

Jerusalem, the Late Judahite Monarchy, and the Composition of the Biblical Texts¹

William M. Schniedewind
University of California, Los Angeles

When was the Bible written? Where was the Bible written? The answers to these questions are becoming increasingly clearer. Recent archaeological data point to dramatic social changes during the late Judahite monarchy. The late Judahite monarchy saw the emergence of a world economy under the *pax Assyriaca*, the urbanization of Judah, the growth of Jerusalem into an urban political center, and a growing Judahite administrative bureaucracy. All these things provided fertile ground for the composition of biblical literature. As it turns out, archaeological data suggest that Jerusalem in the eighth and seventh centuries was more conducive to the flourishing of biblical literature than Jerusalem of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. In the present paper, I explore some of the changes that took place in the eighth and seventh centuries in Jerusalem and Judah that made it ripe for the flourishing of biblical literature. I conclude by relating this social context with some prophetic traditions that would have been composed, written down, and edited during the late Judahite monarchy in Jerusalem.

THE CONTEXT FOR WRITING THE BIBLE

The framework for the composition of much of the Bible is quite circumscribed only at the end. That is, while it is difficult to fix the earliest possible date for the composition of many texts, we can set the latest possible date. Manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls fix the latest possible date of several manuscripts, most notably the book of Samuel, in the third century B.C.E. To be sure, we hardly believe that these manuscripts are autographs, so it is conceivable that the initial composition was several

¹ A version of this paper was presented in the "Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology Consultation" at the Society of Biblical Literature meetings during November 1998. The author thanks those who offered criticism and encouragement.

centuries earlier. The tradition of translation into Greek also suggests that the Torah was essentially complete by the end of the third century B.C.E. We must acknowledge, of course, that the transmission and editing process continued long after the composition of these books. For example, the Great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran dates to the first century B.C.E. and demonstrates numerous editorial and scribal innovations.² However, no one would reasonably claim that the Great Isaiah Scroll was composed in the first century. Likewise, it is clear that the number, divisions, and order of the Psalter was still in flux as late as the first century C.E.; however, this is not to concede that the individual psalms were composed at such a late date. Thus, the final editorial shaping of the Bible probably continued until the first century C.E., even though the individual books had been composed centuries earlier. The question is, how many centuries earlier?

This issue has been hotly debated in recent years. For example, Philip Davies in his widely cited recent book, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures*, points to the importance of scribal schools for understanding the origins of the canon. Davies argues that the entire canonical process needs to be set in the late Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. He contends that there was no large scribal class in ancient Palestine during the Iron Age, even though Davies admits that the late Judahite kingdom represented a complex urban state that would have had a scribal infrastructure. Davies gives two reasons why he regards literacy unlikely in monarchic Judah. First, an agrarian society such as Judah “did not have any use for widespread literacy.”³ Second, the monarchy and scribal schools would have been unwilling to relinquish their monopoly on writing. However, it is clear the late Judahite monarchy was increasingly an urbanized society, as I point out below. Further, Davies furnishes no evidence that there was a monopoly on writing or that such a monopoly was closely guarded. Ironically, his reservations might more appropriately be applied to the Persian period.

Charles Carter’s book, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period*, briefly touches on the “Literary Genius in the Post-Exilic Period.”⁴ The larger part of the book, however, is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the settlement patterns and population distribution of Yehud. His study

² See Edward Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (IQ Isa)* (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

³ Philip R. Davies, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 82.

⁴ Charles Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social And Demographic Study* (JSOTSup 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 286–88.

paints a “general picture of a province based on a subsistence level rural or village economy.”⁵ This naturally begs the question: How could a subsistence-level rural and village economy be responsible for the prolific literary achievements that are accorded to the Persian period? Carter himself poses the question: “But could a small Jerusalem support this level of literary production?”⁶ He reasons that it could because it is essentially a question of the size and nature of urban elites. He suggests that the size of Jerusalem was between 1,250 and 1,500 during this period and that a large percentage of these were literate urban elites (e.g., priests, temple servants, gatekeepers, and a scribal class). However, could these urban elites account for the complexity of the Hebrew Bible? Carter points to historical and sociological parallels in fourteenth-century Paris or Russia of the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries and concludes that this level of literary creativity need not be questioned.

These historical and sociological parallels for literary production are quite suspect, however. While fourteenth-century Paris or seventeenth-century Russia may be analogous in size, the technology of writing had changed dramatically. The use of paper, for example, had become widespread. Invented in China, paper was adopted by the Arabs in the eighth century, and its use spread throughout the Mediterranean world between the ninth and eleventh centuries.⁷ The thirteenth century in particular saw dramatic technological innovations in paper production. Moreover, Champagne, not far from Paris, became a center of papermaking in the fourteenth century. As Henri-Jean Martin points out in his *History and Power of Writing*:

The importance of this movement can hardly be exaggerated. Before paper became available, the hides of a veritable herd of young animals were required to make a single in-folio volume. After the fourteenth century, when the West had access to a writing material in seemingly unlimited quantities, the way was open for printing.⁸

Given these technological changes, Carter’s much later sociological and historical analogies to Persian Yehud fall flat. The parallels also fail in another important way. That is, the literary activity of fourteenth-century Paris and eighteenth-century Russia were centered in the classical written

⁵ Ibid., 248.

⁶ Ibid., 287.

