to the work of hermeneutics and to that

end, scholars must be self-conscious and critical of their scholarly expectations and assumptions.

To return to the role intertextuality has taken in biblical studies, I want to suggest that intertexts do not interrupt reading. They should not invite us to further break down our texts into their parts. Rather, they are an integral and integrated part of a new work. To be sure, cultural contexts are important and relevant, but they are not the endpoint. Understanding, from Kristeva, that any and every work is always made up of others' words, does not help us read the text itself. Rather, it is part of the movement of the text.

3.5 Poetic Processes

Undertaking philology as hermeneutics leads us, then, to try to formulate some of the distinctive laws of philological understanding. At the core of this, I think, is a rejection of what biblical scholars might call the idea of uniformity: uniformity across an author's work or uniformity of a work within its context. To celebrate the text as poetry and as a cultural artefact which is ever dynamic and vital, one can come to be more reflective of our own philology and of our own understanding of the text.

My own comparative work on philology in antiquity considers practices of philology alongside practices of reading. The goal of this kind of philology is two-fold: (1) to understand the history of biblical philology with corresponding related disciplines; and (2) to integrate new insights into scholarly philological practices from other fields and from new findings. In short, practices of philology must be considered alongside practices of reading which can be exemplified through interpretation but also through composition of new text.

The twentieth-century Hungarian-German literary critic and philologist Peter Szondi focused on the way a 'work' develops over time and considered the concept of 'poetic process'. He was interested not in a single originary moment of text production, or in its first expression, i.e. the Urtext. Rather, he was concerned with the ongoing and ever-continuous productivity of a work with respect to its history, philology, and production. He understood the work of the scholar as an intervening reader who continues to produce the texts through their own reading.

Szondi's conception of philology was also rooted in the future and in the past, but he conceptualized philology in light of the present of a certain collection or work. This work is complex and situated within time, but its impact is over time with a new enlivening present through rereading. Reading for Szondi is about understanding the interrelational dimensions of a work not as a work only of the past but rather as one that is life-giving to itself through internal conversation and its afterlife as a read and interpreted text. Whereas intertextuality has been taken in biblical studies as a lens through which to examine only a text's indebtedness or its

reception—both of which imply linearity—Szondi's framework allows us to more deeply reconsider the text as both internally complex and as giving rise to complex interaction. Philosophically, much of Szondi's work was devoted to *Erkenntnis*—understanding—and to bridging a past to the future through practices of reading.

For Szondi, through scholars' continued interventions, the works are rendered comprehensible and historically contextualized and then reread, which then adds to the text's vitality. It is my hope, that Szondi can help offer biblical studies an intervention into current developments in biblical hermeneutics.

I will return to Szondi in the final chapter, but his contribution can already help us reflect on compositional practices. I am interested in the compositional practices that contribute to the compositional dimensions of what goes into the collection, compilation, and assembly of a work over time. Philology is at once syntactical, exegetical, historical, and compositional—it is at once ancient and modern. It might be crystalized in the history of modern philology by Wolf and Eichhorn, but it is not determined only by their practices. New doors can be opened as our philological practices are rethought through hermeneutics.

Historically, in biblical studies, commentary was understood only to be late and subsequent to the formation and fixity of the Jewish canon of Scripture in Hebrew Bible traditions. In fact, the whole Hellenistic period of Jewish literature was seen as late and subsequent. The Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrated that there was a great deal of early interpretation: from targum to pesher, from rewritten Pentateuch to entirely new compositions that reused and implemented biblical traditions. However, these findings went much further as they came to impact the biblical texts themselves. The place of interpretation within the biblical canon became far more integrated and central to this work.[47] Consideration of the place of interpretation in the very composition of the biblical texts themselves became central to the discourse of biblical studies.[48] My point is that it opened up pathways that had not been considered.

It is indeed the case that, while scholarship already recognized the contribution of the scrolls to understanding the history of interpretation, scholarship overall did not see the larger implications for transforming the way Judaism was understood

[47] See Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*; William H. Brownlee, 'Biblical Interpretation among the Sectaries of the Dead Sea Scrolls', *BA* 14, no. 4 (1951): pp. 54–76, doi:10.2307/3209298; idem, 'Pesharim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books', *JBL* 102, no. 2 (1983): pp. 323–7, doi:10.2307/3261189; idem, *The Midrash Pesher Habakkuk* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979); Bernard M. Levinson, *A More Perfect Torah: At the Intersection of Philology and Hermeneutics in Deuteronomy and the Temple Scroll* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2021); idem, *Legal Revision and Religious Renewal in Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); George J. Brooke, *Reading the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essays in Method* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013); idem, 'Scripture and Scriptural Tradition in Transmission: Light from the Dead Sea Scrolls', in *The Scrolls and Biblical Traditions*: *Proceedings of the Seventh Meeting of the IOQS in Helsinki*, ed. idem et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 1–17.

[48] Moshe J. Bernstein, 'The Contribution of the Qumran Discoveries to the History of Early Biblical Interpretation', in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 215–38.

and characterized in the Hellenistic period. The scrolls attest to a dramatic transformation of textuality, theology, and practices of reading which led to new liturgies and religious practices.

In Pentateuchal or Jeremiah studies, for example, discussions of sources and layers have historically predominated. Now, increasingly, the critical question is less about how to reconstruct the earliest layer of a text or the differentiation of sources than about charting the growth of tradition through interpretation, compositional variety, and flexibility. In the words of George Brooke:

> Scholars could pursue a continued undermining of the difference between higher and lower criticisms by insisting that the goal of philology is not the discovery of an original text (a key aspect of old text criticism) but a better understanding of the text in the form that we have received it (even if fragmentary), in its particularity.[49]

The intense re-opening of the field to new literary criticism in the 1970s and 1980s brought about new enthusiasm about the interpretative dimensions of the Tanakh in formation and interest in our earliest records of reception and transcription. Furthermore, it demonstrated that biblical texts are alive and dynamic to their production even at the levels of internal composition and transcription (as a kind of study and performance respectively). The Masoretic text proved to be a single voice in a web of complex and variegated traditions of vocalization, accent, and performance.[50] Our existing models of higher and lower criticism, of literary analysis and historical reconstruction, do not capture the new information we have come to understand about the growth of biblical canon, from the scrolls and elsewhere.

It is that optimism, but also recognition of the need for extensive correction, that brings me back to vitality. We must interrogate the ways in which ancient texts have been read to accommodate existing narratives. If the Hebrew Bible is read as superseded as the Old Testament, it will be studied retrospectively with a dogmatic burial. If the Dead Sea Scrolls are rendered sectarian and marginal to the history

[49] George J. Brooke, 'The Qumran Scrolls and the Demise of the Distinction between Higher and Lower Criticism', in *New Directions in Qumran Studies: Proceedings of the Bristol Colloquium on the Dead Sea Scrolls, 8–10 September 2003*, ed. Jonathan G. Campbell et al. (London: T&T Clark, 2005), pp. 26–42. In this essay Brooke explicitly challenges the search for the Urtext in section 3.2 entitled: "Given Up the Pursuit of the Original Text."

[50] See Khan: *The Tiberian Pronunciation Tradition of Biblical Hebrew*; idem, *A Short Introduction to the Tiberian Masoretic Bible and Its Reading Tradition*, 2nd edn (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2013); idem, 'Innovative Morphological Distinctions in Verbal Forms in the Samaritan and Tiberian Reading Traditions of Biblical Hebrew', *JSem* 30, no. 2 (2021): pp. 2–12; idem, 'The Phasal Narrative Function of Long *yiqṭol* and *weqaṭal* in Biblical Hebrew', in *Linguistic and Philological Studies of the Hebrew Bible and its Manuscripts*, ed. Vincent D. Beiler and Aaron D. Rubin (Leiden: Brill, 2023). See also Moshe Greenberg, 'The Use of Ancient Versions for Interpreting the Hebrew Text: A Sampling from Ezekiel ii 1–iii 11', in *Congress Volume, Göttingen 1977*, ed. John Emerton (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 131–48. See also David Stern, *The Jewish Bible: A Material History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017).

of the development of Judaism, their contribution to the dynamic voice of Hebrew, hermeneutics, and Jewish philosophy will be silenced.

The Hellenistic period is a much-understudied context for thinking about plurilingualism,[51] revitalization of Judaism in a golden age of philosophical and hermeneutical reflection, scribal patterns of performance, and philological development (Hebrew both as a vernacular and as a literary language). By shifting our gaze forward to a vital and creative contribution to the development of Judaism, this period can serve to contribute much to our understanding of the history of Judaism with respect to philology, philosophy, and the poetic.

To reiterate, the Hellenistic period has been considered a period of *Spätjudentum*, a kind of late development or even an afterthought of Judaism.[52] Or it has been seen as a time prior to the watershed of the rabbinic movement which is said to have been formed fundamentally in the aftermath of 70 CE.[53] My claim is that this is a period of radical innovation, deep and complex engagement with the Greek philosophical tradition, and a fundamentally *formative* period for the history of Judaism. This will be true for Jewish philosophy, mysticism, the tradition of commentary and interpretation, and, also, for the traditions of performance, grammar, and hermeneutics.

Innovation is also exhibited in hermeneutics, prayer, as well as translations. The earliest translations of what comes to be called the Septuagint, that is, Greek Bible and the narrative around the Letter of Aristeas, exhibit tremendous creativity and innovation in the context of the early Greek materials.[54] What we have come to understand is that the Hellenistic period is one of poesis, imagination, new innovative composition, practices of refinement, editing, and expansion (legal, liturgical/performance, scribal, and oracular).

This requires that we recognize that the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE and then the Second Temple's destruction in 70 CE did not interrupt creativity.

[51] See Glenn W. Most, Dagmar Schäfer, and Mårten Söderblom Saarela, eds, *Plurilingualism in Traditional Eurasian Scholarship: Thinking in Many Tongues* (Leiden: Brill, 2023); Louis Jonker, Angelika Berlejung, and Isak Cornelius, eds, *Multilingualism in Ancient Contexts: Perspectives from Ancient Near Eastern and Early Christian Contexts* (Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2021).

[52] Cf. Konrad Schmid, 'The Rise and Fall of the Notion of "*Spätjudentum*" in Christian Biblical Scholarship', in *Protestant Bible Scholarship: Antisemitism, Philosemitism and Anti-Judaism*, ed. Arjen Bakker et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 63–78.

[53] See Daniel R. Schwartz and Zeev Weiss, eds, *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

[54] See Alison Salvesen, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Septuagint*, ed. Alison Salvesen and Timothy Michael Law (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 1–12; James K. Aitken, 'The Language of the Septuagint and Jewish Greek Identity', in *The Jewish-Greek Tradition in Antiquity and the Byzantine Empire*, ed. James K. Aitken and James Carleton Paget (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 120–34; James K. Aitken, 'The Septuagint and Jewish Translation Traditions', in *Septuagint, Targum and Beyond: Comparing Aramaic and Greek Versions from Jewish Antiquity*, ed. David J. Shepherd et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 197–227; Martin Rösel, *Tradition and Innovation: English and German Studies on the Septuagint* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019); Johann Cook and Martin Rösel, eds, *Toward a Theology of the Septuagint: Stellenbosch Congress on the Septuagint, 2018* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020).

On the contrary, there was even more growth and dynamic production. There is destruction, but it does not mark the kind of rupture that has been called an end to prophecy. Rather it marks the beginning of prophecy inflected by destruction. Different from what had been, to be sure, but resilient and sustained both linguistically and philologically. Hebrew was transformed, and a new vernacular and a new literary dialect was born. This is true for the language but also true for the philosophical and poetic imagination. This does not mean, however, that Hebrew was an artificial language in the Hellenistic period. On the contrary, I would argue that such a claim participates in the very same line of thinking that we have already problematized above around the narrative of *Spätjudentum*.

Even more, throughout the Graeco-Roman period, there were increased expansions and revisions of existing literary and scribal traditions, as well as rich iconic traditions evidenced in ancient Jewish synagogues and Jewish manuscript traditions. Vivid depictions of deity, cosmos, and monarchy in both material and textual traditions also came to life. These depictions are exhibited in a number of different ways from text to object, from temple to synagogue, and from ritual innovation to the study of text. Thus we can see these innovations in the Magdala Stone, early Jewish mosaics, and textual and meditative study spaces across many different sites.[55] These traditions from the Greek and Hebrew communities along with the extant textual traditions both in scrolls and inscriptions, testify to ongoing innovation in study, teaching, and prayer (both as read and as performed aloud, as evidenced in some texts with scribal and prosaic discussions).[56] These practices of philology are ongoing and profoundly vivid through what we can decipher, restore, and reconstruct.

3.6 Continuity and Pluriformity

Across the second half of the twentieth century, in the aftermath of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars came to reflect deeply on early biblical interpretation. Perhaps the most important volume on this topic was James Kugel's work *The Bible as It Was*, which served as a catalytic force for attending to interpretations that were found amongst the scrolls.[57] His work drew people back into interpretative patterns within the Bible but also carried scholars forward into practices of reading in the New Testament, Hellenistic Jewish texts, the Tannaitic and Amoraic traditions,

[55] Rina Talgam with D. Avshalom – Gorni and A. Najar, *From the Magdala Stone to the Syriac Bema: Mutual Influences between the Liturgical Space in the Early Synagogue and Church* (Brill: Leiden, forthcoming, 2024). See also Zeev Weiss, 'The "Magdala Stone Table": Its Function and Role in Determining the Liturgical Furniture in the Ancient Synagogue', *JRA* 34, no. 2 (2021): pp. 608–31, doi:10.1017/S1047759421000544.

[56] See for example the following texts: Philo of Alexandria's *De Vita Contemplativa*, Ezekiel the Tragedian's *Exagoge*, 1QS, and Pesher Habakkuk.

[57] Kugel, *The Bible as It Was*.

and the interpretative work of the church fathers as well as ever-emerging gnostic readings from the Nag Hammadi texts. This groundbreaking work opened up new ways of thinking about interpretation across the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Furthermore, his work helped us understand the flowing waters of hermeneutics, wisdom, practices of commentary and reading, and interpretative motifs that continue to be shared across centuries of reading communities.

I came to understand that we could mark these changes not only with a single text, but also through texts that participate in what has been called rewriting or what I prefer to call re-articulation of old or existing tradition to generate a new text through a variety of operations through texts, image (e.g. mosaics), but also through charting the crystallization of particular concepts over time.

Part of my critique of the field which I articulate here came out of the new findings about composition and textual revisions we can trace through the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as the vital and dynamic information we were also able to gather up through the Cairo Geniza. The scrolls in particular demanded that we rethink and challenge the notion of a single archetype and instead reflect on the kind of pluriformity that Peter Schäfer exemplified in his edition of the Hekhalot[58] or Gruenwald and Hayman demonstrated in the case of Sefer Yetzirah,[59] which is a great example of how there was not just a singular version out of which any variation, corruption, or error emerged. In earlier traditions likewise, we have come to understand that pluriformity is a way of life and breath of a text, not its indecision or lack of the earliest layer. Pluriformity challenges us not to think in terms of a fixed text and rather in terms of an identity of a corpus which has a great deal of flexibility. These fluidities allow scholars to trace the creative and dynamic traditions.[60]

Part of that flexibility is variation which can suggest a vibrant and dynamic understanding of versions (as opposed to reconstruction). Another part of that flexibility is about the way in which Scripture not only exhibits vitality through pluriformity but also through a variety of ways of articulation through composition of new Scripture and of early forms of reading practices (pesher, commentaries, rewritings, targumim, and more).

My point is that the texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls and many other Jewish texts of the Hellenistic period are part of a dynamic textual and performative tradition

[58] Peter Schäfer, Margarete Schlüter, and Hans Georg von Mutius, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981). See also Daniel Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscript and Textual Theory* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2010), pp. 41–7.

[59] Ithamar Gruenwald, 'A Preliminary Critical Edition of *Sefer Yezira*', *IOS* 1 (1971): pp. 132–77; A. Peter Hayman, *Sefer Yeṣira: Edition, Translation, and Text-Critical Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

[60] Note in particular the study of models of priestly authority across the multiple versions of the Exodus Tabernacle account by Nathan MacDonald, *The Making of the Tabernacle and the Construction of Priestly Hegemony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

of dynamic survival like living through a past. This is much like what Walter Benjamin called *Überleben*.[61]

I hope here to anticipate some of the contributions of these insights to Part II and my work on Jubilees. That is, Jubilees is already participating in a tradition that is articulating and performing Scripture through new works. This is part of what it is to read and perform Scripture, namely, to transform and re-articulate.

So, whether it happens in the law codes or in the narrative retellings, this articulation is part of the life and survival of ancient Jewish tradition.[62] It seems that the more we consider practices of reading and writing within the Dead Sea Scrolls that it becomes even clearer that we need to attend to the particular forms of what I am calling 're-articulation'. While the language of 'rewritten Bible' still holds sway in our field this language is not, I suggest, appropriate. These texts are not reworking fixed texts, and they certainly do not do so with the apparent goal of replacing them.[63] We are not confronting a rewritten Bible any more than we are confronting medieval commentary traditions. Both conceptions imply an anachronistic understanding of the workings of these texts. This matters, furthermore, because it means that Jews in the Hellenistic period seem to be doing something rather different than rewriting. It means that the author of Jubilees, or the Chronicler for that matter,[64] is less bound by the biblical text that we as scholars have assumed the author or the interpretative community is rewriting. Rather there seems to be a freedom to continue to write, produce, and authorize what we might call 'new Scriptures'.

We will see in Part II that Jubilees provides an important example of this phenomenon but it is just one of a series of examples. Other such examples are very different in style and form to Jubilees but play the same role with respect to what I want to call creativity and poesis in the Hellenistic period. Here we might include the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian, Instruction, Hodayot, and Wisdom of Solomon amongst many, many more. My central point here is that articulation—a new performance of the earlier writings—is not about (a) replacement or (b) rewriting. Rather, I take it to be a revitalization of the biblical text through new writing and imagination.

[61] See discussion above on pp. 57–8.

[62] On the role of this already in Pentateuchal traditions, see e.g. Konrad Schmid, *The Scribes of the Torah: The Formation of the Pentateuch in its Literary and Historical Contexts* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2023).

[63] I offered these critiques already in *Seconding Sinai*. See esp. ch. 2: 'Rewriting, Rewritten: Jubilees and 11QTemple as Participants in Mosaic Discourse', pp. 49–69.

[64] See e.g. Gary N. Knoppers, *Prophets, Priests, and Promises: Essays on the Deuteronomistic History, Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah*, ed. Christl M. Maier and H. G. M. Williamson (Leiden: Brill, 2021). I highlight here 'Part 2: Mimesis, Prophetic Succession, and Scribal Prophecy', pp. 83–197.

4
Reading, Fragments, and Selfhood

In the preceding chapters, we have examined some of the key issues, as I see them, which have shaped—or which can, going forward, shape—reading and hermeneutics as they are undertaken for early Jewish literature. I have argued for a forward-moving philology as the fitting response to the variety and vitality we see in Jewish literature of the Hellenistic era. Here, closing this first methodologically focused section, I turn more explicitly to the self. What is the understanding of the self or selves imagined by these ancient texts, and how does the reader imagine their self in relation to the text as they are affected, even transformed, by reading? Perhaps, as we begin this chapter, the unifying question I want to reflect on is: what is the integrity of the text and of the self, and how are these entangled in the processes of reading?

4.1 On the Integrity of the Text and Its Construction

Ancient texts such as the Hebrew Bible may often be reduced to fragments of an irretrievable past. I have shown in the preceding chapters that this retrospective orientation often leaves our ancient texts as derivative products of earlier originals, or perhaps fragments pointing us to those originals. Instead of trying to reduce the text to a snapshot or fragment of a lost whole, I would rather describe the books of the Hebrew Bible as dynamic films of composition, and moving images that contribute overall to an understanding of ancient Israel. I maintain, for example, that the text of the Pentateuch itself is fluid and alive to the very traditions it inscribes and rewrites, although I think sometimes there is also an element of transmitting traditions even though they are not understood. Can one re-open the various sources or units as in particular narratives or pericopes with an eye towards the text's compositional and cultural history (insofar as it can be reconstructed) while also reading with an eye to its aesthetic, with respect to its organic and unifying development—philologically, ideologically, and literarily?

A different reading practice is needed in order to understand these texts. The solution cannot be to disintegrate the narrative into parts. We need not—indeed, we cannot—only ever read as source critics, identifying seams and sources to fragment the text. Rather, I am arguing that expressions of inconsistency or contradiction are preserved for a whole host of possible reasons: reasons of tradition or of integration of communities with competing traditions (amongst other reasons).

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I might even go further and suggest that the priority of our ancient Israelite poets and prophets was not a smooth or seamless integration. We need not impose this aesthetic value upon them. Could their default option not have been to create a coherent streamlined narrative, but rather to integrate as much as they could from existing traditions?[1]

There is a need for a hermeneutical turn in biblical studies in order to develop a way of reading the Pentateuch, and the Hebrew Bible more generally, that takes into account the ambiguities that its authors and redactors produced and that are responsible for the essentially dynamic nature of both the text itself and its use and re-use throughout its reception history. It is a mode of philology as hermeneutics that both presupposes the rigors of etymology and grammar but moves beyond that mode by applying it to a practice of reading which is intricate and interweaving with respect to the work, or corpus.[2] The goal is to understand an organic whole, though this is not to presuppose an anachronistic, predetermined canonical whole. Rather, by reading the organic whole as dynamic, I hope to pave the way to a new mode of critical reading.

In order to understand the formation and emergence of the Tanakh, we should continue to rethink the contribution of the Dead Sea Scrolls here. It is essential to understand how, in the Hellenistic period, new forms of vitalization and textual creativity emerged in a particularly Hellenistic milieu. This is the case both with respect to the production of new texts and to the production of commentary on the older materials. But what are the implications for thinking about these compositional practices?

The answer lies in the way we conceive of the author of new texts. Here I am thinking of the author as a reader and that reader as an emerging subject, whether as an individual or as an interpretative community. I have shown that while the retrospective orientation towards originary moments might imply a dichotomy between those originating texts and those responding to them, in fact, we see a much deeper entanglement between the creation of new compositions and the re-imagining of existing ones. Fundamentally the reader of those textual traditions emerges as the new voice both with respect to reception and to the transformation of the older tradition now in the space of a new tradition. The ongoing transformation of prior textual traditions goes well beyond the interpretative as

[1] See the discussion from Edward L. Greenstein who argues that inconsistency is not an irritant to ancient Near Eastern scribes and tradents: review of Jan C. Gertz et al., eds, *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, *RBL* 1 (2019). See also Joel Rosenberg, 'Bible: A Biblical Narrative', in *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, ed. Barry W. Holtz (New York: Summit Books, 1984), pp. 31–81, and Joshua Berman, *Inconsistency in the Torah: Ancient Literary Convention and the Limits of Source Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[2] See David A. Lambert, 'Refreshing Philology: James Barr, Supersessionism, and the State of Biblical Words', *BibInt* 24, no. 3 (2016): pp. 332–56, doi:10.1163/15685152-00243p03.

the rewritings, commentaries, and songs (amongst other literary tendencies).[3] Rather, these readers and communities create new texts and new conditions for earlier textual traditions, but now in new contexts (innovative with respect to language, culture, and at times even theological or philosophical outlook). My point here is that just as language continues to grow in dynamic ways—between the oral and the written, as well as across new cultural influences and integrations—so too the new voices of individuals and communities are manifest through the vitality of new textual traditions.

This discussion of continued vitality and textual production also speaks against the claim that prophecy ended. It was once common to claim that prophecy ended prior to the Hellenistic period. This is yet another feature in the narrative we have already discussed: what is early is original and what is original is of greater value aesthetically, historically, and spiritually. In Chapter 2 we saw some of the interplay of these values in Lowth's work. While certain scholars have queried whether prophecy ended per se, the idea of that end—like the idea of the Hellenistic period as late and oriented only towards reception or rewriting—still casts a shadow over the field of biblical studies. I want to emphasize here that prophecy did not end but rather continued to transform.[4]

4.2 The Self and the Prophet

Here it is productive to introduce an emerging understanding of the self in Jewish antiquity. This discourse crosses a full range of texts in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Jewish texts generally. Here we trace the individual aspiring towards a next self, even towards an ideal next self, through prayer, contemplation, and ritual acts. The continuing work we see in these texts to shape and improve the self in a range of ways demonstrates yet again the continuing vitality of Jewish literature into the Hellenistic period (and, of course, beyond). We see a continued interest in shaping the self concerning the divine, an aspiration to *imitatio dei* as I will return to in Chapter 8. All of this speaks to dynamic thinking about the construction of the self. This is left sidelined or unimagined if we maintain a conception of the end to prophecy or an end to inspiration.

[3] I am avoiding the term genre here since, as I have discussed elsewhere, while we may see 'generic norms' across a number of our texts, we do not find self-conscious claims of 'genre' or attempts to conform to 'genre' per se as we find with, for example, Greek tragedy. There are other groupings of text which merit our attention (what I have called 'constellations'), and we need not impose excessively rigid or anachronistic models onto our texts. See my article, 'The Idea of Biblical Genre: From Discourse to Constellation', in *Prayer and Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature: Essays in Honor of Eileen Schuller on the Occasion of Her 65th Birthday*, ed. Jeremy Penner et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 307–21.

[4] See my discussion of the end of prophecy in *Losing the Temple and Recovering the Future: An Analysis of 4 Ezra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 3–5.

These ideas are central to the argument I have made elsewhere that prophecy does not end in the face of destruction; rather it develops a particular inflection, i.e. revelation inflected by destruction.[5] That is, the revelatory summons of the other can demolish the present self and call the recipient to the next self. But can this occur even in an environment where the very concept of prophecy has been forgotten or become confused?

Part of the challenge of understanding the self, I would want to argue, is also about understanding what that self can become. The self, I have already suggested, is dynamic and aspires to the next self, not to a static state of being. But to move beyond one's framework—to aspire to another state of being—one would have to imagine life beyond one's own present. In a profound way, that is what it is to become a prophet. The prophet looks beyond the here and now to other times—past, present, and future—and to the divine. But is this even possible in an environment that no longer remembers prophecy or understands prophecy? Even more, what does such forgetting say about selfhood and becoming if the revelatory no longer plays a role in human understanding?

Stephen Mulhall considers Wittgenstein's discussion of what it is to lose a concept, as well as Stanley Cavell's reflections on this loss. Wittgenstein writes (in the *Investigations* §19): 'to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life'.[6] Would it be possible to understand the form of life in which prophecy is viable, even in an environment where prophecy in the Hellenistic period for ancient Judaism was said to have exhausted itself? To be sure, this would require us to remember what it was to claim to *be a prophet*. But even more than that: what does it mean to claim to be a prophet and to live in a society that could sincerely respond to such a claim, without, say, raising the question of the claimant's sanity?

Stanley Cavell writes (drawing on Wittgenstein) about forgetting or losing a concept versus confusion about a concept. According to Cavell, in the case of Kierkegaard, authority and obedience were forgotten. However, the concept of revelation has been confused. This, Cavell argues, has a lot to do with Kierkegaard's attempt to free Christianity from Christendom (from the institution of Christendom that claims authority).[7]

These two ways in which prophecy was no longer viable—through forgetting and confusion—are important for us to understand the self vis-à-vis the divine according to Kierkegaard. What would it take to understand the revelatory after

[5] Ibid., pp. 6–25, 70.

[6] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), §19.

[7] Stanley Cavell, 'Kierkegaard's *Authority and Revelation*', in *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* (New York: Scribner, 1969), pp. 171–2; Stephen Mulhall, 'A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs: Stanley Cavell on Søren Kierkegaard', in *Debates in Nineteenth Century European Philosophy: Essential Readings and Contemporary Responses*, ed. Kristin Gjesdal (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 248–58; idem, 'Authority and Revelation', in *The Ascetic Ideal: Genealogies of Life-Denial in Religion, Morality, Art, Science, and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 18–98.

prophecy—for the ancients and the moderns? What are the new forms where revelation surfaces (words and contexts), and how is that marked? Is it art? Genius? Interpretation? Prayer?

There is a transformation both in antiquity and in modernity. On the one hand, there is the so-called end of prophecy in Judaism in the Hellenistic period. The claim that prophecy ended is contextualized as rupture. Yet that rupture is also characterized as losing the thread with respect to salvation history. The presupposition of the revelatory is broken in the context of the loss of confidence in redemptive promise and the threat of false hope in the mouths of false prophets. It strikes me that this claim about the forgetting of a concept and the confusion of what that way of life is goes to the very heart of the way the end of prophecy is characterized.

But new and transformed ways emerged both in antiquity and in modernity to overcome such a rupture in ways that were resilient and even tenacious. In antiquity, the expression moved from the prophetic to inspired interpretation, a new kind of spiritual authority accompanied by forms of *askesis* and *metanoia*.[8] Whereas in modernity, new forms arose for example through modernist art, and according to Cavell, what emerged was a kind of new apostleship—not genius. In other words, on Cavell's conception of modernism, the artist and the work of art demanded to be understood by means of religious categories.

These redefinitions still leave scholars of modernity and antiquity speaking about an 'end' to prophecy. But, perhaps the best construal of 'the end of prophecy' is not that prophecy is no longer possible, or no longer actual, that prophecy has ceased, but something closer to what Hegel meant by 'the end of art'. In his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Hegel said:

> The beautiful days of Greek art, like the golden age of the later Middle Ages, are gone . . . In all these respects art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our ideas instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place.[9]

Hegel did not mean that art had ceased. Art was now part of a *tradition*, which had to be reactivated and renewed, actively made present, if it was to continue. That is, the reflection and critique of art was essential to its appreciation. As Cavell understood modernism, it arose from the thought that, if the tradition of art was to be reactivated, it would have to be by radical means that alienate and challenge art's audience. Cavell explains that what he means by 'the burden of modernism'

[8] But not for everyone. See Ishay Rosen-Zvi, 'Between Wisdom and Apocalypse: Reading *Tosefta Soṭah* Chapters 10–15', *HTR* 115, no. 1 (2022): pp. 46–68, doi:10.1017/S0017816021000377. In this piece, Rosen-Zvi argues from a passage from *Tosefta Sota* that prophecy tout court never ended.

[9] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 1, trans. Thomas Malcolm Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 20–1.

is: 'the procedures and problems it now seems necessary to composers to employ and confront to make a work of art at all themselves ensure that their work will not be comprehensible to an audience'.[10]

In the context of this self-conscious interaction with the past as a kind of vitality, we might revisit the discussion of pseudonymity, addressed in the previous chapter. After it is no longer possible to claim revelation of the self that is ever approaching an improvement (i.e. the next self), one invokes an 'other', or a past self, or even a past example, formed through revelation. Through that, past authority is transferred to the present. Here, one might say, prophecy has become 'a thing of the past'—but this does not mean that prophecy ceased.

It would be interesting indeed to think about Kierkegaard's practices of pseudonymous attribution as a distinctively modernist variant, in which the use of pseudonyms is a way to claim no authority whatsoever, instead leaving the entire question of revelation to the individual reader. Kierkegaard's pseudonyms are not traditionally authoritative figures like Moses and Ezra. They have no authority but deflect the question of the authority of the author, Kierkegaard himself, who claims none. Like a modernist artist, Kierkegaard risks alienating his audience altogether through the use of pseudonyms. So deep is our confusion about the concept of revelation in the present age, according to Kierkegaard, that it would be better to destroy the false sense that we all know what it means. He would rather lose his audience altogether than continue cultivating confusion. The only hope for clarity must arise from this destruction if it is to arise at all. Revelation is, then, 'a thing of the past' that can be made present only to the extent that we realize how much we fail to understand it and what it demands of our lives.

4.3 Aspiration, Perfectionism, and Ethical Reading

So, in the discussion above, we have seen the intimate connections between the emerging conception of the self and the role of the prophet even as we find claims of prophecy as ending or forgotten. I mentioned already that in early Jewish literature, we see emerging ideas of the self not as static but as aspiring and as in the process of shaping. Here I turn more explicitly to the self of the reader, a self that is also in formation as it engages text and, more particularly, fragments.

Here I begin with Stanley Cavell's understanding of what he calls moral perfectionism. He writes as follows:

> Perfectionism, as I think of it, is not a competing theory of the moral life, but something like a dimension or tradition of the moral life that spans the course

[10] Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, p. 187.

> of Western thought and concerns what used to be called the state of one's soul, a dimension that places tremendous burdens on personal relationships and on the possibility or necessity of the transforming of oneself and of one's society.[11]

What Cavell calls perfectionism is not an alternative theory of the moral life. It is not an alternative account of what is valuable in moral action. Rather, it is a dimension of the moral life. It is that dimension that is concerned, not with moral action and its evaluation, but rather with the fragile achievement of moral agency. What does it take to become a moral agent? What threatens to undo moral agency, to render human beings not immoral but inhuman?

Biblical reading, both ancient and modern, as I have described it, is ethical in this perfectionist sense. It operates within the dimension where moral agency is made and unmade; where the self is shaped and unshaped through narratives, images, and critical encounters with the traditions of interpretative communities. In ethical reading, the self steps back from action. Like the runner who takes her mark before the firing of the starting pistol, the position assumed at this crucial moment, though prior to evaluated action, may have a decisive effect upon the action once it is undertaken.

Yet, how do we conceive of our relationship to these ancient texts which we seek to read? Here I want to bring Friedrich Schlegel's discussion of 'fragmentariness' to this conversation. More particularly I will begin with his celebrated distinction between the classical and the romantic. Schlegel's emphasis on the importance of fragmentariness came in contrast to Winckelmann who had sought to re-insert Greek works of art—available mostly in copies or fragments—into their original cultural contexts, and he had argued that the classical status of ancient Greek art arose from the perfect fit between the works and their culture, constituting a seamless whole. Schlegel at first sought to model his work on Winckelmann's, attempting to write an account of Greek poetry that would parallel Winckelmann's history of Greek art while drawing on the methods of Wolf.[12] Yet, Winckelmann believed that the ancient works of art could be re-inserted to demonstrate completeness and harmony.[13]

[11] Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (La Salle: Open Court Press, 1990), p. 2. Cavell further develops his conception of moral perfectionism in *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) and *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[12] Christian Benne and Ulrich Breuer, eds, *Antike—Philologie—Romantik: Friedrich Schlegels altertumswissenschaftliche Manuskripte* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2011); Ulrich Breuer, Remigius Bunia, and Armin Erlinghagen, eds, *Friedrich Schlegel und die Philologie* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2013).

