

## The Rise of Holy Mountains: Historical Traditions of Zion and Sinai in the Hebrew Bible<sup>\*</sup>

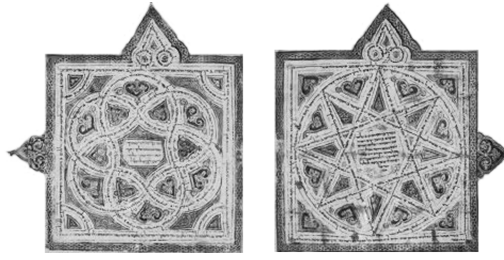
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**Abstract:** The traditions of the holy mountains, which refer primarily to Mount Zion and Mount Sinai, are presented prominently in the biblical writings. The tradition of Mount Sinai has long been conceived as the starting point for discussion of the chronological relationship between Mount Zion and Mount Sinai. However, with the discovery of new archeological data and new insights into the compositional history of the Torah over the last several decades, there have been increasing voices arguing that the relationship between the traditions of Mount Zion and Mount Sinai probably has a more complex history than what has been perceived. Thus, the historical interactions of the two mountains have to be reconsidered. This article will contextualize the historical development of the traditions of the holy mountains against the background of the historical experiences of the Jerusalem temple in the Babylonian exilic and early Persian periods. It will argue that the interactions of the traditions of Zion and Sinai eventually led to a historical transformation from the traditions of the former to those of the latter.

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**Key Words:** Ancient Israelite Religion, Hebrew Bible, Mount Zion, Mount Sinai, Jerusalem Temple

## I. Introduction to Traditions of Holy Mountains in Ancient Israel

The traditions of the holy mountains in the ancient Israelite religion refer primarily to Mount Zion and Mount Sinai. In biblical writings, Mount Zion and Mount Sinai are constructed rhetorically as two important natural places at the geographical level, and as sacred places on the symbolic level.<sup>①</sup> Mount Sinai is constructed not only as a place where the Israelites receive YHWH's revelation, but also as the place where Moses, as the leader of the Israelites, receives the law and make a covenant with YHWH. It eventually becomes a place with religious significance, wherein the identity of Israelites is defined by an association with the covenant of YHWH.<sup>②</sup> Mount Sinai's broader narrative context is that of the Israelites wandering in the Sinai wilderness, and is thus closely connected with the Exodus narrative. The tradition of Mount Zion, on the other hand, is closely linked with the city of Jerusalem and the Jerusalem temple.<sup>③</sup> Compared to the term "Sinai," the term "Zion," however, is primarily presented outside of the Torah.

From the perspective of the biblical narrative, the tradition of Mount Sinai

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<sup>①</sup> Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); George J. Brooke, "Moving Mountains: From Sinai to Jerusalem," in *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity*, eds. George J. Brooke et al. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 73-89; Konrad Schmid, *A Historical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, trans. Peter Altmann (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 412-424; Andreas Bedenbender, "Warum am Horeb? Zur Lokalisierung von Gottesoffenbarungen in der Hebräischen Bibel," *BK* 66 (2011): 219-223.

<sup>②</sup> Graham I. Davies, "Mount Sinai," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* VI, ed. David N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 47-49; Stefan Timm, "Sinai," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* XXXI, ed. Gerhard Müller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), 283-285; Christoph Dohmen, *Exodus 19-40* (Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 52-57.

<sup>③</sup> Martin Metzger, "Zion: Gottes Berg, Gottes Wohnung, Gottes Stadt," in *Laetare Jerusalem: Festschrift zum 100 jährigen Ankommen der Benediktinermönche auf dem Jerusalmmer Zionsberg*, ed. Nikodemus C. Schnabel (Münster: Aschendorff, 2006), 41-63; Eckart Otto, "יִרְמְיָהוּ שִׁיִּיּוֹן," in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* VI, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1989), 994-1028; W. Harold Mare, "Zion," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* VI, 1096-1097.

