

## *English Abstracts*

### Achsah, from Object to Subject: A Story about a Wise Woman, a Field, and Water (Judges 1:10–15)

*Yael Shemesh*

The article offers a literary analysis of the short tale in Judges 1:10–15, focusing on Achsah and her transformation during the course of the story. Whereas, at first (vv. 10–13), she is depicted as an object to be given away by her father, in the second half of the story (vv. 14–15) she becomes a subject who gets her father to grant her request. When Achsah becomes an active character in the drama, she is seen to be a wise woman who knows how to influence the two men who are associated with her — her husband Othniel and her father Caleb — in a way that brings a blessing to them all. Achsah's intelligence is also evident in the fact that she addresses her father in a way that is both overt, and also covert and illusive. On the overt level, she asks him for water sources, to ensure the fertility of the land he has given her and her husband. On the covert level, she is asking him to provide them with the conditions that will make it possible for them to have children. A study of the parallels between this story and others, both in the Book of Judges and elsewhere, helps us understand the characterization here — chiefly Achsah, but also Caleb and Othniel — and shows that the story is a positive model for family relations: between brothers, between father-in-law and son-in-law, between spouses, and between father and daughter.

### The Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter

*Chayah Ben-Ayoon*

Most commentators have condemned and criticized Jephthah for his hasty vow, which demanded the sacrifice of his only daughter. Through literary analysis, a close and critical reading of this article offers a different point of view of Jephthah's character and his story.

Our close reading proves that Jephthah was aware of the horrible consequences

of his vow. It also reveals unique relations between father and daughter, and uncovers tensions and intricate relationships that are skillfully woven under apparently simple layers.

This reading shows that the narrator appreciates Jephthah and finds him no less pious than Abraham — who was commanded by the Lord to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice.

## The Downfall of Jephthah

*Jonathan Jacobs*

Jephthah, the judge, is one of the most tragic characters in the Bible; there are few figures in the entire history of ancient literature that can be compared to him. At the outset, Jephthah is banished from his family and from his city, and is seen to lead a group of idlers from the margins of society. Later on — thanks to his military prowess and his gift for rhetoric — he succeeds in making something of himself. He is appointed leader of the nation of Israel, and delivers the people quite spectacularly from severe oppression. But his story concludes with a double tragedy: a personal catastrophe, in which he sacrifices his only daughter, and a national catastrophe, in which he instigates a bitter and cruel civil war.

The purpose of the present article is to explain why the biblical narrator molds Jephthah's character as a disappointing failure of a leader. This aim is achieved primarily by examining the relationship between Jephthah and God, and addressing the factors that lead to Jephthah's absolute failure, both on the personal and the national levels.

Jephthah is uniquely characterized by the following two points: a. He is the only judge who is not commissioned by God, but chosen by the people.

b. Jephthah tries, throughout the narrative, to make contact with God, but with no success.

The article goes on to discuss how the above two points represent the background to Jephthah's personal and national downfall. The thesis presented here is that Jephthah fails not because of his sins and iniquities, but because of the generally degenerate state of the nation. In a generation in which God refuses to send a person to lead the nation of Israel, a leader elected by the people rather than appointed by God cannot possibly be a success. Were this not the case, it would be possible to draw the mistaken conclusion that the nation of Israel

is capable of managing without divine assistance. In the event, Jephthah is the victim of the prevailing situation, of a generation totally cut off from God.

### The Book of Judges — Its Time and Significance

*Yairah Amit*

In this article, I try to pinpoint the time and place of the Book of Judges and to understand its meaning. The assumption is that the writing of history in ancient Israel was not done for purposes of documentation or preservation, but for social and cultural needs — namely, in order to understand the significance of past events, derive lessons from them, and transmit them to the readers. I conclude that the Book of Judges resulted from the experience of the Assyrian invasion and the fall of the northern Israelite kingdom (722 BCE). In other words, most of the book is a Judean pre-Deuteronomistic work, written and edited by Judean intellectuals, scribes, and prophets, in order to prevent their society from facing similar destruction. The hundred years between the fall of northern Israel and Josiah also bore literary fruits, of which the Book of Judges is one — a Judean indictment against the northern leaders who were unable to prevent the catastrophe that befell their society. An analysis of the book's style and ideas (cult, prophecy, kingship and more) supports the conclusion that the main work of editing preceded the composition of Deuteronomy.

