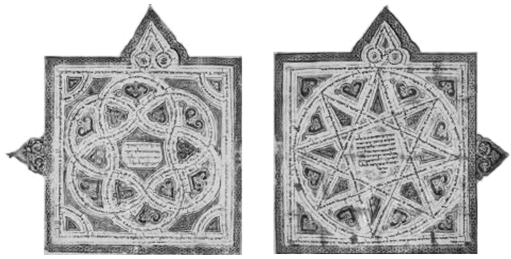

Some Habits of Thought Reflected in and Communicated by the Hebrew Bible That Played Important Roles in Various Forms of Historical Judaisms

Ehud Ben Zvi*

Abstract: This essay explores four underlying habits of thought that were communicated across many of these books of the Hebrew Bible and the collection itself, or an earlier close forerunner of it, and which eventually played important roles in the later development of multiple historical manifestations of Judaism. Following an introduction, the essay focuses first on the habit of imagining and remembering a foundational past and its implications. Then, it explores the habit of remembering calamity and its relation to "chosen trauma," didactic approaches and the related habit of thinking of Mosaic / Torah teachers. The third habit of mind that it investigates is that of thinking in terms of and about divine teachings / Torah and some of its multiple implications, including the related habit of thinking of Mosaic / Torah teachers. The essay then discusses the habit of being hopeful. As a whole, the essay conveys some of the ways how readings or awareness of the Hebrew Bible have contributed to the shaping of key socially shared habits of thought and mind among diverse historical communities that existed across multiple times and geographical (and social) spaces.

Key Words: Hebrew Bible, Habits of Thought, Judaism, Remembering

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Ⅰ. Introduction

The Hebrew Bible (hereafter, HB) is a collection of books composed and edited over centuries. ① Moreover, it was brought together as a collection via a long process over centuries which included the development of several sub-collections (e.g., the Pentateuch) that were included as such in the HB.② All these books were meant to be read directly by literati and some included explicit references about the character of those able to understand them well.③ At the same time, many of the books played important roles in Jewish liturgy / liturgies, already in the Second Temple period, and since then to the present.④ Needless to say, liturgical settings contribute to the shaping of the pragmatic meaning of a text, emphasizing some aspects and de-emphasizing others.⑤ This is particularly true when a text or portion of a book was read alongside and in integrated ways with portions of other books, biblical or not. Moreover, there is a long tradition of publicly reading books or selected portions thereof

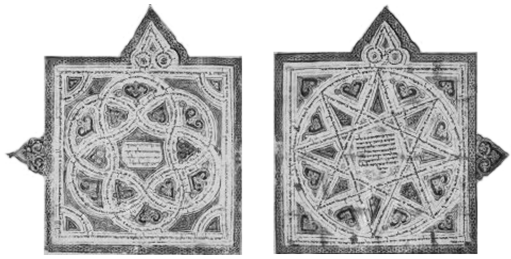
① There is also plenty of evidence that many of these books existed in multiple textual versions.

② The date and process by which the eventual "canon" of the HB emerged has been the topic of much debate in recent years. It may well be that the collection that became the HB originated, likely in the main, in what was earlier an authoritative collection of a particular late Second Temple Jewish group / s. See, Timothy H. Lim, "An Indicative Definition of the Canon," in *When Texts Are Canonized*, eds. T. H. Lim and Kengo Akiyama (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2017), 1-24; John J. Collins, "Before the Canon: Scriptures in Second Temple Judaism," in *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present and Future. Essays in Honor of Gene Tucker*, eds. James L. Mays, David L. Petersen and Kent H. Richards (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 225-241; and bibliography. Cf. the summary essay by Marc Z. Brettler, "The Canonization of the Bible," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, eds. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler 2nd edition (Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2153-2158.

③ See, e.g., "Those who are wise understand these things [i.e., the contents of the book of Hosea]; those who are discerning know them" (Hos 14:10a). Of course, to state that these books were meant to be read by qualified readers able to understand them implies that those who are not wise, or discerning are unable to.

④ See, e.g., Avigdor Shinan, "The Bible in the Synagogue," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, 2049-2057; Ruth Langer, "The Bible in the Liturgy," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, 2057-2067; Michael Fishbane, *Haftarot. A Commentary* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2002).

⑤ See, e.g., Michael Fishbane, *Haftarot. A Commentary*, passim.



and their meaning explained to those in attendance.[①] Altogether, this means that a long history of commentary accompanied the texts of the HB, from the inception to the present.

Readers (including, but not restricted to Christians and Jews) read these books century after century in vastly different ways, depending on their social location, culture, the world of knowledge they had, and the textual collection within which they included them such as Tanakh or the various Christian Bibles each of them with their own sets of books and their internal classification of them. [②]

In addition, Jews and Christians have read these books through history as a crucial but integral part of their own various "libraries" and especially in the context of their collections of culturally / religiously authoritative texts, and thus have encountered different "things" when reading these books. Much

① See, e.g., Neh. 8:1-12; 2 Chr. 17:7-9; cf. Deut. 31:9-13; Josh. 8:34-35. Multiple social and ideological factors contributed to this outcome. See Ehud Ben Zvi, *Social Memory among the Literati of Yehud* (BZAW, 509; Berlin: De Gruyter 2019), passim.

