The Hebrew Bible

A CRITICAL COMPANION

Edited by
John Barton

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The Narrative Books of the Hebrew Bible

Thomas Römer

THE NARRATIVE BOOKS: AN OVERVIEW

There is almost no doctrine in the Hebrew Bible (HB) or Old Testament (OT) but a lot of narration. Statistically around half of its content is narrative. The first part of the HB/OT, the Torah or Pentateuch, can be read as an ongoing narrative starting with the creation of the world and ending with the death of Moses. The reader can easily perceive a will to organize the narration as a chronological sequence, a succession of different periods: the time of the origins of the world and humanity (Gen. 1–11) is followed by the era of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 12–36). The story of Joseph's descent to Egypt and his rise as second to the Egyptian king (Gen. 37–50) offers a transition to the next episode, the deliverance of the Israelites through Moses from Egyptian oppression (Exod. 1–15). After the exodus begins the time of the Israelites' sojourn in the wilderness and God's revelation on Mount Sinai, which constitutes the very center of the Pentateuch. All the legislation as well as the instructions for the construction of the mobile sanctuary are embedded in the second half of the book of Exodus, the whole book of Leviticus, and the first part of Numbers (Exod. 20–Num. 9). In the middle of the Torah the narration is thus interrupted by different collections containing legal, ritual, and ethical prescriptions. However, all these collections are reworked in such a way that they fit into the narrative framework. The instructions for the construction of the sanctuary and its building are interrupted by the narrative of Israel's first apostasy (the golden calf story in Exod. 32–34), and inside the book of Leviticus the narration of the illegitimate sacrifice presented by two sons of the first priest Aaron (Lev. 10) illustrates the danger of not respecting the sacrificial ritual. The narration continues in the book of Numbers,

reporting the time of Israel's wandering in the desert, which is presented as a time of ongoing revolts against Yhwh (Yahweh[1]), Moses, and Aaron. Because of this behavior the adult generation has to die in the wilderness (Num. 10–20), but they are finally able to conquer territory in Transjordan before arriving on the plain of Moab (Num. 21–36), where Moses delivers his last speech to Israel before he dies without entering the land. He is, however, buried by Yhwh himself and proclaimed to be forever the incomparable mediator (Deut. 34).

Again, in Deuteronomy, the narration includes a very long—sometimes interrupted—speech in which Moses recapitulates episodes from the time in the wilderness and also announces coming events such as the crossing of the River Jordan, the conquest of the land, the institution of monarchy, and the possible exile in case of disobedience to the divine Law. That means that despite the canonical distinction between the Torah (Pentateuch) and the Prophets (which in the HB comprises the "Former Prophets," the so-called historical books, and the "Latter Prophets," the prophetic books), the narration goes on until the book of Kings. The book of Joshua takes up where Deuteronomy has ended: Yhwh confirms Joshua as Moses's successor and grants him victory over the inhabitants of the Promised Land, which can therefore be conquered and distributed among the Israelite tribes. At the end of the book Joshua delivers two speeches that conclude the times of the conquest. The statement that a new generation arose, who did not know Joshua anymore and therefore turned away from Yhwh, worshipping other gods (Judg. 2), introduces the next period, the time of the "judges" or saviors. This era is depicted as a time of Israel's continuous forsaking of its God. Each time Yhwh punishes his people by sending enemies who oppress them, but then the Israelites invoke him again, so that he sends saviors to deliver them. But when the savior dies, apostasy starts again. The time of the judges is therefore depicted as a cyclic one. The cycle ends in the book of Samuel with the figure of Samuel, who is presented as the last judge but also as a prophet through whom Yhwh will give Israel its first king, Saul. After several different stories about the establishment of the Israelite monarchy (1 Sam. 8–12), Samuel also pronounces a speech in which he presents the opportunities and dangers for Israel to live under the reign of a king (1 Sam. 12). This speech opens the time of Israel's first kings (Saul, David, Solomon), which concludes with Solomon's construction

of the Jerusalemite Temple, on the occasion of which he announces the possible deportation of the people in later days (1 Kings 8).

Solomon's death starts a new era, the time of the two kingdoms, Judah in the south and Israel in the north. The narration here alternates episodes dealing with the situation in the north (Israel) with episodes from the south (Judah). It focuses on the good and mostly bad behavior of the kings but also includes stories of prophets, such as Elijah and Elisha. Since Jeroboam, the first king of the north, founds competing sanctuaries to Jerusalem in Bethel and Dan in which Yhwh is worshipped in the form of a calf (1 Kings 12), the northern kingdom is strongly criticized by the narrators. The destruction of Samaria and Israel's incorporation into the Assyrian Empire are therefore presented as the result of Yhwh's anger against the northern kings (2 Kings 17). The last episode of the narration (2 Kings 18–25) concerns the remaining kingdom of Judah, in which King Josiah undertakes a religious reform. But this reform cannot prevent the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple by the Babylonians as well as the deportation of King Jehoiachin and parts of the Judaean upper class to Babylon. The narration ends in 2 Kings 25 with a short note about the improvement of Jehoiachin's situation in Babylon: he is admitted at the table of the Babylonian king. The narrative clearly comes to an end since the following book, according to the order of the HB, Isaiah, brings the reader back to the situation of the time of the two kingdoms.

It has therefore been argued that one should speak of an "Enneateuch" (Greek *ennea* = "nine"), a narrative unit binding together the five books of the Torah and the four of the Former Prophets (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings). One may observe indeed a narrative continuity that covers the whole time span from the loss of Paradise to the loss of the land, or from the exile out of the garden to the exile out of the Promised Land. However, one needs to explain why, despite this continuity, the books of Genesis to Deuteronomy have been considered as a separate unit, the Torah, distinct from the books of Joshua to Kings that constitute now the first part of the *Nebiim*, the Prophets.