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appears much earlier than that of Mount Zion. From a historical perspective, however, the issue is more complicated. While there is still a possibility that the tradition of Mount Sinai is an ancient tradition in Israelite history, it is becoming increasingly plausible that the Sinai tradition in its present form, i.e., associated with the revelation of YHWH, is a later construct. Traditional perceptions of the relationship between the traditions of Sinai and Zion need to be reconsidered.<sup>①</sup> This article will first discuss how the tradition of Mount Zion, with its religious significance, originated in the late Judean context, and then analyze the historical process of transformation from the tradition of Mount Zion to that of Mount Sinai in the exilic and the postexilic periods. Lastly, it will point out that the interactions of the traditions of Mount Zion and Mount Sinai were mainly shaped by the fall of the Jerusalem temple in the Babylonian Exile.

## II. The Rise of the Tradition of Mount Zion in the Late Judean Context

The term “Zion” in the biblical narrative has multiple meanings. It was generally associated with Mount Zion and the city of Jerusalem. Most of the texts referring to the Zion tradition appear in the prophetic writings such as Isaiah and in The Book of Psalms. The earlier traditions of Mount Zion are presented in Isa. 1, 8; Ps. 46, 48, 76, 84, 87. The basic features of the early tradition of Mount Zion should thus be deduced from these texts.<sup>②</sup>

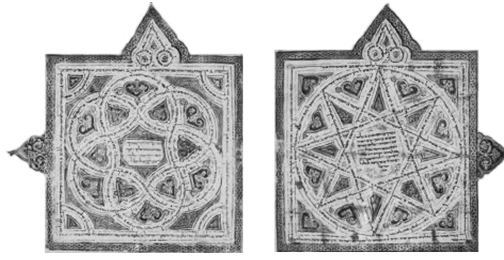
Isa. 8 is generally considered to be the core text of Isa. 1-12 and, as such, is an important window into understanding the beginning of the composition of The Book of Isaiah in the 8th century BCE.<sup>③</sup> There is a statement about the

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① See, e.g., Konrad Schmid, *A Historical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, 412-424.

② Corinna Körting, *Zion in den Psalmen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); Ulrich Berges, “Die Zionstheologie des Buches Jesaja,” *EsBib* 58 (2000): 167-198; Ronald E. Clements, “Zion as Symbol and Political Reality: A Central Isaianic Quest,” in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah*, eds. Jacques Van Ruiten and Marc Vervenne (Leuven: Peters, 1997), 3-17.

③ Reinhard G. Kratz, *The Prophets of Israel*, trans. Anselm C. Hagedorn and Nathan MacDonald (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 40-45; Konrad Schmid, “The Origins of the Book of Isaiah,” in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, eds. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman, and Eibert Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1166-1185; Uwe Becker, *Jesaja — von der Botschaft zum Buch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997).



close connection between YHWH and Zion in Isa. 8: 18. Here, Zion is understood as a dwelling place for YHWH. This notion demonstrates the typical traditional perception of the relationship between YHWH and Mount Zion: YHWH resides on Mount Zion and from there YHWH protects the city of Jerusalem and its citizens.<sup>①</sup>

The tradition of Mount Zion as the “holy mountain” can be found in Ps. 48 (e.g., Ps. 48:2 [Eng. 48:1]).<sup>②</sup> Psalm 48 also states the significance of the relationships between Mount Zion and the city of Jerusalem.<sup>③</sup> Psalm 48 presents Mount Zion as a place belonging to YHWH, who “has shown himself a sure defense” (Ps. 48:4 [Eng. 48:3]). In this appraisal of Mount Zion Jerusalem is understood as being protected from YHWH who resides on it. With the notion of Mount Zion as the residential place of YHWH, Ps. 48 therefore also includes a typical traditional idea of Mount Zion: YHWH is portrayed as ruling from Mount Zion, and the appearance of YHWH on Mount Zion ensures the stability and security of the city of Jerusalem and the state of Judah. The notion of YHWH living on Mount Zion further strengthens the concept of an invulnerable Jerusalem.

In the broad cultural context of the ancient Near East, the concepts of holy mountains such as Zion are not exceptional.<sup>④</sup> The notion of Zion as a divine residential place stems from a similar cultural background. The entire formation of the Zion theology, which portrays Mount Zion as being capable of protecting Jerusalem and the temple with the presence of the divine power,

① Konrad Schmid, “Zion bei Jesaja,” in *Zion: Symbol des Lebens in Judentum und Christentum*, eds. Tanja Pilger and Markus Witte (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013), 9-23.