② Cf., for instance, the Protestant Bible with the Catholic or Orthodox Christian Bibles. For a helpful comparative "table of contents" of the HB, the Protestant Old Testament, the Catholic Old Testament and (most of the) Orthodox Churches Old Testament see Marc Zvi Brettler, "The Canonization of the Bible," p. 2155. There are significant differences not only between the HB and Christian Old Testaments, but also among the tables of contents of the Old Testaments of the mentioned Christian books.The Tanakh itself, even within the Masoretic tradition, has not shown a uniform order of books when it comes to the Latter Prophets (Isaiah-Malachi) and the Writings. Differences in order implied and communicated differences of interpretation. A Tanakh with Chronicles as the first rather than the last book in the Writings is different from one in which this is not the case. Similarly, whether the Latter Prophets should begin with Isaiah, followed by Jeremiah and then Ezekiel (as in the current "traditional" order or with Jeremiah, followed by Ezekiel and only then Isaiah, see b. B. Batra 14b and Maimonides *Mishneh Torah* [Laws of the Torah Scroll, ch. 7, Halakha 15]) establishes a difference in terms of the readers' general understanding of the books. This is clear from the explanation for the Jeremiah-Ezekiel-Isaiah order in b. Batra 14b ("The Gemara further asks: Consider: Isaiah preceded Jeremiah and Ezekiel; let the book of Isaiah precede the books of those other prophets. The Gemara answers: Since the book of Kings ends with the destruction of the Temple, and the book of Jeremiah deals entirely with prophecies of the destruction, and the book of Ezekiel begins with the destruction of the Temple but ends with consolation and the rebuilding of the Temple, and Isaiah deals entirely with consolation, as most of his prophecies refer to the redemption, we juxtapose destruction to destruction and consolation to consolation. This accounts for the order: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah.") (explanatory ET translation of the section according to the William Davidson Talmud, an English version of Adin Steinsaltz's Talmud, freely available at https://www.sefaria.org / Bava_Batra.14b.10? lang=bi).

research has been devoted in recent decades to these various readings. In fact, the history of "reception" of biblical texts over time and space has been among the most vibrant fields of studies for academic scholars of these texts. ①

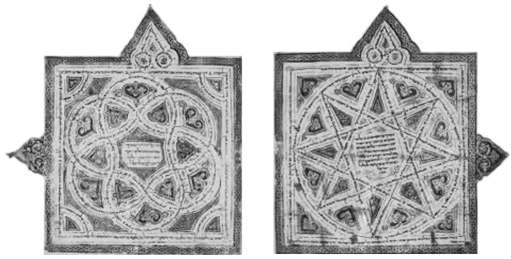
The HB, which is referred to as *Tanakh* or *Miqra* within Judaic mental libraries,② has undoubtedly been a foundational text for all historical forms of Judaism, across time and geographic space, and of course, it was read in a large variety of ways in the last two millennia. It is impossible to discuss these multiple readings and the worlds that they evoked in an essay.③

Thus, in what follows I will only focus on underlying habits of thought that were communicated across many of the books of the HB and the collection itself, or an earlier close forerunner of it, and which eventually played important roles in the later development of multiple historical manifestations of Judaism. To be sure, there are more habits of thought and mind. In fact, there are even more that could be considered and discussed here, but, needless

① An important outcome of this enhanced interest on these matters is the ongoing publication of the *Encyclopaedia of the Bible and Its Reception* by De Gruyter.

② It should be mentioned that the Bible of Beta-Israel, i.e., the Ethiopian Jews, is neither referred to as *Tanakh* nor as *Miqra*, but *Orit*; moreover, its "table of contents" differs from the usual HB in significant ways. In addition, its language is Ge'ez. Recently an academic program ("תופסי האורית") has been launched at Tel Aviv University to further studies of the *Orit*.

③ A good starting point for many of these readings is found in the essays section in Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Study Bible*, esp. 1833-1977, 2049-2106, 2159-2165, 2208-2214. Those interested in the modern period, may consult Yaacov Shavit and Mordechai Eran, *The Hebrew Bible Reborn from Holy Scripture to the Book of Books. A History of Biblical Culture and the Battles over the Bible in Modern Judaism* (Studia Judaica, 38, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007); for those interested in the engagement of (mainly) Orthodox Jews with contemporary research, or as phrased in the volume mentioned below, "the belief in the sanctity of the Torah and the consequent obligation to observe the commandments... and the intellectual obligation to impartial analysis, which is also a religious imperative," see Tova Ganzel, Yehudah Brandes, and Chayuta Deutsch, eds. *The Believer and the Modern Study of the Bible* (Boston : Academic Studies Press, 2019), available online at https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/25322. Likewise see the summary of contemporary understandings of such a central concept as "torah from heavens," among a quite similar group of contemporary Jewish thinkers at https://www.thetorah.com/article/current-approaches. (This summary does not include, "cultural," humanistic, and similar contemporary Jewish groups.) For women-centered, Jewish readings of the Hebrew Bible see Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Andrea L. Weiss, eds. *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* (New York: Women of Reform Judaism, URJ Press,2008), and Elyse Goldstein, ed. *The Women's Torah Commentary: New Insights from Women Rabbis on the 54 Weekly Torah Portion* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000).



to say, writing, even if briefly, about the various historical manifestations of the four habits selected here over circa two millennia of history would yield an encyclopedic work. Even the sayings in / of Qohelet reached an end, and to the amount of writing to be included in a journal article there is certainly an end.① Thus, in what follows I will discuss only these four important and influential habits of thoughts and mind. ②

Ⅱ. The habit of imagining and remembering a foundational past and some of its implications

Leaving aside the explicit injunctions to remember e.g. particular days and events, godly teachings, that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt or Miriam's skin-disease (e.g., Exod. 13:3; 20:8; Deut 15:15; 16:12; 24:9, 22; Josh. 1:13), even the most cursory reading of the HB reveals that most of its books are past-shaping books, that is, books that shape images of the past and thus the memory of the past shared by the readers (see, e.g., Genesis-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Isaiah-Malachi, Ruth, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, Daniel, and notice that many Psalms, many Proverbs, Qohelet, are associated with personages of old). But it also reveals that the past to be remembered is not one which is evenly distributed. Not all periods, let alone events or personages, were to be remembered. In other words, the habit is one of remembering mainly particular times, circumstances, and characters.

