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ABBREVIATIONS

All abbreviations are taken from *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 8.4.

AASF	Annales Academiae scientiarum fennicae
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992.
AJP	*American Journal of Philology*
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ArOr	*Archiv Orientální*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago, 1999.
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford, 1907.
BMes	Bibliotheca mesopotamica
BSac	*Bibliotheca sacra*
BSC	Bible Student's Commentary
BT	*The Bible Translator*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CDME	*A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*. Edited by R. O. Faulkner. Oxford, 1962.
COS	*The Context of Scripture*. Edited by W. W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden, 1997–.
DDD	*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. Edited by K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst. Leiden, 1995.
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
EBib	Etudes bibliques
EDNT	*Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by H. Balz, G. Schneider. Grand Rapids, 1990–93.
EgT	*Eglise et théologie*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
HBC	*Harper's Biblical Commentary.* Edited by J. L. Mays et al. San Francisco, 1988.
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
IB	*Interpreter's Bible*. Edited by G. A. Buttrick et al. 12 vols. New York, 1951–57.
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Edited by G. A. Buttrick. 4 vols. Nashville, 1962.
Int	*Interpretation*
IOS	*Israel Oriental Studies*
JAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JFSR	*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*

JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, 1996.
MDB	*Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*. Edited by W. E. Mills. Macon, 1990.
NewDocs	*New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. Edited by G. H. R. Horsley and S. Llewelyn. North Ryde, N. S.W., 1981–.
NIB	*The New Interpreter's Bible*
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OTS	Old Testament Studies
OtSt	*Oudtestamentische Studiën*
SHANE	Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East
SP	Sacra pagina
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–76.
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VC	*Vigiliae christianae*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

EDITOR'S PREFACE

I am happy to present to the reader this latest issue of *Studia Antiqua*. This will be my last issue as the journal's editor, and it's something I am proud to have accomplished before beginning graduate studies later this year. This has certainly been a learning experience for me and one full of growth. I can only assume that the editing staff and reviewers who have had to put up with me have also experienced their share of growth, especially as it applies to practicing patience. I am deeply indebted to the contributors, editors, reviewers, advisors, and donors who have made this all possible.

The student who will be replacing me as editor in chief is Haley Wilson, one of our recently published authors. She has already helped me in some of the final stages of this issue, and I am fully confident that she will take the journal in wonderful new directions.

This spring issue features three articles from graduating students of Brigham Young University. These papers were presented at the 2016 Students of the Ancient Near East Symposium, and they represent the winning entries of the annual essay contest held in conjunction with *Studia Antiqua*. They embody some of the best work of this year's graduating class at Brigham Young University.

The first article, and our first-place essay this year, is by Wilson C Parson, whose study focuses on Isaiah's oracle to Ariel. He uses a linguistic and source-critical analysis to determine the possible chronology and composition of the passage. Our second-place winner is Sarah Palmer, who identifies several markers of a feminine genre and emphasizes the strong possibility of female authorship in various passages of the Hebrew Bible. Lastly, our third-place winner is Kyla Beckstrand, who explores the possible implications of a post-exilic compilation of Genesis's flood narrative as it pertains to later Judaism.

This journal would be impossible without the devoted time and talents of our faculty reviewers. They go above and beyond the call of duty as volunteers to our cause. I consider their continued efforts to us students the most important aspect of this journal, and what really makes the experience worthwhile. I also wish to thank our financial donors for their support to *Studia Antiqua*. I would especially like to thank the Religious Studies Center, which provides the internship that makes this student journal possible. I am grateful to all involved and look forward to what's in store for *Studia Antiqua*.

Juan D. Pinto
Editor in Chief, *Studia Antiqua*

ON THE UNIFIED AUTHORSHIP OF THE ORACLE TO ARIEL (ISAIAH 29:1–8)

WILSON C PARSON

Wilson C Parson *recently graduated from Brigham Young University with a degree in ancient Near Eastern studies and an emphasis in Hebrew Bible. He will begin a Master of Science in Information at the University of Michigan this fall.*

The oracle to Ariel in Isaiah 29:1–8 is a poetic prophecy that describes a siege upon Jerusalem followed by a miraculous deliverance from her enemies at the hand of Yahweh. Nearly all scholars agree that this prophecy refers to Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701 BCE, the prose versions of which are recorded in 2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37.[1] What scholars do not agree upon, however, is whether to attribute the pericope to the work of a single author. This disagreement has arisen partly because the prophecy contains an abrupt shift in rhetoric between its first and second halves. In verses 1–4, Yahweh describes his designs to lay siege to Jerusalem (Ariel), which will result in her mourning, lamentation, and abasement to the point of near death. After verse 4, however, the tone suddenly shifts, and verses 5–8 describe Ariel's deliverance amid destructive cosmic forces sent by Yahweh himself to annihilate her attackers. As a result of Yahweh's intervention, Ariel's enemies become like fine dust and chaff that blows away in the wind, and the threat of their attack becomes merely a

1. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, AB 4 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 398–402; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* (London: SCM, 1967), 53–57; Geoffrey W. Grogan, "Isaiah," in *Proverbs ~ Isaiah*, vol. 6 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 654–57; Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on Isaiah with Emphasis on the Messianic Hope* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 238–42; Joseph Jensen, *Isaiah 1–39* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984), 233–235; Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 263–68; John Mauchline, *Isaiah 1–39: Confidence in God* (London: SCM, 1966), 202–4; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 524–29; Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1989), 212–15; Gene M. Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah*, NIB 6 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 447–51; John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, WBC 24 (Colombia: Nelson, 2005), 447–51; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp, CC (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 63–79; and Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 2:304–13.

bad dream. This striking shift in rhetoric regarding Ariel's fate has raised questions among scholars about the textual history of the pericope.

One approach, operating under the assumption that the second half of the prophecy could not have possibly been written before the siege, is to attribute part or all of the second half of the prophecy to a later redactor. For example, Clements argues for a Josianic redaction, suggesting that the redactor added verses 5–7 to report the siege's outcome in light of the doctrine of the inviolability of Zion.[2] Childs, on the other hand, argues that verses 1–4, 5c–6 were part of the original prophecy, all of which prescribed punishments upon Judah, and that verses 5a, 5b, and 8 were added later to change the unfortunate recipient of the destructive cosmic phenomena from Jerusalem to her assailants.[3] Thus, Clements and Childs both argue that an earlier or "original" portion of the prophecy was recorded before the siege, and attribute the deliverance portion to a retrospective redactor.

There are also proponents for the unified authorship of the passage. Early form critics, including von Rad, suggested that the two differing halves of the oracle are consistent with an earlier Zion tradition that included elements of both judgment and salvation. Routledge approaches the problem from a canonical perspective, concluding that all strands within the passage are consistent with the larger message and theology of Isaiah.[4] Seitz and Wildberger both argue against a later redaction on the premise that a redactor would be unlikely to inadvertently leave a blatant seam in the passage, and that the seam exists as a conscious rhetorical decision of the author's.[5] While scholars on both sides of the argument present valuable points of view, none has approached the problem by analyzing the passage's literary elements, including word choice and thematic structure.

In this paper I will examine the literary elements of Isaiah's oracle to Ariel in support of the argument for the unified authorship of the passage's first and second halves. In so doing, I will not necessarily argue for the unity of the entire oracle in its current form, as it does indeed contain indicators of secondary expansion. Rather, I will argue that verses 1–4a and 5–7 may be attributed to a single author, while verses 4b and 8 may be attributed to a redactor who sought to expand upon unclear aspects of the original text. It should also be noted that although I will argue for a unified reading of verses 1–4a and 5–7

2. R. E. Clements, "Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem," *JSOT* Supplement 13 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 84–85.

3. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 57.

4. Robin L. Routledge, "The Siege and Deliverance of the City of David in Isaiah 29:1–8, *TynBul* 43.1 (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1992), 182.

5. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 212 and Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 69.

(which I will henceforth refer to as the first and second halves of the passage), I will not suggest that the oracle is authentic to Isaiah, or that it was even composed before Sennacherib's siege in 701 BCE. I will, however, argue that the two halves contain similar literary elements, and that when they are read together they result in a cohesive, symmetrical, and rhetorically powerful oracle.

To pursue this end, I will first provide a fresh translation of the oracle with text-critical notes,[6] after which I will demonstrate how the two halves of the oracle (verses 1–4a and verses 5–7) bear an element of symmetry with respect to word choice as well as to thematic literary structure, resulting in a self-consistent chiasm. Lastly, I will propose an explanation for the additions of verses 4b and 8.

Critical Text and Translation

1 Ah, Ariel, Ariel, the city (where) David camped,
Add[7] year upon year, let the feasts go round.

2 Yet I will distress Ariel,
and there shall be mourning and lamentation,
and she will become to me like Ariel.

3 And I will camp like David[8] against you,
and I will lay siege against you (with) a garrison,
and I will raise siege-works against you.

4 And you will be abased; from the earth you will speak,
and your utterance will be low from the dust,
And your voice will be like a necromancer from the earth,
and from the dust your speaking will chirp.

5 But the multitude of your foes[9] will be as fine dust,

6. Rather than including an exhaustive apparatus, I have included text-critical notes only on significant issues that are relevant to the present argument.

7. MT ספו (2mp imperative); 1QIsa[a] ספי (2fs imperative), which seems more appropriate, considering other 2fs references to Ariel in the passage. The change from *yôd* to *šûreq* may be attributed to graphic similarity.

8. MT כדור, which could be rendered "as a circle" or perhaps "all around." While such a rendering technically fits the given context (i.e. a siege surrounding the city as a circle), LXX renders the phrase "as David" (ὡς Δαυιδ), and כדוד seems more appropriate considering the mention of David in v. 1. The change from *dālet* to *rêš* may be attributed to graphic similarity.

9. MT זריך "your strangers"; 1QIsa[a] זדיך "your insolent ones"; LXX τῶν ἀσεβῶν "(of) the/your ungodly men." However, זרים "strangers/foreigners" and זדים "insolent ones" do

and the multitude of the ruthless as flying chaff,
and suddenly in an instant,

6 From with the Lord of hosts you will be visited,
with thunder, and earthquake and great noise,
whirlwind and storm, and the flame of a devouring fire.

7 And it will be as a dream, a vision of the night,
the multitude of all the nations that war against Ariel,
and all that fight her and her stronghold, and who distress her.

8 And it will be as when the hungry man dreams, and behold, he eats,
but when he awakens his soul is empty;
or as when the thirsty man dreams, and behold, he drinks,
but when he awakens, and behold he is thirsty, and his soul runs about,
so will be the multitude of all the nations that war against Mount Zion.

