Introduction

Shelley L. Birdsong and Serge Frolov

Fortuitously rather than by any kind of conscious design, there are 26 articles in the present volume. This is the gematric value of the tetragrammaton, the explicit divine name of the Hebrew Bible. As such, it is a reminder of a groundwork principle of the honoree's theology, derived from the famous *tikkun olam* (mending of the world) concept of Lurianic Kabbalah—human partnership with the deity in making this world a better place.[1]

Throughout his life, Marvin Sweeney has been an exemplary partner of God—first and foremost, by being a *Mensch*. He is everyone's friend, and everyone is his friend. Teachers, students, and colleagues feel honored to have shared a classroom or a conference room with him or to have worked together on a project. In the academic world often wracked by petty squabble and intrigue, he rises above the conflict and often helps to resolve it. His writing exudes respect for fellow scholars even while disagreeing with them. This is not to say that he does not respond forcefully to incompetence or backstabbing (or that he is lenient to lazy students), but he does so with integrity, always mindful of the maxim, "love your neighbor as yourself."

While coming from a mixed family, Marvin is also a model Jew (when asked in the presence of one of these writers, "How is Sweeney a Jewish last name?" he responded, "Now it is"). His Judaism fully reflects his personality—it is intense yet unobtrusive, personal yet communal, proud yet inclusive. He follows the path of *tikkun olam* in both Reform and Orthodox senses of the concept, combining Jewish observance with social responsibility.

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[1] Marvin A. Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible after the Shoah: Engaging Holocaust Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 14.

It is in Marvin's scholarship, however, where the theme of partnership with the deity truly comes to the forefront. The meaning of a text always emerges in a cooperative effort of the author and the audience, and, assuming with the Jewish and Christian traditions, that the biblical texts go back in one way or another to God, the deity must rely on partnership with the readers, especially highly competent readers, to get its message across. In this respect, Marvin's contribution is matched by few in his generation. With 15 authored books, nine volumes of edited essays, more than 100 articles, and 550 reviews under his belt, Marvin's footprint in biblical scholarship is nothing short of gigantic. He has also been Editor of two professional journals, *Hebrew Studies* and *The Review of Biblical Literature*.

As noted in several contributions to the present *Festschrift*, Marvin has been particularly instrumental in bringing about, through theoretical reflection and especially in his exegetical practice, an epoch-making change to the second-oldest methodology of biblical studies—form criticism, transforming it from a rather stale diachronic approach into a vibrant, predominantly synchronic one. He is co-editor of the only series of form critical biblical commentaries, Forms of Old Testament Literature. Marvin's work has also been vital in developing Jewish and post-Shoah biblical theology, placing both firmly on the map of biblical theological studies.

Among the different corpora of biblical literature, Marvin has always been primarily interested (starting with his 1983 doctoral dissertation) in what Jewish tradition terms the Latter Prophets. At least nine of his books deal entirely or to a great extent with this corpus. However, he has also published extensively on the Pentateuch (especially Genesis), the Former Prophets (especially Kings), and apocalyptic literature. He is currently poised to make a major step beyond the biblical canon by completing a major study of the Jewish mystical tradition.

Marvin is also famous, and well-loved, as a teacher. After receiving his B.A. from the University of Illinois in Political Science and Religious Studies (with distinction) and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate School, he taught for eleven years at the University of Miami before returning more than twenty years ago to Claremont as Professor of Religion. He has also held temporary or

vising appointments at Chang Jung Christian University in Tainan, Taiwan; Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea; Academy for Jewish Religion in California; and the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles. He has lectured throughout the United States and the world, including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa, the former Soviet Union, Switzerland, and Taiwan. Regardless of the venue, Marvin has always worked diligently and creatively to shape new generations of partners with God in rendering the Hebrew Bible meaningful—be that for the purposes of ministry or in an academic setting. His three-hour doctoral seminars, taught on Friday mornings, have been legendary not only for their meticulous attention to "every jot, every tittle" in the studied text but also for ending, reluctantly, at least an hour and a half past the allotted time.

Despite his towering stature in the profession, there is not a hint of hauteur in Marvin. In fact, he is well-known for his gregariousness. At conferences and meetings, there is always a posse of friends around him—which usually ends up in the evening at a cozy pub, preferably one serving authentic Irish Guinness. So, on this celebratory occasion, it appears to us that the most appropriate thing to say would be: Cheers, Marv! *Ad meah ve-esrim*!

