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*Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 99, No. 3. (Sep., 1980), pp. 343-361.

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*Journal of Biblical Literature* is currently published by The Society of Biblical Literature.

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## REVELATION AND TRADITION: ASPECTS OF INNER-BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

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One of the most notable features to emerge with post-biblical Judaism was the explicit interrelationship between the contents of divine revelation (the Hebrew Bible) and exegetical tradition. With the closing of the canon a problem characteristic of religions based on legal revelation came to sharpened focus: those materials regarded as having been revealed by God, and which thereby constituted the authoritative Sinaitic revelation, were faced with new situations and unforeseen contingencies. How post-biblical exegetical traditions dealt with this matter is increasingly well-known. The question which I wish to pose here, and which generates the ensuing discussion, is this: What are the roots of such an exegetical tradition endowed with religious dignity?<sup>1</sup> My contention is that its roots lie in the biblical period—both pre- and post-exilic—and that already from this time tensions between revelation and tradition emerged and were resolved. Because of the difficulties in assigning absolute dates to biblical texts, the examples to be considered below will not presume to delineate any actual historical sequence or development. They will rather focus on several patterns and types which inner-biblical exegesis assumes as it surfaces with respect to law, homily, and prophecy. Some theological considerations emerging from the inner-biblical dialectics between revelation and tradition will be considered *en passant* and in the concluding remarks.

### I

Legal provisions regarded as having been revealed by God and viewed as authoritative divine utterances came to constitute Sinaitic revelation as given by God to man. In the course of time this revealed law was viewed as definitive. Yet its very authoritativeness underscores the dilemma caused by the inevitable inability of the first revelation to deal with all new situations and unforeseen contingencies. This problem was variously resolved in different biblical genres and narratives.

<sup>1</sup>See G. Scholem, "Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism," *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1971) 283.

An ancient cultic solution to the foregoing problem has been preserved in several traditions set in the period of post-Sinaitic wanderings. In Num 27:1–5 the daughters of Zelophehad approached Moses and other notables to plead that their father's patrimony not be lost—despite his death and the absence of male heirs. Since this request could not be adjudicated on the basis of existing statutes, Moses posed the problem to God, as he had been bidden to do in such eventualities (Exod 18:19, 26). The oracular *responsum* dealt favorably with the daughters' appeal (vv 6–7) and further formulated the case in abstract terms (v 8), adding contingencies designed to safeguard a clan's patrimony even when no daughters existed (vv 9–11). Even this new revelation soon proved incomprehensive: The leaders of Zelophehad's extended clan came to warn Moses soon thereafter that, should the daughters pursue exogamic marriages, their patrimonial inheritance would permanently accrue to their husband's tribe (Num 36:1–4). The new *responsum* given Moses is most striking; for in requiring patrilineal endogamy (vv 6–9) it subverted the earlier provision for female inheritance by insuring the transfer of property to just those males who would be in line to inherit it should a father die without issue (Num 27:9–11; cf. 27:9 and 36:11). Depleted of operative force, yet formally retained, the principle of female inheritance (27:8) became a legal fiction.

Another desert *responsum*, and its off-shoot, provide further insight into the formation of legal-exegetical traditions as responses to the insufficiencies of earlier revelation. In Num 9:6–8 Moses again required divine guidance when men defiled by corpses requested some means of celebrating the paschal-feast. The oracle given allows such impure persons to make the offering exactly one month later; and also stipulates that a person away on a journey could do likewise (v 10). As with the cases involving the daughters of Zelophehad, an older law has been supplemented by an oracle-revelation. Furthermore, we also notice that the new law is formulated in abstract terms, together with a proviso unrelated to the original petition. It may, accordingly, be suggested that the abstract, casuistic formulation of the cases found in Num 9:9–14 and 27:8–11 are the products of an even later legal experience and draftsmanship, secondarily worked into *ad hoc* oracle traditions.<sup>2</sup> Be this as it may, it bears reemphasis that these two texts represent their legal supplements as new revelations. This characteristic feature of Num 9:9–14 and 27:8–11 sharply contrasts with the situation