### The Relationship between David and Michal, Daughter of King Saul

*Moshe Garsiel*

This article examines the volatile relationship between David and Michal, as depicted in five relevant texts: 1 Sam. 18:17–28; 19:11–18; 25:42–44; 2 Sam. 12–16; 6:14–23. While Michal is described as a woman in love with the charismatic hero David, the latter was prepared to marry the king's daughter only in order to promote his status at the king's court. Michal risked her life to save David from Saul's plot, while David fled and later married two other women.

Earlier, King Saul had annulled Michal's marriage to David and given her to Palti as wife. At a later stage, David claimed her back from Ish-bosheth, his rival as king, in order to gain legitimacy for his claim to the throne as the son-in-law of the late King Saul. The author subtly denounces David's motivation in this "transaction." In the episode of bringing up the ark of God, Michal despised the way David exposed himself while dancing before the Lord, and gave him a piece of her mind. David's response was harsh, reminding her that she was a member of the rejected dynasty, and that he was right to rejoice before the Lord. The author concludes the episode by stating that Michal remained barren until her last day. This episode creates a subtle analogy between the rejected house of Saul and the rejected house of Eli. The article's conclusion is that the final episode brings to fulfillment the prophecies concerning the rejection of Saul's dynasty; however, the poor relationship between the two parties demonstrates the author's point of view regarding the degree to which the desire for power corrupts — and the fact that kingship corrupts even the best of people.

### Josephus's Retelling of the Story of David, Nabal, and Abigail (1 Sam. 25)

*Michael Avioz*

This article seeks to present Josephus's retelling of the story of David, Nabal, and Abigail in 1 Samuel 25. It tries to answer the following questions: what was the text on which Josephus based his story? What are the differences between the biblical version and Josephus's retelling, and how can they be explained? What is Josephus's view of women as reflected in this story?

Our conclusion was that Josephus's version is very similar to the MT, the differences stemming from various reasons: he tries to make the difficult text of MT clearer; omits long speeches; and accentuates David's piety.

As to his view of women as reflected in this story, we rejected the view that it is misogynic. In Josephus's version, as in the Hebrew Bible, Abigail is depicted as beautiful, wise, assertive, and very suitable as a wife for David.

Josephus's retelling of 1 Samuel 25 is connected to the circumstances in which he lived — the Hellenistic society. He appeals both to Jewish and Roman audiences, trying to promote sympathy for the Jewish people and the Roman Empire.

Micaiah's Narrative and the Death of Ahab (1 Kings 22) —  
Proactive Editing

*Jonathan Grossman*

A biblical narrative often manifests itself in two different perspectives: the narrow perspective, in which the unit is seen as standing alone; and the wider perspective, in which the narrative is viewed as part of the cycle in which it appears. It is sometimes possible to differentiate between the significance of a single short story in its own right, and a new understanding of the narrative based on the wider context in which it appears. In this article, the story of Micaiah Ben Imlah is discussed. It is possible to see the original meaning of the story, which is connected to the question of truth of prophecy; however, it is also possible to recognize the new significance that arises out of the placement of the story in its wider context, connected to the portrayal of the character of Ahab before his death.

Time and Memory in the Deuteronomistic History

*Gershon Galil*

This article reconsiders the chronological framework of the Deuteronomistic History (=DH). It is the author's opinion that the deuteronomistic work in Deuteronomy, Kings, and Jeremiah is that of a single person (=Dtr), who prepared in Babylon an extensive composition, in the mid-sixth century BCE, describing the history of Israel from the Exodus to the fall of Jerusalem. The Dtr viewed the relationship between God and Israel as an everlasting bond, and his main intention was to justify the divine judgment and to express hope for the future, transmitting to the exiles the message of redemption.

The Dtr constructs a chronological framework spanning **880** years, from the Exodus to the fall of Jerusalem. He opens the DH with a 40-year period assigned to the leadership of Moses, and concludes it with a period of about 40 years assigned to Jeremiah's career. He divided this epoch into two subperiods: **480** years from the Exodus from Egypt to the establishment of the Temple (1 Kgs. 6:1), and **400** years from the beginning of the Temple period to its destruction. The 480-year era opens with the period of 40 years in the desert and concludes

with a period of 40 years plus 4 years, assigned to David and Solomon. The next two main links are those of the periods of Joshua and Samuel, each lasting probably 40 years. The era between Joshua and Samuel, spanning 314 years, comprises 10 links, arranged by the Dtr in a pattern of 4+3+3: four periods of successive judges (Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, and Gideon); three periods related to the three disappointing judges (Abimelech, Jephthah, and Samson); paralleled by a similar overlapping period also divided into three subperiods, and also related to three unsuccessful leaders — Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. The series of minor judges was not included in the deuteronomistic edition of the Book of Judges, and therefore did not form part of the Dtr's chronology.

