

Torah and Tradition

*Papers Read at the Sixteenth Joint Meeting
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Contents

Preface VII

Introduction: Fifteen Joint Meetings and the Sixteenth 1

Klaas Spronk

Reexamining the ‘Fathers’ in Deuteronomy’s Framework 10

Bill T. Arnold

Did the Assyrian Envoy Know the *Venite?*: What did He Know?

What did He Say? And should He be Believed? 42

Graeme Auld

‘I am a God and Not a Human Being’: The Divine Dilemma in Hosea 54

Samuel E. Balentine

Covenant, Agreement, and Law: The Social Code Underlying the Book
of Nehemiah 70

Bob Becking

Geography in Num 33 and 34 and the Challenge of Pentateuchal
Theory 93

Koert van Bekkum

The Concept of Torah in the Book of Isaiah 118

Jaap Dekker

The Kingship Motif in Isaiah 61:1–3 135

Hedy Hung

The Influence of the Decalogue on the Shape of Exodus 150

William Johnstone

The Greek Translators of the Pentateuch and the Epicureans 176

Michaël N. van der Meer

**Leviticus from a Gendered Perspective: Making and Maintaining
Priests 201**

Deborah W. Rooke

**Interpreting Torah: Strategies of Producing, Circulating, and Validating
Authoritative Scriptures in Early Judaism 223**

Jacques van Ruiten

**The Inner Cohesion of Jeremiah 34:8–22, on the Liberation of Slaves during
the Siege of Jerusalem, and its Relation to Deuteronomy 15 239**

Klaas A.D. Smelik

Index of Authors 251

Index of Textual References 258

Introduction: Fifteen Joint Meetings and the Sixteenth

Klaas Spronk

The publication of the proceedings of the sixteenth joint meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study (SOTS) and the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap (OTW) is a good moment to look back to the history of these meetings. The idea of a joint meeting came up with Piet de Boer, professor of Old Testament in Leiden, at the end of the sixties. In 1950 he had already organized an international meeting of the Dutch Society of Old Testament Study in Leiden. It was attended by famous scholars like Albrecht Alt, Martin Noth, Norman Porteous, and Harold Rowley. On this occasion the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament (IOSOT) was founded. Apparently, for De Boer this was not enough, because twenty years later he as president of the OTW and the board of the SOTS decided to start joint meetings of their societies. There is no official statement about the motives behind this new initiative. It was certainly furthered by the very good contacts between De Boer and a number of his British colleagues. Perhaps they also wanted to have international meetings on a smaller scale next to the big events of the IOSOT and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL). From the start the joint meetings had a more open and relaxed character than those of the IOSOT and SBL. Of course, the papers presented should be of a good quality, but De Boer also invited students to attend the meetings and some of them also got the opportunity to present some of their research.

The first meeting was held in the Netherlands, at Woudschoten. Since then there has been a meeting every three years, alternately in the Low Countries and in Britain. The papers read were published by Brill in the series *Oudtestamentische Studien*. Every meeting had a specific theme.

1. Woudschoten (1970)—M.A. Beek et al., *The Witness of Tradition: Papers Read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference Held at Woudschoten* (OTS, 17), Leiden 1972.
2. Londen (1973)—J. Barr et al., *Language and Meaning: Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis. Papers Read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference Held At London, 1973* (OTS, 19), Leiden 1974.
3. Leuven (1976)—H.A. Brongers et al., *Instruction and Interpretation: Studies in Hebrew language, Palestinian Archaeology and Biblical Exegesis:*

- Papers Read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference Held at Louvain, 1976* (OTS, 20), Leiden 1977.
4. Cambridge (1979)—B. Albrektson et al., *Remembering All the Way...: A Collection of Old Testament Studies Published on the Occasion of the Fortieth Anniversary of the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland* (OTS, 21), Leiden 1981.
 5. Woudschoten (1982)—A.S. van der Woude (ed.), *Prophets, Worship and Theodicy: Studies in Prophetism, Biblical Theology and Structural and Rhetorical Analysis and on the Place of Music in Worship: Papers read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference held at Woudschoten, Zeist, from 1–3 September 1982* (OTS, 23), Leiden 1984.
 6. Cambridge (1985)—A.S. van der Woude (ed.), *Crises and Perspectives: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Polytheism, Biblical Theology, Palestinian Archaeology and Intertestamental Literature. Papers read at the joint British-Dutch Old Testament conference held at Cambridge* (OTS, 24), Leiden 1986.
 7. Elspeet (1988)—A.S. van der Woude (ed.), *In Quest of the Past: Studies on Israelite Religion, Literature and Prophetism: Papers Read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference, Held at Elspeet, 1988* (OTS, 26), Leiden 1990.
 8. Durham (1991)—The papers have not been published in OTS.¹
 9. Kampen (1994)—J.C. de Moor (ed.) *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis. Papers Read at the Ninth Joint Meeting of Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België and The Society for Old Testament Study Held at Kampen, 1994* (OTS, 34), Leiden 1995.