Even the large narrations of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets can easily be recognized as composite units, a combination of former independent narrations. It is quite clear that the stories about the creation

of the world and the Flood once existed independently of the patriarchal narratives. And it is also quite plausible that the Abraham narratives were not linked from the very beginning to the Jacob narratives. Further, the Joseph story is so different in style and theology that one may also think that it was conceived as an autonomous novella. The Exodus story was certainly also told in the beginning without the stories of the book of Genesis. In the Former Prophets, the conquest stories were originally not followed by the savior narratives in the book of Judges. The narratives in Samuel and Kings were originally not related with the stories about the conquest and the judges. Thus, the so-called Enneateuch is the result of a long and complex process implying different groups of scribes and redactors.

Besides the Enneateuch, the Old Testament contains more narratives. The book of Chronicles recounts the books of Genesis–Kings in a very different way, by summarizing the time from the origins to the beginning of monarchy through genealogies. The time of the monarchy is here related in quite a different manner than in the books of Samuel and Kings. Contrary to Kings, Chronicles does not end with the destruction of Jerusalem and the reign of the Babylonians but, rather, with the arrival of the Persian king Cyrus, who defeated the Babylonians. The end of Chronicles is an exhortation of Cyrus to the Judaean exiles to go back to Jerusalem and to rebuild the Temple (2 Chron. 36:22–23). The story about the restoration of Jerusalem is continued in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The book of Ezra opens where 2 Chronicles ends, with the edict of Cyrus, and then recounts the rebuilding of the Temple and the publication of the Law brought by Ezra from Babylon, whereas the book of Nehemiah relates the difficult reconstruction of the city wall as well as the reading of the Law.

The canon of the HB, and the Protestant OT, which comprises the same books as the HB, contains a number of other narrative books. Among the prophetic books, Jonah is more a narrative than a classical prophetic book. It narrates the story of a reluctant prophet who finally understands that God can change his mind and act differently by not realizing the prophetic oracles. The book of Daniel, which belongs in the Hebrew canon to the *Ketubim* (Writings) and in the Christian canons to the Prophets, contains in its first part (Dan. 1–6) a "court tale" about the dangers and triumphs of young Daniel and his friends living in exile in

Babylon. The books of Esther and Ruth are two novellas about heroic women. The book of Ruth has a rural setting and narrates how a Moabite woman became the ancestor of King David. The book of Esther tells the story of how a Jewish girl planned to become the wife of the Persian king in order to save the Jews living in the Diaspora from mortal danger.

The OT of the Roman Catholic Church contains more narrative books (which in many Protestant Bibles are printed as "apocryphal" or "deuterocanonical" books). The book of Judith again tells the story of a heroic woman who saves her people by killing a (fictional) Assyrian king. The book of Tobit is again a Diaspora tale. Like Judith the story is placed in the Assyrian period and recounts two parallel stories about the pious Tobit and his son Tobias, who, with the help of the angel Raphael, is able to exorcise a demon that threatens a young girl, who will become Tobias's spouse at the end. Finally, the first and second books of Maccabees narrate the fight of Judas Maccabeus ("the hammer") and his descendants against the hellenization of Judaea.

THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVES IN THEIR ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CONTEXT

Narratives are universal; they make it possible to entertain an audience, to teach, to legitimate or to criticize, to create cohesion among a group, and so on. In ancient times, many narratives were not the work of individual authors; they were first transmitted orally before they were written down. Thus one should be careful when comparing biblical narratives with modern novels as is done sometimes in "narrative criticism." The biblical stories were transmitted anonymously; no narrative book of the Hebrew Bible is signed. Biblical literature is not a literature of authors but a literature made up from tradition. The same holds true for narratives from ancient Mesopotamia and the Levant. From time to time we have the name of a scribe, who indicates at the end that he copied or wrote down the text, but he never presents himself as the author. As in ancient Israel and Judah, narratives played a major role in everyday life but also among elites and at the court. The major difference between the biblical narratives and the narrative material we know from the Levant and Mesopotamia is that the biblical narratives were canonized and

transmitted as "Holy Scriptures," whereas the ancient Near Eastern texts, although some of them had an "official" status, did not become part of a "holy book" and disappeared before being rediscovered in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by archaeologists. That also means that we have most of these narratives only in a fragmentary form; but in many cases we can reconstruct the sense of the stories despite the gaps.

The most popular narrative in the ancient Near East was undoubtedly the epic of Gilgamesh.[2] This epic is very important not only because of its content but also because of the history of its composition, which parallels in a certain sense the history of the formation of some of the biblical narrative material. The oldest written documents about Gilgamesh are tablets from the early second millennium BCE written in Sumerian. These tablets do not belong to one coherent narrative but are independent tales that focus on different exploits of a hero called Gilgamesh. In the second half of the second millennium the Gilgamesh tradition became very popular, and the different stories were combined into an epic. At the end of the second millennium a scribe named Shin-leqi-unninni organized the epic on twelve tablets and gave it more or less its standard form, in which it was recopied during the first centuries of the first millennium and found in the library of the Assyrian king Assurbanipal. The Babylonians, who succeeded the Assyrians, considered Shin-leqi-unninni the "author" of the epic. In fact, he probably recopied an older text, but he also introduced major changes and added new passages, such as the prologue and the epic's end, and probably also an abbreviation of the Flood myth, thus recasting a poem that originally told about the glorious deed of a mighty king into a meditation on the fragility and difficulty of the human condition.

The standard version of the poem presents Gilgamesh, the mighty king of Uruk (located in present-day Iraq), as being two-thirds divine and one-third human. But the mighty Gilgamesh is alone, and therefore the inhabitants ask the gods to create someone like him, a vis-à-vis. The goddess Aruru creates with clay a being named Enkidu. But he is not a real human yet: he lives with the animals and behaves like an animal, until he encounters the prostitute Shamhat and has sex with her. After that, the animals abandon him, and he becomes a human; according to the poem, he had acquired reason (I, 201–2). Shamhat introduces Enkidu to Gilgamesh, and they become inseparable friends or even lovers. Gilgamesh is prepared for this encounter by his dreams, which his mother explains to him as meaning that he will meet someone who will be his "equal" (I, 256–58 and 283–85). Both friends accomplish a heroic exploit by killing the mighty Humbaba, guardian of a mysterious cedar forest. After their return Ishtar, the goddess of sexuality, offers herself to Gilgamesh, but he refuses. Furious, she wants to kill him in revenge by dispatching the Bull of Heaven—the constellation Taurus—but Enkidu and Gilgamesh are able to kill the bull. In order to punish Gilgamesh, the gods decide that his counterpart Enkidu has to die.

