CHAPTER 8

ORIGIN OF THE MASORETIC TEXT AND MONOTHEISM: SYNOPTIC SURVEY

8.1   Introduction

In the foregoing chapters of this thesis[1] I endeavour – by means of my research – to illustrate that the different disciplines of biblical scholarship and archaeology are interdependent. The Hebrew Bible, being in many instances biased, is not historically dependable; at the same time 'archaeological artifacts, although not subject to editing in the same way as the texts, do not easily reveal their meaning'.[2] A long oral tradition preceded the later written and edited Masoretic Text, which was compiled within the framework of the background and preconceived ideas of the authors and redactors. The Hebrew Bible in itself is therefore not an adequate source to reconstruct 'a reliable portrait of Israelite religions as they actually were'.[3] Dever[4] indicates that in ancient Israel there was, seemingly, a "multiplicity" of religions, namely folk religion, as well as state or book religion. Biblical scholars generally pay little attention to the "real life" context considered essential by archaeologists. Biblical texts should therefore also be discussed in relation to their Ancient Near Eastern environment and frame of reference. Women, as well as other marginalised and disenfranchised groups, have become "invisible", except for the archaeological record. Similarly, iconography, or symbols, is '*more* evocative of the past than are texts'.[5] Biblical scholars, however, tend to neglect archaeology, not realising its revolutionary potential. It is thus clear that neither biblical historiography nor theology can reach the full scope of its research without the support of relevant disciplines. However, the Hebrew Bible remains the prime source of information concerning the Israelite nation and its religion, and therefore it seems appropriate to conclude this research with a brief discussion of matters pertaining to the compilation and finalisation of the Masoretic Text.

I am knowledgeable about the book *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, by Karel van der Toorn, which was published in 2007 and recently reviewed by Frank Polak and Richard Weis. Unfortunately, I have not been able to study this publication fully at this late stage, and therefore I have not incorporated it in this chapter.

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[1] Chapters 2-7.
[2] Dever 2005:xi.
[3] Dever 2005:32.
[4] Dever 2005:xv, 5, 7, 29, 32, 43, 48, 54, 59, 62.
[5] Dever 2005:54.

Van Seters[6] endorses a definition of "history writing" by the Dutch historian, J Huizinga, namely that 'history is the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past',[7] as a well-suited guideline concerning historiography. He indicates that historiographic material in the Hebrew Bible – as for the rest of the Ancient Near East – is based upon contemporary information or data from relatively limited origins. Histories in the Masoretic Text are compiled from a variety of written and oral sources. A genre of Egyptian literature, namely the historical novel, had a significant influence on Israelite history writing. Similarly, some scholars argue that literary texts of ancient Ugarit – that are in essence mythological or legendary matter – had influenced later Hebrew texts, while other scholars contend that little else, but Ugaritic poetic narrative texts, could be classified according to an historiographic genre. Terminology regarding Israelite historiography is ambiguous and confusing as the same terms are administered in different ways. Historical and chronological genres have been applied in the writing of Israel's history, although the history did not evolve directly out of these genres. Narratives, combined with chronology, portray political events and create the potential for the "historical" reconstruction of the past. Van Seters[8] regards the Deuteronomist as the first Israelite historian, 'and the first known historian in Western civilization truly to deserve this designation'.

In his research on Babylonian and some biblical chronicles, Dijkstra[9] reaches the conclusion that, although the Babylonian and biblical narrators hardly qualify as historians in the modern sense, they were – within the confines of the Ancient Near Eastern civilisation – 'certainly historians in their own right'. They were, nonetheless, ideologically biased in the application of their traditions and sources, and wrote from a specific theological viewpoint. Biblical historiography shares many elements of the Ancient Near Eastern belief system, such as a vision of the past as a sequence of good and bad spells and, particularly, the idea of divine intervention. Historical memory everywhere adjusts reality to serve the present. Dijkstra[10] contends 'that a contextual approach from the cultures and literature of the ancient Near East provides our best "controlled comparison" for the development of historiography in Israel and the Old Testament'. There is thus no historical reason to set the Hebrew Bible against a Hellenistic

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[6] Van Seters 1983:1, 40, 60, 199-200, 207, 356-357.
[7] Van Seters 1983:1.
[8] Van Seters 1983:362.
[9] Dijkstra 2005:39.
[10] Dijkstra 2005:39.

historiographic background.[11] Biblical writers probably borrowed familiar mythological motifs, transformed and incorporated them into an original story of their own.[12]

Although it is commonly accepted in contemporary biblical scholarship that early collections had existed of narrative, legal, prophetic, wisdom and cultic matter that were transmitted orally, and later composed in the literature known as the Masoretic Text, scholars differ as to the extent of such transmissions. Narratives and some other issues were probably communicated within the family and tribal circles. Wisdom sayings on the other hand, might have circulated orally in certain strata of Israelite society, as well as in the circle of the sage. Characteristically biblical tradition was transmitted from one generation to the next. Although a core tradition – thus not merely a theme or set of motifs – that functioned orally, could possibly now be reconstructed hypothetically by biblical scholars, it seems unlikely that the analyst would be able to recover the form of such a tradition from the surviving literature. In contrast to early customs and lore that were adapted to later developments, the early core of Israelite tradition 'already contains the most striking element of early Israelite religion',[13] namely *Yahweh*'s concern for the oppressed.[14]

'Israelite tradition did not develop in an isolated vacuum',[15] but factors from outside Israel obviously contributed to the moulding of this tradition.[16] Smend[17] denotes that the main task of an historian is 'to extract history out of tradition'. However, the contents of the Hebrew Bible is not an adequate historical source, but one must keep in mind that Israelite narrative is not actually interested in historical events, but rather in the activity of God in history.[18] Biblical scholars generally agree that the main purpose of the cult was to actualise the tradition.[19] According to Beyerlin,[20] the Sinai tradition – if it had its *Sitz im Leben* in the history of the tribal confederacy of Israel – would have been linked with its cult in a special way. The growth of

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[11] Dijkstra 2005:18, 39. Minimalists contend that the Hebrew Bible was composed during the Persian and Hellenistic periods.
[12] Wenham 1987:53.
[13] Harrelson 1977:25.
[14] Harrelson 1977:11, 13-15, 18, 25, 29.
[15] Ringgren 1977:31.
[16] Ringgren 1977:31, 34-35, 45. Examples of the impact of the Ancient Near East on the development of the Israelite tradition, are the Joseph narrative in Genesis – that has a distinct Egyptian bearing – and the flood story, which marks a decisive moment in the Yahwistic presentation of history; scholars currently have access to three parallels in the Mesopotamian literature regarding the Flood (Ringgren 1977:34-35).
[17] Smend 1977:51.
[18] Smend 1977:51, 54-55.
[19] Childs 1962b:75.
[20] Beyerlin 1965:167, 169.

this tradition was, furthermore, determined by its cultic affiliations, which lasted into the Monarchical Period. However, tradition did not have its origin in the cult.

The question of the typological status of biblical narratives is a problem that confronts biblical scholars; are these stories related typologically to literature of other cultures? Much has been said about the difficulties concerning an oral tradition being transmitted into a written tradition, and the development of such a tradition. Scholars distinguish between "learned" oral literature – communicated by professionals, who had created and preserved, inter alia, laws and rituals – and "folk" oral literature, such as legends, lyrics and proverbs. Scholars also debate the question of epic poetry – or not – in biblical literature.[21] The power of writing was highly respected. Literacy was initially restricted to the professional scribes, but with the development of the alphabet literacy spread to wider segments of the population. According to Niditch,[22] some scholars assume that, in general, the Israelites were literate.

In contrast to the suggestion by Niditch[23] – above – Horsley[24] is of the opinion 'that literacy was limited basically to circles of scribes', and that Israelites as a rule were not literate. He, furthermore, mentions that literature, which arose from historical circumstances, also addressed those situations; ancient Judean texts are virtually the only sources available to reconstruct such historical events. In his analysis of wisdom and apocalyptic material he indicates that Ben Sira[25] regarded scribes and sages to be of higher social standing than farmers and artisans. The principal role of scribes was to serve the rulers. Rival factions among the aristocracy complicated relations between sages or scribes and the rulers in whose service they were.[26] Frick[27] indicates that people had asked questions about their relationship to the land where they lived, to the ethnic group with which they identified, and to the religious myths and rituals that were fundamental to their sense of identity. Therefore he conceives the purpose of biblical narratives to answer these questions, and not to "present facts". Biblical scholars have become aware of the reality that history is a social construct. The writers and editors of the biblical text, however, represented 'the concerns of a small male literate elite'[28] – who delineated the interests of those in power – and hardly expressed the concerns of the general society.

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[21] Jason 1995:280-281, 283. See Jason (1995:282-283) for a definition and discussion of oral folk epic.
[22] Niditch 1996:39, 58.
[23] See Niditch 1996:39.
[24] Horsley 2005:124.
[25] See footnote on Ben Sira in § 3.8.3.
[26] Horsley 2005:123, 125, 127, 132-133.
[27] Frick 1999:245.
[28] Frick 1999:245.

Historiography is always interpretation. Past events are described and interpreted from a distinct point of view, leading to an ongoing reinterpretation of history. This, furthermore, results in an historical ideology for a specific nation or group, reflecting a history from which they emerged, which differs from the reality. The text recreates the history of a nation to present a message in a new time.[29] Any assessment of the historicity of certain biblical accounts should keep in mind that the origin of the particular material, as well as the aims of its compilers and editors, determined the outcome of the text.[30] There are thus limitations to all historical reports. According to Dever,[31] more attention should be paid to the role ideology played in history writing. Smith[32] advances 'that the academic study of collective memory offers important intellectual help for understanding the biblical representations of Israel's past'. Scholars should take cognisance thereof that the Hebrew Bible is not a record of events, but incorporates different witnesses to various occurrences, of which a large number have a religious character. Researchers should also negotiate between Israel's collective memories of its past, and 'the historical contexts that gave rise to those memories'.[33] Scholars underestimate the importance of the fact that the literary tradition in the Hebrew Bible is not only later than the actual events, but also belongs to the aristocracy.[34] 'Literature is not life, but rather the product of the intellectual and literary imagination of a creative few.'[35]

'The intention of the historian … , is to communicate an analysis of the course of events.'[36] Although not intended, the audience might have taken this communication literally. The modern Bible reader should endeavour to get back into the minds of the chronicler's listeners or readers who shared his assumptions, and could therefore be persuaded by his logic. An example is the report of particular miracles; the further removed from events, the greater the tolerance for miracles.[37]

Sasson[38] distinguishes two biographical forms that convey biblical history, namely the melodramatic and the cumulative, or episodic, modes. Each scene in the episodic biography

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[29] Van Rooy 1994:163-166.
[30] Bartlett 1989:91. An example is narratives recording Israel's contact with Edom in the Wilderness. These chronicles – see, for instance, Numbers 20:14-21 – have important theological and political overtones; they are told as political and theological propaganda, furnishing no information on the land of Edom (Bartlett 1989:93).
[31] Dever 1997b:291.
[32] Smith 2004:125.
[33] Smith 2004:126.
[34] Dever 1988:346.
[35] Dever 1997b:292.
[36] Halpern 1988:275.
[37] Halpern 1988:275-276.
[38] Sasson 1984:306-308.

contains a narrative which is complete in itself. The various scenes present different manifestations of the character, the hero – whose sum total of virtues and failings emerges from these narratives. Little attention was paid to the birth or death of the hero, as his character could best be captured during his maturity. The melodramatic biography is also based on the sequencing of scenes, but, unlike the episodic in which the activities of the hero could easily be idealised, the melodramatic explores the inner world of the character. According to Mendenhall,[39] scholars concentrate on small detail concerning the Abraham narratives, and thereby obscure an important historical problem regarding the purpose and nature of these chronicles in the Israelite cultural history. The history of the patriarchal narratives is intimately attached to the Israelite history and its changing religious ideologies. Mendenhall[40] suggests, as a working hypothesis, 'that the Abraham traditions are inseparately tied up with the historical and social (as well as political and ideological) process that resulted in the disintegration of the old tribal federation and the rise of the temporary empire', and is of the opinion that 'many features of the patriarchal tradition (will then) fall neatly into place'. Abraham is distinguished as the "common ancestor", he is linked to the "gift of the land" and to the "covenant" – the latter, which might have had a direct connection with the Davidic covenant. It seems that the entire Abraham tradition was transmitted through a variety of sources, from the time of the Middle Bronze Age. It is thus clear that all the main elements of the Abraham narrative functioned to legitimise the Monarchy. By the time of the Exile these stories were firmly ingrained as part of the total tradition.[41]

Fenton[42] is of the opinion that, by a comparative examination of the earliest biblical poetic structures in the Hebrew Bible, the antiquity of biblical Hebrew literature – as well as historical references therein – might be found. In his comparison of this literature with ancient Canaanite models, he established that the time span of the biblical Hebrew literature tradition extended from at least the eleventh century BC to the Persian Period. Dever[43] indicates that biblical scholars acknowledge that 'the books of the Hebrew Bible were written long after the events that they purport to describe', and that the Masoretic Text was compiled by writers and editors in an 'exceedingly complex literary process that stretched over a thousand years'. The latest findings and techniques concerning linguistics, form criticism, archaeology and comparative religion, assist scholars to re-evaluate the data of the biblical period.[44]

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[39] Mendenhall 1987:337-338.
[40] Mendenhall 1987:340.
[41] Mendenhall 1987:340, 343, 347-348, 354-355.
[42] Fenton 2004:386, 408.
[43] Dever 2003:1.
[44] Cohen 1965:59.

Long[45] denotes that scientific experiments should be repeated by various scientists before any results could be considered confirmed. In this regard he refers to an exercise carried out by Lester Grabbe, wherein the latter compares historical assertions in the Hebrew Bible with parallel attestations from Ancient Near Eastern texts. Grabbe reached specific generalisations, inter alia, 'that the details of the biblical accounts are at times misleading, inaccurate, or even invented'.[46] Long[47] repeated the comparative experiment with the result that he reversed this particular verdict[48] of Grabbe. He therefore questions the occurrence that scholars, working with the same evidence, at times reach totally different conclusions.

With regard to inconsistencies and contradictions in biblical narratives,[49] Revell[50] poses the question whether modern scholars fail to understand words in the same way as the audience – for whom the text was produced – would have done. Synonyms were probably deliberately chosen for the specific value of each word. Silver[51] mentions that many rabbinic legends developed to account for anomalies in the biblical text. Davies[52] indicates that, as vague as the name "Israel" is, are the terms "circles", "schools" and "tradition". Similarly, social systems cannot easily be conjectured from texts, therefore scholars should adopt an external standard of reference. If scholars, thus, have identified the society that had been responsible for the biblical literature, the question might be asked 'who, within that society, could write, or read, and why anyone would write *this* sort of stuff that we find in the Bible'.[53] According to Grabbe,[54] 'the importance of the Persian period for Jewish history has been widely recognized', although the extent to which this history reflects the propaganda of the sources, has generally not been acknowledged.

Roots of Western historiography are anchored in the cultures of Israel and Greece. The first discussions of Israelite and Judean history date from the Hellenistic Age,[55] as products from both Jewish and non-Jewish authors. In this regard the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus[56]

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[45] Long 2002:384.
[46] Long 2002:384.
[47] See Long (2002:368-382) for a comparative experiment between portrayals in biblical texts and analogous Ancient Near Eastern texts.
[48] 'That the details of the biblical accounts are at times misleading, inaccurate, or even invented' (Long 2002:384).
[49] For example, in Genesis 37 the traders, who carried Joseph to Egypt, are called Midianites in one instance and Ishmaelites in another verse. For an explanation of this discrepancy, see Revell (2001:70).
[50] Revell 2001:71.
[51] Silver 1974:311.
[52] Davies 1994c:28-29.
[53] Davies 1994c:29.
[54] Grabbe 2006:400.
[55] The Hellenistic Age dates from 332-37 BC (Negev & Gibson 2001:556).
[56] See footnote in § 3.5 for information on Josephus.

played an important role. Practically all historical works during the Middle Ages could characteristically be called "history without historical perspective". Medieval writers could not distinguish development in temporal history. The primary concerns of Medieval Jewish historiography centred upon philosophical-ethical matters. Foundations of modern historiography were laid in the Renaissance; an historical sensibility began to develop. Literary criticism was applied to various documents, either to prove that the documents were not authentic, or to elucidate their origin and history. The Hebrew Bible, as the Word of God, however, was exempted from such an examination. The intellectual climate of the seventeenth century had a particular impact on biblical historiography: a growing literary-critical approach to the Masoretic Text, the application of "new sciences" to defend a literal interpretation of biblical narratives, and the desire to produce a biblical chronology. A new biblical criticism subsequently developed subjecting the Hebrew Bible to critical study and acknowledging a history of transmission of biblical material. During the eighteenth century mythological study was introduced in biblical research.[57]

Major developments in the nineteenth century form the background for Israelite historiography. The decipherment of Ancient Near Eastern languages – particularly Egyptian hieroglyphics and Akkadian cuneiform – unlocked literary remains of Israel's neighbours; this had, subsequently, an enormous impact on the interpretation and research of the Hebrew Bible.[58] Julius Wellhausen – the most influential and significant biblical scholar of the nineteenth century – carried out a comprehensive examination of the literary traditions in the Hexateuch.[59] He 'supported the documentary criticism which argued that there were four sources in the pentateuch which originated in the order J, E, D, P'.[60]

Van der Kooij[61] mentions that the work of Abraham Kuenen – 'one of the leading Old Testament scholars of the 19th century' – is characterised by his outstanding reasoning and methodology. The purpose of the "Critical Method" of Kuenen was to reconstruct the Israelite religion and the history of Israel. A literary-critical and an historical-critical research of the literature of the Masoretic Text was considered as means to attain this goal. Although there are many new developments in biblical historiography, Kuenen is still regarded as an important

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[57] Hayes 1977:2-3, 8, 23, 32-36, 44, 46, 52.
[58] Hayes 1977:54.
[59] The Hexateuch consists of the first six books of the Hebrew Bible, namely Genesis up to, and including, Joshua (Deist 1990:114).
[60] Hayes 1977:61. See brief discussion in § 8.2.
[61] Van der Kooij 1993:49.

"discussion partner", pertaining to the literary-critical method.[62] 'The significance of Kuenen's critical method lies in the fact that it reminds us of the question of coherence and methodological compatibility of the various areas of Old Testament research, based on the principles of an historical-cultural approach.'[63]

Biblical archaeology developed out of an historical approach to the biblical texts, and during the first decades of the twentieth century biblical studies and archaeology were closely inter-woven. In the latter half of the twentieth century biblical studies and archaeology divided into several sub-disciplines. Archaeological practices were dominated by two schools of thought, namely a continuation of the traditional culture-historical approach, and the "New Archaeolo-gy",[64] 'whose scientifically based paradigms challenged what was perceived as the highly sub-jective nature of culture-historical interpretations of the past'.[65] Dever[66] emphasises that 'ar-chaeology is acknowledged as a potential source of historical information'.

Israelite historiography currently experiences a crisis; related epistemological issues are lately being addressed by Syro-Palestinian archaeologists. Recent debates include the role of ar-chaeology in the writing of a history of ancient Israel. Literature normally reflects only the life of the literati.[67] Dever[68] maintains that 'we need a fresh approach to the phenomenon of ancient Israel that is truly critical, comparative, generative, synthetic, and ecumenical'.

Miller[69] explores the historical criticism of the Hebrew Bible the past two centuries; he 'out-lines trends in historiographical theory, and assesses the impact newer theories of intellectual cultural history can have on studies of the history of the social world of ancient Israel'. He also indicates that – concerning the relevance of the Hebrew Bible for the history of ancient Israel – scholars should approach this matter with an open mind. A substantial number of scholars assume 'that the biblical pattern is automatically wrong and that the first principle of operation is to discard it for something else'.[70] However, if at least not some of the biblical testimony is accepted, scholars would hardly know where – or in which chronological period

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[62] Van der Kooij 1993:49, 54, 61.
[63] Van der Kooij 1993:63.
[64] See brief discussion in § 2.2, subtitle "Palynology".
[65] Killebrew 2005:3.
[66] Dever 1997b:291.
[67] Dever 1997b:297, 299, 304.
[68] Dever 1997b:305.
[69] Miller 2006:149.
[70] Miller 2006:159.