Now, a few words about the present volume. In another bout of fortuity (*Festschriften* are eclectic by nature), most articles here are reflective of the main foci of the honoree's scholarship noted above and, even more importantly, of the overlaps between them.

Several contributions offer form critical treatments of biblical texts, either in their own right or as test cases in theoretical discussions concerning various aspects of this methodology. **Peter Benjamin Boeckel** traces the evolution of form criticism from Gunkel to Sweeney, paying special attention to the shifting concepts of genre. He then applies the form critical procedure developed by Sweeney and his *Doktorvater* Rolf Knierim to Gen 9:8–18 where the idea of covenant makes its first-ever appearance in the Hebrew Bible. After examining the structure, genre, and setting of the piece, he describes it as a report that plays an important role in the larger context of Genesis by changing the narrative trajectory from the creation – un-creation – re-

creation loop to an arrow pointing to Abraham and thus establishes covenant's centrality in the Enneateuch as a whole.

Timothy D. Finlay also deals with the concluding part of the flood narrative in Gen 9, but he is primarily interested in the divine instructions for human beings in vv. 1–7. The article analyzes the structure of this pronouncement, the various categories of speech acts (in essence, micro-genres of speech) that are utilized in it, and its multiple intertextual connections to Gen 1–2. On the basis of this analysis, Finlay concludes that although the appropriate term does not occur until the next divine discourse (studied by Boeckel), rabbinic tradition was correct in viewing Gen 9:1–7, complete with its prohibition of murder and associated requirement of capital punishment for it, as part and parcel of what it terms Noahide covenant.

The purpose of **Serge Frolov**'s piece is to position form criticism in its different incarnations vis-à-vis the synchronic/ diachronic divide that currently bedevils biblical scholarship. He emphasizes that although Gunkel conceived his method as an extension of (archetypically diachronic) source criticism, for Knierim and Sweeney diachronic (mainly redaction critical) analysis is but an extension of essentially synchronic form critical investigation. Moreover, as Frolov tries to demonstrate by his brief but comprehensive form critical study of creation compositions in Gen 1 and 2, even this extension is redundant. Consistently synchronic form critical inquiry is eminently capable of resolving the problems that have long been diachronic showcases, and even where it might seem to fail, the diachronic approach would not fare any better.

In contrast to Frolov, **H. G. M. Williamson** does believe that form critical analysis may have diachronic corollaries. In a sustained conversation with Sweeney's exegesis of Isa 8:9–10, Williamson argues that semantics of key verbs in this passage preclude its characterization as a (probably ironic) call for battle. Rather, it is an "address before battle of one army commander to his opponents"—a genre attested in the Hebrew Bible as well as in Greek and ancient Near Eastern literatures. Accordingly, the two verses present themselves as a redactional insertion, adding a positive note to what is otherwise a predominantly grim prophecy.

Williamson's contribution brings a form critical approach to bear on what has been Marvin's earliest passion and what remains his primary area of expertise—the study of the Latter Prophets. The same is true of **Tyler D. Mayfield**, who seeks to unravel the complicated literary structure of Ezek 25 by treating it, in accordance with the basics of Knierim-Sweeney form criticism, synchronically (at least in the first instance) and favoring literary form over content. Based on various formulae and genres identified in the text, Mayfield describes the bulk of the chapter as an oracle addressed to Ammon and falling into five proof sayings, two concerning Ammon and one each concerning Moab, Edom, and Philistia. He also suggests that in the diachronic perspective this structure points to four-stage composition, in which an oracle concerning Ammon alone was gradually expanded and supplemented by discourses on other nations.

Unsurprisingly, articles on the Latter Prophets constitute the largest group in the present *Festschrift*, covering all three "major" prophetic books and several of the Twelve. **Reinhard Kratz** works with the two concluding chapters of Isaiah in a predominantly redaction critical rather than form critical mode but he begins, in accordance with the main premise of Knierim-Sweeney form criticism, with the final form of the biblical text and converses with Sweeney's two monographs covering Isaiah 65–66. Based on the readings of Isaiah in Daniel, Ben Sira, and 4Q176, the chapters' structuring in 1QIsa[a], and intertextual links between different parts of Isaiah, Kratz argues that Isaiah 65–66 is not a unity. Rather, it received its current shape through successive supplementations (*Fortschreibungen*). In his opinion, seeing "too many hands" behind the text does not invalidate this hypothesis because the "flow of tradition" must involve multiple scribes.