[13] See foreword by Rodolphe Gasché in Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Jochen Schulte-Sasse et al., eds, *Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), esp. §III, 'The Fragmentary Imperative', pp. 287–358.

In *Athenäum* fragment 24, Schlegel wrote: 'Many works of the ancients have become fragments. Many works of the moderns are fragments from the moment of their emergence.'[14] That 'many works of the ancients have become fragments' is obvious. Winckelmann had written a celebrated essay on the fragmentary torso of the Belvedere Apollo, in which he weeps over his inability to see the statue in its originary wholeness.[15] But how can 'many works of the moderns' be 'fragments from the moment of their emergence'? Fragment 77 offers a clue: 'A dialogue is a chain or a garland of fragments.'[16] The reason why each contribution to a dialogue is a fragment is because it calls for a response from an interlocutor. Similarly, the works of the moderns are fragments because they call for the response of the critic. Are the works of the ancients superior to the works of the moderns because they need no response from the reader because they claim originary wholeness? Or are the works of the moderns superior because they make explicit through their fragmentary form that the call to the critic is a feature of art as such? Setting ancient Greek art aside, it is clear that biblical traditions have always been understood as incomplete. Indeed, this incompleteness or fragmentariness has often been regarded as a problem for the reader and a deficit for the text. Yet, taking seriously Schegel's understanding of fragmentariness, we can recontextualize this incompleteness. The biblical texts are—and have always been—calling for the response of the reader, a response that has taken many forms. To name but a few: enactment, rewriting, redaction, interpretation, and translation. In short, biblical texts are, like Schlegel's works of the moderns, 'fragments from the moment of their emergence'. Accordingly, what is at stake is not the restoration of originary wholeness. What is at stake instead is how one responds to the biblical text's call to the reader. Biblical philology is one such response.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, philology—both biblical and classical—encountered a crisis of its own making. At the outset, there seemed to be no conflict between the scientific status of philology, which was rigorizing its methods and transcending its previous status as an art, and the importance of its subject matter: the Bible on the one hand and classical civilization on the other. Within culture, a special normative status was claimed for both the Bible and classical civilization. Each was treated as uniquely worthy of study because each was regarded as having a special ability to shape the ethical and spiritual subjectivity of its students.[17] However, as philology honed its methods, the quest for the origin, which was already regarded as an unattainable ideal, was superseded by

[14] Friedrich Schlegel, 'Athenäum Fragments', in *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 21.

[15] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988). See also Hans Decker, *Biblical Wisdom and the Hermeneutics of Nostalgia: Rereading the Poetics of the Familiar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), forthcoming.

[16] Schlegel, 'Athenäum Fragments', p. 27.

[17] Joshua Billings, 'Nietzsche's Philology of the Present', *NLH* 51, no. 3 (2020): pp. 549–65, doi:10.1353/NLH.2020.0034.

what was regarded as an attainable goal of restoring each text to its cultural context. Historicism undermined the idea of a timeless ideal, whether embodied in the Bible or Homer. Philology itself survived, but the justification for applying its methods to any particular time period rather than any other was lost. Wissenschaft is not the end goal; it is part of a way of explaining and enacting a certain vision of the self in the world.[18]

It was philology of this sort, claiming only scientific status but no ethical or spiritual significance whatsoever, that Nietzsche contested in his inaugural lecture. He wanted to show that the study of antiquity could claim ethical significance without claiming timeless exemplarity. He argued that, although Wolf had failed to find the original Homer, and had discovered instead that the history of textual attribution to Homer was complex, he had succeeded in raising a more important question: 'Was a concept produced from a person, or was a person produced from a concept?'[19] Nietzsche's answer was clear enough. He rejected the standard idea that a concept had been produced from a person, in other words, that there must have been a real person called Homer around whom different texts and ideas had coalesced at different times. Instead, Nietzsche thought, a person had been produced from a concept. In other words, the development of conceptions of literature had generated a person, the author to whom a corpus had to be ascribed.

A parallel argument could have been made in biblical studies. I have argued elsewhere that the important question about textual attribution in the Hebrew Bible was not whether a certain named person had written the text ascribed to him or not. Rather, the important question concerned the function of the attribution. If, for example, texts ascribed to Moses were found amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls, texts that seemed to have been written much later than biblical texts ascribed to Moses, this did not raise the question of fraudulence. Except that, in some cases, scholars think these texts are pretending to be authentic from a chronological standpoint, trying to authorize themselves as predating the present.[20] Instead, it raised the question: how was the idea of Moses both continued and transformed by

[18] See on this point Constanze Güthenke, *Feeling and Classical Philology: Knowing Antiquity in German Scholarship, 1770–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). See also James Barr, 'The Interpretation of Scripture: II Revelation through History in the Old Testament and in Modern Theology', *Int* 17, no. 2 (1963): pp. 193–205; Daniel Blue, *The Making of Friedrich Nietzsche: The Quest for Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[19] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Homer and Classical Philology (Inaugural Address delivered at Bâle University, 28th of May 1869)', in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, vol. 3, ed. Oscar Levy and trans. J. M. Kennedy (Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1910), p. 155. To point further, Homer is not co-extensive with classics, but is in many ways the outlier case (as much as the founding one). The question of Homeric authorship as a retroactive concept is already in Vico, and the imbrication with biblical scholarship is there from the beginning. In the wake of Vico, Homer is considered a communal concept and that discussion keeps rumbling on, parallel to all the thinking about Homer as a 'genius' (private correspondence with Constanze Güthenke).

[20] See Irene Peirano Garrison, *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

the later attribution, and why were just these texts ascribed to *Moses* rather than to some other authoritative figure?

In his transformed version of the Homeric question, Nietzsche also found ethical significance. By showing that the image of Homer as the individual poet par excellence was a historical construction, Wolf had shown, despite himself, that the age of individuality was over. For centuries, readers had been formed into individuals under the sign of Homer. Now the spell would be broken.

In Nietzsche's words, 'all philological activities should be enclosed and surrounded by a philosophical worldview, in which everything individual and isolated is evaporated as something detestable, and in which only the whole and the unified remain'.[21] This early view of Nietzsche was later revised. From Nietzsche's later standpoint, the import of philology was not only the destruction of individuality but also its constructability. If subjects had been formed as individuals under the sign of Homer, then, under different signs, they could also be formed differently.

Again, there is a parallel in biblical studies. Textual ascription—say, of psalms to David—creates an image of David, in light of whom the psalm-reader's subjectivity is formed.[22] Under the sign of this Davidic personality, an assortment of psalms becomes a unity, associated with the narrative of David's life, and provides the reader with a repertoire of emotional and spiritual responses to different life situations. But it is also the case that David's past is constructed and transformed over time through superscriptions, expansion, and a new narrative about David's life and new cultural translation of the exemplar in new Hellenistic and later historical contexts as well. This engagement and shaping of the self in relation to text is, again, what I have called ethical reading.

Yet, not all reading is ethical reading.[23] Reading becomes ethical in certain contexts, and some texts—certainly biblical texts but perhaps also other texts traditionally and communally recognized as authoritative—can hardly help but be read ethically because of the formative role ascribed to them. Biblical reading is the attempt to respond to a biblical text's call for completion. When one responds to

[21] Nietzsche, 'Homer and Classical Philology', p. 170.

[22] See George J. Brooke and Hindy Najman, 'Dethroning David and Enthroning Messiah: Jewish and Christian Perspectives', in *On Prophets, Warriors, and Kings: Former Prophets through the Eyes of Their Interpreters*, ed. George J. Brooke and Ariel Feldman (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), pp. 111–28; Mroczek, 'Moses, David and Scribal Revelation'; idem, *Literary Imagination*, pp. 51–85; James L. Kugel, 'David the Prophet', in *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition*, ed. James L. Kugel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 45–55.

[23] It is important to contrast the way I am speaking about ethical reading as distinctive from what John Barton has meant by ethics in the Hebrew Bible. In *Ethics in Ancient Israel*, John Barton distinguishes two senses of 'ethics'. In one sense, ethics is the moral code of a society. In another sense, ethics is philosophical reflection on moral codes, which produces theories of the moral life, such as consequentialism, deontology, virtue theory, and divine command theory. I am thinking about the ethical in a descriptive, not prescriptive manner. See John Barton, *Ethics in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

the text in one way or another, it is the text that takes one's measure. To this extent, it is as if, in reading the biblical text, one is also read by it.

Thus, one is to reflect on philosophical hermeneutics as the emergence of the self in the face of a transformed prophecy. This is where the individual as reader emerges through new reading, new Scripture, and renewed reflection on the place of the self as an emerging character.

The ethical sense of reading a fragment is captured by Rilke's poem, 'Apollo's Archaic Torso':

> Wir kannten nicht sein unerhörtes Haupt,
> darin die Augenäpfel reiften. Aber
> sein Torso glüht noch wie ein Kandelaber,
> in dem sein Schauen, nur zurückgeschraubt,
> sich hält und glänzt. Sonst könnte nicht der Bug
> der Brust dich blenden, und im leisen Drehen
> der Lenden könnte nicht ein Lächeln gehen
> zu jener Mitte, die die Zeugung trug.
> Sonst stünde dieser Stein entstellt und kurz
> unter der Schultern durchsichtigem Sturz
> und flimmerte nicht so wie Raubtierfelle
> und bräche nicht aus allen seinen Rändern
> aus wie ein Stern: denn da ist keine Stelle,
> die dich nicht sieht. Du mußt dein Leben ändern.[24]

> Never will we know his fabulous head
> where the eyes' apples slowly ripened. Yet
> his torso glows: a candelabrum set
> before his gaze which is pushed back and hid,
> restrained and shining. Else the curving breast
> could not thus blind you, nor through the soft turn
> of the loins could this smile easily have passed
> into the bright groins where the genitals burned.
> Else stood this stone a fragment and defaced,
> with lucent body from the shoulders falling,
> too short, not gleaming like a lion's fell;
> nor would this star have shaken the shackles off,
> bursting with light, until there is no place
> that does not see you. You must change your life.[25]

[24] Rainer Maria Rilke, 'Archaïscher Torso Apollos', in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Insel-Verlag, 1962), p. 557.

[25] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Selected Poems*, trans. C. F. MacIntyre (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).

The torso lacks a head and thus lacks eyes. Yet it gleams likes a lion's fell, with a blinding light, as if its eyes, instead of being absent, shine from within it. The viewer, who sees it as a fragment, hence as part of an absent whole, is called upon to complete it. In hearing this call, it is as if the viewer is seen by the torso. And, in hearing this call to complete the torso, the viewer hears the call to complete herself. Hence the poem's last line: 'You must change your life'.

This call to change is also the call for a vitality which is generative for community and for refining the individual who inherits and transforms herself through the act of reading, in his or her perfectionist tendencies and towards improvement. We will consider these perfectionist tendencies below in Part III. For now, we will turn to the dynamics of Scripture through the example of the book of Jubilees.

PART II

MEMORY AND REVITALIZATION

Jubilees and the Dynamic of Scripture

5
Between Rewriting and New Scripture

In this next section I turn to a more specific example of vitality in Hellenistic-period Jewish literature, namely the book of Jubilees. Here we find an innovative and dramatic reading of Genesis through the middle of Exodus. I have selected Jubilees as it directly contributes to the central questions of this book: about vitality, practices of reading and composition, and new Scripture. Jubilees is not a unique example. I have suggested already in the previous section that we see these ideas all over Jewish literature of the Hellenistic period. Yet, by turning to Jubilees specifically we can re-examine these questions in the context of a more particular example. Jubilees, thus, presents the context in which to ask: How were the traditions of Scripture and tradition kept dynamic, and what were the mechanisms for reading and interpreting texts?

Jubilees is a work dated to the second century BCE or even earlier. It has long been known through medieval Ethiopic manuscripts, but with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we now have access to earlier Hebrew versions. Its narrative spans much of the material from Genesis to the middle of Exodus, but it has been newly framed as an account of matters revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai.[1]

5.1 Canonization and Traditionary Process

Jubilees captures the vitality and dynamic nature of the Jewish textual tradition in the Hellenistic period. Jubilees is assembled, composed, and read in the context of the Hellenistic period, prior to the canonization of the Old Testament or the Tanakh. Jubilees rewrites parts of the Pentateuch not unlike scholars have observed was already happening in Psalms, Chronicles, and Deuteronomy.[2] This rewriting, as it has been called, is well known and amply precedented across the biblical traditions. However, instead of speaking about rewriting, I want to refer to the continuing vitalization of the biblical traditions in the Hellenistic period. The

[1] James C. VanderKam, *Jubilees: A Commentary on the Book of Jubilees* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018). In the discussions of Jubilees in this book I will largely follow the translation of James C. VanderKam in this commentary.

[2] For a recent discussion, see Molly M. Zahn, *Genres of Rewriting in Second Temple Judaism: Scribal Composition and Transmission* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). See also the important earlier discussion by Sidnie White Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

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dynamic dimensions of Jubilees are exemplified both through the ongoing interpretative work and through the ways in which our manuscript evidence shows its physical expression of pluriform and emerging textual traditions. This transformative nature of textual traditions shows ongoing growth of the work of Jubilees itself, both with respect to its composition and with respect to its hermeneutical ambition. Furthermore, Jubilees performs innovative new readings that disseminate, and transform the scriptural traditions.

Jubilees invokes tradition in such a way that it can be said to contribute retrospectively to canonization. Jubilees, by innovating and reflecting on Genesis to the middle of Exodus, is a part of the process of crystalizing Torah or Pentateuch.[3] This interaction with the text ultimately contributes to the centrality of what comes to be the canonical form of the Tanakh or the Old Testament in their respective Jewish and Christian contexts. However, the interaction is not citational necessarily, but can also be allusive or elliptically referential to the text with which it is most explicitly in conversation (in this case especially Genesis and Exodus).[4] Jubilees rereads Scripture through radical and innovative representations, thereby contributing to the growth of Scripture. We can discern this by considering Jubilees' participation in practices of citation and interpretation; there are whole passages that are recognizably identical with Genesis as well as broader recontextualizations of pericopes without a specific corresponding citation.[5] The citational and hermeneutical dimensions contribute to the processes of vitality. Jubilees thus contributes to a tendency towards revitalizing Scripture prior to processes of canonization. This process is part of what I have elsewhere called traditionary processes.[6] What I mean by traditionary processes is that a text emerges by invoking past traditions but also in that process, it acquires a new unity. Thus, the tradition is overflowing from a past but ultimately creates a new context of reading and a new composition. The new text creates its own precursors through this process. Thus, traditionary processes are a way of tracking and characterizing compositional growth and emergence. This is particularly important for our overarching argument because these traditionary processes are themselves manifestations of vitality.

[3] See David A. Lambert, 'How the "Torah of Moses" Became Revelation: An Early, Apocalyptic Theory of Pentateuchal Origins', *JSJ* 47, no. 1 (2016): pp. 22–54, doi:10.1163/15700631-12340440. Here Lambert argues that Jubilees proposes to read Torah and *te'udah* together.

[4] See Hila Dayfani, '4Q37 and Excerpted Texts of Deuteronomy from Qumran', *DSD* 30, no. 3 (2023): pp. 213–34, especially pp. 229–30, doi:10.1163/15685179-bja10045.

[5] Michael Segal, 'From the Jordan to Mt. Ebal and Back: On the Textual Dynamics of Deut. 27 and Josh. 3–4:8' (lecture, University of Oxford, spring 2023).

[6] Hindy Najman, 'Traditionary Processes and Textual Unity in 4Ezra', in *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction after the Fall*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and Matthias Henze (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 99–117. For further discussion of traditionary processes see Olivia Stewart Lester, *Prophetic Rivalry, Gender, and Economic: A Study in Revelation and Sibylline Oracles 4–5* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

One of the central arguments of this book is that the Hellenistic period is not a period of *Spätjudentum* but rather a golden age of convergence of Greek and Jewish traditions. This is demonstrated clearly by Jubilees where we see a rethinking of creation, history, and the calculation of the calendar as a way of securing a narrative that coordinates heavenly and earthly correspondences. Such correspondences participate in Greek and Babylonian thinking but also create a distinctive and particular narrative for Jewish tradition. Thus, what we see is not a Jewish tradition that is only ever indebted to and derivative of the cultures of its neighbours and rulers. We see traditions that innovate narratives and ideas. These persist even while these same traditions interact with cultures that borrow and transform ideas reciprocally. Indeed, this original and creative narrative in Jubilees will also come to be shared in later traditions. It may also be traced in later midrashic and liturgical traditions.

This kind of textual growth exhibited in Jubilees is already manifested in the growth and development of biblical texts within the Hebrew Bible. That is, the processes of creating new narratives, new songs, and new laws are already embedded in the biblical traditions. What is distinctive about Jubilees is the complex network of innovative readings of earlier Scriptures that show the intertwined discourses of recollection, law, and time across the entirety of the work of Jubilees. This process of writing for Jubilees articulates the vitality of Scripture in such a way that new Scripture is created. This new Scripture has within it embedded new readings, new practices, and an intricate calendrical system. All of this is said to be already authorized in the heavens and inscribed in the heavenly tablets.

5.2 Jubilees and 'Rewritten Bible'

In scholarly discussions of Jubilees' interaction with existing literature and its creative innovation, the term perhaps most often used is 'rewritten Bible'. There are many ways that Geza Vermes and Charles Perrot, and since then generations of scholars, have applied this language.[7] However, I still want to problematize the genre or tendency of 'rewritten Bible'. Rewritten Bible reinforces the canonical and the boundaries between text and interpretation; between Scripture and its commentary; between the early as privileged and the late as derivative; and between the canonical and the non-canonical. These assumptions were already embedded in Vermes's nomenclature of rewritten Bible:

[7] Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies*, 2nd edn (Leiden: Brill, 1973); Charles Perrot, *Pseudo-Philon: Les antiquités bibliques*, vol. 2 (Paris: Cerf, 1976). See my discussion where I first problematized rewritten Bible: 'Rewriting, Rewritten: *Jubilees* and 11QTemple as Participants in Mosaic Discourse', in *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 43–69.

> In order to anticipate questions, and to solve problems in advance, the midrashist inserts haggadic development into the biblical narrative—an exegetical process which is probably as ancient as scriptural exegesis itself.[8]

Vermes makes three assumptions that many, even most, scholars still make about Jubilees. (1) Prior to the composition of Jubilees there is already a relatively stable biblical narrative. (2) Much of rewritten Bible is driven by exegetical questions and problems arising from a particular text. (3) A given work of 'rewritten Bible' stems from the solutions to those problems proposed by a single writer: 'the midrashist'. And so, while Jubilees has affinities with midrash (early Jewish rabbinic interpretation) to be sure, and I have argued that it might contribute to canonization, it is composed at a time that is prior to canon and where the fixity of what would come to be canonical is still very fluid. The affinity to later midrash was so extreme that Jacob Lauterbach suggested, in his preface to Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, that Jubilees could even be the lost midrash *halakhah* to Genesis, something we do not have in any manuscript tradition to date.[9]

This does not mean that some of the ways Jubilees has been characterized as 'rewritten Bible' do not speak to larger significant ideas about the dynamics of the text. James Kugel transformed our understanding of Jubilees as a text.[10] Furthermore, Jubilees should be received as a treasure of some of our earliest interpretations of the book of Genesis and the first part of Exodus that we did not possess in the halakhic midrashim in the way that we do for Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. To be sure, this is intriguing, but this category of rewritten Bible obscures more than it illuminates.[11] Thus, while the category of 'rewritten Bible' helped us to make sense of the findings from Qumran and beyond, it did not fully address or consider the material that we uncovered. Eibert Tigchelaar and I wrote:

> Like philosophy, philology understands in retrospect. There is no alternative. But we run the risk of forgetting that the texts are part of a continuous, dynamic, and vital tradition that lived forwards. The *yaḥad*—as well as other Jews living and writing in antiquity—were exploring a multiplicity of possible continuations of the traditions that they had inherited. The fact that many of these ways of continuing died out for various reasons should not blind us to the fact that they were possible. We should not allow our understanding of the vitality of ancient Judaism to be shaped by those elements that survived and gave rise to the subject matters studied

[8] Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, p. 95.

[9] See here Aaron Mirsky, *Midrash Tana'im li-Vereshit* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kuk, 2000).

[10] See James L. Kugel, *A Walk through Jubilees: Studies in the Book of Jubilees and the World of Its Creation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

[11] See Hindy Najman, 'Rewriting as Whitewashing: The Case of Rewritten Bible', in *Vixens Disturbing Vineyards: Embarrassment and Embracement of Scriptures: Festschrift in Honor of Harry Fox (leBeit Yoreh)*, ed. Tzemah Yoreh et al. (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010), pp. 140–53.

> in the fields of Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Rabbinics, and Early Christianity. Instead, we should embrace the opportunity to see ancient Judaism in flux, prior to the origination of these subject matters, when scriptural texts were polyform and the possibilities for development had not yet been narrowed down.[12]

For Tigchelaar and myself, this above paragraph applied first to advocate for rethinking the names of the Dead Sea Scrolls. However, I think this logic also applies here, as I advocate for rethinking the category of 'rewritten Bible', especially as it is applied to Jubilees. For the history of scholarship, in a sense, the framework into which Jubilees would be included, i.e. rewritten Bible, was already established even before the Hebrew fragments of Jubilees were found among the scrolls. The framework stemmed from the same ideas of fixity and a perpetual orientation towards the early or original which I have addressed in the first part of this book. There was no space in scholarship to consider other paths. I want to argue that the field did not use the opportunity of the finding of the scrolls to rethink what the Bible was in the Hellenistic period as it might have done.

Many scholars have contributed to thinking about rewriting as a way of characterizing what is going on in texts such as Jubilees.[13] However, it seems that the more one considers practices of reading and writing within the Dead Sea Scrolls, the more it becomes clear that we are not confronting rewritten Bible any more than we are confronting medieval commentary traditions. I maintain that how we characterize Jubilees *matters*. Jews in the Hellenistic period are doing something rather different from, for example, later medieval commentary which also presupposes a fixed text, and we cannot continue to impose old and anachronistic models upon Jubilees. It is also the case that rewriting is insufficient as it does not fully capture the creative and innovative work that is manifest in a work such as Jubilees (not to mention other contemporaneous works such as the Temple Scroll).[14] The central

[12] Hindy Najman and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, 'A Preparatory Study of Nomenclature and Text Designation in the Dead Sea Scrolls', *RevQ* 26, no. 3 (2014): p. 325, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24663194. See also Hindy Najman and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, 'Unity after Fragmentation', *RevQ* 26, no. 4 (2014): pp. 495–500, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24663240.

[13] See the earlier works of Philip Alexander and Moshe Bernstein: Philip S. Alexander, 'Retelling the Old Testament', in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars*, ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 99–121; Moshe J. Bernstein, '"Rewritten Bible": A Generic Category Which Has Outlived Its Usefulness?', *Text* 22 (2005): pp. 169–96, doi:10.1163/2589255X-02201009. See also Sidnie White Crawford, *The Temple Scroll and Related Texts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); idem, *Rewriting Scripture*, pp. 185–227; Michael Segal, 'Between Bible and Rewritten Bible', in *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran*, ed. Matthias Henze (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 10–28; Zahn, *Genres of Rewriting*; Hindy Najman, 'Interpretation as Primordial Writing: Jubilees and Its Authority Conferring Strategies', *JSJ* 30, no. 4 (1999): pp. 379–410, doi:10.1163/157006399X00064. James C. VanderKam has suggested that is it better to refer to texts such as Jubilees or the Temple Scroll with the 'more general, less suggestive' term of 'rewritten Scripture' rather than 'rewritten Bible' ('Questions of Canon Viewed through the Dead Sea Scrolls', *BBR* 11, no. 2 [2001]: p. 292, doi:10.2307/26422274).

[14] On this point, see Zahn, *Genres of Rewriting*; Annie Calderbank, 'Reading for Resonance: Divine Presence and Biblical Hermeneutics in the Temple Scroll', *DSD* 29, no. 2 (2021): pp. 123–54, doi:10.1163/

point here is that reading practices as exemplified by the Dead Sea Scrolls and related literature of the Hellenistic Jewish corpus are actively producing new work that goes well beyond rewriting and reinforcing existing Scripture.

The author of Jubilees—not unlike the Chronicler in its 'reproduction' of the Deuteronomistic history or Deuteronomy in its 'rewriting' of the covenant code—is less bound by the biblical text than we as scholars have assumed. Rather, there seems to be a freedom to continue to write, produce, and authorize what we might call new Scriptures. That means that we are charting the creative transformation of textual traditions before our eyes. We can see the dynamic reworking, updating, and creating of new compositions alongside the creation of new language.

Jubilees is just one in a series of examples of this phenomenon. Other such examples are very different in style and form to Jubilees but play the same role with respect to what I want to call creativity in the Hellenistic period.[15] Articulation as a new performance of earlier writings should not be reduced to either replacement or rewriting. In a passage from an article I wrote with Geoffrey Khan, we defined this further:

> By "performance" of a text we understand the vital and creative act of engagement with an ancient textual tradition that makes the text relevant and meaningful for individuals or for a community at the time of performance. This includes the oral performance of a written tradition and also the written performance of a tradition in the form of innovative texts.[16]

On the one hand, I want to destabilize the idea of Jubilees as a stable or fixed text and recognize that its vitality is in the fact that it continues to grow and to be rewritten. On the other hand, I still believe it is possible to read Jubilees for concepts and beliefs that are at the centre of how earlier biblical traditions are understood. It is fluid in its vitality, but it also can be read through the more normative lens of studies of early biblical interpretation. In making this point, I am not only considering Jubilees, but I am considering how Jubilees is reading earlier texts and also how we can perceive Jubilees as being already read in the late Hellenistic period. While I am pushing back on calling it a rewriting, it is indeed the case that Jubilees belongs somewhere in between the Chronicler and fifth-century rabbinic midrashic collection, such as Genesis Rabbah. Even with citations, we do not yet see a fixed text that is read as a commentary.

15685179-bja10024; George J. Brooke, 'Between Authority and Canon: The Significance of Reworking the Bible for Understanding the Canonical Process', in *Reworking the Bible: Apocryphal and Related Texts at Qumran*, ed. Esther G. Chazon et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 85–104.

[15] Other texts which I would include in our conversation are texts such as Ezekiel the Tragedian's *Exagoge*, Instruction, Hodayot, and Wisdom of Solomon.

[16] Khan and Najman, 'Performance in Ancient and Medieval Judaism'.

5.3 Recharacterizing Jubilees

The question is how to characterize that work if it is not simply a replacement or a commentary. This is where I believe current work on pluriformity of biblical traditions on the one hand, and on the pre-canonical state of Scripture on the other comes into play. On the matter of pluriformity, I want to emphasize again that the impulse to reconstruct a single archetype does not map onto the textual witnesses we have. So many texts, like Jubilees, are preserved in a pluriform manner which does not lead us clearly or inevitably towards an archetype or Urtext. So again we see this ongoing vitality of Scripture. The crucial point for me here regarding vitality is as follows: pluriformity can be demonstrated by the growth and ongoing expansion of a tradition through ongoing writing and thinking about tradition.

Working on the traditional retrospective model, Jubilees and other texts discovered among the scrolls from the Dead Sea were assumed to have an archetype. That is, various copies, despite significant variations were said to be either copies of Jubilees (retrospectively using much later Ethiopic manuscripts to reconstruct an imagined Urtext) or pseudo-Jubilees (i.e. Jubilees-like). This trend has been discussed extensively recently by scholars who have suggested that pluriformity could be the norm and not exceptional. Certainly, a text like Jubilees speaks to this idea.

Tigchelaar, for example, demonstrated, based on the scrolls' evidence, that Jubilees is a work—not unlike the Psalms Scroll—that continued to be reworked and rewritten.[17] The challenges he poses to a general scholarly consensus about Jubilees leave us with a significant question. However, the variegated nature of the Jubilees and so-called pseudo-Jubilees scrolls and fragments might suggest that the composition of Jubilees in the late Hellenistic period was a work in formation and that it continued to enjoy its rewriting and reworking. This is ongoing through the history of copying, translation, manuscript, and commentary.

This is a twofold challenge to scholarship. One challenge is our ongoing use of medieval manuscripts to reconstruct Hellenistic or even Persian period works assuming a unified correspondence. The second challenge comes in the suggestion that we need to recognize that the texts that we come to call The Bible continue to participate in this dynamic and ever-changing reworking. These reworkings can be perceived in our biblical traditions, even once the forms of the texts come to be stable and fixed. These questions take the challenge of 'canon' to a completely new level. We are not asking about when the canon was formed; rather we are asking: When did the biblical books themselves take shape, and what kind of possibilities were there for rewriting?

[17] Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, 'The Qumran *Jubilees* Manuscripts as Evidence for the Literary Growth of the Book', *RevQ* 26, no. 4 (2014): pp. 580–94, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24663245.

Here I continue my critique of the search for an original text (Urtext), begun in Part I. So, instead of reconstructing an Urtext or an archetype, we can trace the vicissitudes of the biblical traditions—traditions that have an identity or a recognizable form, be it Jubilees, Exodus, Psalms, or Chronicles, but that are not fixed. The fluctuation we see in these traditions speaks to how these texts were in use and alive to liturgy, creative copying, and correction, and, of course, to study and innovation. Similar critiques have been made by Loren Stuckenbruck, regarding scholarly reliance on a single manuscript in the context of Enoch.[18] This focus on a single manuscript like the focus on a single original diminishes the vitality and variety we see when we pay attention to the manuscript tradition. In both of these cases, Jubilees and Enoch, and so many others, we can understand the possibility and creativity of scribes who had the agency to transform, create, and manipulate new and old texts in ways that kept the textual traditions alive.

As noted, Jubilees belongs somewhere in between the Chronicler and Bereshit Rabbah. It reworks existing material like the Chronicler but makes explicit and extensive use of citations like Bereshit Rabbah. Yet, even with citations, we do not yet see a fixed text that is read as a commentary. Rather this forward-moving approach to philology, which I discussed in Part I of this book, can underwrite and emphasize Jubilees' importance as an example of what I want to call Scripture, even as it is emerging, in flux, and without a canonical status or fixed form.[19]

[18] Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Ted M. Erho, 'The Significance of Ethiopic Witnesses for the Text Tradition of 1 Enoch: Problems and Prospects', in *Congress Volume Aberdeen 2019*, ed. Grant Macaskill et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2022), pp. 416–34.

[19] This is important as the canon is forming and the Pentateuch is already in its canonical shape (despite some variation across Hebrew versions and linguistic translations). But it is also the case that Jubilees will emerge as Scripture for some Christian communities.

6
The Status of Jubilees in the Hellenistic Period

The tradition of Jubilees is cited both explicitly and implicitly in many works across the Hellenistic period. We know that the title for Jubilees used in the Damascus Document comes directly out of the book itself: the 'Book of Times and Divisions by Jubilees and Weeks' ספר מחלקות העתים ליובליהם ובשבועותיהם.[1] Beyond explicit reference or citation, material included in Jubilees is omnipresent in numerous works. Indeed, this is a work that is replete with interpretations that were previously only known from later interpretative traditions.

What is the status of Jubilees? As a biblical work, what can we say about how Jubilees is emulating, for example, the larger framework for Sinai in Exodus 19–24? Or to what extent is the model of Jubilees' rewriting imitative of Deuteronomy and Chronicles? How should we understand Jubilees' contribution to the transformation of biblical thinking in the Hellenistic period? To be sure, much important attention has been paid to Jubilees' compositional history. Jubilees' innovation updates and transforms its past through interpretation, calculation, and supplementation to a biblical narrative: what Jubilees calls its 'second law'. Jubilees claims access to a prior and pre-Sinaitic law (its 'first law') which is isomorphic with what it calls heavenly tablets. The law is fundamentally re-instantiated by recalling the past:

> It was granted to these that for all times they should be the blessed and holy ones. This is the testimony and the first law (וזאת התעודה והתורה הראשונה),[2] as it was sanctified and blessed on the seventh day. He created the heavens, the earth, and everything that was created in six days. The Lord gave a holy festal day to all his creation. For this reason he gave orders regarding it that anyone who would do any work on it was to die; also, the one who would defile it was to die. (Jubilees 2:24–5)[3]

[1] CD 16:3–4.
[2] Hebrew: 4Q216 7:17.
[3] The translation follows VanderKam, *Jubilees*, with some adaptations. This translation is largely based on the Ethiopic. Small parts of Jubilees were preserved in fragmentary Hebrew manuscripts in Qumran. Where extant, and relevant, Hebrew terminology has been inserted in the translation in parenthesis. On Jubilees manuscript from Qumran, see Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, 'The Qumran *Jubilees* Manuscripts as Evidence for the Literary Growth of the Book', *RevQ* 26, no. 4 (2014): pp. 580–94, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24663245.

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DOI: 10.1093/9780191898037.003.0006

This entire process becomes one of representing the law, but as a revised law—not unlike the Deuteronomic reworking of the covenant code. This is not an insignificant analogy, especially because in so many ways Jubilees presents itself as a kind of second Torah, not unlike Deuteronomy which self-presents as a second law.