② All translations of biblical texts are from the NRSV.

③ Corinna Körting, *Zion in den Psalmen*, 165-177.

④ Richard Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press, 1972); Klaus Koch, “Ḥazzi-Ṣafón-Kasion: Die Geschichte eines Berges und seiner Gottheiten,” in *Religionsgeschichtliche Beziehungen zwischen Kleinasien, Nordsyrien und dem Alten Testament*, *Internationales Symposium Hamburg 17-21. März 1990*, eds. Bernd Janowski et al. (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 171-223; Johannes Renz, “‘Jahwe ist der Gott der ganzen Erde’: Der Beitrag der außerkanonischen althebräischen Texte zur Rekonstruktion der vorexilischen Religions- und Theologiegeschichte Palästinas,” in *Israel zwischen den Mächten: Festschrift für Stefan Timm zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Friedhelm Hartenstein and Michael Pietsch (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2009), 289-377.

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was probably significantly influenced by the Neo-Assyrian force's unsuccessful invasion of the city of Jerusalem in the late 8th century BCE. This invasion and the subsequent retreat of the Neo-Assyrians can be arguably conceived as a critical turning point for the formation of the Zion theology.<sup>①</sup>

In the late 8th century BCE, the force led by the Neo-Assyrian king Sennacherib attacked Jerusalem after conquering the northern kingdom of Israel. The invasion of Jerusalem, however, was unaccomplished; Sennacherib abandoned the invasion and his force retreated. The Neo-Assyrians' surprising and unexpected departure from their siege of Jerusalem is arguably attributable to the Judean king Hezekiah's promise of a hefty tribute tax to the Neo-Assyrian Empire (see, e.g., 2 Kgs. 18:13-16). It is important to note that the same historical event is also reflected in Isa. 36-39 and Ps. 46 and 48, each with its own particular theological adaptations and interpretations.<sup>②</sup> According to Isa. 36-39, for example, the Neo-Assyrians' retreat from Jerusalem is mainly due to YHWH's protection of Jerusalem from atop Mount Zion (e.g., Isa. 37: 22, 32).<sup>③</sup> It is probably also in this historical context that the notion of Zion reflected in Ps. 46 and Ps. 48 was formed, presenting the city of Jerusalem and the Jerusalem temple as being invulnerable. The rise of Zion theology should therefore be attributed to the late Judean context, presenting a stable mountain and an indestructible city with the protection of YHWH on Mount Zion.<sup>④</sup>

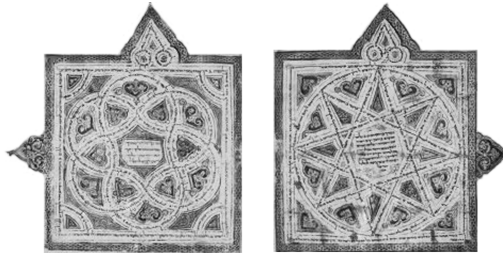
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① Eckart Otto, *Das antike Jerusalem: Archäologie und Geschichte* (Munich: Beck, 2008); Thomas Römer, *The Invention of God*, trans. Raymond Geuss (Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press, 2015), 182-187; Ronald E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem: A Study of the Interpretation of Prophecy in the Old Testament* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980), 84-86; Jan C. Gertz et al., eds. *T&T Clark Handbook of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Literature, Religion and History of the Old Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 416.

② Raymond F. Person, "II Kings 18-20 and Isaiah 36-39: A Text Critical Case Study in the Redaction History of the Book of Isaiah," *ZAW* 111 (1999): 373-379.

③ Christopher R. Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah; A Reassessment of Isaiah 36-39* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 228.

④ Herman Spiekermann, "Stadtgott und Gottesstadt: Beobachtungen im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament," *Bib* 73 (1992): 1-31; Matthias Köckert, "Wie kam das Gesetz an den Sinai?" in *Vergegenwärtigung des Alten Testaments: Beiträge zur biblischen Hermeneutik: Festschrift für Rudolf Smend*, ed. Christoph Bultmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 13-27.