One may argue that the most important set of times, characters and events are those associated with the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent

① I am here alluding to "Of making many books there is no end" (Qoh. 12:12).

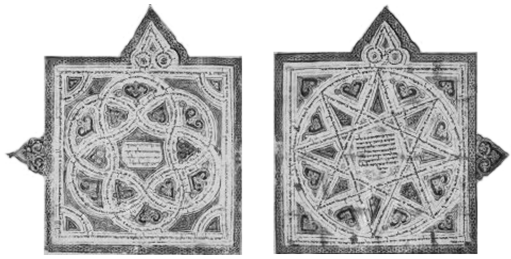
② There is a very large corpus of works dealing with "habit," with a similar term in social studies, namely "habitus," and with teaching (critical) habits of thought in the realm of Education Studies. Readers interested may consult e.g., Nick Crossley, "Habit and Habitus," *Body and Society* 19 (2013): 136-161 and cited bibliography. Scholars trained in a particular discipline, tend to share some "habits of thought" and unsurprisingly, scholars who advance "interdisciplinarity" often challenge these habits of thought. Notice the title of Myra H. Stober, *Interdisciplinary Conversations: Challenging Habits of Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011, 2020). From a cognitive, social-psychological approach to the concept of "habit of thought" see, e.g., Richard E. Nisbett, Kaiping Peng, Incheol Choi and Ara Norenzayan, "Culture and Systems of Thought: Holistic Versus Analytic Cognition," *Psychological Review* 108 (2001): 291-310.

period in the desert at whose center stand the related foundational, often remembered events of receiving divine teachings (Torah), and along with them, the progression of instructions and activities leading up to and culminating in the building of the tabernacle.

Readers of the HB construed, of course, the tabernacle as transitory and as the forerunner of the Jerusalemite temple (i.e., from within the perspective communicated by the HB as a whole, "the Temple"). Thus, a link is established not only between the former and the latter but also between the main human characters, namely Moses and David,[①] alongside YHWH and Israel as a collective group.

In terms of spaces, when the readers of the HB recall the Moses era, they encounter a liminal landscape, namely the wilderness. Such a space keeps evoking and activating both their imagination and their imaginary. This is the place in which, inter alia, (a) the Israelites, via Moses, receive YHWH's teachings (see below), (b) the Israelites are under the best possible leadership, (c) YHWH's promise of the land to the ancestors is reaffirmed to them, (d) the tabernacle is built and the camp around it shapes an image of a well-organized Israel at whose center is YHWH, which in a later and different iteration appears as an utopian image in Ezekiel, (e) YHWH directly feeds them and provides them with water, and like the humans in Eden, they need not to toil for food, (f) the Israelites may enjoy the safety provided by the mighty acts of YHWH who brought them out of Egypt, and are the only generation of Israelites who were eye-witnesses to that act of divine salvation. But the same wilderness is also the place in which the Israelites, who received all these benefits and lived in what might have been considered a kind of Edenic

① David's son, Solomon is the king who carried out the building of the temple, following the instruction of his father and the divine instructions communicated to both Moses and David. David, himself, was forbidden to build the Temple because he "shed much blood and have waged great wars" (see 1 Chr. 22:8; 28:3). Solomon is characterized as a man of peace and well-being and no wars were associated with him.



period, [1] responded to all these divine gifts with rebellion after rebellion against their K / king / deity / benefactor and the latter's human representatives.[2] The combination of divine action and human response turns the wilderness into a space in which utopian and dystopian features interweave time and again.

Moreover, although it helps those remembering the period to explore the motif of human inability to dwell and live in utopian spaces, it also communicates that although Israel's rebellions caused one generation to die without reaching the land, Israel survived and took over the promised land. Moreover, as Moses already knew, Israel will end up losing that land — as a consequence of their rebellions against their K / king / deity; see below — but not the divine promise; YHWH will still return them from the Exile (a point made in Deut 30:1-6, and repeated time and again in prophetic literature).

The theme (of the permanence of) the promise — along with the hope it conveys, and the related motif of the (permanent) willingness of YHWH to forgive the misdeeds of Israel — even if, at times or often, after the deity enacted punishment — shape a strong sense of an underlying element of permanence within a basically helically or cyclically construed past. Calamities may happen and are somewhat expected, but there is no risk of annihilation, and the divine promises stand fast (alongside Torah and hope, see below).

Since these promises are to a large extent associated with the three patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) within the world of memory and ideology conjured by the HB (see e.g., Exod. 3:5-7; Deut. 4:37; 7:8; 9:27; 2 Kgs. 13:23; Jer. 33:26; Mic. 7:20), their stories were also allocated a great deal of social mindshare. For comparable reasons, David was allocated substantial mindshare, and the four of them were construed as types through

① Notice also that some "autobiographical" memories of YHWH (Hos. 2:16-17; 9:10; 11:1-4; 12:9-10; 13:4-5) construe the period in which YHWH was with Israel in the wilderness as "happy times," much better than those that followed in the land, despite the fact that the latter is explicitly imagined as YHWH's land (see Hos. 9:3; cf. "YHWH's kingdom" in reference to Israel / Judah in 1 Chr. 17:14).

② On the importance and implications of this seemingly strange response, from a different perspective, see e.g., Adriane Leveen, *Memory and Tradition in the Book of Numbers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). See also, e.g., Ps. 78; 106. On the motif of the wilderness / desert, see also M. de Roche, "Jeremiah 2:2-3 and Israel's Love for God during the Wilderness Wanderings," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 364-376.