1 The conference was held at Grey College, Durham, 16–19 July 1991. The program contained papers by G. Vermes, 'Gen 1–3 in post-biblical Hebrew and Aramaic Literature: before the Mishnah'; P. Hailnal & M.D. Goulder, 'Gen 1–3 in Greek Jewish Literature'; P.S. Alexander, 'Gen 1–3 in Rabbinic and Mystical Literature'; N. Solomon & G.I. Emmerson, 'Gen 1–3 in Modern Jewish and Christian Interpretation'; M.D. Koster, 'Peshitta Revisited: A Reassessment of its Value as a Version'; K.A.D. Smelik, 'The Portrayal of King Manasseh: Texts and Traditions' (published in K.A.D. Smelik, *Converting the Past: Studies in Ancient Israelite and Moabite Historiography* [OTS 28], Leiden 1992, 129–189); D.J. Lane, 'Text: Scholar and Church: the Place of the Leiden Peshitta within the Context of Scholastically and Ecclesiastically Definitive Editions'; A. van der Kooij, 'The Story of David and Goliath: The Early History of its Text' (published in *ETL* 68 [1992], 118–131); B.E.J.H. Becking, 'Jeremiah's Book of Consolation: A Textual Comparison of the Old Greek and Masoretic Versions' (published in *VT* 44 [1994], 146–169); R.P. Gordon, 'Dialogue and Disputation in the Targum to the Prophets' (published in *JSS* 39 [1994], 7–17).

10. Oxford (1997)—J.C. de Moor (ed.), *Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel. Papers Read at the Tenth Joint Meeting of The Society for Old Testament Study and Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België, Held at Oxford, 1997* (OTS, 40), Leiden 1998.
11. Soesterberg (2000)—J.C. de Moor (ed.), *The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character and Anonymous Artist. Papers Read at the Eleventh Joint Meeting of The Society for Old Testament Study and Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België, Held at Soesterberg 2000* (OTS, 45), Leiden 2001.
12. Cambridge (2003)—R.P. Gordon and J.C. de Moor (eds), *The Old Testament in Its World: Papers Read at the Winter Meeting, January 2003, the Society for Old Testament Study and at the Joint Meeting, July 2003, the Society for Old Testament Study and Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België* (OTS, 52), Leiden 2005.
13. Apeldoorn (2006)—B. Becking and E. Peels (eds), *Psalms and Prayers: Papers Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society of Old Testament Study and Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België, Apeldoorn August 2006* (OTS, 55), Leiden 2007.
14. Lincoln 2009—B. Becking and L.L. Grabbe (eds), *Between Evidence and Ideology: Essays on the History of Ancient Israel read at the Joint Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study and the Oud Testamentisch Werkgezelschap Lincoln, July 2009* (OTS, 59), Leiden 2011.
15. Amsterdam 2012—G.J. Brooke et al. (eds), *Goochem in Mokum: Wisdom in Amsterdam. Papers on Biblical and Related Wisdom Read at the Fifteenth Joint Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study and the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap, Amsterdam, July 2012* (OTS 68), Leiden 2016.

Overseeing all these themes one could ask: is there anything that was not discussed in all these joint meetings? One could also ask: was it worth the effort? Or: can we speak here of good examples of teamwork? It is good to be reminded of the remark made by De Boer when looked back at 25 years of OTW, noting that it appears to be very difficult to really study together.² That was back in 1965. Since then he and many others organized all kinds of cooperation and

2 Cf. K. Spronk, 'Seventy-five years Oudtestamentisch werkgezelschap—the Study of the Old Testament in the Netherlands and Belgium', in K. Spronk (ed.), *The Present State of OT Studies in the Low Countries A Collection of Old Testament Studies Published on the Occasion of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap* (OTS, 69), Leiden 2016, 1–12; esp. 5.

many projects in which a number of scholars work together have been set up. But is it enough?

When one compares the field of Old Testament research to that of, for instance, medical research or economics, it can only be concluded that biblical scholars are notoriously individualistic. In the Netherlands a committee presided by Ed Noort, professor Emeritus of Old Testament of the University of Groningen, wrote a report about the situation of the academic studies of theology and religion.³ The main conclusion is that the only chance to end the continuous closing down of the faculties of theology is to cooperate. Because good theology begins with decent study of the Old Testament, the scholars in this field should give here the good example.