– to look for Israel's artefacts.[71] Miller[72] emphasises that 'we must always clearly distinguish what it is possible to know and what it is possible to propose. Let us be explicit with our models, open to revision, and seek not 'how it really was', but 'what we can really say'.' In his book, *The authority of the Bible*,[73] Gnuse[74] indicates that three questions should be raised concerning the authority of the Bible, namely, what the word "authority" means, why the Bible is regarded authoritative and how this authority could be applied to the faith and practice of the church. He discusses different models of inspiration, and points out that 'greater sensitivity to the biblical text and its complex process of development has led to a modern theory of inspiration'.[75] Biblical scholars now realise that the production of a text often involved more than one individual. The inspiration for a text therefore resided primarily in a community.[76]

On the question, "What is the Bible?", Finkelstein and Silberman[77] denote that the Hebrew Bible – previously referred to as the Old Testament – is primarily a collection of ancient writings. A comparison of archaeological data and biblical narratives eventuates in 'a fascinating and complex relationship between what *actually* happened'[78] and the historical chronicles in the Hebrew Bible. I wish to endorse a remark by Berlinerblau[79] that the Hebrew Bible 'is a religious book and not a history book'. In conclusion, Friedman[80] mentions that for many years scholars – in their analysis of the Hebrew Bible – appeared to be taking it apart in numerous pieces, which was thus not the Bible anymore. However, scholars have now reached the point 'at which our discoveries concerning the Bible's origins can mean an enhanced understanding and appreciation of the Bible in its final, developed form'.

8.2   Hypotheses on the Pentateuch

It was only during the eighteenth century that scholars seriously attempted to 'differentiate the component parts of the Pentateuch according to a theory of multiple sources or documents'.[81] In 1711 the German pastor H B Witter noted that the two creation accounts in Genesis are distinguished by the names *Elohim* and *Yahweh*. He was followed by other scholars who

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[71] Miller 2006:160.
[72] Miller 2006:161.
[73] See bibliography in this thesis: Gnuse 1985.
[74] Gnuse 1985:2.
[75] Gnuse 1985:50.
[76] Gnuse 1985:50-51.
[77] Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:5-6.
[78] Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:8.
[79] Berlinerblau 1996:16.
[80] Friedman 1987:241.
[81] West 1981:63.

advanced that the Book of Genesis had been compiled from an *Elohim* source and a *Yahweh* source. J G Eichhorn developed this theory in 1780, characterising the two suggested sources. The three-document hypothesis was initiated by K D Ilgen in 1798, according to which the *Elohim* source was subdivided into two parts. During the nineteenth century scholars realised different literary traditions could be found in the first four books of the Pentateuch.[82] The three sources identified were therefore the Yahwist, or "J" document, Elohim – or "E" document – and a second Elohim document with priestly characteristics, thus designated "P". Scholars concluded that a redactor skilfully combined these individual documents into a unified whole. Deuteronomy – basically distinct from the first four books – was named as the fourth pentateuchal source, "D".[83]

During the nineteenth century these earlier theories were coordinated by two German scholars, Karl Graf and Julius Wellhausen. They proposed the classic chronology – or Documentary hypothesis – J, E, D and P. Significant studies in Deuteronomy by W M L de Wette facilitated the dating of these documents; Deuteronomy became the key element in the Documentary hypothesis. During 1805 De Wette concluded that Deuteronomy was the book found in the Jerusalem Temple on which Josiah's[84] reforms were based.[85] Since the time of Wellhausen, 'the original documentary hypothesis has undergone considerable modification'.[86]

The recognition of multiple authors in the narrative sections, as well as in the legal and ritual parts of the Pentateuch, is based on the evidence of duplications, contradictions and inconsistencies in this work. In the legal portion of the Pentateuch the different documents could be distinguished easily, due to endings and conclusions that mark their boundaries. In contrast, 'the narrative sources are intertwined with one another and discontinuous'.[87] The moment biblical criticism negated Moses' traditional position as composer of the Pentateuch, it also relinquished any certainty about either the time of composition or the identity of its authors. According to Wellhausen, the J-document was composed during the ninth century BC, the E-document in the eighth, D in the seventh and P in the sixth to fifth century BC. Scholars later had various objections concerning Wellhausen's proposal.[88] Rofé[89] indicates that the P and D documents initially had separate geographical origins. 'The question of the dates and sources

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[82] Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers.
[83] West 1981:63-64.
[84] Josiah, Judean king, dated ca 640-609 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).
[85] West 1981:63-65.
[86] West 1981:65.
[87] Rofé 1999:30.
[88] Rofé 1999:17, 28, 30, 62, 65-66.
[89] Rofé 1999:75, 80.

of P and D is complicated by the fact that one can identify in each of them discrete sections that may be earlier or later than the rest of the document.'[90] The Holiness Code, "H", which is found in P,[91] is a well-known example. Scholars have suggested that H should 'be considered a separate theological trajectory',[92] and dated later than P in Leviticus.

According to the nineteenth century Dutch historian, Abraham Kuenen, 'the prophetic conception of Israel's early history and of the Mosaic legislation no longer fully satisfied the priest in Babylonia';[93] he felt compelled to recreate the past and present a more accurate account to his contemporaries. Rofé[94] is of the opinion that Kuenen's dating of the Priestly source in the exilic-post-exilic period is the correct assessment. Yet, as Kuenen[95] aptly indicated, P is not the expression of a post-exilic way of life, but rather the incorporation of old traditions preserved by the priesthood – the most conservative class in the land of Israel. De Vries[96] compares Kuenen's pentateuchal studies with research lately done in North America. The American pentateuchal scholar, George W Coats – for example – seldom wrote on the same passages that Kuenen analysed for his exegetical articles. It is, however, significant that Coats 'employs in his own original way the methodology that made Kuenen famous'.[97]

Friedman[98] is of the opinion that the redactor mainly arranged existing texts – not writing much of his own – therefore there is little evidence to identify him. As the major sections of the Pentateuch all begin with Priestly texts, the person(s) was probably aligned with the circle of Aaronid priests. Friedman[99] identifies Ezra as the redactor.

Coats[100] mentions that the pentateuchal narrative portrays the traditions of a community for many generations, before it was recorded. 'Different generations preserved the verbal portrait as their distinctive document of identity for their particular time.'[101] At least two different forms of chronicles have been combined to construct the Pentateuch. The oldest form was

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[90] Rofé 1999:80.
[91] The form of the Holiness Code 'is defined by the standard format of biblical legal codes. It begins with the laws of sacrifices … and ends with blessings and curses'. It is found particularly in Leviticus 17-26 (Rofé 1999:80).
[92] Gnuse 2000:220.
[93] Kuenen 1882b:173.
[94] Rofé 1993:106-107.
[95] Kuenen 1882b:248-249.
[96] De Vries 1993:129, 139, 142-143.
[97] De Vries 1993:142.
[98] Friedman 1987:218, 232.
[99] Friedman 1987:232.
[100] Coats 1993:152, 190-191.
[101] Coats 1993:152.

seemingly under the influence of the Davidic court,[102] and might have been composed in the time of Solomon.[103] The Yahwist was presumably the author of the oldest strand in the Pentateuch; a history of the world is portrayed – probably written by Davidic scribes – with David's kingdom at its centre. According to Von Rad,[104] the Priestly account of the creation narrative is not myth, but priestly doctrine – thus ancient sacred knowledge – which was preserved and handed down by generations of priests, who reformed and expanded this doctrine by new reflections and experiences of faith.

Propp[105] mentions that some scholars, although they continue to support the traditional image of P as a continuous narrative, acknowledge the presence of various supplements to P. They have pointed out contradictions and doublets in the Priestly material arguing that an author or "supplementer" hardly would have created a document that would regularly repeat and contradict itself. Other scholars raise the question why the editor did not rather start a new document, instead of 'creating chaos out of order'.[106] Smith[107] indicates that the Book of Exodus exhibits a number of Priestly glosses and compositions; biblical researchers now acknowledge a significant Priestly redaction of the book. Scholars, furthermore, lately contend that the Pentateuch is 'a basic collection of traditions that was continuously supplemented … and later extensively edited by different redactors'.[108]

Relatively late dating of the pentateuchal sources would have significant consequences for the theology, history, history of religion and literary history of the Hebrew Bible. Firm historical grounds support a late – thus exilic – date for the Yahwist.[109] 'The catastrophe of the exile gave rise to extensive thought and writings in Israel. … (this) event needed explanation in large historical and theological works of literature'.[110] Anderson[111] denotes that the question arises whether the writers – or redactors – of the pentateuchal traditions were aware of the presence of Cushites in seventeenth century BC Palestine. Does the reference to Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman[112] support early dating of the pentateuchal material, or does it

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[102] David reigned ca 1011-971 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).
[103] Solomon reigned ca 971-931 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).
[104] Von Rad 1972:63.
[105] Propp 1996:458-459.
[106] Propp 1996:459.
[107] Smith 1997:181.
[108] Van Dyk 1990:194.
[109] Van Dyk 1990:197-198.
[110] Van Dyk 1990:197.
[111] Anderson 1995:59. Anderson (1995:45-70) discusses Cushite presence in Syria-Palestine – a matter that has been neglected with regard to the history of this region.
[112] Numbers 12:1.

sustain the idea of retrojection? Waaler[113] mentions that the tendency among scholars to date pentateuchal texts to exilic or post-exilic times might be challenged by the amulets from Ketef Hinnom;[114] these are dated between 725 BC and 650 BC. The amulets contain material from the Priestly source in Numbers,[115] as well as from Deuteronomy.[116] He contends that evidence from Ketef Hinnom – the priestly blessing in the two amulets, with little variation in the text – 'indicates a continuous written tradition before the inscription of the amulets'.[117] It thus seems evident that a written tradition existed – that included these two texts – prior to this inscription.[118]

According to Gnuse,[119] 'the Elohist now has slipped into obscurity at the hands of contemporary pentateuchal scholars'. As the J and P traditions seemingly emerged in the Exile, the Elohist is thus incorporated in the Yahwist. Gnuse[120] discusses different viewpoints of various scholars regarding the Elohist. He is of the opinion that Alan Jenks provides the best elucidation in his suggestion that the Elohist was a school of thought – and not a single author – that emerged in the North; Elohist themes are linked to northern Israelite prophetic traditions. Some scholars, however, conclude 'that the Elohist tradition may never have existed'.[121] Contrary to these scholars, Gnuse[122] argues that an Elohist tradition could be dated to the seventh century BC; he advances three arguments to substantiate this suggestion. In addition to his reasoning, he proposes that the destruction of Samaria in 722 BC could have inspired an Elohist tradition as a northern prophetic response to this disaster.[123]

Dever[124] points out a statement by Rendtorff 'that the classic Documentary hypothesis is dead'.[125] This hypothesis dominated the literary approach to the Pentateuch for more than a hundred years. The new literary approach differs from prior studies primarily in its interest in texts as literary objects, rather than in the history of the text; its interest is thus in literary

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[113] Waaler 2002:29.
[114] See brief discussion in § 2.12 on the Ketef Hinnom amulets.
[115] Numbers 6:24-26.
[116] Deuteronomy 7:9.
[117] Waaler 2002:53.
[118] Waaler 2002:29, 53.
[119] Gnuse 2000:201.
[120] See Gnuse (2000:202-204) regarding these viewpoints.
[121] Gnuse 2000:204.
[122] To substantiate this suggestion, Gnuse (2000:204-209) discusses the Deir ʿAlla inscription and the dream reports in Elohist texts; the latter are linked to the Mesopotamian dream report formula. According to a third argument, theological themes attributed to the Elohist date to a time prior to the Exile.
[123] See Gnuse (2000:209-214, 220) for an elucidation of this reasoning.
[124] Dever 1997b:294.
[125] The statement is in an article in the inaugural issue of *Biblical Interpretation*: Rendtorff, R 1994. The paradigm is changing: hopes – and fears. *Biblical Interpretation* 1. No page number.

criticism, rather than literary history.[126] Rendtorff[127] denotes that until the 1970s the Documentary hypothesis 'was commonly accepted and seldom questioned';[128] according to this theory, the Pentateuch was formed from a number of independent sources that were, at the end of their transmission, brought together by redactors. The postulated number of sources varied among schools and scholars. In retrospect it is obvious that at no stage the hypothesis had been unanimously accepted by all supporters. Different views and opinions were included. The only consensus reached – seemingly – after twenty years debate about the composition of the Pentateuch, is that the four-source theory is obsolete. There are signs that a meaningful agreement has been reached concerning the following proposals:

'The earliest major composition extending from the patriarchs to the beginning of the settlement in Canaan … was produced in a deuteronomistic environment, not earlier than the seventh century BCE, and probably not before the sixth century BCE.

The priestly (P) material comprises a supplement (or series of supplements) to this composition, not an independent account of Israel's origins that once existed separately from it and was secondarily combined with it by a redactor'.[129]

This "new" proposal makes it quite clear that the basic elements of the Documentary hypothesis are not regarded any longer as valid. There is also no longer a definite difference between "earlier" and "later" sources, and "P" is not regarded any more as an originally independent source. The initial alternate views of the emergence of the Pentateuch were in confrontation with the Documentary hypothesis. There is still a wide range of reactions between the two extreme positions. A number of scholars support an exilic or post-exilic J, and believe that the Pentateuch had one author who was an historian. The Yahwist is also seen as a redactor who composed a history out of different sources. Other scholars assume that there are no sources at all; the main emphasis of the research is on the latest layers or compositions of the texts. One of the most obvious results of the debates the past number of years 'is the tendency to date the "pentateuchal" composition not earlier than the Babylonian Exile'.[130] It is therefore important to conceive that significant texts of the Hebrew Bible got their final profile in the exilic and post-exilic times.[131]

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[126] Fretheim 1991:5-6.
[127] Rendtorff 1997:43, 45, 49.
[128] Rendtorff 1997:43.
[129] Rendtorff 1997:49.
[130] Rendtorff 1997:56.
[131] Rendtorff 1997:49, 51, 53, 55-56.

Van Dyk[132] categorises new hypotheses on the origin of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch is 'too complex to be explained simply as the result of a few authors' creative and compilatory works'.[133] He indicates that the "Redaction History" perceives the Pentateuch 'as a basic collection of traditions that was continuously supplemented … and later extensively edited by different redactors',[134] while, according to the "transmission historical approach" – or Transmission History – of Rendtorff, several blocks of tradition that were transmitted separately – mainly in written form – were compiled by a redactor. At the same time as the rise of these two hypotheses, the dating of the different layers of the Pentateuch was reconsidered. The earlier Yahwist source is now dated according to an early ground layer, and an exilic redaction. Arguments have been advanced, indicating that at least the Yahwistic redaction should be seen within the framework of the deuteronomistic literature. Van Dyk[135] suggests that 'a coherent theory of literature should be devised to explain the origin of the Pentateuch'.

Rofé[136] reaches the conclusion that the composition of the Pentateuch seemingly had been a 'lengthy and complex creative process', which lasted from the days of the Judges – twelfth century BC – until the end of the Persian Period, fourth century BC. All stages of composition[137] were included in this process.

Sweek[138] denotes that scholarly disputes of the past could be described as 'consensus, its breakdown, and synthesis … as long as we understand that they are not norms we should pursue in the academic conversation of the present'.

8.3 Deuteronomistic historiography

On the question what "deuteronomic" and "deuteronomistic" mean, scholars have suggested that "deuteronomic" describes 'that which pertains specifically to the book of Deuteronomy', while "deuteronomistic" is 'more general, to denote the influence or thought-forms associated with the work of the Deuteronomists and expressed more widely and diffusely in the literature'.[139] For Van Seters[140] the term "deuteronomistic" means 'a piece of literature that is

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[132] Van Dyk 1990:194-196.
[133] Van Dyk 1990:194.
[134] Van Dyk 1990:194.
[135] Van Dyk 1990:200.
[136] Rofé 1999:130.
[137] Initial oral transmission, individual story writing, composition of cycles of stories, and collections of laws (Rofé 1999:130).
[138] Sweek 1995:419.
[139] Coggins 1995:136.
[140] Van Seters 1999:160.

closely related to the recognized work of the Deuteronomist within the corpus of Deuterono-my and Deuteronomistic History (DtrH) and that reflects a set of theological and social con-cerns that are most characteristic of this editorial hand'. The term "deuteronomic" was initial-ly applied when referring to the pentateuchal source D. Martin Noth later 'discerned both a D source and later redactional material in the book of Deuteronomy'[141] and created the term "deuteronomistic" to refer to this later redactional material. Coggins[142] indicates 'the extreme diversity underlying contemporary scholarly usage of "Deuteronomistic" and related terms'.

Scholars traditionally observed that the deuteronomists were responsible for the Book of Deu-teronomy, as well as most of the so-called Deuteronomistic History,[143] and non-narrative prose in Jeremiah, Isaiah 36-39, and small units in Amos and Hosea. However, pentateuchal studies lately indicate that 'the Deuteronomists (are) represented in most of the books of the Torah'.[144] Since the development of the classical Documentary hypothesis that restricted the deuteronomistic contribution to the Book of Deuteronomy, scholars became aware of similari-ties between the work of the Deuteronomist and that of the Elohist. It also became obvious that 'Deuteronomistic editing is much more pervasive than scholars have previously thought, particularly in the Torah'.[145] Contemporary scholars are, notwithstanding, familiar with the viewpoint that the deuteronomists were the developers of the Deuteronomistic History. The idea that a single creator was responsible for this history, is associated with the name of Mar-tin Noth; he argued strongly against the concept of a slow progression through the work of several editors. Lately, the notion of scholars – who approach the Hebrew Bible as literature – is that 'the Deuteronomists were creative writers more than they were historians utilizing earlier sources'.[146] The Deuteronomistic History, therefore, should not be deemed a reliable historical record.[147]

Friedman[148] identifies the prophet Jeremiah as the Deuteronomist. He had the literary skills and wrote precisely in the time attributed to the emergence of the Deuteronomistic History. He proffers the idea that the first edition of this history would have been written before the death of Josiah in 609 BC, while the second edition had to be written after the Babylonian

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[141] Person 2002:4-5.
[142] Coggins 1995:144.
[143] Deuteronomistic History: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings (Wilson 1999:68).
[144] Wilson 1999:68.
[145] Wilson 1999:69.
[146] Wilson 1999:72.
[147] Wilson 1999:68-69, 71-73.
[148] Friedman 1987:145-146.

exile in 587 BC. One person could easily have recorded a history in a period of twenty-two years.

Present debates are concerned with a deuteronomistic redaction of the Tetrateuch[149] and endeavour 'to find the oldest basis for the Sinai-Horeb tradition and the time and circumstances under which the law (*Torah*) became associated with it'.[150] Van Seters[151] reviews different scholars' viewpoints on this matter and summarises his own perspective. He acknowledges an early theophany tradition associated with the worship of *Yahweh*, but indicates that it is not to be found in Exodus 19-20. He also reaches the conclusion that there is no deuteronomistic redaction in the Tetrateuch. Person[152] indicates that arguments for deuteronomistic redaction in prophetic books, as well as the Tetrateuch, have led to a tendency to associate the Deuteronomic School with the complete Hebrew Bible and has thus prompted warnings of "pan-Deuteronomism". Although pan-Deuteronomism has been rejected, it is necessary that scholars take a closer look at deliberations against this propensity. Pan-Deuteronomism 'refers to the collection of various arguments for Deuteronomic redaction in or of diverse books outside of the Deuteronomic History and Jeremiah'.[153] Person[154] assesses views against this phenomenon by different scholars, and concludes that pan-Deuteronomism should be rejected as it does not adequately describe the literature of ancient Israel and, in addition, 'its rhetorical force may also unjustifiably lead some scholars to dismiss arguments made by those accused erroneously of promoting the idea of pan-Deuteronomism'.[155] Wilson[156] refers to a theory advanced by the scholar Lothar Perlitt, who suggested that the deuteronomists – possibly under the influence of prophets such as Hosea – developed the idea of covenant and introduced it to other biblical literature, particularly the Sinai section of the Torah. This proposal by Perlitt influenced the later pan-Deuteronomism.