⁷ See Henri-Jean Martin, *The History and Power of Writing* (trans. L. G. Cochrane; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 207.

⁸ Ibid., 210.

languages of the day, not in an otherwise dead language such as Hebrew. The language of the Persian Empire was Aramaic, and the scribal training of the literary elites was in Aramaic. That Hebrew should even have been widely known, let alone that its classical form could have been widely written, in the Persian period seems quite unlikely.

The proposed Persian-Hellenistic origins of the Bible have also created the linguistic problem of a Hebrew canonical literature written in a world dominated by an Aramaic and later Greek administrative *lingua franca*. Aside from the few books attributed to the stratum of Late Biblical Hebrew, there is little to suggest that biblical literature was influenced by Aramaic or Greek. Philip Davies, recognizing the problem, proposes that a few scribes preserved the tradition of written Hebrew through the Babylonian and into the Persian periods. However, it seems implausible that such left-over scribes should account for the entire Hebrew Bible and be free from the pervasive influence of the Aramaic language. The books traditionally ascribed to the Persian and Hellenistic periods (e.g., Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel) show clear Aramaic influence, in contrast to texts traditionally ascribed to the Iron Age (e.g., Genesis, Joshua, Kings, Hosea). Thus, the preservation of the biblical Hebrew language (with all its diachronic nuances) presents a difficult problem.⁹

The problem of the literary flourishing in Persian Yehud is even worse when one looks at the shape of biblical literature. The great amount of scribal activity is clearly inconsistent with the portrait of the Persian province of Yehud that archaeologists, historians, and biblical scholars have generally agreed on. Indeed, the diversity of biblical literature and the numerous redactional and editorial stages that traditional scholarship has posed are difficult to set within an impoverished Yehud. Apparently aware of this problem, Davies remarks that “the later we move in date, the easier it is to conclude that the temple could sustain a number of scribal schools with a vigorous scribal activity.”¹⁰ Not just *one* scribal school but *a number* of them (as Davies recognizes) would be necessary to generate the quantity and variety we find in biblical literature. This does not preclude that some biblical literature was composed and edited during the Persian period, yet the social setting of the Persian period makes a great eruption of Hebrew literature quite implausible. A more suitable setting for the composition of biblical literature from the evidence of archaeology and social history would be the late Judahite monarchy in the city of Jerusalem.

⁹ See Avi Hurvitz, “The Historical Quest for ‘Ancient Israel’ and the Linguistic Evidence of the Hebrew Bible: Some Methodological Observations,” *VT* 47 (1997): 310–15.

¹⁰ Davies, *Scribes and Schools*, 79.

LATE MONARCHIC JERUSALEM

Archaeological research of the last several decades has made it abundantly clear that dramatic changes in the social life of Judah were ushered in by the Assyrian Empire in the late eighth century. The urbanization of Judah, for example, resulted in a much more complex society where writing was a regular part of burgeoning government bureaucracy. The use of writing by new social classes (military, merchants, craftsmen) is indicated by inscriptional evidence relating to government bureaucracy, economic globalization, and religious ideology (e.g., private seals, royal seal impressions, letters, receipts, graffiti, amulets). Jerusalem would emerge as a large metropolis and a powerful political center in the late eighth century. From the perspective of social anthropology, the changes must have had profound implications for society and ultimately for the composition of biblical texts during this period. These changes would be the primary catalysts for the formation of biblical literature.

The exile of the northern kingdom and the subsequent urbanization of the rural south—particularly Jerusalem—is the *Sitz im Leben* for an eruption of literary activity that resulted in the composition of extended portions of the Hebrew Bible. It produced the prophetic works of Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah of Jerusalem, and a pre-Deuteronomic historical work. The late Judahite monarchy was the ideal social and political context for the flourishing of biblical literature. To begin, the urbanization and accompanying administrative bureaucracy made writing widely accessible. There is a remarkable increase in the epigraphic evidence specifically in the late Iron II period. In contrast, none of the conditions conducive to a literary flourishing existed in the Babylonian or Persian periods. Indeed, these were periods of retrenchment that were best suited to the collection, preservation, and editing of literature, not to its creation. The impoverished economic conditions did not lend themselves to vigorous scribal activity. Moreover, the circumscribed city of Jerusalem and its small temple complex were hardly conducive to the wide-scale scribal activity sometimes ascribed to it. To be sure, literature may be created at any time, but the conditions for a flourishing of literary activity are to be found in the late Judahite monarchy, not the Babylonian or Persian periods.

Since Jerusalem would be a focal point for the production of biblical literature, any analysis must begin there. Up until the last twenty years, there was considerable debate about the size and extent of Jerusalem during the period of the monarchy.¹¹ After Avigad's excavations in the Jewish

¹¹ Nahman Avigad summarizes the early debate about the size of Jerusalem during the biblical period in *Discovering Jerusalem* (Nashville: Nelson, 1983), 26–31.

Quarter uncovered a city wall more than 7 m wide (i.e., “the broad wall”), it became clear that Jerusalem became quite large during the late monarchy. One remaining question is how to account for this expansion.

The classic explanation for Jerusalem’s growth was given by Magen Broshi two decades ago: “the main reasons behind this expansion was the immigration of Israelites who came to Judah from the Northern Kingdom after the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C.E., and the influx of dispossessed refugees from the territories that Sennacherib took from Judah and gave to the Philistine cities.”¹² Indeed, these two events must have played a critical role in the changing demographics of Palestine in the late Iron Age. With the aid of recent archaeological evidence we can refine Broshi’s explanation and draw out some of its implications.