Word Choice in Both Halves of the Prophecy

There are two instances of the author's word choice in the first and second halves of the prophecy that link the two halves together: the use of the rare verb "to distress" (צוק), and the use of "dust" (עפר) and "fine dust" (אבק דק) as a comparative pair. As I will demonstrate below, both of these instances contribute significantly to the literary symmetry and overall rhetorical effect of the oracle, supporting the argument that a single author employed them consciously and purposefully.

"To Distress" (צוק)

After addressing Jerusalem in verse 1, Yahweh immediately announces his plans to "distress" (והציקותי) her, which results in her mourning and lamentation (v. 2). The verb that Yahweh uses here (צוק) is a rare one, appearing only 12 times in the entire Hebrew Bible, five of which are in Isaiah, and two of

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not appear elsewhere with pronominal suffixes, making both options *hapax legomena*. Blenkinsopp and Childs suggest צריך "your foes," emending *zayin* to *ṣādê*. צרים "foes" appears more commonly with pronominal suffixes (cf. Ps 3:2, Ezek 39:23, Deut 32:27, etc.) than זרים "strangers/foreigners" and זדים "insolent ones," and fits more comfortably in the verse as a reference to Assyria. (That this verse refers to Assyria is made nearly certain by the comparison Assyria to chaff, a motif which also appears in Isa 17:13).

which are in this oracle.[10] The second instance of the verb appears in verse 7 and complements the first.

After describing the destruction of Ariel's enemies, Yahweh closes the oracle with a general prophecy about the fate of all nations that seek to fight against Ariel: "And it will be as a dream, a vision of the night, the multitude of all the nations that war against Ariel, and all that fight her and her stronghold, and that distress (והמציקים) her" (v. 7). In this closing prophecy, Yahweh has used the same verb (צוק) to describe the actions of Ariel's enemies that he used in the first half of the passage to refer to his own actions against Ariel. By using the same verb in both halves of the passage—once in reference to Yahweh and once in reference to Ariel's enemies—the author has effectively equated the actions of both parties. In other words, Yahweh and Ariel's enemies become essentially interchangeable characters in the first half of the oracle because Yahweh uses Ariel's enemies as a means by which to punish her. Such theology is reflected elsewhere in First Isaiah, where, for example, Yahweh describes Assyria as "the rod of [his] anger," chosen by him to punish his people (Isa 10:5).

Even more compelling than the mere usage of "to distress" (צוק) in both halves of the passage is its placement within the oracle. If verse 1 is set aside as a prelude to the prophecy and verse 2 is considered the beginning of a chiasm (which I will discuss at length below), the chiasm begins with Yahweh's words, "Yet I will distress Ariel" (והציקותי לאריאל), and ends with the words, "and those who distress her" (והמציקים לה, v. 7). Thus, "to distress" (צוק) not only appears in both halves of the passage, but also serves as the oracle's opening and closing bookends.

"Dust" (עפר) and "Fine Dust" (אבק דק)

Another instance of complementary word choice between the two halves of the passage appears in the use of the words "dust" (עפר) and "fine dust" (אבק דק) in verses 4a and 5. After providing the details of his siege upon Ariel, Yahweh describes her resulting degradation: "And you will be abased; from the earth you will speak, and your utterance will be low from the dust" (v. 4a). While the verbs in this verse ("to be low" [שפל] and "to bow down" [שחח]) elicit an image of Ariel's abasement, it is the inclusion of the phrases "from

10. In Deuteronomy 28:53, 55, 57; Isaiah 51:13; and Jeremiah 19:19, צוק is used in reference to one's enemies, similar to the usage in the Ariel oracle. Other appearances of צוק include Judges 14:17, 16:16, where Delilah "presses/urges" Samson; and Job 32:18, where the spirit "constrains" Job.

the earth" (מארץ) and "from the dust" (מעפר) that intensify the image, placing Ariel's situation in comparison to Sheol, the dark and dusty underworld.[11]

It is after this verse that the turning point in the oracle takes place—and the author uses the image of dust to facilitate the transition. After having described Ariel as speaking "from the dust" (מעפר), Yahweh refers to Ariel's enemies as "fine dust" (אבק דק): "But the multitude of your foes will be as fine dust, and the multitude of the ruthless as flying chaff" (v. 5a, b).[12] The resulting image is one of Ariel's deliverance from death: although Ariel had been brought low, being figuratively enshrouded with the dusts of the underworld, that dust—as the personification of Ariel's enemies—would soon be blown away like chaff in the wind.[13]

Thus, the author has carefully chosen words both to open and close the prophecy (with the verb "to distress" [צוק]) as well as to transition between the two halves of the prophecy (with the words "dust" [עפר] and "fine dust" [אבק דק]). This conscious use of words in the two halves of the passage may suggest that both halves were composed by the same author.

Of course, it is also possible that a later Isaianic author or redactor crafted the second half of the prophecy and deliberately included the words "to distress" (צוק) and "fine dust" (אבק דק) in order to elicit a sense of unity between the two strands. In fact, some may argue that the complementary word choice between the two halves of the passage is *evidence* of a redactor's hand. Such an assertion runs into the problem of what John Barton has called "The Disappearing Redactor," which is that as a critic makes the work of the redactor appear more coherent and impressive, he or she in turn weakens the very argument for redaction, eventually causing the redactor to disappear entirely.[14] In the case of the passage at hand, the complementary word choice between the passage's two halves is much more supportive other a unified author than

11. For treatment on the symbolic connection of the underworld with darkness and dust, see Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (trans. Timothy J. Hallett; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 63–69 and Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 374–375.

12. While עפר and אבק both refer generally to dust, and are even used as a pair in Deuteronomy 28:24, they appear to refer to two different types of dust. עפר refers to the dust or dry earth of the ground, while אבק generally refers to dust in the air. For example, in Nahum 1:3 אבק is used to describe the clouds of the sky as the dust under Yahweh's feet, and in Song of Songs 3:6 the *hapax legomenon* אבקה ("powder") is used in the phrase אבקת רוכל ("powders of the merchant"). With the addition of the adjective דק ("small" or "fine") to אבק, and the comparison of the fine dust to "flying chaff" (מוץ עבר), the author has further accentuated the floating, airy nature of אבק.

13. Cf. Isa 17:13, where Assyria is compared to chaff blowing in the wind.

14. John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (rev. ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 56–58.

of a redactor. The passage's unified authorship is further corroborated by the passage's thematic literary structure, to which I will now turn my discussion.

Thematic Literary Structure of the Passage

Aside from bearing elements of symmetry in word choice, the two halves of the oracle to Ariel (vv. 1–4a and 5–7) work together in a larger sense to form a thematic chiasm (diagrammed below).

Prelude (v.1)
A. Yahweh's distress of Ariel, resulting in mourning and lamentation (v. 2)
    B. Yahweh provides details of his siege (v. 3)
        C. Ariel, abased, speaks from the dust (v. 4a)
        C. Ariel's enemies will become like fine dust (v. 5)
    B. Yahweh provides details of his cosmic forces (v. 6)
A. Ariel's distress has become merely a dream (v. 7)

As I alluded to in the previous section, I have dismissed verse 1 as a prelude to the prophecy, and have therefore not considered it part of the chiasm. However, verse 1 still plays an important role in setting the scene for the prophecy. It establishes Jerusalem as the addressee and prepares the reader to be jarred by Yahweh's sudden decision to bring distress upon Jerusalem. By qualifying Ariel as "the city (where) David camped," Yahweh makes it clear that the oracle is addressed to Jerusalem. With the words "add year upon year, let the feasts go round," he paints a picture of Jerusalem's seemingly everlasting nature: each coming year will continue to bring fruitful harvests and prosperity, symbolized by the regular feasts. Yet according to the verses immediately following, Ariel's prosperity will soon be replaced by mourning and lamentation.

The chiasm begins in verse 2, which contains Yahweh's plan to distress Ariel. The chiasm closes with Yahweh's promise that the nations who seek to distress Ariel will become like a dream. Thus, the outermost level of the chiasm (vv. 2 and 7) addresses the changing fate of Ariel. The second level (vv. 3 and 6) provides details of Yahweh's works of destruction first against Ariel, and then against her enemies. In verse 3 he mentions that he will lay siege to Ariel with a garrison and with siege works; in verse 7 he lists the cosmic forces with which he will visit Ariel to destroy her enemies. The third and deepest level (vv. 4a and 5) highlights the helpless state that both Ariel and her enemies enter as a result of Yahweh's works. Verse 4a portrays Ariel's response to the siege that Yahweh has brought upon her; she grovels on the ground, her voice

coming low from the dusts of the underworld. Verse 5 presents Ariel's enemies as weak and transient: they will blow away like fine dust and chaff in the wind.

This deepest level contains the key to the overarching theme of the chiasm and of the prophecy as a whole. While the prophecy does describe the abasement and subsequent deliverance of Ariel, its central theme is that Yahweh is omnipotent and arbitrary in his dealings with man. Yahweh is able to remove Ariel from a state of happiness and flourishing to one of lamentation and sadness at his own will. It is he who decides to distress Ariel. It is he who lays siege against her. It is he who brings her down to the depths of humility and degradation.

At the same time, Yahweh has the power to reverse Ariel's calamity and turn the destruction onto her enemies. It is "from with the Lord of hosts" (מעם יהוה צבאות) that Ariel and her enemies will be visited by thunder, earthquake, great noise, whirlwind, storm, and fire (v. 5). Yahweh is entirely responsible both for distressing Ariel, as well as for removing the distress brought by her enemies.

Aside from the prominent thematic chiasm, the prophecy also exhibits a less obvious chiastic structure in the way that Yahweh refers to Ariel. At the beginning and end of the prophecy, he refers to Ariel in the third-person feminine (vv. 2 and 7); however, towards the center of the prophecy he speaks to her directly in the second-person feminine (vv. 3–4a, 5–6). This subtle rhetorical decision results in the sense that the prophecy opens and closes with general statements about Ariel's fate, while the inner section contains the specific and intimate details of Ariel's struggle and triumph against her enemies. One might posit that this shift in grammar may be indicative of multiple authorship. However, if such is the case, we are left to choose between verses 2 and 7 or verses 3–4a and 5–6 as the material for the original prophecy, and either strand would result in a severely disjointed text.

In the foregoing discussion I have demonstrated that the oracle to Ariel contains unifying literary elements (word choice and thematic chiastic structure) in its first and second halves that support the argument for its unified authorship. However, by using the term unified authorship I refer not to the entirety of the passage as it currently stands, but to verses 1–4a and 5–7, attributing verses 4b and 8 to the work of a later redactor. I will now discuss verses 4b and 8, providing an explanation of why the redactor chose to add these two verses.