6.1 Jubilees as an Open Book

The book of Jubilees is a work that is fundamentally an open book, as it continues to be written across traditions within the Second Temple period but also as it is copied across linguistic registers.[4] But it is also the case that Jubilees shows the way it contributes to and participates in the ongoing growth of biblical tradition, especially as to the Pentateuch. Concerning the compositional history of Jubilees itself, as has been argued by Michael Segal and James Kugel, the work generates further conversation through the tensions that are preserved in the style of ancient texts. As I wrote with Konrad Schmid:

> The claim is that the reader is expected to engage in a practice of exegesis that can overcome the gapping or interruption due to the compositional history of the text. Or, in other words, readers are challenged by the text to make sense of contradiction in a way that forces them to inherit multiple traditions through exegetical strategies that involve making sense of scripture. One should keep in mind that the quest for unambiguousness in reading a text is, to a large extent, a modern achievement.[5]

Part of what I want to argue here is that whether or not Jubilees is written by a single hand or multiple hands, the work is composite, complex, and has preserved within it contradictions along with the development of interpretative traditions.[6] This is a remarkable fact because not only does Jubilees mimic earlier biblical

[4] On open book, see e.g. the two monographs by Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the 14th and 18th Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994) and *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language and Practices* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

[5] Najman and Schmid, 'Reading the Blood Plague', p. 24, doi:10.15699/jbl.1411.2022.2. On this point, see also Thomas Bauer, *Die Vereindeutigung der Welt: Über den Verlust an Mehrdeutigkeit und Vielfalt* (Leipzig: Reclam, 2018). See also Michael E. Lyons, 'Standards of Cohesion and Coherence: Evidence from Early Readers', *HeBAI* 9, no. 2 (2020): pp. 183–208, doi:10.1628/hebai-2020-0011; D. Andrew Teeter and William A. Tooman, 'Standards of (In)coherence in Ancient Jewish Literature', *HeBAI* 9, no. 2 (2020): pp. 94–129, particularly pp. 108–12, doi:10.1628/hebai-2020-0009.

[6] On interpretative traditions in the book of Jubilees and more generally for a comprehensive account of early biblical interpretation in the Second Temple period, see James L. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

models, such as Deuteronomy and the Chronicler, but it also participates in the very same compositional practices that we can observe in biblical traditions, for example, the Sinai Pericope of Exodus 19–24, which is one of the most complex collections within the Pentateuch. The compositional practices across biblical books are part of complex histories of expansion, refinement, supplementation, and deletion. Jubilees exhibits all of those features as well. This has been tracked and explored, especially in the work of Michael Segal[7] and James Kugel.[8] This history is not in any sense a surprise, but neither does it detract from the overall unity of the work as a whole. We see many of these same features and similarly complex history in texts from 1Enoch to the Damascus Document to the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. Again, Jubilees is not unique but a fascinating example of compositional practices we see shared by so many Jewish texts of the Hellenistic period and beyond.

In addition to Jubilees itself participating in the same phenomena exemplified in other biblical texts, it also participates in practices of reading earlier biblical traditions as well as incorporating interpretative materials into the work itself. Thus, Jubilees is itself a reading of texts that in every way participates, extends, and enlivens biblical texts through its compositional practices. Its tradition of authorization through heavenly tablets and its practice of composition are open to more and new writing and expansion.[9]

The retelling of the Cain and Abel narrative is a helpful example where the lex talionis is incorporated as a way of making sense of Cain's punishment:

> During the first (week) of the third jubilee Cain killed Abel because we had accepted his sacrifice from him but from Cain we had not accepted (one). When he killed him in a field, his blood cried out from the ground to heaven—crying because he had been killed. The Lord blamed Cain regarding Abel because he had

[7] Michael Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) and a more recent discussion by idem, 'The Dynamics of Composition and Rewriting in Jubilees and Pseudo-Jubilees', *RevQ* 26, no. 4 (2014): pp. 555–77, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24663244.

[8] See James L. Kugel, *A Walk through Jubilees: Studies in the Book of Jubilees and the World of its Creation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). For subsequent discussion, see also: idem, 'The Compositional History of the Book of "Jubilees"', *RevQ* 26, no. 4 (2014): pp. 517–37, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24663242.

[9] On heavenly tablets see Florentino García Martínez, 'The Heavenly Tablets in the Book of Jubilees', trans. Michael T. Davis, in *Studies in the Book of Jubilees*, ed. Matthias Albani et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), pp. 243–60 = 'Las Tablas Celestes en el Libro de los Jubileos', in *Palabra y Vida: Homenaje a José Alonso Díaz en su 70 cumpleaños*, ed. A. Vargas Machuca and G. Ruiz (Madrid: Publicaciones de la Universidad Pontifica Comillias Madrid, 1984), pp. 333–49; Hindy Najman, 'Interpretation as Primordial Writing'; Cana Werman, 'The Torah and the *Te'udah* on the Tablets' (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 68, no. 4 (1999): pp. 473–92, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23601214 = '"The תורה and the תעודה" Engraved on the Tablets', *DSD* 9, no. 1 (2001): pp. 75–103, doi:10.1163/156851702320115742; Leslie Baynes, *The Heavenly Book Motif in Judeo-Christian Apocalypses 200 BCE–200 CE* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Matthew Klem, 'Heavenly Writing and the Authority of Rewritten Scripture: Reevaluating Explicit References to the Pentateuch in Jubilees', *JSP* 32, no. 3 (2023): pp. 285–99, doi:10.1177/09518207221137068.

> killed him. While he allowed him a length (of time) on the earth because of his brother's blood, he cursed him upon the earth. For this reason it has been written on the heavenly tablets: 'Cursed is the person who beats his companion maliciously.' All who saw (it) said: 'May it be. And let the man who has seen but has not told be cursed like him.' For this reason we report, when we come before the Lord our God, all the sins that take place in heaven and on earth—what (happens) in the light, in the darkness, or in any place. (Jubilees 4:2–6)

The book is not a closed book in any sense. It accesses the past and creates a pathway for a new future. This is exemplified in the authorization, in the writing, and in the traditions of composition. In Part III of the book, I will explore how this vital and vibrant practice of composition also extends into practices of reading itself.

6.2 Earthly and Heavenly Law and Testimony

Jubilees challenges scholarly constructs of canon and margins in the way it explicitly claims to be a better form of Scripture, specifically the Torah, as it asserts to be both the heavenly and earthy copy of the law and the testimony in its prologue:

> These are the words regarding the divisions of the times for the law and for the testimony, for the events of the years, for the weeks of their jubilees throughout all the years of eternity as he related (them) to Moses on Mount Sinai when he went up to receive the stone tablets—the law and the commandment—by the word of the Lord (בדבר יהוה) as he had told him that he should come up to the summit of the mountain (אל ראש ההר). (Prologue)[10]

As I discussed in the previous chapter, scholars have claimed that Jubilees is rewritten Bible. That is to say that Jubilees is all about rewriting an already-established or fixed Bible. Yet, on Jubilees' account, the Torah that is being rewritten is both secondary (i.e. the second law, as opposed to the first), and it is merely a copy (as opposed to the original) of the heavenly tablets. This is a way, as I have argued, to authorize new interpretations through a radical and multi-layered claim of authority. That is, Jubilees claims to be divine, angelic (with the authority of the highest angel, namely the angel of the presence), heavenly, and the original first expression of writing:

> 'Now you write all these words which I tell you on this mountain: what is first and what is last (האחרנים) and what is to come during all the divisions of the times that

[10] Hebrew: 4Q216 1:3–4.

are for the law and for the testimony (לתורה ולתעודה) and for the weeks of their jubilees until eternity—until the time when I descend and live with them (ושכנתי עמם) throughout all the ages of eternity.'

Then he told to the Angel of the Presence (הפנים) to dictate (להכתיב) to Moses (starting) from the beginning of the creation until the time when my temple is built (אשר יבנה מקדשי) among them throughout the ages of eternity. 'The Lord will appear in the sight of all, and all will know (וידעו) that I am the God of Israel, the father of all the children of Jacob (יעקב), and King (מלך) on Mount Zion for the ages of eternity. Then Zion and Jerusalem will become holy.' (Jubilees 1:26–8)[11]

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Jubilees is also authored by Moses as another second Torah, modelled on Deuteronomy as a second Torah. Moses authorizes then both the first expression of writing in the history of the world (namely through Enoch the first scribe), and the second copy which, according to Jubilees, would be the law in the Sinai narrative.

For Jubilees there must be a pre-Torah and a Torah, a first or heavenly law, and a copy of that law as instantiated in Sinaitic revelation. This double revelation will be mapped onto Isaiah's account of the law and the testimony, as I discuss later in this chapter. Here too, Jubilees seems to understand this as a twofold revelation of the heavens or the original and the earthly copy. With each new copying and dissemination, there is, for Jubilees, another articulation of the very first revelation through the creation of the world, as well as the revelation of the heavenly tablets from their original point of dissemination and beyond.

To claim a scriptural status and the very same or higher status than the Torah itself is on the one hand not surprising. We receive many such claims to replace the past, for example, to trump a past king (as David does to Saul, for example) or a previous law (the Deuteronomic code, for example, which updates and through that updating transforms the laws in the covenant code). Both, however, remain intact. As James VanderKam suggested, Jubilees expresses a kind of 'Moses trumping Moses'.[12] And throughout Jubilees, not only in the prologue, the claim is made that the heavenly tablets are already inscribed. This is a claim that is threaded throughout the entire work.

Part of what needs to be highlighted here is that, with this claim to replace and to supplement or to create a precursor of the law, Jubilees is participating in the authorization as Scripture. Thereby, Jubilees preserves that which is authoritative, even before the law comes into being. As I mentioned above, Jubilees contributes

[11] Hebrew: 4Q216 4:3–9.

[12] James C. VanderKam, 'Moses Trumping Moses: Making the Book of Jubilees', in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Transmission of Traditions and Production of Texts*, ed. Sarianna Metso et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 25–44.

to the overarching canonizing process. That is, Jubilees underwrites the importance of the Pentateuch by authorizing it as already heavenly, angelic, and divine.[13] The Torah is thus a rearticulation of creation, but now from the perspective that already presupposes Sinai.

The relationship between creation and Sinai for Jubilees further supports the relationship between cosmic or natural law and Mosaic or earthly law. With heavenly and earthly correspondences, Jubilees re-authorizes the law from Sinai as primordial as well as earthly. This further bridges the gap between humanity and God, between heaven and earth, and between the noetic world and the physical world.

In this presentation, Jubilees both embedded and inherited traditions and texts and also converged with Greek culture and tradition. The very presence of Greek philosophical traditions should not be a surprise but is simply evidence of Jubilees being a product of a period of cultural convergence between Hebrew and Greek, despite being written in Hebrew. Or despite its own insistence that it resists Hellenism. To resist becoming Greek, but nevertheless to exhibit what it is to be written in the second century BCE and to clearly be part of Hellenistic culture is also essential to the way the work presents itself.

The notion of heavenly and early correspondences, between the heavenly writing and the earthly copies made by each priestly tradent, is inextricably linked to the concept of testimony (in Hebrew *te'udah*). This concept of witness or testimony binds the book together as a whole. It claims for itself the status of nothing less than the law and the testimony (a word associated with jurisprudence, with establishing calendar, and with the covenantal tablets from Sinai). It is the lynchpin for understanding what I want to mark as a constellation of memory, law, and time. Thus, the history of the world, the law instantiated in that world with a heavenly copy and then the obligation on the people to bear witness to that revelation through their keeping of the law. This integration of law and time and memory is the revitalization of the law for Jubilees.

The concept of testimony, *te'udah*, is central in Jubilees. In the prologue, cited above, Jubilees sets up a new law, or what we might call a pre-law which will ultimately form the basis for heavenly time and the 'correct calendar'. As many have noted already, this phrase '*Torah* and *te'udah*' draws on Isaiah 8:16 and 8:20 and corresponds to what Jubilees elsewhere calls the first and second law.

צֹר תְּעוּדָה חֲתֹם תּוֹרָה בְּלִמָּדָי

Bind up the message (*te'udah*),
Seal the instruction with My disciples (Isa 8:16)

[13] On this point, see Najman, 'Interpretation as Primordial Writing'.

I intend to highlight *te'udah* as a framework for thinking about heavenly order and the division of all time until eternity.[14] *Te'udah* (testimony) in Isaiah 8:16 is about bearing witness to the immanent destruction of the present but also to a future that is not lost. It is about witnessing a covenantal past and warning about a future that is at risk. But it is also the term that underwrites the innovative dimensions of the book.

Testimony (*te'udah*) is a significant term throughout Jubilees. It is not my ambition here to provide a comprehensive explanation of the usage of the word *te'udah*, but rather to examine what *te'udah* (testimony) and *maḥleqot ha-'ittim* (divisions of times) teach us about concepts of time in this primordial recounting of the creation of the world and the implementation of calendar, the order of weeks, and liturgical time. However, in Jubilees, *te'udah* becomes a central framework for the heavenly law which is prior to, but also serves as a corrective for, the Mosaic Torah (what Jubilees calls the second law). *Te'udah*, in Jubilees, is about bearing witness to the history of the world, as a testimony of that which is revealed to those with a

[14] For an extensive overview of discussions and a broad range of scholarly positions on the word 'testimony' (*te'udah*) see VanderKam, *Jubilees: A Commentary*, pp. 72–9. VanderKam's own view is that 'testimony' means the message that Jubilees conveys on three levels: 'to give fuller explanation or clarification of Laws … to provide examples of the ways God operates in events of history … and to present the preordained divisions of time and the organization of the calendar' (pp. 78–9). James Kugel has argued that it means warning, and that the use of the term *te'udah* builds on the essential meaning of 'to warn' and thus Jubilees is self-referentially the 'warning' with respect to obeying the law. See James L. Kugel, 'Biblical Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha and the Hebrew of the Second Temple Period', in *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, ed. Takamitsu Muraoka and John F. Elwolde (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 166–77. George J. Brooke and Menahem Kister both align with a view that 'testimony' is fundamentally the secrets of time, the calendar, and the heavens: George J. Brooke, 'Exegetical Strategies in Jubilees: New Light from 4QJubilees[a]', in *Studies in the Book of Jubilees*, eds. Matthias Albani et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), pp. 39–58. See also on *te'udah*: Menahem Kister, 'On Two Formulae in the Book of Jubilees' (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 70, no. 2 (2001): pp. 289–300 (esp. pp. 294–300), https://www.jstor.org/stable/23601289; and also idem, 'Physical and Metaphysical Measurements Ordained by God in the Literature of the Second Temple Period', in *Reworking the Bible: Apocryphal and Related Texts at Qumran*, ed. Esther G. Chazon et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 153–76. For Kister and Brooke then, the 'testimony' is part of the hidden Torah, in contrast to Werman for whom 'testimony' is what is contained on the heavenly tablets, i.e. beyond Torah. See Cana Werman, 'The *Torah* and the *Te'udah* on the Tablets'. This view is not isomorphic, but also not in tension with the approach of others such as Himmelfarb, Segal, and Bakker. Himmelfarb argues that 'testimony' is about time or what she calls the 'course of history'. See Martha Himmelfarb, 'Torah, Testimony and Heavenly Tablets: The Claim of Authority of the Book of Jubilees', in *A Multiform Heritage: Studies in Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Robert A. Kraft*, ed. Benjamin G. Wright III (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), pp. 19–29, esp. p. 23; Segal, *The Book of Jubilees*, pp. 282–99 and idem, 'On the Meaning of the Expression תורה ותעודה in *Jubilees*' (Hebrew), *Meghillot* 5–6 (2007), pp. 323–45, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23438237. The positions of Segal and Himmelfarb cohere well with Arjen Bakker's overall understanding that the *te'udah* is part of the larger secret of time (*raz nihyeh*) that we see in works such as Instruction and Mysteries. See his discussion in Bakker, *Secret of Time*, pp. 106–39. One could read Kister's view in consonance with Bakker, if one understands the mystery of 'testimony' to be aligned with the secret of time, which Bakker takes to also be the *raz nihyeh*. More generally on the presence of 'testimony' in biblical texts, see Orit Malka, 'On the Meaning of הָעִיד in Biblical Hebrew: Between Summoning Witnesses and Imposing Oaths', *VT* 71, nos. 4–5 (2021): pp. 1–22, doi:10.1163/15685330-12341076.

circumcised mind.[15] The revelation is divine thinking which is hidden from the people who have uncircumcised minds. But it is a secret that can again be made clear through the study of the first and second laws. The language of *te'udah* has also been connected to the *raz nihyeh*, the secret of being, which I return to in Chapter 9.[16]

Even for Jubilees, the calendar is established through the testimony which governs the earth. But the Jubilees' calendar also serves to correct 'Mosaic' time or the 'second law'. Furthermore, the calendar is said to derive not from the earthly or second law from Moses, but rather from heavenly, divine, angelic, and written authority.[17]

This is a kind of argument analogous to the natural law of which Philo of Alexandria speaks.[18] In this way, the testimony is a kind of heavenly law together with the Torah which provides the framework for the innovative ordering of the world, and the cosmic law which comes to have earthly correspondences in the copy of the heavenly tablets on earth.

The *te'udah*, testimony, governs the ordering of the calendar, calculation of time, and the history of the world. Embedded in the *te'udah* of Jubilees is a notion of time which invokes the past, present, and future. This account of time exhibits the history of the development of the world from the beginning of time which is marked by days, weeks, sabbath, seasons, *mo'adim*, and three seminal moments in history: creation, Sinai, and the day of judgement (i.e. new creation which is already foreshadowed in the great flood). The division of the times that is revealed to Moses is recorded in the law and the testimony, the *Torah*, and *te'udah*.

Jubilees enters a pre-Sinaitic world by claiming a prior Torah which is primordial and heavenly. Jubilees creates important continuity with the Torah itself to the interpretative tradition. This growth of Torah through unravelling this primordial history manifests in several ways. First, there is an underwriting of Scripture itself through citation and retelling. The narrative of Scripture is paradigmatic for Jubilees—from creation to Sinai. Second, the tradition of Jubilees expands and transforms the biblical narrative. Third, and finally, Jubilees itself is part of a larger tradition of materials that continues to be inherited and rewritten. This inheritance is in no way passive but is profoundly active and innovative.

[15] Arjen Bakker, 'The God of Knowledge: Qumran Reflections on Divine Prescience Based on 1 Sam 2:3', *RevQ* 26, no. 3 (2014): pp. 361–74, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24663197; idem, *The Secret of Time*, pp. 117–31.

[16] See Bakker, *Secret of Time*, pp. 134–5.

[17] See Jubilees ch. 6.

[18] On law of nature and Philo of Alexandria, see Hindy Najman, 'A Written Copy of the Law of Nature: An Unthinkable Paradox?', *SPhiloA* 15 (2003): pp. 54–63, see esp. pp. 51–6; idem, 'The Law of Nature and the Authority of Mosaic Law', *SPhiloA* 11 (1999): pp. 55–73. See also Menahem Kister, 'The Commandments—Israel and the Nations: Dynamics of Ideas, Apologetics, Polemics and Interpretation', *Mehqere Talmud* 4 (2023): pp. 609–44.

6.3 Integrating Traditions

Jubilees integrates the Pentateuch and other biblical texts known to us from the later collection of Tanakh or Old Testament. In addition, though, Jubilees also integrated traditions that were authoritative and defining for the authorship of Jubilees, for example, traditions from 1Enoch and the Aramaic Levi document.[19] As I discussed above, it consistently defies scholarly attempts to seek a unified Hebrew original from the Ethiopic manuscripts. We see, as early as the versions from the Dead Sea Scrolls, a pluriform and flexible engagement with a range of traditions.

Jubilees, like its many biblical precursors, is a complex collection of traditions woven together. The work of rewriting (e.g. the Deuteronomic Law Code of the Covenant Code) and integration of existing traditions (e.g. P and non-P in Exodus 19–24) is not only outside of the Bible but is also manifest within the biblical texts themselves. The processes of writing and composition are part of a complex history of assembling sources and interpretative traditions and interweaving them into a coherent whole.

At the centre of the current debate about whether Jubilees is a unified whole is a larger challenge. Can we find any examples of biblical or extra-biblical texts that are unified wholes without variegation, pluriformity, and fluidity? Jubilees just as in the case of all other biblical texts is a composite text with layers and history. The assembly of the parts is both about assembling traditions, but it is also about activating the earlier biblical texts and earlier traditions, and embedding them into a new unity, i.e. an assembled and ever-growing composition called Jubilees. This assembly cannot be *underestimated* as part of the vitality of the traditions themselves.

Thus, I want to argue that the composition of Jubilees itself exemplifies this ever-growing and dynamic tradition of the scriptural process. The narratives grow through the reworking and the rethinking of the past scriptural traditions but now in a new context. These two dimensions of the past and the present come to define a new vitality for understanding heaven, earth, law, revelation, and calendar.

This chapter has demonstrated again our overarching claim about the creation of new Scripture. To be sure, Jubilees is rewriting with frequent reference to scriptural traditions, especially but not exclusively Genesis through the first chapters of Exodus. But it is also the case that the rewriting of Scripture encompasses the establishment of a new calendar, innovative, and creative instantiation of new rituals, and the composition of new prayers to accompany established biblical narratives. Innovation is thus part of the very dynamic that contributes to a new cultural and literary context in the face of Hellenism.

[19] See Annette Reed's work on the third-century BCE Aramaic scribal tradition with Jubilees as its end and demise: Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing in Ancient Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 247–71.

7
Memorialized Law in Jubilees

Vitality in the book of Jubilees is ultimately expressed through the rearticulation of a past narrative and a renewed implementation of law throughout Jubilees. Many Jewish texts of this era make radical claims to unique access to heavenly knowledge, but we can still see that in this period interpretation is constantly open. This can be true in at least two senses, both of which may be in tension but are not in conflict with the claims of the texts. First, we see the openness in the plurality of texts and the variety of interpretations and ways of interpreting even among (for example) the Dead Sea Scrolls. Then, within individual texts, even while they make claims to extraordinary unique access or absolute interpretation, we still see fluidity in the way they interpret existing texts or ideas and in their ability to accommodate a range of authoritative voices or ideas.

As we have already argued in the previous chapters, the contribution of Jubilees' innovative and creative rethinking is profound. It is a testimony to a Judaism that transformed and emerged during the Hellenistic period. I want to propose in this chapter that, at the very heart of Jubilees, is what I want to name the 'memorialization of the law'. Jubilees memorializes the law through its consistent calculating of the historical progression from primordial times through Sinai. But, of course, it is a work that is aware of subsequent periods of destruction and exile about which it reflects as well. Memorialization of the primordial or patriarchal history does not, for Jubilees, erase or discount eras closer to its present.

Essentially every aspect of the book of Jubilees is the memorialization of the law. This memorialization comes to be inextricably linked to time and calculation, as these concern the organization of the law and recalling with precision when events happen and how to memorialize them. The memorialization of the law creates a new framework for the representation and rethinking of Sinai, creation, history, and calendrical calculation. This framework forms the basis for the overarching argument of the work with respect to vitality.

Recollection of biblical narrative constitutes a history and creates the possibility of a new future in the Hellenistic period. Memorialized law then is the essence of how Jubilees depicts the creation and the sustaining of the world from primordial time until the present. The calculation of time for Jubilees is essential to keeping the law. The forgetting of the law is the explanation for punishment and exile, recalling it makes recovery from exile possible in the economy of Jubilees. Moreover, Jubilees marks the experience of remembering. It is only through recollection that repentance and recovery are possible in the context of correction

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and adherence to the law which is retold, recalled, and re-implemented. The risk of the loss of memory, law, and time is a risk to cosmic order, an ethical polis, and the possibility of return after transgression. Thus, correct adherence to the law is essential to the recovery of correct calendrical calculation and festival, as well as sabbath, observance. Retelling biblical narrative in the Second Temple period is thus about understanding how to live a good and ethical life in the context of Jewish culture and practice. Precise recollection of the narrative and calculation of the calendar are also inextricably linked to living in accordance with the law according to Jubilees. Precision in all forms of recollection is also linked to correct practice and the observance of ritual. Fundamentally, the practice of reading and understanding scriptural traditions correctly will determine the future of the world and recovery from transgression in Jubilees' economy.

7.1 The Foundations of Heavenly and Earthly Correspondence

As emphasized above, correspondence between the heavenly and the earthly law is omnipresent in the book of Jubilees through the language of law and testimony, first and second law, or references to heavenly tablets and their earthly copies. This is a very important aspect of the book of Jubilees, which is linked to notions of heavenly patterns (in Hebrew *tabnît*). This heavenly pattern will be imagined with a corresponding terrestrial pattern in texts such as Instruction and the works of Philo of Alexandria, to which we will turn in Chapter 9 of this book. For now, I already want to signal that there is an ongoing emphasis on correspondences between heavenly and angelic song and earthly prayer and precise calendrical adherence. I will go on, later in this chapter, to describe how angelic prayer already structures time in Jubilees.

Precision in calendrical articulation on earth is understood to already have a precedent in the heavens from the time of the creation of the world, in particular on day four of creation:

> On the fourth day the Lord made the sun, the moon, and the stars (השמש ואת הירח ואת הכוכבים). He placed them in the heavenly firmament to shine on the whole earth, to rule over day and night (ולמשל ביום ובלילה), and to separate (ולהבדיל) between light and darkness. The Lord appointed the sun as a great sign above the earth for days, sabbaths, months (לימים ולשבתות ולחדשים), festivals, years, sabbaths of years, jubilees, and all cycles of the years (וליובלים ולכל תקופות השנים). It separates between light and darkness and (serves) for wellbeing so that everything that sprouts and grows on the earth (הצמח וגדל בארץ) may prosper. These three types he made on the fourth day. (Jubilees 2:8–10)[1]

[1] Hebrew: 4Q216 6:5–9.

The history of the world is already articulated in the heavens as fixed in time. In some sense, we can conclude that according to Jubilees everything is already set in time. And yet, remarkably, it is still possible to change the course of one's fate through adherence to the law or to experience punishment in response to transgression. Memory, time, and law are thus fixed, and yet they can be changed through human speech, prayer, and action.[2] Jubilees crystalizes the underlying conviction and belief about the possibility of human improvement (challenging determinism, despite presenting a history that is already told) by confronting the past of the book of memory, living with the law and its interpretation, and creating a pathway for a new time, i.e. divine time.

At the core of my argument here is the idea that the creation of the world according to Jubilees is in tandem with the creation and organization of time and law which are at once heavenly and earthly. It is through that integration of time and law that memory is constructed, that is, a past, a future, and a present are constructed. Jubilees creates a newly revitalized Scripture through a triangulating engagement between memory, forgetting, and law (both heavenly and earthly), and time as calculation, calendar, and history.

Already in the very first words of Jubilees the division of times is embedded in the paradigmatic event of law (the first heavenly law and the second Sinaitic law). Furthermore, the calendrical system is intimately related to the course of history.

I quoted from Jubilees' prologue in the previous chapter, and I want to revisit that passage here:

> These are the words regarding the divisions of the times for the law and for the testimony, for the events of the years, for the weeks of their jubilees throughout all the years of eternity as he related (them) to Moses on Mount Sinai when he went up to receive the stone tablets—the law and the commandment—by the word of the Lord (בדבר יהוה) as he had told him that he should come up to the summit of the mountain (אל ראש ההר).[3]

Here in the prologue to Jubilees we see the framing of the work as a whole. This introduction claims to be describing the organization of time, i.e. festivals, calendar, and the history of the world (division of the times). But this is not obviously or transparently a reworking of Genesis, but rather an integration and innovative presentation of how Jubilees conceives of time. In Jubilees time is collapsed so that the time of Sinai is also the time of creation concerning the law of Moses.[4] By this,

[2] See Bakker, 'Early Configurations of Jewish Prayer'. See also the DPhil dissertation by Sarah Wisialowski, 'Stopping Time: The Function of Prayer in Jewish-Hellenistic Texts' (DPhil dissertation, University of Oxford, anticipated completion 2025), forthcoming.

[3] Hebrew: 4Q216 1:3–4.

[4] On this point of collapsing time, see Hindy Najman, *Losing the Temple and Recovering the Future: An Analysis of 4 Ezra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 5.

I mean that the time of creation is also the time of Sinai. This creates a new way of thinking about Mosaic law and the establishment of the cosmos, as though they are simultaneous. This is possible in the economy of Jubilees because the first law is the corrected and prior law. Thus, Jubilees itself argues that it is itself (as a text) a heavenly archetype for the copy or 'second law' which is the law of Moses. This is precisely what has led people to call Jubilees a rewriting. But to be sure, it is not rewriting but a representation. To rewrite is to leave it intact and to perform and to articulate anew is really something else.[5]

Ultimately, Jubilees integrates different aspects of the biblical narrative and in so doing, creates new narratives and pathways for thinking about the past, the present, and the future. I emphasize the concept of integration here because a great part of what Jubilees is doing is to integrate several different texts from what we will come to call the Hebrew Bible or the Jewish canon into a larger framework that reflects on time, memory, and law. Ultimately Jubilees creates a new platform for thinking about the creation of the world, Sinai and the law, and recollection or remembering.

7.2 Memory, Law, and Time

Memory, law, and time are thus inherently entangled in Jubilees' understanding. Shortly following the prologue, we encounter a formulation that exhibits this integration of the three:

> They will forget all my law, all my commandments, and all my instructions (וכל תורותי). They will forget (ושכחו) beginning(s) of the month, sabbath, festival, jubilee, and covenant. (Jubilees 1:14)[6]

Jubilees tethers the organization of the law and the history of Israel (especially but not only primordial and pre-Sinaitic times) to the establishment of time. In some sense then, although, as has been noted, Jubilees is deeply Deuteronomic in character and in genre, it is also a text that is shaped and accountable to the Genesis account of creation, especially Genesis 1, a text which scholars associate with the priestly source (P) tradition.[7] But the transgression is epitomized as forgetfulness in a characteristically Deuteronomic fashion. The entire world depends on Israel's ability to recall the correct implementation of the law to calculate the seasons, festivals, and sabbath, tracing itself back to the very creation of the world. By forgetting

[5] Hindy Najman, 'Vitality of Scripture'.
[6] Hebrew: 4Q216 2:16.
[7] James C. VanderKam, 'Genesis 1 in the Book of Jubilees', *ZAC* 26, no. 1 (2022): pp. 8–24, doi:10.1515/zac-2022-0010.

the law, Israel is compromised and the entire earthly framework collapses, which reduces the entirety of the world to primordial chaos.

There is repeated language of forgetting and also about remembering—but what was there to forget and to remember before Sinai with respect to the law, the calculation of time, and the festivals? Revisiting the wider context for the passage cited above we can see the significance forgetting and remembering take within Jubilees as God speaks to Moses:

> Now you write all these words (את כל הדברים האלה) that I am telling you today, because I know their defiance and their stubbornness (even) before I bring them into the land which I promised by oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: 'To your posterity (לזרעכם) I will give the land which flows with milk and honey.' When they eat and are full (ואכלו ושבעו), they will turn after other gods (אחר אלהים אחרים) who will not save them from any afflictions (מצוקות). Then the testimony is to correspond with this testimony (וענתה התעודה אל התעודה הזאת). For they will forget all my commandments—everything that I command you—and will follow the nations, their disgrace, and their shame (וילכו אחר הגוים ואחר כלמתם ואחר חרפתם). They will serve their gods, and (this) will prove an obstacle for them—an affliction, a pain, and a trap.
>
> . . .
>
> After this they will return to me from among the nations (אלי מתוך הגוים) with all their minds, all their souls, and all their strength. Then I will gather them from among all the nations, and they will search for me so that I may be found by them when they have searched for me with all their minds and with all their souls. I will rightly disclose to them abundant peace. I will plant them as a righteous plant with all my mind and with all my soul. They will become a blessing, not a curse; they will become the head, not the tail. I will build my temple among them and will live with them; I will be their God and they will become my true and righteous people. I will neither abandon them nor become alienated from them, for I am the Lord their God. (Jubilees 1:7–9, 15–18)[8]

The language throughout this passage is one of forgetting or abandoning and one of remembering, i.e. returning.[9] The experience of exile and loss is mapped onto the work of memory—the loss and the recovery associated with memory. This language will continue throughout the work. The retelling of the narrative from the very beginning of the people, from Sinai, and the creation of the world, is the framework for the entirety of the book. The stories of Genesis and the first part of

[8] Hebrew: 4Q215 1:17–2:17.

[9] On this passage, see Cana Werman, *The Book of Jubilees: Introduction, Translation, and Interpretation* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 2015), pp. 129–43.

Exodus are retold to remind the readers of their past, of the law, and of the correct implementation of time. These narratives, laws, and calculations are already heavenly for Jubilees. But they also have their own distinctive transmission through earthly tradents. This transmission and dissemination occur through the writing and the reading of these originally heavenly traditions. According to Jubilees, Moses was not the first divine amanuensis, neither was he the first to learn about the heavenly organization of time. There were plenty of precursors. The heavenly tablets were already revealed to the first one who learned writing, namely, Enoch the scribe:

> He was the first to write a testimony. He testified to humanity in the generations of the earth. The weeks of the jubilees he related, and made known the days of the years; the months he arranged, and related the sabbaths of the years, as we had told him. (Jubilees 4:18)

Enoch is credited with writing down the astronomical phenomena in coordination with the correct understanding of the calendar. The *te'udah* (testimony) that is witnessed by Enoch contains the division of calendrical times (days of the year, months, and sabbaths of years). But the testimony also contains a vision of the course of history that functions as an admonition or a witness against humanity. Thus, this testimony and the law (*te'udah* and *Torah*) reflect the integration of memory, law, and time, all of which come to recount the history of Israel and ultimately of the world. Enoch himself becomes emblematic of this testimony which he must continue to give:

> Because of him the flood water did not come on any of the land of Eden because he was placed there as a sign and to testify against all people in order to tell all the deeds of history until the day of judgment. (Jubilees 4:24)

In Jubilees, Enoch knows and sees the wickedness of humanity. He records all the deeds of human beings as well as the catastrophes that will befall them. Human beings have no right to complain that these catastrophes are signs of the injustice of the cosmos or of God's rule. Enoch is there to testify against humanity, precisely because he witnessed all their evil actions and now will record them in the heavens. But what is most striking in verse 4:18, quoted above, is that the testimony written by Enoch contains knowledge of both the correct calendrical order and the entire course of history. Time and history are intimately connected, and both testify against humanity over time. They bear witness to past transgressions against the law, and at the same time recount that past. The explanation for transgression is repeatedly the forgetfulness of the people. It is essential then that the retelling of ancient Israel's history brings memory to life.