There is ample evidence that Hezekiah attempted to integrate northern refugees into his kingdom. The tradition that Manasseh followed in the sins of King Ahab of Israel also suggests that the northern émigrés left their mark on religious practice in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 21:3; see also Mic 3:9–10).¹³ Perhaps more to the point, Hezekiah named his son Manasseh, a name well known as one of the leading tribes of the northern kingdom. He also arranged a marriage between his son and a family from Jotbah in Galilee (see 2 Kgs 21:19). This can only have been an attempt by Hezekiah to control influx of northern refugees into his capital.¹⁴ Given this evidence, the account in 2 Chr 30:1—“Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of YHWH at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to YHWH the God of Israel”—aptly fits the political situation. Archaeological support for Hezekiah’s attempt to integrate the north into his

Andrew G. Vaughn brings this debate up to the present in *Theology, History, and Archaeology in the Chronicler’s Account of Hezekiah* (SBLABS 4; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 19–80. My own understanding of Jerusalem’s archaeology owes much to graduate courses and conversations with Gabriel Barkay.

¹² Magen Broshi, “Expansion of Jerusalem in the Reigns of Hezekiah and Manasseh,” *IEJ* 24 (1974): 21. Although the growth of Jerusalem began already in the ninth century (see Vaughn, *Theology, History, and Archaeology*, 59–70), the late eighth and seventh centuries witnessed a more rapid growth of the city and urbanization of the Judahite state.

¹³ See William Schniedewind, “History and Interpretation: The Religion of Ahab and Manasseh in the Book of Kings,” *CBQ* 55 (1993): 657–60.

¹⁴ For a similar interpretation, see Hugh G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 361; also note Shemaryahu Talmon’s interpretation of Hezekiah in his essay, “The Cult and Calendar Reform of Jeroboam I,” in *King, Cult, and Calendar in Ancient Israel: Collected Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), 123–30.

kingdom also comes from *lmlk* seals found at northern sites.¹⁵ These *lmlk* seals originate in the late eighth century and most likely were developed by Hezekiah's administration; they reflect an increasingly sophisticated governmental control by Jerusalem.

A second phase of expansion followed Sennacherib's invasion in 701 B.C.E. Sennacherib's invasion devastated the Judean Shephelah. According to the calculations of Israel Finkelstein, "about 85 percent of the settlements of the Shephelah in the eighth century had not been reoccupied in the last phase of the Iron II. The total built-up area decreased by about 70 percent."¹⁶ The decrease was primarily in small agricultural settlements and not in the larger cities and towns. The devastation of the Judean foothills along with the growth of Jerusalem resulted in a corresponding increase in smaller settlements around Jerusalem established in the late eighth or seventh century. New agricultural villages and farmsteads were founded forming an agricultural and industrial hinterland for Jerusalem.¹⁷ Additionally, Gibeon (7 km north) emerges as an industrial center in the late monarchy.¹⁸ The royal administrative center at Ramat Rahel (3 km south of Jerusalem), probably the enigmatic *mmšt* of the *lmlk* seals, was

¹⁵ This was first pointed out to me by Gabriel Barkay. See also Hanan Eshel, "A *lmlk* Stamp from Beth-El," *IEJ* 39 (1989): 60–62; Ora Yogev, "Tel Yizre'el—October 1987–January 1988," *ESI* 7–8 (1988–89): 192–93; Nadav Na'aman, "Hezekiah's Fortified Cities and the LMLK Stamps," *BASOR* 261 (1989): 5–21.

¹⁶ Israel Finkelstein, "The Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh," in *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King* (ed. M. Coogan et al.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 173.

¹⁷ Recent surveys of the Jerusalem area have uncovered a number of settlements from the eighth–sixth centuries; see Gershon Edelstein and Ianir Milevski, "The Rural Settlement of Jerusalem Re-evaluated: Surveys and Excavations in the Reph'aim Valley and the Mevasseret Yerushalayim," *PEQ* 126 (1994): 2–11; Zvi Ron, "Agricultural Terraces in the Judean Mountains," *IEJ* 16 (1966): 111–22; Shimon Gibson and Gershon Edelstein, "Investigating Jerusalem's Rural Landscape," *Levant* 17 (1985): 139–55; A. Zahavi, "Mal'ha Hill" [Hebrew], *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 99 (1993): 59–60; Ruth Ovadia, "Jerusalem, Giv'at Massu'a," *ESI* 12 (1994): 71–76; and most recently, Nurit Feig, "New Discoveries in the Rephaim Valley, Jerusalem," *PEQ* 128 (1996): 3–7. The material is summarized by Vaughn, *Theology, History, and Archaeology*, 32–45.