The Additions of Verses 4b and 8

Both of the later expansions to the oracle to Ariel appear to have been inserted for the sake of providing clarity to enigmatic parts of the text. The parts that the redactor appears to have sought to clarify are (1) the meaning of the word Ariel, and (2) the comparison of Ariel's enemies to a dream (v. 7). I will now discuss the possible reasons why the redactor saw these two parts of the text as difficult for the reader to grasp without further explanation.

The Meaning of Ariel

Perhaps the greatest enigma in the oracle to Ariel is the word Ariel itself. Scholars are still largely uncertain as to the meaning of the word, and most commentators provide several possible translations before hesitantly choosing one.[15] The recent trend, however, is to translate Ariel as "altar hearth" or "hearth of El." This rendering is based on a nearly identical word that appears twice in the book of Ezekiel to refer to the 12 x 12 cubit surface of the altar in Ezekiel's temple (Ezek 43:15–16).[16] This association of Jerusalem with an altar hearth fits well. The Temple in Jerusalem was known as a center for cultic sacrifice, and Yahweh's statement that Jerusalem would become to him "like an Ariel/altar hearth" (v. 2) invokes the imagery of slaughter and burning characteristic not only of ritual sacrifice, but also of a siege experience.

However, it is important to note that the orthography of Ezekiel's Ariel is different from that of Isaiah's (אראיל vs. אריאל). Albright and Feigin, both writing nearly a century ago, affirmed that the variance in spelling exposes Ariel as a loan word from the Akkadian *arallu*, which appears as a poetic name for the netherworld in Assyrian texts.[17] In particular, *arallu* is described as a mountainous abode of the dead, frequented by the gods and filled with stores of gold.[18] As Albright noted, the ideographical meanings of the *arallu*—"House of the mountain of the dead" and "House of the great mountain of the lands"—were two of the most popular names for Mesopotamian ziggurats.[19] Albright furthermore argued that because Ezekiel's three-tiered altar resembles a

15. See the commentaries cited in footnote 1.

16. Aside from this oracle and the verses in Ezekiel, the word Ariel also appears in Ezra 8:16 as a personal name and in 2 Sam 23:20 // 1 Chr 11:26, where the meaning is obscure.

17. William F. Albright, "The Babylonian Temple-Tower and the Altar of Burnt Offering," *JBL* 39 (1920): 137 and Samuel Feigin, "The Meaning of Ariel," *JBL* 39 (1920): 133.

18. "*arallu*," *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of Chicago*, 1:2:226–227.

19. Albright, "Temple-Tower," 137.

ziggurat in shape, the name for the top level of Ezekiel's altar—Ariel—refers to *arallu,* the mountainous abode of the gods.[20]

Interestingly, a textual problem in the Ezekiel passage about the Ariel altar appears to support Albright's conclusion that the altar was associated with a mountain. In the description of the altar, the author first calls it "the mountain of God" (ההראל), and then, only a few words later, calls it "the Ariel" (האראיל). This apparent confusion of terms may suggest that Ezekiel's altar was commonly referred to both by the name "mountain of God" (הראל) as well as by the name "the Ariel/netherworld" (האראיל), each of which refers to a mountain associated with divinity. In light of these facts, I disagree with the current trend among scholars of rendering the word "altar hearth" in the context of the oracle. It seems more likely that both Ezekiel's Ariel and Isaiah's Ariel refer either to "netherworld" (*arallu*) or to "mountain of God" (הראל)—or both.

Blenkinsopp notes the possibility that the author (of the oracle to Ariel) used a "deliberately cryptic and polyvalent" term that would allow Ariel to carry several meanings within the passage.[21] This suggestion may shed light on verse 2 of the oracle, in which Yahweh says, "Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be mourning and lamentation, and she will become to me like Ariel." In this verse it appears that Ariel is undergoing some kind of transformation. She starts out with Ariel as her name, but it is after her mourning and lamentation that she actually *becomes* like Ariel. This transformation may suggest that the two Ariels in the verse, despite being spelled identically, refer to two different ideas. For example, the first Ariel could be a reference to the mountain of God, while the second could be a reference to *arallu*, the netherworld. Regardless of what the original author intended, the redactor's additions of verses 4b and 8 suggest that he interpreted the word Ariel as both "mountain of God" and as the netherworld.

Verse 4b, which at first appears to be merely the second half of a parallelism from 4a, is likely an addition to the oracle to clarify the meaning of Ariel as the netherworld. After verse 4a, which says "and you will be abased; from the earth you will speak, and your utterance will be low from the dust," verse 4b repeats the image yet a third and fourth time, only with more specificity: "And your voice will be like a necromancer from the earth, and from the dust your speaking will chirp." This extra couplet betrays the flow and balance of the rest of the poetic prophecy, which, as has been demonstrated, follows a fairly strict system of chiastic symmetry. Furthermore, the images of necromancy, dust, and earth in verse 4b appear to merely expand upon the images of abasement,

20. Ibid., 139.
21. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 401.

dust, and earth in the previous couplet (v. 4a). It is possible that the knowledge of the meaning of the word Ariel had already begun to deteriorate in society by the time of the redactor, and that the he provided the extra couplet to confirm to the reader that Jerusalem, under siege, truly had become "like Ariel" (netherworld) (v. 2).

Ariel's Enemies as (Having) a Dream

The ambiguous meaning of Ariel may also shed light on the addition of verse 8, the prose section at the end of the oracle. The basic purpose of this addition appears to be an attempt to explain the fairly obscure conclusion of the oracle in verse 7, where Yahweh says that Ariel's enemies will be "as a dream, a vision of the night." To clarify and expand upon this dream motif, the redactor uses a concrete example in verse 8: a man who dreams of food and drink, but wakes up and is hungry and thirsty. Ironically, this example appears to have only further obfuscated the original meaning of verse 7. When verse 7 is read without verse 8, the text seems to suggest that the nations that come against Ariel will become like a fleeting dream, a vision of the night that is gone the next day. In other words, *Jerusalem* is the individual having the dream, not her enemies. Verse 8, however, seems to suggest the opposite. As Ariel's enemies approach in battle, their appetite for victory begins to be satisfied, just like the hungry man who dreams of eating food. However, as a result of Yahweh's intervention, Ariel's enemies are left starving for victory, just as the hungry man awakens from his dream with an empty stomach.

The most striking indicator of the redactor's efforts to clarify the passage may be seen in the final line of verse 8, where he explains, "so will be the multitude of all the nations that fight against Mount Zion." This line is identical to verse 7b, except for the substitution of the name Mount Zion (הר ציון) for Ariel.

Isaiah 29:7 vs. 29:8

המון כל־הגוים הצבאים על־אריאל	the multitude of all the nations that war against Ariel.
המון כל־הגוים הצבאים על־הר ציון	the multitude of all the nations that war against Mount Zion.

By using the exact same sentence and substituting Mount Zion for Ariel, it is obvious that the redactor wanted his audience to understand that the oracle was about Jerusalem. Up until this point in the oracle, Jerusalem had been referred to by only two names: "the city where David camped" (v. 1) and Ariel. By adding the name Mount Zion in verse 8, the redactor has left no question as

to whom the oracle is about. Furthermore, his choice to use the name Mount Zion (הר ציון) may that he considered the word Ariel to mean "mountain of God," similar to the author of the Ezekiel passage (Ezek 43:15–16).

Conclusion

In conclusion, after having examined the literary elements of the oracle to Ariel, I affirm that the first and second halves of the passage (vv. 1–4a and 5–7) may be attributed to a single author. The two halves of the oracle elicit a conscious balance in word choice with the use of the verb "to distress" (צוק) in verses 2 and 7, and with the use of the word pair "dust" (עפר) and "fine dust" (אבק דק) in verses 4a and 5. Furthermore, verses 1–4a and 5–7 form a thematically balanced and rhetorically powerful chiasm, highlighting Yahweh's omnipotence and participation in the reversal of Ariel's fate. These two features of the oracle (word choice and chiastic structure) have heretofore gone unnoticed (or at least unpublished) by biblical scholars.

In addition, I contend that verses 4b and 8 may be ascribed to a later redactor seeking to clarify the meaning(s) of the word Ariel and the obscure reference to Ariel's enemies becoming like a dream. Since it appears that the redactor's main goal was clarity, it would make sense to suggest that he lived long enough after Isaiah that his audience had already lost the meaning of the word Ariel and needed clarification. Therefore, it is possible that the redactor made the additions during the exilic or post-exilic period. However, it is also possible that the author's audience did not understand the references to Ariel even at the time they were uttered or written, in which case a Josianic or even earlier redaction may argued.

In terms of further research on the subject, it would be of value to more accurately contextualize the redactor in terms of chronology and location, as well as to examine the other Isaianic oracles for indications of literary symmetry and of similar explanatory redactional additions.

RECOVERING FEMALE AUTHORS OF THE BIBLE

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The assumption that ancient scripture was primarily written by men and for men has been accepted by many and tested by few, especially as it concerns the Hebrew Bible. Most feminist critics, historical critics, and literary critics would agree with the statement by Danna Nolan Fewell that "the Bible, for the most part, is an alien text (to women), not written by women or with women in mind."[1] Almost all biblical scholars can safely agree that male prophets, scribes, and poets wrote the majority of the books of the Hebrew Bible. However, there is that caveat: "for the most part."

Although many sections of the Bible may seem alien to women, there is evidence that a few of these texts were actually composed by women. Surprisingly, literature on this theory is almost completely absent. There have been many articles and books published in the last few decades by both male and female feminist critics that reevaluate stories about women in the Bible and that analyze the tragic, violent, or flippant way that women are sometimes discussed in the Bible.[2] However, finding scholarly work discussing whether certain texts were actually composed or even written down initially by women is nearly impossible.

Proving that certain texts were actually written by women is impossible, but providing evidence that some texts *could* have been written by women is

1. Danna Nolan Fewell, "Reading the Bible Ideologically: Feminist Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, eds. Stephen Haynes and Steven McKenzie (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 270.

2. Examples include stories like the concubine raped by Benjaminites, Tamar (both, for different reasons), and the many allegories in which Israel or Judah is compared to a wife who has prostituted herself out, after which YHWH decides to expose her to rape, beatings, and humiliation from "the nations." This last category of biblical pericope has been the topic of much discussion. See Linda Day, "Rhetoric and Domestic Violence in Ezekiel 16," *Biblical Interpreter* 8, no. 3 (2000): 205–30.

possible. Although no one can prove definitively who wrote the Bible, or even the genders of individual authors, it is worthwhile to question the assumption that all texts are masculine and to entertain the idea of a female author. Three texts that are not only about women, but which are also explicitly attributed to women in the text of the Bible, are the Song of Deborah,[3] the Song of the Mother of King Lemuel,[4] and Hannah's Prayer.[5] These texts all share a few similarities that could indicate a "feminine genre": the use of poetic verse, praise of deity, interest in women and women's concerns as their primary subject matter, and sympathy towards women's suffering in situations such as war and sexual violence. Considering the possibility that female authorship could exist in the Bible opens the field of feminist Biblical criticism to new possibilities and areas of study.