<sup>2</sup>The four desert cases wherein new legal decisions were called for—Lev 24:10–23; Num 9:6–14; 15:32–36; 27:1–11—share manifest stylistic and structural similarities. Despite this received narrative and legal patterning, the outlines of an older mantological procedure can still be detected.

found in 2 Chr 30:2–3—a later reflex of Num 9:9–14—where the human component in the expansion of an original divine revelation is more explicitly depicted.

In 2 Chronicles 29 the priests in the time of Hezekiah became defiled during their purification of the temple, owing to contact with impure objects (vv 14–19). As the levites purified themselves more quickly than the priests, they were empowered by the priest to assist them in the flaying of animals at the ensuing public celebrations (vv 31–34)—an emergency decision without scriptural warrant. The narrator then reports that since the priests remained defiled, and the nation had not yet convened in Jerusalem, the king and his council decided to postpone the passover celebration by a month (30:2–3). The matter is more complex. A determinative factor in postponing the passover was certainly that the temple purification lasted until the 16th of Nisan, or more than a day after the required onset of the feast (29:17). Why, then, were priestly impurity and the people's absence from Jerusalem singled out as reasons for the postponement; and on what grounds was such a legal move made?

It will be recalled from Num 9 that men “unable to perform the paschal-offering on time (*lō' yākēlū la'āsōt happesaḥ bayyôm hahū'*)” due to corpse defilement received an oracle permitting all Israelites and strangers in such a situation, or away on a journey, now or in the future, to postpone the feast by a month (vv 6, 9–11, 14). In 2 Chr 30:2–3, 25 a comparable situation obtained: due to continued priestly defilement and the absence of the bulk of the people from Jerusalem, those already assembled “were unable to perform it [the paschal-offering] at that time (*lō' yākēlū la* and *'āsōtō bā'ēt hahī'*).” As a result, the event was postponed a month, and all the Israelites and strangers participated in its celebration (v 25).

Verbal and structural similarities clearly link Num 9 and 2 Chr 30. Whereas Num 9 deals with a lay ritual and corpse defilement, 2 Chr 30 deals with a public ritual and object defilement. It may, accordingly, be proposed that the latter scenario is related analogically to its pentateuchal source. We are given to infer that Hezekiah and his counselors, wanting to celebrate the passover, but unable to do so as scheduled, perceived a correlation between Num 9:9–14 and their life situation—for both involved cases of ritual defilement and distance from a legitimate shrine. Further, on the basis of the clause “for you or your future generations” (Num 9:10), the pentateuchal provision for a delayed passover feast was applied to a later historical occasion, and also generalized so as to serve the exigencies of a national crises—not simple individual circumstances. Regardless of whether such an extended analogy was actually perceived in royal council, or is merely the product of an historiographical conceit, the received result is that the

verbal and legal reality of Num 9:9–14 now underpins the narrative of the Chronicler, and so indirectly serves to legitimize the human decision portrayed.<sup>3</sup> In this case, exegesis has dynamically revived a divine law—itsself the result of revision—and reapplied it to a new situation.

The covert nature of the exegesis in 2 Chr 30:2–3 may be a result of the writer's hesitation to make his reinterpretation explicit, and therewith obscure any suggestion that the Torah of Moses is insufficient when faced with new exigencies. Indeed, this latter sensibility coalesces with that tendency of tradition which justifies its innovative activities through presumptive archaizing. Such a tendency comes to explicit exemplification in the way the emergency measure of 2 Chr 30:17, allowing levites to engage in lay slaughter of the paschal-offering during Hezekiah's passover celebration, was subsequently legitimized. The fact is that neither this emergency permission, nor that in 2 Chr 29:34, granting levites the *ad hoc* right to execute sacrifices, has any support in the received pentateuchal laws of cult procedure. It is thus striking that the permission temporarily granted in 2 Chr 30:17 owing to external exigencies was normalized in 2 Chr 35:5–6 by presumptively attributing its origins to "the word of YHWH to Moses" (v 6).<sup>4</sup> In fine, an original *ad hoc* decision has been accorded the status of a revealed law—a law to Moses from Sinai. In the process its original human dimension has been thoroughly effaced and reauthorized.