¹⁸ See James B. Pritchard, "Industry and Trade at Biblical Gibeon," *BA* 23 (1960): 23–29. The discovery of eighty-six *lmlk* stamps suggests that Gibeon was an important agricultural center in Hezekiah's administration. Gitin also explains the rapid growth of the city of Ekron by relating it to northern refugees; see Seymour Gitin, "Incense Altars from Ekron, Israel and Judah: Context and Typology," *Erlsr* 20 (1989): 52*–67*.

established in the late eighth century and flourished in the seventh century; apparently, the site served as a secondary capital and administrative center alleviating overcrowding in Jerusalem.¹⁹ The City of David itself was apparently expanded by Manasseh: “he built an outer wall for the City of David west of Gihon, in the valley, reaching the entrance at the Fish Gate; he carried it around Ophel, and raised it to a very great height” (2 Chr 33:14).²⁰ This further growth may be accounted for as the aftermath of Sennacherib’s campaign wherein he claimed to have “laid siege to forty-six of [Hezekiah’s] strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity” (*ANET*, 288; see also 2 Kgs 18:13). Jerusalem’s growing hinterland corresponds to (1) the demographic shift from the Shephelah to the hill country, (2) the need for agricultural production to supply Jerusalem and Hezekiah’s administration, and (3) the need to replace the devastated agricultural infrastructure of the Shephelah.²¹

One problem this growth must have presented to Jerusalem is water. In fact, Dan Bahat cites this problem as a limiting factor for the size of Jerusalem.²² While this is quite true, it should not be surprising that the water problem began to be addressed specifically in the late eighth century. Bahat himself points out that the upper pool of Bethesda “provided an additional [water] supply for the growing city” and appears “to belong to the later centuries of the First Temple Period.”²³ Josephus mentions the “Pool of the Towers” (*War* 5.468; known today as “Hezekiah’s Pool”) on the northwest side of the western hill that he associates with the “First

¹⁹ Ramat Rahel has been a problem for historical geography. It is often identified by Beth-haccherem (Jer 6:1; Neh 3:14; Josh 15:59a [LXX]). Gabriel Barkay makes a cogent case for its identification with the enigmatic *mmšt* mentioned in the numerous *lmlk* stamps at the site; see Gabriel Barkay, “Ramat Rahel,” *NEAEHL* 4:1261–67.

²⁰ Kenyon excavated a wall on the eastern slope of the City of David and attributed it to Hezekiah (“Wall NA”), but it seems more likely that it should be attributed to Manasseh; see Dan Bahat, “The Wall of Manasseh in Jerusalem,” *IEJ* 31 (1981): 235–36.

²¹ There was also a sudden expansion of settlement in the more arid regions of the Beer-sheba valley and the Judean Desert; see further Finkelstein, “Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh,” 175–76. The Beer-sheba region largely replaced the Shephelah as the “breadbasket” of the small Judahite state.

²² Dan Bahat, “Was Jerusalem Really That Large?” in *Biblical Archaeology Today, 1990: Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Biblical Archaeology* (ed. A. Biran and J. Aviram; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 583; for a summary of Jerusalem’s water systems, see Shiloh’s contribution on “Water Systems” in “Jerusalem,” *NEAEHL* 2:709–12.

²³ Bahat, “Was Jerusalem Really That Large?” 583.

Wall”; this pool dates at least as far back as the Roman period but has never been adequately investigated and could also originate in the late Iron II period. Hezekiah’s water projects are also mentioned in three independent biblical accounts (2 Kgs 20:20; 2 Chr 32:2–4, 30; Isa 22:10–11). Water projects point to the ongoing urbanization and centralization of Jerusalem. Karl August Wittfogel’s classic study, *Oriental Despotism*, relates the organization of society to the economics of regimes in Mesopotamia.²⁴ Wittfogel’s basic thesis was that centralization of state control arose through the maintenance of water rights and canal systems. The scale of these projects necessitated a centralization of administrative control. Likewise, the problem of water supply in Jerusalem probably also encouraged centralization of state control, even though there were a number of other forces at work. Certainly, the need to prepare and coordinate military defenses in the face of the rising Assyrian Empire also contributed to political centralization.

Such centralization of state control tended to provoke harsh reactions from the countryside. The informal political structures of the rural Judahite state, such as the “elders” or the “people of the land,” were marginalized as power shifted to the urban center in Jerusalem. Along these lines, we should probably understand the negative portrait of Manasseh as resulting from the societal dynamics of centralization and urbanization. At the same time, the revolution that followed the assassination of King Amon and placed the eight-year-old king Josiah on the throne was surely tied to the social tensions generated by urbanization and centralization.

In sum, during the late eighth through early seventh century Judah underwent a process of rapid centralization and urbanization. Israel Finkelstein describes it as follows: “in the later days of Hezekiah and in the reign of Manasseh, Judah went through a painful transformation from a relatively large state with a varied economic system to a small community, in fact not much more than a city-state, with a large capital and a small but densely settled countryside.”²⁵ More to the point, though, Judah moved from a large rural state to a smaller but more centralized and urbanized state. The centrality of Jerusalem was the de facto result of the exponential increase in its population. Jerusalem, which had represented about 6 percent of Judah’s total population in the mid-eighth century, suddenly became about 29 percent in scarcely two generations.²⁶ Tumultuous events and the

²⁴ Karl August Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

²⁵ Finkelstein, “Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh,” 181.

²⁶ The exact numbers depend on the exact size of Jerusalem post-701 B.C.E. Finkelstein takes a conservative estimate of 60 ha. This would still translate into an

accompanying demographic revolution must have had a profound impact on ideology and literature that arose during this period.