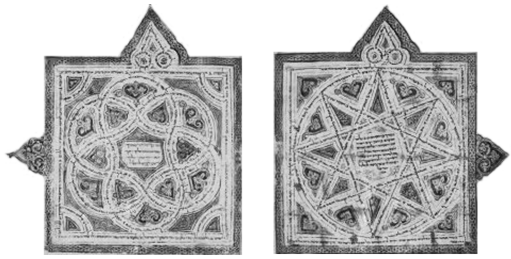
which to imagine Israel.[①]

The combined weight of memories of Israel's rebellions and of unprecedent divine gifts in the wilderness and the character of the latter as an anteroom that serves as a space, place and environment leading to the promised land resulted eventually in the generation of memories about a future, utopian wilderness, in which YHWH transforms existing Israel into one unable to rebel against YHWH and disobey YHWH's teachings again (see, e.g., Deut. 30:6; Hos. 2:16-25; see below), and thus, bringing the repeating cycle of rebellion and forgiveness to an end, before YHWH ends Exile.

This association of wilderness's memories and images with overcoming Exile in the utopian future carries much rhetorical power because it elicits and engages those associated with the first wilderness period, which are recalled time and again in the HB (in addition to Exodus-Deuteronomy, see, e.g., Ezek. 20:5-17; cf. Ps. 105-106, a pair of psalms that although distinct from one another, comment and inform each other).

The wilderness period also conjures an image of YHWH as their foundational king, who integrates multiple common ideological features associated with foundational kingship, including being a (a) powerful warrior / deliverer with no peer, (b) lawgiver who establishes wise laws for the people, (c) king who commands the establishment of the cultic center of the people and its ordinances, and (d) ruler who instills obedience, awe, and fear among the subjects. Significantly, the HB readers are supposed to keep in mind that this foundational king is not a human, even not a human of the highest quality

① On the transfer of the image and promise of David to all Israel, see e.g. Isa. 55:3-5. This transfer went hand in hand with the processes of (partial) "kingization" of Israel within the discourse of the literati responsible for most of the books that ended up in the HB (see e.g., the concept of a covenant between the deity and the people, in which the traditional role of the king is performed by the people; cf. characterization of the Davidic Manasseh in Chronicles [see 2 Chr. 33] and the manner in which he was identified with pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic / future Israel or that of David as a person whose sin (see Bathsheba-Uriah affair) made him liable for divine execution (see 2 Sam. 12: 1-14), although he was punished and harshly humiliated, but he was allowed by YHWH to survive and eventually organized the future building of the temple, all of which parallel the basic memory narrative about Israel conveyed by the HB. This process of (partial) kingization went along with one of (partial) priestization of Israel (see, e.g., Exod. 19:6; Isa. 61:6) and both constructed an ideological / imagined Israel marked by a strong level of horizontal cohesion.



(such as Moses) really fulfil this role.

In strong contrast, David, the most central and most memorable human king of Israel within the world of memory of these readers, is construed in multiple ways. Since he is a site of memory integrating so many images, he ends up being an extremely complex figure, with multiple highs and lows, and evoking images of grievous sin and of elevated piety. Further, his son and successor, who is characterized as the paradigmatic example of a wise man, is also imagined as one who nonetheless fails, especially when old age reached him. Human frailties thus apply to human kings. In any case, their dynasty failed Israel and led to the calamity of the destruction of the Jerusalemite temple / the Temple and the E / exile of the people. The events associated with the latter (and some key godly figures related to them, e.g., Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah) represent the other key section of the past evoked time and again through the HB.

Another central point of this imagined foundational past of the Israelites that comes upon often in the HB involved turning upside down a common motif in ancient West Asia. In the HB the key narrative is not about a deity searching for and eventually selecting a proper human king, but rather about a monarchic deity who selects a people to be ruled, judged and protected by that deity. It is one about a king-god selecting his subjects, and not necessarily due to the latter's qualities (cf., for instance, Isa 1:2-3; see also Exod 33:6 and esp. Exod 34:9, and notice that the text may be understood "... let the Lord go with us, *because* this is a stiff-necked people..," see already Ramban's commentary on the verse). At the same time, since Israel received YHWH's wise teachings (i.e., Torah), which provided Israel with lasting (godly) wisdom (cf. Deut. 4:6-8), even if often within the world portrayed by the HB, it (/ she?) rejected it.

Allocating much social mindshare to this past contributed much to the presence of this remembered past in the present of Jewish communities over time and space. It also contributed much to an ideological construction that

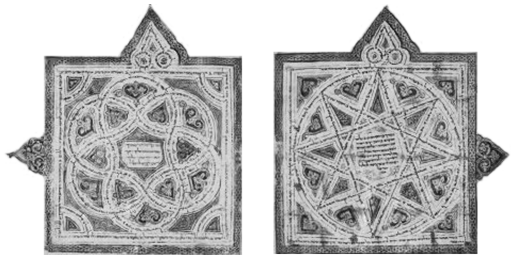
brings to the forefront the pastness of their presence.[①] These communities and their members saw themselves, inter alia, as living in the desert / wilderness,[②]holding to divine promises, enjoying Torah but often failing to (fully) follow it, asking for divine forgiveness, in need of Mosaic teachers and construing and remembering mental temples and their worship (see, e.g., the emphasis on the temple in the Mishna, a foundational work written after the destruction of the second temple). Their main meta-narratives about the past provided them not only with a present past, but also structured, to an extent, their ideological constructions of their (various and different) presents over centuries.