McKenzie[157] mentions that 'the book of Deuteronomy is sometimes referred to as the "Archimedean point"[158] of pentateuchal criticism. ... . For biblical scholars since the time of de Wette, Deuteronomy has been the fulcrum upon which critical study of the Pentateuch

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[149] First four books in the Hebrew Bible, namely Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers (Deist 1990:256).
[150] Van Seters 1999:161.
[151] Van Seters 1999:161-170.
[152] Person 2002:13.
[153] Person 2002:14.
[154] Person 2002:13-15.
[155] Person 2002:15.
[156] Wilson 1999:69.
[157] McKenzie 1999:262.
[158] Archimedes – dated third century BC – 'who studied the properties of levers, claimed to be able to move the world if given the proper vantage point' (McKenzie 1999:262).

swings'. McKenzie[159] also states that Deuteronomy is the only pentateuchal source that can be firmly dated on internal grounds. Although there are indications that the "Book of Law" found under king Josiah in the late seventh century BC, might be fictional, there remain positive reasons to link Deuteronomy with Josiah. Scholars have perceived Deuteronomy as the key to the formation of the Hebrew Bible in its totality. The deuteronomistic historian thus, seemingly, enlarged the "Book of Law" and set it as a guide of his theological history of Israel. It is therefore apparent that Deuteronomy – and particularly its deuteronomistic amplification – effected a significant influence on the formation of the Hebrew Bible. McKenzie,[160] however, observes that the effect of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History on the composition of the Hebrew Bible 'is not tantamount to pan-Deuteronomism'.

Dever[161] denotes that mainstream scholars date the composition and first editing of the Deuteronomistic History toward the end of the Israelite Monarchy, probably during the reign of Josiah.[162] Handy[163] indicates that Assyriology has influenced scholars' conception of Josiah significantly. Biblical scholars had previously almost exclusively employed the narratives of Kings and Chronicles to reconstruct the late seventh century BC political environment of Judah. Due to the decipherment of Akkadian texts, Josiah's reign became incorporated into Assyrian history. Assyriology enhanced scholars' perception of the deities in Josiah's reign. On the assumption that Josiah achieved political freedom from Assyria, the "reform" narratives should be read against a declining Assyrian presence. A possible reconstruction of this period 'finds Josiah scrambling to deal with political instability', and thus 'to read the cult reform as a *de facto* political revolt from Assyria'.[164] The death of Josiah, and thus the end of his reign, has also been re-evaluated in the light of Assyriology.

According to a long scholarly tradition,[165] the scroll – or "Book of Law" – found in the Temple during the reign of Josiah, was assumed to be the Book of Deuteronomy. There is, however, 'no sustainable reason for this identification'.[166] As the canonical Deuteronomy comprises more data than that of which the author of Kings had been aware of, it clearly could not have been in existence at the time of Josiah. It is therefore improbable that the text in

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[159] McKenzie 1999:262-263.
[160] McKenzie 1999:267.
[161] Dever 2003:38.
[162] 640-609 BC (Dever 2003:38).
[163] Handy 2006:415-416, 421, 424, 430.
[164] Handy 2006:424.
[165] The early Church Fathers – including Jerome – identified the scroll as Deuteronomy (Friedman 1987:101).
[166] Handy 1995:254. See Handy (1995:255-263) for his arguments against the existence of a canonical Deuteronomy at the time of Josiah.

Kings[167] refers to Deuteronomy, or an earlier edition thereof. During the early nineteenth century De Wette, however, argued that Deuteronomy was the "book" discovered in the Temple and handed to Josiah. He, furthermore, maintained that it was written not long before it was so-called "found". The book was thus compiled to supply grounds for Josiah's religious reform.[168] According to Althann,[169] the account in 2 Kings 22 of the discovery of the law book resembles the story in 2 Kings 12 regarding Joash's [Jehoash] Temple restoration; it is thus 'sometimes judged to be an invention of a Deuteronomistic Historian'. Notwithstanding, the document probably did exist, at least as part of Deuteronomy. Droge's[170] view, on the other hand, is that 'the "Book of Law" was neither part of Deuteronomy nor any other known book'. Some scholars are of the opinion that the book had been the result of a "pious fraud" promoted by the high priest Hilkiah and the secretary Shaphan. Their intention would have been to convince Josiah that the reforms were in accordance with the direct command of God, as revealed to Moses. Claims of the discovery of an ancient document were at times presented to legitimise a group's arguments. Wolfgang Speyer[171] – a leading expert on forgery in Mediterranean antiquity – introduced the concept of authentic religious pseudepigraphy.[172] 'A book "discovered" in a sacred place seems to have been one of the most potent instruments available.'[173] It is, however, improbable that the law code originated from the royal court; it seems unlikely that Josiah – or any other king – would have had it written to serve his own political purposes. This particular law code restricts the king in many ways. It, furthermore, 'contains material that relates to conditions that existed before there were any kings in Israel or Judah'.[174]

The deuteronomistic law code includes prohibitions against the practising of pagan religions.[175] The Deuteronomist did not intend to deny the existence of deities other than *Yahweh*, but to convey the idea of the sovereignty of *Yahweh* over all gods – although it did not express an exclusiveness of *Yahweh*; it was thus legitimate for each nation to venerate its own deities.[176] Hadley[177] indicates that the deuteronomist(s) treats deities – such as *Asherah* – as

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[167] 2 Kings 22:8-20; particularly verse 8.
[168] Friedman 1987:101-102.
[169] Althann 1992:1016.
[170] Droge 2003:122.
[171] See also footnote in § 3.1. This phenomenon was widespread in the Ancient Near East, as well as in Greece and Rome (Droge 2003:135).
[172] Droge 2003:122, 126-127, 129, 135.
[173] Droge 2003:142.
[174] Friedman 1987:119.
[175] Friedman 1987:118.
[176] Hoffman 1994:73.
[177] Hadley 1997:177.

common nouns, which might have been an attempt to eradicate the worship of these gods by reducing their roles and granting *Yahweh* control over their functions. Due to the centralisation of the cult the Levites were grouped with the poor; 'the deuteronomic laws (therefore) enhance the marginal status of the Levites'.[178] Yet, Fechter[179] is of the opinion that 'deuteronomic lawgiving came from levitical circles'. Nelson[180] suggests – as a possible scenario – that the Book of Deuteronomy started 'as a covert undertaking by dissident Jerusalem scribal circles during the reign of Manasseh, with collaboration from conservative rural landowners, elements of the priesthood, and those schooled in wisdom'. Motivational rhetoric attached to the laws was incorporated in order to encourage the acceptance of this material. Additions were subsequently added to Deuteronomy to adapt it to new ideological situations.[181]

Lohfink[182] denotes that 'the expression Deuteronomistic movement is accompanied by Deuteronomistic school'. He argues that a movement – embodied in groups of supporters – goes beyond the limits of an organisation that had been created *ad hoc*. Differentiated groups and individuals may join a movement. A movement is normally aimed at social, and often also political, change. To construct a hypothesis of a deuteronomistic movement, scholars should identify the objectives of the deuteronomists more than concentrating on the analysis of their style. A movement therefore does not mean linguistic uniformity. The mere occurrence of particular texts – without an historical investigation – does neither support the existence of such a movement nor exclude the existence thereof. Scholars, at times, refer to literature that stemmed from a deuteronomistic movement, projecting a modern concept of "reading culture" back into ancient Israel.[183]

If the deuteronomistic movement did really exist, the question is to what extent and in what form. Authors – in the Northern Kingdom – of deuteronomistic texts, probably worked under the inspiration of the prophet Hosea; this explains traces of certain ideas and language of Hosea in deuteronomistic writings. The suppression of traditional ancestral cults under Hezekiah corresponds to the editing of a document of the Torah, later – seemingly – discovered under Josiah in the Temple; this document deals particularly with new regulations concerning worship. These abovementioned occurrences, however, do not justify speaking of a "movement".

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[178] Lasine 1994:210.
[179] Fechter 2000:693.
[180] Nelson 2003:241.
[181] Nelson 2003:241-242.
[182] Lohfink 1999:36.
[183] Lohfink 1999:36, 45-48.

These particular texts could have been composed by scribes on royal command. The Torah-text probably dealt only with questions of cultic reform, and would appear to be the first of a more elaborate Torah; it is normally referred to as "Ur-Deuteronomy". The actions of Hezekiah could have been supported by a movement; there is, however, no information to substantiate such a deduction.[184]

During the time of Josiah there actually seems to have been a movement. The reform of Josiah was 'at the same time an extensive movement of national, social and religious renewal that made use of the historical opportunity offered by the decline of Assyrian power to reconstruct resolutely and thoroughly the State of Israel'.[185] This movement included nobility of Judah, some Jerusalem court officials, a large part of the Temple clergy, the ordinary "people of the land", as well as prophets and their circles of disciples. Apart from a textual basis in Deuteronomy, the movement probably produced all sorts of other texts. The movement, understandably, developed during the years 630-609 BC, but broke up rather quickly after the sudden death of Josiah in 609 BC. The Deuteronomy of that period would have been the movement's most important text; the question is whether this movement should be referred to as deuteronomistic.[186]

Weinfeld[187] illustrates that two views prevailed concerning the establishment of Israel as a people.[188] Deuteronomy secured the very old tradition that Israel became a nation while standing on the plains of Moab;[189] it, therefore, had chosen the northern Shechemite tradition – which indeed seems to be the most ancient one. In the deuteronomistic historiography the two sins of Israel – *Ba'al* and the golden calves – were condemned in Northern Israel before the rise of the deuteronomistic movement. After the fall of Samaria in 722 BC, Hezekiah – king of Judah – endeavoured to draw the northern population to Jerusalem.[190] The expansion of Jerusalem and of the territory of Judah at the end of the eighth century BC, has been attested archaeologically. A 'period of national revival may explain the nationalistic and patriotic atmosphere prevailing in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic literature'.[191] Work on the Deuteronomistic History – that allegedly presents Israel's history from the exodus to the end

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[184] Lohfink 1999:56-57.
[185] Lohfink 1999:58.
[186] Lohfink 1999:58-59.
[187] Weinfeld 1985:76-79, 83, 89-94.
[188] According to the one view, the establishment of Israel as a people occurred in Sinai at Moses' initiative; according to the other view, this enactment took place at Shechem, under Joshua's leadership (Weinfeld 1985:78).
[189] Deuteronomy 26:16-18; 27:9.
[190] See 2 Chronicles 30.
[191] Weinfeld 1985:91.

of the Monarchical Period – was set in motion as a result of the national consciousness, which developed in the time of Hezekiah and Josiah. Deuteronomistic scribes collected traditions from Northern sanctuaries and utilised these traditions 'in order to render an ideal picture of total conquest of the land under Joshua, the leader of the house of Joseph'.[192] Zevit[193] is of the opinion that the Deuteronomist's perception of his own time, and of Israel's past, might have been moulded in the school of thought that developed among 'sophisticated wisdom-orientated courtiers' during the reign of Hezekiah. The deuteronomistic historian probably also benefited from 'direct cross-cultural stimulation by Mesopotamian writers'.[194]

Friedman[195] refers to literature of the scholarly field 'filled with expressions such as "the Deuteronomistic school", "the Deuteronomistic circle of tradition" …, "the Deuteronomistic movement" …' and indicates that 'the vagueness of these terms in the absence of clear referents in history … is a major weakness in the entire enterprise and a serious threat to our progress in this area'. He questions the probability of a Deuteronomic School, what it was, who its members were, whether they held any meetings, and whether they were in competition with the wisdom and the J schools. Person[196] identifies a "school" as 'a place of instruction or a group of individuals connected by a common ideology and/or method', whereas the Deuteronomic School 'denotes a scribal guild that was active in the Babylonian exile and Persian period and had its origins in the bureaucracy of the monarchy'. In his research on the Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Jeremiah, Friedman[197] reaches the conclusion that, if a distinction is drawn between a deuteronomistic writer of some sections, and the deuteronomistic editing of other sections, it does not necessarily add up to a "school". Although he does not negate the existence of a deuteronomic school, he is of the opinion that – with the present state of evidence available – scholars should not just assume that such a school did exist. Person,[198] on the other hand, indicates that scholars 'limit the dating of the Deuteronomic school's final redactional activity to the exilic period', and thereby basically acknowledge the existence of such a school.

In 538 BC the Persian king, Cyrus, issued a decree to support the return of the exiles to Jerusalem. This strategy included 'the return of scribal groups who were responsible for the

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[192] Weinfeld 1985:94.
[193] Zevit 2001:442.
[194] Zevit 2001:445.
[195] Friedman 1995:71.
[196] Person 2002:7.
[197] Friedman 1995:79-80.
[198] Person 2002:31.

codification and preservation of religious literature associated with the restored sanctuary'.[199] The Deuteronomic School could therefore have returned to Judah with Persian support. Scholars lately date the final redactions of many biblical books to the Persian Period[200] – and even as late as the Hellenistic Period.[201] The Deuteronomic School in Jerusalem – during the Persian Period – could have consisted of a small group of literati. The reconstruction of a scribal school associated with a temple was in accordance with practices throughout the Ancient Near East. Although the Deuteronomic School probably also produced material for the Jerusalem administration, its main interest would have been the composition, redaction and transmission of religious texts.[202] 'In the postexilic period, the restored community in Jerusalem was essentially a cultic community.'[203] The deuteronomistic tradition clearly envisions Jerusalem as the central sanctuary.[204]

According to Wittenberg,[205] 'the relationship between the Deuteronomistic History (Dtr) and its theology and the proclamation of the classical prophets from Amos to Jeremiah is one of the unsolved problem areas of Old Testament scholarship'. Biblical scholars are mystified why the Deuteronomistic History does not mention the prophets Amos and Hosea, who, respectively, addressed a social crisis, and influenced the *Yahweh*-alone movement. Hosea's critical attitude towards the Monarchy could perhaps best explain this prophet's omission. Both Amos and Hosea were probably considered too radical by the deuteronomistic historian to be included in this "historical" work. [206] Evans[207] denotes that, although he does not deny the existence of 'affinities between the Deuteronomistic ideology and the book of Hosea', he finds it difficult 'to take such affinities as evidence' of Hezekiah and Josiah's reform actions. Scholars also debate the possibility of deuteronomistic redaction(s) – or influence – in the corpus of the "Twelve" prophets. There is lately ample support for such a suggestion.[208] While the presence of deuteronomistic phraseology is conspicuous in the books Joshua to Kings – and clearly links these books, and also closely binds them to Deuteronomy – the absence of such phraseology is noteworthy in the prophetic books. It is, however, reasonable to

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[199] Person 2002:57. See also – in this connection – 1 Chronicles 2:55, referring to 'scribes who lived at Jabez'.
[200] Persian Period dated: 539-332 BC.
[201] Hellenistic Period dated: 332-37 BC.
[202] Person 2002:56-57, 60-61, 79-80.
[203] Hoppe 1985:109.
[204] Hoppe 1985:110.
[205] Wittenberg 2007:121.
[206] Wittenberg 2007:121, 133-135.
[207] Evans 1995:209.
[208] See Ben Zvi (1999:233-234) for a motivation of the claim of deuteronomistic redaction in the "Twelve" prophets, and pages 235-261 for a detailed discussion of this suggestion.

assume that the absence of deuteronomistic language is not accidental, but conveys the message that these texts were written in each prophet's own voice, and not in a "Mosaic voice".[209]

Nelson[210] refers to research done on a theory of a double redaction of the Deuteronomistic History and provides criteria for separating the two redactional levels.[211] However, several questions remain unanswered, such as what the relationship is 'of these two redactional levels to the plural stratum of Deuteronomy' and whether 'the respective theologies of the two Deuteronomists (could) be delineated more precisely than in the general overview' as offered by Nelson[212] himself. Cross[213] reaches the conclusion 'that there were two editions of the Deuteronomistic history, one written in the era of Josiah as a programmatic document of his reform and of his revival of the Davidic state.[214] … The second edition,[215] completed about 550 B.C., not only updated the history by adding a chronicle of events subsequent to Josiah's reign, it also attempted to transform the work into a sermon on history addressed to Judaean exiles.' Should scholars accept the existence of two editions of the deuteronomist(s)' work, 'a number of puzzles and apparent contradictions in the Deuteronomistic history are dissolved or explained'.[216]

In the final instance, O'Brien[217] discusses trends in scholarly research on the Book of Deuteronomy. He refers to a comprehensive survey on Deuteronomy by H D Preuss,[218] published in 1982. According to that research, Deuteronomy was divided into two main sections, namely historical-critical issues and studies done on particular parts of the book.[219] Debates concerning historical-critical matters were dominated by classical questions on the historical origins of the book, as well as the extent and shape of the original text. The survey also indicated that

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[209] Ben Zvi 1999:233, 258-259.

[210] Nelson 1981:119-128.

[211] The classical theory of a double redaction of Kings was rejected – partly due to 'Noth's convincing analysis of a unified theology and redactional structure for the larger complex of Deuteronomy to 2 Kings' (Nelson 1981:127). Irregularities were, however, noticed by literary critics, thus preventing a unanimous adoption of the view of a single exilic historian (Nelson 1981:127).

[212] Nelson 1981:127.

[213] Cross 1973:287.

[214] This edition – primary edition (Dtr^1) – contains themes of an interaction of judgement and hope to provide a motivation for a return to the jealous god of Israel, and of the reuniting of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah under Josiah (Cross 1973:287).

[215] In the second – "revised" – edition, Dtr^2, 'the account of Manasseh's reign in particular was retouched, conforming Judah's fate to that of Samaria and Manasseh's role to that of Jeroboam'. The rectification did not – in general – obscure the earlier framework (Cross 1973:287-288).

[216] Cross 1973:288.

[217] O'Brien 1995:95, 97-99, 101-105.

[218] Preuss, H D 1982. *Deuteronomium* (Ed F, 164; Darmstadt: Wissenscaftliche Buchgesellschaft) (O'Brien 1995:126).

[219] Studies done on 'Deuteronomy 1-3; 4:1-40; 4:41-43; 4:44-5:1; 5:2-11:32; 12-25; 26; 27-31; 34; 32 and 33' (O'Brien 1995:95).

the majority of scholars identified Deuteronomy as the book referred to in 2 Kings 22-23. Centralisation of the cult – that linked Deuteronomy and Josiah's reform – was regarded as a distinctive deuteronomic theme. However, increasing scholarly awareness of deuteronomistic redaction in Deuteronomy complicated the issue. 'The difficult nature of literary-critical analysis in Deuteronomy and the diverse and sometimes contradictory results proposed have prompted scholars … to adopt a more literary approach and to view the tensions and apparent contradictions in the book as a mark of literary art.'[220] The majority of historical-critical scholars still accept the seventh century BC – and Josiah's reform – as the most likely date for the origin of Deuteronomy. A number of scholars, however, defend a much earlier date for the book. A seventh century BC authorship has been used within the historical-critical analysis as a reference point for investigating the date of the pentateuchal sources. Scholars, furthermore, propose that Deuteronomy has been modelled on the Ancient New Eastern treaty – or covenant – pattern.

In conclusion, O'Brien[221] states that the 'historical-critical or diachronic analysis of Deuteronomy has continued to develop and be refined' during the later 1980s and the 1990s. Fewer studies have been devoted to analysing the different layers of Deuteronomy; scholars seem to be more interested in factors that affected the shaping of the book. Scholars also pay attention to a comparison between Deuteronomy and the other law codes in the Pentateuch, as well as Ancient Near Eastern law codes. From a theological point of view, the primacy of God's election of Israel is emphasised, 'with fidelity to the law as Israel's appropriate response'.[222]

8.4 Chronistic historiography

According to Kleinig,[223] 'over the last decade the Chronicler's work has finally come into its own after a century of comparative neglect. Many factors have contributed to this, but three stand out as most significant: the shift from historical criticism to literary analysis, the shift from redactional criticism to canonical analysis and the shift from thematic analysis to theological synthesis.'