The Dtr's chronological framework — spanning 400 years from the establishment of the Temple to the fall of Jerusalem — is clearly schematic; it is divided into subperiods as follows: it opens with the **36** years of Solomon's reign, from his fourth to his fortieth year, and is sealed with the **134** years from the fall of Samaria to the fall of Jerusalem. The period from the schism to the fall of Samaria lasted **230** years. The Dtr made great efforts to preserve the dates found in his sources for this period, on the one hand, but — on the other — he misunderstood his sources in two cases, or fabricated figures in order to reconcile the chronological data found in his sources with his schematic framework: he counted the 20 years to Pekah from the murder of Pekahiah, and the 40 years of Ahaziah from the murder of Ataliah. The difference of ca. 20 years between reality and the Dtr's chronology is probably related to these two data.

The author points to the relationship between the period of the 70 years, attested in Jeremiah, and the passages concluding the books of Kings and Jeremiah. It is suggested that these traditions not only express hope, but also clearly hint at a time of redemption and restoration: in the Dtr's opinion, this event will take place at the end of the 70-year era, which is clearly divided into three subperiods, the first of which opens with a 20-year epoch from the fourth year of Jehoiakim to the fall of Jerusalem; the last 50 years are clearly divided into two equal periods of 25 years each, by the date of Jehoiachin's release from the prison in the thirty-seventh year of his exile.

## Meetings on the Salvation of Jerusalem in Nehemiah 2:1–9

*Joseph Fleishman*

We suggest that the secret of Nehemiah's success in receiving the king's permission — perhaps even more than he had expected and hoped for — was the result of clever and precise planning of his decisive and critical meeting with the king. Nehemiah, who was close to the king, and desperately wanted to strengthen the province of Judea and save Jerusalem from its shame, succeeded in circumventing the sensitive problems that endangered his life and receiving a positive response to his request, by basing his words to the Zoroastrian king on key values of the Zoroastrian faith. Nehemiah was familiar with the king's religion, and the various problems and difficulties of the Persian empire in ruling and holding the provinces Beyond the River — and especially the Province of Judea. Nehemiah skillfully demonstrated to the king that his request was consistent with the principles of the Zoroastrian religion, and that there was nothing in his presence or in his actions in the province of Judea that would jeopardize the peace or stability of the Persian empire.

## The Status of Gath in Micah's Lament for the Cities of Judah

*Yigal Levin*

This paper, presented in honor of Professor S. Vargon, deals with the inclusion of Gath in Micah's lament for the destroyed towns of Judah in Micah 1:10, in a way that seems to evoke David's lament for Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sam. 1:20. The paper deals with the literary composition of the oracle, and assumes that it was composed in connection with Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701 BCE. The eleven towns listed with Jerusalem in verses 10–15 all seem to be in the Shephelah of Judah, which makes the inclusion of Gath, presumably the well-known Philistine city, surprising. After reviewing the solutions suggested by various scholars, we turn to the archaeological evidence available from the ongoing excavations at Tell es-Safi, identified as the Philistine Gath. Excavations have shown that, during the tenth and ninth centuries BCE, Gath was one of the largest cities in the Land of Israel, certainly the most important of the Philistine cities. However, the city was destroyed at the end of the ninth century, and

excavations have revealed a massive siege moat from that time. The excavator has identified this as evidence that the city was conquered by Hazael, king of Aram, as mentioned in 2 Kings 12:18, and referred to in Amos 6:2. Most biblical listings of the Philistine cities after this time no longer mention Gath, and archaeological evidence, including several “*lmk*” stamp impressions found at the site, seems to show that Gath was taken over by the kings of Judah during the eighth century. This is also indicated by 2 Chron. 26:6. In 712 BCE, a town called Gath was captured by Sargon II of Assyria together with Ashdod, but not all scholars agree on the identity of this town. The well-known “Azekah Inscription” also mentions a “royal city of the Philistines that Hezekiah king of Judah had fortified” as being conquered by an Assyrian king; we accept Na’aman’s attribution of this inscription to Sennacherib, and his original identification of the city as Gath. This, together with the “*lmk*” stamp impressions, and the fact that settlement at the site seems to have ended at the end of the eighth century, all serve to show that eighth-century Gath, the city conquered and destroyed by Sennacherib, was indeed controlled by the kingdom of Judah. In our view, it is possible that Micah actually intended Gath to be included in his lament, although Vargon’s suggestion — that the order not to tell or to weep in Gath was aimed at the remaining Philistine population, now under Judahite rule — seems to better fit the text.