The reconstitution of legal traditions as revealed laws is also traceable in pentateuchal legal corpora. We shall restrict ourselves to one pattern of examples where a rubric (*wēkēn ta'āsē*) introduces later legal explications added in the course of transmission. Thus, whereas the Covenant Code (Exod 23:4) succinctly requires that an Israelite who encounters his enemy's ox or ass wandering must return it (*hāsēb tēsībennū*), the deuteronomic legislation in Deut 22:1–3 is more complex (and nationalistic). After requiring the return of a compatriot's stray ox or sheep (*hāsēb tēsībēm*; v 1), the law states that a person retain lost goods until they be collected (v 2). Only after this does the

<sup>3</sup>A purely structural analogy can be found in Deut 22:26, where a comparison is drawn between Deut 4:42 (cf. 19:4) and 22:25, 27. A perceived analogy between field altars and the temple also accounts for the transfer of the laws from the former (cf. Deut 27:5–6) to the latter (1 Kgs 6:7); cf. C. Albeck, *Mavo' la-Mishnah* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1959) 5, following *Mekhilta' de-R. Ishmael* (ed. Horowitz-Rabin; Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrmann, 1960) Jethro, end.

<sup>4</sup>The performance of lay slaughter by priests is also given divine legitimation in Ezek 44:11, where it is part of a broader exegetical reworking of Numbers 18. Nevertheless, such sanctions were not part of later second Temple practice (cf. *m. Zebah* 3:1). See the discussion in J. Milgrom, *Studies in Levitical Terminology*, I (Berkeley: University of California 1970) par. 73.

law return to the issue of goods to be returned, first noted in v 1: “and you shall do likewise (*wĕkĕn ta’āsê*) to his ass, and you shall do likewise to his garment, and you shall do likewise to every loss of your compatriots. . . (v 3).” Clearly the first two stipulations (return of goods or their retention for a claimant) are organically connected, for v 2 follows v 1 logically and even uses the same terminology (note: *wahšĕbôtô*). The apparently disruptive character of v 2, when vv 1–3 are seen as a legal unit, indicates that v 3 was added secondarily in order to expand the list of items in v 1. The expanded list seems superfluous, but in fact it serves to make the law more comprehensive—the expansion being introduced by *wĕkĕn ta’āsê*, a rubric recurrently used to introduce later legal explications.<sup>5</sup> The religious consequence of this process is nothing short of remarkable. A legal tradition which developed so as to add operative force to the original law was itself represented as part of that divine law. No distinction is drawn between laws believed to be divine and innovations known to be human.

Another example of this type of expansion is suggested by Exod 23:10–11 and its reflex in Lev 25:3–7. Both texts regulate agricultural activity on the Sabbatical year; but stratifications of judicial tradition may be detected. Exod 23:10–11*a* focuses on sown fields and their use, whereas v 11*b* extends the regulations to viticulture; “(10) You shall sow your field for six years and reap its yield; (11*a*) but in the seventh you shall let it lie fallow and abandon it: let the needy of your nation eat thereof and let the beasts of the field have what they leave over. (11*b*) You shall do likewise (*kĕn-ta’āsê*) to your vineyard and olive grove.” It would thus seem that v 11*b* is secondary: it opens with the same formula used in Deut 22:3, and elsewhere, to introduce judicial addenda; and its analogical formulation is of little operative value, for unanswered are such questions as whether one may prune the vine or harvest unpruned grapes in the sabbatical year.