7.3 Marking and Dividing Time

The *teʿudah* for Jubilees is the uniquely correct understanding of the calendar. So that calendar and time recount the history of the world, time is thereby memorialized through the weekly division, hence Jubilees' obsession with calendrical marking. Calendar is the essence of knowing God by recording the order of day and night, weeks and months, past and future, and the movements of the cosmos. Correct calculation is of the utmost importance, and the violation of that divine time is nothing less than blasphemy and idolatry. Because wrong calculation challenges divine creation, omnipotence, and the laws (both first and second, Jubilees speaks of both), it will inevitably bring destruction upon the world and its inhabitants. I quoted already the explicit warning concerning the implications for calendrical transgression in Jubilees 1:14.

The division of time, as separation or distinction which is articulated through the language of sectioning, is significant because of the way it marks time on earth as a reflection of the movement of the heavenly bodies. Furthermore, it is important to highlight the plural *ʿittim* as the term for this conceptualization of time. This Hebrew term can refer broadly to times or occasions and is applied to a wide range of divisions of time across Jubilees: weeks, months, years, weeks of years, periods, sequence of seasons, and epochs.

Human beings fulfil their own essential obligation, namely to be imitative of the divine, by dividing time and creating order on earth as a repeated creation which is fulfilled weekly with the shabbat. Human imitation of the heavens then becomes the paradigmatic act of correspondence between the heavens and the earth. Thus, the sage will be said to create time as an aspiring divine human:

> . . . [There were also] the depths (את התהומות), darkness and dawn (מאפלה ושחר), light and evening which he prepared through his knowledge (בדעתו).[10] Then we [i.e. the angels] saw his works and blessed him regarding all his works (אז ראינו מעשיו ונברכהו על כל מעשיו). We offered praise before him because he had made seven great works (מעשים גדולים עשה) on the first day. (Jubilees 2:2–3)[11]

This passage explicitly articulates heavenly and earthly correspondence.[12] Immediately following, God creates mediating figures who move between heaven

[10] The Ethiopic versions reads: '. . . the depths, darkness and light, dawn and evening which he prepared through the knowledge of his mind (*ba-ʾaʾməro lebbu*).' Interestingly, this corresponds to the wording of the Hymn of the Creator, at 11Q5 26:11–12 (בדעת לבו), while 4Q216 reads עתו[בד].

[11] Hebrew: 4Q216 5:9–11.

[12] See Jonathan Ben-Dov, 'Job 38:7 and the Qumran Yahad as a Praying Community', in *Prayer in Jewish and Christian Traditions: Identity, Practice, and Cross-cultural Contacts*, ed. Beate Ego, Joachim J. Krause, and Dalit Rom-Shiloni (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2025), forthcoming. In this essay Jonathan Ben-Dov substantiates the claim that this 'heavenly and earthly correspondence' is the real meaning of the *yaḥad* as in Job 38:7. See also idem, 'Demonic Deuteronomy? The Ending of

and earth. Thus, on the fourth day of creation, these mediating figures construct time through seasons and 'the angels of the spirits for cold and heat, for winter and summer (ולחרף ולקיץ)'.[13] Jubilees emphasizes that all of this is created not by a demiurge or by angelic figures, but rather through God's knowledge. God created 'darkness and light, dawn and evening, which he prepared through the knowledge of his mind'.[14] The divine mind in Jubilees is presented as generative. Light and darkness and day and night emerge from God's knowledge. This knowledge is, in fact, the ordering of the world, the implementation of time, history, and the gift of both the first and the second law—which provide humanity with a map to find a way back to the beginning, but only, of course, with the correct conception of time. The angels know the correct alignment between divine creation and human acknowledgment of God as creator. Angelic prayer does not only acknowledge, but also constitutes time. The angels are the gatekeepers, but they are also the messengers between heaven to earth.

As we saw already in 2:3, above, the angels, as divine beings, know instinctively how to pray. Their prayer structures time for the people as an expression of cosmic order. The people imitate the *qedoshim* (holy ones) as part of their charge to be in the image of God, and as a result of this imitation, they learn to pray like the angels. That is, they learn to pray at the correct time, to construct prayers that coincide with different units of time, and ultimately they too, like God, create holy and separate time—i.e. a time of peace, of rest, and blessing through observing and keeping Shabbat (as in Genesis 2:3, through blessing the sabbath day and by making it holy). Thus, when Israel prays with a circumcised mind (Jubilees 6), participation in angelic song is possible in the celebration of the divine mind which is liturgically circumscribed through the ordering of time. This is a reconstruction of history through song and prayer. It is about participation in the creation or recreation of the world. But this narrative of participation is an integrative new account of how creation comes to reconnect with the heavenly and the cosmic.

At the crux of the organization of time is the sabbath day because it unites the creation of the world and the creation of the people.[15] Sabbath will become the

Deuteronomy and the Sectarian Debate', in *The Textual History of the Bible from the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Biblical Manuscripts of the Vienna Papyrus Collection: Proceedings of the Fifteenth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, Cosponsored by the University of Vienna Institute for Jewish Studies and the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), pp. 253–84.

[13] The translation follows 4Q216 5:8. The Ethiopic reads: 'for cold and heat, for winter, spring, autumn, and summer.' Epiphanius' Greek text likewise lists all four seasons. See VanderKam, *Jubilees*, 169.

[14] See the Psalms Scroll (11QPs[a]) in which the Hymn to the Creator is partially preserved in column 26 (James A. Sanders, ed., *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll*, vol. 4 [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967], pp. 89–91). See also the extensive discussion about the Hymn to the Creator in Bakker, *Secret of Time*, pp. 117–20.

[15] Jon D. Levenson, 'The Temple and the World', *JR* 64, no. 3 (1984): pp. 275–98, doi:10.1086/487131; idem, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987). See also, Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975).

paradigm for the organization of all time: past, present, and future. Imitation of the divine through the perfect adherence to calendrical detail is required to give testimony to God as creator. Thus, every unit of time is marked with liturgical celebration and ritual. This collapsing of time also allows for the reconnection to the heavenly realm where history is retold from the beginning of the world. Let us consider chapter 6 from Jubilees:

> There will be people who carefully observe the moon with lunar observations because it is corrupt (with respect to) the seasons and is early from year to year by ten days. Therefore, years will come about for them when they will disturb (the year) and make a day of testimony something worthless and a profane day a festival. Everyone will join together both holy days with the profane and the profane day with the holy day, for they will err regarding the months, the sabbaths, the festivals, and the jubilee. (Jubilees 6:36–7)

Without correct knowledge of how the year has been divided, it is impossible to live in accordance with the signs of the heavens, or with the order of nature. This lack of coordination expresses itself first and foremost in liturgical practices that are no longer attuned to revealed law but rather participate in the misguided notions of the nations. For all the knowledge that gentiles may have gathered, they still misunderstand the correct calendrical order, i.e. they break the law. It is the number seven that lies at the heart of the 364-day year that we encounter in Jubilees, in the Astronomic Book of Enoch, and a series of calendrical texts from Qumran.[16] The year is calculated based on four seasons of thirteen weeks each.

Jubilees rejects the moon as a reliable basis for time reckoning, and accordingly months are not calculated based on the lunar cycle. But, as Jonathan Ben-Dov has argued, it would be incorrect to refer to the 364-day year as a solar calendar, since the solar cycle does not lie at the basis of this calendrical system. Moreover, while 365 is close to a full solar cycle, a solar year lasts instead a little less than 365 days and a quarter.

It is the number seven as an ideal and normative category that is superimposed on the cycle of the seasons. Indeed, it is also imposed on the reckoning of long temporal cycles: weeks of years and jubilees. The number seven is used as a principle that underlies the order of nature, similar to theories of the Pythagoreans, and similar to the ideas of Aristobulus and Philo of Alexandria.[17] But it is important

[16] See Jonathan Ben-Dov, *Head of All Years: Astronomy and Calendars at Qumran in Their Ancient Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); idem, 'The 364-Day Year in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Jewish Pseudepigraphy', in *Calendars and Years II: Astronomy and Time in the Ancient and Medieval World*, ed. John M. Steele (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011), pp. 69–105; James C. VanderKam, 'Studies in the Chronology of the Book of Jubilees', in *From Revelation to Canon: Studies in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 522–44; Helen R. Jacobus, *Zodiac Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Their Reception: Ancient Astronomy and Astrology in Early Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

[17] See especially Philo's *De opificio mundi* 89–128.

to remember that, unlike for the Pythagoreans, for Jubilees this principle does not ultimately derive from mathematical insights, but rather is derived from the institution of the sabbath that creates a seven-day cycle. So, while we do not have an explicit expression of time in the abstract, in Jubilees, we nevertheless have a clear conception of time. We have an account of its origin, organization, purpose, and implementation as obligatory with respect to prayer.

7.4 History Underwriting the Present

While the recovery of the (primordial and patriarchal) past through retelling is the mechanism by which histories are constructed in ancient Judaism, narratives are also about underwriting the present. What is being written, and copied from dictation was already revealed to generations of holy men: from Enoch through Jacob to Levi and eventually to Moses on Sinai. Jubilees describes this process for Enoch here:

> While he slept he saw in a vision what has happened and what will occur—how things will happen for humanity during their history until the day of judgment. He saw everything and understood. He wrote a testimony for himself and placed it upon the earth against all mankind and for their history. (Jubilees 4:19)

These are the tablets that are copied and disseminated. Indeed, to properly understand the Mosaic Torah, according to Jubilees, one will have to understand how the law is contextualized already and always in the heavenly tablets. Whether it is the prohibition of adultery, the correct calendrical calculation, or the laws of purity after a woman gives birth, these are the laws inscribed on the heavenly tablets:

> For this reason the law of these days has been ordained for the one who gives birth to a male or a female. She is not to touch any sacred thing nor to enter the sanctuary until the time when those days for a male or a female are completed. These are the law and testimony that were written for Israel to keep for all times. (Jubilees 3:13–14)

The law for Jubilees is the organization of the cosmos, the history of the world—past, present, and future—as well as a way of life that is remembered forward. To remember and to observe the law, especially with respect to the sabbath day, is to recover a perfect past. Remembering and observing are remarkably interwoven together in Exodus 20:8 where we find: 'Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy.' Remembering is not only about a past but about a lived interweaving of that past into the present obedience to the law. The past is already inscribed in the heavenly tablets, as is the future. This is in part why Jubilees has been linked to apocalyptic

literature more generally.[18] This ongoing narrative constantly connects the past to the future as a way of animating the texts of antiquity. Already for Jacob (here called Israel) as he tells his sons about their near future—the Israelites' life in Egypt—he tells them also about the end-time and, in turn, passes on the books to Levi. Thus, he entangles past and future with present—both the present for the patriarchs and the present for the writers and readers of the book of Jubilees:

> Israel lived for seventeen years in the land of Egypt. All of the time that he lived was three jubilees—one hundred and forty-seven years. He died during the fourth year of the fifth week of the forty-fifth jubilee. Israel blessed his sons before he died. He told them everything that would happen to them in the land of Egypt; and he informed them (about) what would happen to them at the end of time. He blessed them and gave Joseph two shares in the land. He slept with his fathers and was buried near his father Abraham in the double cave in the land of Canaan—in the grave which he had dug for himself in the double cave in the land of Hebron. He gave all his books and the books of his fathers to his son Levi so that he could preserve them and renew them for his sons until today. (Jubilees 45:13–16)

A transformation of the present is created through Jubilees' account of time, memory, and the law. As the passage indicates it is about renewal of the past as well as an articulation of a present law that was already revealed. Jubilees thereby underwrites a new present.

Perhaps the most appropriate text for exhibiting this interweaving calendrical time, history, and an ongoing present is the Noah pericope. None of the compositional complexity of Genesis 6–9 is lost on the composers of Jubilees. So, while Jubilees itself is constructing a complex composition in its own right, the work also takes great pains to iron out the very inconcinnities of the Pentateuchal narratives. Here the Noah pericope is embedded into the complex and detailed calendrical structure of Jubilees:

> On the first of the first month, the first of the fourth month, the first of the seventh month, and the first of the tenth month are memorial days and days of the seasons. They are written down and ordained at the four divisions of the year as an eternal testimony. Noah ordained them as festivals for himself throughout the history of eternity with the result that through them he had a reminder. On the

[18] See John J. Collins, 'The Genre of Apocalypse Reconsidered', *ZAC* 20, no. 1 (2016): pp. 21–40, doi:10.1515/zac-2016-0001; Jonathan Ben-Dov, 'Apocalyptic Temporality: The Force of the Here and Now', *HeBAI* 5, no. 3 (2016): pp. 289–303, doi:10.1628/186870316X14805954607759; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, 'The Apocalypse of Weeks: Periodization and Tradition-Historical Context', in *Four Kingdom Motifs before and beyond the Book of Daniel*, ed. Andrew B. Perrin and Loren T. Stuckenbruck (Leiden: Brill, 2021), pp. 81–95; Hindy Najman, 'The Inheritance of Prophecy in Apocalyptic', in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 36–48.

> first of the first month he was told to make the ark, and on it the earth became dry, he opened (it), and saw the earth. On the first of the fourth month the openings of the depths of the abyss below were closed. On the first of the seventh month all the openings of the earth's depths were opened, and the water began to go down into them. On the first of the tenth month the summits of the mountains became visible, and Noah was very happy.
>
> For this reason he ordained them for himself forever as memorial festivals. So, they are ordained, and they enter them on the heavenly tablets. Each one of them (consists of) thirteen weeks; their memorial (extends) from one to the other: from the first to the second, from the second to third, and from the third to the fourth. All the days of the commandments will be fifty-two weeks of days; (they will make) the entire year complete. So it has been engraved and ordained on the heavenly tablets. One is not allowed to transgress a single year, year by year. (Jubilees 6:23–31)

While there is some attention to calendrical matters already in the Pentateuchal narratives, much of this calendrical focus in Jubilees is not matched in the Pentateuchal narratives, especially with respect to the patriarchs. Within the Pentateuchal narratives of Genesis 6–9, of course, we see tensions reflecting varied traditions from which scholars have identified sources. Typically, the non-priestly traditions are far less focused on the calendar, whereas for the priestly traditions calendar could not be more central. To be sure, Jubilees integrates the priestly focus on time and calendar and makes those two aspects of religious life and prescription to be of the highest priority. I mention this not because the later historical-critical divisions are relevant to the creators of Jubilees, but rather because it is important to observe how Jubilees calculates the history of the world in a way that integrates past and future punishment, reward, and redemption.[19]

Notably, Jubilees constructs a past that tells of history and memory of which we have no independent record within the biblical materials, but we do have ample non-canonical materials that show that Jubilees is participating in a much larger framework for conceiving of the biblical. Regardless of whether Jubilees' supplementary expressions are part of other textual traditions (e.g. traditions around Enoch,[20] or the Aramaic Levi document),[21] they are nevertheless integrated into a larger framework for a reconstituted Pentateuch which comes to be part of a

[19] There are many texts that align with Jubilees' account of time, e.g. 1QH^a 9:23–35 (a text we will discuss more extensively below, pp. 143–145).

[20] Michael Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[21] On this, see Michael E. Stone, 'Aramaic Levi in Its Contexts', *JSQ* 9, no. 4 (2002): pp. 207–326, doi:10.1628/0944570033029581; Jonas C. Greenfield, Michael E. Stone, and Esther Eshel, eds, *The Aramaic Levi Document: Edition, Translation, Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); James L. Kugel, 'How Old is the *Aramaic Levi Document*?', *DSD* 14, no. 3 (2007): pp. 291–312, doi:10.1163/156851707782177495.

renewed past through sacrifice, prayer, and calendrical reckonings, all of which were already inscribed, according to Jubilees, on the heavenly tablets.

Jubilees will repeatedly claim that what is being recorded is already and always old, primordial, and pre-Sinaitic. And yet, the narrative of Jubilees itself could not be more innovative as a new scriptural tradition is being constructed that has no chronological constraints. And despite all of that, innovative elements are embedded in the narrative of Jubilees as though it is looking backward. Jubilees wants to transfer to the present, which seems bereft of hope, the temporal horizon of the earlier moment, in which hope was still possible.[22] This is a complex operation. For we know that hope was still possible retrospectively. We know, for example, that there was grave disappointment and critique of the Second Temple in the Persian period and into the Hellenistic period, but we also know that others greeted the Second Temple with much joy and celebration. The biblical book of Ezra 3:10–12 expresses both sentiments—and that tension will continue throughout the Second Temple period. But there will continue to be a residual longing for the past—an idealized primordial time or patriarchal period which renders that hope of the past accessible again:

וְיִסְּדוּ הַבּנִּים אֶת־הֵיכַל יְהוָה וַיַּעֲמִידוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים מְלֻבָּשִׁים בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת וְהַלְוִיִּם בְּנֵי־אָסָף בֶּמְצִלְתַּיִם לְהַלֵּל אֶת־יְהוָה עַל־יְדֵי דָּוִיד מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיַּעֲנוּ בְּהַלֵּל וּבְהוֹדֹת לַיהוָה כִּי טוֹב כִּי־לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל־הָעָם הֵרִיעוּ תְרוּעָה גְדוֹלָה בְּהַלֵּל לַיהוָה עַל הוּסַד בֵּית־יְהוָה: וְרַבִּים מֵהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם וְרָאשֵׁי הָאָבוֹת הַזְּקֵנִים אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ אֶת־הַבַּיִת הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּיִסְּדוֹ זֶה הַבַּיִת בְּעֵינֵיהֶם בֹּכִים בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל וְרַבִּים בִּתְרוּעָה בְשִׂמְחָה לְהָרִים קוֹל:

> When the builders had laid the foundation of the Temple of the Lord, priests in their vestments with trumpets, and Levites sons of Asaph with cymbals were stationed to give praise to the Lord, as King David of Israel had ordained. They sang songs extolling and praising the Lord, 'For He is good, His steadfast love for Israel is eternal.' All the people raised a great shout extolling the Lord because the foundation of the House of the Lord had been laid. Many of the priests and Levites and the chiefs of the clans, the old men who had seen the first house, wept loudly at the sight of the founding of this house. Many others shouted joyously at the top of their voices. (Ezra 3:10–12)

And, so, whether Jubilees is now focused on rebuilding a new, or heavenly temple, or an alternative temple (which might be the situation in the Temple Scroll), the point is the reorientation of a disoriented community. This new orientation is not spatial, but temporal. The temporal connections come to be between a traditional past and a hopeful future.

[22] For an extensive discussion of radical hope in Second Temple Judaism see Najman, *Losing the Temple*.

Works such as Jubilees seek to relocate the reader from the present (a failed reconstituted temple community in Jerusalem) not because they want to perpetuate the past, but because they want to transfer a feature of the earlier moment to the present. The present seems to Jubilees bereft of hope or is at the very least compromised due to transgression or inaccurate fulfilment of the times and the law. It therefore hopes to transfer to that present the temporal horizon of the earlier moment in which hope was still possible. This is a complex operation. The return to the past seems to be to try to render that hope accessible again, whether it is now focused on newly reconceived calendrical practices, corrected rituals, or reconceiving of the law of Moses.

In other words, the goal seems to be reorientation, not spatially, but temporally, as a location between a traditional past and a hopeful future. This requires us to collapse time, but it might also ask that we retell our past in a way that creates a new future. This retelling then is presupposed through writing. Jubilees' account of history crosses temporal boundaries.

7.5 Writing, Remembering, and Atoning

The role of writing is of the uppermost importance across the work. As I have argued, the centrality and authorizing forces of writing in Jubilees cannot be stated strongly enough.[23] But writing is both noetic or spiritual and heavenly as well as terrestrial. Writing is itself magical and heavenly as a way of accessing angelic poetry and divine creation. Moreover, writing can be redemptive, but it can also be destructive and dangerous. And thus, writing is capable of participating in divine imitation, but it can also be idolatrous. Writing is essential both as a means of recording and of remembering and transmitting.

One of the most remarkable narrative transformations in Jubilees is about writing as a mode of remembering and recording in the retold narrative of Jacob and the ladder. Again, the narrative within Jubilees is remarkably different and distant from what we might recall as the Genesis 28 pericope. This story and the supplementation that Jubilees provides is remarkable for many reasons. Jubilees transforms the biblical narrative about the angels ascending and descending into a narrative about the transmission of the contents of the heavenly tablets and the history of the world, especially of Israel. That is, Jubilees combines the vision that Jacob has with a vision of history that Daniel will receive (in Daniel chs 2 and 7). This integration of the dreams of Jacob and Daniel will have an even more awesome and dramatic expression in the much later composition The Ladder of

[23] Hindy Najman, 'Interpretation as Primordial Writing'.

Jacob.[24] In addition to this very clear transformation we see a persistent underlying emphasis on memory and writing which speaks to the language of the idea of a record. It binds the language of time and record—or witness (inscribed in the heavenly *te'udah*)—of past, present, and future:

> During the next night, on the twenty-second day of this month, Jacob decided to build up that place and to surround the courtyard with a wall, to sanctify it, and make it eternally holy for himself and for his children after him forever. The Lord appeared to him during the night. He blessed him and said to him, 'You are not to be called Jacob only but you will (also) be named Israel.' He said to him a second time, 'I am the Lord who created heaven and earth (הארץ). I will make you fruitful (והפריתיכה) and multiply you very much. Kings will come from you, and they will rule wherever mankind has set foot (וימשלו בכול מדרוך כף רגל). I will give your descendants all of the land that is beneath the sky. They will rule over all the nations (וימשלו בכול הגוים) just as they wish. Afterwards, they will gain the entire earth, and they will possess it forever.' When he had finished speaking with him, he went up (לדבר אתו ויעלה) from him, and Jacob kept watching until he had gone up into heaven. In a night vision he saw an angel (הלילה והנה מלאך) coming down from heaven with seven tablets in his hands. He gave (them) to Jacob, and he read them. He learned everything that was written in them—what would happen to him and his sons throughout all ages. After he had shown him everything that was written on the tablets, he said to him, 'Do not build up this place, and do not make it an eternal temple. Do not live here because this is not the place. Go to the house of your father Abraham and live where your father Isaac is until the day of your father's death. For you will die peacefully in Egypt and be buried honorably in this land in the grave of your fathers—with Abraham and Isaac. Do not be afraid because everything will happen just as you have seen and read. Now you write down everything just as you have seen and read.' Then Jacob said, 'Lord, how shall I remember everything just as I have read and seen?' He said to him, 'I will remind you of everything.' When he had gone from him, he awakened and remembered everything that he had read and seen. He wrote down all the things that he had read and seen. He celebrated one more day there. On it he sacrificed exactly as he had been sacrificing on the previous days. He named it Detaining because he was detained one day.[25] He named the previous ones the Festival. This is the way it was revealed that it should be, and it is written on the heavenly tablets. For this reason it was revealed to him that he should celebrate it and add it

[24] See discussion on 'the Ladder of Jacob' and related interpretative traditions in James L. Kugel, 'The Ladder of Jacob', *HTR* 88, no. 2 (1995): pp. 209–77, doi:10.1017/S0017816000030303. See also James L. Kugel, *The Ladder of Jacob: Ancient Interpretations of the Biblical Story of Jacob and His Children* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[25] VanderKam follows the Latin (*Jubilees: A Commentary*, pp. 867, 869): referring to *Shemini Atseret*.

> to the seven days of the festival. It was called Detaining because of the fact that it is entered in the testimony of the festal days in accord with the number of days in the year.
>
> That night, on the twenty-third of this month, Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, died. They buried her below the city, beneath the oak (near) the stream. He named that place the Stream of Deborah and the oak the Oak of Mourning for Deborah. (Jubilees 32:16–30)[26]

The anxiety about remembering is at once terrifying and paralysing. Jacob is aware that the inscribing of the tablets and testimonies is essential for the sustaining of his people and their future. Writing becomes the mode of inscribing law, keeping records of history, and ensuring that the people do not forget. The writing down and the rewriting become the most important means of preserving the tradition of the heavenly tablets. This writing preserves the oracular and transmits it to the next generation. The fear of forgetting is profound. By forgetting the history, the law and the tradition are lost.

The substance of what was already revealed to Jacob, will get threaded through the Jubilees narrative at a much later point in the biblical story. Thus, when Jacob is told to descend to Egypt, Jacob recalls the vision of the history of his people and he does not want to go, even to see his favourite son Joseph:

> They went up and told their father that Joseph was alive and that he was having grain distributed to all the peoples of the earth and ruling over the entire land of Egypt. Their father did not believe (it) because he was disturbed in his thoughts. But after he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent, his spirit revived and he said, 'It is enough for me that Joseph is alive. Let me go down and see him before I die'.
>
> Israel set out from Hebron, from his house, on the first of the third month. He went by way of the well of the oath and offered a sacrifice to the God of his father Isaac on the seventh of this month. When Jacob remembered the dream that he had seen in Bethel, he was afraid to go down to Egypt. But as he was thinking about sending word to Joseph that he should come to him and that he would not go down, he remained there for seven days on the chance that he would see a vision (about) whether he should remain or go down. He celebrated the harvest festival—the firstfruits of grain—with old grain because in all the land of Canaan there was not even a handful of seed in the land since the famine affected all the animals, the cattle, the birds, and humanity as well.
>
> On the sixteenth the Lord appeared to him and said to him, 'Jacob, Jacob.' He said, 'Yes?' He said to him: 'I am the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham and Isaac. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt because I will make you into

[26] Hebrew: 4Q223–224 1 I 1–5.

> a great nation there. I will go down with you and will lead you (back). You will be buried in this land, and Joseph will place his hands on your eyes. Do not be afraid; go down to Egypt.' (Jubilees 43:23–44:6)

Jacob remembers something that did not yet happen. He remembers the vision of what would become of Israel. But history is not in Jacob's control. The message is that the history is set. All that human beings can do is to live with the law, a law that is at once heavenly and terrestrial. There is no other way to move forward. To resist the history that is already in place is to resist law and necessarily to forget.[27] The role of recollection and forgetfulness is also part of the history of the heavenly tablets. But it also solves another problem for Jubilees, namely, the law before Sinai.

What is remembered by Jacob according to Jubilees is full of complexity and of course, aligns with Jubilees' understanding of the history of the world. The law was not yet given, and yet it was available. The law that is to be observed and to be remembered originates with the first one who knew the law because he walked with God—namely, Enoch. However, the first law which Jubilees describes is said to be given before Sinai. It is also the perfect record of heavenly law and history. For Jubilees the first law is timeless and primordial and divine. To remember is to mention, but it can be to activate a law, a tradition, or a past that has not yet happened. There are many such ways of creating new traditions, one is to recall that which was not yet revealed. So timelessly the heavenly tablets testify to a timeless law—so that Sinai is just one of many revelations. This can be likened to myths of lost or burnt books (Jeremiah 36 and 4Ezra), that loss becomes a catalyst for re-activation of that revelation.[28]

[27] See this additional passage about remembering: 'Now Joseph was well formed and very handsome. The wife of his master looked up at him, saw Joseph, loved him, and pleaded with him to lie with her. But he did not surrender himself. He remembered the Lord and what his father Jacob would read to him from the words of Abraham—that no one is to commit adultery with a woman who has a husband; that there is a death penalty which has been ordained for him in heaven before the Most High God. The sin will be entered regarding him in the eternal books forever before the Lord. Joseph remembered what he had said and refused to sleep with her. She pleaded with him for one year and a second, but he refused to listen to her. She grasped him and held on to him in the house to compel him to sleep with her. She closed the door of the house and held on to him. He left his clothes in her hands, broke the door, and ran away from her to the outside. When that woman saw that he would not lie with her, she accused him falsely to his master: "Your Hebrew slave whom you love wanted to force me so that he could sleep with me. When I shouted, he ran outside, left his clothes in my hands when I grabbed him by his clothes, and broke the door." When the Egyptian saw Joseph's clothes and the broken door, he believed what his wife said. He put Joseph in prison in the place where the prisoners of the king were held' (Jubilees 39:5–11).

[28] The re-activation of the exodus is also part of the recalling, this can even be described as digging up, e.g. in the Damascus Document:

2 . . . ויזכר אל ברית ראשנים *vacat* ויקם מאהרן נבונים ומישראל 3 חכמים וישמיעם ויחפורו את הבאר באר
חפרוה שרים כרוה 4 נדיבי העם במחוקק הבאר היא התורה וחופריה *vacat* הם 5 שבי ישראל היוצאים
מארץ יהודה ויגורו בארץ דמשק 6 אשר קרא אל את כולם שרים כי דרשוהו ולא הושבה
7 פארתם בפי אחד *vacat* והמחוקק הוא דורש התורה אשר 8 אמר ישעיה מוציא כלי למעשיהו *vacat* ונדיבי
העם הם 9 הבאים לכרות את הבאר במחוקקות אשר חקק המחוקק 10 להתהלך במה בכל קץ הרשיע
וזולתם לא ישיגו עד עמד 11 יורה הצדק באחרית הימים *vacat* . . .

7.6 Memorializing, Ritualizing, Activating

To memorialize, especially in the case of Jubilees, is also to ritualize and to re-activate. The re-activation of the law in Jubilees is part of a radical new performance of the law in the context of the heavenly tablets which are prior to the law and are also included in the law:

> I have now written for you the sabbath commandments and all the statutes of its laws. You will work for six days, but on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God. Do not do any work on it—you, your children, your male and female servants, all your cattle, or the foreigner who is with you. The man who does any work on it is to die. Any man who desecrates this day; who sleeps with a woman; who says anything about work on it—that he is to set out on a trip on it, or about any selling or buying; who on it draws water which he had not prepared for himself on the sixth day; or who lifts any load to bring (it) outside his tent or his house is to die. On the sabbath day do not do any work which you have not prepared for yourself on the sixth day so that you may eat, drink, rest, keep sabbath on this day from all work, and bless the Lord your God who has given you a festal day and a holy day. This day among their days is to be the day of the holy kingdom for all Israel throughout all time. For great is the honor that the Lord has given Israel to eat, drink, and be filled on this festal day; and to rest on it from any work that belongs to the work of humanity except to burn incense and to bring before the Lord offerings and sacrifices for the days and sabbaths. Only this (kind of) work is to be done on the sabbath days in the sanctuary of the Lord your God in order that they may atone continuously for Israel with offerings from day to day as a memorial that is acceptable before the Lord; and in order that he may receive them forever, day by day, as you were ordered. (Jubilees 50:6–11)

The possibility of atonement through adhering to the law is central to the framework of recovery and repentance which is part of the essence of Jubilees' message.[29]

> But God remembered the covenant of the forefathers. *Blank* And he raised from Aaron men of knowledge and from Israel 3 wise men, and made them listen. And they dug the well: 'A well which the princes dug, which 4 the nobles of the people delved with the staff' (Numbers 21:18). The well is the law. And those who dug it *Blank* are 5 the converts of Israel, who left the land of Judah and lived in the land of Damascus, 6 all of whom God called princes, for they sought him, and their renown has not been repudiated 7 in anyone's mouth. *Blank* And the staff is the interpreter of the law, of whom 8 Isaiah said: 'He produces a tool for his labour' (Isaiah 54:16). *Blank* And the nobles of the people are 9 those who came to dig the well with the staves that the sceptre decreed, 10 to walk in them throughout the whole age of wickedness, and without which they will not obtain it, until there arises 11 he who teaches justice at the end of days. *Blank*

[29] Yom Kippur is crucial for *teshuvah*. In Jubilees however this is an anomaly which exemplifies chosenness for Jubilees. See Ishay Rosen-Zvi, 'Pauline Traditions and the Rabbis: Three Case Studies', *HTR* 110, no. 2 (2017): pp. 169–94, doi:10.1017/S0017816017000037.

For Jubilees, the sabbath day and the structure of the calendar is the very redemptive framework that brings the heavenly tablets into the earthly realm. The order of time, days, and seasons is part of what it is to live in the holiness and the order of Israel. For Jubilees to celebrate the calendrical holidays in time is precisely to live with the law and with divine time.

This animation is part of activating a paradigm for living at one with the heavenly tablets only to be rearticulated across time and generations until it is fulfilled through Sinai. This re-giving of the law is part of the collapsing of past and present in Jubilees. Time in Jubilees is past, present, and future. There is not a prior time when the law was not in the heavens, because the world is created at one time with the law as a memorialized and eternal expression of deity.

Jubilees re-animates Scripture as it creates new contexts for understanding biblical narrative, history, and law. Jubilees is an innovative work that carries the biblical traditions into new directions: recounting history, creating liturgy, and the pursuit of understanding. It is through a remembered and recontextualized past that a new present is created. But this is a new present which is ever-changing. The work of Jubilees is a dynamic mode of writing. In short, it is a paradigmatic example of the vitality of Scripture.

Therefore, Jubilees' reading of the first sections of the Pentateuch is not a replacement but a parallel work of Scripture that invokes the authoritative texts while at the same time supplementing those earlier works. This work is a new performance of Genesis through Exodus but not as replacement.[30] Rather, this is a new manifestation of Sinai and creation as a merging of heaven and earth.

As we reflect on the innovative and dynamic mode of writing in Jubilees as a new work that is alive to the transformed practices of reading and ritual in the Hellenistic period for the Jewish community, we can come to appreciate how a forward-moving understanding of scriptural composition operates. Jubilees reconceives Scripture in a new register which authorizes a new understanding of how one overcomes destruction and exile through a new kind of reading which allows for an overcoming of destruction through recalculation and recollection. Thus, Jubilees as reader exemplifies a forward-looking method through its own hermeneutic.

[30] See discussion in Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai*.

PART III

CONCEPTUAL REFLECTIONS IN HELLENISTIC JUDAISM AS AN EXPRESSION OF VITALITY

8
Formation of the Subject in Hellenistic Judaism

The third and final section of this book considers concepts that participate in vitality through new and surprising ways of thinking about knowledge, God, creation, and subjecthood in the Hellenistic period. I want to explore the larger implications for thinking about the formation and transformation of the subject in the service of understanding the larger framework of vitality.