### Royal Estates in the Kingdom of Judah in View of the Archaeological Finds

*Hayah Katz*

The biblical sources describe the existence of royal estates in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. In this article, the archaeological evidence of this phenomenon is examined. During the last third of the eighth century BCE, royal estates were initially established all over Judah, in the Shephelah on the western border and in Ein-Gedi in the east. Royal centers were built in the periphery around Jerusalem. These centers, like Motza, Beit-Safafa, and Gibeon, were used for production and storage. It is logical to assume that the appearance of the royal “*lmk*” storage jars at the end of the eighth century BCE was connected to this process, when the kingdom of Judah needed to store agricultural produce for the first time in



large quantities. Some of these estates were destroyed in 586 BCE, while others remained property of the Crown throughout the Second-Temple period and later.

### The Scribal Families of Jabetz and their Settlement in the Judean Mountains

*Aaron Demsky*

This paper illuminates the biblical tradition of Jabetz, a descendant of Jethro, as recorded in 1 Chron. 2 55; 4:9–10. After summarizing the commentaries, attention is given to the geographical aspect of the settlement of this non-Israelite family in southern Judah. Seeking proximity, the clan names Tiratim, Shimatim, and Sukkatim are identified, respectively, with the sites: Tel `Ira, Eshtemoa, and Socoh (south). The social background of the group is mentioned in light of the maternal naming process and the unique kinship terms *חמת* and *באים*. Of particular interest is the issue of the textual break in the material between 1 Chronicles 2 and 4, for which an historiographic and literary explanation is given.

### Social Criticism of the Prophets and the Social Reality in Israel and Judah: An Archaeological Examination

*Avraham Faust*

The prophets' social criticism has received considerable scholarly attention, mainly by biblical scholars, historians, and theologians. Most scholars, while their opinions differ in many respects, believe that the prophecies reflect the harsh social reality in the late monarchic period, when a small number of rich seized most of the lands, and the vast majority of the population became poor and landless. Traditional society disintegrated, and the large extended families broke down. Some scholars, however, while considering Israelite society to be highly stratified, believe that the above description is exaggerated; yet others believe that the Israelite society retained its traditional structure throughout the period. According to this view, the prophets' reproach does not indicate social disintegration, and there was no socioeconomic stratification at the time.

An examination of the archaeological evidence, however, shows a more complex reality. While there is clear evidence for severe socioeconomic stratification in the Israelite cities, the finds indicate that large extended families with strong communal organization prevailed in the rural sector until the end of the period of the monarchy.

The prophets' reproach seems to have reflected what they observed — serious stratification in those cities where they were active. In the villages, however, the differences were far less acute, and the traditional structure of society continued to predominate. A new examination of the written sources, especially Jeremiah, strengthens this interpretation.

## Dialogue and Negotiation Tactics in Biblical Narrative

*Frank Polak*

Dialogue, which is all-important in biblical narrative, often represents negotiations between two parties. Many perceived difficulties in the spoken exchange between the parties find a ready solution in the light of negotiation tactics. Abraham's proclamation of readiness to enter into a covenant with the king of Gerar, Abimelech, which is followed by the raising of issues that demand a solution, can be interpreted as a preliminary agreement to initiate negotiations, while using the opportunity to raise the issue of the wells (Gen. 21:24–25). In the parallel narrative, Isaac's angry reaction to the visit of the king of Gerar and his army chief (Gen. 26:26) is a way to wrest concessions from his interlocutors, who have to appease him.