Presumably, the notational addendum in Exod 23:11*b* was supplemented by customary interpretations. It was also supplemented in fact. The legal draftsman of Lev 25:3–7, dependent on Exod 23:10–11, normalized v 11*b* by weaving it into his citation of v 10 (“You shall sow your field for six years *and you may prune your vineyard for six years*

<sup>5</sup>See the example to follow, and also Deut 20:10–18, where v 15 introduces a later (harmonizing) expansion with this phrase, as noted by A. Biram, “Corvee,” *Tarbiz* 23 (1952) 139 (Hebrew). Generalizing expansions are common in later legal traditions; e.g., the Samaritan pentateuch adds the comprehensive designation *wĕkāl-bĕhĕma* (“and every animal”) to the listing of cattle and sheep in MT Exod 21:28, 29, 32, 35, 36; 22:3; 23:4, 14. Nevertheless, Exod 22:9 seems to reflect an incipient example of this exegetical tendency, formalized as a legal principle in *m. B. Qam. 5:7*.

and reap its yield;" Lev 25:3). He also added exegetical comments which explicate other matters in the received law. Thus Lev 25:4-5 supplement Exod 23:10-11, and detail what it means to let a field lie fallow and abandon it, and to "do likewise" for the fruit of the vine; Lev 25:6 expands upon Exod 23:11a, and enumerates the disadvantaged persons allowed to eat from the fallow fields; and Lev 25:7a makes clear that domesticated cattle, in addition to beasts (Exod 23:11a), may graze on the uneaten remainder of a field. Whether such exegesis is the product of juridical tradition, scribal activity, or liturgical exposition, the result is the on-going incorporation of legal expansions into the legitimizing framework of the Sinaitic revelation (cf. Lev 25:1).

In addition to patterns of dynamic elaborations necessitated by changing concerns, protective restrictions were added to biblical laws so as to safeguard them from infraction. These two processes are not unrelated, of course, as Jer 17:19-27 may serve to exemplify. Although the precise nature and extent to which this text can be attributed to Jeremiah himself has long been a matter of debate, there is no doubt that the connection made in it between violation of the Sabbath and national fate is a feature of late prophetic theology (from 597 B. C. E., at least) unknown to pentateuchal sources,<sup>6</sup> and that the sermonic rhetoric of the divine warning against Sabbath infractions is couched in the phraseology of the Decalogue. Indeed, this phraseology is doubly arresting: for its use of an authoritative source does not mask, but rather highlights, the audacious normalization of a legal *novum* which is the distinctive element of the speech in Jer 17:21-22.

In Jer 17:21-22 the people are admonished: "*Be heedful of yourselves and do not bear a burden on the sabbath day and bring it unto the gates of Jerusalem; and do not take any burden from your homes on the Sabbath day; do not do any work: you shall sanctify the sabbath day, as I commanded your forefathers.*" The emphasized clauses of this quotation clearly indicate that it is the deuteronomic version of the Decalogue which has been cited and reworked; in particular, Jer 17:12-22 employ the verbal stem *šamar* ("heed") and the words "as I commanded." The latter phrase, used in Deut 5:12 to refer to the Sinaitic recension of the Decalogue (Exod 20:2-17), appears in Jer 17:22 with a notably different effect: it normalizes the two innovative restrictions on the sabbath law (the unemphasized clauses) by presenting them as the word of God from Sinai. The second restriction is of particular interest, for it further circumscribes the first command against conveying goods to Jerusalem for sale on the

<sup>6</sup>A point recently stressed by M. Greenberg, "The Sabbath-pericope in Jeremiah," *Iyyunim be-Sefer Yirmiyahu* (Jerusalem: Israel Bible Society, 1971) 34-36 (Hebrew).

sabbath with an additional prohibition against transporting objects from the private to the public domain on that day. By this means, an attempt was made to render sabbath rest inviolable without prior infraction of these secondary, protective measures.