Evidence of Female Authorship

How can scholars recognize when a biblical text has been written by a woman? Outside of the texts themselves, there is not much authentic literature about how the Bible was written and by whom. A narrative or song attributed to a certain person in the text or by tradition by no means makes the authorship certain—something biblical scholars know well.[6]

Most texts in the Hebrew Bible show a very negative view of the fairer sex by male biblical authors. Within texts like the Adam and Eve narrative, the story of the concubine raped and killed by the Benjaminites, and other "texts of terror"[7] for women, there are glimpses of women being blamed, raped, and killed. The male authors of these texts typically show little or no compassion. Women's feelings are considered much less than that of their male counterparts.[8] All of these texts lead us to the conclusion that women's voices were silenced and unwanted by this society.

However, other Hebrew Bible pericopes have a more positive view of women and the importance of listening to women's words. Chief among these is the account of Josiah and Huldah. When Josiah finds the "Book of the Law" in the temple, he asks his advisors (including Hilkiah the High Priest) to go

3. "On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song." (Judg 5:1)
4. "The sayings of King Lemuel — a song with which his mother instructed him." (Prov 31:1)
5. "Then Hannah prayed and said . . . " (1 Sam 2:1)
6. Richard Elliot Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Harpercollins, 1987).
7. See Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).
8. Compare David's concerns in the case of Tamar and Amnon.

and "inquire of YHWH."[9] Oddly, instead of praying directly to YHWH (after all, the High Priest of YHWH is among them), they turn to the Prophetess Huldah in order to inquire of YHWH. Huldah is one of several women referred to in the Hebrew Bible as a prophetess.[10] The Deuteronomistic author of the text, as well as King Josiah, the High Priest Hilkiah, and three other important aristocratic men, obviously believed Huldah spoke for YHWH, and they not only sought out her counsel, but recorded it afterwards.[11] This pericope provides evidence that the words of "wise women" and prophetesses were sought out and recorded.

Female Authorship in the Ancient Near East

In order to recognize markers of female authorship we may need to look outside of the Bible, at texts known to be authored by women anciently and in similar areas and cultures. Here, we will look at the poetry of Enheduanna, High Priestess of the moon god Nanna at Ur in Sumeria during the third millennium BCE.

Enheduanna was the daughter of the Akkadian King Sargon, and she was appointed by her father to be the En-Priestess of Ur as he conquered Mesopotamia. She is the first author in history of either sex whose name we know and whose works are attributed to her. She lived during a time of great cultural change in Sumeria, and she was instrumental in uniting the culturally diverse kingdom her father created. Archaeologist Leonard Wooley rediscovered Enheduanna in 1927 when he found an alabaster disk bearing her name and image in the Early Dynastic Level of the *giparu* at Ur.[12]

On this disk, which was originally found broken in several pieces and has been heavily reconstructed, we see Enheduanna in a flounced dress and a traditional Sumerian rolled-brim cap, though the cap is a restoration and what her original headdress looked like is unclear. She is flanked by three people, all of which are likely male temple attendants, and the man in front of Enheduanna

9. 2 Kgs 22:13. For Hebrew Bible translations, I use the New International Version with a few of my own variations—for example, I always substitute "the LORD" for "YHWH". This will make more sense in the context of the poetry of Enheduanna, who was praising a single Goddess with a name, as Hannah was praising her named God.

10. Others are Miriam, Deborah, Isaiah's wife, Noadiah, and a few false prophetesses (Ezek 13:17).

11. 2 Kgs 22.

12. Irene Winter, "Women in Public: The Disk of Enheduanna, The Beginning of the Office of En-Priestess, and the Weight of Visual Evidence," *RAI* 33 (1987): 195.

is making an offering on an altar before a Ziggurat.[13] On the reverse of the disk is the name Enheduanna, "true lady of Nanna, wife of Nanna."[14]

Limestone Disk of Enheduanna, University of Pennsylvania Museum

Since this discovery, several Babylonian clay tablets have been found bearing copies of poems attributed to Enheduanna. Her known anthology consists of three long poems to Inanna, three poems to Nanna, and forty-two temple hymns celebrating each of the several temples throughout Sargon's kingdom. Because of these discoveries and others,[15] scholars now have access to a wealth of female literature from the ancient Near East. We know that at least noblewomen in Mesopotamia could have been educated, literate, and artistically expressive, composing poetry within only a few hundred years of the invention of writing. Despite the very patriarchal society of her time, Enheduanna was well known, well read, well respected, and a talented poet. She was a religious leader in her community, whom men respected and followed,[16] very

13. The restoration of this Ziggurat is debated and considered improper by some. Winter, "Women in Public," 68.

14. Betty De Shong Meador, *Inanna, Lady of Largest Heart: Poems of the Sumerian High Priestess Enheduanna* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 41.

15. Some other examples of female authorship in the ancient Near East are the account written on two paving stones in Harran by Adad-guppi (Marc Van de Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East* [Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007], 279) and the Wadi Daliyeh papyri, which contain legal texts written by the Samaritan woman, Babatha (Eric M. Meyers and Sean Burt, "Exile and Return: From the Babylonian Destruction to the Beginnings of Hellenism," in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*, ed. Hershel Shanks [Washington DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2011], 234–35).

16. Although archaeologists have not discovered any texts mentioning Enheduanna outside of her own poems and the inscription on the Enheduanna Disk, a careful reading of her own work describes how she was able to function in a masculine way in a patriarchal society—to the point where she is told by a man to castrate herself (Meador, *Inanna*, 177).

similar to the description we have of Deborah in Judges 4.[17] The very existence of Enheduanna and her writings is evidence that female authorship was not only possible, but plausible in Israel. However, a stronger argument is made by comparing Enheduanna's poetry with female-attributed texts in the Hebrew Bible.

Hannah's Prayer and Lady of Largest Heart

The poem "In-nin-sa-gur-ra," or "Lady of Largest Heart," is a collection of praise hymns to Inanna following a long period of suffering by Enheduanna.[18] In this poem, Enheduanna attempts to convince Inanna to ease her suffering by praising Inanna's many wonderful qualities and testifying of how faithful she is in worshipping her goddess.

> Lady of Largest Heart
> Keen-for-battle Queen
> Joy of the Annuna
>
> Eldest daughter of the Moon
> In all lands supreme
> Tower among great rulers
> …
> Who dares defy her
> Queen of lifted head
> She is greater than the mountain[19]

The first few lines of this poem praise Inanna and establish her as the greatest among all gods and kings alike. This introduction of praise and veneration is echoed in Hannah's Prayer:

17. In the introduction to Judges 4, Deborah is described using typically masculine phraseology: "leading Israel at that time," deciding disputes, acting as a judge in the Ephraimite hill country, and ultimately leading an army into battle.

18. The cause of this pain is never expressed, although the effects are explained clearly: "my Lady/what day will you have mercy/how long will I cry a moaning prayer/I am yours/why do you slay me?" (Meador, *Lady of Largest Heart*, 134.)

19. For translations of Enheduanna's poetry, I used Betty De Shong Meador's translations in *Inanna, Lady of Largest Heart: Poems of the Sumerian High Priestess Enheduanna* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000). Although Meador is not a Sumerian scholar, she worked closely with several, such as Daniel Foxvog, while creating these translations. I have found her volume to be the most complete translation of Enheduanna's poems to Inanna.

> My heart rejoices in YHWH
> In YHWH my horn is lifted high
> …
> There is no one holy like YHWH
> There is no one besides you
> There is no rock like our God[20]

Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1–10 is a short but profound poem attributed to Hannah. This poem appears, according to the text, to have been sung by Hannah in the courtyard of the Temple in Shiloh after she weaned her son, Samuel, whom she had promised to YHWH in a previous year. The impetus for Hannah's promise with YHWH came from the continual provocation by "her rival," Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah. According to the account in 1 Samuel 1:6–8, Peninnah regularly drove Hannah to tears by ridiculing her for her barrenness. This prayer is a song of triumph, praising YHWH who has the power to make "the barren [bear] seven" and cause "she that hath many children [to] wax feeble." Hannah pined for a child for years, and after being blessed with a child, placed him into the service of YHWH as promised. In this prayer, she continues her praise of YHWH for taking away her "shame."

The underlying theme of this text, jealousy between two women brought about by difficulty in conceiving, is exclusively feminine.[21] In the Bible, barrenness is never attributed to men, but is attributed to women many times.[22] In ancient Near Eastern contexts, childlessness is almost always considered a defect in a wife, and not in a husband.[23] Because of this, it was very shameful for ancient women to not bear children, especially when another of her husband's wives was bearing children.[24] This song is then mainly about the triumph over shame that Hannah experienced after the birth of her son; shame that was placed on her because of the expectations of her culture. In both this prayer and in "Lady of the Largest Heart," these poets praise the power of their deity to bring shame on their enemies and bring ruin on the strong.

20. 1 Sam 2:1–2.

21. Or, at least, it was exclusively feminine in this cultural context. Today, with our better understanding of how conception works, we know that men can just as easily be the cause of barrenness, and it is entirely possible for jealousy to arise between two men because one is fertile and the other is not.

22. John Byron, "Infertility and the Bible 2: The Defective Wife," *The Biblical World: Dedicated to the Study of All Things Biblical* (blog), 26 Jan 2011, http://thebiblicalworld.blogspot.com/2011/01/childlessness-and-bible-2-defective.html?m=1.

23. Hennie J. Marsman, *Women in Ugarit and Israel: Their Social and Religious Position in the Context of the Ancient Near East*, OtSt 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 176.

24. Similar situations arise in other biblical passages, such as the fallout between Sarah and Hagar (Gen 16:4–6) and Rachel and Leah (Gen 30:1–2).

The one who disobeys
She does chase, twist
afflict with jumbled eyes
…
Greatest of the great rulers
A pit trap for the headstrong
a rope snare for the evil
…
What she has crushed to powder
Never will rise up
The scent of fear stains her robe
She wears
The carved-out ground plan
Of Heaven and Earth
…
Inanna
You draw men into unending strife
Or crown with fame
A favored person's life[25]

Do not keep talking so proudly
Or let your mouth speak such arrogance
For YHWH is a God who knows
And by him deeds are weighed[26]
…
For the foundations of the earth are YHWH's
On them he has set the world

He will guard the feet of his faithful servants
But the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness
Because it is not by strength that a man prevails

Those who oppose YHWH will be broken
The Most High will thunder from heaven
YHWH will judge the ends of the earth.