Ⅲ. The habit of remembering calamity and its relation to "chosen trauma," didactic approaches and the related habit of thinking of Mosaic / Torah teachers

Contemporary scholars often explore the social roles of recalling and "reliving" past social traumas. The clear focus on recalling and explaining the destruction of the temple play a prominent role in the HB. The narrative from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings is teleological and, despite occasional and necessary detours, it moves towards the destruction of the Temple and Exile. Not only does this calamity figure prominently in this collection of books, but implicitly or explicitly is central to the collection of prophetic books, and to texts such as Lamentations and some Psalms. Even Moses is imagined as being aware of the calamity to come (see, e.g., Deut. 30:1-5; 32:19-25, and the pragmatic meaning of it (e.g., Deut. 28:15-68; 29:13-27; 30:17-19; 31:19-22) and in Chronicles, David, at one of, if not the highest moment of his reign, is

① I am closely following Jacob Neusner's phrase, explicitly and intentionally. See Jacob Neusner, *The Presence of the Past, The Pastness of the Present. History, Time, and Paradigm in Rabbinic Judaism* (Bethsheda, MD: CDL Press, 1996), even if my focus here does not necessarily overlap that of Neusner's cited work.

② This may not necessarily be the case among some groups of contemporary Jewish Israelis. On the HB among Jews in the State of Israel and their culture / s in general, see Uriel Simon, "The Bible in Israeli Life," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, 2071-2081.



imagined as having knowledge of the E / exile to come.[①]

From the perspective of recent scholarship, it seems that the HB communicates a habit of mind to recall and re-configure a "chosen trauma."[②] There is, however, a major difference. Contemporary groups recalling and vicariously revisiting regularly their "chosen trauma" strongly tend to imagine themselves as (innocent) victims, and as (past) powerless agents. Reading the HB shaped, in the main, an image of ancient Israel as neither a group of innocent victims nor a powerless one.[③] In fact, it construed an image of ancient Israel as agents of their own calamity, for having disobeyed YHWH's teachings.

To be sure, there is a strong didactic point to this rather unusual approach to the "chosen trauma." The point, of course is to socialize the readers to follow the divine teachings and warn them (like Moses did) of the consequences of failing to do that. This required imagining and remembering Moses as a necessary human intermediary and teacher of YHWH's teachings to the people. Since Moses was the foundational prophet, he was conceived as a unique character, but this habit of mind expressed and instilled by the HB requires thinking and imagining Mosaic successors of Moses, i.e., teachers in each generation. These teachers of the divine teachings / Torah become necessary for the welfare of the people; they serve within the logic shaped by this habit of mind, they serve as "guardians of Israel."

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① See Ehud Ben Zvi, "Who Knew What? The Construction of the Monarchic Past in Chronicles and Implications for the Intellectual Setting of Chronicles," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.O.*, eds. Lipschits, G. N. Knoppers and R. Albertz (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 349-360 (esp. 349-354).

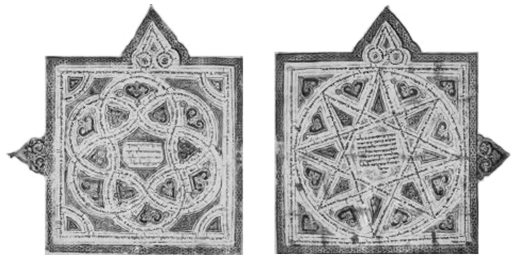
② The concept of "chosen trauma" was developed by Vamik D. Volkan, see, e.g., Vamik D. Volkan, "Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity," *Group Analysis* 34 (2001): 79-97, esp. 87-95 and bibliography.

③ The Holocaust has led many Jewish circles to question this habit of mind. But even in their opposition to it, they indicate the long-term influence of this habit of mind. Moreover, challenges to it were often involved in the construction of processes for overcoming, by human hands, the state of powerlessness.

Ⅳ. The habit of thinking in terms of and about divine teachings / Torah and some of its multiple implications, including the related habit of thinking of Mosaic / Torah teachers

Few would doubt that the concept of Torah / YHWH's teachings is central to the HB as a collection. ① Within the world of the HB, Israel and the Israelites are taught the wise teachings of the wisest possible personage in their conceptual world, i.e., YHWH. Although the latter is also remembered, inter

① There are multiple concepts of (divine) Torah in the HB. References to the YHWH's Torah carried both a meaning of "godly instruction" but also of written corpora, namely the Pentateuch, as instantiated in one or multiple versions. As Honigman and I wrote elsewhere, "the large social, ideological, symbolic, and mnemonic power of the concept of Torah in the literati's world was grounded precisely in its ability to engage more than one meaning and the associated "generative" ambiguity or even multivalence that this created," (Sylvie Honigman and Ehud Ben Zvi, "The Spread of the Ideological Concept of a (Jerusalem-Centred) Tōrâ-centred Israel beyond Yehud: Observations and Implications," *HeBAI* 9 [2021]: 370-397 [371]). The present discussion refers to the concept of Torah in the HB as a collection and above all within the ideological world that it construes. A good attestation of this concept is to be found in a group of relatively late Psalms such as Ps. 19; 119. On these matters and on Psalm 119, see Kent Aaron Reynolds, *Torah as Teacher: The Exemplary Torah Student in Psalm 119* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2010) and bibliography; and esp. for an insightful study of similarities and dissimilarities between this understanding of Torah and traditional Chinese concepts, Zhenshuai Jiang, "A Comparative Study of the Concepts of Torah in the Hebrew Bible and Li in *Zuozhuan*," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 45/3-4 (2018): 175-189. Cf. Konrad Schmid, "The Genesis of Normativity in Biblical Law," in *Concepts of Law in the Sciences, Legal Studies, and Theology*, eds. Michael Welker and Gregor Etzelmüller (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 119-135. I would like to mention in this context that, contrary to a long tradition of interpretation, I doubt that even e.g., the cultic or social regulations, and prescriptions such as the command to obey the Shabbat really (or fully) qualify as "law." At the most, within this context these are discrete bits or sets of bits of "ideal" (or "utopian") regulations, and within the intellectual discourses reflected in the HB, "commandments" that all together and interacting with one another at multiple levels served to explore and construct a discourse about which particular social, cultural, interpersonal, cultic and sexual behaviors might be conducive to, or consistent with the establishment of what the ancient readers thought that an ideal society should be. Of course, later, not just "commandments," but even the Pentateuchal stories were used in rabbinic texts to advance halacha (see, e.g., Jane L. Kanarek, *Biblical Narrative and the Formation of Rabbinic Law* [New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014]). That said, I am not sure that law is a good English translation of the Hebrew term halacha either, despite its widespread use. For a comparable issue of translation, see Lena Salaymeh, "Decolonial Translation: Destabilizing Coloniality in Secular Translations of Islamic Law," *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 5 (2021): 1-28.