The proceedings of the sixteenth joint meeting⁴ presented in this volume will show the fruits of the ongoing cooperation between the members of the two societies, with room for very different approaches. The theme 'Torah and tradition' takes up the theme of the first meeting in 1970: 'The Witness of Tradition'. Comparing the two volumes, the reader will notice that things have become more complicated, but also that progress has been made in describing the multifaceted traditions behind the Hebrew Bible in its present form.

In his contribution 'Reexamining the "Fathers" in Deuteronomy's Framework' Bill T. Arnold takes up the theory of John Van Seters and Thomas Römer of the patriarchal name-formula as late insertions in the text made necessary during the post-exilic period when the ancestral traditions of Genesis were first bound to the Moses-exodus narrative. A reexamination of the name-formula identifies Deut 1:8 as a *crux interpretum* for the insertion theory and explores further its role in Deut 1–3. It results in a new perspective on the use of the patriarchal name-formula in Deuteronomy and raises questions about the supposed gains inhering to the insertion theory. It is more likely that the deuteronomistic scribes were aware of the use of 'fathers' for the exodus generation, and used the name-formula intentionally to clarify which 'fathers' were in view.

Graeme Auld begins his paper on the Assyrian envoy in 2 Chr 32 by noting that there is no conflict between the Chronicler's report of Hezekiah's reform

3 *Klaar om te wenden. . . . De academische bestudering van religie in Nederland: een verkenning*. KNAW, Amsterdam 2015.

4 The paper by Pieter van der Lugt, 'The Wave-like Motion of the "Song of the Sea" (Exod 15:1–18) and the People of Israel as a Worshipping Community', was published in *ZAW* 128 (2016), 49–63. The paper by Anselm Hagedorn, 'The Biblical Laws of Asylum between Mediterraneanism and Postcolonial Critique' will be published in *ZAR*. The contributions to the present volume by Bill Arnold and Klaas Smelik were not read at the conference.

and that offered by the Assyrian envoy. In 2 Kgs 18, however, altars were not included in the narrator's list of four destructions practised by Hezekiah, while the envoy makes a feature of altars being removed and 'this' altar being chosen. The possibility of the envoy's independence from the narrator raises the question of his credibility. The narrator in Isaiah offers no reform report, and in the shorter Greek text (Isa 36:7–8) none is provided even by the envoy. The Greek rendering of the envoy's advice ('mix with my master') marks him as a figure of fun; and this may also be intended by 'prostrate before this/one altar' of the majority tradition. The corrections in both Kings and Chronicles to the report of Solomon standing to pray may be correlated with the emphasis on prostration before YHWH in Book IV of the Psalms, and especially the Venite.

Samuel Balentine, "I am God and not a Human Being": The Divine Dilemma in Hosea, relocates Tertullian's question, 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?' by focusing on Hos 11:9: What does Hosea have to do with Homer (or Hesiod)? If Hos 11:9 is the answer is to some sort of divine dilemma—'I am God (or "a god", ἑὸς) and not a human', that is, 'I am this kind of god but not that kind of god'—then what were the presenting metatheistic and metaethical questions that shaped the world of the text? The exploration comprises three parts: 1) generic concepts of divinity in Mesopotamia, the Levant, and Greece in the eighth to sixth centuries, especially connections between Hosea's El-God and Homer's Zeus-god; 2) transcultural distinctions between divine and human portfolios, especially descriptions of divine judgment exercised by Zeus and YHWH/El; and 3) the interface between divine moralizing and moralizing about the divine. It is suggested that Hosea provides his readers with an education in divine moralizing ('How can I give you up, Ephraim', 11:8) while he himself is at the same time moralizing about the divine. Hosea's YHWH-God can transcend even divine limitations, a sort of self-transcendence in which divine compassion exceeds divine anger. YHWH is both more than human-like and more than God-like. In a pre-Socratic world, where the formal conceptualization of philosophy (love of learning) is as yet unarticulated, Hosea's author is already doing pre-moral, philosophical work.

In his article 'Covenant, Agreement and Law: the Social Code underlying the Book of Nehemiah' Bob Becking scrutinizes the concept of the social code in the Book of Nehemiah. He observes that the prayer in Neh 1 stresses the basic intention towards God's commandments. Neh 5 argues for the appropriation of the concept of 'remission' in a period of economic decline caused by drought. The presentation of the law in Neh 8 urges the reinstatement of the Feast of Booths. In Neh 13 the new community is marked by specific regulations on exogamous marriages and the celebration of the Shabbat. The Book of Nehemiah cannot play a role in the discussion of the formation

of the Pentateuch, since Nehemiah offers not a reflection on the whole of the Torah, but presents the 'Gebot der Stunde' for the new community in and around Jerusalem.