He will give strength to his king
and exalt the horn of his annointed[27]

Especially striking is the explicit assertion, in both texts, that the deity has control over heaven and earth. Enheduanna writes that Inanna wears upon her "the carved-out ground plan of heaven and earth," while Hannah remarks that "the foundations of the earth are YHWH's." Here we see two very similar compositions: both glorify each woman's deity, both extoll YHWH and Inanna's role in architecturally creating and shaping the earth,[28] and both rejoice in

25. Meador, *Inanna*, 117–36.
26. 1 Sam 2:3.
27. 1 Sam 2:8b–10.
28. It is interesting to note that in the etiological narrative of Mesopotamia, Inanna was not actually the deity that created and shaped the earth, rather it was Apsu and Tiamat. Enheduanna, through her poetry, raises Inanna to a position among the Mesopotamian Pantheon that she had not hitherto enjoyed, that of ruler over all other gods. This was a theology that persisted for the next few hundred years in Mesopotamia. See Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

their respective deity's power to destroy enemies and the wicked. Keeping in mind that worship is not an exclusively male experience, but is a shared experience between both genders, these similarities could point to a "woman's genre" in the ancient Near East. There are masculine texts laid out in a similar manner, which could indicate instead a more general pattern of praise hymn utilized by both male and female authors. However, the emphasis on female characters and experiences in the texts discussed here mark them as feminine rather than masculine.[29]

The Song of Deborah and the Exaltation of Inanna

Another of Enheduanna's long poems to Inanna is Nin-me-šar-ra, or "The Exaltation of Inanna." This piece, unlike the majority of Enheduanna's earlier works, is not simply a hymn of praise to her goddess, but an autobiographical story of the time when Enheduanna was driven away from her post as En-Priestess of Ur by Lugalanne, a man who took part in the rebellion in Ur against Naram-Sin (Enheduanna's nephew). In this poem, Enheduanna describes all of the pain and humiliation this man has brought upon her and pleads with Inanna to open her heart to her again and help her. By the end of the poem, Enheduanna is reinstated as En-Priestess of Nanna.

> Truly for your gain
> You drew me toward
> My holy quarters
> I, the High Priestess
> I, Enheduanna
> There I raised the ritual basket
> There I sang the shout of joy[30]

This poem shares a few similarities with the Song of Deborah, a mix of praise and storytelling in the genre of a poem told in the first person. In 1936, W. F. Albright made the claim that "Nearly all competent biblical scholars believe that the Song (of Deborah) is the oldest document which the Bible has

29. To clarify, I am only arguing that the poetic Prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1–10 could have been written by a woman, not the narrative surrounding the poem. Although this narrative draws on the same feminine themes as the poem, it seems more likely that the author of the greater Samuel narrative wrote it. The author may have used Hannah's account as a primary source, while the poem itself seems to be a direct quote.

30. Meador, *Inanna*, 174.

preserved in approximately its original form."[31] This passage begins with the phrase, "And Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang on this day."[32] Here we have a clear attribution to a woman as the composer and singer of this song, although it is doubled with an attribution to a man. It is difficult to tell which verses can be safely attributed to Deborah. Verses 6–9 can confidently be attributed to her because she refers to herself in the first person: "Villagers in Israel would not fight, they held back until I, Deborah, arose, I arose a mother in Israel."[33] With an attribution and a first-person reference to a female author, it is obvious that, at least traditionally, this text was considered to be composed in part by a female author.

A striking similarity between these two song-stories is displayed in the following passages:

The Woman will dash his fate
That Lugalanne
The mountains, the biggest floods
Lie at Her feet

The Woman is as great as he
She will break the city from him[34]

Most blessed of women be Jael
the wife of Heber the Kenite
most blessed of tent-dwelling women
…
Her hand reached for the tent peg
Her right hand for the workman's hammer
She struck Sisera, she crushed his head
She shattered and pierced his temple
At her feet he sank, he fell; there he lay[35]

In both of these works, the poet emphasizes the fact that woman ultimately triumphs over man, and that women are just as capable as men at winning battles and carrying out the work of their deity. This is an aspect that is hardly, if ever, found in literature written by men, especially in the ancient Near East. It is also one of the most compelling reasons to attribute the Song to a woman.

The Song of Deborah and The Exaltation of Inanna are both beautiful, long poems that glorify the poets' deities, but that also dwell on human women in the story. Deborah herself is a major figure in the Song, who rose up and

31. W.F. Albright, "The Song of Deborah in the Light of Archaeology," *BASOR* 62 (1936): 26–31.
32. Judg 5:1.
33. Judg 5:7.
34. Meador, *Inanna*, 175.
35. Judg 5:24, 26–27.

led the tribes of Israel into battle against her enemies. Jael is the ultimate victor in the battle.[36] The fact that these traditionally masculine roles of leader and victor in war are given to women could be another indication that the Song of Deborah was actually composed by a woman. Female characters in masculine-attributed texts of the Bible are generally treated as the victims of violence rather than the instigators, or are resigned to the position of mother or wife and their actions are not expounded upon outside of those roles.[37]

In the Exaltation of Inanna as well, the poet remarks on her own role in carrying out the work of Inanna:

> I have heaped up coals in the brazier
> I have washed in the sacred basin
> I have readied your room
> in the tavern
> (may your heart be cooled for me)
> Suffering bitter pangs
> I gave birth to this exaltation
> For you my Queen[38]

Enheduanna describes here her role in actually giving birth to Inanna's exaltation. This seems to be a reference to her religious innovations in Ur, which exalted Inanna to a position above all other gods in the Mesopotamian Pantheon, even exalting her above Nanna whom Enheduanna explicitly served.[39] This account parallels the accounts of Deborah and Jael, in which women are used to exalt YHWH as the fulfillment of prophecies.[40]

However, not only are stories of "righteous" women allied with Israel given a place in this poem; the very end of the Song of Deborah reflects on the usual situation of women when their men go to war.

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36. Jael is also "masculinized" in this pericope by the inversion of the traditionally female roles of lover, mother, and rape victim. The scene of Sisera fleeing to Jael's tent is ironically full of sexual and maternal imagery. The repeated action of Jael "covering" Sisera (ותכסהו) is suggestive of a sexual encounter. There is also maternal imagery in the action of covering him with a blanket and bringing him milk. All of these roles are reversed with Jael's betrayal.

37. Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

38. Meador, *Inanna*, 179.

39. This is referred to earlier in the poem, when Enheduanna writes, "I shall not/pay tribute to Nanna/it is of you/I proclaim" (Meador, *Inanna*, 178).

40. "YHWH will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." (Judg 4:9)

Through the window peered Siser's mother
Behind the lattice she cried out
"Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why is the clatter of his chariots delayed?[41]

The situation described here is a caricature of the "woman at the window" motif.[42] The use of this image appears to be meant to appeal especially to other women, mothers, wives, and daughters, who have been in that position before. However, the initial attempt of the author to invoke sorrow for this bereaved mother on the part of the reader is dramatically reversed with the following verses.

The wisest of her ladies answer her
Indeed, she keeps saying to herself
"Are they not finding and dividing the spoils?
A womb or two for each man
Colorful garments as plunder for Sisera
Colorful garments embroidered
Highly embroidered garments for my neck
All this as plunder?"
So may all your enemies perish, YHWH![43]

The mothers and wives of Israel's enemies stand gleefully contemplating the rape of Israelite women by their sons, and the plunder that they will bring back to them. Once again, this condemnation of the formerly pitiable mother of Sisera is especially effective when used before a female audience, who were more likely to become rape victims than men in this context because of accepted war practices.[44] In fact, some believe that the repeated sexual language in the Jael/Sisera section of the poem may be an allusion to a rape of Jael by Sisera, although her invitation for him to enter the tent makes this less likely. However, even this traditional view of women as easy victims of rape is turned on its head as Jael drives the tent peg into Sisera's mouth and then the ground.[45]

41. Judg 5:28.

42. D. N. Pienaar, "Symbolism in the Samaria Ivories and Architecture," *AcT* 2 (2008): 48–68.

43. Judg 5:29–31.

44. Susan Brooks Thistlewaite, "You May Enjoy the Spoil of Your Enemies: Rape as a Biblical Metaphor for War," *Semeia* 61 (1993): 59–75.

45. Fewell and Gunn argue that the word usually translated as "his temple/side of his head" (רקתו) should instead be translated as mouth because of the other uses of the word in Psalms and Song of Solomon. "In Songs, both the sequence of description and the (sexually

This transforms the woman, who would predictably be the rape victim in this scenario, into a figurative rapist.

This sheds light on a possible reason for Jael's actions: she was married to a man who had allied himself with the losing side of the war. As a civilian who lived in the war zone, she knew what was coming her way. By killing Sisera and presenting his body to Barak, she became a hero instead of a victim in the aftermath of this battle. Similar to the characters of Deborah and Enheduanna, Jael takes charge of her own position in society, rather than having her actions dictated by men. This account of Jael has inverted every patriarchal notion of women; it is truly unique within the biblical cannon. All of these factors combine to suggest that this song was in fact composed by a woman. If not Deborah herself, then perhaps a contemporary woman or a woman who lived shortly after her time.

Another text in the Hebrew Bible that is both about women and attributed to a woman is the well-quoted passage in Proverbs 31 on the qualities of a virtuous woman. This passage has historically been interpreted as a man's idealized notion of what a good wife should be, and it may be just that.[46] However, the introduction of this poem offers us another option: what if this is actually a *woman's* idealized notion of what a good wife should be?

> The sayings of King Lemuel – a song with which his mother instructed him:
> "Listen, my son! Listen, son of my womb!
> Listen, my son, the answer to my prayers!"[47]

The attribution of this saying is a bit confusing; is King Lemuel the composer, or his mother? However, the first stanza of the poem makes it clear who is speaking: it is told from the first-person perspective of Lemuel's mother. From the text, it seems that this song could either be an exact transcription of a song sung by King Lemuel's mother, or King Lemuel's rendition of the song, in which case it could have been heavily edited and changed to the point where the poem was no longer truly the composition of a woman.

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charged) comparison to a 'split pomegranate' strongly suggest 'mouth' rather than 'temple.'" (Danna Nolan Fewell and D.M. Gunn, "Controlling Perspectives: Women, Men, and the Authority of Violence in Judges 4 and 5," *JAAR* 58:3 [1990]: 389–411.)

46. Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann, *Schriftbeweis* (Nördlingen: C. H. Bed'schen, 1960), 404.

47. Prov 31:1–2. This translation is my own.

In this song, Lemuel's mother offers him advice and chastisement. She advises him to not "spend [his] strength on women,"[48] to avoid beer and becoming drunk, to speak up for the destitute, and in general to be a good, righteous, and fair judge and king. Following this, there is an abrupt shift to the discussion of a virtuous woman; so abrupt, in fact, that most scholars think that Proverbs 31:1–9 is a separate text entirely from Proverbs 31:10–31.[49] The recipient of this song, King Lemuel, is only mentioned in this proverb, and is otherwise unknown in the Bible or extrabiblical Jewish literature. There are several theories about who Lemuel was. According to rabbinic tradition, Lemuel was another name for Solomon, which would make the composer of this proverb Bathsheba.[50] However, this tradition was most likely an attempt to conform to the idea that Solomon is the author of the Book of Proverbs.[51]

This song is different in many ways from the previous feminine texts we have surveyed thus far. There is almost nothing theological about it. It is not written as a praise of YHWH or another god, but is rather a song of advice from a mother to her son. However, it does maintain a few of the genre characteristics described thus far. Namely, it is in verse form rather than prose, it is told from a first-person perspective, and it specifically discusses women. The secular, human material is also different from Enheduanna's texts. Despite the difference in genre, its feminine attribution makes it possible that verses 1–9, or perhaps even the whole proverb, were written by a woman.

Markers of a Feminine Genre

From the examples listed above—and assuming that most biblical texts attributed to women in the Bible actually were composed by women—we can see a few defining features of this genre:

1. Women always used poetic verse when writing; this could have been either written or sung from memory.
2. Their poetry usually consisted of praise to YHWH, although secular ideas may be addressed instead.

48. Prov 31:3.

49. Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985).

50. Moncure Daniel Conway, *Solomon and Solomonic Literature* (Charleston: BiblioBazaar, 2008), 67.

51. For some interesting insights on the discussion of the feminine, and especially the female "Wisdom" in Proverbs, see Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985) and *Wise, Strange, and Holy: The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

3. These compositions usually included women and women's concerns as their subject matter, such as a woman's place in society, pregnancy and barrenness, rape, children, and marriage.
4. The tone of the poetry is usually sympathetic towards the plight of women.

There may never be a way to definitively prove who the authors of individual biblical texts really were. Even the authorship of the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible or the Epistles of the New Testament, all attributed to certain men, are disputed in scholarly circles. It is a popular thing to discuss the Deuteronomist, Proto-Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, etc., and stay away from suggesting that any book of the Bible was actually written by who it says it was written by. However, in many of these arguments, an alternative author is not suggested; it is simply fashionable to question everything the Bible claims. This seems to be the case with feminine texts as well. We tend to shy away from attributing anything directly to Deborah, Hannah, Bathsheba, etc., even though—as is the case with the Song of Deborah—the text seems relatively unchanged and dates back to the period in which the historical events were claimed to have happened. I am not suggesting that scholars begin to exercise a hermeneutic of faith. However, an extreme hermeneutic of suspicion is just as subjective in most situations. Unless there is another explanation that makes better sense, to me it seems natural to assume that certain biblical texts were indeed written by the person to whom they are attributed. This holds true for texts attributed to women. There is much stronger evidence for female literacy in the ancient Near East than many think, and it is a disservice to everyone to assume, in the face of all this evidence, that there is no female composition in the Bible. These feminine texts help women relate to the Bible in a way that other texts do not allow, and they give us an intimate glimpse into the lives, feelings, and art of ancient Israelite women.

A POSTEXILIC READING OF THE BIBLICAL FLOOD NARRATIVE

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Among the most widely debated passages in the Old Testament is the flood narrative. Scholars have long puzzled over the vagueness, inconsistencies, and outright contradictions in the account of Genesis chapters 6–9, attempting to answer where it came from, what traditions lay behind it, what it means, and how it originally read.[1] It may never be possible to know with certainty the answers to many of these questions, but as new discoveries, ideas, and methods come forward we will continue to attempt to answer them in the best possible way.

There has been much study on the early development of the biblical flood narrative—its sources and original meaning; but this article will attempt a reading as it would have been understood by the Jews at the time it reached the form in which we now see it.[2] The time period emphasized will be from the

1. Though the source-critical conclusions about the Flood Narrative will be briefly reviewed in this article, this passage of text has been studied through many different methodological lenses which will not be covered here. These include text critical studies of the terminologies used, studies that defend the unity of the passage on literary and narrative grounds, and comparisons with other Mesopotamian versions of the flood story.

2. The extent of scholarly work that has been produced regarding this passage is too vast to be completely summarized here. For the purpose of this article, specific mention will only be made of that literature which directly pertains to the thesis of this essay. As far as I can tell, there have not been any previous studies addressing the significance of the flood narrative when read as a post-exilic document. For exegetical analyses of the flood narrative, see Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary of the Book of Genesis, Part One: From Adam to Noah* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961); Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary of the Book of Genesis, Part Two: From Noah to Abraham* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984); David J. A. Clines, "The Significance of the 'Sons of God' Episode (Genesis 6: 1–4) in the Context of the 'Primeval History' (Genesis 1–11)," *JSOT* 13 (1979): 33–46; Lyle Eslinger, "A Contextual Identification of the bene ha'elohim and benoth ha'adam in Genesis 6: 1–4," *JSOT* 4 (1979): 65–73; Robert W. E. Forrest, "Paradise Lost Again: Violence and Obedience in the Flood Narrative," *JSOT* 19 (1994): 3–17; Jon C. Gertz, "Source Criticism in the Primeval History of Genesis: An Outdated Paradigm

Babylonian conquest until shortly after the return from exile. We will examine the religious and political changes that took place over this time period which produced the environment in which the final redaction of Genesis 6:1–9:17 was created. Specific emphasis will be placed on the themes of personal obedience, destruction of the wicked, proper ritual worship, and covenant. After reviewing the developing importance of these themes from the last days of the kingdom of Judah to the return from exile, we will examine how the flood narrative would have been read by contemporaries in light of their recent past.

The exact date at which the final redaction of the flood narrative took place is unknown, though many scholars have attempted to date the various

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for the Study of the Pentateuch?" *FAT* 78 (2011): 169–80; John Maier, "The Flood Story: Four Literary Approaches," in *Approaches to Teaching the Hebrew Bible as Literature in Translation*, eds. Barry N. Olshen and Yael S. Feldman (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1989), 106–109; Jacob Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis: A New American Translation,* Vol. 1 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1985); David L. Petersen, "The Yahwist on the Flood," *VT* (1976): 438–46; John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910); Paul Romanoff, "A Third Version of the Flood Narrative," *JBL* (1931): 304–07; Gordon J. Wenham, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative," *VT* 28 (1978): 336–48. For discussion on the dating of the composition of the Pentateuch, see W. F. Albright, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra: A Historical Survey* (New York: Harper and Row, 1949); Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch,* (New York: Doubleday, 1992); David M. Carr, "The Rise of Torah," in *Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding its Promulgation and Acceptance*, eds. Gary N. Knoppers and Bernard M. Levinson (Warsaw, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007); Francois Castel, *The History of Israel and Judah in Old Testament Times*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1985); David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978); Philip R. Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel": A Study in Biblical Origins* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); C. Houtman, "Ezra and the Law: Observations of the Supposed Relation Between Ezra and the Pentateuch," in *Remembering All the Way: A Collection of Old Testament Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1981); H. Jagersma, *A History of Israel in the Old Testament Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); Norbert Lohfink, *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of the Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994); Benjamin D. Sommer, "Dating Pentateuchal Texts and the Perils of Pseudo-Historicism," in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*, eds. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); James W. Watts, "Using Ezra's Time as a Methodological Pivot for Understanding the Rhetoric and Functions of the Pentateuch," in *The Pentateuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

Another venue of research involving the Pentateuch and the exile is the extent to which Jewish literature was influenced by Canaanite and Mesopotamian mythology. This topic will not be broached in the current study, but significant scholarship has been conducted on the subject. For references, see Clines, "The Significance of the 'Sons of God' Episode," 33–46; Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (New York: Oxford, 2000); Lyle Eslinger, "A Contextual Identification of the bene ha'elohim and benoth ha'adam in Genesis 6:1–4," *JSOT* 4 (1979): 65–73; Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels,* (Chicago: Chicago, 1946); A. R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic, Volume II* (New York: Oxford, 2003); Shemuel Shaviv, "The Polytheistic Origins of the Biblical Flood Narrative," *VT* 54 (2004): 527–48.

sources seen within it. Our best approach is to assume that the narrative was finalized at the time that the Pentateuch as a whole became part of Jewish scripture.[3] When seeking a date for the flood narrative or other passages in the Pentateuch, the typical scholarly method used has been source criticism. Though its validity is debated by some scholars,[4] source criticism has made major contributions to our understanding of the development of Pentateuchal texts. Probably the most influential product of source criticism is Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis, which has been used, studied, and debated by generations of Bible scholars since.[5] While taking these conclusions into account, this article will not use source criticism as its primary methodology since our focus here is on the final form of the biblical flood narrative, not the sources from which it came.[6]

Until the last few decades, the prevailing view has been that early versions of the Pentateuch were in the process of development before the exile and that it was compiled in Babylon in its final form from these earlier sources.[7] Recently, however, the consensus has shifted in favor of a post-exilic Persian

3. The terms "Pentateuch," "Torah," and "Law" will be assumed to be generally interchangeable in this article.

4. See Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel"*, 81–88; Wenham, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative," 336–48; Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch,* 77. Many scholars now believe that the Pentateuchal narrative as we now see it is a post-exilic invention. Proponents of this theory argue that each of the older sources contained collections of individual stories that were later combined into a continuous history of the Israelite nation, from Creation to the conquest of the promised land. See Carr, "The Rise of Torah" 48–56.

5. The Documentary Hypothesis says that the Pentateuch was created primarily by combining four different sources together. These sources are given the designations of Elohistic (E), Yahwistic (J), Priestly (P), and Deuteronomistic (D). J and E are both considered to be folkloric accounts of origin stories, explaining the early history of the ancestors of Israel and the nature of their god. E may have been composed as far back as the time of David. J was probably a bit later, no earlier than 750 B.C.E. D began with the reforms of Josiah and was mostly written during the exile in order to explain what had caused the fall of Judah. P is most likely a composition from the very end of Judah into the Exile, though various scholars sometimes place it before the exile. It is concerned with ritual procedure more than deep religious questions. See Skinner, *A Commentary on Genesis,* xl–lviii, lx-lxvi; Castel, *The History of Israel and Judah,* 144–46; Lohfink, *Theology of the Pentateuch,* 138–65. For an excellent history of the development and later use of Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis see Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 1–28.