alia, as a warrior, and as a king, his most substantial attribute implicitly and explicitly is being a teacher (see e.g., Ps. 78:1; 119:12, 33-36, 64), and the ultimate source of the most important teachings of Israel.

Within the world of the HB, these teachings make the "simple" wise, the heart rejoice, and engender and communicate love (e.g., Ps. 19; 119: passim). Following these teachings leads, within that discourse, to wisdom, well-being, and joy (cf. Deut. 4:5-8; Ps. 1:2; 19:7; 94:12; 119). But conversely, defying them leads to calamity. Not only are the Israelites supposed to learn these teaching constantly, but in some constructions of the utopian future, these teaching will eventually become innate and embodied in the future Israelites (see Jer. 31:33; cf. Ps. 40:8), while pious men of the past were imagined as studying these teachings day and night (see Josh 1:8; Ps. 1:2). To some extent, already at this level here, there is a strong tendency towards a convergence between wisdom and Torah.[①]

The centrality of such a Torah in the HB draws attention to readers expectations about Torah that become habits of mind. For instance, the teacher of this Torah, i.e., YHWH, speaks in multiple dictions and expresses seemingly contradictory positions, depending on the literary world in which YHWH's sayings are reported. Since all of these are associated with the same character and, from the perspective of the community core site of memory, namely YHWH, the latter becomes multivocal and polyvalent, and conversely multivocality and polyvalence become "divine." The same holds for godly human characters (e.g., Moses), and within a world of thought in which pious humans are supposed to strive to approximate the divine image (*imago dei*), these pious characters as well as the literati reading and writing these books are supposed to strive for an inherent, internal multivocality. In other words, the habit of mind mentioned here is not one conducive towards univocal, clear-cut voices, or (formal) logical consistency, but one towards of fluidity and

① Cf. Sirach, but see Anja Klein, "Half Way between Psalm 119 and Ben Sira: Wisdom and Torah in Psalm 19," in *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of Torah in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, eds. Bernd Schipper and D. Andrew Teeter (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 119-136.

fuzziness.[①]

Since all that multivocality is embodied in and thus integrated in the same character / site of memory (e.g., YHWH, Moses) and thus the different perspectives are construed not as dissonant, but as interrelated, integrated, and complementary. Torah / wisdom thus is construed as a complementary array of voices (and sets of voices) informing each other, without any of them being identified alone as Torah.

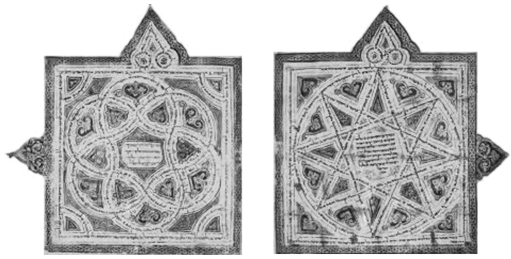
This approach is extended to narratives. Thus, for instance, the Israel that left Egypt could be imagined and remembered as so populous that the Egyptians — one of the "ethnies" with the largest population in the ancient world — were outnumbered (see Exod. 1:9; cf. Exod. 1:7) and there are said to be as many as the stars in heaven (Deut. 1:10; 10:22; 28:62); yet at the same time as the least populous of ethnie (in the entire world (Deut. 7:7), depending on the context and the didactic (and ideological) message that the relevant text was meant to communicate.[②]

To be sure, the mentioned, integrative openness to multiple voices has limits too. Anything that would be patently inconsistent with the basic ideological tenets of the group (e.g., positions that YHWH is not "the God" or that YHWH's Temple should not be in Jerusalem or that the authoritative texts of the community carry no authority) was out-of-limits.

Another important habit of mind developed by the centrality of Torah is the communal focus on (wise / divine / authoritative) written texts. Inevitably, this focus increased the social and cultural capital of those able to directly read them and teach, according to their understanding, them to others. But there is more. The material character of texts written in papyrus stands in sharp contrast with that of non-textual monuments, including and particularly relevant to our case, the Jerusalemite temple. Papyri are fragile, but they can be copied, reproduced, hidden from enemies, etc. In that sense, papyri (and later parchment) texts can continue to exist under any

① I discussed these matters elsewhere, see, e.g., Ehud Ben Zvi, *Social Memory among the Literati of Yehud* (Berlin: De Gruyter 2019), passim.

② Examples like these can easily be multiplied and are attested in all literary genres and across book collections; see, e.g., 2 Chr. 14: 2, 4 and contrast with 2 Chr. 15:17; 17:6; 20:33.



circumstances and remain "functional." A temple is none of the above. It can be destroyed, polluted, and so on. Only temples that exist in texts in fragile material and in the minds of those reading them (like Ezekiel's temple, and the tabernacle, etc.) are conceptualized as impervious to the vicissitudes of history.① This also explains the elevation of Torah and the conceptualization of the temple as sacred because it is grounded in and conforms to Torah and not the other way around.