Since the nineteenth century, the question of its historicity dominated scholarship in Chronicles. These debates have been replaced by the analysis of Chronicles as literature. Scholars

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[220] O'Brien 1995:101.
[221] O'Brien 1995:117.
[222] O'Brien 1995:117-118.
[223] Kleinig 1994:68.

now appreciate the skill of the Chronicler and his sophistication as an author in the creation of a complex work of art. Scholars have been successful also – to a certain extent – to establish the purpose of narrative units in Chronicles, and of the book as a whole. Researchers were initially preoccupied by the identity of the sources of Chronicles and the redaction by different writers. The accent has now moved 'from Chronicles as a product of various editors to the canonical text of Chronicles as the work of a single author'.[224] Scholarly interest, moreover, has also shifted from thematic analysis to theological synthesis. A unified composition of a single writer should reasonably be expected to represent 'a highly organized and concerted theological statement'.[225] Research on Chronicles has led to a new appreciation of the book and its creator. It seems that the Chronicler – apart from being a skilful author – was also a well-versed theologian who reflected on Israel's traditions, and formulated a theological synthesis for this nation as a liturgical community in the Persian Empire. The composition exhibits unity 'with its own literary integrity, purpose and message'.[226]

Initially, the Chronicler's depiction of the Davidic-Solomonic era was regarded an idealistic fabrication and retrojection of post-exilic circumstances. However, a reappraisal of Chronicles indicates that the book presents certain events more faithfully than previously assumed; the Chronicler clearly had access to ancient traditions not preserved elsewhere.[227] The Chronicler utilised canonical sources, especially Samuel and Kings, as well as extra-biblical sources. Samuel was the major contributor to the account of David's kingship. There is a tendency amongst scholars to doubt the existence of sources cited by the Chronicler.[228] McKenzie[229] raises the question whether these are genuine sources or whether it reflects an elementary device on the part of the Chronicler. Rofé[230] likewise questions the nature of the historical sources in Chronicles. The Chronicler also made use of genealogical, military and Levitical lists. However, this is no indication that the Chronicler did not introduce his own interests. He made a few minor changes in narratives, particularly regarding his idealised view of David and Solomon. His concerns are apparent in independent material and specific omissions. His techniques of composition are thus more sophisticated than what he is normally credited for.[231] Van Rooy[232] poses the question, what do scholars know about the

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[224] Kleinig 1994:69.
[225] Kleinig 1994:69.
[226] Kleinig 1994:69.
[227] Polk 1979:3.
[228] McKenzie 1984:26-27, 71.
[229] McKenzie 1984:26-28.
[230] Rofé 2001:102.
[231] McKenzie 1984:71-73.
[232] Van Rooy 1994:163.

Chronicler's 'historiographic principles, the value of his sources and the way he used his sources'.

Chronicles portrays a completely different David and Solomon to the presentation in the books of Samuel and Kings. At a superficial glance it seems that the Chronicler repeats the accounts in Samuel and Kings, 'merely omitting some original material and elaborating certain other themes'.[233] This is, however, not the case. All that is critical and unflattering about David and Solomon – related in Samuel and Kings – have been omitted intentionally and selectively. Both monarchs are depicted flawless – almost saintly. Additional material in Chronicles – that does not appear in the Deuteronomistic History – deals almost exclusively with the Temple. At the time when Chronicles was written – in the fourth century BC – the significance of the David and Solomon tradition was fundamentally reversed.[234]

Judah's predominance is prominent in Chronicles; this is expressed in David's kingship. 'According to Chronicles the kingship of David is the result of, rather than the reason for, Judah's special role.'[235] The non-Israelite relationships are conspicuous in the Chronicler's genealogy of Judah; these "foreign" people are regarded as legitimate members of the tribe of Judah.[236] Based on information provided by Genesis 38, the integration of Jerahmeel and Caleb into the framework of the Judah-genealogy is probably the Chronicler's own contribution. While he invariably constructed his depiction of Judah on tradition, he adapted and applied this tradition to his own time. However, as the older traditions were already firmly established, his interpretation thereof was thus not with the intention to preserve and transmit these traditions. He, therefore, recounts the past, while addressing the present.[237] The Chronicler, consequently, introduces new material while, in some instances, there is also a link with the contents of the Deuteronomic History – or, in other instances, no connection at all.[238] Zevit[239] denotes that 'post-exilic Israelites presented their genealogies in an official way that would secure their rights and status within the soladity [solidarity] of Israel in its homeland'.

In contrast to the account in 2 Samuel 6 – of the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem – that does not mention the Levites at all, 1 Chronicles 15-16 particularly describes the Levites, as well as

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[233] Finkelstein & Silberman 2006:222.
[234] Finkelstein & Silberman 2006:222-223, 225.
[235] Willi 1994:155.
[236] In this regard, see discussions in Chapter 6, particularly § 6.2.
[237] Willi 1994:148, 155, 158-160.
[238] Van Rooy 1994:169.
[239] Zevit 2001:631.

the Levitical musicians and caretakers. The intention of the Chronicler seems clear with the added detail in 1 Chronicles 15:4-10, 'namely to secure the Levitical pedigree of the priestly families mentioned in v. 11 by specifically identifying their patronymics with the earliest descendants of Levi'.[240] Particular names mentioned in 1 Chronicles 16 represent different Levitical families in the Second Temple Period. The superior status of the priests is not denied, but the important activities revolve around the Levites. The considerable amount of attention paid to the Levites is in accordance with the Chronicler's history as a whole – a history written during the rebuilding of the Second Temple. The Chronicler illustrates the significant role in the restored Temple cult and community conferred on the threatened Levitical families.[241] In Chronicles the author makes it clear that Jerusalem and its institutions constitute a fundamental component of Israel's classical heritage; this is already evident within the genealogical prologue.[242] The city plays, unquestionably, a pivotal role in the author's worldview. The status of Jerusalem is established in pre-exilic history, and thereby positioned internationally within the Chronicler's own time. Jerusalem was obviously promoted, as it was central to the social identity, economy and religious life of Yehud. The Chronicler promulgates the value of the Jerusalem Temple for all southern and northern Israelites.[243]

The cult reform in Judah, carried out by king Josiah – 2 Kings 22-23 – has a parallel narrative in 2 Chronicles 34-35; the latter is, however a "significantly different rendition" of what claims to be the same event. Scholars argue that Chronicles simply reinterprets the narrative in Kings and does not provide primary information.[244] Ben Zvi[245] emphasises that research on Chronicles should 'clearly distinguish between the messages conveyed by a particular account, or portion thereof, and the messages conveyed by the book as a whole'. Keeping this in mind, Ben Zvi[246] 'deals with theological and historiographical aspects of worldviews that appear in Chronicles'. In this regard he has the character Josiah in mind that readers of Chronicles in the Achaemenid period visualised. The book implies – indirectly – Josiah's personal worthiness and piousness, as well as the legitimacy of the cultic actions he had undertaken. Yet, just as the purification was completed, an unmistakeable message of devastation is brought.[247] 'The use of the motif of finding the book as an omen for disaster is consistent with the tendency in postmonarchic discourse (amply demonstrated in prophetic literature) to link

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[240] Hanson 1992:71.
[241] Hanson 1992:69, 71-73, 75.
[242] 1 Chronicles 1:1-9:34.
[243] Knoppers 2003:307, 314, 326.
[244] Handy 1995:252-253.
[245] Ben Zvi 2006:90.
[246] Ben Zvi 2006:91.
[247] See 2 Chronicles 34:19.

the deserved punishment that brought the monarchic era to an end with hope for the future'.[248] Observations on the narrative of Josiah in Chronicles raise a considerable number of fundamental ideological issues.[249]

During the time of the Chronicler, the term "*asherah*" meant neither the goddess nor the cult symbol associated with the goddess. The distinction between these two perceptions became obscured. The Chronicler mainly refers to "*asherah*" in the plural and probably understood it to be an idolatrous object. References to the goddess *Astarte* are to be found in the books of the Deuteronomistic History, wherein she is identified as a "foreign deity". A passage in Chronicles – 1 Chronicles 10:10 – parallel to 1 Samuel 31:10, omits any reference to *Astarte* (*Ashtaroth*), reading instead "the temple of their gods". There is the possibility that the Chronicler did not know of the existence of a goddess *Astarte*, known in Israel.[250]

Willi[251] mentions that in the late Persian Period major sections of Israel's tradition – particularly the Pentateuch and prophetic writings – had already been given canonical status. 'Chronicles is one of the most important witnesses to the canonical Scripture in the late Persian period.'[252] Chronicles, furthermore, reflects the function of prophets and prophecy in a changing society, and possibly also the changing position and influence of the prophetic movement after the Exile.[253]

8.5   Prophets and prophecy

As explained by Nissinen,[254] 'the word "prophecy" is deeply rooted in the vocabulary of religious communities, but also belongs to the academic language'. However, scholars entertain different meanings in the application of the word. It is to the disadvantage of critical scholarship to use a specific tradition – such as Israelite or biblical prophecy – as a criterion for comparative material. The noun "prophecy" is defined as "a statement that something will happen in the future", particularly made by somebody with religious or magic powers. A prophet is therefore 'a person who claims to know what will happen in the future'.[255] Prophecy is thus present when a person – through a cognitive experience – becomes the subject of the revelation of a deity. The designation "prophet", furthermore, refers to a person holding a specific

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[248] Ben Zvi 2006:102.
[249] Ben Zvi 2006:90-91, 95-96, 100, 102.
[250] Hadley 1997:170-171, 174-175.
[251] Willi 1994:151.
[252] Willi 1994:151.
[253] Van Rooy 1994:163.
[254] Nissinen 2004:17.
[255] Nissinen 2004:18.

position in a society, which implies a social role and function that distinguishes him from other members of the community.[256] Van der Toorn[257] indicates that the biblical picture denoting prophetic "guilds" or associations during the Omride period is ambiguous; these "guilds" might have been religious orders comparable with monastic orders. Although prophets are portrayed as "fervent religious men at the fringes of society", they also played a role as civil servants.

Scholars have developed a new approach towards text analysis, denoting that biblical texts should not be divorced from their literary and linguistic conventions, or from their cultural environment and readers; texts should thus not be treated in isolation.[258] Throughout the past century biblical prophecy played an important part in both Christian and Jewish communities of faith. Biblical prophets were perceived 'as advocates of high moral and theological values'.[259] Nineteenth century scholars created the traditional picture of the biblical prophet – Israelite prophets were seen as inspired poets; this perception lasted for most of the twentieth century. This traditional conception was, however, challenged, as not all prophetic material in the Hebrew Bible is poetry. Likewise, serious questions were raised about the alleged uniqueness of Israelite prophecy, particularly considering recently published prophetic material in Neo-Assyrian texts. Accumulating evidence, therefore, suggests that Israel's prophets did not actually differ from those of surrounding cultures. No consensus has been reached to date on the challenges directed at the traditional view of Israelite prophecy. An important point emerged from research on traditional cultures in recent years, indicating that 'both oral and written literature continue to exist together for a long period of time and interact with each other in various complex ways'.[260] Prophetic oracles that turned out to be true enhanced the authority of the prophet; his disciples – most likely – played a role in the preservation of his oracles.[261]

Uffenheimer[262] maintains that Israelite prophecy grew from the popular religion – as reflected in the Book of Psalms, the Torah literature, and the wisdom literature – and was part of ancient Israel's culture. The Israelite prophet was thus moulded by internal social and cultural forces; he also denotes that prophecy originated during the time when the Israelites were

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[256] Nissinen 2004:17-18, 20, 22.
[257] Van der Toorn 1995:239-240.
[258] Wessels 1996:190.
[259] Wilson 2004:38.
[260] Wilson 2004:42.
[261] Wilson 2004:38-39, 42-44.
[262] Uffenheimer 1987:7, 10, 14.

consolidated as a nation. On the view challenging the uniqueness of Israel's prophecy, Bright[263] contends that the Israelite prophets had no real parallel in the ancient world. Nissinen,[264] however, indicates that any definition of prophecy – being a scholarly construct – could 'only be formulated in interaction with sources that are considered to represent the prophetic phenomenon in one way or another'. In this regard 'the largest corpus of prophetic records comes from eighteenth-century Mari, comprising fifty letters with prophetic quotations'.[265] At this stage, these letters represent the closest parallel to biblical prophecy in cuneiform literature. The letters follow a fairly regular pattern that applies to virtually all the letters; it could thus be assumed that scribes followed well-known procedures in the letter-writing. These letters, furthermore, afford some insight into the first stages of literary tradition of prophetic oracles.[266] Van der Toorn[267] mentions that research on Ancient Near Eastern prophecy – biblical prophecy included – depends entirely on the testimony of written texts. Records of Ancient Near Eastern prophecy 'have turned out to be indispensable for understanding not only the prophetic phenomenon in general, but also the cultural and conceptual preconditions of prophecy in the Bible'.[268]

Considering the extent of material deliberated in this thesis, as well as keeping the purpose of this research in mind, individual biblical prophets cannot be discussed – albeit briefly. Some of these prophets are, therefore, referred to only cursorily hereafter.

Apart from the announcements of disaster, Ezekiel – probably 'a central integrating figure of the exiled priests'[269] – clearly distinguishes between the Zadokites and the Levites; the Zadokites alone were allowed to come close to *Yahweh*, while the Levites – accused of the practice of foreign cults – had to bear the negative consequences of their sinful behaviour.[270] Kohn[271] mentions that, as a result of a new generation of scholars' effort to 'reconcile and comprehend the challenging book of the prophet Ezekiel, … this ancient text has been given new life in the many interesting, innovative and challenging studies that have been produced over the last decade'. 'The book of Jeremiah is an important reference point in the study of scripturization of Hebrew prophecy because of the various references it contains to the

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[263] Bright 1965:xv.
[264] Nissinen 2004:25.
[265] Nissinen 2004:25. See also brief discussion in § 2.4.
[266] Schart 1995:75-76, 88.
[267] Van der Toorn 2004:191.
[268] Nissinen 2004:28.
[269] Fechter 2000:697.
[270] Fechter 2000:673, 686-688.
[271] Kohn 2003:23.

fixation in writing of oracles received by the prophet'.[272] The book recounts four instances where the prophet is said to have dictated, or written, a single oracle or a collection of oracles. Scholars had assumed initially that much of the early material in the book should be attributed to the hand of the scribe Baruch. Early Jewish tradition believed Baruch was the author of the book in its entirety; modern scholarship, however, rejects this claim. An early collection of Jeremiah oracles, seemingly, should be attributed to one or more anonymous authors; at a later stage another author probably reworked much of the material substantially to give it a deuteronomistic angle, and also added narratives concerning the prophet.[273]

Evans[274] indicates that, although affinities between the deuteronomistic ideology and the Book of Hosea could not be denied, such affinities should not be regarded as evidence to explain the cult reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah. Traces of certain ideas and language of Hosea do appear in deuteronomistic writings.[275] Both Amos and Hosea were, however, not included in the Deuteronomistic History and were probably considered too radical – particularly Hosea's critical attitude towards the Monarchy – to be incorporated in this "historical" work.[276] Apart from the Book of Ezekiel, the Temple does not particularly feature in prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible; as far as these books are concerned, the Temple is regarded as a textual feature. The Temple might also be a reference to *Yahweh*'s heavenly or earthly temple, or even a future temple. Texts in the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are indisputably considered to be products of the Second Temple Period; the prophets Haggai and Zechariah are associated with the rebuilding of this Temple. Textual material in Malachi refers to the Temple a number of times; questions about altar pollution, and the acceptability – or not – of altar-offerings, are dealt with.[277] Carroll[278] denotes that 'the temple represented in Ezra-Nehemiah is the ideological property and private concern of a pressure group determined to be as exclusive as possible', and he reaches the conclusion 'that the second temple was not widely accepted as the legitimate temple', and that scholars should question 'the use of the phrase "second temple" to cover the Persian-Graeco-Roman period'.[279]

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[272] Van der Toorn 2004:194.
[273] Van der Toorn 2004:194, 197-198, 201.
[274] Evans 1995:209.
[275] Lohfink 1999:56-57.
[276] Wittenberg 2007:121, 133-135.
[277] Carroll 1994:37-38, 41, 43.
[278] Carroll 1994:48.
[279] Carroll 1994:49.

8.6 Documentation of Israel's traditions during the monarchical era

The Hebrew term for scribe, *sofer*, means, "to count". It is a Canaanite word, as well as a loanword in an Egyptian text. The first biblical reference to *sofer* is found in the *Song of Deborah*.[280] Scholars are of the opinion that the presence of scribal schools in the time of David, were linked to the crown. Epigraphic materials, biblical texts, and analogies to other Ancient Near Eastern societies signify the existence of schools in the Israelite Monarchy; if schools did exist, they would have been positioned in Jerusalem. Epigraphic and textual data concerning monarchical Israel is, however, minimal and open to diverse interpretations. Evidence for writing in the eighth and seventh centuries BC correlates with affirmation of trade, skilled artisanship and centralised control, with Jerusalem as the locale of central management.[281] Literacy was limited to circles of scribes who were economically dependent upon the rulers – the main role of scribes was thus to serve the rulers.[282] The highest post was that of the royal scribe.[283] See also *Excursus 3* regarding "scribes".

Greenberg[284] denotes that numerous chronicles in the Hebrew Bible are of a mythological nature. Of many stories there are two contradictory accounts in the Masoretic Text, meaning that at least one version was untrue. Inconsistencies reflect – in many instances – ongoing propaganda wars between Judah and the Northern Kingdom; an early version of a chronicle was replaced by a later version. In particular instances – such as the Creation and Flood accounts – earlier Egyptian, or later Babylonian influences, as well as parallel myths and legends from neighbouring countries, had an effect on the rendering of biblical narratives. As the true nature of the biblical story is often disguised – particularly with the emphasis on monotheism – it complicates the identification of the mythological source. Several narratives described in the Hebrew Bible are, furthermore, contradicted by archaeological data. Cassuto[285] indicates that in the Semitic way of thinking there was 'no reason to refrain from duplicating the theme [such as the creation narratives], since such a repetition was consonant with the stylistic principle of presenting first a general statement and thereafter the detailed elaboration', which is found in biblical literature as well as in other Ancient Near Eastern

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[280] Demsky 1971:1041. The Masoretic Text refers to the staff of the ספר in Judges 5:14; the English Standard Version translates the text as the "lieutenant's" staff. Holladay (1971:259) indicates that ספר is a scribe (for example a teacher of the law), writer, secretary, state secretary, secretary of the king, or a secretary for Jewish affairs.
[281] Jamieson-Drake 1991:12-13, 26, 155-156.
[282] Horsley 2005:124, 127.
[283] Demsky 1971:1042.
[284] Greenberg 2000:ix-x.
[285] Cassuto 1961:91.

literature. According to Silver,[286] Mesopotamian legends – familiar to the early Hebrews – were edited by later Israelites to emphasise their particular sacred teachings.

Coats[287] mentions that Moses is described as a hero, in order to depict his leadership and to present his ministry as a model for all subsequent leaders in Israel; David and his heirs should therefore be in line with Moses. The Moses saga probably circulated amongst Israel's story-tellers. Many scholars place the work of the Yahwist in the time of the United Monarchy – even as early as David. Recent research, however, sets the work of the Yahwist in an exilic or post-exilic period. The question is whether Moses fits in this late period when the kingship had been subjugated. 'A conflict between the traditions about Moses and the traditions about David seems to set these two complex bodies of narrative in opposition.'[288] Different generations preserved accounts of the events at Sinai orally as their distinctive documents of identity. 'At least two different forms of the story have been combined into an artistic whole to form the Pentateuch.'[289] The oldest form was probably under the influence of the Davidic court. The history of the world was thus, seemingly, written by David's scribes, with the Kingdom of David central.

Wittenberg[290] denotes that the enigma of the primeval history rests in the distinction between traditions belonging to an urban context, and that which relates to the concerns of the village. Peculiarities in this history seem to contradict the claim that the author(s) was a royal scribe at the court in Jerusalem, but that he should be located rather among the Judean "people of the land". Kruger[291] mentions that some scholars view the narrative of Genesis 2-3 'as a paradigm for the rise and fall of the king of Israel'. According to Dever,[292] the compilation of the later literary tradition of the creation narratives was a 'complex, multifaceted process'.

Fritz[293] indicates that, regarding the settlement process, the Book of Joshua – composed during the time of the Monarchy – is of no historical value; chapters 1-11 are etiological sagas intended to prove that the entire land was conquered by the tribes under the leadership of Joshua. Halpern[294] denotes that scholars disagree on the date and purpose of the books of

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[286] Silver 1974:9.
[287] Coats 1993:111-113, 152, 191.
[288] Coats 1993:112.
[289] Coats 1993:152.
[290] Wittenberg 1995:442, 449.
[291] Kruger 2001a:62.
[292] Dever 1997a:47.
[293] Fritz 1987:98.
[294] Halpern 1997:314-315.