This reconstitution of new legal measures as part of the original Mosaic law is of particular interest, insofar as the very formulation of these measures is attributed to God as a quote from His own law. But, since this quotation is so easily refuted by the actual text of the Decalogue, such a daring presumption was undoubtedly risked to obscure the legal innovations introduced, and to insure their authority as part of the Sinaitic revelation.

One more trajectory of inner-biblical legal exegesis may be traced; in it the subsequent recombination of earlier and disparate Torah-texts creates a new divine law. For example, Exod 22:30 is an isolated law in context which adjures Israelites to refrain from eating ripped carcasses, whereas Exod 23:19 concludes a series of cultic prescriptions keyed to annual pilgrimage festivals (vv 17–19) with a prohibition against boiling a kid in its mother's milk at the time of first-fruit donations. Deut 14:21 combines these two distinct instructions and also appends them to its digest of the priestly laws on forbidden-permitted foods (Lev 22).

*Exod 22:30; 23:19*

And be a *holy people to Me*: do not eat ripped field carrion; throw it to the dogs. . . Bring the first of your produce to the shrine of YHWH; do not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

*Deut 14:21*

Do not eat any carcass; either give it to the sojourner. . . or sell it to the stranger: for you are a *holy nation to YHWH*, your God; do not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

Characteristic features of deuteronomic ideology are reflected in Deut 14:21: gifts to strangers and the presentation of the holiness of Israel in unconditional and national terms. A more remarkable result of its collocation with the food regulations of Deut 14:3–20, however, is that the laws from the Covenant Code—particularly the cult-law against boiling a kid in its mother's milk—have been transformed substantially: they have become food regulations in the broadest sense, a transformation not without substantive consequence for later Jewish law. Such a reworking of older laws as found in Deut 14:21 reflects an ambiance of legal study and tradition whose validating context was the covenant revelation, and it alone.

The predominant authority of revelation over tradition in the diverse genres and expressions of inner-biblical legal exegesis reflects an incipient canonical consciousness. Texts believed to be divinely revealed had a fixed and controlling legitimacy about them in relation to all new developments. As a partial consequence of this phenomenon, study and exegesis of the revealed materials developed—these being functional products of such a mode of consciousness.

Traces of study and exegesis become particularly visible in relatively late biblical sources, where a distinct ideal of scriptural study emerges (cf. Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2). Indeed, particularly in Ps 119, scripture and its study emerges as a value of such importance that a whole series of terms are transferred to it which originally, or independently, served to express an immediate religious relationship with God. For example, verbs which express attitudes of direct reliance upon God in other biblical liturgies, like *bāṭah* ("trust;" cf. Pss 13:6; 26:1; 31:2, 15; 52:19) or *'āmēn* ("have confidence in;" cf. Pss 27:13; 78:32; also Gen 15:6), are used in Ps 119:42 and 66, respectively, to denote a relationship to Torah, now seen as an independent object of religious devotion. Similarly, as God's will is found in His Torah, verbs like *ḥānan* ("give mercy;" cf. Pss 4:2; 6:3; 41:5, 11 or *yā'ēr* ("give grace;" cf. Pss 4:7; 67:2; 118:27), which routinely express hopes in a material divine sustenance and grace, are intellectualized in Ps 119:66 and 135, respectively, with regard to Torah study.<sup>7</sup> In this vein, the speaker of Ps 119 even asks God to open his eyes that he might perceive *nīplā'ōt mittôrātekā*, "wonders from your Torah" (v 18; cf. Ps 78:4). Since the Torah is a concrete reality to the psalmist, such a request (and cf. vv 66, 135) must be understood as the desire for the gracious gift of its divinely-guided exposition.