Unlike Kratz, **Patricia K. Tull** approaches Isaiah synchronically. Her interest lies in delineating the implied audiences and speakers in chs. 40–55 (the so-called Second Isaiah). The former, in her analysis, include primarily a feminine singular figure called Jerusalem, Zion, or Daughter Zion, a masculine singular figure identified as Israel/Jacob and the Servant, and a masculine plural audience related to both. Predominating among the latter are the prophet (particularly in ch. 40) and the divine voice (chs. 41–55). Second Isaiah also makes liberal use of a double-voicing technique, in

which one speaker quotes another, explicitly or implicitly embedding somebody else's discourse into his or her own.

The objective of **Richard D. Weis** is to reconstruct the structure of Jeremiah in its canonical Masoretic formulation. Guided by reader-response criticism, Weis postulates that even "disorderly" features (such as repetitions or shifts of genre and narrative voice), often treated as signs of redactional development, are interpretable as authorial means of encouraging the audience to discover the composition's orderliness. Starting from these premises, Weis sees three main parts in Jeremiah, chs. 1–20, 21–45, and 46–51, with the central section also being tripartite (21:1–38:28; 39:1–14; 39:15–45:15), and its first segment, central in the book, falling into seven units. He maintains that this structure must have arisen in the Persian I period, 538–450 BCE.

Jeremiah's allusions to Genesis are traced by **Shelley L. Birdsong**. Bringing together materials from different parts of the prophetic book, she finds, to begin with, consistent use of vocabulary and tropes associated with the creation account in Gen 2:4–4:1, especially of the metaphor of YHWH as a potter. Further, there are persistent references to the divine promise to Abraham in Jer 1:4–10 and chs. 30–33 of the book. Finally, Jeremiah's story in chs. 38–43 displays multiple parallels to Joseph's story in Gen 37–50, especially with regard to both characters being confined to a pit. The purpose of these allusions, argues Birdsong, is to inject hope (associated with Abraham) into the bitterness of exile (despite which Eve and Adam as well as Joseph's family manage to survive and succeed).

Else K. Holt uses the book of Jeremiah to reflect on the conceptuality underlying the process of nonmaterial divine word becoming a material object, a book. She describes two main stages of this metamorphosis. First, the literary figure of the prophet becomes a metaphorical embodiment of the divine discourse, as seen in Jer 8:18–22, where God's voice is indistinguishable from Jeremiah's. Second, the prophet's words are written down (a process uniquely emphasized in the book of Jeremiah), in part for preservation, but mainly to render the text a metonymy for the deity, replacing or supplementing the temple as such. Such a replacement was typical for the religious transformation characterizing the "axial age" — the second half of the first millennium BCE.

A similar conclusion is reached by **Soo J. Kim** who reads the book of Ezekiel together with Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. She notes that in Ezekiel (unlike Isaiah and Jeremiah) communication between God and the people of Israel is scant: divine messages to the prophet rarely seem to reach his contemporaries. As a result, Israelite exiles are left in a situation that makes them counterparts of Beckett's characters: confused, passive, and hopelessly waiting for clarity from someone who keeps promising, through an intermediary, to arrive the next day but never does. For Kim, that means that Ezekiel does not play the traditional role of a preacher; rather, he becomes a walking sanctuary that embodies the divine word without immediately imparting it.

The article of **Hye Kyung Park** draws cross-cultural parallels between the images of YHWH in Hosea 11 and sea goddess Matzu in Taiwanese folk religion. Park argues that Hosea 11 represents YHWH as a motherly deity, merciful, compassionate, and inseparable from her beloved son Israel even in exile just as a pregnant woman is inseparable from her unborn child. Likewise, Matzu is described as accompanying seafarers, especially migrants who cross the sea, on their journeys and offering them motherly protection; she is also a patron of women, particularly in pregnancy. These similarities suggest that even monotheism, where the deity is predominantly male, contains substantial elements of the feminine divine because certain aspects associated with it are indispensable to any religion.

Taking a new look at a one-of-a-kind piece of the Book of the Twelve—the prayer in Habakkuk 3—**Steven Tuell** highlights the contrast between the bulk of the chapter (vv. 3–15), where the might of YHWH as a divine warrior is on full theophanic display, and the framing fragments (vv. 2–3, 16–19), where the deity seems to be absent. On this basis, Tuell posits that the chapter emerged when an old theophanic hymn was extended to become a prayer for help. Since the plaintive mood of the extensions matches that predominating in the rest of Habakkuk, the article ascribes ch. 3 to the prophet himself rather than to the book's more optimistic redactors.