Attention to the progress of the negotiations and the tactics used is a *sine qua non* for the interpretation of a number of important narratives. Analysis of the tale of the Machpelah cave reveals the subtle tactics used by Abraham and the Hittites, as well as Abraham's magnanimity. The patriarch is represented as a munificent nobleman (Isa. 32:5), whereas Ephron is portrayed as a greedy townsman, set to make the most of the opportunity offered to him by this "mighty prince." The tale of the people's demand for a king (1 Sam. 8) also embodies a negotiation process. The elders use Samuel's weaknesses in order to silence him as they present their demand. The divine answer to Samuel's prayer (v. 7a) signifies a preliminary agreement to open negotiations, whereas the warning against the king's "rights" is to be Samuel's main argument. In the end, however,

the elders are victorious. Thus, the conservative opposition to the institution of the monarchy has its voice heard and, by its association with the prophet, is even shown great respect. However, it does not prevail: the monarchy carries the day and is even granted divine support.

### Inquiring of God before Ratifying a Treaty

*David Elgavish*

Israel established a treaty with the Gibeonites. To this fact the story-teller adds the critical comment: “and did not inquire of the Lord” (Jos. 9:14). This comment brings with it an obligation to investigate whether there was a practice of asking God prior to concluding a treaty. To this end, I will deal with the association between the concluding of treaties in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible, and the gods, in order to discern the theological and political aspects of the appeal to the gods prior to establishing a treaty.

Rulers of the Ancient Near East approached diviners before ratifying treaties in order to make sure that the second party was speaking sincerely and intended to respect his obligations. The rulers wanted also to be reassured that the gods were in favor of their actions. Nevertheless, they did not always respect the diviners’ response, and sometimes acted contrary to the advice of the prophets.

By contrast, we have no testimony to inquiring of God before concluding an agreement in the Bible, although we do have remarks that are critical of rulers who established treaties without consulting with God. The objection to the policy of those rulers was not on principle, but pertained to certain cases in which the religious and national interests were put at risk. The most explicit example of this is the statement in Joshua 9:14. Joshua and the Israelite leadership established an agreement with the Gibeonites, who were residents of the country, thereby violating the ban law. The Israelite leadership did not mention God’s name in their conversations with the Gibeonites, and took action without referring to Him, thus insulting God’s honor in the presence of foreigners.

Besides defaming God’s name, there is criticism of rulers who established treaties with their partners without consulting with God, and harmed their national interest: Ahaz, king of Judah, subjugated his country to the Assyrian king in order to obtain his military assistance against Aram and Israel (Isa. 7: 4–13); Hezekiah sought Egypt’s help against Assyria, and established a protection treaty with Egypt

(Isa. 30–31); Menahem, the king of Israel, ascended the throne by usurpation. He killed his predecessor, and subjugated himself to the king of Assyria in order to gain support for his kingship. In all these cases the consequences of the treaty were to bring trouble upon Israel and Judah, which the prophets claimed could have been prevented by first consulting with God.

### “He Subdued the Water Monster/ Crocodile”: God’s Battle with the Sea according to Egyptian Sources

*Nili Shupak*

The battle of God with the sea, which symbolizes the conflict between the cosmic order and the powers of chaos, was a prevalent myth in the ancient world. Different versions of this myth from Babylon, Ugarit, Mari, and Hatti have long been known. Allusions to this myth occur also in the Bible (cf. Gen. 1:21; Isa. 27:1; 51: 9–10; Ps. 74:13; Job 7:12; 26:12–13; Hab. 3:8–9, 15; etc.).

The common research view is that the Hebrew texts bear the imprint of the Mesopotamian or Ugaritic versions, and, more recently, the impact of Asia Minor has even been mentioned.

The aim of the present discussion is to demonstrate that a parallel myth, which unfortunately has not attracted the attention it merits, was also known in ancient Egypt. The Egyptian tradition is documented from the second millennium BCE until the Roman period, thus predating most of the Ancient Near Eastern versions, the oldest of which is from the 18th–17th centuries BCE.

The Egyptian myth has been preserved in a fragmented state in many sources (literary and iconographic). To reconstruct it, one must gather and assemble these scattered fragments into one whole piece.

The present investigation establishes that the tradition of God’s battle with the sea was well known in ancient Egypt. The possibility that the tradition left its traces in the biblical texts is not to be excluded.

## The Meaning of the Book of Haggai in Light of its Structure and Historical Background

*Elie Assis*

This article reveals the sophisticated structure of the Book of Haggai and its significance. The structure of the book is part of the rhetoric used by the prophet to contend with the people's thinking that reality had not met their hopes. They had expected, in vain, the immediate renewal of the "old days." They, therefore, believed that God was not with them, and felt that they were still being rejected by Him. Haggai argues to the contrary: God is with them despite the seemingly desperate situation; the anticipated reality will materialize, but only gradually. The book's structure also shows that it is not a random collection of oracles, but one unified literary work.