Across ancient Jewish traditions we see a particularly complex convergence of Jewish and pagan traditions in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek which both inherit and innovate. We also see a rich and variegated Greek and Hebrew tradition in which the Jewish communities during the Hellenistic period were engaged. We have extended discussions about creation, acquisition of knowledge, and the formation of the human subject, among other philosophical and cosmological topics. By highlighting the innovative developments in the Hellenistic period, we can productively use the metaphor of entanglement as a way of capturing strands of Jewish thinking and Greek thinking whose fates are momentarily entwined, that are nevertheless strands that can be and are differentiated from one another and that will subsequently be disentangled. Entanglement is an expression of vitality, but it is not a permanent instantiation of vitality. Rather, it is temporary; it can be interrupted.[1] Namely, the intermingling of cultural traditions might be fleeting or temporary as the use of the language of entanglement suggests.

This is not unrelated to how philosophical engagement in ancient Judaism and beyond has been described. We can see explicit engagement between philosophical thinking in Wisdom of Solomon and Philo of Alexandria.[2] Philosophical engagement is best expressed by this notion of entanglement as it resurfaces over time under particular conditions of shared philosophical engagement, but it does not self-sustain. Nonetheless it will resurface again when the conditions arise. So, it is not about a linear development or transmission, but rather particular conditions for reflection.[3]

[1] Conversation with Gavin Salam (August 2022).

[2] To be sure, we see this later with figures such as Saadia Gaon or even later with Maimonides.

[3] Hindy Najman, 'The Writings and Reception of Philo of Alexandria', in *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, ed. Tikva Frymer-Kensky et al. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), pp. 99–106; Hindy Najman and Tobias Reinhardt, 'Exemplarity and Its Discontents: Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom Texts and Greco-Roman Didactic Poetry', *JSJ* 50, nos. 4–5 (2019): pp. 460–96, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26843368.

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It is important to note that even in discussing concepts in the textual traditions in ancient Judaism we are again challenging claims in scholarship. Here the claim among scholars has been that ancient Judaism as well as ancient Israel are bereft of complex thinking patterns.[4] I will argue that complex and philosophically informed thinking is already present in Second Temple Judaism, especially in the service of thinking about the self and transformation of that self. That is, we can see how Judaism continues to be alive in its intellectual and social context by participating and integrating thinking from the Greek and Roman traditions. Yet, again, this complex philosophical thinking was not new to Judaism or purely indebted to these classical traditions.

As I discussed earlier at the end of the first part of this book, one particular expression of vitality is to speak of subjecthood, transformation, and perfection in Jewish texts from the Hellenistic period. While there are some precedents for exploring subjecthood and personal transformation in some earlier biblical traditions, what we see in the Hellenistic Jewish texts is a significant growth around the discourse of subjecthood.

8.1 Scholarly Trajectories for Subjecthood

The history of the study of the subject has largely ignored ancient Jewish contributions to this discourse. To be sure, priestly concepts of divine image and holiness, along with the impossibility of overcoming the divine-human gap, were recreated in the Graeco-Roman period to shape new models for soul formation and subjecthood.[5]

In *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor traces the historical lineage of the interiorization of the self, which he sees as typical of modern identity. Taylor argues that the modern notion of an individual self that is turned inward and radically reflexive was properly formulated only in the seventeenth century by Descartes and Locke. But he also argues that this interiorization of the self is historically rooted in ancient Greek philosophy, especially in Plato's redirection of the soul towards the immaterial and eternal, and then, more fully, in a Christian transformation of Greek philosophy, more specifically in Augustine who redirects the soul towards itself. Thus, for Taylor, the interiorized self emerges in a historical trajectory leading from Athens in the classical period to the Christianized Roman empire

[4] See e.g. Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, trans. Jules L. Moreau (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1970), originally published as *Das hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem griechischen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952). See also James Barr's critique of Boman in *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

[5] See Hindy Najman, '*Imitatio Dei* and the Formation of the Subject in Ancient Judaism', *JBL* 140, no. 2 (2021): pp. 309–23, doi:10.15699/jbl.1402.2021.5; Hindy Najman and Arjen Bakker, 'Die Herausbildung des Subjekts im antiken Judentum', *ThLZ* 149, no. 5 (2024): pp. 367–82.

of late antiquity, and from there to Western Europe. Taylor then argues that these philosophical constructions of an interiorized and reflexive self are foundational for modern political and cultural institutions such as liberal democracy. Yet, as I will discuss more explicitly later, such a trajectory entirely ignores many other expressions of ancient selfhood, notably for this book the particular self as it emerges in Jewish literature.

Turning also to Michel Foucault in his late work on the history of sexuality, he began thinking in a new way about subject-formation.[6] He developed a strong interest in how the subject, through a variety of spiritual and religious practices, can self-determine. In his last book *The Care of the Self* and in a series of lectures that were published posthumously as *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault takes Plato's dialogue *Alcibiades* as a starting point for analysing practices of the self in antiquity. He focuses on the concept of self-improvement and care, or cultivation (ἐπιμέλεια), attending to the self, as he underlines that in the *Alcibiades*, both self-knowledge and self-care are mutually dependent. Furthermore, he argued that these two elements (self-knowledge and self-care) require a constant hermeneutical process; to know oneself, one must cultivate oneself, and vice versa.

In Foucault's writings, he argued that the concept of self-care presented in the *Alcibiades* became foundational for a broad range of practices and techniques of self-cultivation that were influential and widespread among the elites of the Roman empire. According to Foucault these practices should not be considered expressions of growing individualism, but rather as an intensification of the relationship to the self.[7] Such practices range from dietary regimes to meditations and self-examination. The practices aim to establish a turning of the self away from external realities and towards itself in order to obtain self-knowledge and cultivate the soul. This aspiration was of equal significance across the different Graeco-Roman philosophical schools, from the Stoics and Epicureanism to Neo-Platonism, and had a significant impact on early Christianity which adopted these practices and modified them in line with Christianity's regime of truth-speaking.[8]

It was Daniel Boyarin who first sought to apply Foucault's history of sexuality to ancient Jewish sources.[9] In his book *Carnal Israel*, he argues that asceticism is alien to Judaism, because ascetic practices and in particular sexual renunciation

[6] Michel Foucault, *Le souci de soi*, vol. 3, Histoire de la sexualité (Paris: Gallimard, 1984); cf. idem, *L'herméneutique du sujet: Cours au Collège de France (1981–1982)* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2001).

[7] Foucault, *Le souci de soi*, pp. 58–60.

[8] See the posthumously published Michel Foucault, *Les aveux de la chair* (Paris: Gallimard, 2018), and the more recent contributions by Niki Kasumi Clements, *Sites of the Ascetic Self: John Cassian and Early Christian Ethical Formation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020); Daniele Lorenzini, *The Force of Truth: Critique, Genealogy, and Truth-Telling in Michel Foucault* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023).

[9] Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). See also idem and Elizabeth A. Castelli, 'Introduction: Foucault's "The History of Sexuality": The Fourth Volume, or, A Field Left Fallow for Others to Till', *JHS* 10, nos. 3–4 (2001): pp. 357–74, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3704752.

are the result of the dualism of body and soul, which according to Boyarin is a characteristic of ancient Greek culture. Boyarin acknowledges that the notion of an immortal soul and ascetic practices are attested in Jewish sources from antiquity, including the writings of Philo of Alexandria and Josephus' description of the Essenes. But he makes it very clear that these phenomena should be seen as the external influence of Greek culture in the Eastern Mediterranean world and that asceticism and body-soul dualism are otherwise absent from Judaism and Semitic culture more generally.

Subsequently, in more recent scholarship, others have argued against Boyarin that Hellenistic and Christian phenomena can indeed be identified in the literature of the rabbis. So, for example, Joshua Levinson and Mira Balberg have each examined aspects of the interiorization of the self in rabbinic sources and argued that the rabbis responded to a cultural tenet of late antiquity to emphasize the inner self that was particularly prominent among Stoic philosophers.[10] Ishay Rosen-Zvi has moved this discussion even further and argued that characteristic features of rabbinic self-presentation in the context of *halakhah* were ignored.[11] The rhetorical self that emerges in rabbinic *halakhah*, Rosen-Zvi argues, is a distinctive construction that is embedded in the hermeneutic activity of rabbinic legal discourse and cannot be reduced to parallels in Hellenistic philosophy.

The distinctive configurations of selfhood that we see in ancient Judaism are in conversation with and responding to contemporaneous models appearing already in the Hellenistic period and earlier. That is, in texts from the Persian and Hellenistic periods, we can already see discourses and practices that contribute to and participate in a discourse of subjecthood and the formation of the self.

8.2 Jewish Subjecthood and the Human Relationship to the Divine

Ancient Jewish texts create a bridge between the challenge of what is and is not possible with respect to imitating God through wisdom. The emerging self, as a human being, is thus on a path towards coming to understand creation, the law of nature, and divine knowledge. A further step along this trajectory is then to include imitation in the form of *tselem* (image), *demut* (likeness), *tabnît* (pattern) as a way of defining oneself through the originary moment (creation or birth) which is unrepeatable, but aspires to repeat that moment nevertheless. To be

[10] Joshua Levinson, 'From Narrative Practice to Cultural Poetics: Literary Anthropology and Rabbinic Sense of Self', in *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters: Between Literary and Religious Concerns*, ed. Maren R. Niehoff (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 345–67; Mira Balberg, *Purity, Body, and Self in Early Rabbinic Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

[11] Ishay Rosen-Zvi, 'The Mishnaic Mental Revolution: A Reassessment', *JJS* 66, no. 1 (2015): pp. 36–58, doi:10.18647/3210/jjs-2015; idem, 'The Rhetorical Self in Tannaitic Halakhah', *DSD* 28, no. 3 (2021): pp. 241–366, doi:10.1163/15685179-bja10027.

godlike is thus to emerge as a subject and to approximate the very thing that is out of reach.[12]

The discourse of *imitatio dei*—or *betselem Elohim* ('in the image of God')—is precisely an imitation of the divine which is reflected onto the formation of the creator in human hands.[13] We can say nothing about divine perfection in itself, but we can say that divinity is supposed to govern, i.e. not be subordinate, and thus we can talk in human terms about what it is to be a perfect ruler. Rather, it is an interior aspiration that is about the formation of the self insofar as the subject is formed and it relates to its own perfection. Imitation of the divine is an internal aspiration that is always incomplete but the essence of every subject.

How then is the subject said to have been formed in relation to God? In the priestly narrative of Genesis, there is the creation of the human being, i.e. the self which is created in relation to deity. This Adam is constitutively related to a higher, divine being. Both creation accounts, priestly and the non-priestly, express aspects of this human-divine relationality:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ בִּדְגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ: וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth.' And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26–7)

וַיִּיצֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עָפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה:

The Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)

These passages from Genesis exemplify actions around creation that are correlated with the divine and the human. There is then perhaps both a theological and a conceptual challenge. On the one hand, humanity is described as godlike or created in the image of God, and human beings are called upon to be *godlike* in their behaviour.

[12] According to Maimonides, 'perfections' are understood as negations of privations. 'Attributes of action' are ascribed insofar as such actions would flow from a human agent who is a perfect ruler. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, 1:54, 3:54; idem, *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhot De'ot, 1:5–11.

[13] Jacob Milgrom argues that *imitatio dei* is a specifically priestly ideal (e.g. Milgrom on Leviticus 20:25–6 in *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007]).

See Annette Schellenberg, *Der Mensch, das Bild Gottes? Zum Gedanken einer Sonderstellung des Menschen im Alten Testament und in weiteren altorientalischen Quellen* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2011).

On the other hand, crossing between the earth and the heavens is impossible, as demonstrated by texts such as Exodus 15:11, 'Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods'. How then is the call to be like God, or to be like the exemplar who is godlike—even a divine human—remotely compelling or coherent? One cannot be God, but there is the charge to be godlike: 'You shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy' (Leviticus 20:26). This is a typical formulation, which surfaces and resurfaces across later texts that engage with this priestly discourse.[14] To study subjecthood here is to think about how the 'I' comes to be characterized in relation to the deity. Perhaps, one might first focus on the term *nefesh*—as the closest formulation for selfhood.[15] *Nefesh* is the way in which the self comes to express itself through prayer and ritualized discourses.[16]

8.3 Jewish Subjecthood in the Hellenistic Period

In texts composed in the Hellenistic period, we find an even more developed account of the subject who is formed through her or his relationship with God. The self comes to be defined through prayer, submission to the work of the self, adherence to the law, as well as practices associated with *musar*, correction, or even askesis, and praying with heavenly beings as a way of participating in divine-like activity. The self is thus defined through the impossibility of overcoming the divide between the human and the divine and the work that is involved on the part of the subject to nevertheless realize the godlike nature of the self. This is evident in ancient Jewish examples from the Hellenistic period with respect to confession, repentance, and the emergence of the self. The book of Daniel is one such example of selfhood.

While the narrative of Daniel 9 is situated after the fall of Babylon and before the rebuilding of the Temple, it was composed in the second century BCE. Daniel studies the scrolls and tries to understand Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the number of years that the desolation of Jerusalem will last. He expresses his grief in a prayer of supplication:

וָאֶתְּנָה אֶת־פָּנַי אֶל־אֲדֹנָי הָאֱלֹהִים לְבַקֵּשׁ תְּפִלָּה וְתַחֲנוּנִים בְּצוֹם וְשַׂק וָאֵפֶר: וָאֶתְפַּלְלָה לַיהוָה
אֱלֹהָי וָאֶתְוַדֶּה וָאֹמְרָה אָנָּא אֲדֹנָי הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא שֹׁמֵר הַבְּרִית וְהַחֶסֶד לְאֹהֲבָיו וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי
מִצְוֹתָיו: חָטָאנוּ וְעָוִינוּ הִרְשַׁעְנוּ וּמָרָדְנוּ וְסוֹר מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ וּמִמִּשְׁפָּטֶיךָ:

I turned my face to the Lord God, devoting myself to prayer and supplication, in fasting, in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God, making confession

[14] See especially Ezekiel, and the much later 11QT (Temple Scroll) from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

[15] Najman, '*Imitatio Dei* and the Formation of the Subject'.

[16] See e.g. Psalm 23:3: נַפְשִׁי יְשׁוֹבֵב יַנְחֵנִי בְמַעְגְּלֵי־צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ, 'He renews my life; He guides me in right paths as befits His name.'

thus: 'O Lord, great and awesome God, who stays faithful to His covenant with those who love Him and keep His commandments! We have sinned; we have gone astray; we have acted wickedly; we have been rebellious and have deviated from Your commandments and Your rules.' (Daniel 9:3–5)

Represented here in this passage from Daniel is the self on behalf of his community. In his confession (9:3–20), Daniel reviews history and recounts how despite the warnings of the prophets his ancestors did not turn from their evil deeds and their rebellion. His prayer draws insights from the books that reveal 'the curse and the oath that is written in the law of Moses' and 'this entire calamity' over which God kept watch and brought it upon his people, invoking Jeremianic language. Daniel's confession results in an angelic encounter at the time of the evening sacrifice when the angel Gabriel appears to him and offers an understanding of heavenly secrets in Daniel:

וְעוֹד אֲנִי מְדַבֵּר בַּתְּפִלָּה וְהָאִישׁ גַּבְרִיאֵל אֲשֶׁר־רָאִיתִי בֶחָזוֹן בַּתְּחִלָּה מֻעָף בִּיעָף נֹגֵעַ אֵלַי כְּעֵת מִנְחַת־
עֶרֶב: וַיָּבֶן וַיְדַבֵּר עִמִּי וַיֹּאמֶר דָּנִיֵּאל עַתָּה יָצָאתִי לְהַשְׂכִּילְךָ בִּינָה: בִּתְחִלַּת תַּחֲנוּנֶיךָ יָצָא דָבָר וַאֲנִי
בָּאתִי לְהַגִּיד כִּי חֲמוּדוֹת אָתָּה וּבִין בַּדָּבָר וְהָבֵן בַּמַּרְאֶה: שָׁבֻעִים שִׁבְעִים נֶחְתַּךְ עַל־עַמְּךָ וְעַל־עִיר
קָדְשֶׁךָ לְכַלֵּא הַפֶּשַׁע וּלְהָתֵם חַטָּאוֹת וּלְכַפֵּר עָוֹן וּלְהָבִיא צֶדֶק עֹלָמִים וְלַחְתֹּם חָזוֹן וְנָבִיא וְלִמְשֹׁחַ קֹדֶשׁ
קָדָשִׁים: וְתֵדַע וְתַשְׂכֵּל מִן־מֹצָא דָבָר לְהָשִׁיב וְלִבְנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם עַד־מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד שָׁבֻעִים שִׁבְעָה וְשָׁבֻעִים
שִׁשִּׁים וּשְׁנַיִם תָּשׁוּב וְנִבְנְתָה רְחוֹב וְחָרוּץ וּבְצוֹק הָעִתִּים: וְאַחֲרֵי הַשָּׁבֻעִים שִׁשִּׁים וּשְׁנַיִם יִכָּרֵת מָשִׁיחַ
וְאֵין לוֹ וְהָעִיר וְהַקֹּדֶשׁ יַשְׁחִית עַם נָגִיד הַבָּא וְקִצּוֹ בַּשֶּׁטֶף וְעַד קֵץ מִלְחָמָה נֶחֱרֶצֶת שֹׁמֵמוֹת: וְהִגְבִּיר
בְּרִית לָרַבִּים שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וַחֲצִי הַשָּׁבוּעַ יַשְׁבִּית זֶבַח וּמִנְחָה וְעַל כְּנַף שִׁקּוּצִים מְשֹׁמֵם וְעַד־כָּלָה
וְנֶחֱרָצָה תִּתַּךְ עַל־שֹׁמֵם:

While I was uttering my prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had previously seen in the vision, was sent forth in flight and reached me about the time of the evening offering. He made me understand by speaking to me and saying, 'Daniel, I have just come forth to give you understanding. A word went forth as you began your plea, and I have come to tell it, for you are precious; so mark the word and understand the vision.

'Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city until the measure of transgression is filled and that of sin complete, until iniquity is expiated, and eternal righteousness ushered in; and prophetic vision ratified, and the Holy of Holies anointed. You must know and understand: From the issuance of the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the [time of the] anointed leader is seven weeks; and for sixty-two weeks it will be rebuilt, square and moat, but in a time of distress. And after those sixty-two weeks, the anointed one will disappear and vanish. The army of a leader who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary, but its end will come through a flood. Desolation is decreed until the end of war. During one week he will make a firm covenant with many. For half a week he will put a stop to the sacrifice and the meal offering. At the corner [of the altar]

> will be an appalling abomination until the decreed destruction will be poured down upon the appalling thing.' (Daniel 9:21–7)

Can this prayer and confession effect external change for the community or does confession transform the individual from within? To explore this question further, it is useful to give an example where the individual is the representative of the community. The Rule of the Community (1QS) from the Dead Sea Scrolls provides rules and procedures for a network of associated communities that is called the *Yaḥad*. These Jewish communities aspired to live a perfect life in accordance with divine laws. Their life was devoted to studying and the pursuit of knowledge. They study the law of Moses and the prophets with the aspiration of unveiling the hidden meaning of these books (1QS 8:11, 15–16). By joining the community, the members circumcise the foreskin of their heart (1QS 5:5), and at least some will withdraw from society, to pursue a life of holiness that is entirely devoted to study and prayer (1QS 8:1–16).

The final hymn of the Rule of the Community contains a poem that describes the gift of angelic wisdom to the righteous.

The first strophe reports on an experience of heavenly insight that is associated with light, confession, and prayer:

כיא אני לאל משפטי ובידו תום דרכי עם ישור לבבי ובצדקותו ימח פשעי
כיא ממקור דעתו פתח אורי ובנפלאותיו הביטה עיני ואורת לבבי ברז נהיה
והויא עולם משען ימיני בסלע עוז דרך פעמי
מפני כול לוא יזדעזע
כיא אמת אל היאה סלע פעמי וגבורתו משענת ימיני
וממקור צדקתו משפטי אור בלבבי מרזי פלאו בהויא עולם הביטה עיני

> As for me, my justification lies with God. In his hand are the perfection of my way and the virtue of my heart. By his righteous deeds my transgressions are wiped away.
> For from the source of his knowledge he has opened my light, and my eye observed his wonders, and the light of my mind the secret of being.
> And what exists eternally is the support of my right hand. The path of my footsteps is on firm rock.
> It will not be shaken by anything.[17]

[17] The manuscript reads לוא יוד עזרע. The occurrence of יזדעזעו in 1QS 8:8 suggests the reading יזדעזע in the current passage. See Charlotte Hempel, *The Community Rules from Qumran: A Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), p. 289. The term יזדעזע occurs in several passages in the Rule of the Community and the Hodayot (1QS 8:8; 11:4; 1QH[a] 14:30; 15:20). For an analysis, see Menahem Kister, 'Some Observations on Vocabulary and Style in the Dead Sea Scrolls', in *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, ed. Takamitsu Muraoka and John F. Elwolde (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 137–65 (esp. 161–2).

> For the truth of God is the rock of my steps. And his might is the support of my right hand.
> And from the source of his righteousness is my judgment. The light in my mind is from his wonderful mysteries. My eye has observed what exists eternally. (1QS 11:2–6)[18]

The sages perceive heavenly secrets when they join in the praise of the angels. Here the knowledge that is achieved in liturgical celebration—even a mystical state, perhaps—is the highest form of knowledge that is achieved when the inner light is opened in a vision of the deity. The light proceeds from God's knowledge which the sage is made to share, and through which it perceives the source of knowledge as an eternal essence. In the above passage, the holy ones are likened to angels and are with angels as ones that are chosen and carry forward a legacy (cf. 1QS 11:7–9). And thus it follows that the self is a manifestation of divine image, but not fully divine. The impasse between heaven and earth is still not overcome.

In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, there continues to be much reflection about the self as to the divine; however, there is nevertheless an obstacle with respect to achieving divine perfection.[19] The aspiration to be godlike is part of the aspiration towards perfection and it is what makes it possible for human beings to be living *godlike* lives.

The priestly traditions relating to the divine image and the call for imitation are extant in the Persian period but continue to be adapted and transformed in the Hellenistic period in counterpoint with the incomparability formula from the Song of the Sea, which poses an unbreachable gap between humanity and divinity. This finds expression in prayers of confession that lament the limitations of human perfectibility while simultaneously bearing witness to heavenly light that is reflected in the mind of the sage who was chosen to share in the praise of the angels.

This has implications for how we think about perfection and aspiration. How is it possible to do the kind of work that can ultimately achieve being soul alone or mind alone, as articulated in Philo's depiction of the perfection of Moses or of the Therapeutae?[20] The story that these ancient Jewish communities seem to tell goes as follows: there is an earthly context for perfection which revolves around the community, or city, which lives in accordance with the law. This law *is* the law of Moses, but

[18] The textual edition largely follows: Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 96. The translation is my own.

[19] It is worth noting that the self of which I speak, unlike the one celebrated by Taylor, is porous, and is not independent of cosmic forces as demonstrated by Ishay Rosen-Zvi in *Demonic Desires: 'Yetzer Hara' and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). This is thus a fundamental difference from the reflexive selfhood of Seneca or Augustine, which is radically different from external reality (what Taylor sees as the sources of the modern concept of the individual as *camera obscura*).

[20] For example, in Philo of Alexandria, *Who Is the Heir to the Divine Things?* 56–7; and *The Contemplative Life* 10–11.

also goes well beyond the confines of the law of Moses as it also embodies and is exemplified through wisdom. In this sense, while there is an impasse between heaven and earth that is not overcome, it seems that to be like God is to exemplify the image of God which then falls short of being a divine human being.

This is expressed in Philo's terms as becoming mind alone (as in the case of Moses at the end of his life),[21] or soul alone (in the life of the Therapeutae).[22] Thus the phrase 'divine man' (*theios anēr*) is not celebrated; rather the exemplification of the human as the subject is the focus. If that is achieved, then the exemplary state of being might be characterized as ensouled laws, or the exemplary status of the law since the paradoxically perfect copy of that which is unwritten, namely the law of nature, is repeatable.[23] In Philo of Alexandria, it is the law of Moses that emerges as equivalent to the law of nature, but also exemplifies the paradigm for understanding the cosmos through the law of nature.

The construction of the divine image is a reflection of the ideal human from the subject's standpoint. The structure itself is reversed so that we are speaking of divine image and aspiration. However, the notion of 'aspiration' is itself ultimately internalized in the work of wisdom, the law, and the individual who achieves time and again the status of an ensouled law, the *maskil*, or the *mevin*. It is of no surprise here that the prophet and more generally the charismatic comes to be downplayed but not because there is no longer inspiration.[24] Instead, my suggestion is that the winding down or the so-called ending of prophecy is precisely an internalization of the prophetic which in no way compromises the spirit or vitality of Judaism, as I began to discuss in Chapter 4.

The emergence of the self as the image of God happens precisely at a time when practice, ritual, and even sacrifice are internalized and translated onto the body and the practices of the individual.[25] These texts from the Hellenistic

[21] Philo, *Life of Moses* 2.228.

[22] Philo, *Contemplative Life* 90.

[23] For example, *Life of Moses* 2.12–14; *Life of Abraham* 5; *Who Is the Heir?* 230–1. For further discussion of this point, see Hindy Najman, 'A Written Copy of the Law of Nature: An Unthinkable Paradox?', *SPhiloA* 15 (2003): pp. 54–63; and idem, 'The Law of Nature and the Authority of Mosaic Law', *SPhiloA* 11 (1999): pp. 55–73.

[24] On the 'end' or changing of prophecy, see John Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986); George J. Brooke, 'Prophecy and Prophets in the Dead Sea Scrolls', in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Michael H. Floyd and Robert D. Haak (London: T&T Clark, 2006), pp. 151–65; Najman, *Losing the Temple*.

[25] Guy G. Stroumsa, *The End of Sacrifice: Religious Transformations in Late Antiquity*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Michael D. Swartz, 'Ritual about Myth about Ritual: Toward an Understanding of the *Avodah* in the Rabbinic Period', *JJTP* 6, no. 1 (1997): pp. 135–55, doi:10.1163/147728597794761727; idem, 'Liturgy, Poetry, and the Persistence of Sacrifice', in *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple*, ed. Daniel R. Schwartz and Zeev Weiss (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 393–412; Bakker, 'Early Configurations of Jewish Prayer'.

period construct a bridge between the possible and the impossible through wisdom and the comprehension of creation, the law of nature, and divine knowledge. There are many ways in which this can be achieved in ancient Jewish texts. Imitation can be performed through creating and building.[26] But there are also imitative ways of reproducing the creation of humanity or incomparable heroes such as Moses or Isaiah. As discussed above, this is done through pseudonymous attribution which can have the effect of growing a corpus or attaching a much later work to an earlier author in the form of a pseudonym.[27] This is done as a way of repeating an unrepeatable moment, namely the creation of the human being itself.

To emerge as a subject and to approximate the very thing that is out of reach, i.e. divine imaging, is perfectly captured. The aspiration is not to be divinized, but rather to be angel-like, godlike, and perhaps also to embody the law of nature or the law of Moses as perfectionist aspiration. This is an internal self-evaluation as she turns on herself to achieve the next self in the larger framework of what I would call, in ancient Jewish terms, the aspiration to be godlike, which is also to aspire to humanity. This achievement is not about an ideal that can be reached, but rather, this is increasingly described as a subject that is ultimately defined through the image of God, or in the form of holiness, or as ensouled law. Thus, the texts that thematize becoming godlike do not necessarily reflect the possibility of becoming a divine human. Rather, this aspiration is an important development of the desire to recover the image of the divine in both an earthly and heavenly context. This argument is meant to challenge the claim that discussions of selfhood, subjecthood, and transformation are not part of ancient Jewish thinking. Even more so, the period of Hellenism is the place where these concepts are first expressed as Greek and Jewish thinking, in an integrated manner.

8.4 The Jewish Contribution to Ancient Subjecthood

The reflexive self and the mind turning inward, towards itself, cannot exclusively be traced back to a Christian transformation of Platonic philosophy that Taylor identifies in Augustine. Before the emergence of Christianity we can see these features in Judaism. What is more, they emerge in the context of confession in both the final hymns of the Rule of the Community and the Hodayot. I want to view this as growing out of the broader cultural synergy in the Graeco-Roman world and the

[26] E.g. רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים (spirit of God) and חָכְמַת־לֵב (knowledge of the heart or mind), which are said to have inspired Betzalel in Exod 31:3–6; 35:31–35.

[27] See my discussion in *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 1–8; and also Najman and Peirano Garrison, 'Pseudepigraphy as an Interpretative Construct'.

entanglement of cultural traditions, but it is articulated as a distinctively Jewish liturgical expression and vision.

Following on this line of argumentation, in several of his lectures at Collège de France Michel Foucault discussed Philo's treatise on the contemplative life as a paradigmatic example of the cultivation of the self in the early Roman empire.[28] For Foucault, this was a religious group that was devoted to self-formation in a community setting. But Foucault entirely glosses over the fact that this is a Jewish community and, whereas Philo calls them 'disciples of Moses', Foucault presents an anonymized version of the Therapeutae, which is seen as merely an expression of Graeco-Roman culture. This is indeed also an expression of Graeco-Roman culture, but to ignore the fact that it is simultaneously a distinctively Jewish expression of self-formation is, first of all, a misperception of Hellenistic culture as homogenizing diverse cultural traditions, and moreover, a marginalizing and ignoring of Judaism which in its own right has contributed significantly to the formation of ideas about selfhood.

James Porter criticized Foucault and argued that the model of Christian asceticism, which was of central interest in Foucault's research, determined his reading of the pagan Graeco-Roman sources.[29] According to Porter, Foucault had projected the Christian monastic tradition onto his 'ascetic ancients'. Porter's critique may be somewhat harsh and not fully acknowledge the contribution of Foucault's late research to developing a new and broader model for understanding askesis, sexuality, and self-formation in antiquity. But fundamentally, Porter raises a very important point that has implications for both Foucault and Taylor.

Taylor and Foucault each impose a Christian paradigm onto sources that were written before Christianity. They both see the historical origins of selfhood in the classical Greek and Roman world; and then, in one way or another, they perceive a transformation of these Graeco-Roman philosophical ideas in early Christianity, which then prepares the way for our modern Western concepts and practices. However, Christianity borrowed not only from the classical world, but it has also inherited or adopted a large body of writings, concepts, and practices from Judaism, and has presented itself as the legitimate heir of Jewish traditions and as having superseded Judaism.[30] Through this self-presentation, important contributions of Judaism have been effaced. Early Christianity presents a biased model of Judaism before the beginning of Christianity. The problem with scholarship on the self is that this 'theologically inspired model of history' has been adopted uncritically. Aspects of Christian supersessionism have been integrated into the secularized tradition of scholarship of Graeco-Roman culture in its negotiation of

[28] Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet*, pp. 88–9, 95, 112–14, 326–7.

[29] James I. Porter, 'Foucault's Ascetic Ancients', *Phoenix* 59, nos. 1–2 (2005): pp. 121–32, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3704752.

[30] Arjen Bakker, René Bloch, Yael Fisch, Paula Fredriksen, and Hindy Najman, eds, *Protestant Bible Scholarship: Antisemitism, Philosemitism and Anti-Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

Christian and classical heritage and thereby effaced the ancient Jewish contribution. This has resulted in linear models for the development of selfhood that has forgotten the contribution of Judaism.

The same critique bears on Daniel Boyarin who identifies Hellenism and Christianity as the primary loci of asceticism and soul-formation, whereas Judaism would have either adopted alien traditions or rejected such practices wholescale. Instead, we want to argue that rituals of repentance in ancient Judaism elaborate on post-exilic traditions of imitation and incomparability that are reinvented and transformed within the cultural conversation of Hellenism.[31] Rather than merely adopting Greek notions of the soul along with ascetic practices, Jewish texts from the Graeco-Roman period reinvent the priestly concept of creation in the divine image in a new cultural register and formulate new trajectories for soul formation and the aspiration to become godlike, while never being able to bridge the gap between humanity and divinity.

Another voice that should be included in the new account of the formation of the subject is that of Stanley Cavell. Although Cavell did not address the question of Jewishness, his Emersonian perfectionism did indeed capture some of the ways in which Jewish texts contributed to the formation and expansion of subjecthood for ancient Judaism. Cavell's work exemplifies how to perform ethical reading through philosophical reflection. The understanding of the self as emerging and aspiring towards a next self, even towards an ideal next self, is certainly compatible with what has been called revelation inflected by destruction.[32] That is, the revelatory summons of the other can demolish the present self and call the recipient to the next self. But can this occur even in an environment where the very concept of prophecy or even the revelatory has been forgotten or become confused? Part of the challenge of understanding the self is also about understanding what that self can become. But to move beyond one's own framework—that is, to aspire to another state of being—one has to imagine a form of life beyond one's own present.[33]

Notions of the self and the subject of the kind that were identified by Taylor and Foucault are already present in ancient Jewish traditions. Furthermore, the very practices of care of the self and soul formation are part of the study and prayer practices that are exemplified in Hellenistic Jewish texts. Cavell's notion of perfection goes hand in hand with some of the developments that are already in the texts from Jewish antiquity. It is essential to understand that the Jewish voice with respect to subjecthood is part of the conversation and should be included in the

[31] This critique also bears on David Lambert's argument that repentance is entirely derived from Greek influence. Cf. David A. Lambert, *How Repentance Became Biblical: Judaism, Christianity, and the Interpretation of Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[32] Najman, *Losing the Temple*, pp. 6–25.