Samuel. Is Samuel contemporary with the events it describes, or late fiction? Droge[295] maintains that the discovery of the "Book of Law" – see also paragraph 8.3 – 'accords well with the evidence for a dramatic increase in literacy in late seventh-century Judah'. It, furthermore, signifies the purpose of the Josianic ideologies to serve the political interest of the royal court for a united kingdom.[296] Ramsey[297] denotes that certain narratives and poems – such as those concerning the patriarchs – most likely 'originated as encapsulations of *tribal* experiences'. According to Younger,[298] extra-biblical evidence, which had been discovered by the beginning of the nineteenth century, was not 'sufficiently understood to serve as a reliable historical source'. Comparative studies were hampered by scepticism and suspicions. Early research was, furthermore, troubled by errors in the reading and interpretation of the documents. However, more archives and texts – including many West Semitic inscriptions – were discovered that enhanced the comparative study of biblical texts.[299]

8.7 Exilic and post-exilic documentation, redactional adaptations and finalisation of the Masoretic Text

'Editing was always marked and meant to be noticed'.[300] Editors maintained the original text to which they were bound, but felt free to interpret and change it. They 'generally did not set out to spoil the text they transmitted and preserved, but they regularly made it more complex, meaningful, and difficult to understand'.[301] Interpretation comprises the rewriting of the original text.[302] Obvious discrepancies were not eliminated by the redactor, presumably owing to his editorial authority that was exercised with the utmost hesitancy. It is not unlikely that some of the original material was preserved and handed down in a written form; however, the large number of inconsistencies in the Masoretic Text is an indication that data were transmitted primarily in an oral mode. The content of the Hebrew Bible was thus, in the course of time, enveloped in layer after layer of superimposed interpretation.[303] The Hebrew writer probably borrowed different familiar mythological motifs, 'transformed them, and integrated them into a fresh and original story of his own'.[304] In time to come the earliest traditional details of a chronicle were reinterpreted in accordance with the perception of later

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[295] Droge 2003:142.
[296] Droge 2003:138.
[297] Ramsey 1981:82.
[298] Younger 2006:199.
[299] Younger 2006:199-200.
[300] Peckham 1995:382.
[301] Peckham 1995:383.
[302] Peckham 1995:365.
[303] Speiser 1964:xxiv, xxxviii, lxiv.
[304] Wenham 1987:53.

generations; for the editor it simply might have been a didactic, moral tale.[305] Ramsey[306] denotes that there was a tendency to weaken mythical elements in the inherited tradition. Lasine,[307] furthermore, indicates that, while some reinterpretations 'have an apologetic intent, others are designed to create a paradigm of legitimate political purges capable of justifying similar acts in the present'. Similarly, the catastrophe of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was explained theologically by the deuteronomists by applying the category of monotheism.[308]

According to Davies,[309] a composition is part of a canon when it is classified as belonging to some collection, and preserved by copying until its status as a classic is secured; scrolls could also be canons in their own right. Although the Jewish canon contains no extended myths, omen literature or incantations, 'it does include extended historiographical and other narrative texts, as well as unique compositions of prophetic oracles'.[310] It is necessary to acknowledge the indispensable role of scribes – or even private individuals – in the canonising process.

Dempster[311] mentions that scholars classically formulated the three-fold designation of the canon – *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, *Ketuvim* – as the historical evolution of the canon; the closure of this process was pushed into the second century BC, or as late as the second century AD. Scholars arguing for an early date is of the opinion that canonisation was the result of aesthetic considerations that influenced the final arrangement of the Hebrew Bible, rather than an unintentional historical occurrence and arbitrary selection. It is therefore evident that one person, or a compatible group, collected the component parts and arranged it into a coherent whole. The Hebrew Bible, as an editorial work within the corpus of literature, thus implies the importance of the arrangement of sacred writings. Scholars who propose a later date, argue that the question of sequence only became significant with the arrival of the codex or longer scrolls.[312] Dempster[313] discusses external and internal evidence for a tripartite canon that accentuates sequence for Jewish Scriptures. In the initial chapter of each major division of the Masoretic

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[305] Gaster 1969:xxx-xxxi. An example is the narrative concerning the rivalry between Cain and Abel, resulting in a murder (Gn 4). According to Vehse (1995:439-440), the anointment of Saul (1 Sm 9-10) should be classified as historical myth; stories – such as these – 'lend insight into history not by accurately revealing how things happened but by suggesting how people thought about the things that happened' (Vehse 1995:440).
[306] Ramsey 1981:80.
[307] Lasine 1994:219.
[308] Fechter 2000:693.
[309] Davies 1998:9, 35-36.
[310] Davies 1998:35.
[311] Dempster 2001:19-21.
[312] The content of the scrolls for the entire Hebrew canon is described for the first time in the Babylonian Talmud; the Codex was used in Christian circles, and the longer scroll was used in Judaism (Dempster 2001:21).
[313] See Dempster (2001:23-49) for a discussion of external and internal evidence for a tripartite canon.

Text extraordinary emphasis is placed on the Word of God. Explicit links connect these main divisions with one another.[314] 'The broad divisions within the canon reflect not various canonical phases or arbitrary arrangements but thematic divisions based on various epistemological perspectives within Israel.'[315] According to Dever,[316] responsible scholars today do not question the late date of the final redaction of the Masoretic Text.

Lemche[317] denotes that, as scholars are familiar with the viewpoint that 'the books of the Pentateuch seem to be a collection of originally independent traditions or groups of traditions which were preserved for some time and were subjected to a variety of reworkings, expansions, and revisions in the process', in the same manner, 'other parts of the Old Testament have been subjected to a similar process of redaction'.[318] Therefore, also, apart from the activities of the deuteronomists, 'the prophetic books, too, are the results of the conscious redactional reworking of pre-existent traditional material'.[319] Although the Psalms are considered to be excellent sources for the particular period in which they originated, their continuous reinterpretation after their composition undermine their referential value; it is, furthermore, extremely difficult to date the Psalms.[320]

Garbini[321] indicates that an essential part of the Hebrew literature was created in Babylon during the Persian Period. Although these Judahites obviously had close links with Jerusalem, they certainly would have been influenced by 'a cultural make-up fed by daily contact with the most creative currents in oriental thought'.[322] Jews in Egypt wrote in Hebrew about their own roots. Most of the Hebrew literature thus developed in Jerusalem, Babylon and Egypt – probably between the end of the sixth and the end of the fourth centuries BC. The nucleus of literature was thus created during the Persian Period; the literature of the court was replaced by the literature of the Temple. 'The exile marked the pinnacle of anti-monarchic literature.'[323] Major parts of Israel's tradition – particularly the Pentateuch and prophetic writings – had already been given canonical status by the late Persian Period; Chronicles is one of the most important witnesses to this status.[324] Scholars do not, however, have sufficient data to

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[314] Dempster 2001:43, 45, 49.
[315] Dempster 2001:51.
[316] Dever 1997b:301.
[317] Lemche 1988:41.
[318] Lemche 1988:43.
[319] Lemche 1988:44.
[320] Lemche 1988:47.
[321] Garbini 1994:184, 186.
[322] Garbini 1994:186.
[323] Garbini 1994:182.
[324] Willi 1994:151.

advance a theory about the post-exilic society, and also, particularly, the function of prophecy in that society. During the Persian Period prophecy was transformed to apocalyptic pronouncement.[325]

While scholars, such as Van Seters, view the Sinai pericope – also attached to the Covenant Code – as an exilic unit without any literary prehistory, Levenson[326] argues that the Sinai pericope is a redactional composition of which the pre-exilic Covenant Code is patterned after the Laws of Hammurabi. Furthermore, the altar law of the Covenant Code is pre-deuteronomic; 'sacrificial worship at an altar, not prayer, provides access to the deity … . This conception, like the Covenant Code prior to its redactional incorporation into the Sinai pericope, makes most sense in the pre-exilic, not the exilic, period'.[327]

Montefiore and Loewe[328] denote that, as the rabbis regarded the Hebrew Bible – particularly the Pentateuch – as the Word of God in its fullest degree, no inconsistencies could be allowed. The lower levels of this text were deemed no less divine than the higher levels. They probably adopted and expanded both these levels; all rabbinic quotations emphasise the Hebrew doctrine that there is only one God.

Excursus 3: Scribes

As mentioned in paragraph 8.6, soferim,*[329] scribes, as well as scribal schools, were linked to the crown – probably from the time of David. The main role of scribes, who were economically dependent upon the rulers, was thus to serve the rulers.[330] The word* sofer *had a wide range of meaning that changed in the course of time; it could denote several social roles. A scribe was generally a middle-level government official, such as a secretary. Detailed information is available on the education, social position and roles of Egyptian and Mesopotamian scribes. According to the Hebrew Bible, 'the chief scribe at the Jerusalem court was a high cabinet officer concerned with finance, policy, and administration'.[331] Ezra is a well-known scribe of the post-exilic time.[332] Scribal activity by different groups would account for the composition and editing of the text of the Hebrew Bible during the exilic and post-exilic periods. Jewish literature of the Hellenistic Period testifies to scribal traditions. Ben*

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[325] Van Rooy 1994:163, 178.

[326] Levenson 2004:316-317.

[327] Levenson 2004:317.

[328] Montefiore & Loewe 1938:1-2.

[329] See also footnote on *sofer* in § 6.5. Sophereth was the head of the family of Solomon's servants who returned from the Babylonian exile to Jerusalem. Ezra 2:55 refers to Hassophereth, and Nehemiah 7:57 to Sophereth; this name literally means "female scribe". The name might have denoted a profession, or the guild or office of scribes. There is the possibility that this family owes its origin to a female scribe; females have been documented in the Ancient Near East as scribes. A clan, also, could have taken on the name of its matriarch. The origin of the guild is probably pre-exilic. Some scholars conclude that these people were originally enslaved foreigners (see 1 Ki 9:20-21) (Eskenazi 1992:159).

[330] Horsley 2005:124, 127.

[331] Saldarini 1992:1012. See 2 Kings 22; Jeremiah 36:10.

[332] Ezra 7:6.

Sira[333] attributes knowledge and wisdom, as well as lasting fame, to the ideal scribe. Rabbinic collections – such as the Mishnah[334] – refer to scribes as "early authoritative teachers", who probably had a great influence on Judaism from the time of Ezra.[335]

Although scribes had to serve their rulers, Ben Sira and his scribal colleagues regarded themselves and their work as independent of the rulers. According to them, their authority was derived from God. They were, therefore, the professional guardians and interpreters of the sacred cultural tradition. Rival factions among the aristocracy resulted in complicated relations between the scribes and the rulers. Despite their political vulnerability and economic dependence on the rulers, it is thus conceivable that a scribal circle would have taken a course independent of any aristocratic faction. Scribes were primarily interpreters and teachers of the law. Behind the books of Ben Sira and Daniel,[336] as well as the early Enoch literature,[337] different circles of scribes or sages can be discerned. Ben Sira and his followers served the priestly rulers in Jerusalem, while the Enoch and Daniel scribal circles – although attached to different groups – were apparently alienated from the Jerusalem high-priestly court. Notwithstanding that the Enoch circle 'stood vehemently opposed to the wealthy, that is the aristocracy of the Judean temple-state',[338] there is no indication – in any form – of a resistance movement. 'Daniel was produced by and for the circle of the maskilim'.[339] *The* maskilim, *however, resisted the oppressive imperial forces. A fourth scribal circle appears to have preceded, and then joined – or assisted the formation of – the Qumran community. Although these proto-Qumran scribes displayed a positive attitude toward the temple-state and high priesthood as institutions, they were opposed to the priesthood of the Hasmoneans.[340] It thus seems that there were four different scribal circles in post-exilic Jerusalem.[341]*

Although not being part of the ruling elite itself, scribes were an indispensable component of the administration. They possessed a resource, namely writing, which was unavailable to other people. They accumulated and codified information and knowledge for the rulers, and developed their own skills through education. Scribes, furthermore, created texts that would typically comprise the contents of a library. The craft was passed on to their successors, who were taught, not only how to write,

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[333] For information on Ben Sira, see footnote in § 3.8.3.

[334] See footnote in § 3.2.2.

[335] Saldarini 1992:1012-1015.

[336] The composition of the Book of Daniel is controversial. Scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries dated the book to the Maccabean era (ca 166-142 BC), and also affirmed its unity (Collins 1992:30). There are, however, many problems to date the book and its additions precisely to this period. For an elucidation hereof, see Collins (1992:29-37).

[337] The Enoch literature consists of a collection of traditions and writings composed between the fourth century BC and the end of the first century BC. The literature was constructed in the name of Enoch, son of Jared, descendant of Seth – third son of Adam (Gn 5:18-21). 'The Enochic corpus claims to be a series of revelations which Enoch received in antiquity and transmitted to his son Methuselah for the benefit of the righteous who would live in the end times' (Nickelsburg 1992:508).

[338] Horsley 2005:140.

[339] Horsley 2005:143. According to Collins (1992:33), Daniel Chapter 1 refers to Daniel and his companions as *maskilim* (משכלים) in all wisdom (Dn 1:4); in Chapter 11 they were called *maskilim* (משכילי) or wise teachers (Dn 11:33). Holladay (1971:217) indicates that a משכיל is an unclarified term in the Psalms, suggesting a cultic song, a passage for learning, or a wisdom song put to music.

[340] The Hasmoneans, or Hasmonean Dynasty, were a family of high priests and kings, descended from Mattathias – father of Judas Maccabeus. They were prominent in Judea from 165 BC until 37 BC, and ruled the region between 142 BC and 63 BC (Rajak 1992:67).

[341] Horsley 2005:127, 132-133, 136, 140, 143-145.

but also how to compose.[342] *'Textual families or traditions are not identical with literary editions. The textual families and traditions evolve through the accumulation of scribal errors, corrections, harmonizing, parallel readings, etc. They are the result of the frailty of families of scribes copying texts over centuries.'*[343]

According to 1 Chronicles 2:55,[344] *clans of scribes – particularly Kenites – lived at Jabez.*[345] *1 Chronicles 2, furthermore, links the Kenites to the Rechabites and, seemingly, also to the Calebites.*[346] *Kittel*[347] *is of the opinion that the Rechabites were scribes. The person Jabez – who was probably founder of the town – might have been a Calebite scribe.*[348] *The importance of Hammath, the native city of famous families of scribes, is accentuated by the Chronicler.*[349] *Carter*[350] *questions the ability of a small, poor province – such as post-exilic Yehud – 'to sustain the literary activity traditionally attributed to it'. Nehemiah*[351] *presents an idealised picture of Yehud – one that conforms more to the late Judean monarchy that that of post-exilic communities. Scholars are, however, generally in agreement that the post-exilic period is distinguished by a significant amount of literary activity; this should thus not be questioned on the grounds of a small province or a small Jerusalem*[352] *– 'small and relatively poor does not mean insignificant or isolated'.*[353]

8.8   Monotheism

8.8.1   Synoptic discussion

Although the aspect of monotheism is particularly relevant for the deliberations in this thesis, specifically considering the *Yahweh*-alone movement, monotheism is a scholarly field that has been debated extensively, and therefore – as in the instance of a number of other matters in this thesis – due to the extent of the numerous debates, it cannot be discussed more than merely cursorily.

Smith[354] denotes that most scholars define monotheism as an indication of *Yahweh*'s exclusivity, thus proclaiming that there is no god besides *Yahweh*. A second statement claims that all other deities are "not" or are "dead". Becking[355] indicates that a monotheistic religion – such as in the Christian tradition and Judaism – implies that the existence of only one God is

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[342] Davies 1998:18-19.

[343] Cross 1998:159.

[344] 1 Chronicles 2:55: 'The clans also of the scribes who lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites and the Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab.'

[345] For an elucidation of the place Jabez, as well as the person Jabez, see footnote in § 6.2.2.

[346] See 1 Chronicles 2:50-55, and also footnote in § 6.2.3.

[347] Kittel 1905:481.

[348] Kobayashi 1992:595.

[349] Eerdmans 1948:26.

[350] Carter 1994:108.

[351] Nehemiah 11:25-36.

[352] Carter 1994:108, 111, 137-139.

[353] Carter 1994:144.

[354] Smith 2001:151.

[355] Becking 2001:189.

acknowledged. A kind of henotheism[356] might be observed in the world-empire ideology of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires from as early as the first half of the first millennium BC; the belief in one god – *Ahura Mazda*[357]– became the official state religion during the Persian Achaemenid Period.[358] Contemporary with the official tendencies of this period, Yahwistic monotheism probably developed from a henotheistic religion into a more defined monotheism after the Exile.[359]

Gerstenberger[360] questions the establishment of a claim to total exclusive worship of *Yahweh* in the newly formed religious community of Judah, after the collapse of the state in 587 BC and deportation of the people to Babylon. Although the theology of the Hebrew Bible seemingly presents the religious belief of the early Israelite/Jewish people, the final collection and compilation of the canon reflect the theology from the sixth or fifth century BC. The formation of the exilic and post-exilic Yahwistic community was therefore an integral element of this Judahite society. In time to come Judahites identified themselves by *Yahweh*. In his reflections on Gerstenberger's *Theologies in the Old Testament*,[361] MacDonald[362] mentions that, although Gerstenberger argues that the whole monotheism of the early Jewish community is fundamentally 'a great, impressively presented monolatry which arose in a situation of confession and at a few points is theoretically supported by statements of uniqueness verging on an ontology',[363] Gerstenberger's idea of monotheism also justifies the question, which nationality and whose monotheism?[364] According to Evans,[365] despite the observation by scholars that aniconism and exclusive monotheism are two marked features that distinguish the Israelite religion from the religions of the Ancient Near East, it proves 'to be very elusive when one inquires as to when and why they emerged in ancient Israel'.[366] Similarly, it is not clear when and why divine images were eventually rejected.

The general idea amongst scholars is that an "official religion" is 'that religion which exerts the greatest power in its relations with other religious groups within a given territory.'[367] It,

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[356] Henotheism: one deity is radically elevated over the other gods (Gnuse 1999:315).
[357] For *Ahura Mazda*, see footnote in § 3.3.
[358] Achaemenid Period: see footnote in § 4.3.13.
[359] Ornan 2001b:25-26.
[360] Gerstenberger 2002:215-216, 219.
[361] See bibliography in this thesis: Gerstenberger 2002.
[362] MacDonald 2005:163. See also Gerstenberger (2002:275).
[363] Ontology: see brief discussion in § 4.2, as well as the relevant footnote in the same paragraph.
[364] MacDonald 2005:164.
[365] Evans 1995:195.
[366] Evans 1995:195.
[367] Berlinerblau 1996:30.

therefore, could be maintained that the intelligentsia employed by the Israelite Monarchy – the court theologians and historians, as well as the scribes and priests – were thus responsible for the creation, promulgation and maintenance of the official religion. It is conceivable that, at some point, biblical Yahwism could be envisaged as the official religion.[368]

Gnuse[369] is of the opinion that 'the best way to characterize the emergence of monotheism is to describe it as both a revolutionary and an evolutionary process … . The ultimate break-through in Israel came in revolutionary fashion, yet at the end of a long evolutionary process in the ancient world'. A significant development in the emerging monotheism came during the Exile, while the implications of radical monotheism are discerned most effectively during the Second Temple Period.[370] 'Israelite faith arose out of a complex and multifaceted milieu.'[371] Its worldview was not in opposition to the values of the Ancient Near East, but existing ideas and old beliefs were gradually moulded – consciously and unconsciously – into a new pattern.[372] Gnuse[373] theorises, furthermore, that the monotheistic revolution is still ongoing and that the implications of this religion 'are unfolding still in our own age.'

Becking[374] mentions that, by both Jews and Christians, the religion of the ancient Israelites traditionally has been construed 'as a monotheistic cult devoid of images', however, the Hebrew Bible testifies that the Israelites worshipped deities other than *Yahweh*; veneration of gods, such as *Asherah*, *Astarte*, *Ba'al* and the *Queen of Heaven*, are mentioned. Evidence from Assyrian texts seems to indicate that iconic polytheism was a feature of the state religion in Northern Israel. Yet, various analyses of possible evidence from Mesopotamia yield neither positive nor negative results in this connection.[375] A number of scholars, however, argued that, by virtue of its monotheistic faith, Israel radically divorced itself from the value systems of the ancient world; this view has been subjected to much criticism. Notwithstanding, despite being confronted by the local Canaanite culture, the reconstruction of old ideologies enabled Israel to sustain a separate identity and they thus remained as a distinct people even in the Diaspora after the Babylonian exile.[376]

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[368] Berlinerblau 1996:30, 33.
[369] Gnuse 1997:7, 130.
[370] Gnuse 1997:269. Second Temple Period: 539 BC - AD 70.
[371] Gnuse 1987:132.
[372] Gnuse 1987:132.
[373] Gnuse 1997:275.
[374] Becking 1997:157.
[375] Becking 1997:157, 167, 171.
[376] Gnuse 1987:127-128, 132-133.