Reception of Mal 2:10a is the topic of **Ehud Ben Zvi**. He begins by documenting the fragment's uses by such variegated groups as church fathers, traditional Jewish commentators, Enlightenment

thinkers, abolitionists, suffragists, Unitarians, and liberal Reform rabbis. Ben Zvi then asks how the text in question might have been understood by the group that produced it—late-Persian period literati of Judah/Yehud. He demonstrates that their construal would depend on multiple interlocking factors—for example, whether the following verses come into consideration (which seem to contradict the piece's supposedly universalist message by denouncing marriage to a "daughter of foreign god") or whether the "one father" of Mal 2:10a is construed as God, Adam, Abraham, or Aaron—that generate an intricate web of meanings.

Another major group of contributions to the present volume deals with the book of Kings, on which Marvin has published a commentary in the venerable Old Testament Library series and which is central to his classic *King Josiah of Judah*. Two articles challenge, each in its own way, the conventional interpretation of the famous "Solomon's judgment" scene in the book's third chapter as nothing but laudatory as far as the king is concerned. Building upon Roger Whybray's observation that wisdom plays a major role in the so-called Succession Narrative (2 Samuel 9–20; 1 Kings 1–2), **Craig Evan Anderson** points out, first, that in these chapters the advice offered by the characters identified as wise is usually immoral and foolish. Second, "wisdom" and "counsel" are inextricably linked here to violence, with "sword" functioning as a *Leitwort*. Solomon's characterization as the wisest of all people, followed by an immediate demonstration that his wisdom entails readiness to put a sword to a newborn baby (which was not even necessary to resolve the case), thus subverts the monarchic ideal exemplified by Solomon (and David) rather than buttressing it.

A different intertextual approach to "Solomon's judgment" is pursued by **Hyun Chul Paul Kim** who draws parallels with the king's accession to the throne in 1 Kings 1–2. Kim contends that the dispute between two prostitute mothers, one of whom has lost a son, mirrors the implicit conflict between Solomon's mother Bathsheba and Adonijah's mother Haggith who ends up losing her son. The king's order to kill a baby then reminds the reader about his order to execute his half-brother and, more broadly, about the violent and ethically dubious means whereby Solomon came to power. The judgment scene

consequently functions as a parable-style parody on the preceding part of the narrative and foreshadows Solomon's eventual failure as king.

Cross-cultural analogues to the instances of divine deception in Kings (chs. 13 and 22) are explored by **Lester L. Grabbe**. These analogues include Mesopotamian flood stories (almost all of which have gods swear not to warn humans about the impending disaster), gods' determination not to honor an agreement with a builder in the *Poetic Edda*, their decision to deprive humans of the extraordinary far-sightedness they initially possessed in Mayan mythology, and misleading prophecies of the ancient Greek tradition related by Herodotus. In all these instances, as well as in 1 Kgs 13 and 22, the divine purpose is justifiable but the means to achieve it are dubious.

Jeremiah Unterman aims to unravel the cryptic pronouncement of Mal 3:24 about Elijah reuniting parents and children and thus preventing a cosmic catastrophe. The article connects this pronouncement to the prophet's first encounter with his future disciple Elisha in 1 Kgs 19:19–21. According to Unterman, when Elisha requests to say good-bye to his parents before following Elijah and the latter responds, "Go, return, for what have I done to you?" the implication is that even a divinely ordained mission does not obviate normal ethical behavior exemplified by an act of filial respect. Building on this episode, Malachi emphasizes that the world cannot be saved if reconciliation between parents and their children does not take place.

Addressing Kings from a feminist standpoint, **Tammi J. Schneider** rethinks one of the book's greatest villains—Jezebel. Reviewing the ways in which the biblical narrators refer to the queen, Schneider notes that her Sidonian origin is often stressed and argues that Jezebel mostly does what would be expected of her as a Phoenician princess married to a foreign ruler. She worships Baal (both she and her father Ethbaal bear theophoric Baal names), works to enlarge the royal estate in accordance with her husband's wishes, and dresses formally in public even when facing death (2 Kgs 9:30). Jezebel's extremely negative portrayal is thus a function not of her "going bad," but rather of biblical authors having drastically different expectations.