A development corresponding to the preceding verbal transformations is the new use made of the old verb *dārās*, which originally expressed a direct oracular appeal to God, as in the phrase, "to consult (*lidrōš*) YHWH" (1 Kgs 22:8). While this verb continued to express a posture of real or potential religious immediacy—particularly where a worshipper is called upon to, or actually does, "beseech" God directly—it is significant that by the time of Ezra the mantic aspects of the verb had been transferred to Torah study as the valued mode of inquiry into the divine will, so that Ezra's principle concern during the Restoration to Zion was "to consult (*lidrōš*) the Torah of YHWH" (Ezra 7:10). A comparison of this phrase with the preceding citation from 1 Kgs 22:8 most instructively illustrates the inner-cultural shift of emphasis which has been briefly charted here.

The post-deuteronomic development of the notion of scripture as a religious entity, mediating between God and man through its faithful study, further reinforced the ancient sense of the actual and potential authority of the Mosaic laws over all areas of life. As we have seen, however, the legal conservatism thereby engendered masks a dynamic reality. Though routinized and institutionalized, the old laws retained the aura of the divine origins attributed to them with sufficient

<sup>7</sup>Cf. the remarks of M. Gertner, "The Massorah and the Levites," *VT* 10 (1960) 249–50.

intensity as to legitimate and absorb their later-day reinterpretations, expansions, or transformation.<sup>8</sup> Whether the product of study, judicial action, or custom, biblical legal traditions were ultimately (and often presumptively) authorized as divine words from Sinai.

## II

Another dimension of inner-biblical exegesis is reflected in later homiletical transformations of authoritative texts. In the examples to follow, which cover diverse genres and concerns, the use of the older texts and the creation of new formulations are apparent from the recurrence of similar language and themes in both passages. Indeed, it is precisely this new use of old language, or the associations elicited thereby, that lends theological force and irony to the new formulations.

Biblical laws are frequently features in prophetic discourse, as when Ezekiel (22:7, 10–12) thickens his admonition with a list of transgressions derived from Lev 20:9–12, 17–19; or when Jeremiah (3:1–2) rhetorically quotes a prohibition against remarriage to a former spouse in connection with the possibility of Israel's return to God (Deut 24:1–4). Particularly notable in this connection is Jer 2:26, 34 set within a longer divine rebuke. Its singular rhetorical force derives from a re-use of a case-law found in Exod 22:1–2a.

### *Exod 22:1–2a*

If a thief (*gannāb*) is caught (*yimmāšē'*) in a clandestine act/while tunneling (*bamaḥteret*) and struck dead, he [the homeowner] has no bloodguilt (*dāmim*); but if it [the crime] was done in broad daylight, he [the homeowner] shall be liable (*dāmim*).

### *Jer 2:26,34*

As a thief (*gannāb*) is ashamed when caught (*yimmāšē'*), so is the house of Israel ashamed. . .the blood (*dam*) of poor, innocent people has also been found (*nimšē'ū*) on your clothes; I did not seize them (*mēšā'īm*) in secret places (*bamaḥteret*), but right out in the open.<sup>9</sup>

The law in Exod 22:1–2a interrupts the legal sequence of 21:37 and 22:1b–3, and restricts permissible self-help to surreptitious breaking-and-entering. The case is used by Jeremiah to suggest that God has caught Israel *in flagrante delicto*, as it were, in the overt course of her covenant infractions. But while the infusion of the language of Exod 22:1–2a transforms the prophetic rebuke into a legal indictment, its

<sup>8</sup>E. Shils has suggested that a charismatic propensity may remain part of institutions governed by the rational-legal type of authority at an “unintense” level, thereby helping to conserve and maintain them; see “Charisma, Order, and Status,” *American Sociological Review* 30 (1965) 199–213. His reflections, extending Weber's position, have influenced my remarks.