### III. Historical Transformation from Mount Zion to Mount Sinai

#### A. The Development of the Tradition of Mount Sinai

In the history of the development of the ancient Israelite religion, Mount Sinai is also a significant and prominent spatial image that embodies a strong sense of holiness. The biblical Mount Sinai is embedded in the present grand narrative from Exodus to Numbers, which consist of the traditions of the Sinai wilderness, lawgiving, and divine revelation.<sup>①</sup>

The possible original independence of the tradition of Mount Sinai from its narrative context has already been observed since the 19th century. It has taken a complicated redactional process before the tradition of Mount Sinai incorporated into the present Exodus narrative. According to Julius Wellhausen, its earliest form has probably already acquired some divine components. It was perhaps only at a later stage that it has gradually become closely related to the themes of YHWH's lawgiving at Sinai and the wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness.<sup>②</sup> In the middle of the last century, Gerhard von Rad also looked into the relationship between the Sinai tradition and the Exodus tradition. He argued that they are two independent traditions that were integrated on the compositional level only at a later stage.<sup>③</sup>

Whether or not Mount Sinai was originally an independent theme embedded within the Exodus narrative, as a tradition it has long been considered to constitute the beginning of the history of the Israelites who received the revelation from YHWH at Sinai. In this sense, Mount Sinai was a place where the Israelites and their relationship to YHWH was defined. The perception of Mount Sinai as a place of YHWH's revelation has, accordingly, long been considered as constituting the background of the discussion about the

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① Wolfgang Oswald, *Israel am Gottesberg: Eine Untersuchung zur Literargeschichte der vorderen Sinai-Perikope Ex 19-24 und deren historischem Hintergrund* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); Manfred Görg, "Der Sinai. '(der Berg) des Erzgebietes'?" *BN* 54 (1990): 12-18.

② Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: Reimer, 1886), 358-360.

③ For a review of the discussion of Gerhard von Rad on Sinai tradition, see, e.g., Herbert B. Huffmon, "The Exodus, Sinai and the Credo," *CBQ* 27 (1965): 101-113.

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relationship between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion, indicating that the tradition of Mount Sinai is much older than the tradition of Mount Zion.

In the last several decades, however, interpretations of the relationship between Sinai and Zion have become increasingly diverse and complex.<sup>①</sup> The new understanding of the interaction between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion is, first, based on the reevaluation of the texts outside the Torah regarding the tradition of Mount Sinai. Compared to the Torah, in which there are numerous texts referring to the tradition of Mount Sinai, texts outside the Torah containing such references are few. Furthermore, these texts show the relatively different features of Mount Sinai from those portrayed in the Torah. For instance, although the text in Ps. 106:19 refers clearly to Mount Sinai, it does not mention lawgiving by YHWH. It is also noteworthy that while Jug. 5:4-5, Hab. 3:3 and Ps. 68:9 (Eng. 68:8) — which are also considered important texts referring to the Sinai tradition — mention the “Mount of God” with or without referring to Sinai, there are no specific statements about the spatial relationship between YHWH and Sinai.<sup>②</sup> These texts probably demonstrate more ancient traditions about Mount Sinai in the Israelite culture, in which Mount Sinai was understood only as a place where YHWH appeared, but did not yet involve the traditions of lawgiving, covenant establishment, or wandering in the wilderness. It is only in the later texts that there is a combination of the traditions of Mount Sinai and lawgiving. The predominant example is from Neh. 9, which refers to Mount Sinai and the tradition of lawgiving together (e.g., Neh. 9:13-14). Furthermore, it is important to note that the Priestly texts, which are generally considered to be from the early Persian period, only mention Sinai as the wilderness — rather than as the mountain — in the Priestly Sinai pericope.<sup>③</sup>

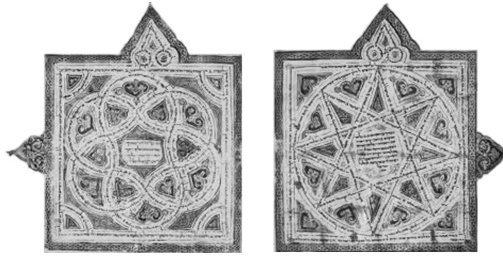
Second, the new interpretations of the interaction between Sinai and Zion

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① For an overview, see Konrad Schmid, *A Historical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, 412-424.

② Martin Leuenberger, “Jhwhs Herkunft aus dem Süden: Archäologische Befunde — biblische Überlieferungen — historische Korrelationen,” *ZAW* 122 (2010): 1-19.