The organization of Kings as a whole is the subject of *John H. Hull, Jr.*'s contribution. His observations reveal multiple interlocking

patterns in the way the book lists post-Solomonic rulers of both Israel and Judah with regard to their names and reported acts. For example, apart from Jehu, there are nine rulers with a יהו element in their names listed for both monarchies and falling into groups of three or six depending on whether this element is a prefix or a suffix. Moreover, several of these patterns match the Assyrian King List (AKL), even in seemingly irrelevant numerical details (while AKL has two groups of 38 kings, in Kings Israel and Judah each have 19 rulers after Solomon), suggesting literary dependence.

Although many articles in the present volume have explicit or implicit theological implications, only one, by **Jon D. Levenson**, is fully devoted to yet another major passion of the honoree—Jewish biblical theology. Levenson calls for a proper understanding of the biblical idea of Israel's chosenness, which offends the sensibilities of many today because of its particularism. Over against growing calls to discard the concept or at least to interpret it in instrumental terms, the article stresses that the Hebrew Bible consistently presents chosenness as unmerited and often presents it more specifically as the result of divine love—a relationship that is exclusive by nature, does not have a purpose, and cannot be couched in terms of justice because it does not require or presuppose any merit on the recipient's part. Neither does it involve rejection of the non-chosen or justify violence against them.

Broad as are Marvin's interests and contributions to biblical studies, the field is just too diverse today for a single person to leave his imprint everywhere. Reflecting this diversity, several contributions to this *Festschrift* go where the honoree has not gone—at least not yet.

Bill T. Arnold offers a redaction critical analysis of Gen 17. Whereas previous scholarship has tended to see here a Priestly account of the Abrahamic covenant, Arnold argues that both the chapter's terminology and the concepts underlying it point to a more complex trajectory of its formation. In his opinion, the text received its canonical form at the hands of Holiness scribes who had both J and P sources available to them. They conflated the two while rewriting, revising, and expanding P with a view to shifting its agenda so that cultic concerns are supplemented by ethical ones. A similar strategy is traceable, according to Arnold, in the flood narrative (Gen 6–9).

The article of **John T. Fitzgerald** sheds light on two insufficiently understood details of the Samson narratives in Judg 13–16. First, he demonstrates that Samson's violation of prohibitions associated with his lifelong Nazirite consecration in ch. 13 can be seen not only in his famously losing his hair in ch. 16 but also in his willing participation in a "drinking feast" in ch. 14. The audience's expectation that Samson would live a life of piety is thus dashed from the outset. Second, Fitzgerald explains, citing multiple sources, that the picture of bees living in the carcass of a lion (Judg 14:8) would not be bizarre for ancient Greeks who believed that these insects are born out of dead mammals.

The role of paratextual elements in bridging production, transmission, and reception of the Hebrew Bible is the focus of **William Yarchin**'s attention. He contends that a manuscript is much more than just a receptacle for the text; through various means, such as page layout, marginalia, and spacing, it always reads the text in a certain way. Therefore, on the one hand, scholars never have access to the text as such—only to its receptions in the extant manuscripts. On the other, in a certain sense, composition of the biblical books has never ceased—it continues even today, in modern publications of the Bible as well as in scholarly commentaries, including those by the present volume's honoree.

Philological analysis of Job 31:9–10 is pursued by **Shalom Paul**. Based on inner-biblical evidence, as well as on numerous Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, and rabbinic sources, he establishes that the noun "door" in the passage is a euphemism for the *pudendum muliebre* while the verbs "to grind" and "to kneel" allude to sexual intercourse. Job's discourse thus proceeds in a talionic fashion: if he has ever committed adultery, may his wife do the same.

Last but by no means the least, **Dennis R. MacDonald** bridges the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament by tracing the transformations of Deuteronomic texts in his reconstruction of a lost gospel, which he dubs the *Logoi of Jesus* or Q+. MacDonald shows that *Logoi* consistently, if implicitly, critiques Moses's commands to destroy entire populations. For example, the echo of the blessing to Israel in Deut 33:29 omits the reference to the people trampling upon their enemies. Such adjustments were in line with concerns found in the

writings of Hellenized Jews, such as Philo and Josephus, and they are also at home in the pluralistic strand of modern Judaism, prominently represented by Marvin Sweeney.