Koert van Bekkum, 'Geography in Numbers 33–34 and Recent Pentateuchal Theory', notes that both earlier and recent discussions of the composition, genre and historical background of the itinerary in Num 33:1–49 and of the description of the Promised Land in Num 34:1–12 have highlighted the pre-exilic nature of these texts. He considers what challenge this poses to recent theories of the formation of the Pentateuch. On one hand, it is still difficult to detect the specific sources behind the itinerary list of Num 33. On the other hand much information is available with regard to the tradition history of the geographical concept that is used in Num 34:1–12; Josh 13:2–6; Judg 3:3; and Ezek 47:15–20. In addition, this pre-exilic material turns out to be remarkably well integrated into Num 26–36 as a whole. These observations pose serious problems for several literary-critical criteria and for the suggestion that the chapters belong to a post-priestly compositional layer. They suggest that different, less deductive alternatives, including exploring the possibility of a tradition regarding an earlier blending of D- and P-like vocabulary and style, need to be found.

Jaap Dekker, 'The Concept of Torah in the Book of Isaiah', notes the difference of opinion regarding whether Torah in the book of Isaiah should be understood as referring to the Mosaic Torah or in a more general sense be seen as indicative of prophetic instruction. It is argued that in the first part of Isaiah תורה refers to prophetic instruction as a general reference to the concept of justice and righteousness. In the second part it substantively refers to the realizing of YHWH's salvific righteousness. This latter concept is already indicated in the programmatic vision of Isa 2:1–4. Nothing indicates that a Torah-revision afterwards has altered this understanding of תורה or consequently the overall message of the book. While the paper does argue that the final form of the book requires that all references to תורה be seen as referring to Mosaic Torah, it is suggested that, from a wider canonical perspective the closure of the segment of the נבאים in Mal 3:22 makes clear that in the end, both the Law and the Prophets are to be read in accordance with each other. Thus whenever Christian theology interprets prophecy as diametrically opposed to the legal context of the Pentateuch, this reads against the grain of the present canonical form of the Hebrew Bible.

In her article 'The Kingship Motif in Isaiah 61:1–3' Hedy Hung observes that Isa 61:1–3 is generally taken to be a prophecy about the ideal servant, or the prophet claiming to be the servant, who works for the restoration of post-exilic Jerusalem. It is suggested that two reasons account for this interpretation:

1) the passage inherits the servant motif from the Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah; 2) the fact that Israel has come under Persia's shadow makes restoration to Davidic kingship seem impossible. It is argued that it was not likely that this text is limited to the reading of an ideal servant nor that history has dictated the thoughts and expressions of the Isaianic writing communities. It is suggested that Isa 61:1–3 has a kingship motif and that this motif is seen to be intricately related to the servant motif in the Servant Songs by comparing the literary features of 61:1–3 with those of the Servant Songs as well as those of chapter 11. The paper explores the continuity and the transformation of the kingship and the servant motifs in different contexts and how the eschatologically important category of myth functions in this text.

William Johnstone, 'The Influence of the Decalogue on the Shape of Exodus', argues that Deut 5's reminiscences attest that its 'Horeb Decalogue' was once present in Exod 20 (cf. the repeated cross-reference 'as YHWH your God commanded you'). A number of considerations confirm the presence of the 'Horeb Decalogue' in the original version of Exodus: the narrative surrounding its revelation in Exodus matches that in Deuteronomy; Deut 5:31 confirms the role of the Book of the Covenant (Exod 20:22–23:33) as exposition of the 'Horeb Decalogue' and as code for the covenant in Exod 24:3–8; twice over, the reaffirmation of the covenant in Exod 34:5–26 uses the figure of speech of *merismus* to confirm that the terms of the covenant are unchanged. The first merism (34:5–16) begins citing the opening of the 'Horeb Decalogue' (Exod 20:5–6) and ends with a free play on the conclusion of the Book of the Covenant in Exod 23:20–33; the second (34:17–26) also begins with citing the opening of the 'Horeb Decalogue' and ends with a parallel version of the concluding legal stipulations of the Book of the Covenant in Exod 23:14–19. P's 'Sinai edition' of the Decalogue that now stands in Exod 20 affirms that the Decalogue may indeed function as a formative influence on the shape of Exodus provided it is interpreted in cosmic terms, as in its most radical change: the motive for observing Sabbath.