After Enkidu's death, Gilgamesh undertakes a dangerous journey to the end of the world because he wants to encounter Utnapishti, the hero of the Flood, to whom, together with his wife, the gods gave immortality. Gilgamesh assumes that Utnapishti knows the remedy against death. Before arriving at this place, which no human being can normally reach, Gilgamesh comes to a mysterious garden full of precious stones (very similar to those of the garden described in Ezek. 28) in which he encounters a woman, named Shiduri, a tavern keeper by the edge of the ocean, the waters of Death, which Gilgamesh has to cross. Shiduri already tells him that death is the destiny of mankind and that he should enjoy life (Fragment Meissner iii, 1–13), a piece of advice that comes very close to a passage in the biblical book of Qoheleth (9, 7–10). However, Shiduri helps Gilgamesh to meet Utnapishti, who tells him the whole story of the Flood and confirms that the gods have decided that death is the destiny of all humans. But pushed by his wife, Utnapishti finally reveals to Gilgamesh a mysterious plant at the bottom of the ocean, which may have the property of rejuvenation or preventing death. Gilgamesh is able to find this plant, but on his way home, when he is taking a bath, a serpent emerges and swallows it; after that the serpent immediately sheds its skin, a sign of its "immortality." Gilgamesh has to accept death as being part of the human condition and return to Uruk. He must learn that humans are mortal, though humankind may be immortal, through the generations that succeed each other.

This epic was largely known all over the ancient Near East, as is shown by the fragments and mentions of Gilgamesh found from Palestine to Babylon. And even in a fragment of the "book of the Giants" (a part of the book of Enoch) found at Qumran, Gilgamesh is still mentioned (4Q530, col. 2). The epic of Gilgamesh served for the training and instruction of

young men in Mesopotamia and probably also in the Levant. It seems quite obvious that the epic was known to the biblical writers, who picked up several themes and expressions from it, for instance, the role of the snake in the loss of immortality (Gen. 3), the link between sexuality and "knowledge," and the anthropological statement that a human being cannot be alone but needs a vis-à-vis (Gen. 2). The homoerotic friendship of Gilgamesh and Enkidu may have inspired the biblical story of David and Jonathan (see the elegies of Gilgamesh and David in *Gilgamesh* VIII:44–60 and 1 Sam. 1:25–27). Thus, although we have no parallel epic to Gilgamesh in the HB, the biblical writers were certainly influenced by this narrative and, consciously or subconsciously, used several themes and motifs from it.

The parallels between biblical narratives and ancient Near Eastern myths are stronger in regard to the creation and Flood stories. It is quite widely accepted that the biblical authors of the two creation accounts in Gen. 1:1–2:3 and of Gen. 2:4–3:24 were familiar with the Babylonian accounts of Athrahasis and Enuma Elish. *Athrahasis* (The Very Wise One) is a diptych telling of the creation of human beings and the Flood story.[3] More than twenty copies of this epic exist; the oldest can be dated to the seventeenth century BCE, but the epic was still popular in the Neo-Babylonian period (sixth century BCE). It explains the creation of human beings as a means for the minor gods to avoid having to work for the more important gods. One of the minor gods is killed, and his blood is mixed with clay in order to create humans. But the gods do not appreciate the multiplication of the humans or their noise and decide to annihilate them with a flood. The god Ea, however, warns the pious Athrahasis, who builds a huge boat, by which he saves his family and the animals. After the Flood Athrahasis offers a sacrifice, which marks the reconciliation between humans and the gods, who, however, invent different means to reduce the multiplication of humankind (infertility, stillbirths, sexual abstinence for certain women).

Enuma Elish (named after its beginning, "When above . . .") was a very popular myth relating the creation of the world and humankind, since more than sixty copies have been discovered.[4] The oldest date from the beginning of the first millennium BCE, many manuscripts come from the Neo-Assyrian period, and the epic was copied even after the fall of Babylon in 539 BCE and translated into Greek in the third century BCE.

The epic narrates the creation of the world via the victory of the god Marduk over Tiamat, a dragon or sea monster. Marduk uses her corpse in order to create heaven and earth. As in the Athrahasis epic, humankind is created by killing the god Kingu, Tiamat's ally. His blood is added to the soil, and humans are formed out of this mixture. The poem ends with the praise of Marduk as the most powerful of all gods.

It seems quite evident that the biblical creation and Flood accounts borrow from these epics. Like *Enuma Elish*, Gen. 1 tells of the creation as a "victory" of the creator god over the watery chaos (the Hebrew word *tehom* may be related to the Akkadian term *tiamat*). But unlike the Babylonian poem, in Gen. 1, there are no more traces of a fight (Pss. 74 and 89, however, still reflect the idea of a victory of Yhwh against sea monsters). In Gen. 1, man and woman are created in the "image of god," whereas in Egypt and Mesopotamia this appellation is reserved for the king, such that the biblical account could be understood as a democratization of ancient royal ideology. In Gen. 2 the creation of the first human being using clay also recalls Athrahasis and Enuma Elish. In the biblical account, no god is killed to mix his blood with the clay; note, however, that Yhwh breathes into the man's nostrils his breath or spirit, so that in Gen. 2, the humans also have something divine in them. One may even detect an allusion to the blood theme: Gen. 2 explains the name of Adam with the statement that he is made out of the *'adamah* (soil). The name *'adam* may, however, also evoke the Hebrew term for blood, *dam*.