Gnuse[377] denotes that historical models that considered Israelites as outsiders who invaded Palestine, strengthened the idea that a new Israelite religion stood opposed to Canaanite values. New scholarly paradigms, however, 'stress gradual, evolutionary origins for political identity and monotheistic faith',[378] emphasising continuity with surrounding cultures, rather than being in opposition to them. Scholars now perceive Israelite monotheism as a minority movement in the pre-exilic period up to the Babylonian exile. Pre-exilic syncretism of Yahwism and Baalism might have been the normal religious experience of the people; the religion of the Israelites thus being naturally syncretistic and not a "worn out" version of an earlier, so-called pure, Yahwism. A number of scholars now pay more attention to the appearance of Canaanite elements in the Yahwistic faith. Scholars are now also 'willing to look at all the information in a new way, especially the biblical texts'.[379] A simple set of beliefs did not evolve into monotheism. The Israelites 'inherited a complex set of ideas, … and they amalgamated them into their own distinctive worldview'.[380] While some theologians characterise monotheism as a movement conducive to human equality and to social values, other scholars postulate that monotheism has been administered to justify and legitimise the institution of slavery and the radical subordination of women.[381]

Gnuse[382] discusses a 'contemporary evolutionary theory as a new heuristic[383] model for the socioscientific method in biblical studies'. He mentions that a number of scientists proposed a new thesis called punctuated equilibria.[384] On the question whether it is possible to use this new theory to deliberate phenomena in the social sciences, Gnuse[385] is of the opinion that, in a limited way, it has heuristic value. With the application of this model, scholars might be able to discuss religious developments in Israel, particularly regarding the rise of monotheism. The model of Israel's religious development is, in several ways, analogous to the model of punctuated equilibria.[386]

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[377] Gnuse 1994:894, 896, 898-900.
[378] Gnuse 1994:896.
[379] Gnuse 2007:79.
[380] Gnuse 2007:79.
[381] Gnuse 2007:79-80.
[382] Gnuse 1990:405. See Gnuse (1990:405-428) for the discussion of this model.
[383] According to Wehmeier (2005:701), 'Heuristic teaching or education encourages you to learn by discovering things for yourself.'
[384] Regarding punctuated equilibria, a number of scientists 'propose that evolution does not result from the buildup of small genetic changes gradually over long periods of time; rather, there are long periods of stasis in the life of a species, within which there may be some genetic "drift", but no change of sufficient magnitude to initiate a new species. This long period of stasis is punctuated by a short but rapid evolutionary development in which a new species arises that may displace the ancestral species' (Gnuse 1990:408-409).
[385] Gnuse 1990:413, 422, 425.
[386] The punctuated equilibria theory 'enables us to describe phenomena by a model that more or less conforms to what we observe' (Gnuse 1990:413).

Excursus 4: Akhenaten monotheism

*The Egyptian pharaoh, Amenhotep IV, took on the name Akhenaten[387] early in his reign.[388] He intro-
duced a revolutionary period in the Egyptian history, often called the Amarna Interlude. During his
rule he initiated a new art style, and elevated the cult of the sun disc, the* Aten. *Akhenaten's forbearer,
Amenhotep III, recognised the growing power of the priesthood of* Amun;[389] *it was Akhenaten who
took the matter further with the introduction of 'a new monotheistic cult of sun-worship that was in-
carnate in the sun's disc, the* Aten'.[390] *He also built a new city Akhetaten[391] for his god.*

*Stiebing[392] mentions that many scholars perceive Akhenaten's new religion as a monotheistic faith
similar to the later Judaism, Christianity and Islam; some scholars have even claimed that this faith
influenced the development of Israelite monotheism. Gnuse[393] denotes that a type of "intolerant mono-
theism" was created, and as a proto-monotheism inspired by Akhenaten for political reasons. He
probably equated himself with the* Aten. *Scholars observe a similarity in the monotheistic doctrine of
Moses and that of Akhenaten.[394] According to Cornelius,[395] Akhenaten created a police state, system-
atically destroying images of deities. Common elements of Egyptian religion – iconography and my-
thology – were replaced by the new aniconism. His god, as the sun disc, was omnipresent.
Cathcart[396] is of the opinion that the linking of pharaoh Akhenaten to the founding of the first mono-
theistic faith is ambiguous; the cult of* Aten *probably developed in the time of his father, Amenhotep
III[397] – thus before Amenhotep IV, Akhenaten, had come to the throne.*

*According to De Moor,[398] 'the religion of Akhenaten creates an impression of bloodless frigidity, it
resembles nothing more than a queer kind of science'. He denotes that the monotheistic revolution of
Akhenaten set in motion a counter-movement that declared that all gods were only the manifestations
of one god,* Amun-Re. *This action had far-reaching theological implications; a crisis of polytheism
echoed all over the ancient world. Letters from Amarna and the vassals in Canaan indicate that,
whereas it was customary for the vassals to include good wishes in the name of* Amun *in their letters,
they did not mention this deity anymore, and also refrained from praising* Aten.[399]*

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[387] See also § 3.6, and the relevant footnote in the same paragraph.

[388] Akhenaten reigned 1350-1334 BC, during the Eighteenth Dynasty (Clayton 1994:120).

[389] During the Eleventh Dynasty – 2134-1991 BC (Clayton 1994:72) – *Amun* was equated with the sun god *Re*;
he was also established as the city god of Thebes and the state god of a reunified Egypt. The ram was his sacred
animal. In Jeremiah 46:25 the deity *Amun* is referred to in an oracle against Egypt. *Amun* is the only Egyptian
deity mentioned by name within this context (Assmann 1999:29, 31).

[390] Clayton 1994:121.

[391] Also spelled Akhetaton, and later known as El-Amarna.

[392] Stiebing 1983:7.

[393] Gnuse 2007:84-86.

[394] Finegan 1998:231.

[395] Cornelius 1997b:29-30.

[396] Cathcart 1997:84-85.

[397] Amenhotep III was one of the great kings of ancient Egypt. Scholars discovered that the name of Amenhotep
III had been deliberately defaced at the temple of Karnak; it was done in such a way that the name *Amun* in the
cartouche had been damaged (Cathcart 1997:85). For further particulars on Cathcart's argument, see Cathcart
(1997:84-85). For information on the damaging and erasing of a pharaoh's cartouche, see the relevant footnote
in § 2.7.

[398] De Moor 1997:44.

[399] De Moor 1997:68-69, 99-100.

Despite refraining from any reference to the Aten*, one of the Amarna letters contains a short hymn exhibiting that Akhenaten's theology had been preserved in a Babylonian translation.*[400] *The longest copy of the* Hymn to the Aten *was inscribed in the tomb of Ay – private secretary and chief official of the king – at Amarna.* Aten *is called the universal and beneficent "sole god".*[401] *Dion*[402] *argues that 'elements from the Amarna sun-god literary tradition', as well as symbols and phrases typical of Ancient Near Eastern storm gods, have been blended harmoniously into Psalm 104 by the psalmist.*

8.8.2   Marginal groups and their influence on the establishment and maintaining of exilic and post-exilic monotheism

In accordance with my hypothesis, I postulate that marginal and minority groups had an influence – to a great extent – on the establishment of an exilic and post-exilic *Yahweh*-alone monotheism. In Chapter 6, I identify marginal groups that according to my theory – apart from maintaining the pre-exilic *Yahweh*-alone movement – played a significant role in the post-exilic period. Some of these former tribes and other minority assemblages – particularly the Rechabites – were, seemingly, an important element concerning the continuity of Yahwism/Judaism after the Exile during the Second Temple Period. Some relevant post-exilic groups, who apparently maintained a Yahwistic monotheism, are discussed briefly in this paragraph.

Becking[403] indicates that for the period roughly between 600 BC and 400 BC, the Israelite history is characterised by changes. 'Exile and restoration provoked a crisis in the Israelite, Yahwistic religion.'[404] The return from Exile, and the rebuilding of the Temple for a religious minority 'had a great impact on the symbol system of the Yahwistic group(s) in and around Jerusalem'.[405] The principal form of Yahwism before the Exile could be described as monotheistic, aniconic and directed at one central sanctuary. Judaism, which is well documented from the middle of the fourth century BC, was not uniform in its character. Due to a scarcity of evidence it is difficult to qualify the religion of the Yehudites – who worshipped *Yahweh* – as either "still Yahwism" or "already Judaism". Yahwism and Judaism are not identical, although they have much in common. 'Traditionally the exile is taken as the watershed between the two forms.'[406]

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[400] De Moor 1997:69.
[401] Finegan 1998:231.
[402] Dion 1991:44. See also brief discussion of the similarity between Psalm 104 and the *Hymn to the Aten* in § 3.6.
[403] Becking 1999b:1, 4-6.
[404] Becking 1999b:4.
[405] Becking 1999b:4.
[406] Becking 1999b:6.

According to Niehr,[407] although some texts of Deutero-Isaiah claim some kind of monotheism in the Second Temple Period, exaggerating the role of *Yahweh* and denying the existence of other deities, it 'cannot be taken as proof of the existence of monotheism in Yehud from the Achaemenid period onward'.[408] Gods brought in by the Edomites and Phoenicians might have been venerated. The cultic critique in the Hebrew Bible against the worship of deities beside *Yahweh* is an indication that such practices did exist during the sixth and fifth centuries BC; it is also likely that *Asherah* was still venerated.[409] Stern[410] denotes that archaeological finds of the Persian Period reflect new types of clay figurines made in Phoenician, Egyptian, Persian and Greek styles; the Phoenician cult was composed of a triad of deities. All figurines 'were found only in areas outside the region settled by the returning Judaean exiles'[411] – no cultic figurines have been found in the areas occupied by the Jews. He is thus of the opinion that pagan cults ceased to exist among the Judeans in the Persian Period.

The Babylonian conquest of Judah did not reduce the population substantially; the inhabitants of Judah were partly increased by – among others – Ammonites and Edomites penetrating into the region. While the elite were exterminated or weakened, the productive potential of land and people were maintained. Archaeological work indicates that the southern part of Judah was almost totally destroyed, while the northern region of the tribe of Benjamin was more intact. The majority of the Judean nobility and some of the "people of the land"[412] were deported. The relationship between the citizen-temple community and other socio-political structures influenced the development and nature of the post-exilic society, which was, more or less, in a permanent confrontation with the population of Palestine.[413]

Most accounts of the Babylonian exile emphasise the aspect of restoration, hardly mentioning pessimism and disillusion – or the rejection of all religious and moral principles – that were found among Jews in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods. The general feeling of the post-exilic community was apparently that idolatry was one of the main reasons for the destruction of the Temple and the termination of the Monarchy. Yet, these people 'suffered

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[407] Niehr 1999d:239-240.
[408] Niehr 1999d:239.
[409] The goddess *Asherah* is explicitly excluded in the books of Chronicles that are dated in the fourth, or even the second century BC (Niehr 1999d:240).
[410] Stern 1999:253-255.
[411] Stern 1999:254.
[412] Scholars have various descriptions for the term "people of the land" – *'am hā'āreṣ* – such as, that it describes the members of the post-exilic community, or that it designates the population in Palestine standing outside the community – mainly Samaritans and inhabitants of Judah who were not deported (Weinberg 1992:68).
[413] Weinberg 1992:37-40, 63, 67.

under the burden of the sins of previous generations'.[414] Advocates of strict monotheism probably also would have been dissatisfied with their failure to convert all Israelites to monotheism; how do they explain that God seemingly abandoned his people. Many exiles apparently adapted successfully to the Babylonian way of life, resisting Isaiah's call to return to Zion. Apart from a feeling of despair documented in the Hebrew Bible, evidence of a Jewish identity crisis is evident throughout the Persian Period.[415]

Hanson[416] mentions that the devastating events of the Exile clearly affected the religious life of the early post-exilic Jews; some of the most fundamental principles of their Yahwistic faith were called into question. The Zadokites continued with the theological and cultic beliefs of their ancestors. The religious convictions of the Judeans were intimately associated with the Jerusalem Temple. 'Recognition of the pivotal role of the Yahwistic religious symbol system in the life of the nation, and specifically of the central religious significance of the Temple, provides background for considering the effects of the destruction of Zion on the survivors.'[417] Oppression at the hands of foreigners and of rivals within the Jewish community – during the Hellenistic and Roman periods – gave rise to apocalyptic movements.

Jewish sectarianism[418] started between the fourth and the second century centuries BC. New evidence throws light on 'dissenting religious groups and trends in the Second Temple period'.[419] Internal diversification in Judaism found expression in the formation of sects, and should be assessed in the light of the Babylonian exile and the return from the Exile. The Exile, and all that it entails, did not result in a religious reorientation searching for new forms of worship, but rather 'in the emergence of an intensified dream of a future restitution of the age-honored holy place and the sacrificial cult'.[420] Jewish communities in Judah did not change their lifestyle, or their religious-cultic customs; these conservatives clung to their established value systems. In the Babylonian community, however, 'a particular understanding of biblical monotheism was cultivated'.[421] These exiles reinterpreted their traditional values and reinforced a strict adherence to their spiritual heritage. The inhabitants of Judah and Benjamin, who had not undergone the exile experience, were considered opponents of the returnees; the

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[414] Korpel 2005:136.
[415] Korpel 2005:135-138, 144, 157.
[416] Hanson 1987:485, 487, 489, 492.
[417] Hanson 1987:489.
[418] Wehmeier (2005:1320) describes sectarianism as 'strong support for one particular religious or political group, especially when this leads to violence between different groups'.
[419] Talmon 1987:588.
[420] Talmon 1987:594.
[421] Talmon 1987:595.

question being whether the latter should separate themselves from the "Palestinian" Judeans, or whether they should agree to integrate them into their midst. The concept of sectarianism does not necessarily apply to cases of internal cultic-political protest before 300 BC. Thereafter, Jewish dissent presents itself in the commune of the Qumran Covenanters. Attempts to identify this group with any Jewish sect or religious stream of the Second Temple Period connect them with the Essenes – this is currently the most widely accepted theory.[422]

The origin of the Qumran community is still – after decades of study – the subject of diverse hypotheses. The *Damascus Scroll*[423] attends to matters that distinguish the sect from the rest of the Jews.[424] A dispute over the right of succession to the high priesthood seemingly precipitated the shift to Qumran. On archaeological grounds the commencement of the settlement at Khirbet Qumran[425] is dated to the early Hasmonean Period.[426] Scholars still debate the issue whether the Essenes had been an organised group before their alleged settlement at Qumran.[427]

Knights[428] argues that it is worthwhile to analyse a scholarly proposal that the Essenes were the descendants of the Rechabites – found in Jeremiah 35[429] – and that the latter were thus the precursors of the Essenes. Although the ancient tribal asceticism of the Rechabites that possibly ultimately stemmed from the desert origins of Yahwism could be parallel to Essene practices; not one of the published Dead Sea Scrolls, or any remarks in Philo or Josephus, makes any reference to the Rechabites. A comparison of practices of the Rechabites and those of the Essenes also seems to indicate that these practices are at variance with each other. It, therefore, appears that the Essenes were not influenced by the Rechabites – or any biblical texts dealing with them. Abramsky,[430] on the other hand, is of the opinion that the Rechabites, although not a revisionary sect as such, might – in the light of their social withdrawal, discipline and belief – be regarded as the archetype of the Essenes.

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[422] Talmon 1987:587-588, 591, 593-596, 600, 604-605.

[423] The scrolls discovered in the Qumran caves, include the *Damascus Scroll* or *Damascus Rule*. This document is particularly rich in clues to the origin of the Qumran community; it is also significant for the dating of the sect's beginnings. It is mainly a document addressed to the sons of Zadok, and consists of various laws (Vermes 1982:49-50, 142, 147).

[424] See Collins (1989:159-167) for an elaboration of these differences and the presumed incentive for their emergence.

[425] Khirbet Qumran is a site on the western shore of the Dead Sea, bounded on the south by Wadi Qumran. The uncovering of a building complex during excavations, as well as the discovery of scrolls in nearby caves, identified the site as having been occupied by the Essene community (Negev & Gibson 2001:420-423).

[426] The Hasmonean Period is dated 142-37 BC.

[427] Collins 1989:159, 162, 167.

[428] Knights 1992:81-87.

[429] Concerning the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35, see discussions in § 6.2.2, § 6.4 and § 6.5.

[430] Abramsky 1967:76.

Knights[431] denotes, furthermore, that some scholars have attempted to link the Therapeutae[432] with the *History of the Rechabites*[433] – the latter represents a post-biblical use of material about the Rechabites. The Therapeutae also might have been connected with the Essenes. Charlesworth,[434] however, indicates that there are many dissimilarities between the life of the Rechabites – as presented in the *History of the Rechabites* – and the Therapeutae.

Stallman[435] mentions that reference to Levi and the Levites in the Dead Sea Scrolls 'is evidence that this tribe was both highly respected and the subject of extensive theological reflection'.[436] In the *Temple Scroll* they were, inter alia, considered to be one of the twelve tribes and also formed part of the royal cabinet; the *War Scroll* promotes the Levites in the leadership of cult and combat.

According to Lang,[437] the origin of monolatry – or henotheism[438] – cannot be reconstructed with confidence. Contributing factors to its formation might include 'rivalry between the priests and prophets of Yahweh and those of other gods, … opposition of conservative nomads against Canaanite cult and culture'.[439] It was only by the ninth century BC that the influence of the monolatric idea is attested.[440] Its exact aims are, however, difficult to grasp. Although many leaders of the minority *Yahweh*-alone movement remain anonymous, they could be called the founders of Jewish monotheism. During the crisis of the Exile, this small but growing group demanded exclusive worship of *Yahweh*; monotheism was the solution to their political crisis. Gnuse[441] denotes that 'only a small minority of pre-exilic Israelites were developing monotheistic ideas,' and probably after several stages of evolution 'became consistent monotheists in the Babylonian Exile'. The emergence of monotheism during the Exile, or later in the post-exilic period, reflects – apart from the conclusion of pre-exilic Israelite

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[431] Knights 1992:86.
[432] The Therapeutae (Greek: healers or worshippers) were a Jewish sect known only from the description in Philo's treatise *The Contemplative Life*. They lived in a monastic community south of Alexandria in Egypt. Due to their particular way of life Eusebius regarded them as Christians. They – for example – lived in deserted areas, spent all day studying scripture, fasted and composed psalms; male and female members lived separately. However, although Eusebius' identification is probably incorrect, it gives an indication of Christian observances and the continuity between sectarian Judaism and early Christianity (Ferguson 1990:896).
[433] See a brief discussion of the *History of the Rechabites* later in this paragraph.
[434] Charlesworth 1986:238.
[435] Stallman 1992:168-169, 176, 188-189.
[436] Stallman 1992:189.
[437] Lang 1983:19, 54, 56.
[438] See explanatory footnote in § 8.8.1.
[439] Lang 1983:19.
[440] The monolatric idea was advocated by the prophets Elijah and Elisha in the Northern Kingdom, and by the reforms of Asa and Jehoshaphat in the South (Lang 1983:19). Asa ruled ca 911-870 BC, and Jehoshaphat ca 870-848 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196).
[441] Gnuse 1999:315.

religious speculation – contributions from anonymous philosophers, sages or theorists from the Ancient Near East.[442]

Zevit[443] is of the opinion that at least some of the *Yahweh*-alone groups were Jerusalem Temple Levites. 'Its members would have included people driven by aggressive passion, some gifted with the intellectual skills necessary to recast the past and the daring insight to reform a worldview, others gifted with oratorical and organizational skills, still others with cunning and political savvy, and all with a sense of teleological certainty and patience.'[444] From the eighth century BC on the *Yahweh*-alone movement borrowed treaty forms, idioms and curses from the language of Neo-Assyrian statecraft, and provided its members with metaphors and images for interpreting Israel's past, present and future, as well as its relationship with *Yahweh*. This movement's eventual success could be contributed to its having the final say in these interpretations. The legitimacy of other religions and cults was challenged by scribes from the perspective of a *Yahweh*-alone covenant. During the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods 'under circumstances yet to be determined by historians, the worldview of the YHWH-alone movement may have become particularly widespread among Israelites, even in their places of exile'.[445]

In Chapter 6 the *Yahweh*-alone movement is discussed, as well as the likely involvement of the Rechabites with this movement. According to Van der Toorn,[446] the Rechabites could be regarded as one of the oldest families among the Israelites that worshipped *Yahweh*. Although a minority group with an almost negligible influence, the Rechabites represented a silent protest against the dominant culture in Israel. Their lifestyle 'subtly shifted from a ritual resistance into a ritual self-assertion'.[447] Their symbol of resistance and religious convictions later became an identity marker; yet, they should not be reduced to a phenomenon of social resistance. The history of the Israelite religion is that of the interaction of various religious groups and traditions – the Rechabites were one of these groups. They might have been joined by others – not of Rechabite lineage – that submitted to their discipline. Those that rejected this lifestyle lost their identity.