③ Konrad Schmid, “Der Sinai und die Priesterschrift,” in “*Gerechtigkeit und Recht üben*” (*Gen 18,19*): *Studien zur altorientalischen und biblischen Rechtsgeschichte, zur Religionsgeschichte Israels und zur Religionssoziologie: Festschrift für Eckart Otto*, eds. Reinhard Achenbach and Martin Arneht (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 114-127.



are significantly influenced by the reconstruction of the intellectual history of ancient Israel since the mid-1970s. This reconstruction is particularly concerned with the concept of the “covenant”. As one of the important themes referring to the relationship between YHWH and the Israelites, the concept of the covenant is generally associated with Mount Sinai, that is, YHWH establishes the covenant with the Israelites through Moses at Sinai. However, given the increasing emphasis on the influence of Neo-Assyrian culture on the history of ancient Israel, the concept of the covenant has gradually come to be recognized as having been influenced by the model of the vassal treaty established between the Neo-Assyrian power and its vassal states.<sup>①</sup> The reevaluation of the concept of the covenant is primarily motivated by Neo-Assyrian documents such as *Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaty*. The similarities between the Neo-Assyrian vassal treaty and the covenant established between YHWH and the Israelites support the idea that the origination of the notion of the covenant in the biblical narratives should not have been earlier than the 8th century BCE.<sup>②</sup> Therefore, the historical relationships among the covenant and the Exodus tradition, the historical development of the tradition of Mount Sinai, and the narrative background of the latter need to be reconstructed.

Lastly, the new understanding of the development of the tradition of Mount Sinai and its narrative function accompanies new insights into the composition of the Torah. There is a growing emphasis on the exilic profile of the Torah, emphasizing that the formation of the Torah should be understood according to the historical event of the Babylonian exile.<sup>③</sup> The exilic features presented in the Torah are increasingly interpreted in historical terms against the background of the late Babylonian and early Persian periods. The embedding of the tradition of Mount Sinai within the Exodus tradition is thus

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① The significant influence of Assyrian culture on the biblical covenants is emphasized by Lothar Perlitt, *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969); see also, Eckart Otto, *Das Deuteronomium: Politische Theologie und Rechtsreform in Juda und Assyrien* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999).

② Bernard M. Levinson and Jeffrey Stackert, “Between the Covenant Code and Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaty: Deuteronomy 13 and the Composition of Deuteronomy,” *JAJ* (2012): 123-140.

③ Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch*, trans. Sr. Pascale Dominique (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 217-229.

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gradually placed in the exilic and postexilic periods.

Given the above considerations, it is obvious that the tradition of Mount Sinai may have been ancient and independent. It was probably originally formed as tradition in which YHWH appeared as the God of the Israelites, but without the traditions of the establishment of the covenant, the lawgiving, or the wanderings in the wilderness. It is only after a long historical development of the tradition that Mount Sinai has become a mountain of divine revelation.

## B. From Mount Zion to Mount Sinai

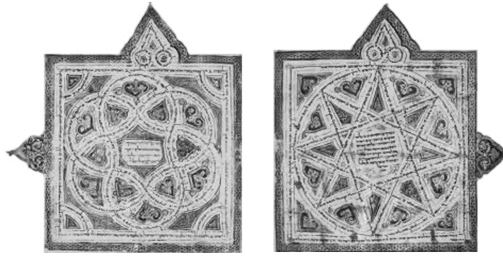
The reinterpretation of the Sinai tradition must be associated with an understanding of the historical development of the Zion theology. While the survival of Jerusalem and the temple influenced the formation of the Zion theology, the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of the temple caused by the Neo-Babylonian Empire challenged the traditional notion of Mount Zion and urged a transformation of its religious attributions. As discussed, the traditional understanding of Mount Zion emphasizes that Mount Zion assures the stability and indestructibility of the city of Jerusalem. However, the fall of Jerusalem and the Jerusalem temple, led by Nebuchadnezzar in the 6th century BCE, makes the transformation of the traditional Zion theology necessary.<sup>①</sup>

The alternative to the preexilic notion of Zion as the divine residential place and protectorate of Jerusalem is presented in Isa. 40-66, which is traditionally divided into Isa. 40-55 and Isa. 56-66 as two independent units.<sup>②</sup> There are increasing debates about the specific relationship between Isa. 40-55 and 56-66 on the compositional level; however, Isa. 40-55 can still be considered to be from the exilic period while Isa. 56-66 can be dated to the Hellenistic period, on the basis of the different historical backgrounds

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① Konrad Schmid, "The Canon and the Cult: The Emergence of Book Religion in Ancient Israel and the Gradual Sublimation of the Temple Cult," *JBL* 131 (2012): 289-305.