<sup>9</sup>The translation “right out in the open” (or “everywhere”) is a free rendition of the perplexing *'al-kōl-'ēlle* based on the legal logic (by analogy with Exod 22) of the passage. A. Ehrlich came to a similar conclusion from stylistic considerations; cf. *Miqra' ki-Pshuto* (Berlin: 1901; New York: Ktav, reprint, 1969) 3. 176.

literal construction has been metaphorically altered: the Israelites are hereby charged with immoral abuse of the innocent, through a play on the word *dāmîm*. It is on this basis that the people are judged (*nišpāṭ*, v 35). The legal metaphor concludes by returning to the subjective state of shame (v 36) with which the discourse opened (v 26), underscoring thereby its stylistic and conceptual unity. In sum, God arraigns and judges Israel according to His own covenant law—albeit with moralizing, exegetical adjustments.

Prophetic rhetoric provides other instances whereby divine words were reinvigorated through reuse. Micah 7:18–20, a case in point, is a reformulation and expansion of God's self-proclaimed attributes (Exod 34:6–7a; cf. Num 14:17–18)<sup>10</sup>

*Exod 34:6–7a*

YHWH—a *God compassionate* and gracious; assuaging *anger*, great in *steadfast kindness*, and maintaining kindness to the thousands; *forgiving iniquity, rebellion* and *sin*. . . .

*Micah 7:18–20*

Who is a *god* like you, *forgiving iniquity*, passing over the *rebellion* of the remnant of His inheritance; not keeping His *anger* forever, but delighting in *kindness*?! May He again be *compassionate* to us, cleanse our iniquities, and cast all our [!] *sins* to the depths of the sea. O be *steadfast* with Jacob and *compassionate* with Abraham, as You swore to our ancestors long ago.

In his praise and appeal, the prophet reminds God of His attributes of mercy and so transforms a revelatory disclosure into a prayerful recitation. Also striking is the reinterpretation of the divine self-proclamation as an oath, and the exegetical expansions which contemporize the formulation and add to its liturgical force.

Two other uses of the attribute formulary may be noted here, for they demonstrate how later theological tradition embellished, in the one case, but rejected in the other, the retributive aspects of the divine self-proclamation of Exod 34:7 (“maintaining kindness to the thousands. . .but who will not entirely acquit the guilty, but visits the iniquity of fathers on children. . .to the third and fourth generation”). On the positive side, this proclamation was homiletically worked into the Decalogue to explain God's covenant zeal, and was itself supplemented with the explanations that punishment or grace depended on obedience to the commandments (Exod 20:5b–6).<sup>11</sup> The impact of the

<sup>10</sup>This and other biblical reworkings of the attribute formula considerably antedate the early midrashic exegesis found in 4 Ezra 7:132–40, reconstructed by D. Simonsen, “Ein Midrasch im IV. Buch Esra,” *Festschrift I. Lewy* (Breslau: M.& H. Marcus, 1911) 270–78.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. already S. R. Driver, *Exodus* (Cambridge Bible; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1911) 192. Recent studies have emphasized that the original Decalogue contained

attribute formulary on the final form of the Decalogue shows up again in the warning against false oaths, which *follows* the proclamation of retribution (20:7). A juxtaposition of the two passages easily demonstrates their linguistic concordance.

*Exod 20:7*

Do not take (*lō' tissā'*) the name of YHWH, your God, in vain; for He will not acquit (*lō' yēnaqqē*) whomsoever takes (*yissā'*) His name in vain.

*Exod 34:7*

Who forgives (*nōsē'*) transgression, iniquity and sin, but will not acquit (*bēnaqqēh lō' yēnaqqē*) the guilty. . .

In sum, the verbal and topical sequence of the attribute formula in Exod 34:7 are manifestly and strikingly reflected in the received version of the Decalogue (Exod 20:5b–7). In fact, these observations are further reinforced by the indubitable secondariness of just those phrases reflecting “attribute” language; for it may easily be observed that each of them constitutes parenetic-theological motivation-clauses to commandments introduced by the particle *kî* (cf. *kî* in v 11 and *lēma'an* in v 12b, and the clauses introduced thereby).