Dramatic changes in Judah's society between the eighth and seventh century B.C.E. can also be illustrated by a comparison of the ceramic repertoire in the Judahite city of Lachish. Orna Zimhoni emphasizes an almost surprising uniformity among the pottery of the late eighth century at Lachish, especially when compared with the variety of influences represented by the late seventh century; she writes, "The ceramic uniformity of Lachish Level III [= destroyed by Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E.], and its orientation towards the Shephelah-hill country, are replaced in Level II [= destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 588 B.C.E.] by a more diverse, coastal plain-oriented assemblage."²⁷ A similar picture is also reflected at the sites of Timnah (Tel Batash) and Ekron (Tel Miqne). She concludes that the pottery reflects the changing sociopolitical situation of Lachish in the eighth to seventh centuries:

The Lachish ceramic assemblage reflects the environment of *Pax Assyriaca*, an open political and economic system under the aegis of the Assyrian Empire, conditions which continued to prevail later under Egyptian occupation. The diverse character of the ceramic assemblage complements the historical picture and can be understood in view of the political changes that took place during that period.²⁸

In other words, the ceramic assemblage during the period of Hezekiah reflects a highly isolated economy with little significant outside cultural influences reflected in the pottery repertoire. On the other hand, the period of Josiah, or the late monarchy in general, is marked by an open economy in which the pottery reflects a wide variety of cultural influences. Along similar lines, Baruch Halpern addresses changes in attitudes about individual moral responsibility during the late monarchy by adducing a wealth and variety of archaeological evidence pointing to the breakdown of the

almost fourfold increase in Jerusalem's size and make Jerusalem's population 23 percent of Judah's total population. Gabriel Barkay argues cogently for a much larger Jerusalem of 100 ha that translates into about 34 percent (Gabriel Barkay, "Northern and Western Jerusalem in the End of the Iron Age" [Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 1985]). I follow a mediating position, estimating a total built-up area of 80 ha. Of course, this does not include the small agricultural villages that sprang up around Jerusalem.

²⁷ Orna Zimhoni, "Two Ceramic Assemblages from Lachish Levels III and II," *TA* 17 (1990): 48.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 49; also see Nadav Na'aman "The Kingdom of Judah under Josiah," *TA* 18 (1991): 3–71.

family structure occasioned by urbanization.²⁹ The architecture of the classic four-room house, for example, becomes smaller, reflecting an increasing urban and mobile society. Even the size of cooking pots shrinks as society moves toward smaller, nuclear families.³⁰ Implicit in these differences is a momentous shift in Judahite society, away from the isolated, rural nation that characterized its first few centuries into a more urbanized, cosmopolitan state.

The social influences in Jerusalem were twofold. First, there were the numerous northern émigrés. These people came from a more urban and cosmopolitan culture. From the perspective of historical geography, the north was also much more open to contacts, both political and commercial. Although Judah had been a relatively poor, sparsely populated state (especially compared to Samaria), this situation began to change in the late eighth century as wealthier, more cosmopolitan northerners were thrust back into Judahite society. The acceptance of these new settlers—particularly in Jerusalem, as opposed to the rural communities—was probably eased by the lineal ties with the northern dynasty of Ahab through Athaliah.³¹ The second social influence came through contact with Assyrian culture and religion.³² In the late eighth through seventh centuries the rural Judahite state had two foreign cultures, Samaria and Assyria, thrust upon them. The Josianic reforms were a reaction against these cultural incursions.

The urbanization and concomitant centralization of Jerusalem naturally resulted in some resentment among the more rural towns and villages. This is reflected, for example, in the rural prophet Micah from the countryside town of Moresheth-gath:³³

²⁹ Baruch Halpern, "Jerusalem and the Lineages in the Seventh Century BCE: Kinship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability," in *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel* (ed. B. Halpern and D. Hobson; JSOTSup 124; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 11–107.

³⁰ On family structure in ancient Israel, see Lawrence E. Stager, "The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel," *BASOR* 260 (1985): 1–35.

³¹ E.g., 2 Kgs 8:26–27. See Halpern, "Jerusalem and the Lineages in the Seventh Century BCE," 11–107.

³² There has been extensive discussion concerning the degree of Assyrian imposition of religion; see Morton [Mordechai] Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.* (SBLMS 19; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1974); and John McKay, *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians* (SBT 26; Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1973).

³³ Moresheth-gath should probably be identified with Tell ej-Judeideh (aka Tel Goded), a small 6-acre site excavated at the turn of the century; see Felix M. Abel,

Hear this, you *heads of the house of Jacob and chiefs of the house of Israel*, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who *build* Zion with blood and Jerusalem with wrong! Its rulers give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for a price, its prophets give oracles for money; yet they lean upon YHWH and say, “Surely YHWH is with us! No harm shall come upon us.” Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height. (Mic 3:9–12)

The “heads” and “chiefs” are related to the house of “Jacob” and “Israel,” that is, the north. These are the ones who “build Jerusalem.” In the context of the enormous growth in Jerusalem’s size at this time, the use of the verb בנה “to build” should be understood as having a concrete referent. The new inhabitants of Jerusalem—apparently, many of them from the north—are accused of bringing perverted social values. Notably absent in Micah’s diatribe is anything reminiscent of the later Deuteronomic religious critique. Rather, the critique compares with the prophetic critiques in Amos and Hosea, a hint that these books also received their final form from Judahite editors around 700 B.C.E.