Another habit of mind that emerges from the focus on Torah is one in which the latter, YHWH's wishes and YHWH's wisdom and thus Israel's deal and are both atemporal or better transtemporal since they are relevant not only to the world portrayed in the book but to "all times" (as wisdom generally is), but also at times contingent on the circumstances in which the people live. Thus, what seems a clear rule that Levites assume their responsibilities when they are 30 years old (Num. 4:3), is shown to have only a temporally related validity (see 1 Chr. 23:24-27), because the Jerusalemite temple is not the Tabernacle.② Similarly, the rules for the first Passover do not necessarily apply

① Cf. Hanna Liss, "'Describe the Temple to the House of Israel': Preliminary Remarks on the Temple Vision in the Book of Ezekiel and the Question of Fictionality in Priestly Literatures," in *Utopia and Dystopia in Prophetic Literature*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi (PFES 92; Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 122-143.

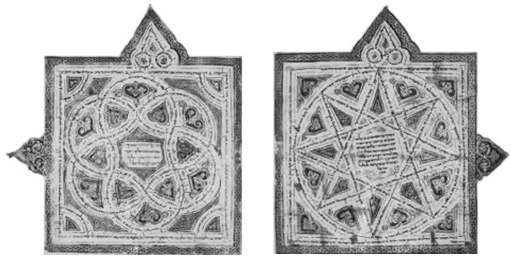
② Remembering the establishment of the tabernacle, the central place in the liminal, temporary space of the desert recalls and necessitates a memory about the establishment of the permanent central place in the land. Thus, the stories of the tabernacle lead and are linked within the memoryscape shaped by the HB to those of the establishment of the Jerusalemite temple, its permanent successor. That said, the fixed temple and the mobile tabernacle cannot but be different in terms of physical structure, even if imagined physical structures. This observation only emphasizes that the linkage between the two is grounded on the divine rites and regulations governing the temple, and the identity of the proper priests (i. e., the sons of Aaron). But they also suggest that these rites and regulations are that are associated with Moses, under whose initiative the tabernacle was established, require those of David / Solomon, under whose initiative the Jerusalemite temple was set up. Within this frame Moses and David / Solomon become complementary foundational leaders, and so are the regulations that they instituted for the proper function of the cultic center. See 1 Chr. 28:11-19 (esp. v 19), 2 Chr. 8:14; 23:18. See, e.g., Simon J. De Vries, "Moses and David as Cult Founders in Chronicles," *JBL* 107 (1988): 619-639; William Riley, *King and Cultus in Chronicles. Worship and the Reinterpretation of History* (JSOT Sup 160; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 61-63. Of course, it is the job the Mosaic teaching voices of later times to keep it functioning properly, and if / when required they may also, within this logic, add complementary regulations.

to others. At the same time, even when the rule is imagined as not applicable anymore given the changed circumstances, the memory of the previous rule remains important, and part of Torah / wisdom.

Another important habit of mind communicated by the HB is associated with following Torah, along with the understanding that following Torah means following YHWH, namely to construct following Torah as a categorical imperative that is not dependent on contingent circumstances or potential rewards. Despite the fact that Torah is generally associated in the world portrayed in the HB with joy, and well-being, reading the HB conjured multiple cases that balance this portrayal and advance the important concept that people should not follow Torah (only) for the sake of fostering their own well-being, but as a divine, categorial commandment. Thus, for instance, as a consequence of their piety — which for the readers of the HB was understood as following YHWH and hence Torah — most of the prophets of YHWH were killed by Jezebel (1 Kgs. 18:4), the true prophet Uriah was killed by order of his Davidic king (Jer. 30:20-23), Jeremiah was sent to prison (Jer. 32-33; 37:11-16) and cast into a pit with no water (Jer. 30:4-5) and widely ridiculed, Hanani the seer and others associated with him were imprisoned and likely tortured (2 Chr. 16:7-10), and Zechariah was killed by his Davidic king (2 Chr. 24:20-22). Moreover, although Uriah behaves much more accordingly to YHWH's teachings than David, it is the former, not the latter that ends up being killed. Further, Josiah, one of the few good Davidic kings in later memory[①] purges the land and temple; and seals a covenant before YHWH to follow the deity's teachings (see 2 Kgs. 22:3-23:27; cf. 2 Chr. 34:8-35:20a), while knowing all too well that the temple will be destroyed and the land polluted after his death. [②] Qohelet explores at length the observed lack of consistency between proper behavior and reward, but the exploration leads to the basic operative and conceptual statement that "the end of the matter: all

① See, e.g., "except for David and Hezekiah and Josiah, all of them [i.e., the Davidic kings of Israel] were great sinners" (Sir. 49:4; NRSV).

② This viewpoint is conveyed both by Kings and Chronicles as after reporting his death, the narrative moves quickly from his death to the dramatic end of the kingdom of Judah and the fall of YHWH's temple in Jerusalem.



has been heard; fear god, and observe his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone" (Qoh. 12:13).[①] This approach is clearly attested in later texts; see e.g., "he [Antigonos, a man of Socho and disciple of Simon, the Righteous] used to say: do not be like servants who serve the master in the expectation of receiving a reward, but be like servants who serve the master without the expectation of receiving a reward, and let the fear of Heaven be upon you" (m. Avot 1.3). "Heavenly" teachings may be conceptualized as necessary for the upkeeping of the entire world, but not necessarily for the personal welfare of individuals, except for the sense of the joy they may feel because they are "fulfilling their duties" as ordained by their heavenly teachings.[②]

Ⅴ. The habit of being hopeful

The habit of remembering calamity mentioned above goes together with the habit of being hopeful. The social reproduction of a community requires not only calamities and traumas to remember, but also hope for the future. Since I have expanded on these and related matters of utopian thinking and utopias in the texts that eventually ended up in the HB,[③] I will only summarize some crucial points here. That said, this essay could not properly conclude without a reference to the habit of being hopeful.