② Andrea Spans, *Die Stadtfrau Zion im Zentrum der Welt: Exegese und Theologie von Jes 60-62* (Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2015); Antti Laato, "Understanding Zion Theology in the Book of Isaiah," in *Studies in Isaiah: History, Theology and Reception*, eds. Tommy Wasserman, Greger Andersson, and David Willgren (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017), 22-46.



and religious thoughts they demonstrate.<sup>①</sup> The transformation of the preexilic notion of Zion can be found in Isa. 40, in which exile is an important topic. Zion, in Isa. 40, is equated with the city of Jerusalem, and is presented as a different concept from that in the preexilic period; it is apparently no longer impregnable but has been abandoned by YHWH (Isa. 40:1-11). This notion of the weak and abandoned Zion should be understood in the context of the loss of Jerusalem and the temple in the 6th century BCE. Still, the Zion of Isa. 40 is understood as an important space for the Israelites. There is a strong expectation of the return to Zion, which may be perceived as corresponding to the theme of the Israelite exodus, strengthening the relationship between Mount Zion and YHWH in a hopeful voice.

In addition to the Isaiah tradition, Jer. 6 reappropriates the preexilic notion of Mount Zion with the Babylonian exile as its narrative background. In Jer. 6, similarly to Isa. 40, the connotation of Zion is extended to include the whole city of Jerusalem. Zion is no longer constructed as a place of divine residence and manifestation, but has rather become turbulent and vulnerable. This perception becomes clearer when Jer. 6 is compared with Ps. 48, which presents the typical preexilic notion of Zion. There are significant adaptations and repatriations of Ps. 48's notion of Zion by Jer. 6 in the exilic context.<sup>②</sup> In the historical context of the loss of Jerusalem and the fall of the temple, the connotation of Mount Zion is extended beyond the mountain itself to the whole city of Jerusalem. By contrast, Mount Zion is no longer a place for protecting Jerusalem in the exilic period, which has become turbulent and vulnerable.

It is probably in this historical context of the development of Zion theology that a historical transformation emerged from the tradition of Mount Zion to that of Mount Sinai on both the symbolic and cultural levels. The transformation of the tradition of Mount Zion to that of Sinai is prominently presented in the Sinai pericope from Exod. 19 through Num. 10. Mount Sinai is

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<sup>①</sup> Uwe Becker, "Das Jesajabuch als Jesajas Buch: Zu neuesten Entwicklungen in der Prophetenforschung," *TRev* 104 (2008): 3-14; Hugo G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

<sup>②</sup> Konrad Schmid, "The Canon and the Cult: The Emergence of Book Religion in Ancient Israel and the Gradual Sublimation of the Temple Cult," 302-303.

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especially associated with the concept of the covenant established between YHWH and the Israelites. This is presented in Exod. 19-24 and 32-34. In the Sinai pericope, the concept of the covenant no longer takes Jerusalem and the temple as the basis for its development. The place where the covenant is established between YHWH and the Israelites is, rather, transformed from Jerusalem to remote Mount Sinai, which is also difficult to be located precisely.<sup>①</sup>

The transformation from Zion to Sinai can also be found in the Priestly texts, while the concept of Sinai in the Priestly texts essentially refers to the wilderness rather than the mountain.<sup>②</sup> In the Priestly texts originating from the exilic and the postexilic periods, the center of the worship cult is no longer linked with the Jerusalem temple, but is dramatically transferred to the wilderness of Sinai, where it is rendered as the space for the Israelite wanderings. Furthermore, according to the Priestly texts, the tabernacle constructed in the wilderness of Sinai was understood to be the place where YHWH could appear.<sup>③</sup> The residential place of YHWH is also understood as a dwelling among the Israelites.