According to the creation account in Gen. 1, the human being, as the image of God, should govern the world, like a king, and multiply. In the Athrahasis epic, the multiplication of humans is also an issue but, contrary to the Bible, an issue that the gods try to prevent. And in the version of the Flood according to the epic of Gilgamesh, we find the same idea: the Flood is considered a disproportionate means by which the gods limit the growth of humans. The two biblical versions of the Deluge, which are contained in Gen. 6–9, display an opposite concern. Even after the Flood, Yhwh exhorts Noah and his family to become numerous and multiply (Gen. 9:1 and 7). The divine command, given to humankind at the time of creation and repeated after the Flood in Gen. 1 and 9, is therefore a redefinition of the Babylonian myths. Humanity is called to multiply and fill the earth, and this fact no longer causes the wrath of the gods. This difference between Athrahasis and the biblical account

probably reflects significant economic, political, and theological changes and a different view of humanity and its destiny. The biblical writers' knowledge of the Babylonian creation and Flood epics can easily be explained by the fact that after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (587 BCE), Judaean intellectuals were deported to Babylonia, where they could easily acquire knowledge of those texts.

For the following narratives in the Pentateuch (Patriarchs, Exodus, wilderness) we have no direct parallels in the narrative material of the ancient Near East. As for the patriarchal stories, some comparable elements can be found in epics from Ugarit, a wealthy city-state during the second half of the second millennium BCE.[5] As in Gen. 12–36, the fragmentary epic of King Kirta (or Keret) is concerned with the question of offspring. The god El intervenes in order to give Kirta a son and to heal him from a dangerous illness. The figure of Danel, who is the hero of another Ugaritic myth, was certainly known by the Judaean scribes, since Danel is referred to in Ezek. 14:12–20. In the Ugaritic narrative, Danel, who is also a king, is childless. He is finally healed from his infertility by El, who gives him a son, Aqhat. But Aqhat dies very quickly, and the king is again without offspring. Since the epic is incomplete, its end is still unknown. Perhaps El intervened again in favor of Danel by restoring Aqhat to him or by giving him another son. The Abraham narratives are also very much concerned with the absence of an heir and with the danger that the living heir can be lost. Interestingly, Yhwh is identified in the patriarchal narratives with El more often than in other texts of the Pentateuch. Contrary to the Ugaritic myths, however, the patriarchs are not kings. This is a similar phenomenon as observed in the creation narrative of Gen. 1: the democratization of royal ideology. Although the Ugaritic narratives are at least five hundred years older than the biblical accounts, it is quite possible that the themes of the Ugaritic epics were still circulating in the Levant in the first half of the first millennium BCE.

As for Moses, there exists one clear extrabiblical parallel in regard to his birth account in Exod. 2: the birth legend of King Sargon, the mythical founder of the Assyrian dynasty. This text, which refers to the Sargon from the third millennium BCE, was written under Sargon II (722–705 BCE) in order to legitimate this king, who was probably a usurper.[6] Sargon and Moses are both exposed by their mothers, who are both in some way related to the priesthood. Sargon's mother is a priestess, and Moses's

mother is the daughter of Levi, the ancestor of Israel's priestly tribe. Their fathers do not intervene. Both children are set adrift on a river in a basket, found, and adopted. In both cases, the adoption alludes to royal adoption: Sargon is "loved" by Ishtar, and Moses becomes the son of Pharaoh's daughter. According to the biblical account, Moses is depicted as Israel's founder, as important as the founder of the Assyrians, Sargon. It is tempting, then, to understand the first written story about Moses to be a reaction to Neo-Assyrian royal ideology, elaborated during the seventh century BCE. The tradition about the Exodus may, however, have been older and come from an old Israelite memory, since no similar narratives can be found in the ancient Near East. There is a very fragmentary Hittite poem called "Song of Release"[7] in which a storm god demands the release of his worshippers who are kept in slavery in the city of Ebla. The elders of the city, contrary to the king, insist that they need these slaves. Unfortunately the text breaks off so that its outcome is unknown. It is, however, possible that the deity destroyed the city of Ebla and liberated his people. This text was probably unknown to the biblical scribes who put the Exodus narrative into shape. However, it shows the existence of similar motifs in the ancient Near East and illustrates that the idea of a god delivering his people is not an absolute specificity of the biblical tradition.

The conquest accounts in the book of Joshua display strong parallels with Assyrian military narratives, relating the victorious campaigns of the Assyrian kings and their armies and the intervention of the Assyrian gods against their enemies. There is an interesting parallel between a "Letter to the God" written on behalf of Sargon II and an episode from Joshua 10:10–11. The Assyrian text relates the victory of the Assyrian army thanks to an intervention of the storm god Adad. The Assyrian and the biblical texts relate a slaughter of enemies on the descent or ascent of a mountain, and both episodes are followed by divine military intervention: "The rest of the people, who had fled to save their lives ... Adad, the violent, the son of Anu, the valiant, uttered his loud cry against them; and with flood cloud and stones of heaven, he totally annihilated the remainder."[8] In a similar way, Joshua 10:11 reports: "As they fled before Israel, while they were going down the slope of Beth-Horon, Yhwh threw down huge stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died because of the hailstones than the Israelites

killed with the sword." There may be a subversive component in these parallels. Apparently the biblical writers took over the Assyrian narratives in order to show that Yhwh is indeed stronger than the Assyrians and all their gods.

The story of David's rise in the book of Samuel displays some parallels with royal legends of the ancient Near East, especially the epic of Zimri-Lîm, who in the eighteenth century BCE became king of Mari (a city-state located in Syria) after returning from a forced exile and ousting his rival. He campaigned extensively and broadened the territory of his kingdom. The inscription of King Idrimi of Alakha (a city-state located in the south of Turkey) from the fifteenth century BCE recounts how he regained kingship by rejoining the "Habiru people" in Canaan. He became their chief, and after seven years he led them to war against Alakha, where he was acclaimed king. Like the David narrative, these royal documents legitimate the rise to power of a king who first had to flee before coming back and taking the throne.

The story of the two kingdoms of Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom) resembles Assyrian and Babylonian royal chronicles.[9] However, contrary to this kind of literature, the stories about the kings of Israel and Judah are evaluated according to theological criteria, regarding fidelity or infidelity toward the god of Israel and his exclusive worship in the Jerusalemite Temple. Unlike the Mesopotamian chronicles, the books of Kings also contain an important number of prophetic narratives.