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[442] Gnuse 1999:330.
[443] Zevit 2001:667, 688-690.
[444] Zevit 2001:688.
[445] Zevit 2001:690.
[446] Van der Toorn 1995:248, 250-253.
[447] Van der Toorn 1995:250.

The Rechabites, as a religious group, probably included post-exilic priests. According to sources dealing with the Second Temple Period, they surfaced again as such a religious group during that time.[448] Reference to them in rabbinic literature is an indication that they continued to exist in the Second Temple Period.[449] Pope,[450] however, indicates that evidence is rather tenuous that they survived the Exile as a group. Pressure of circumstances during the post-exilic period might have forced many Rechabites to change their mode of life. According to Jewish tradition, they entered the temple service by marriage of their daughters to priests. They were seemingly also among the Levite singers and taken as first exiles. Knights[451] denotes that numerous rabbinic references to the Rechabites demonstrate their concern that the promise in Jeremiah 35:19[452] should be fulfilled; according to rabbinic traditions, the Rechabites became incorporated into the Sanhedrin, or into the priesthood.

The Talmud[453] indicates that the seventh of *Ab*[454] was a special day for the Rechabites; they partook in the wood festival of the priests and the people.[455] In Midrashic[456] discourses[457] characteristics attributed to the descendants of Jethro – Moses' father-in-law – are sometimes applied to the Rechabites; the latter appear in some of these texts as an example of pious converts. Particular passages in these debates could be followed only if the Rechabites are identified as from the lineage of Jethro.[458] In the *History of the Rechabites*, the descendants of Jonadab son of Rechab – a collective biblical figure – are discussed. Parallels to this group are pointed out by Nikolsky[459] in the abovementioned Midrashic dialogues, as well as in works of early Christian authors. Similarities with Christian writings suggest that the *History of the Rechabites* is a fourth century Christian composition.[460] From the third to the seventh century eleven Christian authors mention the Rechabites.[461] In some instances the Christian

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[448] Van der Toorn 1995:232, 251.
[449] Frick 1962:727-728.
[450] Pope 1962:16.
[451] Knights 1993:243.
[452] Jeremiah 35:19, 'therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never lack a man to stand before me' – thus always being included in the priesthood.
[453] Talmud: see explanation in a footnote on Mishnah in § 3.2.2.
[454] *Ab* was the fifth Hebrew month, and corresponds to July to August (De Vries 1962:486). See also page 2 in the same volume.
[455] Pope 1962:16.
[456] Midrash: the traditional Jewish method of exegesis, and particularly the traditional presentation of the Law (Deist 1990:158).
[457] Midrashic texts found in *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai*, dated the mid third century AD. This work contains a lengthy discussion of Exodus 18:27 (Nikolsky 2002:189).
[458] Nikolsky 2002:189-190.
[459] For a detailed discussion hereof, see Nikolsky (2002:188-202).
[460] Nikolsky 2002:185.
[461] These authors are: Eusebius (260-340), Athanasius (296-373), Pseudo-Athanasius (fourth century), Gregorius Nazianzus (330-390), Gregorius of Nice (330-395), Jerome (345-420), John Chrysostomos (347-407), John

authors refer to the Rechabites as ascetics. Jerome[462] views the Rechabites as a monastic model. As this group purportedly observed unique customs that could be interpreted as ascetic practices, it is not surprising that their popularity was heightened at a time when the Christian monastic movement was escalating.[463]

Pope[464] denotes that travellers – as late as during the twelfth century – found Rechabites in various places. Benjamin of Tudela reported that he found a community of a hundred thousand Jews near El Jubar in Arabia; they devoted themselves to study and to weeping for Jerusalem, abstained from wine and meat and gave tithes to teachers. During the nineteenth century Pierotti stated that he met a tribe – calling themselves Rechabites – near the Dead Sea. During the same period Joseph Wolff noted that he had found Rechabites in Mesopotamia and Yemen.

According to Knights,[465] scholars have agreed that the central chapters – chapters eight to ten – of the pseudepigraphon variously titled the *Story of Zosimus* or the *History of the Rechabites*, could 'be isolated from the rest of the document and treated as a separate text in their own right'. These chapters that are probably a late insertion in the *Story of Zosimus*, alone merit the title *History of the Rechabites*[466] – which is evaluated as an independent apocryphal[467] composition from late antiquity.[468] The Greek version of these chapters is the most primitive and was probably written by a Greek-speaking Jew,[469] redacted by a Syriac editor.[470] Charlesworth[471] denotes that chapters seven to nine of the Greek rendering constitute the nucleus of the Rechabite text, and is an expanded exegesis of Jeremiah 35. Although the document – in its present and final form – is Christian, it preserves more than only early Jewish tradition, and 'contains portions of an otherwise lost Jewish document'.[472] Possible Iranian influence on the "History" is strengthened by the recognition of numerous links with, and parallels between its Jewish core and the Persian *Arda Viraf*.[473] Early Judaism was influenced by

Cassian (360-430), Nilus of Ancyra (died 430), Theodoret of Kyrrh (393-460) and the Chronicon Pascale (seventh century) (Nikolsky 2002:202).

[462] For information on Jerome, see footnote in § 4.2.

[463] Nikolsky 2002:186-188, 202-204.

[464] Pope 1962:16.

[465] Knights 1995:324.

[466] Knights 1995:324.

[467] Apocryphal: 'not regarded as canonical, of dubious origin' (Deist 1990:17).

[468] Nikolsky 2002:188.

[469] Knights 1995:325, 329.

[470] Knights 1993:239.

[471] Charlesworth 1986:219-221, 232-233.

[472] Charlesworth 1986:219.

[473] The *Arda Viraf* was composed sometime between the third century BC and the ninth century AD. The book is a quasi-apocalypse (Charlesworth 1986:232).

all cultures it had contact with, and not only by Greek thought. Knights[474] suggests that 'verbal parallels between HistRech[475] 8,6 and Daniel 9 reveal that Dan. 9 *as a whole* is a source of HistRech'. The latter text is explicitly related to the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the destruction of Jerusalem.[476]

The *Story of Zosimus* – also known as the *Journey of Zosimus* – is identified by Nikolsky[477] as an early Byzantine Palestinian Christian story. In this chronicle, the monk Zosimus is taken on a journey to observe how the "Blessed Ones" live. They dwell in an Eden-like land and do not have to work for their sustenance. They describe their way of life to Zosimus and recount the events that led to their arrival at their destination. Knights[478] mentions that the inhabitants of the Isle of the Blessed Ones[479] 'claim to be the Rechabites encountered by Jeremiah in the closing years of the Judaean monarchy'. The contents of the *History of the Rechabites* – incorporated in the *Journey of Zosimus* – is part of what the Blessed Ones inform Zosimus about themselves; it is a narrative about a collective biblical figure, known mainly from Jeremiah 35. The Rechabites' unique customs are enlightened in this text.[480] According to Charlesworth,[481] 'the author of the HistRech was influenced by the ideas related to the place of the lost ten tribes'.[482] Knights[483] observes that some scholars disagree that the Rechabites should be linked to the ten tribes in the biblical tradition. He describes the *Story of Zosimus* as 'one of those fascinating blends of Jewish and Christian writings from the early centuries of Catholic Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism'.[484]

Knights,[485] furthermore, indicates that 'the Rechabites were seen as Jewish precursors of Christian monks by the Church fathers'. In the first centuries Zosimus was a relatively common Christian name. The present Christian form of the document probably dates from the fifth or sixth century.[486] Scholars have also suggested placing the *History of the Rechabites* in

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[474] Knights 1997b:423.
[475] *History of the Rechabites*.
[476] Knights 1997b:423.
[477] Nikolsky 2002:185-186.
[478] Knights 1997a:53.
[479] Charlesworth (2002:228-231) denotes that Greek and other ancient poems and historical works describe a distant island on which the Blessed Ones lived. For an elucidation hereof by Charlesworth, see the aforementioned pages.
[480] Nikolsky 2002:186.
[481] Charlesworth 1986:240.
[482] The legend of the place of the lost ten tribes was very popular in early Jewish literature; compare the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs 9, 4 Ezra 13, and 2 Baruch 77 (Charlesworth 1986:240).
[483] Knights 1997a:58-59.
[484] Knights 1997a:64.
[485] Knights 1995:342.
[486] Knights 1993:236.

the first century Palestinian Judaism. The contents of the document could point to a late date of composition 'given the apparent presence of various groups that called themselves Rechabites within late Second Temple Judaism'.[487] The purpose of the document is to argue that divine commands should be obeyed and that God does answer true, faithful prayer.[488]

As also mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, my theory is that marginal and minority groups – especially those involved in the pre-exilic *Yahweh*-alone movement – played a significant role in the establishment of a post-exilic *Yahweh*-alone monotheism. As indicated in this chapter, so-called "historical" information in the Hebrew Bible is biased, with the main purpose to actualise the tradition; the aims of the editors and compilers therefore determined the outcome of the text. Unless revolutionary informative material becomes available, it is, more or less, impossible to ascertain exactly what the course of Israel's religious history was – particularly how, and by which group or groups, a strict *Yahweh*-alone monotheism was instituted during the Exile, and thereafter maintained in the Second Temple Period. Therefore, my hypothesis as a possible scenario could be regarded as valid as any other suggestion.

In the discussions in this paragraph (8.8.2) – as well as deliberations in Chapter 6 – I endeavour to establish which group or groups adhered strictly to Yahwism. Although there are sparse referrals to particular marginal and minority groups in the Masoretic Text, these references link these people implicitly or explicitly to *Yahweh*. A number of the marginal groups – as indicated in Chapter 6, as well as in Chapter 5, concerning the Kenites – were smiths. According to passages in the Hebrew Bible,[489] metalworkers and artisans were 'numbered among those of high status who were carried off into captivity by the Babylonians'[490] – and were thus among the exiles who had to reflect on their new situation. I, furthermore, theorise that the Rechabites – who were commended by Jeremiah for their firm obedience to the commands of their ancestor Jonadab, and moreover were obviously members of the *Yahweh*-alone movement – were also among the exiles, and instrumental in the establishment and maintaining of an exilic and post-exilic *Yahweh*-alone monotheism. Persistent references to the Rechabites in post-exilic literature – as pointed out in this paragraph – are an indication that this group played a major role in the lives of the post-exilic Jews.

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[487] Knights 1995:330.
[488] Knights 1995:342.
[489] Examples are 2 Kings 24:14, 16; Jeremiah 24:1; 29:2.
[490] McNutt 1994:112.

It is significant that the Chronicler specifically refers to the Rechabites when he mentions 'the clans also of the scribes who lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites and the Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab'.[491] These families – or guilds – of the Sepherites, inhabitants of Qiryat-Sepher, were those that dwelt at Jabez.[492] The important role that scribes played in the compilation and finalisation of the Masoretic Text – and thus also in respect of the contents thereof – has been fully elucidated in previous discussions in this chapter.

8.9   Minimalistic or revisionistic views on the historicity of the Masoretic Text and an Israelite nation

History-writing is essential to both archaeology and biblical studies, therefore historiographical matters that have come to the fore since the 1990s are fundamental to both disciplines. However, fierce controversies are presently the most critical issue confronting these disciplines. Revisionism started on the archaeological front when several archaeologists in the 1980s lowered the conventional tenth century BC date of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer to the early-mid ninth century BC. 'This initially harmless move precipitated a critical historiographical crisis',[493] because, apart from the fact that these monumental constructions had been dated confidently to the mid-tenth century BC on stratigraphic and ceramic typological grounds, it was also taken by leading authorities as a confirmation of the remark in 1 Kings[494] that Solomon built four fortified cities. This lowering of the date is still not accepted by many archaeologists.

By the early 1990s more biblical scholars began to argue that there was no historical United Monarchy or Solomon, and 'indeed no Israelite state before the ninth century BCE, and no Judean state before the late seventh century BCE, if then'.[495] This controversy started with Philip R Davies' argument[496] that "biblical" and "ancient" Israel 'were simply modern "social constructs", reflecting the theological biases and quests of Jewish and Christian scholars, ancient and modern'.[497] According to Davies' argument archaeology was the only possible source of information, but due to the limitations thereof, an "historical" Israel was merely a

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[491] 1 Chronicles 2:55.
[492] Frick 1971:286.
[493] Dever 2000:105.
[494] 1 Kings 9:15-17, 'And this is the account of the forced labour that King Solomon drafted to build … the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor and Megiddo and Gezer … .'
[495] Dever 2000:105.
[496] See in this bibliography, P R Davies, 1992. *In search of 'Ancient Israel'*.
[497] Dever 2000:105-106.

remote possibility. Even more radical works[498] than that of Davies were produced later. Literature on "revisionism" has since developed rapidly and debates have become exceedingly acrimonious. Leading scholars are dismissed on the one hand as "minimalists" or "nihilists", and on the other hand as "maximalists", "credulists", or even "crypto-fundamentalists".[499] Dever[500] indicates that, although few archaeologists respond to the revisionists' efforts to write ancient Israel out of the history of Palestine, their 'ignorance or deliberate abuse of archaeology must not be allowed to go unchallenged', not being a real threat to archaeology, but for the impeding of debates between two complementary disciplines. Mainstream archaeologists argue that, if they could distinguish Egyptians, Canaanites, Moabites, Edomites, and others in the archaeological record, an Israelite tenth century BC "state" – however modest – could similarly be identified. Notwithstanding, Dever[501] is of the opinion that the ideologies of the revisionists are rapidly becoming a threat to biblical studies.

Together with other revisionist scholars, Lemche[502] argues that, although some kind of entity – called Israel – probably had existed in Palestine around 1200 BC, it was hardly the Israelite nation referred to in the Hebrew Bible. Revisionist scholars suggest that a substitution of terminology should be considered, 'instead of speaking exclusively about "Israelites", thereby indicating members of the biblical nation of Israel, historians should speak about *Palestinians*, i.e. the ancient inhabitants of the landscape of Palestine.'[503] In reaction to Lemche's various assertions,[504] Dever[505] states that he believes 'that some of the false presuppositions, oversimplifications, undocumented assertions and contradictions – not to mention the ideological overtones – of the revisionist school will be apparent to the unbiased observer'. He perceives that revisionism – in its increasingly extreme form – has become 'a classic example of the deconstructionist New Literary Critical approaches now in vogue'.[506]

8.10   Résumé and conclusion

As illustrated in the foregoing chapters of this thesis, the different disciplines of biblical scholarship and archaeology are interdependent. A long oral tradition preceded the later written and edited Masoretic Text, which was compiled within the framework of the background

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[498] Works by, inter alia, Keith W Whitelam, Niels P Lemche and Thomas L Thompson (Dever 2000:106).
[499] Dever 2000:105-106.
[500] Dever 2000:106-107.
[501] Dever 1998a:39.
[502] Lemche 1996:20.
[503] Lemche 1996:20.
[504] See Lemche (1996:9-34), for an elucidation of his views.
[505] Dever 1996:36.
[506] Dever 1996:36.

and preconceived ideas of the authors and redactors, and is therefore not historically dependable. Although neither biblical historiography nor theology can reach the full extent of its research without the support of relevant disciplines, the Hebrew Bible remains the prime source of information concerning the Israelite nation and its religion. It seems, therefore, appropriate that this research is concluded with a brief discussion of matters pertaining to the compilation and finalisation of the Masoretic Text.

Histories in the Hebrew Bible are compiled from a variety of written and oral sources. Narratives, combined with chronology, portray political events and create the potential for the "historical" reconstruction of the past. Biblical narrators were, however, ideologically biased in the application of their traditions and sources, and wrote from a specific theological viewpoint; historical memory adjusts reality to serve the present. The purpose of biblical narratives was, in all likelihood, to answer questions about the relationship of people to the land where they lived, to the ethnic group with which they identified, and to the religious myths and rituals that were fundamental to their sense of identity – and not to "present facts". Historiography – always being interpretation – describes and interprets past events from a distinct point of view, thus leading to an ongoing reinterpretation of history; the reflected history therefore differs from the reality.

Literacy was initially restricted to professional scribes, but with the development of the alphabet literacy spread to wider segments of the population. Scholars have established that the time span of the biblical Hebrew literature tradition extended from at least the eleventh century BC to the Persian Period. Many rabbinic legends developed to account for anomalies in the biblical text. Foundations of modern historiography were laid in the Renaissance. The intellectual climate of the seventeenth century had a particular impact on biblical historiography; a growing literary-critical approach to the Masoretic Text ensued. Major developments in the nineteenth century form the background for the twentieth century Israelite historiography. The decipherment of Ancient Near Eastern languages unlocked literary remains of Israel's neighbours that subsequently had an enormous impact on the interpretation and research of the Hebrew Bible. The "Critical Method" of Abraham Kuenen – one of the leading biblical scholars of the nineteenth century – is still regarded as an important literary-critical method.

Biblical archaeology developed out of an historical approach to the biblical texts, and during the first decades of the twentieth century biblical studies and archaeology were closely interwoven, dividing later into several sub-disciplines. Israelite historiography currently

experiences a crisis; recent debates include the role of archaeology in the writing of a history of ancient Israel – literature normally reflects only the life of the literati. A comparison of archaeological data and biblical narratives eventuates in 'a fascinating and complex relationship between what *actually* happened'[507] and the "historical" chronicles in the Hebrew Bible.

It was only during the eighteenth century that scholars seriously attempted to 'differentiate the component parts of the Pentateuch according to a theory of multiple sources or documents'.[508] In 1711 the German pastor H B Witter noted that the two creation accounts in Genesis are distinguished by the names *Elohim* and *Yahweh*. He was followed by other scholars with various hypotheses suggesting different sources. During the nineteenth century these earlier theories were coordinated by two German scholars, Karl Graf and Julius Wellhausen. They proposed the classic chronology – or Documentary hypothesis – J, E, D and P;[509] Deuteronomy became the key element in this hypothesis. This theory has since undergone considerable modifications. The dating of the different sources is complex with various suggestions by scholars. Scholars also proposed that the Holiness Code, "H", which is defined by the standard format of biblical legal codes, to be considered a separate "theological trajectory".

The pentateuchal narrative portrays the traditions of a community for many generations, before it was recorded. At least two different forms of chronicles have been combined to construct the Pentateuch, of which the oldest form was seemingly under the influence of the Davidic court – probably written by Davidic scribes, with David's kingdom at its centre. Biblical researchers acknowledge a significant Priestly redaction to the Book of Exodus. Scholars also contend that the Pentateuch is 'a basic collection of traditions that was continuously supplemented … and later extensively edited by different redactors'.[510] The tendency among scholars to date pentateuchal texts to the exilic or post-exilic times might be challenged by the two amulets from Ketef Hinnom – dated between 725 BC and 650 BC. These amulets contain the priestly blessing in Numbers[511] and Deuteronomy,[512] with little variation in the text. It thus seems evident that a continuous written tradition existed prior to the inscription of the amulets.

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[507] Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:8.
[508] West 1981:63.
[509] J, or *Yahweh* source; E, or *Elohim*; D, or Deuteronomy; P, or Priestly source.
[510] Van Dyk 1990:194.
[511] Numbers 6:24-26.
[512] Deuteronomy 7:9.

The Documentary hypothesis dominated the literary approach to the Pentateuch for more than a hundred years. A new literary approach differs from former studies primarily in its interest in texts as literary objects, rather than in the history of the text; its interest is thus in literary criticism, rather than literary history. The "new" proposal makes it quite clear that the basic elements of the Documentary hypothesis are not regarded any longer as valid. The main emphasis of the current research is on the latest layers or compositions of the texts. One of the most obvious results of the debates the past number of years 'is the tendency to date the "pentateuchal" composition not earlier than the Babylonian Exile'.[513] It is therefore important to conceive that significant texts of the Hebrew Bible got their final profile in the exilic and post-exilic times.

The "Redaction History"– a new hypothesis on the origin of the Pentateuch – perceives the Pentateuch 'as a basic collection of traditions that was continuously supplemented … and later extensively edited by different redactors',[514] while, according to the "Transmission History" of Rendtorff, several blocks of tradition that were transmitted separately – mainly in written form – were compiled by a redactor. Rofé[515] reaches the conclusion that the composition of the Pentateuch obviously had been a 'lengthy and complex creative process' that seemingly lasted from the twelfth century BC until the end of the Persian Period.