[33] Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (La Salle: Open Court Press, 1990); idem, *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

larger conceptual framework and intellectual history of this discourse. The forgetting of ancient Jewish contributions to this rich philosophical discourse also leaves an impoverished narrative. Models of imitation, perfection, and therapeutic practices of reading and prayer both originated in and developed through ancient Jewish traditions. As such, ancient Judaism is an essential partner in the discourse of the subject, both with respect to ritual, practice, and textual traditions. But the development of subjecthood in the context of Hellenistic culture is part of the vitality which we have already considered.

My argument then is that this vitality has been overlooked and even effaced as Judaism was forgotten as a dynamic and vital contribution to this discourse. The overlooking of the discourse of subjecthood and selfhood is one such example. The emergence of subjecthood is part of the vitality of Judaism in the Hellenistic period. Furthermore, this discourse which is already engaged in Hellenistic thinking also can be a voice for a rich conceptual understanding of the subject in this entangled world of Jewish and Hellenistic thinking.

9
Cosmological Reflections in Greek and Hebrew Texts

Philo of Alexandria is often called upon when, as scholars, we consider Hellenistic and late-antique Judaism, early biblical interpretation, and try to understand the context for early Jewish interpretation (*midrash*) and exegesis. But Philo, in turn, radically changes the way we can come to understand Judaism in the Hellenistic period. Philo's writings force us to rethink scholarly divides between Judaism and Hellenism, Hebrew and Greek, and instead call us to understand the intertwined nature of these traditions in the Hellenistic period. Such entangled traditions are not unique to the Hellenistic period as we similarly see the Persian and Babylonian influences in earlier Hebrew Bible traditions.

But it is not only Philo's writings that challenge such established scholarly divides. There are many expressions of cosmological reflection across the Dead Sea Scrolls. These expressions of vitality in Hebrew texts deepen the overarching argument that in this period of Hellenism, Judaism acquires new modes of thinking that are at once creative, innovative, and entangled with Greek thinking. On the one hand, these texts continue to develop some of the sapiential and liturgical reflections on nature that we see in earlier texts. But it is also the case that the Dead Sea Scrolls take traditions that are embedded in Job, Psalms, or Proverbs into new directions that exemplify the very kind of dynamism that we have discussed thus far.[1]

9.1 4QInstruction and the Secret of Being

A great illustration of the development is a sapiential text called Instruction (or 4QInstruction) by scholars. This is a text that has consumed those of us who work on the Dead Sea Scrolls from the very first discoveries.[2] It exists in at least seven

[1] See Konrad Schmid, *The Scribes of the Torah: The Formation of the Pentateuch in Its Literary and Historical Contexts* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2023), pp. 509–42.

[2] For introductions to Instruction, see John Strugnell, Daniel J. Harrington, and Torleif Elgvin, *Qumran Cave 4 XXIV: Sapiential Texts Part 2: 4QInstruction (Mûsār lĕ Mēvîn): 4Q415 ff. with a Re-edition of 1Q26* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), pp. 1–40; Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *To Increase Learning for the Understanding Ones: Reading and Reconstructing the Fragmentary Early Jewish Sapiential Text 4QInstruction* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Bakker, *Secret of Time*.

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or eight copies. The manuscripts are from the first century BCE and first half of the first century CE.[3]

What is particularly interesting here is the language of the secret of being (*raz nihyeh*), which I suggest reflects a kind of secrecy or hiding as linked to being or to nature that is something we can also see in Greek thinking. We have extensive indications of philosophical thinking across ancient Jewish texts in Hebrew about nature, as hidden, as divine, as part of creation, and as an essential way of thinking about time, but time as something that grows and is generative. But who gets access to the *raz* (secret) and to the *nistar* (what is hidden)? The holy ones (*qedoshim*) or those who are perfect, whole, or self-taught, or those who have internalized correct thinking? Below is an illustrative passage from Instruction:

[הויא ולמה נהיה במה . . . דרו]שׁ בְּכוֹל[. . . ובכול]מַעשׂהּ וּמַע[שה]
[הבן יומם ולילה הגה ברז נ]היה כְּדורש תמיד ואז תדע אמת ועול חכמה
[ואול]ת תַּ[בי]ן דַּ[ע] מַעֲשֵׂ[יהם]בְּכול דרכיהם עם פקודתם לכול קצי עולם ופקודת
עד ואז תדע בין [טו]ב לָ[רע כ]מַעֲשֵׂיו[הם]כָּיְא אל הדעות סודּ אמת וברז נהיה
פָּרֹש אֹתּ אושה וּמעשׂיהּ ◦◦◦[לכל חכ]מה ולכל[ע]רמה יצרה וממשלת מעשיה
לכָּ[ו]ל◦◦◦למָּה וּכוֹל[דע]ת כָּ[ו]לָּ◦◦בֹּא◦[פ]רש למ[ב]ינתם לכול מ[עשי]ה להתהלך
ב[יצר]מבינתָּם ויפרש לֹא◦[כול . . .]◦ריה ובכושר מבינות נָוֹדָּ[עו נס]תָּרי
מחשבתו עם התהלכו[ת]מָּים[בכול מ]עשיו אלה שחר תמיד והתבונן[בכו]ל
תוצאותמה ואז תדע בכבוד עָ[וזו ע]ם רזי פלאו וגבורות מעשיו ואתהּ

[It happens and why it will happen in them . . . stud]y every . . . [and every]deed.
[understand. Day and night meditate on the *raz ni*]*hyeh* as one who studies continually. And then you will know truth and injustice, wisdom [and foll]y you[will underst]and.
Kno[w] [their] dee[ds] in all their ways and the assignments of all periods of eternity and the eternal assignment. And then you will discern between [goo]d and [evil according to] [their] deeds.
For the God of knowledge is the essence of truth and with the *raz nihyeh* he spread out[4] its foundation. Its deeds . . . [for all their wis]dom . . . and for all their [ins]ightfulness . . . . He fashioned it. And the dominion of its deeds is for a[l]l their . . . .
And all [knowle]dge . . . . He spread out for the [und]erstanding of all its d[eeds], so that it will behave according to the [nature]of his understanding.
And he spread out to . . . its . . . .

[3] This is based upon analysis of handwriting. The Groningen ERC project 'The Hands That Wrote the Bible' (PI Mladen Popović) demonstrates that some manuscripts with so-called Herodian handwriting go back to *c.*100 BCE. See also Mladen Popović, Maruf A. Dhali, Lambert Schomaker, et al. 'Dating Ancient Manuscripts Using Radiocarbon and AI-based Writing Style Analysis' (forthcoming).

[4] This can be understood in a variety of ways, for example, 'spreading out' but also a kind of 'intellectual investigation'. I suggest this is multivalent.

> And through correct understanding the [hid]den things of his plan are kno[wn] together with his [pe]rfect behaviour [in all his d]eeds.
> Search these continually and consider [all] their consequences. And then you will know [his] po[werful] glory [together w]ith his wonderful mysteries and his mighty deeds. And you . . . . (4Q417 1 i 5–13 *par* 4Q418 43, 44, 45 i 3–10)[5]

In this remarkable text,[6] both *being* and *secrecy* are expressed as trying to examine and investigate the workings of the world. Mystery and being are linked in the phrase *raz nihyeh*.[7]

It is important to note that the phrase *raz nihyeh* appears as it is in three texts only—4QMysteries, the Community Rule, and Instruction. But it is connected to a network of terms—*raz* (secret or mystery), *sod* (secret), *pele* (beyond reach),[8] *niflah* (a wonderful thing), and *nistarot* (what is hidden). Among others, this phrase is without a doubt drawing from earlier biblical materials. In this way, there is both continuity and new meaning.

The phrase *raz nihyeh* was already associated with reflection on creation.[9] Bakker has added a further significant dimension to understanding this phrase as he has suggested that we should translate the phrase *raz nihyeh* as the secret of time. By this, Bakker suggests that the reflection on time and being is entangled because of how *being* is connected to the calendar, the diurnal workings of the created world, and also meditation on the stars, light, and darkness. This is a

[5] The text for 4QInstruction employed throughout is modified from: Strugnell, Harrington, and Elgvin, *Qumran Cave 4 XXIV*; Tigchelaar, *To Increase Learning for the Understanding Ones*; Elisha Qimron, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: The Hebrew Writings*, 3 vols (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2010–14).

[6] For an important recent study on 4Q417, see Jonathan Ben-Dov, 'Study with the Fleshly Spirit: A Rereading of 4Q417 1' (Hebrew), *Meghillot* 16 (2023): 15–50.

[7] On *rāz nihyeh*, see Menahem Kister, 'Wisdom Literature at Qumran' (Hebrew), in *The Qumran Scrolls and their World*, vol. 1, ed. Menahem Kister (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2009), pp. 299–320; idem, 'Wisdom Literature and Its Relation to Other Genres: From Ben Sira to Mysteries', in *Sapiential Perspectives: Wisdom Literature in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 20–22 May, 2001*, ed. John J. Collins et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 13–47 (esp. pp. 30–5); Matthew J. Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom of 4QInstruction* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 58; idem, *4QInstruction: Wisdom Literature from the Ancient World* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013), p. 16; Frédérique Michèle (J.-S.) Rey, *4QInstruction: Sagesse et eschatologie* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 286–7, 91; Gregor Geiger, *Das hebräische Partizip in den Texten aus der judäischen Wüste* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 388; Arjen Bakker, 'Rāz Nihyeh', in *Secret of Time*, pp. 106–39; Hindy Najman, 'Ethical Reading'.

[8] Conversation with Menahem Kister (December 2023).

[9] John J. Collins, 'In the Likeness of the Holy Ones: The Creation of Humankind in a Wisdom Text from Qumran', in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Technological Innovations, New Texts, and Reformulated Issues*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Eugene Ulrich (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 609–18; Kister, 'Wisdom Literature at Qumran'; Yair Furstenberg, 'The Rabbinic Ban of *Ma'aseh Bereshit*: Sources, Contexts and Concerns', in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), pp. 39–63; Arjen Bakker, 'Rāz Nihyeh'; Hindy Najman and Benjamin G. Wright III, 'Creation and Virtue in Second Temple Period Wisdom and Liturgical Texts', in *Bridging Educational Virtues and Values: Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Early Christian Paideia and Its Relevance in Past and Present*, ed. Gabriella Gelardini et al. (Munich: Waxman, 2024), forthcoming.

very important and compelling contribution to ongoing scholarly investigation. The language of *raz nihyeh* further exposes the complexity and the sophistication of the philosophical and hermeneutical work of these ancient authors and interpretative communities.[10] The language of being and secrecy is part of the philosophical thinking embedded in these ancient Jewish texts.[11] The intellectual and spiritual work that is described in Instruction is about reflection and the pursuit of knowledge as a way of understanding human essence, and ultimately the pursuit of goodness.

As the above passage emphasizes, only with the knowledge of good and evil can one access the knowledge required to understand the thinking of processes of creation. So too, to understand the creation of the world, procedures of insight, and the history of the world (time, patterns of the stars and constellations, as well as the calendar) it is essential to understand the difference between good and evil but also that there is a way back from evil. Embedded within this text of Instruction, as well as many other related wisdom and liturgical texts, is the concept of repentance.

The very possibility of discerning between good and evil is essential to being able both to choose and to return to goodness or to descend into darkness. That possibility of discerning continues to be characterized through the processes of purification, transformation, or translation from one realm to another. Yet there are a variety of ways of characterizing transformation and the possibility of changing the makeup of one's soul. To be sure there is an excellent metaphor for change that is expressed in the Greek philosophical tradition about the waxen soul which can change with imprints of good and of evil. Philo of Alexandria takes this up in a fascinating study on Cain and Abel.[12] However, the possibility of return, both physical and spiritual, to deity and one's people is also an essential dimension of much of biblical traditions. On the one hand, there are expressions where return is not possible anymore. For example, David can never build the temple, Moses cannot enter the land of Israel, and Adam can never re-enter Eden as his abode.

[10] Hindy Najman, 'Ethical Reading'.

[11] Heraclitus, Fragment B123 DK. It is interesting that Philo cites a famous aphorism from Heraclitus no less than five times: 'φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ' ('A nature loves to hide'). On this, see Glenn W. Most, 'Heraclitus Fragment B123 DK', in *What Reason Promises: Essays on Reason, Nature and History*, ed. Wendy Doniger et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 117–23.

[12] Hindy Najman, 'Cain and Abel as Character Traits: A Study in the Allegorical Typology of Philo of Alexandria', in *Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions,* ed. Gerard Luttikhuizen et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 107–19. See also some recent literature which attends to the formation of the subject and the soul. For example, Maren R. Niehoff and Joshua Levinson, eds., *Self, Self-Fashioning and Individuality in Late Antiquity: New Perspectives* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019); Ishay Rosen-Zvi, 'The Mishnaic Mental Revolution: A Reassessment', *JJS* 66, no. 1 (2015): pp. 36–58, doi:10.18647/3210/jjs-2015; Hindy Najman, '*Imitatio Dei* and the Formation of the Subject in Ancient Judaism', *JBL* 140, no. 2 (2021): pp. 309–23, doi:10.15699/jbl.1402.2021.5; Joshua Levinson, 'From Narrative Practice to Cultural Poetics: Literary Anthropology and the Rabbinic Sense of Self', in *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters: Between Literary and Religious Concerns*, ed. Maren R. Niehoff (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 345–67.

And yet, there are so many expressions of return and forgiveness embedded in the liturgical traditions attributed to David, to the paradigmatic return of the people after the sin of the golden calf, or the forgiving of the world after the flood on the part of God.

9.2 Discerning Good and Evil and the Aspiring and Transforming Self

I will now return to the formation of the subject. This formation necessitates that the individual herself has agency for the actions of good or actions of evil. So not only do individuals bear responsibility, but it is also the case that it is upon the individual to self-reflect, meditate, and align oneself with the law and the correct understanding of that law, as it is interpreted in Instruction among other texts as well. Thus, in the process of reflecting on what it is to be human, or to be godlike, or to 'be' in the image of God, there is a process of reflection and discernment between good and evil. Thus, some paths are chosen, and there are occasions for changing one's own path.[13]

It is essential to focus on the broader conceptual framework when one considers the inclinations of the soul, the self, and the subject. In that context, the possibility of purification or defilement after acts of goodness or corruption or, in sapiential terms, the opposite of insight, is always possible. But the door is open for return and recovery. This is inscribed in the heavenly tablets, on the soul of the individual, and the history of Israel and Judea from exile to return—spiritually and physically. This does not mean *teshuvah* (repentance) should be understood as a particularly defined technical term. Rather, repentance is to be understood as a process that contributes to the formation of the self and the subject as growing and changing.[14] This is, I argue, part of the aspiration to be godlike.[15]

Throughout Instruction, there is attention to the self and an aspiring and transforming self. In one of its copies, we can discern an important reflection which

[13] Lambert, *How Repentance Became Biblical*.

[14] Nevertheless, there appears to already be practices associated with repentence such as, for example genuflection, fasting, donning dust and ashes, and praying.

[15] Najman, '*Imitatio Dei* and the Formation of the Subject'; Hindy Najman and Tobias Reinhardt, 'Exemplarity and Its Discontents: Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom Texts and Greco-Roman Didactic Poetry', *JSJ* 50, nos. 4–5 (2019): pp. 460–96, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26843368; Najman, 'Ethical Reading'; idem, 'Philosophical Contemplation and Revelatory Inspiration in Ancient Judean Traditions', *SPhiloA* (2007): pp. 101–11. And more generally, see idem, *Past Renewals: Interpretive Authority, Renewed Revelation and the Quest for Perfection in Jewish Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

has implications for transformation and even for repentence. Here Instruction (4Q417) reads:

ואל תעבור על[פש]עיכה היה כאישׁ עני בריבך משפט[כה בפשעיכה] קח ואז יראה אל ושב אפו ועבר על חטאותכה

And do not pass over your [si]ns. Be like a humble man in your dispute. Accept [your] verdict [for your sins]. And then God will see, and his anger will cease, and he will pass over your sins. (4Q417 2 i 14–15)

This passage surely creates the space for repentance and transformation of one's self in the face of self-critique.[16] God is willing to accept the regret of humanity, so much so that God will pass over the sins of the one in error who is humble and transparent in his sins. This passage emphasizes that one should rebuke oneself and receive deserving judgement. After that, God sees and forgives. This is essential for the overarching journey of the subject in the context of aspirations towards becoming godlike and living with and according to the law. Perhaps we could acknowledge that we do not have the named exercise of repentance—*teshuvah*. But we have many accounts of transformation and the process of change through purification, study, reflection, and recalibrating oneself according to the law. This heightened sense of transformation as expressed through repentance is essential to understanding selfhood and subjecthood.

9.3 Heavenly Patterns

Let us consider another passage from Instruction in which we suggest a further development of insight, knowledge, and comprehension:[17]

ואתה מבין ריש פעלתכה בזכרון הע[ ]בא
חורות החוק וחקוק כול הפקודה
כי חרות מחוקק לאל על כול ע[ו]נ[ו]ת בני שית
וספר זכרון כתוב לפניו לשמרי דברו
והואה חזון ההגוי [ב]ספר זכרון
וינחילה לאנוש עם עם רוח

[16] Menahem Kister, 'Divorce, Reproof, and Other Sayings in the Synoptic Gospels: Jesus Traditions in the Context of "Qumranic" and Other Texts', in *Text, Thought, and Practice in Qumran and Early Christianity*, ed. Ruth A. Clements and Daniel R. Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 195–229 (esp. 221–2).

[17] On this discussion see Jan Dietrich and Hindy Najman, 'Altes Zeug und himmlische Ideen Überlegnungen zu Ideenlehren im Alten Testament und in frühjüdischen Texten', in *Ding | Macht | Zeit: Erzähltheorien besonderer Dinge*, ed. Sabine Feist et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2024), forthcoming, and our unpublished paper: 'Paradigms: Heavenly, Liminal and Earthly: A Comparative Study.'

כֻ֯[י]אָ֯ כתבנית קדושים יצרו
ועוד לוא נתן הגוי לרוח בשר
כי לא ידע בין [טו]ב לרע כמשפט [ר]וחו

And you, *Mevin*, inherit your work in the memorial of [] has come.
The law is engraved and the entire assignment is decreed.
For it is engraved, inscribed for God, concerning all the in[iquities of] humanity.[18]
And a book of memorial is written before him for those who keep his word.
That is: the vision of contemplation [on] a book of memorial.
And he has given it as a share to mankind together with a nation of spirit.
Be[cau]se he had fashioned him according to the pattern of the holy ones.
But he had not yet given contemplation to the fleshly spirit.
Because he did not know how to distinguish between [goo]d and evil according to the nature of his [spi]rit.[19] (4Q417 1 i 13–18 *par* 4Q418 43, 44, 45 i 10–14)

This pattern of the holy ones is imparted to human beings, in contrast to those humans with a spirit of flesh.[20] Here it is also relevant to point to the way this passage characterizes the concept of deity as all-knowing and as gifting the order of the world to humans. The notion of heavenly pattern is both unchanging and constant for humanity. It is then up to humanity to actualize the potential of the paradigm for order and goodness that is already inscribed in the heavens.

The heavenly pattern (in Hebrew *tabnît*) is a liminal image in which the paradigm originates from a register which is between 'heaven and earth'. Thus it is

[18] Meike Christian proposed a new reading here, reconstructing in line 15 על כול עב[ודו]ת בני שית, 'about all the whole ser[vic]e of the sons of Seth' ('The "Sons of Seth": A New Interpretation of 4Q417 1 i 14–16', *DSD* 25, no. 1 [2018]: 1–14, doi:10.1163/15685179-12341448). For an overview of previous readings see also idem, *Zu Entstehung und Theologie von 1/4QInstruction und der 'Zwei-Geister-Lehre' (1QS III,13–IV,26)* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), p. 138, n. 51. See further (not mentioned by Christian) Émile Puech, '"Tous les peuples, fils de Seth" et "la vision de la méditation" en 4Q417 1 I 15–16', *RevQ* 31, no. 1 (2019): 135–43, doi:10.2143/rq.31.1.3286507, who restores עמים.

[19] Translating in this way with 'nature' is Eibert Tigchelaar's translation. In conversation March 2024.

[20] See also the following passages from the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and 4QBerakot:

4Q403 1 ii 3

מראֵי תֹבנית כבוד לראשי ממלכות רו֯ח֯[י]

Appearances of the glorious bodies (*tabnît*) belonging to the princes of the spiritual kingdom ….

4Q403 1 ii 16

רֹאשי תבנית אלוהים והללוהו בדביר קודשו

The chiefs of the divine building (*tabnît*). They shall praise Him in His holy innermost sanctum.

4Q286 1 ii 6

ומעשי פלאים סוד חוכמא ותבנית דעה ומקור בינה מִקְוֹר עֹרְמָה

Wondrous works, wise counsel, a pattern (*tabnît*) for knowledge, a fount of understanding, a fount of discernment.

accessible to both God and the human mind. Here, *tabnît* means the liminal form or shape (between heaven and earth) but not an earthly instantiation.[21] Such a liminal aspect can also be glimpsed from the terms *tselem* and *demut*, referring to the image and likeness of God, and humankind.[22] This is formed in correspondence to these, and not in direct correspondence to God as illustrated by 1 Chronicles:

וַיִּתֵּן דָּוִיד לִשְׁלֹמֹה בְּנֹו אֶת־תַּבְנִית הָאוּלָם וְאֶת־בָּתָּיו וְגִנְזַכָּיו וַעֲלִיֹּתָיו וַחֲדָרָיו הַפְּנִימִים וּבֵית הַכַּפֹּרֶת: וְתַבְנִית כֹּל אֲשֶׁר הָיָה בָרוּחַ עִמֹּו לְחַצְרֹות בֵּית־יְהוָה וּלְכָל־הַלְּשָׁכֹות סָבִיב לְאֹצְרֹות בֵּית הָאֱלֹהִים וּלְאֹצְרֹות הַקֳּדָשִׁים:

David gave his son Solomon the plan of the porch and its houses, its storerooms and its upper chambers and inner chambers; and of the place of the Ark-cover; and the plan of all that he had by the spirit: of the courts of the House of the Lord and all its surrounding chambers, and of the treasuries of the House of God and of the treasuries of the holy things. (1 Chronicles 28:11–12)

Here the *tabnît* that is shown to Solomon by David is inspired and divine. The building of the temple is nothing less than an instantiation of the divinely inspired pattern. This will continue to be expressed in myriad ways about the human soul in its perfectible state—that is to be created as a holy paradigm which we see in the sapiential text Instruction, quoted above.

Tabnît is thus a cosmic blueprint which will be instantiated in an earthly pattern. This is a liminal framework that enables humanity to access divine wisdom and insight.[23] The context and usage will determine the answer, but it is nevertheless very important for our argument to discern reflective thinking, we will also need to create the space for a variety of ways of expressing a particular concept. *Tabnît* is essentially a very complex concept with a variety of valences and achievements.

A comparison with Philo of Alexandria can be illuminating. Philo posits that the image of God is the blueprint whose implementation involves wisdom, and the human recipient of this wisdom is created in light of this image. Philo of Alexandria, *Questions and Answers on Exodus*:

[21] E.g. Ezekiel 8:3:

וַיִּשְׁלַח תַּבְנִית יָד וַיִּקָּחֵנִי בְּצִיצִת רֹאשִׁי וַתִּשָּׂא אֹתִי רוּחַ בֵּין־הָאָרֶץ וּבֵין הַשָּׁמַיִם וַתָּבֵא אֹתִי יְרוּשְׁלַמָה בְּמַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים

He stretched out the form of a hand (*tabnît yad*), and took me by the hair of my head. A spirit lifted me up between heaven and earth and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem.

And also Ezekiel 10:8:

וַיֵּרָא לַכְּרֻבִים תַּבְנִית יַד־אָדָם תַּחַת כַּנְפֵיהֶם

The cherubs appeared to have the form of a man's hand (*tabnît yad 'adam*) under their wings.

[22] e.g. in Gen 1:26–7. See above, Chapter 8.

[23] See Wisdom of Solomon chs 7–9.

> What is the meaning of the words, 'Thou shalt make, according to all that I shall show thee on the mountain, the patterns of the tent and the vessels' (Exodus 25:9)? That every sense-perceptible likeness has (as) its origin an intelligible pattern in nature, (Scripture) has declared in many other passages as well as in the present one. Excellently, moreover, has it presented (as) the teacher of incorporeal and archetypal things not one who is begotten and created but the unbegotten and uncreated God. For it was indeed proper and fitting to reveal to an intelligent man the forms of intelligible things and the measures of all things in accordance with which the world was made. (*Questions and Answers on Exodus* 2.52)[24]

And again, Philo writes of the heavenly pattern in *Life of Moses* 2:

> σκηνὴν οὖν, ἔργον ἱερώτατον, δημιουργεῖν ἔδοξεν, ἧς τὴν κατασκευὴν θεσφάτοις λογίοις ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄρους Μωυσῆς ἀνεδιδάσκετο, τῶν μελλόντων ἀποτελεῖσθαι σωμάτων ἀσωμάτους ἰδέας τῇ ψυχῇ θεωρῶν, πρὸς ἃς ἔδει καθάπερ ἀπ' ἀρχετύπου γραφῆς καὶ νοητῶν παραδειγμάτων αἰσθητὰ μιμήματα ἀπεικονισθῆναι.
>
> It was determined, therefore, to fashion a tabernacle, a work of the highest sanctity, the construction of which was set forth to Moses on the mount by divine pronouncements. He saw with the soul's eye the immaterial forms of the material objects about to be made, and these forms had to be reproduced in copies perceived by the senses, taken from the original draught, so to speak, and from patterns conceived in the mind. (*Life of Moses* 2.74)[25]

One can only access natural phenomena about the creation of the world and the cosmos after internalizing good and evil. That is, the individual has transformed from having a spirit that is carnal to one that is holy. Thus, to become holy should perhaps be likened to becoming mind-alone or soul-alone. In other words, it is disconnected from one's own body in an aspirational impulse towards becoming perfect.[26]

The language of the heavenly imprint is particularly important for how Instruction and Philo of Alexandria are engaging the notion of heavenly and earthly correspondence. This is an important philosophical engagement that exemplifies the kind of thinking that is ongoing, as the writers contemplate nature

[24] Translation based on the Armenian. See Philo of Alexandria, *Questions on Exodus*, trans. Ralph Marcus (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), pp. 99–100.

[25] Philo, *On Abraham*, *On Joseph*, *On Moses*, trans. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), pp. 485–7.

[26] Hindy Najman, 'La recherche de la perfection dans le judaïsme ancien', in *Les élites dans le monde biblique*, ed. Jean Riaud (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006), pp. 99–116; idem, 'Text and Figure in Ancient Jewish Paideia', in *The Authoritativeness of Scriptures in Ancient Judaism: The Contribution of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature*, ed. Mladen Popović (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 253–66.

and the cosmos. To be sure, the Hellenistic context is generative and productive for thinking about these reflective matters.

Another interesting text that illustrates heavenly and earthly correspondences with the knowledge of the *raz nihyeh* is a text we already saw earlier in this book, namely, the Rule of the Community (1QS 11:3–9). In this passage, the light of the mind here is opened through God. That light opens the secret of being, or the secret of time with the language of 'my eye has seen the eternal being'. Furthermore, we see the sense of nature's constant presence. Humanity can come to see the foundation (as holy ones) of the heavenly eternal planting.[27] This point also highlights correspondences between heavenly and terrestrial parallels. This goodness was created but not yet given until they become the holy ones. These holy ones move from one who is born and merely a lower physical being into one who has the gift of speech. Namely, this is about the possibility of utterance.

These passages reflect on seasons, times, and weeks of years following heavenly patterns. As discussed earlier, Jubilees exemplifies an understanding of the cosmological order of the cosmos and its ordering of the world:

> On the Lord's orders the angel of the presence said to Moses: 'Write all the words about the creation (דברי הבריה)—how on the sixth day the Lord God completed all his works, everything that he had created, and kept Sabbath on the seventh day (וישבת ביום השביעי). He sanctified it for all ages and set it as a sign for all his works. For on the first day he created the heavens that are above, the earth (השמים העליונים ואת הארץ), the waters, and all the spirits who serve before him, namely, the angels of the presence; the angels of holiness (ומלאכי הקודש); the angels of the spirits of fire; the angels of the winds that blow; the angels of the spirits of the clouds for darkness (ומלאכי רוחות העננים לערפל), ice, hoar-frost, dew, snow, hail, and frost; the angels of the thunder (ומלאכי הקולות); and for the angels of the winds (ולמלאכי הרוחות) [. . .]; and the angels of the spirits for cold and heat, for winter and summer (ולחום ולחרף ולקיץ), and for all the spirits of his creatures (ולכל רוחות בריותו) that he made in the heavens and that he made on the earth, and in every (place) (בארץ ובכל). [There were also] the depths, darkness and dawn (את התהומות מאפלה ושחר), light and evening which he prepared through his knowledge (בדעתו). Then we saw his works and blessed him regarding all his works (אז ראינו מעשיו ונברכהו על כל מעשיו). We offered praise before him because he had made seven great works (שבעה מעשים גדולים עשה) on the first day.' (Jubilees 2:1–3)[28]

[27] See Isaiah 60:21. See also Itai Kagan, 'A Rightful Plant Forever: The Evolution of a Phrase in Second Temple Literature' (Hebrew), *Meghillot* 15 (2021): pp. 203–47, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27068632.

[28] Hebrew: 4Q216 5:9–11.

Here we see the focus on calculation, time, and cosmos. To be sure, the whole of Jubilees is consumed by the study of time as a meditation on heavenly time and history. As I have suggested already, this is an important challenge to scholars who have argued that ancient Judaism does not have the concept of time and abstraction.[29] In the above passage from Jubilees, we see a reflection on time and a highlighting of the differentiation between night and day as an expression of creation of the world but also as a characterization of human existence. In my discussion of Jubilees and time in Chapter 7 as well we already saw not only the centrality of this kind of division of time but also the complex theological and philosophical thinking which is built up around it.

Nor is Jubilees alone here. Notably, the Hymn to the Creator reflects on the differentiation of time in a liturgical context:

מבדיל אור מאפלה שחר הכין בדעת לבו
אז ראו כול מלאכיו וירננו כי הראם את אשר לוא ידעו

Separating light from deep darkness, he prepared dawn through the knowledge of his mind.
Then all his angels saw and they rejoiced, because he had shown them what they had not known. (11Q5 26:11–12)[30]

The passage captures the movement between the light and the dark in its invocation of Genesis 1.[31] I want to build upon the incisive integration of the Hymn to the Creator as an integral part of the *Yotzer* liturgy.[32] Thus we see movement between days and months, years and epochs in several texts from this period where there is a development of thinking about history, calculation, and time. Such reflection is exemplified in the Rule of the Community:

ובכול אשר יהיה יספ[ר חסדיו ותרומת] שפתים יברכנו עם קצים אשר חקקא
ברשית ממשלת אור עם תקופתו ובהאספו על מעון חוקו

[29] For example, Sacha Stern, *Time and Process in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007). Stern is however not really focused on the Dead Sea Scrolls but rather on rabbinic literature. More recently, scholars have considered the Dead Sea Scrolls in this conversation with some surprising results. For example, see Bakker, *Secret of Time*.

[30] The textual edition follows Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 1178. The translation is my own.

[31] And see Isaiah 45:7:

יוֹצֵר אוֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא רָע אֲנִי יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה כָּל־אֵלֶּה

I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe—I the Lord do all these things.

[32] See Moshe Weinfeld, 'Traces of Kedushat Yozer and Pesukey De-Zimra in the Qumran Literature and in Ben-Sira' (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 45, nos. 1–2 (1975): pp. 15–26, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23594472; idem, 'The Angelic Song over the Luminaries in the Qumran Texts', in *Normative and Sectarian Judaism in the Second Temple Period* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), pp. 90–111.

ברשית אשמורי חושך כיא יפתח אוצרו וישתהו עלת ובתקופתו עם האספו מפני אור
באופיע מאורות מזבול קודש עם האספם למעון כבוד
במבוא מועדים לימי חודש יחד תקופתם עם מסרותם זה לזה
בהתחדשם יֹום גדול לקודש קודשים ואות נ *vacat* למפתח חסדיו עולם לראשי מועדים בכול
קץ נהיה *vacat*
ברשית ירחים למועדיהם וימי קודש בתכונם לזכרון במועדיהם
תרומת שפתים הברכנו כחוק חרות לעד
בראשי שנים ובתקופת מועדיהם בהשלם חוק תכונם יום משפטו זה לזה
מועד קציר לקיץ ומועד זרע למועד דשא
מועדי שנים לשבועיהם וברוש שבועיהם למועד דרור
ובכול היותי חוק חרות בלשוני לפרי תהלה ומנת שפתי

And with everything that happens he will recou[nt his generosity and with the offering] of the lips he will bless him at the times that he decreed.
At the beginning of the dominion of light, at its turning point, and when it is assembled into its decreed abode.
At the beginning of the watches of darkness, when he opens its storehouse and sets it over[33] . . . and its turning point, and when it is gathered in because of the light.
At the appearance of luminaries from the holy abode and at their ingathering into the glorious dwelling.
At the coming of appointed times according to the days of the month, together with its turning point, with its transmission from one to the next,
With their renewal on a great day for supreme holiness and a sign for the dispensation of his eternal generosity, for the heads of appointed times in every age to come.
With the beginning of the new moons, according to their appointed times, and holy days according to their regulation, for remembrance in their appointed times.
With the offering of my lips, I will bless him, as a law engraved forever.
At the heads of years and in the turning point of their appointed times, at the fulfilling of the law of their regulations, the day (of the transference) of its jurisdiction, from one to the next.
The season of harvest for the summer, and the season of sowing, to the season of sprouting
The appointed times of the years according to their weeks, and at the head of their weeks, for the appointed time of liberation.
And throughout all my being, a law is engraved on my tongue for the fruit of praise and the share of my lips. (1QS 9:26–10:8)[34]

[33] The reading and translation of עלת is disputed.
[34] Translation follows Bakker, 'Early Configurations of Jewish Prayer'.