Summing up, the different narrative traditions gathered in the Enneateuch (Genesis–Kings) are not without parallels. For some of the stories, especially the creation and Flood narratives, Moses's birth story, and the conquest accounts, it seems plausible that the biblical authors took over ancient Near Eastern narratives and adapted them to their own theological agenda. Other Near Eastern narratives (such as the tales about the rise of exiled kings or the Ugaritiç material about childless kings healed by El) display similar narrative features as the biblical narratives, but the authors of Genesis or Samuel probably did not know them. The major difference between the biblical and the ancient Near Eastern narratives is the fact that the different epics, novellas, and stories in Genesis–Kings have been compiled into one meganarrative and have in a long process become "Holy Scripture."

THE FORMATION OF THE PENTATEUCHAL NARRATIVE

According to Jewish and Christian tradition, Moses was the author of the whole Pentateuch. This idea is inspired by some texts in the Torah according to which God asks Moses to write down some events or laws (Exod. 24:4; Deut. 1:1 and 4:45). But there is no biblical text that states explicitly that Moses wrote the whole Torah. Very soon some rabbis wondered whether Moses could have written down his own death. They concluded that the last verses of the Torah were added later by Joshua, Moses's successor (this idea can be found in a passage of the Talmud, a compilation containing rabbinic discussions of the Pentateuch, *Baba Bathra* 12[10]). This theory was in a certain way the beginning of the critical investigation of the Torah.[11] In the seventeenth century, the philosopher Baruch Spinoza, in his *Theologico-political Treatise* (1670), claimed that Moses could not be the author of the Pentateuch, since the narration that starts in Genesis does not come to an end in Deuteronomy but continues in the books of Joshua to Kings, so that the author of the story must have lived after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. For a long time the denial of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was considered to be a heresy (Spinoza was ejected from his synagogue), and only in the eighteenth century did a critical and scientific investigation about the formation of the Pentateuch find its place in (Protestant) faculties of theology.

A critical investigation of the Pentateuchal narrative revealed an important number of contradictions, tensions, and repetitions: for example, there are two different creation accounts in Gen. 1:1–2:3 and 2:4–3:21. In the first account, man and woman are created at the same time, whereas in Gen. 2, Adam is created first, then the animals, and only then the woman. There are also indications that Gen. 6–9 combine two originally separate Flood accounts. According to Gen. 7:15, Noah introduces onto the ark one pair of every kind of animal, whereas in Gen 7:2 he takes seven pairs of all clean animals and one pair of the unclean animals. According to Gen. 4:26, the name of Yhwh was known to all humans from the very beginning, whereas according to Exod. 6:2–3, God reveals his name only at the time of Moses. There are also an important number of repetitions: in the patriarchal narrative, the story of a patriarch presenting his wife as his sister because he fears being killed by the foreign

king is told three times (Gen. 12:10–20, Gen. 20, Gen. 26:1–14), and the call of Moses is repeated twice (Exod. 3:1–4:18 and Exod. 6). These observations led to the establishment of a "Documentary hypothesis," which was first envisaged by a French physician, Jean Astruc, in 1753. His aim was to save the Mosaic authenticity of the Pentateuch by claiming that Moses had two different documents at his disposal, the first using the divine name "elohim" (god) and the second using "Jehova" (as Astruc, with many others, pronounced the name Yhwh). This observation was the base of a scholarly theory that became dominant in biblical research from the end of the nineteenth century until the 1970s and which is still used by many scholars, especially in North America.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Dutch scholar Abraham Kuenen and his German colleague Julius Wellhausen gave this model a widely accepted form. The formation of the Pentateuch was explained in the following way: The Torah results from the compilation of three formerly independent and parallel sources or documents and the addition of a fourth document, the book of Deuteronomy. The oldest sources were the Yahwist (in German "J," because the author of this document mostly uses "Yahweh" when referring to the god of Israel) and the Elohist ("E," because of the document's preference for the term *elohim*—god). J and E were dated to the time of the monarchy—J sometimes even under the reign of Solomon (according to Gerhard von Rad), and E in the eighth century BCE, often in the northern kingdom. Already in the beginning of the nineteenth century Wilhelm M. L. de Wette located the original form of the book of Deuteronomy ("D") at the time of the religious reform of King Josiah, around 622 BCE, because his cult centralization (Jerusalem was declared the only legitimate Yahwistic sanctuary, and all non-Yahwistic cultic symbols in Jerusalem and Judah were destroyed) corresponds to the requirements of the book of Deuteronomy. The last of the four documents is the so-called Priestly source ("P"), which was written by priests after the destruction of Jerusalem during the time of the Babylonian exile (587–539 BCE) or at the beginning of the Persian period (539–515).

Thus, according to the Documentary hypothesis, the Pentateuch is the result of the bringing together of three parallel narrative documents from different times and the adjunction of the book of Deuteronomy. One may imagine this procedure as if several redactors or compilers

wanted to unite the three synoptic gospels (Mark, Matthew, and Luke) and the gospel of John into one megagospel, like the Diatessaron ("Out of four"), a gospel harmony of the second century CE in which the Christian theologian Tatian tried to combine all the narratives that exist in the four gospels into one coherent narrative of Jesus's life and death. But contrary to the case of the Diatessaron, there is no evidence for the existence of three or four independent documents that are supposed to constitute the material out of which the Pentateuch was made up. Although the Documentary hypothesis was and is still quite popular, no scholar has succeeded in reconstructing the four documents J, E, D, and P entirely and in their original form. For each of the four documents one had to postulate gaps and omissions. And it was also very difficult to decide whether a text should belong to J, E, or D (the criteria for the P-texts seemed somewhat more clear-cut). For these and other reasons the Documentary hypothesis was challenged around 1975 by several scholars, especially John Van Seters, Hans Heinrich Schmid, and Rolf Rendtorff. Whereas Van Seters and Schmid denied that the so-called Yahwist (as well as the Elohist[12]) could be much older than the D-source, Rendtorff challenged the idea of an original narrative that comprised all major themes of the Pentateuch or Hexateuch (according to the Documentary hypothesis, some of the sources continued in the book of Joshua, since the conquest account is a better narrative conclusion than the death of Moses). He pointed out that many of the narrative units of the Pentateuch, the primeval history (Gen. 1–11), the Patriarchs (Gen. 12–36), and the Moses and Exodus narrative existed independently before they were brought together, probably not before the sixth century BCE. As a consequence of these challenges, many scholars modified or abandoned the classical Documentary hypothesis. For some of them J is so close to the D-texts that the formation of the Pentateuch should be explained as the result of the merging of two "compositions," a deuteronomistic and a priestly, that were combined at the beginning of the Persian period. Other scholars hold that during a long time the patriarchal narrative and the Exodus story were two independent (perhaps even competing) foundation myths, which were brought together only by priestly redactors.