The critique of these new cultural influences climaxed in the assassination of Hezekiah’s grandson, Amon. It is probable that the attempted coup d’état by the “servants of Amon” was related to the non-Yahwistic (at least by name) queen mother who was of *northern* descent (see 2 Kgs 21:19). At this point, the *‘am bā’āreš* (“people of the land” עַם הָאָרֶץ) moved in to ensure the proper succession. More importantly, this left the government in the hands of an eight-year-old king whose family came from Bozkath, a rural town in the Judean foothills.³⁴ Power apparently had shifted from the aristocratic urbanites with ties to northern Israel back to the rural patricians. The role of the enigmatic *‘am bā’āreš* in the Josianic coup suggests that they represented the old rural aristocracy.³⁵ The tension between the *‘am bā’āreš* and the urban elite is also quite explicit in the account of Josiah’s overthrow of the Israelian queen Athaliah, which concludes, “So all *‘am bā’āreš* rejoiced, but the city was quiet after Athaliah had been killed with the sword at the king’s house” (2 Kgs 11:20). It is hardly surprising that drastic changes in the politics and religion were forthcoming.

Géographie politique (vol. 2 of *Géographie de la Palestine*; Paris: Gabalda, 1938), 392; Magen Broshi, “Judeideh, Tell,” *NEAEHL* 3:837–38.

³⁴ There is no consensus on the exact identification of Bozkath, although it was apparently located in the Judean foothills near Lachish (see Josh. 15:39).

³⁵ For a good summary of the literature, see John Healy, “Am Ha’arez,” *ABD* 1:168–69.

ASPECTS OF THE BIBLICAL LITERARY TRADITION

Rapid growth and change in Jerusalem naturally attracted social, political, and religious interpreters. These conditions invited and even necessitated the creation of literature. There is good reason to believe that the collection and editing of traditions as well as the composition of literature began in earnest with the men of Hezekiah in the late eighth century, as is suggested by Prov 25:1, and continued into the days of Josiah. The time has now come briefly to assess how the sociopolitical context might have shaped the composition of biblical texts. A complete discussion of these texts will require a separate monograph, so I will offer some observations on the Prophets.

ISAIAH OF JERUSALEM

The so-called messianic prophecies in Isa 7–11 were intended initially to address the sociopolitical situation of the late eighth century. These chapters are part of the larger literary unit, Isa 5–12, that focuses on the punishment of the northern kingdom by Assyria and the associated restoration of the Davidic Empire.³⁶ The dating of these prophecies is naturally critical. There is some consensus that the so-called *Denkschrift* or “Isaianic Memoir” (Isa 6:1–9:6 [Eng. 6:1–9:7]) dates to the eighth-century prophet, even while many parts are assigned to later editors.³⁷ Its literary envelope (Isa 5:1–30; 9:7–12:6), on the other hand, has been the subject of more debate. First of all, it is difficult to empathize with those few scholars who wish to dissect these chapters on little or no redactional grounds. Usually these analyses are based on the critics’ feelings about what could or could not be written in the particular historical context. Yet, as this study shows, all the so-called messianic prophecies in Isa 7–11 are entirely appropriate to the sociopolitical context of the late eighth century.

The “Immanuel prophecy” in Isa 7 is set within the context of the Syro-Ephraimite war, the war that precipitated the Assyrian incursions against Damascus and Israel in 734–732. The alliance between Rezin and Pekah against Judah threatened to overthrow the Davidic dynasty, and “when the house of David [בֵּית דָּוִד] heard that Aram had allied itself with Ephraim” they were afraid and turned to the prophet Isaiah (Isa 7:2–3). The narrative’s choice of the expression “house of David” (also in 7:13)

³⁶ For a discussion of the literary unit, see Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39, with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (FOTL 16; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 114–15.

³⁷ See recently Hugh G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah’s Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 116–55.

here quite intentionally recalls the promise of an eternal house to David's sons (see 2 Sam 7:11–16). The prophet's words conclude by highlighting the rebellion of the northern kingdom from Judah: "YHWH will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come *since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah*—the king of Assyria" (Isa 7:17).

The well-known prophecy in Isa 8:23–9:6 [Eng. 9:1–7] begins with the "gloom that is in Galilee," no doubt a reflection of current events. The reversal of this devastating conquest of Samaria by the Assyrians—that is, the light that has shined upon them (9:1)—is found with the chosen son who sits on the throne of David (9:5–6). Likewise, in Isa 11 the Davidic root of Jesse ultimately "will assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather the dispersed of Judah" (11:12). It is easy to see how these prophecies immediately addressed the social setting of the late eighth century in Jerusalem. On the one hand, these prophecies resonated with the recent destruction of the north that vindicated the Davidic monarchy, a monarchy that itself had been threatened by the now-dismantled northern kingdom. On the other hand, these narratives envisioned the ingathering of the northern remnant by the promised Davidic line, which was something that Hezekiah was eager to do in order to strengthen his rule.