Note the coming together in this passage of human essence, creation, and abstraction of time and history in this passage. We see tremendous development in these Jewish texts as the Greek traditions transform in conversation with Hebrew thinking. It is then up to the human being to approximate that perfection, which is always desirable but impossible. Here, we can see an increased development of thinking about the cosmos, heavenly patterns, and time. These concepts and overall developed reflections about subjecthood and heavenly and earthly correspondences are part of the innovative thinking in the Hellenistic period. Thus, the vitality of these traditions in Instruction, Philo, and 1QS, are exemplifications of developed thinking and hermeneutics which creates conditions for new philosophical reflection in an ever-emerging textual and theological tradition of ancient Judaism.

10
Transformation and the Hodayot

Building upon the last two chapters, I turn now to develop the matter of transformation and perfectionist aspirations of the self. In this chapter, I consider the way transformation and the emergence of the self is exemplified in a collection of hymns, the Hodayot, discovered amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls.[1] This chapter is devoted to thinking about the way the self emerges through processes of transformation as an expression of the vitality of this period. Among the innovative developments of the Hellenistic period, we can see conceptual and theological developments which perform the very dynamism of which we have spoken.

The Hodayot (or the Thanksgiving Hymns) are a remarkable collection of songs that reflect a theologically coherent, iterative set of themes across no less than twenty-eight discrete poems; a collection that is dynamic and not fixed. We can trace ongoing growth and variation across both the Cave 1 and Cave 4 copies of the Hodayot. These hymns exhibit ongoing revision and innovation. In this chapter, I want to explore the contribution of the Hodayot for understanding of poetic imagination and biblical theology. These hymns reflect on human essence and human potential as part of an ongoing transformative dimension to the human being.

Across this chapter, I want to reflect on the Hodayot's sequence of humiliation, repentance, purification, and blessing.[2] This aforementioned sequence is repeatedly inscribed in the collection and suggests a performative context for prayer.

[1] Hartmut Stegemann, Eileen Schuller, and Carol Newsom, eds, *1QHodayot^{a}: With Incorporation of 4QHodayot$^{a–f}$ and 1QHodayot^{b}* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009).

[2] See the important work on the role of blessing by George J. Brooke: 'Reading, Searching and Blessing: A Functional Approach to Scriptural Interpretation in the יחד', in *The Temple in Text and Tradition: A Festschrift in Honour of Robert Hayward*, ed. R. Timothy McLay (London: T&T Clark, 2015), pp. 140–56. The first decades of scholarship on the Thanksgiving Hymns focused on form, critically identifying particular units of this collection and linking those scholarly units to historical context for the formation of the so-called sectarians or the 'Essenes'. Assumptions were that these hymns were post-biblical, reducible to a single sect which was apart from the biblical or the rabbinic. Furthermore, scholarship claimed that the theological concepts embedded in these hymns were anticipatory of later Christian concepts (see e.g. Angela Kim Harkins, *Reading with an I to the Heavens: Looking at the Qumran Hodayot through the Lens of Visionary Traditions* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018] where she suggests that these hymns climax in a singular vision which is fundamentally teleological), or that the collection ultimately was headed towards a version of *theios anēr*, i.e. the self-glorification hymn, especially developed by Israel Knohl. See Israel Knohl, *The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, trans. David Maisel (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000). The excerpting of a particular, even fragmentary line or two such as 'who is like me amongst the *elim*' (reworking Exod. 15) in order to locate the thinking and practice of the so-called sect can compromise the reader's ability to learn what the whole of the text expresses through reading and praying. These contributions can radically change the way we think about the past and the history of the biblical—both theologically and historically.

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These texts engage in exegetical practices and shed a great deal of light on how the sapiential and the pedagogical operate in the Second Temple period. While exegesis and history are very much part of the contribution of the Hodayot, I want to suggest that they can also teach us a great deal about poetics, liturgy, self-transformation, and theology for the crystallization of what will come to be canonical and deuterocanonical. In particular, human potential is activated by way of speech and utterance, which articulates itself in the recognition of deity, which is in the form of blessing. These hymns are particularly illuminating for thinking about vitality in the way that liturgy is articulated and activated for ancient Judaism. This new articulation is expressed through new hymns, interpretations, and also creative and innovative accounts of human essence.

Transformation is a central theme of the hymns, pervasive throughout the collection of the Thanksgiving Hymns.[3] Yet, it is hard to disentangle this overarching and comprehensive theme of transformation—of the self, the community, and the leader or teacher. I will not look at the Hodayot through the lens of a distinction of teacher hymns versus community hymns, a distinction which Carol Newsom recently also abandoned on formal grounds.[4] Instead, in alignment with Florentino García Martínez's voice of the teacher, I choose to read assuming an integrated message that is threaded throughout the Hodayot.

I want to approach transformation with a focus on four dimensions or perspectives, which in practice cannot be disentangled, nor dissociated from other perspectives. So, this exploration is of a related set of concepts within the overarching principle of transformation. These concepts are interrelated and at times even inextricably linked to one another.

First, we consider purification where the hymnist describes the subject who moves from a profoundly lowly and humiliating state of impurity through to atonement and ultimately purification. It is an ever-changing purification that moves towards a new self. This brings us to a second dimension of transformation

[3] In talking about transformation, scholars have focused on many aspects, often referencing the language of the Hodayot. For example, in her description of the hymn of col. 11 lines 20–37 in *The Self as Symbolic Space* (see pp. 159–60), Carol Newsom comments on the thanksgiving, 'I thank you Lord that you have redeemed my life from the Pit, and that from Sheol-Abaddon you have brought me up to an eternal height', that a range of polar terms are used in this initial verse to mark the transformation of the speaker's situation: low/high, dust/eternal council, perverted spirit/holy ones, and so forth (lines 19–23). But while the notion of transformation is not central to *The Self as Symbolic Space*, it is the key concept in her later book *The Spirit within Me: Self and Agency in Ancient Israel*. In that recent work, she uses the notion of spirit, a pivotal term in the Hodayot, as a key for describing the transformation of the self, or rather, of one's experience of the self. Newsom thus argues how only after the 'encounter with the abyss of one's own "spirit of flesh," the speaker is able to grasp the experience of the transformation effected by God's purification of one's self and the infusion of God's own spirit.' Carol A. Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space: Constructing Identity and Community at Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); idem, *The Spirit within Me: Self and Agency in Ancient Israel and Second Temple Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021).

[4] Carol A. Newsom, 'A Farewell to the Hodayot of the Community', *DSD* 28, no. 1 (2021): pp. 1–10, doi:10.1163/15685179–bja10002.

in the Hodayot, namely, the overcoming of the merely corporeal created self into a self-transformed being by way of utterance. At times this is explicitly described as coming to use one's mouth in ways that are transformative for the self—through utterance and speech. This speech can carry the human being towards higher and transformative states. This new self is about blessing. And here, a third dimension to the discussion is about utterance and blessing God as a way of overcoming one's own mortality or humiliation.[5] The blessing is both about the celebration of the creator, but also about the human potential to breathe out and to speak and in so doing recognizing and confronting mortality. This blessing, however, should be understood as a kind of new or second self after having articulated the limitations of human capacity. The fourth dimension I want to consider is the expression of transformation through the language of water as transformative. Throughout the Hodayot, we see various forms of water imagery. Water is primordial; it is also violent as storm and deluge. But water can also be represented as Edenic and generative for new life. Here, we have in mind language that is likened to an ideal watered oasis and paradise. It can also be an idealized primordial creation or at times a new creation after humiliation or lowliness. But in all of these variegated forms, water is transformative. It can purify, and it can participate in the humiliation of physical birth. Water can also be associated with an eternal planting which is itself generative of hope.[6] All of these are transformative dimensions.

10.1 Transformation as Purification

References to God's purification of the speaker occur throughout the Hodayot, although it is distributed largely in the first twenty columns of the large Cave 1 scroll. This aspect of divine purification is found in different contexts and collocations in the Hodayot. Repeatedly, as in the case of 1QS 3 and 4, the purification is accomplished through 'a' or 'His' (God's) holy spirit.[7] While the purification of specific sins cannot be excluded, the emphasis rather seems to be on the purification or atonement of moral impurity and human sinfulness in general. Throughout the Hodayot collection, set phrases and particular idioms reappear in ever-changing constellations, with specific expressions or collocations only appearing in some sections, and not in others. Thus, both in column 8 and in column 12 we find purification and atonement associated with God's grace and compassion, patience, and abundant kindness, which pardons iniquity. A close reading of the two hymns will also reveal differences. For example, the end of the hymn of col. 8 has links to the

[5] This blessing, which should also be read in conjunction with 1QS col. 10 as well as the Hymn to the Creator, is a breaking through the darkness and confession which is also characteristic of the collection.

[6] Itai Kagan, 'A Rightful Plant Forever: The Evolution of a Phrase in Second Temple Literature' (Hebrew), *Meghillot* 15 (2021): pp. 203–47, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27068632.

[7] In accordance with the variant in 4Q255.

first part of the Rule of the Community and assigns more agency to the speaker than in col. 12. Such variations require more analysis. It is possible, but not necessary, that this reflects different stages of growth of the collection, as has been argued for other cases by Johnson.[8]

10.2 Transformation through Utterance

The second dimension of transformation is thematized in the hymn of col. 9. Even though now embedded in the 1QH[a] collection, it may have been a programmatic introduction to a smaller earlier collection.[9] Indeed, this creation hymn describes for more than twenty lines God's wisdom, foreknowledge, and creation of all spirits according to their eternal destinies. These include those of the angels, of the luminaries and meteorological phenomena, the earth, the seas and the depths, and, ultimately, the spirits of mankind or human spirit. This description concludes with 'According to your will everything comes to pass; and without you nothing is done'.[10] And then the 'I' who all the time already had been addressing God, comes to speak of themselves. The speaker acknowledges being aware of God's mysterious order of creation because of his having been given knowledge. But the speaker then also understands man's lowly, corporeal, state. In the famous litany of self-depreciation, the 'I' describes himself as follows in column 9 of the Hodayot:

ואני יצר החמר ומגבל המים
סוד הערוה ומקור הנדה
כור העוון ומבנה החטאה
רוח התועה ונעוה בלא בינה

Yet I am a creature of clay and a thing kneaded with water,
A foundation of shame and a well of impurity,
A furnace of iniquity and a structure of sin,
A spirit of error, and a perverted being, without understanding.
(1QH[a] 9:23–25)[11]

[8] And, if we follow Michael Johnson's recent rearrangement of the fragments in some of the earliest columns of 1QH[a], both are introduced by references to humankind as a creature of clay. Michael B. Johnson, 'Revisiting Debated Fragment Placements in the War Scroll with 3D Models (Frags. 3, 9, 10 & Cols. 19–20)', *DSD* 30, no. 3 (2023): pp. 262–91, doi:10.1163/15685179-bja10047.

[9] As suggested by Michael C. Douglas. See 'Power and Praise in the Hodayot: A Literary Critical Study of 1QH 9:1–18:14' (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1998).

[10] 1QH[a] column 9:22.

[11] The quotations from the Hodayot are largely based on the edition of Eileen M. Schuller and Carol A. Newsom, *The Hodayot (Thanksgiving Psalms): A Study Edition of 1QH[a]* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2012).

The psalmist then continues with:

מה אדבר בלא נודע ואשמיעה בלא סופר

> What could I say that is not already known, or what could I declare that has not already been told? (1QH[a] 9:25)

The implicit comparison could be read as awareness of the lowly and iniquitous state of humankind as contrasted to God, as stated some lines later in column 9:

לכה אתה אל הדעות כול מעשי הצדקה וסוד האמת
ולבני האדם עבודת העוון ומעשי הרמיה

> To you, yourself, God of knowledge, belong all righteous deeds and true counsel. But to mortal beings belong iniquitous service and deceitful deeds. (1QH[a] 9:28–9)

But one may also interpret the litany as arising from the speaker's awareness of the error-prone corporeal nature of the human spirit, compared to incorporeal nature of the other spirits of creation who all act according to their allotted tasks.

Only here, then, this creation hymn describes the unique task allotted to the human spirit, enabled by God's creation of breath for the tongue and the lips, according to mysteries and rules analogous to those which govern the paths of the luminaries and other incorporeal spirits who bless 'you' (God) for everlasting ages. And then, ultimately, the 'I' acknowledges God's purification of their human soul, 'so that it might recount your wonders before all your creatures'.

This text can be read on multiple levels. It can be read about a specific 'I' whose human spirit is strengthened in the face of adversity, purified, so that the 'I' can recount (*sapper*) God's wonders to all humankind. This creation hymn speaks about the task of humans at large within God's creation, who are allotted to recite (*sapper*) God's wonders to all his creation. However, only those humans whom God strengthens and purifies are transformed from mere creatures of clay to those who can speak the right words of praise with their breath, tongue, and lips. The use of the one who responds is key, mentioned (*ma'aneh lashon*) at least seven times in the Hodayot. The first time this phrase appears it is in Proverbs:

לְאָדָ֗ם מַעַרְכֵי־לֵ֫ב וּמֵיְהוָ֥ה מַעֲנֵ֥ה לָשׁ֑וֹן׃

> A man may arrange his thoughts, but what he says depends on the Lord. (Prov 16:1)

Here, it is God who provides *ma'aneh lashon* as the final word. The 'I' in col. 10:9 thanks God for having 'given the proper reply to my uncircumcised lips, and

to have supported my soul'. One may read and translate *ma'aneh lashon* as 'responsive tongue', also because the hymn introduces the 'I' as one who teaches those who love discipline and opposes the erring interpreters who still have uncircumcised lips and an alien tongue. And such a reading of *ma'aneh lashon* may be apt in some other instances, too. However, in other cases, in 4:29–30 and 8:24–5 the 'responsive tongue', (מענה לשון) refers to the 'I''s prayer, 'reciting your righteous acts, and your patience (לספר צדקותיך וארוך אפים), your . . . and the deed as of your strong right hand (ומעשי ימין עוזך), and confessing the transgressions of my forebears (ולהתודות על פשעי ראשונים) and p[rostr]ating myself and begging for mercy (ולהתנפל ולהתחנן) . . .' (4:29–30), with the *hitnappel* and *hitḥannen* repeated with the *ma'aneh lashon* in 8:24–5.[12] In all those cases, one might read the *ma'aneh lashon* as part of a dynamic interaction between the community or between the deity and the protagonist.[13] The role of speech and, in particular, blessing, is particularly important for the transition between the humiliation and glorification of the human.

Columns 19 and 20 of the Hodayot are intimately connected to the function of the human tongue in the creation hymn. Thus, in column 19, the Hodayot employ the language of blessing to God as linked with divine gift:

ברוך אתה[אדוני א]שר נתתה לעבדכה שכל דעה להבין בנפלאותיכה ו[מ]ע[נה לשון ל]ספר ברוב חסדיכה

Blessed are you, [O Lord, w]ho have given to your servant insightful knowledge to understand your wondrous works, and [a responsive to]ngu[e in order to] tell of the abundance of your kindness. (1QH^{a} 19:30–1)

The addressee of the one to whom the story is retold is still unknown. But a few lines later, another short prayer or blessing, juxtaposes the 'responsive tongue'—*ma'aneh lashon* with prayer of praise and supplication:

ברוך את[ה] אדוני כי אתה פעלתה אלה ותשם בפי עבדכה הודות ת[ה]ל[ה] ותחנה ומענה לשון

Blessed are yo[u,] O Lord, for you have done those things, and you have put into the mouth of your servant hymns of pr[a]is[e] and a prayer of supplication, and a responsive tongue. (1QH^{a} 19:35–7)

[12] See here, Judith Newman on column 20 and on bodily postures: 'The Hodayot and the Formative Process of Performing Scripture', in *Before the Bible: The Liturgical Body and the Formation of Scriptures in Early Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 132–7.

[13] This is very suggestive when one considers the language of answering in *Sotah* 5.4 and 6.2 (the context is a *drasha* of R. Akiva in the *Tosefta*). See the excellent discussion of Ishay Rosen-Zvi in '"Who will Uncover the Dust from your Eyes?": Mishnah *Sotah* 5 and R. Akiva's *Midrash*' (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 75, nos. 1–2 (2005): pp. 95–127, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23605071. See on this Shlomo Naeh, '"Creates the Fruit of Lips": A Phenomenological Study of Prayer According to Mishnah *Berakhot* 4:3, 5:5' (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 63, no. 2 (1994): pp. 185–218, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23599863.

In this hymn, thanksgiving and prayer for prostrating oneself and supplication are linked with the cycles of the day and night, of the seasons and the festivals. Although I do not accept the division, it is notable that in the traditional classification of teacher and community hymns, this 'community hymn' would be considered unrelated to the Creation Hymn of col. 9. However, with regard to content, it makes explicit the creational task of humankind announced in the Creation Hymn, to pray simultaneously, or in response to, the proper order of the luminaries, in a sense a verbal response, *ma'aneh lashon* (a responsive tongue), to the rest of God's deeds. Thus, the artificial division inhibits integrated reading of the collection. This fragments the collection instead of reading it as an integrated whole. The philological interrelatedness and thematic unity suggested reading it as a collection.

In the fourth column we see the discourse of purification and atonement in the context of divine grace. This is an omnipresent part of the repentance discourse across the Hodayot. The possibility of progress is there, but also in an iterative dimension. There is a paradigm for transformation in the priestly framework for repentance (also with respect to sacrifice and purification) that is reconfigured here in the context of blessing and confession:

]◦ עבדך מכול פשעיו בֻ[המון]רָחמיך [כאשר ד]ברתה ביד מושהׄ עָבְדָ[ך לשא]תָ עָוֹן וחטאה
ולכפר בעדָ[פש]ַע ומעל

[And you have purified] your servant from all his transgressions through the [abundance of] your compassion, [. . . just as] you [sa]id through Moses, [your] servant, [to remo]ve iniquity and sin and to atone for [transgress]ion and unfaithfulness. (1QH^a 4:23–4)

On the matter of the blessing of the Deity, column 5 of the Hodayot, also incorporates the notion of an all-knowing God who knows the past, present, and future of humanity. All the thoughts of humanity and their actions are already known and yet the possibility of change, repentance, and transformation is possible:

ואלה אשר הכֻ[ינותה מקדם]עָוֹלָם לשפוט בם
אֹת כול מעשיך בטרם בראתם עם צבא רוחיך
ועדת [אלים ע]ָם רקיע קודשך וְכֹוֹלָ צבאותיו
עם הארץ וכול צאֹצָאֹיה בימים ובתהומות [כ]ֻכול מחשבותָם לכול קצי עָוֹלָם

And these are what you established from ages of old to regulate through them:
all your creatures, before you created them together with the host of your spirits
and the congregation of the heavenly beings together with your holy firmament and all its hosts,
together with the earth and all that springs from it, in the seas and in the deeps,
according to all the plans for them for all the eternal epochs . . . (1QH^a 5:24–6)

And again, further on in column 5, we see a theme that runs across the Hodayot: the so-called *Niedrigkeit* or 'lowliness' doxology. The humiliation of humanity is a confrontation with mortality. This is also intermingled with the recognition of carnal origins and the prospect of death. The origins of humanity and the transformative possibility of the self is dependent here only on God. This is thus overturned completely in the celebration and in the service of God:

[כי מה ה]יאֹ רוח בשר להבין בְּכוֹל אלה ולהשכיל בס֯[. . .] גדול
ומה ילוד אשה בכוֹל [ג]דֹ֯[ו]לֹ֯[י]ךָ הנוראים
והוא מבנה עפר ומגבל מים
אֹ[שמה וחט]אה סודו ערות קלוֹן וֹמֹ[קור הנ]דה ורוח נעוה משלה בו *vacat*
ואם ירשע יהיהֹ[לאות עד]עֹולם ומופת דורות רחוקֹ[י]ם לֹבשר
רק בטובך יצדק איש וברֹוֹב רחֹ[מיך]

[But how i]s a spirit of flesh to understand all these things and to discern . . . great . . .
What is one born of woman amid all your [gre]at fearful acts?
He is a thing constructed of dust and kneaded with water.
Sin[ful gui]lt is his foundation, obscene shame, and a so[urce of im]purity, and a perverse spirit rules him.
And if he acts wickedly, he will become [a sign for] ever and a portent for dis[ta]nt generations of flesh.
Only through your goodness can a person be righteous, and by [your] abundant compas[sion] (1QH^a 5:30–4)

And, again, a little later in the same column we find:

ואני עבדך ידעתי ברוח אשר נתתה בי [. . .]וצדק כול מעשיך

And I, your servant, know by means of the spirit which you have placed in me . . . and all your deeds are righteousness. (1QH^a 5:35–6)

There are different dimensions to the purification process coming together. First the mortality and limitation of humanity. Second the capability of the human being to overcome humiliation through articulation, breathing out, and expressions of praise (and prayer) towards God. The recognition of God as creator is part of that expression. The recounting of wonders and the celebration of God's compassion is part of the activation of human potential is developed here in column 9:

אתה בראתה רוח בלשון ותדע דבריה ותכן פרי שפתים בטרם היותם ותשם דברים על קו
ומבע רוח שפתים במדה ותוצא קוים לרזיהם ומֹבִֹיעֹ֯ רֹוֹחות לחשבונם להודיע כבודכה ולספר
נפלאותיכה בכול מעשי אמתכה ומֹ[ש]פֹ֯[ט]ֹי צֹדקכה ולהלל שמכה בפה כול וידעוכה לפי
שכלם וברכוכה לעולמי עֹ[ולמי]ם *vacat*

ואתה ברחמיכה וגדול חסדיכה חזקתה רוח אנוש לפני נגע וְנַפְשׁ[אביון] טהַרְתָּה מרוב עוון
לספר נפלאותיכה לנגד כול מעשיכה

You yourself created breath for the tongue, and you know its words, and you determine the fruit of the lips before they exist. You set the words according to the measuring line and the utterance of the breath of the lips by measure. And you bring forth the lines according to their mysteries, and the utterances of the breath according to their calculus, in order to make known your glory and to recount your wonders in all your faithful deeds and your righteous jud[gements] and to praise your name with the mouth of all. And they know you according to their wisdom, and they will bless you for everlasting ages.

And you, in your compassion and your great kindness, you have strengthened the human spirit in the face of affliction and [the poor] soul you have cleansed it from great iniquity, so that it might recount Your wonders before all Your creatures. (1QH^a 9:29–35)

One aspect that I did not yet highlight is the language of redeeming or saving. To be sure the discourse here is repetitive of what we have already seen in columns 5 and 9. But here I wanted also to emphasize the language of purification from sinfulness which is ultimately a precondition for membership into the community and in turn the passageway from corruption to repair. Then, in column 11 of the Hodayot there is celebration and song of praise of God:

אודכה אדוני כי פדיתה נפשי משחת ומשאול אבדון העליתני לרום עולם ואתהלכה במישור
לאין חקר
ואדעה כיא יש מקוה לאשר יצרתה מעפר לסוד עולם ורוח נעוה טהרתה מפשע רב להתיצב
במעמד עם צבא קדושים ולבוא ביחד בני שמים ותפל לאיש גורל עולם עם רוחות
דעת להלל שמכה ביחד רנה ולספר נפלאותיכה לנגד כול מעשיכה
ואני יצר החמר מה אני מגבל במים ולמי נחשבתי ומה כוח לי

I thank you Lord that you have redeemed my life from the pit, and that from Sheol-Abaddon you have lifted me up to an eternal height, so that I walk on a limitless plain.

I know that there is hope for one whom you have formed from the dust for an eternal council. And a perverted spirit you have purified from great sin that it might take its place with the host of the holy ones and enter into community with the congregation of the children of heaven. And you cast for a person an eternal lot with the spirits of knowledge, that he might praise your name in a common rejoicing and recount your wonderful acts before all your creations.

But I, a creature of clay, what am I? A thing kneaded with water. And what am I regarded? What strength do I possess? (1QH^a 11:20–5)

Here, we see the emphasis on divine illumination for humanity as part of the grace (*ḥesed*) for overcoming the state of birth. Or in other words, another version of the Jobian narrative. Thus, human limitation is only mitigated by divine grace and ultimately the human ability to articulate his own lowliness and divine grandeur. Human recollection of sin and compromise is part of the process of growth and transformation.

ובי האירותה פני רבים ותגבר עד לאין מספר
כי הודעתני ברזי פלאכה ובסוד פלאכה הגברתה עמדי והפלא לנגד רבים בעבור כבודכה
ולהודיע לכול החיים גבורותיכה מי בשר כזאת ומה יצר חמר להגדיל פלאות והוא בעוון
מרחם ועד שבה באשמת מעל

Through me you have illumined the faces of many, and you have increased them beyond number.

For you have made me understand your wonderful mysteries, and in your wonderful council you have shown yourself strong to me, doing wondrously before many for the sake of your glory and in order to make known to all the living your mighty deeds. What being of flesh is like this? And what creature of clay is able to do wondrous great deeds? It (exists) in iniquity from the womb, and until old age in faithless guilt. (1QH^a 12:28–31)

And, again, later in column 12:

כי נשענתי בחסדיכה וכהמון רחמיכה בי תכפר עוון ולטה[ר]אנוש מאשמה בצדקתכה

For I am supported by your kindness, and according to your abundant compassion to me you pardon iniquity, and thus clean[se] a person from guilt through your righteousness. (1QH^a 12:37–8)

The mouth's function of speech is for goodness and to praise God. Human beings are created for this purpose. The language of planting and growth are part of this discourse of progress and sustenance. The voice of the poet is empowered and inspired. Here are two illuminating illustrations of this from column 15:

כי אתה ידעתה כול יצר מעשה וכול מענה לשון הכרתה ותכן לבי כ[ל]מודיכה וכאמתכה
לישר פעמי לנתיבות צדקה להתהלך לפניך בגבול [חי]ים לשבולי כבוד ושלום לאין ה[סר
ו]ל[ו]א להשבת לנצח

For you yourself know the intention of every deed and scrutinize every reply. You make my heart firm according to your [te]achings and your truth, directing my steps toward the paths of righteousness, so that I may walk before you in the domain of [lif]e on tracks of glory and peace, without tu[rning aside o]r ceasing forever. (1QH^a 15:16–18)

And also, a second passage from column 15:

ואני נשענתי ברׄוֹב[רחמיכה ולהמון] חסדכה אוחיל להציץ כְּמֹטַע ולגדל נצר להעיז בכוח
וֹל[הפריח פרח כי ב]צְדקתכה העמדתנִי לבריתכה ואתמוכה בֶּאמתכה[14]

But as for me, I rely on [your] great [compassion and upon] your [overflowing] kindness I wait, in order to bloom like a plant, and in order to make a shoot grow, to find security in (your) strength, and to [make a flower bloom, for by] your righteousness you have stationed me in your covenant, and I have held fast to your truth. (1QH^a 15:21–3)

The Hodayot focus on divine grace as sustained by God as the creator and who enables articulation and ultimately recognition of the created world through blessing, which is itself the singular vehicle for overcoming the state of birth *mereḥem* (from the womb).

10.3 'What Is Man?' The Problem of Paralysis

There is a central theme which runs through the Hodayot of 'what is man . . .'[15] This also draws on themes of angelic identification with *qedoshim* (holy ones) and *ruḥot* (spiritual beings) on the one hand, and Jobian humiliation about not knowing and not being able to see behind or in front of us. The theme works in tandem with a perspective on the limitations of humanity and thus there is no movement towards overcoming this paralysis. This is evident across the collection. See, for example, these two passages from columns 5 and 7:

ומה ילוד אשה בכולֹ [ג]דֹ[ו]לֹ[י]ךָ הנוראים

And what is one born of woman amongst all your [aw]esome works? (1QH^a 5:31)

ומה אף הוא בשר כי ישכיל [באלה]

But what is flesh that it should have insight into [these things]? (1QH^a 7:34)

Furthermore, it is impossible to know anything without God's will. Nothing is beyond the deity's power:

[14] See Qimron, vol. 1, p. 80.
[15] Psalm 8:5:

מָה–אֱנוֹשׁ כִּי–תִזְכְּרֶנּוּ וּבֶן–אָדָם כִּי תִפְקְדֶנּוּ
What is man that You have been mindful of him, mortal man that You have taken note of him?

ומבלעדיכה לא יעשה כול ולא יודע בלוא רצונכה ואין זולתך ואין עמכה בכוח ואין לנגד כבודכה. . .

Apart from you nothing is done; nothing is known without your will; and except for you, there is nothing. There is none beside you in strength, none comparable to your glory. (1QH^a 18:11–12)

The Hodayot have many ways of naming what it is to be human. At its essence, however, the Hodayot focus on mortality, physical origins, and rational articulation through speech and recognition of deity. According to the Hodayot, at his birth, Man is nothing and is worthless. It is precisely the expression of the limitation of humanity as mortal, as lowly, and as incapable of overcoming that condition that is expressed here. And yet, the hymns continue to strive to overcome that essential limitation through song that elsewhere we see as angelic song. With every advance there is a setback and a realization of human limitation. This is all achieved with the inheritance of past reflections across the biblical corpus along with the broader Hellenistic context which is full of reflection about the struggle to be and to become wise, godlike, perfect, and holy.

It is impossible, it seems, to overcome the impasse between heaven and the earth. There is none like God and that is precisely what makes this crossing over from earth to heaven inconceivable. The only possible way to achieve insight is through divine gifting, and not through the internalization of divine wisdom and heavenly or angelic knowledge and efficacious prayer. This impasse will be articulated many times throughout the Hodayot. It brings home again and again the greatness and perfection of God and the impossibility of overcoming the lowliness of humanity. Here in columns 9 and 15 we see what the expression entails:

מה אדבר בלא נודע ואשמיעה בלא סופר

What could I say that is not already known, or what could I declare that has not already been told? (1QH^a 9:25)

כיֽ מיֽ כמוֹכה באלים אדוני ומי כאמתכה

Who is like you amongst the gods, O Lord? Who has truth like yours? (1QH^a 15:31)

The impossibility of knowing anything without God emphasizes the impossibility of overcoming the human–divine separation. This is a very different narrative of song and blessing that we see at the end of 1QS or throughout the *Shirot ʿOlat HaShabbat*. In fact, and in stark contrast, the narrative in the Hodayot,

at times, blocks off access to the divine, which can be likened to Lamentations 3:44.[16]

I want to suggest, with Gershom Scholem,[17] that we can already see in Lamentations an iterative and paralysing cycle. This same cycle is reiterated in the Hodayot. However, according to the protagonist in the Hodayot, there are moments of insight, or of overcoming the loss and isolation, but it is only and always through God. See for example column 6:

[ברוך אתה]אֲדוני הנותן בלב עבדך בינה להשכיל בכול אלה

> [Blessed are you,] O Lord, who gives understanding in the heart of your servant so that he may have insight into all these things. (1QH^{a} 6:19–20)

The insight that is mentioned is nothing less than a gift from God. It is singularly through the gift of divine insight and a revealed pathway that humanity can receive relief from the suffering, humiliation, and disorientation of the existential exile of which the protagonist speaks. The blessing and hope can generate moments of insight, and those moments can come to be described as paradise and fertile space, even an eternal planting.[18]

Hope in the Hodayot is the hope of insight and a primordial return to an Eden-like paradise, but one which is paradoxically informed by knowledge. This hope in the Hodayot is an eternal planting that is divinely gifted, but ultimately insufficient to overcome the devastation and suffering of the individual in a sustained manner. So, while there are moments of redemption across the collection of the Thanksgiving Hymns, there is not a singular or ultimate redemptive moment where suffering and humiliation are overcome. There is a violent and ongoing return to suffering, which is interrupted with glimmers of hope and insight into the divine through the gift of knowledge and the possibility of uttering blessing. This is the highest achievement of humankind: to articulate praise and to know the creator through the breath of the lips as exemplified in column 9 of the Hodayot:

[16] Lamentations 3:44:

סַכֹּותָה בֶּעָנָן לָךְ מֵעֲבֹור תְּפִלָּה

You have screened Yourself off with a cloud, that no prayer may pass through.

See also Rebekah Van Sant's discussion of the passage, 'Re-Presenting Dislocation: The Poetics of Exile and Diaspora in Ancient Jewish Texts' (DPhil dissertation, University of Oxford, 2023), pp. 57–9, 63–4.

[17] Gershom Scholem, 'On Lament and Lamentation', in *Lament in Jewish Thought: Philosophical, Theological, and Literary Perspectives*, ed. Ilit Ferber and Paula Schwebel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), pp. 317.

[18] Ibid., pp. 223–4.

ואתה ברחמיכה וגדול חסדיכה חזקתה רוח אנוש לפני נגע וְנֶפֶשׁ[אביון] טהרתה מרוב עוון
לספר נפלאותיכה לנגד כול מעשיכה

> And you, in your compassion and your great kindness, you have strengthened the human spirit in the face of affliction and [the poor] soul you have cleansed it from great iniquity, so that it might recount Your wonders before all Your creatures. (1QH^{a} 9:33–5)

For the Hodayot, there is a revolution through the movement between these elements of the high and the low within this sequence (without any absolute fixity). But these revolutions are achieved through prayer and the articulation of praise of God which is also essential for knowledge—for the differentiation between good and evil and ultimately through the knowledge of the mystery of being[19] as exemplified in column 9:

הכול חקוק לפניכה בחרת זכרון לכול קצי נצח
ותקופות מספר שני עולם בכול מועדיהם ולוא נסתרו ולא נעדרו מלפניכה
ומה יספר אנוש חטאתו ומה יוכיח על עוונותיו ומה ישיב עול על משפט הצדק
לכה אתה אל הדעות כול מעשי הצדקה וסוד האמת
ולבני האדם עבודת העוון ומעשי הרמיה *vacat*
אתה בראתה רוח בלשון ותדע דבריה ותכן פרי שפתים בטרם היותם . . . .