Despite quite different models for the formation of the Torah, there are nevertheless important points on which many scholars would agree:

the Pentateuchal narrative is the result of a long process of transmission and editing of formerly independent "documents" or narratives. The "priestly texts" can quite easily be detected (at least in the books of Genesis–Leviticus), and the priestly group may have been the first who tried to combine the primeval, patriarchal, and Exodus narratives. The Torah came into being in the first half of the Persian period (between 539 and 400 BCE), when different elite factions of Judah and Samaria decided to collect their different narrative and legal traditions in order to construct one great narrative that could be accepted by all groups and serve as the foundation document of a new religion based on regular reading of the Pentateuch. The fact that the Pentateuchal narrative ends in Deut. 34 with the death of Moses, who has to die outside the land, is easily understandable in a context in which most Jews were living in a Diaspora situation and could easily identify themselves with Moses. The most important thing for Judaism was not the possession of the land but, rather, the Torah (which should be translated as "Instruction" and not as "Law"), which God had handed down to them. For that reason, the Torah remains to this day in Judaism the most important part of the tripartite Hebrew Bible.

THE FORMATION OF THE BOOKS OF DEUTERONOMY TO KINGS AND THE THEORY OF THE "DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY"

As we have seen, the book of Deuteronomy constitutes the end of the Pentateuch, but it also contains many links to the following books. In Moses's final speech the conquest of the land that is narrated in Joshua is already mentioned several times. But Deuteronomy also contains allusions to the time of the Judges (compare Deut. 6:12–15 and Judg. 2:12–14) and the history of the rise and fall of the Israelite and Judaean monarchies (see the law of the king in Deut. 17:14–20 and the exile announced in the curses of Deut. 28). These close relations between Deuteronomy and Joshua–Kings had already led Spinoza (see above) to the theory that all these books should be considered as the work of one single author who lived after the events of 587 BCE and who wanted to produce with his narration an explanation of the fall of Judah. Reading this narrative it becomes obvious that the events are explained according to the theological options of the book of Deuteronomy. For that reason, the German scholar Martin Noth elaborated in 1943 his theory of the "Deuteronomistic History."[13] According to Noth, the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua–Kings should be considered the work of an anonymous author, the "Deuteronomist," who shortly after 560 BCE composed a historical work in order to explain the collapse of Judah. The Deuteronomist integrated older sources and independent narratives in his work, such that he should be seen as the author of a complex tradition; for the first time, he conceived a thoroughgoing history of Israel and Judah from the Mosaic beginnings until the destruction of Jerusalem. The Deuteronomist's closest relatives are those historians of Hellenistic and Roman times who, using older and mostly anonymous narrative material, wrote a history of former times in order to explain the present. According to Noth, the Deuteronomist wrote his history to point out that the exile was a punishment by Yhwh for the continuous disobedience of his people and their kings, who did not follow the laws contained in the book of Deuteronomy.

Noth's theory was well received in scholarship but soon underwent two major modifications. The first modification goes back to Frank M. Cross, who pointed out that there are several indications of an older Deuteronomistic History written before the Babylonian exile under the reign of King Josiah (640–609 BCE). According to Cross, two main themes characterize the Deuteronomistic History: the "sin of Jeroboam" (1 Kings 12), the first northern king, who built Yhwh sanctuaries outside Jerusalem in the cities of Dan and Bethel, and the promise of an everlasting Davidic dynasty in 2 Sam. 7. Those two lines come to a conclusion in the narration of Josiah's reform (2 Kings 22–23): Josiah destroys the sanctuary of Bethel (2 Kings 23:15), bringing the sins of Jeroboam to an end. Furthermore, Josiah is presented as a "new David," the best of all kings. Consequently, Cross claimed that the original Deuteronomistic narration ended in 2 Kings 23:25a. He distinguished between Dtr^1 (the redactor of the Josianic edition) and Dtr^2, who added 2 Kings 24–25 and other texts after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. This model is still used today by most scholars in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Rudolf Smend from Göttingen altered Noth's theory in a different way. Analyzing the divine speech to Joshua that opens the book of Joshua, he observed that verse 6 of Josh. 1 draws a first conclusion. In verses 7–9

there is an addition, also in a Deuteronomistic style, that transforms the military speech into an exhortation to obedience toward the Mosaic Law. According to Smend, these verses are the work of a later redactor, whom he calls "DtrN," a Deuteronomistic "nomist," who wanted to strengthen the necessity to be obedient in all circumstances to the divine law. His student Walter Dietrich added a "DtrP," a prophetic Dtr, responsible for the insertion of the main prophetic histories in the books of Kings, promoting a theory of prophetic announcement and fulfillment. Contrary to Cross, the so-called Göttingen model, which is largely used in Continental scholarship, assumes like Noth that the compilation of the Deuteronomistic History only started after the events of 587 BCE. However, Noth's idea of a single author or redactor is definitely given up. Other scholars even added more Deuteronomistic layers, diluting in this way the idea of a coherent Deuteronomistic narrative. Indeed, in the last few decades the whole theory of the Deuteronomistic History has been criticized, especially in European scholarship (A. Graeme Auld, E. Axel Knauf, Kurt Noll). The opponents of Noth's idea insist on the old observation that the Deuteronomistic texts in the different books of the Former Prophets are extremely different from one another and cannot be assigned to one or two coherent Deuteronomistic editions: the condemnation of the "high places," very important in the books of Kings, never appears in Deuteronomy, and the theme of cult centralization only plays a role in Deuteronomy and Kings. For these reasons, some scholars claim that one should definitely reject the idea of a Deuteronomistic History. However, they do not offer a clear alternative model, so the best solution is to try to combine observations from Noth and from the Cross and Smend schools as well as from the critical voices.