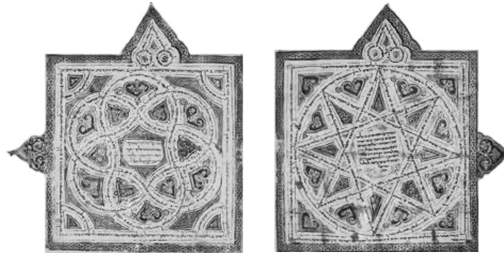
An alternative to the preexilic notion of Zion as the residential place of YHWH protecting Jerusalem and the temple thus accompanies the rise of the theological appropriation of the Sinai tradition. In this sense, it is not a development from the tradition of Sinai to a tradition of Zion; rather, it is a transformation from the tradition of Zion to that of Sinai. It is ultimately from Mount Sinai that the covenant is established between YHWH and the Israelites. Mount Sinai acquires the nature of holiness when combined with the tradition of the covenant. The rise of the Sinai tradition in its present form in the Torah thus corresponds with the alternative to the traditional Zion theology, which has to be intellectually reappropriated because of the fall of Jerusalem and the loss of the temple.

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① Konrad Schmid, *The Old Testament: A Literary History*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 140-141.

② Konrad Schmid, "Der Sinai und die Priesterschrift," 114-127.

③ Mark George, *Israel's Tabernacle as Social Space* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).



#### IV. The Separation and Integration of Sinai, Zion, and the Jerusalem Temple

Whether in the preexilic or the postexilic period, the interactions between traditions of Mount Zion and Mount Sinai are connected directly with the fall and rise of the Jerusalem temple.<sup>①</sup> The traditions of Mount Zion and Mount Sinai were adapted or reinterpreted around the Jerusalem temple's historical experiences. Specifically, the transformation from Zion to Sinai in the exilic and postexilic periods is primarily based on the reorientation of the concept of the Jerusalem temple. This transformation is primarily indicated in the Priestly texts and the Deuteronomistic texts.

Although the origination of the Deuteronomistic texts can be dated to the late Judean period, the systematic formation of the Deuteronomistic texts as a whole is dated to the exilic and postexilic periods.<sup>②</sup> The Deuteronomistic tradition gives its own particular interpretation of the fall of Jerusalem and the loss of the temple. The Deuteronomistic idea that originated in the preexilic period primarily concerns the centralization of the cult and the purification of the worship. The Deuteronomistic texts in the exilic period, however, have to interpret the contemporaneous situation of the fall of the Jerusalem temple. On one hand, the notion of the covenant established in the Deuteronomistic tradition is based on the conditional propositions that the Israelites should obey the instructions of YHWH. On the other hand, the place where the covenant is definitely established is Mount Sinai, which is rendered by the Deuteronomistic

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① Martin Metzger, "Zion: Gottes Berg, Gottes Wohnung, Gottes Stadt," 41-63; Michael Tilly, *Jerusalem-Nabel der Welt: Überlieferung und Funktionen von Heiligtumstraditionen im antiken Judentum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002); Herman Spiekermann, "Stadtgott und Gottesstadt: Beobachtungen im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament," 1-31.

② Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T & T Clark, 2005); Thomas Römer, "From Deuteronomistic History to Nebiim and Torah," in *Making the Biblical Text: Textual Studies in the Hebrew and Greek Bible*, ed. Innocent Himbaza (Fribourg / Göttingen: Academic Press / Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 1-18.

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tradition as the Horeb (e. g., Horeb; Deut. 5-11).<sup>①</sup> The concept of the covenant in the Sinai pericope was initially influenced by the preexilic Deuteronomistic understanding of the covenant, which was then appropriated into the postexilic period. According to the basic Deuteronomistic ideas, the total obedience of the Israelites to the instructions of YHWH is the assurance of the wellness of the Israelites. The basic Deuteronomistic ideas are still concerned with the reestablishment of the Davidic kingdom. The Sinai events in the Deuteronomistic ideas thus became the fundamental basis for the development of ancient Israel with the expectation of the restoration of Jerusalem.