THE HEZEKIAN EDITION OF THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

The book of Kings preserves two similar assessments of the division of the kingdom that must have originated within the Hezekian period among palace scribes in Jerusalem.³⁸ The first summarizes the narrative of the division in which Rehoboam foolishly follows his young counselors: "So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David [בֵּית דָּוִד] until this day" (1 Kgs 12:19). It is noteworthy that there is no prophetic justification in the summary (see 1 Kgs 11:9–13) and that the transgression implied by the verb פָּשַׁע "to transgress, rebel" is against the *house of David*. The highly edited narrative about the fall of Samaria in 2 Kgs 17 also preserves a fragment from this perspective. In 2 Kgs 17:20–21a we read:

YHWH rejected all the seed of Israel; he punished them and gave them into the hand of plunderers until he had banished them from his pres-

³⁸ The present study cannot discuss this hypothesis in detail. The foundation of the approach has been the study of the regnal and judgment formulae, and I agree with Vanderhooft and Halpern that "the most obvious barometer of editorial shifts within Kings is fluctuation in its skeletal formulary" (David S. Vanderhooft and Baruch Halpern, "The Editions of Kings in the 7th–6th Centuries B.C.E.," *HUCA* 62 [1991]: 183); see my review of literature: "The Problem with Kings: Recent Study of the Deuteronomistic History," *RelSRev* 22 (1995): 22–27.

ence because Israel had torn away from the house of David [כִּי־קָרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל מִלְּבַיִת דָּוִד]. Then they made Jeroboam, son of Nebat, king.

Here the exile of the northern kingdom results from Israel breaking away from Judah. Although the Hebrew syntax is clear, commentators sometimes miss the point, interpreting the action as passive. For example, the NRSV translates כִּי־קָרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל מִלְּבַיִת דָּוִד as a clause dependent on the following statement, “When he had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat king.” This translation violates rules of Hebrew grammar. The verb קָרַע is active, not passive; the noun יִשְׂרָאֵל is the subject, not the object.³⁹ The main reason for translating this clause as a passive would seem to be preconceived notions about how the exile of Samaria was interpreted in ancient Judah. It should be clear that Jerusalem interpreted the fall of Samaria as a vindication of the Davidic dynasty, especially in the immediate aftermath. This perspective was fundamentally political, though there were obvious religious aspects as well. I would suggest that these two passages reflect the perspective of a longer Hezekian historical work that vindicated the Davidic line as the legitimate heirs to a united kingdom. Both parts of the kingdom were presented because Hezekiah reunited the divided kingdom. The early division of the kingdom after Saul was critical because David reunited the kingdom, and Hezekiah followed in his steps. Hezekiah reestablished the Davidic kingdom. Here I agree with Ian Provan and others who argue that Hezekiah is presented in the book of Kings as the “new David.”⁴⁰ However, this is more than a literary viewpoint; it reflected a political policy conditioned by the situation in the late eighth century.

This view must have had far-reaching ramifications for the Josianic author of the Deuteronomistic History.⁴¹ The Josianic themes are focused around religious rather than political issues. Whereas Hezekiah tried to *integrate* the north, Josiah only *castigated*. Where Josiah’s centralization

³⁹ This point is argued cogently by Marc Z. Brettler, “Ideology, History and Theology in 2 Kings XVII 7–23,” *VT* 39 (1989): 268–82. However, it is difficult to understand Brettler’s dating of this fragment to the postexilic period, when it would have little relevance.

⁴⁰ Ian W. Provan, *Hezekiah in the Book of Kings* (BZAW, 172; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 116–17. Also see Richard Elliott Friedman, “From Egypt to Egypt in Dtr 1 and Dtr 2,” in *Traditions in Transformations: Turning Points in Biblical Faith* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 171–73; Erik Eynikel, *The Reform of King Josiah and the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 107–11.

⁴¹ There is considerable debate concerning the composition of the Deuteronomistic History that cannot be taken up in detail here. For a complete survey of literature, see Eynikel, *Reform of King Josiah*, 7–31.

was unabashedly religious, centralization under Hezekiah was first of all civil and governmental, precipitated by the growth in size and importance of Jerusalem. Positing a major Hezekian history more satisfactorily answers some lingering questions about the Deuteronomistic History. How relevant was an extinct northern kingdom a century later? Two centuries? The book of Chronicles should inform us of the role of the north in later literature, yet the northern kingdom is omitted. The fate of the northern kingdom would have weighed most heavily in the life and literature of Judah in the years immediately following Samaria's destruction and exile.

THE BOOK OF AMOS

The days of Hezekiah evidently saw not only the influx of northern refugees but also the collection of northern prophetic literature such as Amos and Hosea. There is ample reason to believe that the book of Amos also received its final form in the Hezekian period. The composition of Amos has been a matter of considerable debate. The most recent commentaries by David Noel Freedman and Shalom Paul argue that the book essentially dates to the days of the prophet with little subsequent editing.⁴² In order to arrive at this conclusion, one must dance around rather unequivocal references pointing to the late eighth century. Certainly the clearest of these is the reference to the disappearance of Philistine Gath in Amos 6:2, which was known to have been destroyed by Sargon's invasion in 712 B.C.E.⁴³ Undoubtedly Amos was preserved in the south because the prophet was understood to have correctly foreseen the exile of Samaria, and this was interpreted as further legitimizing the Davidic dynasty.

Amos 9:11—"On that day I will raise up the booth of David [סֶכֶת דָּוִד] that is fallen, and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old"—has been widely analyzed as a late addition to the book.⁴⁴ Usually this redactor was situated in the postexilic period, though there is much less agreement on this. The arguments may be summarized as follows: (1) the expectation of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom reflects such a period; (2) the promise of restoration contradicts the threat of destruction throughout the book; (3) the promise of restoration without

⁴² David Noel Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* (AB 24A; New York: Doubleday, 1989); Shalom Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991).

⁴³ It is also noteworthy that Gath is missing from the list of Philistine cities mentioned in Amos 1:6–8. Its fate is apparently summed up in the words of the prophet Micah: "Tell it not in Gath" (Mic 1:10).