## Haggai and Ezekiel: The Complicated Relations between the Two Prophets

*Rimon Kasher*

The problem of the possible link between Haggai and Ezekiel (the prophets and the books) has been raised in recent years by several scholars, including P.D. Hanson (1975), C. Stuhlmueller (1988), A. Laato (1992), and S.S. Tuell (2003).

In our article we carefully examine the individual arguments, and conclude that only a few are valid.

Despite this, we can show that Haggai and Ezekiel share certain prominent elements of their worldviews. Both seem to belong to an apocalyptic movement; both base their concepts on theocentricity, and both deal seriously with the question of God's status. Their solutions are quite different, however, due to their personal experience and the difference in their political and social situations.

## Some Chapters in the Biography of Job

*Edward L. Greenstein*

An effort is made to fill in some of the chapters in the biography of the biblical character of Job, based on what is related in various parts of the Book of Job, and on what we know about the cultural milieu of the Bible. The Book of Job itself is not biographical in form, and, in fact, there is no full biographical work known from the Ancient Near East or from the Bible. As there is no authentic conventional model for writing a biblical (or any other) form of biography, one must follow one's own best instincts in pursuing biographical questions, fleshing out the character as one does ordinarily in reading narrative.

Our analysis suggests that Job and his companions are fictitious characters from the Transjordan, who seem to have had business connections with each other. Job, no less than his companions, is learned and well versed in rhetoric and law. Before God afflicted and thereby stigmatized him, Job had served his community as a respected magistrate, who took pride in dispensing justice. God's affliction of Job is therefore doubly injurious: God not only treats Job unjustly, but also prevents him from promoting justice in his society. Job's most important value, the one by which he lives, is truthfulness. He is committed to speaking only what he believes to be true, and makes every effort to learn the truth about his suffering. In the end, Job earns the Lord's praise for his dedication to truth.

## A Pen for All Seasons? Towards a Story of David's Rise as Psalmist

*Ruth Fidler*

It is well known that attitudes toward David's psalmody underwent significant changes, to ultimately yield the portrait of the psalmist *par excellence*. Exploring some of these changes through their reflections in biblical and post-biblical writings, this study classifies the testimonies on David's artistic and poetic achievement into three archetypes: (1) a gifted poet and performer, David's work has an almost magical effect on those exposed to (or manipulated by) it; (2) the founder of temple music and psalmody, David is celebrated as a cultic-ritual institution, thereby losing much of his controversial individuality; (3) to become the canonical psalmist and author of the Book of Psalms, David's persona has to

retain (or regain) its individuality, a process assisted by subjecting his sin to a poetic cathartic encounter (e.g. Ps. 51), or by omitting it altogether (e.g. “David’s Compositions” in 11QPs<sup>a</sup> xxvii 2–11).

To some extent, these archetypes can be seen as successive phases in the literary-historical evolution of David’s portrait as a poet, each reflecting major values of its time. Yet “archetypes” is found to be a more helpful concept than “phases” in handling data that does not fit into the evolutionary model.

### The Prophecy of the “Shoot” (Isaiah 10:33–11:9) and the Mythic Figure of the Tree on the Hill

*Lea Mazor*

The prophecy of the “shoot” envisions the dawn of an age when injustice and lawlessness will disappear from the world of man and beast, and harmony will prevail. Conceptual, substantive, stylistic, and linguistic components, all drawn from the rich store of Creation motifs, attested within the Bible as well as in extra-biblical literature, are prominent in the depiction. These are employed by the prophet in a distinctive manner, designed to portray the future both as a return to and an improved version of a time of primordial completion.

The organizing principle of the prophecy and the key to understanding its delineation and the interconnections between the various parts is the mythic symbol of the tree on the hill. The hill is the divine dwelling place; the tree — of knowledge, of life — draws its sustenance from the abundant water found there. Each of the separate components comprising this prophecy is a link in the dense world vision gradually revealed to the prophet. It includes, from the top down, the spirit of God, the shoot (=the tree/leader), human beings, animals, the hill, and water. The spirit of God that comes to rest on the shoot sets into motion a process of change, culminating in the creation of a perfect new order.