Past calamities are remembered, for didactic reasons, and essentially for

① For the present purposes I leave aside the statement in Qoh. 12:14 that requires a separate discussion that bears not direct relevance to the matters at stake here.

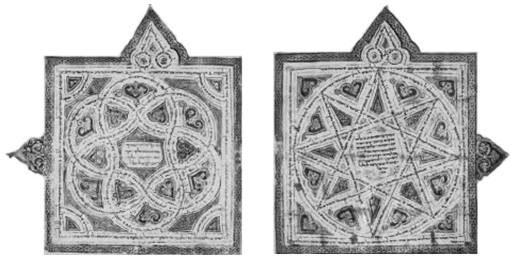
② Of course, this approach facilitated the development of memories of persecution and martyrdom, which were already shaped and evoked in some texts within the HB (e.g., 1 Kgs. 18:4; Jer. 26:20-23; 2 Chr. 24:20-22), became far more attested and important in later texts and liturgies (see, e.g., 2 Macc 7; b Ber. 61b; "The Ten Martyrs" or *Eleh Ezkerah* [אלה אזכרה] in the *musaf* service for Yom Kippur, etc.).

③ I expanded on these matters in Ehud Ben Zvi, "Reading and Constructing Utopias: Utopia /s and / in the Collection of Authoritative Texts / Textual Readings of Late Persian Period Yehud," *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 42 (2013): 463-476, available at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0008429813488344; and "Utopias, Multiple Utopias, and Why Utopias at All? The Social Roles of Utopian Visions in Prophetic Books within Their Historical Context," in *Utopia and Dystopia in Prophetic Literature*, ed. E. Ben Zvi (PFES, 92; Helsinki / Göttingen: Finnish Exegetical Society / Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 55-85.

the sake of social reproduction. That said, social reproduction always requires hope. Thus, it is not a surprise that in the HB memories of calamities are often associated with hope-creating images. The memory of slavery in Egypt leads to the memory of the Exodus, and the divine gift of Torah. The memory of the calamity of the destruction of temple, city and exile leads to the memory of the "return" and in some texts to that of a second Exodus (e.g., Isaiah, Ezra-Nehemiah). In prophetic literature memories of the extremely sinful behavior of Israel / Judah that justified YHWH's punishment in the form of destruction and exile were always associated with memories of YHWH's announcements of hope and even utopian futures that were communicated to Israel / Judah by pious prophets precisely when the latter behaved at its worst. Similarly, the wilderness motif brings up memories of (seemingly) incomprehensibly sinful behavior with memories of utopian futures. Memories of the past and of the fulfilment of divine announcements of doom to Israel / Judah served to socialize people to imagine and remember a future in which the divine announcements concerning future will be fulfilled.

Finally, a seemingly unexpected habit of thought followed this emphasis on hope for the future and on calamity in the past. Some periods and locations are allocated much textual space in the HB and in the memory-scape it evoked, others are rarely considered worth remembering. Thus, for instance, the stories of "falling" into Exile and about the events associated with returning from it are very much worth remembering in the HB, but life in Exile itself is not. The mainly sinful monarchic past is worth remembering, but the present of the literati who wrote these books is not much, because their hope and their memories of a glorious future are, of course, in the future of the readers.

Likewise, while the characters in the books written by the literati are memorable, the actual authors of the books are not; they do not belong to that memorable period. The text, its main characters (e.g., Moses, David, etc.) and the memories that the text evokes are central, but the human agents shaping and transmitting them are imagined as secondary to them. The former were construed as permanent and transtemporal, the latter were temporal, and evanescent. Along with this conceptual process stands the idea that the great people of the past stood and will always stand well above those of the present. Prophets after Moses can only be Mosaic, no king can be David, and so on (cf.



the later rabbinic, and still strongly influential in many Judaic circles, concept of "generational decline."[①] While the habit of thought shaped by the HB construed indeed a narrative of descent from the heights of the foundational period, it also shaped a complementary one about a great ascent leading to a great utopian future. This future is, of course, imagined in multiple, complementary ways, just as the imagined, remembered past and its main characters (see above).

No article can cover the full impact of the HB on the various communities of Jews over time and space, nor among their respective systems of Judaic thought or observance. [②] Even if one were to focus on habits of thought and mind, there are many more that can be considered. Those discussed here serve as a minor lamp helping the visitors to illuminate, even if partially and with only a flickering, a very large, immensely diverse, ever shifting and much alive "neighborhood."

① Cf. b. Šabb. 112b ("Rabbi Zeira said that Rava bar Zimuna said: If the early generations are characterized as sons of angels, we are the sons of men. And if the early generations are characterized as the sons of men, we are akin to donkeys. And I do not mean that we are akin to either the donkey of Rabbi hanina ben Dosa or the donkey of Rabbi Pinhas ben Yair, who were both extraordinarily intelligent donkeys; rather, we are akin to other typical donkeys," (English translation and interpretation according to the William Davidson Talmud).

② One should add also that the impact of the HB was filtered through and interacted with the impact of the other authoritative works (e.g., Talmud, Mishna) that existed in the relevant, mental core "libraries" held by each of the said communities. To approach these matters, even if briefly, constitutes an encyclopedic endeavour.