The idea of a multilayered edition of the Deuteronomistic History should be preferred to Noth's, whose assumption of an individual author writing on his own initiative is quite anachronistic. "Private writing" outside the temple, palace, or scribal schools can hardly be assumed before Hellenistic times. Against the opponents of a Deuteronomistic History it should be recalled that the books of Deuteronomy–2 Kings create a chronologically coherent narrative in order to narrate a history from the Mosaic beginnings to the collapse of Israel and Judah. Since the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua display important parallels with Assyrian vassal treaties and military narratives, they may have been composed for the first time in the seventh century BCE as a "counterhistory" responding to Assyrian imperial ideology. The first edition of Samuel and Kings may also have taken place during this time as an attempt to present Josiah as a new David. We may therefore assume a Deuteronomistic "library" in the Jerusalem Temple composed of several scrolls. In the Babylonian period, and probably in Babylon, where the scribes and the older scrolls had been taken, a new edition developed explaining the reasons for the destruction of Jerusalem and for the exile. The Deuteronomistic History came to an end when, in the middle of the Persian period, the decision was taken to promulgate a Pentateuch (see above). Deuteronomy was cut off from the following books and became the end of the Torah, without, however, losing its links to the Former Prophets. Deuteronomy is therefore the hinge that holds together the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets in the so-called Enneateuch.

THE FORMATION OF THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES AND EZRA–NEHEMIAH

Since the books of Ezra and Nehemiah seem to follow the narrative of the books of Chronicles—Ezra starts exactly where Chronicles ended by quoting an edict of the Persian king Cyrus, exhorting the Jews to restore Jerusalem—biblical scholarship since the beginning of the nineteenth century (Leopold Zunz in 1832) assumed the same author for those books.[14] In analogy to the Deuteronomistic History, Martin Noth coined the term "Chronistic History." The Chronicler would have written his work in the second half of the Persian period to glorify the reconstruction of Jerusalem and to condemn the Samaritans, the inhabitants of the former northern kingdom. This theory is, however, problematic for several reasons. As Sara Japhet has shown, theology as well as vocabulary and style are quite different in Chronicles and Ezra–Nehemiah.[15] Whereas Ezra and Nehemiah display a segregationist ideology, the books of Chronicles seem more "integrative." Although the narration in Chronicles is focused on the southern kingdom, the Judaean kings often appeal to their "brethren in the north" to join the legitimate Yhwh worship in Jerusalem. One should therefore consider the books of Chronicles and Ezra–Nehemiah as two independent narratives. This is also the case in

most manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, in which Ezra and Nehemiah are placed, against chronological logic, before the books of Chronicles.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are probably based on a "Nehemiah memoir" (containing parts of Neh. 1–7, 12, and 13), written in the first person, in which Nehemiah legitimated his activities of restoring and repopulating Jerusalem. If this memoir was written by the historical Nehemiah, it could be dated in the middle of the fifth century. Another source could be an "Ezra narrative," which contained the story of the promulgation and the reading of the Torah in Jerusalem (parts of Ezra 1–6 and Nehemiah 8–10). Both sources were then combined in a quite complex process of editing and revising before the book was completed at the end of the Persian or perhaps beginning of the Hellenistic period.[16] The popularity of the figure of Ezra is reflected in the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, which has another book of Ezra (Esdras α), a rewriting of narratives from Ezra and Nehemiah with some additional stories; in the English translation this book is often called 1 Esdras or the Greek Esdras. The Latin Bible even has a fourth book of Ezra, which contains various apocalyptic texts from the Christian era.

The books of Chronicles are generally considered a rewriting of the Enneateuch. The long genealogy in 1 Chron. 1–9 summarizes the narrative from Adam to Saul, and 1 Chron. 10–2 Chron. 36 narrates the story from David to the arrival of the Persians in a quite different perspective than the Enneateuch. The exodus and the conquest are hardly mentioned, such that the reader gets the impression that Israel has always been in its land. The kings are more interested in taking care of the Temple and the celebrations of festivals than in waging war. Therefore most scholars believe that the author of Chronicles presupposes the Pentateuch and the books of Samuel and Kings, although not in their final form. This view has been challenged by A. Graeme Auld and Ray Person,[17] who think that Samuel–Kings and Chronicles both depend on the same source (a story about the kingdoms of Israel and Judah), which they used with different theological perspectives. Many stories of Chronicles seem, however, a theological correction of the accounts in Samuel–Kings: in 1 Sam. 24, it is Yhwh himself who pushes David to undertake a census for which he is later punished; in 1 Chron. 21, however, the instigator is not Yhwh's anger but "satan"; in 2 Kings the worst king of Judah, Manasseh, has the longest reign of all (fifty-five years; 2 Kings 21:1–2), and so the Chronicler tries to explain this by inventing

a story about a deportation of Manasseh and his conversion to Yhwh, who then rewarded him with many years of reign. Therefore the traditional view that Chronicles is an interpretation of Samuel–Kings still seems quite plausible. The books of Chronicles were written either at the end of the Persian or more likely at the beginning of the Hellenistic period.[18]

THE EMERGENCE OF JEWISH NOVELLAS

During the Persian period short narratives became popular. The book of Ruth was written, maybe in reaction to Ezra–Nehemiah, in order to legitimate the integration of foreign women, for the quite idyllic story narrates the adhesion of the Moabite Ruth to the people of Yhwh and her exemplary fidelity, which enable her to become an ancestress of King David.[19] In the Greek Bible, Ruth is placed between the book of Judges and Samuel, which seems quite logical, since the story is situated at the time of the Judges. Perhaps the book of Ruth was indeed conceived as an insertion between Judges and Samuel in order to correct the Deuteronomistic theology of these books.