“By the River Babylon” — Between Oracles of Redemption and  
Yearning for Redemption

*Bustenai Oded*

In this study, the author argues that the prophetic messages of redemption and the bright future that follows (not eschatological visions) – mainly in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Second Isaiah — reflect the hopes and desires of the expatriates in Babylonia to return to the land of their ancestors. The author attempts to prove this claim against a large number of biblical scholars with opposing opinions, by discussing several topics: (1) awareness of Exile/Captivity; (2) collective memory; (3) genealogies and voluntary segregation; (4) religion and precepts; (5) the international background; (6) “False Prophets”; (7) yearning for the reestablishment of Israel’s everlasting covenant with God, of the Davidic Monarchy and rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem as of old; (8) onomasticon.

On Malbim’s Exegetical Method  
In the Light of his Commentary on  
Genesis 4, Hosea 14, and Psalms 89

*Amos Frisch*

The article profiles the exegetical method employed by Meir Leibush Malbim (1809–79). This is done by a close reading of Malbim’s commentary on three typical passages, one from each division of the Hebrew Bible, and from three different genres (narrative, prophecy, psalm). For each passage, Malbim’s comments are compared mainly with those of a particular author (the 20th-century commentator Umberto Cassuto, the medieval commentator David Kimhi, and the academic scholar Shmuel Segal).

The conclusion summarizes four prominent features of the commentary revealed by this reading: distinguishing among synonyms, focusing on binary oppositions, presenting a coherent conception of the literary unit, and revealing the thoughts of the biblical characters and treating them with due respect. The commentator thus achieves one of his two overarching goals — to demonstrate the perfection of the Bible with regard to its form and content, which is a direct consequence of its holiness. The second overarching goal is to buttress the status



of the Oral Law and the Sages; their comments are not far-fetched or distorted, but are in fact based on a deep understanding of biblical Hebrew.

Despite the occasional forced arguments and the artificiality of some of Malbim's comments, from a historical perspective we should adopt a balanced view, which recognizes that his exegetical labors were enlisted in the service of his contemporary challenges, and appreciate the enduring value of his enterprise.

### Forbidden Sexual Relations in Biblical Hebrew

*Mayer I. Gruber*

Like computer viruses that are transmitted from one computer to another by way of infected floppy disks or electronic mail, the idea that the verbal root "ayin-nun-yod" refers to extramarital sex travels at the speed of light around the world of biblical exegesis, notwithstanding cogent demonstrations to the contrary by Weinfeld (1972) and numerous other scholars, ancient and modern. Meanwhile, the one verbal root that is consistently employed in biblical Hebrew to refer to illicit, extramarital sex, namely *sh-g-l*, which appears four times in all of Hebrew Scripture, has been virtually ignored in the discussion of sex in ancient Israel. The history of this root in medieval Hebrew and the proper understanding of the unrelated noun *shegal* (meaning "wife/consort of the reigning king") represent two additional neglected chapters in the history of Hebrew lexicography.

### The Function of Body Features as a Literary Device in the Hebrew Bible

*Scott B. Noegel*

This article examines a hitherto unrecognized literary device in biblical Hebrew texts. The device entails the subtle clustering of references to bodily features in both poetry and prose. It is employed literally, idiomatically, and through the use of word-play in a way that subtly reinforces a particular theme in the text. The concatenation of bodily features constitutes a subtextual program, a meta-narrative, that adds symbolic weight to the idioms employed. After

demonstrating the device as found in an Akkadian oracular text from Ishchali, the study discusses seven biblical pericopes (Exod. 4:1–17, Judg. 3:12–30, Judg. 7:1–25, 1 Sam. 5:1–6, Jonah 2:3–10, Prov. 6:1–35, and Prov. 8:1–36).

Corrections in the MT Motivated by the Belief in God's Love for  
Israel: Amos 6:8; Hosea 1:6; Jeremiah 31:31 (32)

*Alexander Rofe*'

The Lord's love for Israel was a central tenet in biblical religion. It was asserted by Hosea, Jeremiah, Deuteronomy, and Malachi. Post-biblical works such as the Damascus Document followed suit. With this principle in mind, Second Commonwealth scribes corrected a few passages in the prophetic books where the opposite had been maintained, namely that the Lord hated Israel.

In Amos 6:8, the original *t'.b.* was corrected to *t'.b.* In Hosea 1:6, the original *s.n.'* was corrected to *n.s.'* In Jeremiah 31:31, the original *g'.l.* was corrected to *b'.l.*

These textual corrections were probably made at an early stage of the textual transmission, since the presumed original reading left no traces in any ancient texts.