6. The final redaction of the Pentateuch is most likely later than any of the sources expounded in the Documentary Hypothesis. This would mean that the theme and overall purpose of the narratives within it would not be those intended by any of the sources from which it was created; rather the text of the various sources was used by a later redactor to convey his own themes. Therefore, for the dating of this final redaction, other methodologies than source criticism must be employed. See Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch,* 25; Skinner, *Commentary on Genesis*, xl–lii.

7. Albright, *The Biblical Period,* 52–96; Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 97–100.

period of composition.[8] This means that though many of the individual stories from the Pentateuch existed in various forms before the exile, they did not start to be connected into a continuous history of the origin of Israel until the exile and later. The narrative of the Pentateuch as it stands can be seen to reflect the concerns of a small vassal state of the Persian Empire, which, having recently sustained serious blows to its culture, was desperate to maintain its national identity and thereby avoid being absorbed into the surrounding nations. It is the purpose of this article to show how the story of the Jews returning from Exile can be not only read back into the narrative of the Pentateuch as a whole, but elements of it can also be seen in each individual narrative, as exemplified by the story of the flood.

We will here focus on several specific themes, noting how those themes developed throughout the history of Israel and also observing their presence in the flood narrative. Source criticism tells us that several recensions of the story existed from various time periods in Israelite history, but the elements of each recension that were included in the final version emphasize certain themes. These themes may be an indication of the primary concerns of postexilic Judaism.

Jewish literature came to focus on a pattern of disobedience of Yahweh's chosen people, punishment, and later deliverance by Yahweh. The story of the flood also features a great destruction as a consequence of disobedience and the preservation of a small righteous remnant to continue in a covenant relationship with Yahweh.[9] Narratives of the primeval history such as this one established the pattern of Yahweh's interaction with humankind that would later develop into a law given to a chosen people.[10] Obedience to his commands, especially concerning proper ritual worship, the consequences of disobedience, and the establishment of covenant—themes that form the main features of the flood narrative[11]—are the basic principles behind the Torah. In the religious life of second-temple Judaism, these themes took the form of holiness, centralization of Jewish life on the temple of Jerusalem, and status as Yahweh's chosen people.[12] In order to establish the context for our reading

8. Carr, "The Rise of Torah," 39–47; Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 51–52; Watts, "Using Ezra's Time for Understanding the Pentateuch," 489–94.

9. Many scholars have noted that the theme of impending destruction as a consequence for disobedience seems to be intentionally foreshadowed in the narratives of the Pentateuch, especially the Primeval History. See Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch,* 35.

10. Forrest, "Paradise Lost Again," 3–4.

11. Forrest, "Paradise Lost Again," 3–4.

12. Wardle, *History and Religion of Israel,* 171–73.

of the flood narrative, we must understand how these themes came to be so central in Jewish national literature.[13]

The first event recorded in Jewish literature that we can see as reflecting the developing concept of what would become proper ritual worship is the story of Hezekiah's reforms, found in 2 Kings 18 and 2 Chronicles 29–32.[14] These reforms focus on the centralization of the cult in the Jerusalem temple. This concept became increasingly important to the religion of Judah and was used later as a criterion by which the kings and the people were evaluated and judged. Even though the histories of Kings and Chronicles were written much later, this criterion for evaluation must have been used even as early on as the time of Hezekiah because elements of it can be seen even in the writings of First Isaiah. However, it became especially important during the exile as various challenges to the religion arose. Not least among these challenges was the question of why Yahweh had allowed his chosen people to fall. Evaluating the righteousness of the nation based on how well they observed the proper form of ritual worship allowed for the view that it was not Yahweh who had abandoned his people, but that rather they, his people, had betrayed him by turning to other gods and unauthorized practices.

These ritual standards became a means of evaluating the righteousness both of the kings and of the nation as a whole. The Deuteronomistic history (Samuel–Kings) attributed the downfall of Judah to the failure of the Davidic monarchy to lead the people according to God's will.[15] Hezekiah and Josiah had been good, righteous kings, but the bad had outweighed the good in the end.

Prophetic literature from the period of the exile and after clearly illustrates the increasing emphasis on punishing the people for disobedience to the established cult, this time extending the blame not just to the nation collectively,

13. This is the history of Israel and Judah as found in the biblical record. We would do well to remember, as many have justly pointed out, that the biblical account may be little more than a post-exilic recreation of history. See, for example, Davies, *In Search of Ancient Israel,* 81–86.

14. Whether or not the accounts of Kings and Chronicles, which were written long after the events took place, represent an accurate historical picture is inconsequential. They are certainly based upon true events and, more importantly, reflect the exilic and post-exilic idea of proper devotion to Yahweh.

15. Note the pattern begun in 1 Kings 15:1–3: "Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijam began to reign over Judah. He reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom. He committed all the sins that his father did before him; his heart was not true to the Lord his God, like the heart of his father David." This pattern of analysis of kings based on the righteousness of David continues throughout the book of Kings.

but also to individuals.[16] Jeremiah's prophecies from the early stages of the Babylonian conquest remind the people of Judah of everything that God has done for them as his chosen people (Jer 2:5–8), while condemning them for disregarding him. The point is that misfortunes that come upon Judah will be their own doing, as explained in 2:19: "Your wickedness will punish you, and your apostasies will convict you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the Lord your God; the fear of me is not in you, says the Lord God of hosts." At the same time, Ezekiel in Babylon accused the people of Jerusalem of violent crimes and of abandoning their god,[17] and prophesied of the city's final destruction: "Because you have all become dross, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. . . . I will gather you in my anger and in my wrath, and I will put you in and melt you. . . . You shall know that I the Lord have poured out my wrath upon you." (Ezek 22:19–22)

Clearly, the exiles from Judah recognized their fate as the divine justice of Yahweh for their own disobedience.[18] The Deuteronomist emphasized the collective depravity of the nation as a result of the leadership of its kings, and the prophets emphasized the wickedness of each individual.[19] The scope of condemnation ranged from a national to an individual scale, excluding no one.

In Babylon, strict definition of the Jewish religion deepened as challenges to it intensified. The immediate threat was the possibility of being absorbed into the surrounding peoples as so many other nations had been. In order to preserve national identity, personal devotion to the Israelite religion came to be emphasized—a trend that had been started earlier by the prophets. Before now, the invulnerability of the kingdom of Judah had been assumed solely on merit of being the chosen people of Yahweh. Now it became clear that that protection was contingent upon obedience. The ritual purity laws in the Law of Moses became supremely important, and regulations that distinguished the people of Judah from the other nations, such as dietary restrictions and Sabbath-day observance, came to the forefront.[20]

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16. Albright and Castel both give good analyses of this trend in prophetic writings. Albright, *The Biblical Period,* 82–92; Castel, *History of Israel and Judah,* 136–62.

17. For example, Ezekiel 22:3–4 (NIV): "Thus says the Lord God: A city! Shedding blood within itself; its time has come; making its idols, defiling itself. You have become guilty by the blood that you have shed, and defiled by the idols that you have made; you have brought your day near, the appointed time of your years has come."

18. Wardle, *History and Religion of Israel,* 193–94; J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1986), 421.

19. Ezekiel 14:14 emphasizes that even Noah, Daniel, and Job—individually righteous ancestors of the Judahites—could not by their virtues save the rest of Judah from the consequences of their own disobedience.

20. Jagersma, *A History of Israel,* 185–92.

When Cyrus of Persia conquered the Neo-Babylonian Empire and allowed the Jews to return to their homeland, things were greatly changed from the way they had been before, both politically and culturally. The danger of losing cultural identity had not disappeared with the return from exile. Judah was no longer a strong, independent kingdom, but a small vassal state to the Persian Empire which, while in the process of rebuilding itself, was surrounded by strong foreign influences. The new focus of their hope drew from deep Jewish nationalism, now centered not on the supremacy of the Davidic dynasty as it had been centuries before but on religious and cultural unification. The main seat of authority to the people of Judah became the high priest,[21] and the temple the central focus in the lives of all Jews. Strict emphasis was placed on separation from other nations.[22]

Considering the growing emphasis both on personal obedience and purity and on the centralization of the cult, it is no surprise to learn that one of the first priorities upon returning from exile was the rebuilding of the temple.[23] Essential to the cultic procedures of the purity laws was a house of God at which to sacrifice. In addition, the threat of loss to the religion, in the face of pressures from surrounding influences, necessitated a strong focal point for Jewish religious devotion.

Of more immediate significance to the current discussion of Jewish literature is the compilation of the Pentateuch. In it we can see a reflection of these themes that had developed into the post-exilic period: proper ritual worship, obedience to Yahweh, punishment for disobedience. The event that is generally seen as marking the acceptance of the Pentateuch into the Jewish literary corpus is Ezra's reading of the law ceremony in Nehemiah 8–10.[24]

Ezra's role in the canonization of the Pentateuch is far from agreed upon, however. Some scholars believe that the Pentateuch was already in its final form, and that Ezra was merely an instrument in making it part of the scriptural corpus,[25] while others think that the law that Ezra preached was not the Pentateuch we know at all.[26] This article will accept the middle ground of the argument: that though earlier versions of Pentateuchal material existed before and during the exile, Ezra had a significant role in the compilation and canonization of its final form.[27] Most important to the current discussion is

21. Castel, *History of Israel and Judah,* 154; Jagersma, *History of Israel,* 190–91.
22. See Ezra 4:1–3; 9:1–4; 10; Nehemiah 13:23–30.
23. Ezra 1:5.
24. Castel, *History of Israel and Judah,* 160–62.
25. Albright, *Biblical Period*, 94–96.
26. Houtman, "Ezra and the Law," 103–13.
27. Jagersma, *History of Israel,* 201–03.

that the covenant renewal ceremony recorded in Nehemiah 8–10 emphasizes individual commitment to a covenant of abiding by the laws given to Moses, just as does the Pentateuch as we have it.

The acceptance of the Pentateuch into Jewish scriptural canon marks a landmark leading to what Judaism would become in the future. It is a culmination of the themes that had been developing in the religion in response to the threats of the previous few centuries.[28] The stories that were collected into this canon, and the way in which they were included, emphasize the concerns that were so important in this time period. They describe the pattern of Yahweh giving commandments from the beginning, the continual disobedience of mankind and subsequent punishment, and the formation of Yahweh's chosen people with a law that would define and govern them. Of supreme importance to the Jews who had returned from exile in their current precarious state was an understanding of their nature as Yahweh's chosen people and of what they must do to maintain his favor.