As with the Deuteronomistic texts, the Priestly texts also demonstrate historical reflections about the fall of Jerusalem and the temple. However, the Priestly texts present different reactions from the Deuteronomistic tradition. Particularly, the Priestly texts indicate an alternative view of the notion of the covenant established between YHWH and the Israelites. By contrast with the Deuteronomistic tradition associating the covenant with the law at Sinai, the Priestly version of the Sinai pericope does not emphasize the covenant in the wilderness of Sinai.<sup>②</sup> Further, the Priestly texts highlight the unconditional covenant for the Israelites as a whole, and there is an absence of the Israelites' obedience to the law as the assurance of their relationship with YHWH. The Priestly texts' view of the covenant is primarily indicated by the narrative of the covenant established by YHWH to Noah (Gen. 9) and Abraham (Gen. 17).<sup>③</sup> Furthermore, while the Priestly texts were probably influenced by the notion of the cultic centralization advanced by the Deuteronomistic ideas, the tabernacle is constructed as the important cultic space according to the Priestly texts.

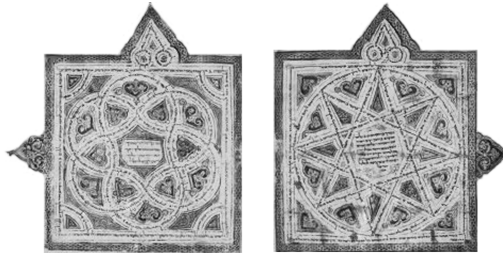
Therefore, the Priestly texts and the Deuteronomistic texts show different understandings and reactions to the fall of Jerusalem and the loss of the

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① The Deuteronomistic tradition probably rendered Mount Sinai as Horeb because of the particular relationship with Edom, from which the ancient Sinai tradition likely originated. See Lothar Peritt, "Sinai und Horeb," in *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie: Festschrift für Walter Zimmerli* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1977), 302-322.

② Konrad Schmid, "Der Sinai und die Priesterschrift," 114-127.

③ For the establishment of the covenant in the Priestly texts, see Konrad Schmid, *A Historical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, 152-154.



temple. Both the Priestly and the Deuteronomistic texts demonstrate the historical transformation from Zion to Sinai, although the Priestly texts render Sinai mainly as the wilderness rather than the mountain. The Priestly and the Deuteronomistic texts, however, give different interpretations of the relationships among Zion, Sinai, and the Jerusalem temple. The Deuteronomistic tradition emphasizes that the definite covenant was established at Sinai. For the Priestly texts, however, the relationship between YHWH and the Israelites has already been assured by the covenants established with Noah and Abraham. Moreover, while the Deuteronomistic tradition still considers Jerusalem the center for the restoration of the Davidic dynasty, the Priestly texts present the tabernacle constructed in the wilderness of Sinai as for the appearance of YHWH. The alteration of the preexilic theology of the Jerusalem temple thus significantly influenced the historical encounters between the traditions of Zion and Sinai.

## V. Conclusions

The discussions above show a historical transformation from the traditions of Mount Zion to those of Mount Sinai in the exilic and postexilic periods. Mount Zion, in the preexilic period, was conceived of as a divine residential place from which YHWH protected the city of Jerusalem. The formation of the Zion theology was motivated by Jerusalem's survival of the Neo-Assyrian invasion in the late 8th century BCE. After the fall of Jerusalem and the loss of the temple in the early years of the 6th century BCE, the traditional Zion theology underwent a fundamental alteration. The historical encounter between the traditions of Mount Zion and Mount Sinai has started during the exilic period. While the Sinai tradition is originally an independent ancient Israelite tradition, it is in the context of the transformation from the traditions of Zion to those of Sinai that Mount Sinai has started to become an important place for the formation of the relationship between YHWH and the Israelites.

In the historical transformation from Mount Zion to Mount Sinai, the Priestly texts and the Deuteronomistic texts show a different understanding of the relationship between Sinai and Zion. While the Deuteronomistic tradition perceives the conditional covenant established at Mount Sinai as important to

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the Israelites, with the expectation of the restoration of the Davidic dynasty, the Priestly texts construct Sinai as the wilderness in which YHWH lives among the Israelites and the covenant was understood to have already been established before the Sinai pericope. On the whole, from a historical view, it could be argued that there is a transformation from the traditions of Mount Zion to Mount Sinai with the reinterpretations of the relationship between YHWH and Israelites in the late Babylonian exilic and early Persian periods.