Scholars have suggested that "deuteronomic" describes 'that which pertains specifically to the book of Deuteronomy'.[516] Although "deuteronomistic" is 'more general, to denote the influence or thought-forms associated with the work of the Deuteronomists and expressed more widely and diffusely in the literature',[517] extreme diversity is concealed in contemporary scholarly usage of "deuteronomistic" and related terms.

Scholars are generally familiar with the viewpoint that the deuteronomists were the developers of the Deuteronomistic History – the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. The deuteronomists are conceived as creative writers, rather than historians; the Deuteronomistic History, therefore, should not be deemed a reliable historical record. Some scholars argue that deuteronomistic redaction could be found in prophetic books, as well as in the Tetrateuch; this has led to a tendency to associate the Deuteronomic School with the complete

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[513] Rendtorff 1997:56.
[514] Van Dyk 1990:194.
[515] Rofé 1999:130.
[516] Coggins 1995:136.
[517] Coggins 1995:136.

Hebrew Bible and has thus prompted warnings of "pan-Deuteronomism". The latter, which 'refers to the collection of various arguments for Deuteronomic redaction in or of diverse books outside of the Deuteronomic History and Jeremiah'[518] has, however, been rejected.

According to a long scholarly tradition, the scroll – or "Book of Law" – found in the Temple during the reign of Josiah, was assumed to be the Book of Deuteronomy. There is, however, 'no sustainable reason for this identification'.[519] Some scholars are of the opinion that this book had been the result of a "pious fraud" promoted by the high priest Hilkiah and the secretary Shaphan. Their intention would have been to convince Josiah that his reforms were in accordance with the direct command of God, as revealed to Moses. The deuteronomistic law code includes prohibitions against the practising of pagan religions.

If a deuteronomistic movement did really exist, the question is to what extent and in what form. A movement – embodied in groups of supporters – is normally aimed at social, and often also political, change. It does not necessarily mean linguistic uniformity. Occurrences of traces of certain ideas and language of Hosea in deuteronomistic writings, as well as documents, such as the "Book of Law", do not justify speaking of a "movement". Similarly, although the actions of Hezekiah could have been supported by a movement, there is, however, no information to substantiate such a deduction. Yet, during the time of Josiah, his reform seems to have been 'an extensive movement of national, social and religious renewal'.[520] This movement included nobility of Judah, some Jerusalem court officials, a large part of the Temple clergy, the ordinary "people of the land", as well as prophets and their circles of disciples; Deuteronomy of that period would have been its most important text.

According to Person,[521] a Deuteronomic School presumable existed that 'denotes a scribal guild that was active in the Babylonian exile and Persian period and had its origins in the bureaucracy of the monarchy'. Exiled scribal groups returned to Jerusalem with the responsibility to codify and preserve religious literature; this could, therefore, signify that the Deuteronomic School returned to Jerusalem with Persian support. The reconstruction of a scribal school associated with a temple was in accordance with practices throughout the Ancient Near East. The deuteronomistic tradition clearly envisions Jerusalem as the central sanctuary.

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[518] Person 2002:14.
[519] Handy 1995:254.
[520] Lohfink 1999:58.
[521] Person 2002:7.

Scholarly debates the past decades on Deuteronomy concerning historical-critical matters were initially dominated by classical questions on the historical origins of the book, as well as the extent and form of the original text. Fewer studies have been devoted to analysing the different layers of Deuteronomy; scholars now seem to be more interested in factors that affected the shaping of the book. The majority of historical-critical scholars accept the seventh century BC – and Josiah's reform – as the most likely date for the origin of Deuteronomy. Researchers are, at the same time, increasingly aware of deuteronomistic redaction in Deuteronomy.

The question on its historicity previously dominated the scholarship in Chronicles; these debates have been replaced by the analysis of Chronicles as literature. Scholars now appreciate the skill of the Chronicler and his sophistication as an author in the creation of a complex work of art. Biblical researchers have been successful also – to a certain extent – to establish the purpose of narrative units in Chronicles, and of the book as a whole. The book is now perceived as a unified composition of a single author. Initially, the Chronicler's depiction of the Davidic-Solomonic era was regarded an idealistic fabrication and retrojection of post-exilic circumstances, however, a reappraisal of the book indicates that certain events are presented more faithfully than previously assumed. Apart from Samuel being his major contributor to the account of David's kingship, he also made use of genealogical, military and Levitical lists in his book. The Chronicler obviously introduced his own interests – particularly regarding his idealised view of David and Solomon. All that is critical and unflattering about these two monarchs – as related in Samuel and Kings – have been omitted intentionally and selectively.

Judah's predominance – as expressed in David's kingship – is prominent in Chronicles. The non-Israelite relationships are, furthermore, conspicuous in the Chronicler's genealogy of Judah; these "foreign" people are regarded as legitimate members of the tribe of Judah. While he invariably constructed his depiction of this tribe on tradition, he adapted and applied this tradition to his own time. The considerable amount of attention paid to the Levites in Chronicles, is in accordance with the Chronicler's history as a whole – history written during the rebuilding of the Second Temple. Although the superior status of priests is not denied, the important activities revolve around the Levites. Chronicles reflects the function of prophets, and prophecy in a changing society, and possibly also the changing position of the prophetic movement after the Exile.

While scholars entertain different meanings in the application of the word "prophecy", it is to the disadvantage or critical scholarship to use a specific tradition – such as Israelite of biblical prophecy – as a criterion for comparative material. During the nineteenth century scholars created the traditional picture of Israelite prophets who were perceived as inspired poets. This traditional conception was, however, challenged during the latter part of the twentieth century, as not all prophetic material in the Hebrew Bible is poetry. Accumulating evidence – particularly published prophetic data in Neo-Assyrian texts – suggests that Israel's prophets did not actually differ from those of surrounding countries. 'The largest corpus of prophetic records comes from eighteenth-century Mari, comprising fifty letters with prophetic quotations.'[522] Uffenheimer[523] maintains that the Israelite prophet was moulded by internal social and cultural forces.

Concerning some biblical prophets, apart from announcements of disaster, Ezekiel clearly distinguishes between the Zadokites and the Levites; the Zadokites alone were allowed to come close to *Yahweh*. 'The book of Jeremiah is an important reference point in the study of scripturization of Hebrew prophecy because of the various references it contains to the fixation in writing of oracles received by the prophet.'[524] Although affinities between the deuteronomistic ideology and the Book of Hosea could not be denied, such affinities should not be regarded as evidence to explain the cult reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah. Both Amos and Hosea were not included in the Deuteronomistic History; they were probably considered too radical – specifically Hosea's critical attitude towards the Monarchy. Apart from the Book of Ezekiel, the Temple does not particularly feature in the prophetic books; the prophets Haggai and Zechariah are, however, associated with the rebuilding of the Second Temple.

The Hebrew term for scribe, ספר, is a Canaanite word, as well as an Egyptian loan word. Scribal schools were linked to the crown – probably from the time of David. The main role of scribes, who were economically dependent upon the rulers, was thus to serve the authorities; the royal scribe was the highest post. Rival factions among the aristocracy resulted in complicated relations between the scribes and the rulers. Scribal activity by different groups would account for the composition and editing of the text of the Hebrew Bible during the exilic and post-exilic periods. Jewish literature of the Hellenistic Period testifies to scribal traditions. Behind the books of Ben Sira and Daniel, as well as the early Enoch literature,

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[522] Nissisen 2004:25.
[523] Uffenheimer 1987:7.
[524] Van der Toorn 2004:194.

different circles of scribes or sages can be discerned. A fourth scribal circle appears to have preceded, and then joined – or assisted the formation of – the Qumran community. Although not being part of the ruling elite itself, scribes were an indispensable component of the administration. They accumulated and codified information, and developed their own skills through education. According to 1 Chronicles 2:55, clans of scribes – particularly Kenites, also linked to the Rechabites – lived at Jabez. Some researchers question the ability of a small, poor province – such as post-exilic Yehud – 'to sustain the literary activity traditionally attributed to it'.[525] Scholars are, however, generally in agreement that the post-exilic period is distinguished by a significant amount of literary activity; this should thus not be questioned on the grounds of a small province or a small Jerusalem.

In the Hebrew Bible there are many chronicles with two contradictory accounts. Inconsistencies reflect – in many instances – ongoing propaganda wars between Judah and the Northern Kingdom; an early version of the story was replaced by a later version. In particular instances parallel myths and legends from neighbouring countries had an effect on the rendering of biblical narratives. Apart from the biblical literature, repetition is also found in other Ancient Near Eastern texts. Moses is described as a hero in the Hebrew Bible, in order to depict his leadership and to present his ministry as a model for all subsequent leaders in Israel; the Moses saga probably circulated amongst Israel's storytellers. 'A conflict between the traditions about Moses and the traditions about David seems to set these two complex bodies of narrative in opposition.'[526] Similarly, different generations preserved accounts of the events at Sinai orally as their distinctive document of identity, of which 'at least two different forms of the story have been combined into an artistic whole to form the Pentateuch'.[527] The oldest form was probably under the influence of the Davidic court. The history of the world was thus, seemingly, written by David's scribes, with the kingdom of David in the centre. A dramatic increase in literacy in late seventh century BC Judah, accords well with the purpose of the Josianic ideologies to serve the political interest of the royal court for a united kingdom.

Editors maintained the original text to which they were bound, but felt free to interpret and change it; interpretation comprises the rewriting of the original text. The large number of inconsistencies in the Masoretic Text is an indication that data were transmitted primarily in an oral mode. The content of the Hebrew Bible was thus, in the course of time, enveloped in

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[525] Carter 1994:108.
[526] Coats 1993:112.
[527] Coats 1993:152.

layer after layer of superimposed interpretation. The earliest traditions were reinterpreted in accordance with the perception of later generations. There was also a tendency to weaken mythical elements in the inherited tradition. The catastrophe of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was explained theologically by the deuteronomists by applying the category of monotheism. Biblical scholars classically formulated the three-fold designation of the canon – *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, *Ketuvim* – as the historical evolution of the canon. Many scholars are of the opinion that canonisation was the result of aesthetic considerations that influenced the final arrangement of the Hebrew Bible. It is therefore evident that one person, or a compatible group, collected the component parts and arranged them into a coherent whole. In the initial chapter of each major division of the Masoretic Text emphasis is placed on the Word of God. Scholars currently do not question the late date of the final redaction of the Masoretic Text.

The essential part of the Hebrew literature was probably created in Babylon during the Persian Period. Most of the Hebrew literature developed in Jerusalem, Babylon and Egypt – probably between the end of the sixth and the end of the fourth centuries BC. The literature of the court was replaced by the literature of the Temple.

Most scholars define monotheism as an indication of *Yahweh*'s exclusivity, thus proclaiming that there is no god besides *Yahweh*. Although the theology of the Hebrew Bible seemingly presents the religious belief of the early Israelite/Jewish people, the final collection and compilation of the canon reflects the theology from the sixth or fifth century BC. Scholars generally perceive an official religion as that which exerts the greatest power – within a given territory – in relation to other religious groups. It could therefore be maintained that the intelligentsia employed by the Israelite Monarchy were responsible for the creation, promulgation and maintenance of the official religion. At some point biblical Yahwism, thus, could be envisaged as the official Israelite religion.

According to Gnuse,[528] 'the best way to characterize the emergence of monotheism is to describe it as both a revolutionary and an evolutionary process … .The ultimate breakthrough in Israel came in revolutionary fashion, yet at the end of a long evolutionary process in the ancient world'. A significant development in the emerging monotheism came during the Exile,

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[528] Gnuse 1997:7, 130.

while the implications of radical monotheism are discerned most effectively during the Second Temple Period.

Although both Jews and Christians traditionally construed the religion of the Israelites 'as a monotheistic cult devoid of images,'[529] the Hebrew Bible testifies that the Israelites worshipped deities other than *Yahweh*. Yet, despite being confronted by the local Canaanite culture, the reconstruction of old ideologies enabled Israel to sustain a separate identity. They, however, maintained continuity with surrounding cultures rather than being in opposition to them. Scholars now perceive Israelite monotheism as a minority movement in the pre-exilic period up to the Babylonian exile. A simple set of beliefs did not evolve into monotheism; the Israelites 'inherited a complex set of ideas, … and they amalgamated them into their own distinctive worldview'.[530]

The Egyptian pharaoh, Amenhotep IV – who took on the name Akhenaten – introduced a revolutionary period in the Egyptian history during the Eighteenth Dynasty, often called the Amarna Interlude. During his reign he initiated a new art style, and elevated the cult of the sun disc, the *Aten*, which was a monotheistic type of veneration of the sun. Many scholars perceive Akhenaten's new religion as a monotheistic faith similar to the later Judaism, Christianity and Islam; some scholars have even claimed that this faith influenced the development of Israelite monotheism, and also observed a similarity in the monotheistic doctrine of Moses and that of Akhenaten. A counter-movement was set in motion that declared that all gods were only the manifestations of one god, *Amun-Re*. This action had far-reaching theological implications; a crisis of polytheism echoed all over the ancient world. Akhenaten's theology had been preserved in a *Hymn to the Aten*; elements from this sun-god literary tradition, as well as symbols and phrases typical of Ancient Near Eastern storm gods, have been blended harmoniously into Psalm 104 by the psalmist.

During the period between 600 BC and 400 BC the Israelite history is characterised by changes. 'Exile and restoration provoked a crisis in the Israelite, Yahwistic religion'.[531] Although some texts of Deutero-Isaiah claim some kind of monotheism in the Second Temple Period, the cultic critique in the Hebrew Bible against the worship of deities beside *Yahweh* is an indication that such practices did exist during the sixth and fifth centuries BC. Most

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[529] Becking 1997:157.
[530] Gnuse 2007:79
[531] Becking 1999b:4.

accounts of the Babylonian exile emphasise the aspect of restoration, hardly mentioning pessimism and disillusion – or the rejection of all religious and moral principles – that were found among Jews in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods. Advocates of strict monotheism probably would have been dissatisfied with their failure to convert all Israelites to monotheism; how do they explain that God seemingly abandoned his people. Apart from a feeling of despair documented in the Hebrew Bible, evidence of a Jewish identity crisis is evident throughout the Persian Period. The devastating events of the Exile clearly affected the religious life of the early post-exilic Jews; some of the most fundamental principles of their Yahwistic faith were called into question. Oppression at the hands of foreigners and of rivals within the Jewish community gave rise to apocalyptic movements.

Jewish sectarianism started between the fourth and the second centuries BC. Internal diversification in Judaism found expression in the formation of sects. Jewish conservative communities in Judah did not change their religious-cultic customs, but clung to their established value systems. In the Babylonian community, on the other hand, 'a particular understanding of biblical monotheism was cultivated'.[532] Inhabitants of Judah and Benjamin who had not undergone the exile experience were considered opponents to the returned exiles. After 300 BC Jewish dissent presented itself in the commune of the Qumran Covenanters. Attempts to identify this group with any Jewish sect or religious stream of the Second Temple Period connect them with the Essenes; scholars still debate the issue whether the Essenes had been an organised group before their alleged settlement at Qumran. Some scholars have also proposed that the Essenes were descendants of the Rechabites – found in Jeremiah 35 – and that the latter were thus the precursors of the Essenes, or that they could be regarded as the archetype of the Essenes. However, although the tribal asceticism of the Rechabites could be parallel to Essene practices, not one of the published Dead Sea Scrolls makes any reference to the Rechabites. The Therapeutae – a Jewish sect – might have been connected with the Essenes. Some scholars have attempted to link the Therapeutae and the Rechabites; there are, however, many dissimilarities between these two groups.

The origin of monolatry – or henotheism – cannot be reconstructed with confidence. It was only by the ninth century BC that the influence of the monolatric idea is attested. Although many leaders of the minority *Yahweh*-alone movement remain anonymous, they could be called the founders of Jewish monotheism. During the crisis of the Exile, this small but

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[532] Talmon 1987:595.

growing group demanded exclusive worship of *Yahweh*; monotheism was the solution to their political crisis. Gnuse[533] denotes that this small minority of pre-exilic Israelites 'became consistent monotheists in the Babylonian Exile'. According to Zevit,[534] at least some of the *Yahweh*-alone groups were Temple Levites. He is, furthermore, of the opinion that during the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods 'under circumstances yet to be determined by historians, the worldview of the YHWH-alone movement may have become particularly widespread among Israelites, even in their places of exile'.[535] Van der Toorn[536] argues that the Rechabites could be regarded as one of the oldest families among the Israelites that worshipped *Yahweh*. Their involvement with the *Yahweh*-alone movement represented a silent protest against the dominant culture is Israel.

As a religious group, the Rechabites probably included post-exilic priests. Reference to them in rabbinic literature is an indication that they continued to exist in the Second Temple Period. However, pressure of circumstances during that time might have forced many Rechabites to change their mode of life. According to Jewish tradition, they entered the temple service by marriage of their daughters to priests. Numerous rabbinic references to the Rechabites demonstrate their concern that the promise to the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35:19 should be fulfilled; the Rechabites became incorporated in the Sanhedrin, or in the priesthood.

Chapters eight to ten of a pseudepigraphon – variously titled the *Story of Zosimus* or the *History of the Rechabites* – could be treated as a separate text and are probably a late insertion in the *Story of Zosimus*. In the *History of the Rechabites*, the descendants of Jonadab son of Rechab – a collective biblical figure – are discussed. Parallels to characteristics of the Rechabites are found in particular Midrashic discourses, as well as in works of early Christian authors. Similarities in the latter writings suggest that the *History of the Rechabites* is a fourth century Christian composition; from the third to the seventh century eleven Christian writers mention the Rechabites. The nucleus of the Rechabite text in the *History of the Rechabites* is an expanded exegesis of Jeremiah 35. The Rechabites were viewed as a monastic model; it is therefore not surprising that their popularity was heightened at a time when the Christian monastic movement was escalating. During the twelfth century, and as late as the nineteenth century, travellers have found groups – calling themselves Rechabites – at various places.

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[533] Gnuse 1999:315.
[534] Zevit 2001: 667.
[535] Zevit 2001: 690. See also § 1.1.
[536] Van der Toorn 1995:248, 250.

In the *Story of Zosimus* – also known as the *Journey of Zosimus* – the monk Zosimus is taken on a journey to observe how the "Blessed Ones" live. The inhabitants of this Eden-like land 'claim to be Rechabites encountered by Jeremiah in the closing years of the Judaean monarchy'.[537] The author of the *History of the Rechabites* was seemingly influenced by perceptions related to the place of the lost ten tribes. Some scholars, however, disagree that the Rechabites should be linked to the ten tribes in the biblical tradition.

It is my theory that marginal and minority groups – especially those involved in the pre-exilic *Yahweh*-alone movement – played a significant role in the establishment of a post-exilic *Yahweh*-alone monotheism. Although it is hardly possible to ascertain exactly how, and by which group or groups, a strict *Yahweh*-alone monotheism was instituted during the Exile, I propose that the Rechabites were at least one of the major groups that were instrumental in this reversal of the Judahites' cultic affinities. The Rechabites, and a number of other marginal groups followed a trade as smiths; according to the Masoretic Text, smiths were among the deportees to Babylonia. These people therefore had the opportunity to promulgate their firm belief in a Yahwistic monotheism, particularly in the light of the devastating effects of the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple; the exiles had to reflect introspectively on the cause of this catastrophe – which was obviously their transgression in straying from *Yahweh*. Furthermore, the Chronicler specifically links the Rechabites to post-exilic scribes who played a significant role in the compilation and finalisation of the Masoretic Text.

In conclusion, I wish to point out that biblical scholars and archaeologists are increasingly aware of the arguments of revisionist scholars who state, inter alia, that there was no historical United Monarchy or Solomon before the ninth century BC, and that the biblical Israel in the Hebrew Bible even might have been a "social construct". Fierce controversies regarding historiographical matters – essential to both archaeology and biblical studies – are currently the most critical issue confronting these disciplines. Revisionism started on the archaeological front in the 1980s. Literature on revisionism has since developed rapidly. Leading scholars are dismissed on the one hand as "revisionists", "minimalists" or "nihilists" and on the other hand as "maximalists", "credulists", or even "crypto-fundamentalists". Revisionists, furthermore, argue that the term "Israelites" should be substituted with "Palestinians", thus referring to the ancient inhabitants of the land of Palestine. Scholars, such as Dever,[538] are of the opinion that the ideologies of the revisionists are rapidly becoming a threat to biblical studies.

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[537] Knights 1997a:53.
[538] Dever 1998a:39.