In the narratives of the Pentateuch, contemporary Jews would have seen a reflection of their current condition. It would have been both a message of warning and of comfort and encouragement. Their forefathers had betrayed Yahweh's covenant and disobeyed his commandments from the beginning, for which they had repeatedly been punished; but there was always a restoration, a reconciliation of the people with their god.

Turning now back to the narrative of the flood, which is the primary focus of this article, we will examine it alongside post-exilic writings which reflect the Jews' view of their position. Writings contemporary to the time period in which the final redaction of the flood narrative was canonized can open our eyes to the way in which the Jews may have read the story.

Many post-exilic writings communicate the Jewish interpretation of the exile and the return. The Samuel–Kings history and the Chronicles history both illustrate the ways in which the people of Judah continually disobeyed the law prior to the exile. Late prophetic and poetic writings, such as Psalm 106 and Isaiah 56, employ brief summaries of the nation's history in order to draw attention to its disobedience and Yahweh's justice. Some texts discuss the flood and other primeval and patriarchal stories directly. Ezekiel referenced the righteousness of Noah and other prominent Old Testament figures in order to

28. Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel"*, 81–88; Welch, *The Work of the Chronicler: Its Purpose and Its Date* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 123; Torry, "The Chronicler as Editor and as Independent Narrator," *AJSL* 25 (1909): 157, 163–72.

The Jewish religion as we see it in the Old Testament is more likely a reflection of post-exilic ideals than of what the Israelite religion really looked like in earlier time periods. See W. L. Wardle, *The History and Religion of Israel* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 127.

teach the Jews that they would not be saved by merit of the obedience of their ancestors (Ezek 14:12–20). In these writings, it becomes clear that the Jews saw their current situation as a repetition of a pattern that had happened in the history of Yahweh's chosen people since the beginning of the world.

Recorded in Nehemiah chapters 8–10 is a particularly clear summary of this Jewish reflection on the events of the exile and the return. We earlier mentioned this passage in reference to the canonization of the Pentateuch by Ezra. Ezra returned to Jerusalem in the mid-fifth century (evidently on orders from Persia) and led the Jews in a festival for the renewal of their covenant with Yahweh. Nehemiah 8 tells us of the law being read to all the people in Jerusalem and their renewed devotion to it. Chapter 9 is in the voice of the whole congregation as they reflect upon the law they have just heard and their ancestors' disobedience to it.

There are similar literary elements in both of these narratives: the importance of strict obedience to the law, the consequences of disobedience, the preservation of a righteous remnant, the establishment of a covenant. They both explain the relationship between Yahweh and his covenant people, Israel. Unlike the gods of all the other nations, Yahweh is very concerned with the moral state of his nation and with their fidelity to him. The covenant status that the Israelite nation enjoys is conditional upon their obedience to his commands.[29] Because these two passages deal with similar concerns, Nehemiah 8–10 will provide us with a post-exilic context by which to examine Genesis 6–9.

Both narratives start with patterns of creation.[30] Genesis 1 and 2 recount the creation of the heavens, the earth, and mankind on it, and are referenced in Nehemiah 9:6. Another creation took place when Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden into a new state of existence. Similarly, after the creation of the world, a covenant family was created through Abraham (Neh 9:7-8). Then another creation took place on Sinai when this covenant people was formed into a nation (Neh 9:9-11). Commandments and instructions were then given to guide them. Adam and Eve were told to multiply and to subdue the earth; the Jews in Nehemiah 9 tell us that God gave their ancestors "right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments . . . and a law through [his] servant Moses" (vv. 13–14). This new creation begins with new instructions and guidance.

29. Jagersma, *History of Israel,* 185–86; Wardle, *History and Religion of Israel,* 164–68.

30. See Clines' theory of a "creation, uncreation, re-creation" theme in the Pentateuch. *The Theme of the Pentateuch,* 73–76; Blenkinsopp also makes a similar observation. Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 85.

The chapters leading up to the account of the flood recount the increasing disobedience of mankind as a whole.[31] Mankind has taken the commands to multiply and to subdue the earth and has corrupted them. The first violent instance of this is Cain, who subdues his brother by shedding his blood upon the earth (Gen 4:10–11). Because he has corrupted God's instructions, Cain is now told that the earth will no longer submit to him (v. 12), but that is as far as the punishment goes. God forbids the rest of mankind from killing Cain (v. 15), hoping that mankind will have learned from its mistakes and will not become further corrupted.

The same pattern can be seen in Nehemiah 9 as the people continue their narration of the history of Israel. God brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and provided for them; but they "acted presumptuously," "refused to obey," and "were not mindful of the wonders" God had done for them (Neh 9:16–17). Nevertheless, the assembly of the Jews tells us, even when the Israelites began to worship idols instead of the God who had delivered them, he "in [his] great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness" (vv. 17–18). He continued to lead and provide for them.[32]

Chapter 5 of Genesis is a genealogy, showing that God did indeed allow Adam's descendants to fill the whole earth. Likewise, the Israelites were brought into the land of Canaan, where God "multiplied their descendants like the stars of heaven" (Neh 9:22–25). Unfortunately, however, in both cases they also multiplied in wickedness.

The next stage of our pattern brings us to the point where the narrative of the Flood begins. Mankind had now become "filled with violence" (Gen 6:11) to a point that God could no longer allow it to continue. Looking upon all the inhabitants of the world he had created, he saw only eight lonely souls who were still intent on obeying him.[33] As this complete rebellion undermined his purposes for creation, it was necessary that the earth be wiped clean to start over from the obedient remnant.[34]

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31. David J. Clines observes that a theme of the Pentateuch is sin of mankind, justice of God, then mercy of God. *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978), 61–65.

32. Forrest, "Paradise Lost Again," 8–9.

33. By reflecting on the words of prophets such as Ezekiel, we come to the conclusion that the final redactor of the text took this to mean that every human being on the earth at that time, aside from Noah and his family, was wicked enough to merit divine punishment, rather than the whole world being punished for the sins of one group, as some have inferred from the episode of Genesis 6:1–4. See Ezekiel 14:14.

34. It seems that the earth itself is a key character in both the narratives of the flood and the exile. In Genesis 6, violence is tied directly to the earth: "the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth" (Gen 6:5); "the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth" (Gen 6:6); "the earth was filled with violence" (Gen 6:11); "all flesh had

Likewise, throughout the history of Israel, the people of God became steadily more disobedient and full of idolatry.[35] Nehemiah 9:30 tells us that God was patient with his people's disobedience for many years. He sent prophets to warn them, but they wouldn't listen. Looking back, the Jews who have returned from exile acknowledge: "our kings, our officials, our priests, and our ancestors have not kept your law or heeded the commandments and the warnings that you gave them." (Neh 9:34) This disobedience undermines God's plan for his holy people.[36]

So God purged wickedness on both occasions and allowed a righteous remnant to return to the land and start again.[37] In the case of the Flood, that righteous remnant consisted of eight obedient souls (Gen 6:18), while the return from the Exile was the small repentant percentage of the population that had before been in the land (Neh 9:31). The principle was the same in either case: only obedient individuals will escape the wrath of God.[38]

The preservation of the righteous remnant was followed in both cases by observance to the correct ritual procedures. The first thing we hear of Noah doing after leaving the ark is offering sacrifice to God (Gen 6:20). Likewise, the highest priority for the Jews returning from the exile was the building of the temple in order to continue offering sacrifice. Following this act, they recommitted to the commandments God had given them before. In the same way that the Jews who had returned from Exile committed again to follow the law they had been given through Moses,[39] God repeated to Noah the first commandment he had given to Adam and Eve: to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (Gen 9:1). In both cases, this reassertion of a commandment emphasizes that the people before the destruction had failed to appropriately carry out that commandment. It also warns the survivors to do better.

In their return from exile, God's people had fresh in their mind the results of their previous disobedience. Like the human race at the time of Noah, the

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corrupted its way upon the earth" (Gen 6:12). So also the Chronicler informs us that the earth is an intimately concerned character who has been deprived by generations of the Israelite people of the restful Sabbaths which are its due (2 Chr 36:21). See Forrest's analysis of the role of the earth, "Paradise Lost Again," 4–8.

35. Blenkinsopp observes the similarity between the theme of increase of sin in the Pentateuch and exilic and post-exilic prophecy. *The Pentateuch,* 76–79; see also Lohfink, *Theology of the Pentateuch,* 145–63.

36. Clines is of the opinion that in the flood narrative, exilic Jews projected themselves back into history, comparing the destruction by water for wickedness with the destruction of Jerusalem for disobedience. *The Theme of the Pentateuch,* 98.

37. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch,* 98.

38. Skinner, *Commentary on Genesis,* 151–58; Castel, *History of Israel and Judah,* 136–62.

39. Summarized in Nehemiah 10.

kingdom of Judah had become full of wickedness. God again sent destruction upon them, and in like manner allowed a remnant to continue on and start anew. We read in Genesis 9 about the new covenant God made with Noah and the new commandments he gave him. These commandments pave the way for the full law of God to be given in the last four books of the Pentateuch. It was upon the proper observance of these new commandments that mankind's standing before God would henceforth be determined. Likewise, the returnees from exile recognized that their preservation or destruction was wholly contingent upon their obedience to the law.[40]

A reading from the perspective of contemporaries to the final form of the flood narrative shows the determination of the post-exilic Jews to define who they were and what it meant to be part of a covenant with God. At a time when it would have been easy to assume that their god had forsaken them, or that he didn't have the power that the gods of the pagan nations surrounding them had, this people instead accepted the conclusion that it was they who had betrayed God and that they had suffered the necessary consequences. Obedience to the law became the primary focus of Judaism. It was a symbol of their standing with God. Judaism had a perspective on its own history that was unique among other Canaanites and Mesopotamians: they recognized and acknowledged their own disobedient and rebellious nature. This allowed them to survive debilitating defeats, seeing these not as the supremacy of other nations, but rather as the just response of their god to their own wickedness. In this light, as long as they changed their ways and returned to full obedience to Yahweh's laws, they were sure to regain his favor and blessing.

Jewish literature from the exile and later was meant to teach the proper relationship between the mortal and the divine. Mankind was to be dependent on God. But as the deluge account and the captivity of the Judahites show us, mankind often rebels against its proper role. They depend upon themselves rather than upon God and disregard his instructions until his purposes become thwarted. The flood sent by God was never meant to be a complete eradication of mankind from the earth, just as the Exile was never meant to be a permanent destruction of the covenant people. Rather it was a new start, a recreation. This time, God's covenant people were to start from that remnant who, unlike their fathers before them, would be completely and unquestioningly obedient to their god.

40. See Nehemiah 10:29.