> Everything is engraved before You with a stylus of remembrance for all the times of eternity.
> And the turning points of the number of eternal years in all their appointed times, they are not hidden, nor are they absent from your countenance.
> How shall a human being recount his transgression, and how will he defend his iniquities? And how will an unjust person reply to the rightful judgement?
> To you alone, God of Knowledge, belong all righteous deeds and the foundation of truth.
> But to the children of humankind belong the work of iniquity and the deeds of falsehood.
> You have created breath on the tongue, and you know its words, and you have prepared the fruit of lips before they come into being. (1QH^{a} 9:25–30)

Here in the Hodayot, there is reflection on the essence of humanity and its potential for transformation and perfection through speech and through approaching the deity through praise. This poetic cycle runs through the entire collection of the

[19] Bakker, *Secret of Time*, pp. 131–8.

Hodayot. Speaking of the measure of speech as the very thing that can transform the human being from corporeal to a spiritual and holy being.

It is important to reflect on speech as *part* of the holy ones—it is the gift to those with a holy spirit who come to know between good and evil. That gift enables humankind to bless—to utter words of acknowledgement to the creator which is what it is to participate in *imitatio dei*—to be in the image of God and to be holy like God. This is a fundamental aspiration of the formation of subjecthood in Hellenistic Jewish literature. What they bless is wonder and mystery through their own acquired understanding—having achieved discernment and higher perception as we can see in column 23 of the Hodayot:

בכוח גבורתכה [יהל]ל שמכה ויתגבר בכבודכה
אל תשב ידכה מ[ל]היות לו מתחזק בבריתכה ועומד לפניכה ב[מק]ור פתחתה בפי עבדכה
ובלשונו חקקתה על קו מ[שפט למ]שמיע ליצר מבינתו ולמליץ באלה לעפר כמוני
ותפתח מ[ק]להוכיח ליצר חמר דרכו ואשמת ילוד אשה כמעשיו ולפתח מ[קו]ר אמתכה ליצר
אשר סמכתה בעוזכה ל[הרי]ם כאמתכה מבשר [ולספ]ר טובכה לבשר ענוים לרוב רחמיכה
[ולה]שביע ממקור ד[עת כול נ]כאי רוח ואבלים לשמחת עולם

By your mighty power [he will prai]se your name and magnify himself in your glory.

Do not remove your hand [. . . so that] he may become one who holds fast to your covenant, and one who stands before you in [. . .] you open [a foun]tain in the mouth of your servant and upon his tongue you have engraved ju[dgement] according to a measuring line [in order to pro]claim to a creature from his understanding, and for one who interprets these things to a being of dust like me.

You open a foun[tain] in order to reprove the creature of clay with respect to his way and the guilt of the one born of woman according to his deeds, and (you) open the f[oun]tain of your truth to the creature whom you have sustained by your strength in order to [rai]se up the herald of good news according to your truth, [and to tel]l of your goodness, to proclaim good news to the poor according to the abundance of your mercy

[and pro]claim from the fountain of kn[owledge to all the contr]ite in spirit and those who mourn (that they may have) eternal joy. (1QH^{a} 23:9–16)

The collection of the Hodayot hymns is consumed and even paralysed at moments by what we might call sceptical despair, the darkest hour and the confrontation of humanity's own mortality, own limitations, or error in judgement and in a mortal struggle to differentiate between good and evil. But, also, in the overcoming of that darkness through the recognition of God as creator, the poems of the Hodayot used and expanded Hebrew idiom and poetics as a means to create a new vital discourse of the overcoming of one's own limitations. At the same time, the deity is recognized, and at times even approached or imitated.

10.4 Water and the Hope of Transformation

To be sure the language of purification and atonement runs throughout the text, and water is an essential part of this. It is probably not insignificant to note that there are no less than fourteen *miqvaot* (ritual baths) at Qumran, and the community for purposes of survival—spiritual and physical—seems to be nothing less than obsessed with water.[20] Water and garden imagery are central throughout the collection. The following three passages emphasize purification and the force of the source of flowing waters and roots which are generative:

אוֹד[כה אד]וֹנַי כִּי נָתַתַּנִי במקור נוזלים ביבשָׁה ומבוע מים בארץ ציָּה ומשקי גן וְאַגָּם ◦◦◦◦
הַשָּׁדֶה מטע ברוש ותדהר עִם תאשור יחד לכבודכה עצי חַיִּים במעין רז מחובאים בתוך כול
עצי מים והיו להפריח נצר למטעת עולם

I thank [you, O Lo]rd, that you have placed me by the source of streams in a dry land, by a spring of water in a thirsty land, and by a watered garden, and a pool . . . the field, a planting of juniper and elm with cedar all together for your glory, trees of life at a secret spring, hidden in the midst of all the trees by the water. And they were there so that a shoot might be made to sprout into an eternal planting. (1QH^a 16:5–7)

And, again, in lines 10–12 of the same column:

וירמו עליו כול ע[צי] מים כי במטעתם יתשגשגו ואל יְובל לא ישלחו שורש ומפְּריח נצר
קָ[ו]דֶשׁ למטעת אמת סותר בלוא נחשב ובלא נודע חותם רזו

And all the tr[ees] by the water towered over it, for in their plantation they grow tall, but they do not send out roots to the watercourse. That which made the h[o]ly shoot sprout up into a planting of truth conceals itself, without being much regarded and without being recognized, sealing up its mystery. (1QH^a 16:10–12)

As well as in column 19:

ולמען כבודכה טהרתה אנוש מפשע להתקדש לכה מכול תועבות נדה ואשמת מעל להוחד
עִם בני אמתך ובגורל עִם קדושיכה להרים מעפר תולעת מתים לסוד אֵ[מתכה] ומרוח נעוה

[20] See e.g. Ronny Reich, 'Design and Maintenance of First-Century Ritual Immersion Baths', *JP* 56, no. 1 (1999): pp. 14–19, https://www.jerusalemperspective.com/1786/.

לבינתכה ולהתיצב במעמד לפניכה עם צבא עד ורוחו[ת עולם] ולהתחדש עם כול ה[ויה]
ונהיה ועם ידעים ביחד רנה

For the sake of your glory you have purified a mortal from sin, so that he may sanctify himself for you from all impure abominations and from faithless guilt, so that he might be united with the children of your truth and in the lot with your holy ones, so that a maggot infested corpse might be raised up from the dust to the council of [your] t[ruth], and from a spirit of perversion to the understanding that comes from you, and so that he may take (his) place before you with the everlasting host and the [eternal] spirit[s], and so that he may be renewed together with all that i[s] and will be and with those who have knowledge in a common rejoicing. (1QH^{a} 19:13–17)

Here I want to emphasize the explicit transformation of the individual poet and also the community as a whole. To utter these hymns is to participate in the process of purification of the self and glorification of the deity as expressed in the following passage from Hodayot:

ברוך אתה[אדוני א]שר נתתה לעבדכה שכל דעה להבין בנפלאותיכה ו[מ]ע[נה לשון ל]ספר
ברוב חסדיכה
ברוך אתה אל הרחמים והחנינה כגדו[ל]כ[ו]חכה ורוב אמתכה והמו[ן] חסדיכה בכול
מעשיכה שמח נפש עבדכה באמתכה וטהרני בצדקתכה כאשר יחלתי לטובכה ולחסדיכה
אקוה ולסליחות[י]כה פתחתה משברי וביגוני נחמתני כיא נשנתי ברחמיכה
ברוך את[ה] אדוני כי אתה פעלתה אלה ותשם בפי עבדכה הודות ת[ה]ל[ה] ותחנה ומענה
לשון. . . .

Blessed are you, [O Lord, w]ho has given to your servant insightful knowledge to understand your wondrous works and [a re]sp[onsive tongue in order] to tell of the abundance of your kindness.

Blessed are you, God of compassion and grace, according to the great[ness of] your st[ren]gth and the magnitude of your truth, and the abundan[ce] of your kindness with all your creatures. Gladden the soul of your servant through your truth, and purify me by your righteousness. Even as I waited for your goodness, so for your kindness I hope. By your forgivenes[s] you relieve my pains, and in my troubles you comfort me, for I depend on your compassion.

Blessed are yo[u,] O Lord, for you have done these things, and you have put into the mouth of your servant hymns of pr[a]is[e] and a prayer of supplication, and a responsive tongue. (1QH^{a} 19:30–37)

Here again, it is important to highlight the language of purification and prayer which is then followed up by language of God as compassionate. This cycle again returns to divine *ḥesed* and human devotion and worship.

I want to return to the temporal dimensions of column 9 earlier in this chapter. The language of column 9 builds on terrestrial or even liturgical time to discuss the ongoing nature of praise of God but also recognizes the governance and establishment of deity as well. Repeatedly time language is particularly powerful here as is the language of genuflection and ongoing petition (line 7). The possibility of this articulation comes from the poet's holy spirit (line 15). The self-effacement along with the deference to deity seems also to go hand in hand with the praise and celebration of God as wondrous and all knowing (*'el ha-de'ot*). But there is also the notion of eternal and ongoing constancy of the divine. This is expressed through the constancy of night and day, and the cycles of times (line 8–11) and the testimony, which is past, present, and future (line 12).[21]

The Hodayot make up a collection that is at once confronting mortality and human limitations, and at the same time exploring the potential of the human as divinely created. The poems themselves do not exhibit the parallelistic stich form with which we are familiar, but rather a kind of poetry that is at once didactic and theological. And yet, the poems are far more dialogical and dynamic than what we typically find in works such as Psalms and Ecclesiastes.

It is important that we consider the creative and imaginative contribution that this text offers on the following fronts: first, the creation of new prayer, second, the philosophical contribution to Hellenistic Judaism and integration into Hellenistic thinking, and thirdly, the profound development of thought. Reading Hodayot as contributing to an emerging Jewish liturgy normalizes the scrolls in a way that enables us to release the shackles of sectarianism and the search for the author and instead read the Hodayot as a contribution to Jewish thought, the development of an idiom of Jewish prayer and a significant contribution to the formation of the subject.

To understand the human's place in the world is to strive to understand God's creatures and creations, the differentiation between good and evil, and to fundamentally come to articulate that knowledge in the form of confession and praise. This is at the core of what it means to praise and acknowledge in the Hebrew language. This innovative understanding of praising God is integrated into this iterative and ever-growing collection. We will now turn to reflect on the significance of the Hodayot collection in the final chapter of Part III.

[21] On this point, see also 1QH^a 20:7–16.

11
Philosophical Hermeneutics
Poetic Processes and the Hodayot

I take the Hellenistic period to be a period of tremendous growth, crystallization, and innovation for interpretation, legal development, and liturgical creativity. The innovation is both about the re-articulation of the biblical and creation of new text. The Hodayot, as seen in the previous chapter, are one such example of that kind of textual innovation. Moreover, the Hodayot exemplify a collection that reflects ever growing commentary of earlier texts as a mode of reading. This collection continues the iterative practice of what I want to call a spiritual exercise through the growth of the collection. Furthermore, the Hodayot benefit from being read as an organic whole, that is intensely iterative in its composition. But in reading the Hodayot as an organic whole, we also observe that they (both as individual prayers and as a collection) collapse time in such a way that past and present and future are simultaneous with respect to creation, end time or death, and the exigencies of the present.

Textual integration through repeated idiom is part of the movement across the collection. Thus, we can trace thematic repetition across the sequence of hymns as a kind of spiritual practice. We see in that repetition a perfectionist aspiration in the context of describing primordial creation which is re-imagined and recontextualized. This perfectionist aspiration is a way of overcoming the angst of human mortality as the hymnist moves from the physical to the spiritual through prayer. The vocabulary is consistent, controlled, and circumscribed in the collection. I would not speak of a limited vocabulary, but rather there is a series of expressions which are repeated in the Hodayot.

To be sure, these are not fashioned as historicizing expressions of the community's self-definition, but neither are they exegetical exercises in rewriting or intertextual acrobatics. So, while we can trace the complexity and intricacy of biblical idiom, these texts nevertheless express a new and innovative articulation. This poetic innovation needs to be contextualized in a Hellenistic register along with integrated biblical idiom. My focus then is on how this collection exhibits remarkably creative readings as part of a larger process of reading and blessing,[1] which participates in a trajectory that already has an extensive precedent.

[1] I draw here on the argument of George Brooke that reading at Qumran was part of a practice of prayer and liturgy. See George J. Brooke: 'Reading, Searching and Blessing: A Functional Approach

Scriptural Vitality. Hindy Najman, Oxford University Press. © Hindy Najman 2025.
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The Hodayot cannot be said to be resolved by salvation from suffering. Rather there is an intensified struggle with the subject (or the self) which is humbled, at times even humiliated, by the protagonist's mortality, earthliness, and remoteness from God.[2] As Licht already noted in his 1957 edition, the collection of Hodayot are at their essence poetry, and are a continuation of biblical poetry. Thus he identifies the Hodayot as *shirah* (song), both in form and in their content. With respect to context, the Hodayot continue the tradition of biblical poetic spiritual self-reflection about the *nefesh*.[3]

The practice of writing and reading the Hodayot is redemptive insofar as the collection of these thanksgiving hymns concludes with a song of praise. Yet, there is no final movement beyond the need for further redemption. The unresolved suffering of the poet is expressed by the pattern of the text which continues across the entirety of the collection.

11.1 The Nature of the Collection

I maintain that they are helpfully designated as a *collection*, instead of anthology, because of the way that the organization and growth of the collection of these hymns are integrated and unified organically. Namely, the Hodayot are an assembly of prayers that are intensely iterative of idioms, themes, and expressions replete in the Hebrew Bible (especially Psalms, Job, Jeremiah, and Genesis 1–3). The unity of the Hodayot is thus both thematic and lexical. In these respects, the Hodayot collection differs from the anthologies in Psalms which exhibit unity within discrete collections, but are not thematically unified across each anthology as a whole.[4] Most importantly, unlike these anthologies, the Hodayot collection is repetitive or iterative, recycling a relatively small number of themes, numerous times in different orders. The lexical range is consistent, as are the themes. There is also significant clustering as the collection grows and is curated.[5]

to Scriptural Interpretation in the יחד', in *The Temple in Text and Tradition: A Festschrift in Honour of Robert Hayward*, ed. R. Timothy McLay (London: T&T Clark, 2015), pp. 140–56.

[2] See Hermann Lichtenberger, *Studien zum Menschenbild in Texten der Qumrangemeinde* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), pp. 73–94, 181–4; Carol A. Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space: Constructing Identity and Community at Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

[3] Jacob Licht, *The Thanksgiving Scroll: A Scroll from the Wilderness of Judaea* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1957).

[4] For a similar argument about Proverbs as a unified whole in light of its repetition of themes and lexical range, see Bernd Schipper discussion in his commentary, 'The composition of Proverbs 1-9', in *Proverbs 1-15*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2019) pp. 45–60; idem, *The Hermeneutics of Torah* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021), pp. 309–15.

[5] See Carol A. Newsom's new work 'A Farewell to the Hodayot of the Community', *DSD* 28, no. 1 (2021): pp. 1–10, doi:10.1163/15685179–bja10002; and 'Genesis 1–3 and the Formation of Subjectivity in the Hodayot and the Two Spirits Teaching', *DSD* 28, no. 3 (2021): pp. 283–98, doi:10.1163/15685179-bja10028. This pattern is very familiar in collections of epigrams. In these we see loosely chronological

The cycle seems never-ending. I take this repetition to participate in a perfectionist aspiration that grows out of the reflection of the protagonist (as individual and as community) on the human condition. The repetition of the various phrases and stages of the self creates a momentum towards improvement and transformation. Thus, while each hymn participates in the larger philosophical reflection on the state of the human being and his or her potential for overcoming darkness or lowliness. Additionally, there is a further dimension of perfection throughout the repetitive nature of the collection.

The integrated nature of the poems and how they repeat themselves across the collection is deserving of attention. That is, we find repetition of individual themes even though the features of that pattern of overcoming humiliation and the praise of the deity, etc., as the order of the sequence varies within individual hymns. In particular, there is ongoing reflection on primordial creation (often with the invocation of texts such as Genesis 1 and 2–3), and also a mindful reflection of the primordial discussions of texts such as Job and Psalm 104. But part of this creation language involves the description of the origin of humanity through the lowliness of the human. Furthermore, the never-ending cycle which works towards overcoming that humiliation only results in a reminder once again of the limitations of the human being. The therapeutic and liturgical work involved in overcoming humiliation through blessing God comes to create the conditions for improvement. Thus the protagonist can move from a state of lowliness to a position of prayer and overcoming humiliation. This comes to be essential to the collection of hymns. Through the recognition of the deity and the acknowledgement of God as creator and as all-powerful, it becomes possible to aspire to a next or a new self in the context of prayer and blessing.

What is essential here are the parts of the whole, as an integrated expression of blessing after overcoming the self, which is at times articulated through a lowly or carnal past self, at others by the language of repentance, transformation, or even purification. At each performance, the human being is elevated and differentiated from the rest of humanity. This sequence (even in its variegated form) cultivates knowledge, understanding, and through understanding a higher level of self, i.e. what it is to be human.

11.2 Emerging Biblical Theology and Scripturalization

These repeated themes across the Hodayot are conceptual. They concern fundamental features of the divine-human relationship. Although of course the themes are hardly new, the Hodayot constitute a sustained focus on the relationship

structures with obsessive repetition of themes and figures (in private conversation with Irene Peirano Garrison).

between God and the human, which makes the Hodayot one of the first works in Hebrew that we can speak of as biblical theology.[6]

The collection is contemporaneous with some of the latest editing and writing that is retrospectively part of the biblical canon of the Hebrew Bible, but also forms a bridge with early Jewish and Christian liturgical developments.[7] This is yet another way in which we can think about a forward-moving trajectory. The Hodayot as collection participate in what we would call *both* the biblical and extra-biblical as it looks back towards earlier biblical precedents but also paves the way for new pathways for the performative and liturgical expression of human essence, and liturgical imagination. The Hodayot thus vitalize and revitalize biblical traditions through liturgical idioms which are heavily scripturalized. On this point, Judith Newman writes:

> In turning to consideration of the renewed covenant in 1QH[a], we should observe their general character as heavily scripturalized, and indeed, given their ongoing use by the community, they can be characterized as scripturalizing. That is to say, they both draw on scriptural language in their composition, but also in their use in ongoing performances, and become authoritative scripts themselves.[8]

It is essential for understanding the Hodayot to consider the role of inheritance, transformation, and transmission of these liturgical expressions as theological and philological innovations. While interpretative dimensions have been emphasized, many readers of the Hodayot have become distracted by a discourse of intertextuality and exegesis. I maintain that it is not fundamentally or only an interpretative text—that is, it should not be reduced to a collection concerned with exegesis. As I argued earlier, the text is replete with biblical language and themes, but this collection is not only an interpretation, and neither should it be reduced to intertextual allusion. Rather, the Hodayot build up a new theological framework as an extension and expansion of the biblical and of the exegetical. This particular expression of innovation and new reading belongs under the aegis of vitality.

[6] Here I want to build on the challenge of George J. Brooke in his essay: 'Aspects of the Theological Significance of Prayer and Worship in the Qumran Scrolls', in *Prayer and Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature: Essays in Honor of Eileen Schuller on the Occasion of Her 65th Birthday*, ed. Jeremy Penner et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 35–54.

[7] See Bakker, 'Early Configurations of Jewish Prayer'.

[8] Judith H. Newman, 'Covenant Renewal and Transformative Scripts in the Performance of the Hodayot and 2 Corinthians', in *Jesus, Paulus, und die Texte von Qumran*, ed. Jörg Frey and Enno Edzard Popkes (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), pp. 300.

11.3 Hermeneutical Turn

One might ask whether the Hodayot hymns should indeed be read as 'climactic', progressing on a ladder to the so-called 'self-glorification hymn'.[9] Or, whether one can also argue for a cyclical structure, in which the hymn close to the end is not the final stage. I will not tackle this question head-on but approach it through a survey of the descriptions of transformation as an overarching principle in the Hodayot. I will consider how the discourse of the emergence of the self and transformation participates in a broader spiritual practice of reflection on human frailty and the possibility of improvement towards a next self in a perfectionist model. My question is whether there is a perceivable development across the collection—which would require a reading of the entire Hodayot as making up a manicured whole, or even an assembled collection. Or whether each individual hymn or hymnic section can also be considered in its own right.

Instead of focusing on the teacher hymns or the community hymns, I want to read the Hodayot collection as a unity, consisting of hymns, or even parts of hymns, that generally share features with other hymns, which constitute building blocks that run across the collection. Those building blocks consist of shared language, shared concepts, and literary forms, which together form what we now call the Hodayot as a collection.[10] This collection can be read as an integrated meditation on the possibility of an emerging self and the ever-aspiring nature of the human towards the creator. This impossibility of ultimate fulfilment does not mitigate the ever-aspiring self within the Hodayot to attempt to arrive at the next point of achievement. The reading of the Hodayot does not presuppose an absolute order or singular improvement towards a goal. I do maintain however that through the current assembly, the iterative nature indeed creates a powerful dimension of growth and improvement. I consider the collection as ancient Jewish prayer which can contribute to our understanding of the history of Jewish prayer and early biblical interpretation of this period in the context of communities that we can identify in sites such as Qumran and Masada.

The Hodayot are full of dynamic and creative poetic new readings which betray both the intricate readings of biblical traditions especially from Job, Genesis 1–3, but also Jeremiah and Isaiah, as well as exhibiting philosophical interests. Hodayot's structured and fluid, but also integrated composition, suggests a developed and sophisticated thinking about creation, acquisition of knowledge, and human essence. The collection points to a philosophically minded spiritual practice which involves repentance, blessing, and *paideia*.

[9] The so-called Self-Glorification Hymn exists in two recensions: 4Q427 7 i and 4Q491c (= 4Q491 11).

[10] The direction of this argument is intended as an alternative to the critique I offer earlier in this book to historicism and positivism with respect to textual criticism and the reconstruction of originary moments as a goal.

There is a need for a hermeneutical turn in biblical studies in order to develop a way of reading the Hebrew Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls that takes into account the ambiguities that its authors and redactors produced. The emergence and growth of biblical traditions is illuminated by considering collection, hermeneutics, and composition. Early in Part I, I mentioned the work of Peter Szondi, who was helpful in thinking about dynamic philology and ongoing composition. Here I find it useful to think about a dynamic collection, as we find in the Hodayot, with what Peter Szondi called 'poetic processes'.[11] It is a mode of philology as hermeneutics that both presupposes the rigors of etymology and grammar but moves beyond that mode by applying it to a practice of reading which is intricate and interweaving with respect to the work, or corpus, or even epic. The goal then is to understand an organic whole (not a canonical whole) and thus pave the way to a new mode of critical reading.

One thing that Szondi can do is to help us appreciate the wholeness of a corpus, but not in such a way that we forget that texts from Jewish antiquity have compositional complexity and history. This is equally relevant to works such as Psalms or Proverbs—as anthologies of prayers or wisdom sayings. To understand the growth of a corpus as generative is to resist the scholarly tendencies to reduce the parts to an original whole (if that is even recoverable). So, whether the parts are smaller units, historical layers, or intertexts, the work of the reader and the scholar (collector and composer) in antiquity, is connected up with the creative and incisive work of the scholar (philologist and exegete) in modernity.

Such processes can be studied as a way of understanding textual unity as well as the composition of new authoritative writings in antiquity. Overall, through reflecting on practices of reading and the dynamic and vital form of textual emergence and extension, one can begin to understand how, through interpreting and critical evaluation, new approaches to philology surface. This is an approach which reflects on new composition as performance, as creative and innovative composition, and as the growth of biblical tradition itself, an expansion which redefines this period as a central flashpoint for biblical growth and vitality.

Peter Szondi is particularly productive for thinking about philological practices and the ways in which his work performs a kind of hermeneutics: attending to the related intricacies and cross-pollination of language across what he would call a work that is authored by a single person. For example, two of his case studies are Hölderlin or Celan. For the Hodayot, it is not about single-person authorship, but rather about a collection of hymns that constitute a unified whole. Szondi's account of philology both presupposes the rigors of philology, but also moves beyond that mode by applying it to a practice of reading which is intricate and interweaving for the work, corpus, or epic to which he is applied. His work is deeply indebted to the

[11] Peter Szondi, *On Textual Understanding and Other Essays,* trans. Harvey Mendelsohn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

historical context but with an eye towards what makes a text dynamic to itself and its reading community. The processes of reading are dynamic and vital practice. This is within and beyond the text through readers, auditors, and the response that work demands of its readers. Hence the notion of life after text, or even the continuation of a textual tradition in the context of a rereading and the work of interpretation is essential to understanding what is alive in writing.

Szondi's critique of the deadening effects of a linear or backwards-looking philology is both devastating but also timely for his work and mission. The texts are alive for him, and the hope is nevertheless present across his philosophical hermeneutics. This is a vitality that is also present in the hermeneutical and dynamic work of the poetry of the Hodayot. On this model, poetry and philology are construed so that we do not lose sight of the text in its largest form but also in its interrelatedness to itself. In that sense, Szondi is a helpful conversation partner for this book on vitality. The texts we have considered in this book are ever-emerging and dynamic entities.

Postscript

Philology needs to go hand in hand with reading, writing, and editing. I mean by these terms various practices, connected to the emergence of new text, nothing less than the history of interpretation. To adapt Kant: historical linguistics without a history of interpretation is empty; history of interpretation without historical linguistics is blind.[1] History of interpretation without historical linguistics (or more generally a narrower definition of philology) is blind because it cannot tell what it has before it, what the linguistic uses and abuses are. But philology without the history of interpretation is empty because it is unclear what the significance of linguistic use or abuse is. That is, unless philology is situated within an account of what readers, writers, and editors are doing, of what they are trying to withstand, and of how they are trying to insist on the resistance and persistence of their language and culture.

Philology needs to be grounded both philosophically and also literarily so that one does not lose sight of the text in its largest form as well as in its interrelatedness to itself.[2] Once we understand what it is that Szondi means by a work and its wholeness (in history and in its poetic whole), then we can also begin to understand what it means to speak of the life or vitality beyond the text. Or, in other words, how the text perpetuates itself through compositional and growing practices.

This was an urgent discourse for Szondi in the 1960s as it was for Scholem or, earlier for Benjamin. For Szondi, the hope of which he spoke (breaking the silence about the Holocaust and Nazification of the academy) was muted. It was urgent for reasons of destruction and paralysis in the 1960s. Szondi writes about Walter Benjamin:

> Benjamin's new conception of history is rooted in the dialectic of future and past of messianic expectation and remembrance.[3]

[1] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A51/B75: 'Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind'.

[2] Constanze Güthenke, *Feeling and Classical Philology: Knowing Antiquity in German Scholarship, 1770–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[3] Peter Szondi, 'Hope in the Past: On Walter Benjamin', trans. Harvey Mendelsohn, *CI* 4, no. 3 (Spring 1978): pp. 157, doi:10.1086/447949.

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I argue here that it is equally urgent for the academy today when we need to fight for the relevance of our discipline. But even more, it is essential that alongside arguing for our relevance, we critically reflect on our disciplines.

Adorno may have been right at the time when he said that it would be barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz. But that was *immediately* after the rupture of the Holocaust. Not only did he come to see that non-barbaric poetry was still possible, but his statement served as a challenge to poetry, which needed to find new forms or new ways of using old forms. We still live with this challenge, more than 75 years later. Szondi is also struggling with these questions, but he does so with a different path. Szondi's conception of philology was also rooted in the future and the past, but he did so in the presence of a collection or a work. This work is complex and situated within time, but its impact is over time with a new enlivening present through rereading.

Reading for Szondi is a wonderful model for understanding practices of reading in ancient Judaism. Reading for Szondi is about understanding the inter-relational dimensions of a work, not as a work only of the past, but rather as one that is life-giving to itself through internal conversation and its afterlife as a read and interpreted text. This is achieved through the preparation of a critical edition, the study of etymology, its relevance to otherness, and ultimately to the legacy of reading again. To quote from Szondi:

> Philological knowledge possesses a dynamic aspect that is peculiarly its own. This is not simply because, like every other kind of knowledge, it is constantly being altered by new points of view and new findings, but because it can exist, in the first place, only through constantly confronting texts, only through constantly referring knowledge (*Wissen*) back to its source in cognition (*Erkenntnis*), that is to say, by relating it to the understanding (*Verstehen*) of the poetic word.[4]

If we are to understand the authority of Scripture and other religiously privileged corpora then, we must seek to understand the generative vitality of these texts, and this requires us to cross the boundaries between so-called canonical texts and the marginal texts to which they inevitably give rise. This is precisely what Szondi is referring to when he signals that constant (perpetual) confronting of a text through understanding.

Part of what we want to consider is how texts are heard and read, as well as performed and experienced. In these reflections on philology, we want to build a path between philology and philosophical hermeneutics. Part of Szondi's point here is that philological *Wissen*, *Erkenntnis*, and *Verstehen* are quite closely tied together, if not identical. The consequences of this identification are significant: philological

[4] Peter Szondi, *On Textual Understanding and Other Essays*, trans. Harvey Mendelsohn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 5.

knowledge for Szondi is not knowledge *about* texts (as a 'scientific' understanding of philology would have it), but the knowledge that emerges *from* texts—from the continuous engagement with language, and specifically, poetic language. That is, he understands *philology as hermeneutics* as the science of interpretation. This identity is not at all obvious: much of what we often call 'philology', at least in classics and biblical studies, is concerned with establishing texts and their basic meaning, and is contrasted with the 'criticism' that is concerned with interpreting them. We all pay lip service to the idea that these two activities should be in close dialogue, but there remains broadly a division of labour between them, and an ontological event, what we call 'philological' work. Szondi's point is that interpretation is at the core of all philological practice.

What do we mean by hermeneutics? Answering, again, is the tendency to read through a model of intertextuality because it is not a mode of reading, rather a mode of fragmentation.[5] I have offered a different answer. I have considered how new integration works in the context of reading. Thus, I have continued to push back on the impulse to reduce the core of a text or tradition to its originary moment. Here the impulse to get at the dissected parts of a collection or a text is to unread it or to work against understanding. To atomize our texts and to try to find the original or the early or the 'author' or text is not always the most productive path for reading. Furthermore, it can at times work against the very practices and the dynamic and perpetuating dimensions of philology that we want to think about, for example with Szondi and his notion of poetic processes.

With an eye towards the interpretative and linguistic play with a series of theurgic, redemptive, and narratological studies, we can see texts being reread within the very text itself. It also goes beyond itself insofar as it will continue in the afterlife of the text through its embeddedness in later writers and through the history of scholarship, through its new editions, the discovery of new fragments, and new engagements with discourses of location: heavenly, earthly, liminal, and cosmic. What is important to this discussion with respect to philology as hermeneutics is that the practices of philology can be used to trace the lines of composition and emerging new readings (in scholarly, poetic, and philosophical or theological engagements). Our responsibilities as scholars are urgent and sensitive. In our times, the work of the philologist must be as mindful of the future as we are of the past.

To understand vitality is to understand the various ways in which Judaism reimagines itself through various expressions of writing, imagining, and performance. These expressions are the life and breath of Judaism in antiquity and beyond. What we have traced in the three parts of the book are the various ways in which

[5] By way of contrast see Ishay Rosen-Zvi in his afterword to the Hebrew translation of Boyarin's *Intertextuality:* Ishay Rosen-Zvi, 'Afterword to the Hebrew Translation' (Hebrew), in Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*, ed. E. Reiner (Jerusalem: Shalom Hartman Institute, 2011), pp. 273–86.

new writings across the Hellenistic period re-animate earlier scriptural traditions in ways that exemplify distinctive creativity, innovation, and a profound engagement with the world of Hellenism. As I discussed in the preface, we see a dynamic vitality throughout these texts which I find recalled in Kandinsky's piece on the cover of this book. Like Kandinsky's artwork, we see in this literature a wild creativity and openness to pluriformity, yet we also see careful precision and philosophical thinking.

Thus, we have considered how vitality in the context of the Hellenistic period is manifest through innovative interpretation, articulation of the law, and the development of concepts that reflect engagement and integration of Greek philosophical thinking. We explored how philosophical, sapiential, and liturgical texts from the Hellenistic period reflected thoughts about nature, knowledge, and a heavenly paradigm for the organization of the cosmos and the world. The rethinking of these aspects of ancient Jewish texts speaks to the vital and transformative ways in which the world and the heavens are reconceived in the intermingling of Greek and Jewish thinking in this period. It is precisely this rich and variegated convergence of Greek and Hebrew tradition, in which immersion occurred in the communities of Jews in the Hellenistic period.

This book has explored how vitality is expressed in ancient Jewish thinking during the Hellenistic period. It is a study of philology and the study of manuscript traditions; philosophical thinking; and the importance and centrality of innovation and creativity with respect to scriptural traditions. Overall, the book is dedicated to overcoming thick biases that are embedded in our field of biblical studies with respect to supersessionism, the privileging of an original and early expression of a tradition, and the dismissing of the Hellenistic period as late Judaism.

The goal of this volume is not to focus on what is missing from our discipline but rather to highlight and integrate the contributions of literature and imagination during the Hellenistic period to the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism, and Judaism in antiquity more broadly. I cannot emphasize enough that the discoveries of the scrolls from the region of the Dead Sea are a profound contribution to this new perspective on the history of Judaism. The Hellenistic period is one of innovative thinking, poetic imagination, and expansion of text and tradition. The work of integration of texts from this period has only begun to infiltrate the way we think about Judaism and Jewish thought, from antiquity until the present day.

Hermeneutics is at the essence of the vitality of Judaism from its earliest inception until the present day. This is a book committed to thinking about the dynamic between the oral and the written as the tradition grows through the performance, meditation, and study of traditions. It is a celebration of new textual findings as well as established and known texts. However, it is also a book that problematizes central tenets of the field of biblical studies which we have inherited so that we might ask ourselves what we are transmitting and repeating in our own teaching and scholarship.

The goal is thus to offer new perspectives and orientations for the study of biblical texts so that we can see trajectories that are exposed due to new findings. These findings across the past century help us understand the formation of Scripture, the interpretative genius, and the ongoing production of new texts, rituals, and understandings of the transforming and emerging traditions of Judaism.

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