In his article 'The Greek Translation of the Pentateuch in the Light of Contemporary Hellenistic Philosophy' Michaël van der Meer argues, in response to the contemporary discussion in Septuagint studies concerning the possible influence of philosophical (often: Platonic) influence upon the Greek translators of the Hebrew scriptural books, that the Greek version of Genesis may reflect the influence of Greek philosophy, but only in an indirect way. He suggests that a number of unusual Greek renderings in the creation stories can be seen as deliberate attempts to avoid hedonistic concepts known from Epicureanism and its Cyrenaic predecessors. These expressions concern the translation of Hebrew *יְדֵי יָם* with Greek *παραδείσος τῆς τρυφῆς* instead of

κήπος τῆς ἡδονῆς in order to avoid associations with the garden of Epicurus, the avoidance of the concept ἡδονή and ἐπιθυμία in Gen 18:12 (Hebrew עֲדָנָה) and Gen 3:16 and 4:7 (Hebrew תְּשׁוּבָה) as well as the idea of an empty (Greek κενός) universe (Gen 1:2 תִּהְיֶה).

Deborah Rooke, 'Leviticus from a Gendered Perspective', observes that in both the making and the maintaining of cult and priesthood in Leviticus, there is a clear masculine gender-bias. In this overwhelmingly androcentric conception, women bring some of the raw materials for the cultic apparatus, and are required for reproductive purposes to maintain the priestly line. But they are excluded from the arena of the holy, and any holiness that they appear to have as a result of either their birth from or marriage to a priest disappears when their connection or proximity to the priest ends or is superseded. Indeed, far from being holy, women can threaten priestly holiness, specifically by virtue of their sexuality; this is evidenced by the restrictions on priests' marriage partners, the severe condemnation of a priest's daughter who becomes a prostitute, and the ban on priests mourning their wives and married sisters alone of all their close relatives. Priests who fail to observe these restrictions risk profaning themselves and/or their offspring, thereby losing their priestly status. At the same time, the cult as presented in Exodus and Leviticus could not exist or continue without women. Rooke concludes that the nature of cultic holiness in this material is clear: it is constructed, performative, and provisional, like the notions of gender that underlie it.

In his article 'Interpreting Torah: Strategies for Producing, Circulating, and Validating Authoritative Scriptures in Early Judaism' Jacques van Ruiten argues that in antiquity, especially in early Jewish literature exemplified by the book of Jubilees, displaying your knowledge was an important strategy for sustaining Jewish society. An imitation of texts from the past was valued even more highly than individual originality and innovation. However, when looking at strategies of copying and rewriting, one often discovers important steps of innovation veiled in a traditional form. The book of Jubilees presupposes material that can be found in the scriptural text, presents it mostly in the same sequential order, and includes in its composition nearly all the relevant pericopes. At the same it changes and innovates by rewriting the material (e.g., harmonisations), adding other material (e.g., Enochic traditions; halakic material), and by putting knowledge into a new framework (chronology). Although Jubilees acknowledges the Torah as an authoritative body of knowledge, it seems to claim the same, or even a greater authority for its own revelation than for that of the Torah. This display of knowledge by means of absorbing earlier authoritative texts is a means of sustaining society. It gives authority to a new text, and

at the same time appropriates an ancient tradition by means of production, validation, and circulation.

In his article 'The Inner Cohesion of Jeremiah 34:8–22, on the Liberation of Slaves during the Siege of Jerusalem, and its Relation to Deuteronomy 15' Klaas A.D. Smelik questions the assumption by a number of scholars that Jer 34:8–22 is a compilation of texts written by different authors. He suggests that Jer 34:8–22 has an inner cohesion and that the phenomena which led other scholars to conclude that we are dealing here with a compilation of texts or a piece of poor writing, are, in fact, literary devices meant to grab the reader's attention. He also discusses the intriguing question of why a rule from the Torah is cited in v. 14 that only partially addresses the actual situation. It is demonstrated that Jer 34 is part of a much more extensive collection of texts to which Deut 15 belonged as well. Attempts to harmonize Jer 34 with the laws in the Torah in relation to debt slavery, however, appear to miss the point; they make no sense because we are dealing here with catchwords and catchphrases, not with an historical account of what actually happened in Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege. Referring to other Biblical texts with catchwords and catchphrases proves to be a common device in the Book of Jeremiah. In this respect, the way of referring to other Biblical texts in the Book of Jeremiah resembles the way Biblical references are made in Rabbinic literature.