⁴⁴ E.g., William R. Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1904), 195–96.

ethical demands contradicts Amos's message elsewhere; (4) the historical background presupposes exile; and (5) the language is Late Biblical Hebrew. Given the social background described in this essay, the first four arguments may be disregarded. The last linguistic argument has never been properly developed and does not bear up to scrutiny. A critical plank in this argument is the plene spelling of the name David, admittedly a late tendency. However, as James Barr has shown, spelling is not a reliable means of dating, since it often reflects scribal transmission more than authorship.⁴⁵ There is then no reason to see this passage as a very late addition when we now have a more plausible context in the late eighth century.

The conclusion of Amos draws from two sources: Amos 5:26–27 and 2 Sam 7. The enigmatic prophecy in Amos 5:26–27 is preserved in the MT as follows:

ונשאתם את סכות מלככם ואת כיון צלמיכם כוכב אלהיכם אשר עשיתם לכם
והגליתי אתכם מהלאה לרמשק אמר יהוה אלהי צבאות שמו

You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god, your images, which you made for yourselves; therefore I will take you into exile beyond Damascus, says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts. (NRSV)

This text has generated endless debates over its meaning. This debate need not concern us here. What is relevant is not what it meant to the prophet Amos but rather how it was interpreted by the redactor of Amos 9:11.⁴⁶ In this enigmatic prophecy the redactor sees a correctly predicted exile of the northern kingdom. More than this, the redactor apparently asks the questions: (1) “Who is your legitimate king [מלככם]?” and “What is the סכות?” The legitimate king must be David, and the fallen “hut” of David (סכת דויד הנופלת) is the division of the kingdom that now will be mended (גדר “to repair”; בנה “to build”; קום “to raise up”). The verbs in 5:26 and 9:11—נשא “to lift up” and קום “to rise up”—should be understood as intentionally parallel. As in Isa 7:17, the book of Amos recalls the former times: the kingdom will be restored “like the days of old” (כימי עולם), namely, the golden age of David and Solomon (see Prov 25:1).

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

The critique of kingship in the book of Hosea probably also received its final shape in the aftermath of Samaria's fall and Jerusalem's survival. In

⁴⁵ James Barr, *The Variable Spelling of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 201.

⁴⁶ The association between Amos 5:26–27 and 9:11 is recognized by the author of the *Damascus Document* (see CD vii, 14–21).

that context, Hosea's prophecies were understood to give divine sanction to the Davidic kings who remained in Jerusalem. Hosea's superscription describes the prophet's activity as continuing into the Hezekian period, and the prophet actually prophesies the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem: "But I will have pity on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God; I will not save them by bow, or by sword, or by war, or by horses, or by horsemen" (Hos 1:7 NRSV). Ronald E. Clements ascribes this verse to a late seventh-century editor.⁴⁷ It seems more likely, however, that the verse was part of an editorial framework given the book when it was brought down from the north in the aftermath of the destruction of Samaria. The late seventh century was characterized by a fierce polemic against Jeroboam's religious practices and as such hardly makes an appropriate context for the integration of northern prophetic traditions. If there was to be an integration of northern literary traditions in Jerusalem, it makes more sense to see them in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Samaria with its concomitant influx of refugees to the south than to place it a century later in the context of religious reforms aimed at eradicating northern cultural influences!

Many commentators have pointed out the largely negative portrait of monarchy in the book of Hosea. Perhaps the most oft-quoted example is Hos 8:4, "They made kings, but not through me; they set up princes, but without my knowledge." Ultimately, however, the meaning of this critique within the book as a whole must be read through the lens of Hos 3:4–5:

For the Israelites shall live [יִשְׁבוּ] many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward [אַחֲרַי] the Israelites shall return [יִשְׁבוּ] and seek YHWH their God, and David their king; they shall come in awe to YHWH and to his goodness in the latter days.

The temporal relationship between 3:4 and 5 is marked by the preposition אַחֲרַי "afterward." For a period the northern kingdom did not have a king, but then they were drawn into the fold under the Davidic dynasty. It is natural to assume that this refers to the period following the fall of Samaria until the time of the author. The author argues that David is "their king" (מֶלֶכָם), implying that the former northern kingdom and its kings were illegitimate. The idea that the Israelites would be incorporated *again* into the kingdom fits into the context we know in the late eighth century and early seventh century, but it is difficult to place within any later exilic

⁴⁷ See Ronald E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem: A Study of the Interpretation of Prophecy in the Old Testament* (JSOTSup 13; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 60.

or postexilic context. Northern prophetic texts would have been given a Jerusalemite redaction soon after they arrived in the south—that is, if they were to be preserved at all.

In sum, the dramatic social and political changes that accompanied rapid growth and urbanization in Jerusalem during the late eighth and early seventh centuries attracted the composition of literature. Moreover, the more precisely we understand the sociopolitical context, the better we may understand why the literature might have been written and how it was *read* by those for whom it was written.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ By focusing on the audience as opposed to author, we bypass the intentional fallacy. Yet the onus to understand the context of the audience—that is, what Jauss has termed the readers' "horizon of expectations"—becomes greater; see Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History As a Challenge to Literary Theory," *New Literary History* 2 (1970): 7–37. For a survey of audience-oriented criticism, see Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, eds., *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980).