The book of Esther reflects the first problems Jews could face in a Diaspora situation. The book is less idyllic than Ruth, but both heroines use ruses, and their respective marriages are beneficial for the people of Yhwh. The Esther narrative was very popular; we have three different versions of it, two in Greek, which may be a translation from a Hebrew text different from the canonical one. Since the views about the Persians in the book of Esther reflect Greek stereotypes it is plausible that the Esther story dates from the Hellenistic era.[20] The book of Esther may be called a Diaspora novella, like the first part of the book of Daniel and the Joseph story (Gen. 37–50), which all share some literary motifs and narrate the dangers but above all the possibilities of integration for Jews living in the Diaspora.[21]

NOTES

1. The name of the god of Israel is often pronounced "Yahweh." But Judaism does not pronounce anymore the name of the god of Israel, so that we cannot be sure about the original vocalization. For that reason I refer to the god of Israel by the four consonants written in the Hebrew Bible, called the tetragrammaton.

2. The best English translation and introduction available is Andrew R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic. Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Text*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

3. English translation: Wilfred G. Lambert and Alan R. Millard, *Atra-ḫasīs: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999).

4. For an English translation, see W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*, Mesopotamian Civilizations 16 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013).

5. An English translation of the Ugaritic myths can be found in Johannes Cornelis de Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit*, Nisaba 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), pp. 199–223 (*Kirta*), 224–73 (*Danel* and *Aqhat*).

6. For a presentation and translation of this text, see Brian Lewis, *The Sargon Legend. A Study of the Akkadian Text and the Tale of the Hero Who Was Exposed at Birth*, American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series 4 (Cambridge, Mass.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1980).

7. An English translation is available in Harry Angier Hoffner, *Hittite Myths*, 2nd ed., Writings from the Ancient World 2 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), pp. 65–80.

8. In K. Lawson Younger Jr., *Ancient Conquest Accounts. A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), p. 210.

9. For an English translation, see Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, Benjamin R. Forster, trans., Writings from the Ancient World 19 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

10. *Baba Bathra* means "the last gate."

11. For the quite complicated history of research concerning the formation of the Pentateuch, see Jean Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), a book that also contains the bibliographical references of the works of the scholars mentioned in this paragraph.

12. The Elohist was from the beginning a very fragmentary source, so that many scholars spoke of "Elohistic fragments" or considered the E-texts as later additions to the J-source.

13. An English translation of this important study is available: Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991). For the following presentation and bibliographical indications, see also Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark; and New York: Continuum, 2007).

14. For an orientation on research on the Chronicles, see Matt Patrick Graham, Kenneth G. Hoglund, and Steven L. McKenzie, eds., *The Chronicler as Historian* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1997).

15. Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (Frankfurt/Main: P. Lang, 1997).

16. Jacob L. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah-Memoir and Its Earliest Readers*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 348 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2004).

17. A. Graeme Auld, *Kings without Privilege. David and Moses in the Story of the Bible's Kings* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994); Raymond F. Person Jr., *The Deuteronomistic History and the Books of Chronicles. Scribal Works in an Oral World*, Ancient Israel and Its Literature 6 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

18. Hans-Peter Mathys, "Chronikbücher und hellenistischer Zeitgeist," in *Vom Anfang und vom Ende: Fünf alttestamentliche Studien* (Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 41–155.

19. Irmtraud Fischer, "The Book of Ruth: A 'Feminist' Commentary to the Torah?" in Athalya Brenner, ed., *Ruth and Esther*, A Feminist Companion to the Bible Second Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 24–49.

20. Jean-Daniel Macchi, "The Book of Esther: A Persian Story in Greek Style," in Ehud Ben Zvi, Diana V. Edelman, and Frank Polak, eds., *A Palimpsest: Rhetoric, Ideology, Stylistics, and Language Relating to Persian Israel*, Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and Its Contexts 5 (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2009), pp. 109–27.

21. Michael J. Chan, "Joseph and Jehoiachin: On the Edge of Exodus," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 125 (2013): pp. 566–77.

FURTHER READING

A good introduction to the question of the narrative units in the books of Genesis to Kings can be found in the volume Thomas B. Dozeman, Thomas Römer, and Konrad Schmid, eds., *Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch? Identifying Literary Works in Genesis through Kings*, Ancient Israel and Its Literature 8 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011). The question of narrative, history, and ideology is presented in Yairah Amit, *History and Ideology. Introduction to the Historiography in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). A good overview on the current discussion about the formation of the Pentateuch can be found in Jean Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006). How the Pentateuch was read and understood in the Persian period is exposed in Diana V. Edelman, Philip R. Davies, Christophe Nihan, and Thomas Römer, *Opening the Books of Moses*, BibleWorld (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012). The history of the idea that the Pentateuch is a compromise of two competing foundation myths is brilliantly exposed in Konrad Schmid, *Genesis and the Moses Story. Israel's Dual Origins in the Hebrew Bible*, Siphrut 3 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2010). An introduction to the debate about the Deuteronomistic History and the formation of the narrative in the books of Joshua to Kings is given in Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark; and New York: Continuum, 2007). It is useful to consult a synopsis that permits one to read the books of Samuel–Kings and Chronicles

in parallel: John C. Endres, William R. Millar, and John Barclay Burns, eds., *Chronicles and Its Synoptic Parallels in Samuel, Kings and Related Texts* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998). One of the best presentations of the books of Chronicles is Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (Frankfurt/Main: P. Lang, 1997); for Ezra and Nehemiah one should consult Lester L. Grabbe, *Ezra–Nehemiah*, Old Testament Readings (London: Routledge, 1998). Finally, Carolyn J. Sharp, *Irony and Meaning in the Hebrew Bible*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 43–83, gives a good overview of the genre of Diaspora novellas and their themes and motifs.