The homiletical embellishment of the attribute formulary in the Decalogue, however, must not obscure the fact that the supplementation of references to covenant obedience in Exod 20:5b–6 syntactically transforms the doctrine of transgenerational retribution as found in Exod 34:7. As the Decalogue now reads, only those who hate or love the commandments will be punished or rewarded. Individual responsibility is now stressed; divine judgment is enacted on a person by person basis: sons will be punished or rewarded like their fathers *if* they continue the ways of their fathers. This striking shift—one which clearly reflects a deuteronomic ideology—is brought to explicit formulation in the book of Deuteronomy. In a deuteronomic sermon attributed to Moses' peroration (7:9–10), the decalogic formulation of divine attributes is paraphrased. V 9 stresses that beneficence will befall those who obey the covenant. This theological stress on individual responsibility is even more deliberately articulated in v 10: “But He will require those who reject Him, directly to destroy him; He will not delay hating him, but will repay him at once.” With one stroke later tradition controverted the earlier revelation of divine attributes (Exod 34:7), authenticating its novel viewpoint by means of a presumptive misquote.

In addition to revealed words, the Hebrew Bible testifies that God reveals His power and presence through historical processes. The exodus from Egypt was considered the paradigm-event of national salvation, and so set the pattern for redemptions to come (cf. Isa 11:11–16; 43:16–20; 51:9–11; 52:12; 63:11–12; Jer 16:14–15; Micah 7:15). The reuse and transformation of the exodus typology in Isa

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commandments only, with no homiletical expansions; see J. Stamm, “Dreissig Jahre Dekalogforschung,” *ThR* 27 (1961) 181–239, 281–305.

19:19–25 is particularly remarkable. This can best be seen through a comparison of the pentateuchal cycle of Exod 3–11 (specifically Exod 3:7–9; 8:16–24) with Isa 19:19–25. In the Book of Exodus, when YHWH saw the torment of “My people (*‘ammî*)”, heard their cry (*ša ‘āqātām*) and saw the Egyptians oppressing (*lōḥāšîm*) them, He sent (stem: *šālah*) Moses to the Pharonic court to request that the Israelites be delivered from bondage. The Lord visited signs (sg., *’ôti*) upon the Egyptians and plagued them (stem: *nāgap*; cf. 7:27), that they might know (stem: *yāda’*) His power and free His people. In distress at these events, Pharaoh occasionally asked Moses to pray for him (stem: *’atar*); however he never granted the latter’s request. The most Pharaoh conceded was to permit the Israelites to sacrifice (stem: *zābah*) to YHWH in Egypt, but this was unacceptable.

The foregoing thematic-verbal synopsis of the exodus-cycle is thoroughly transformed in Isa 19:19–25. In this series of oracles, the Egyptians have oppressors (*lōḥāšîm*), cry (*yiš ‘āqû*) to YHWH, and build an altar to Him in Egypt—which will serve as a sign (*’ôti*) that He will send (*yišlah*) them a deliverer. Through His acts of deliverance, the Egyptians would come to know (*yādē’û*) YHWH and slaughter sacrifices (*zēbah*) to Him. Thus YHWH would plague (*wēnāgap*) the Egyptians mightily; but He would, in the end, respond to their entreaty (*wēne’tar*) and call them “My people (*‘ammî*).” Through a manifest and deliberate reworking, Israel’s paramount national memory of salvation has been extended to its most ancient enemy.<sup>12</sup> Such a metamorphosis requires that the literary tradition of Exod 3–11 had already become sufficiently authoritative so as to provide the foil for this audacious, theological counterpoint. The historical tradition of one generation has self-evidently become sacred “scripture” for another.

### III

A third pattern of inner-biblical exegesis, with its own configurations and dialectics, is the reinterpretation of prophetic oracles. As with legal and homiletic exegesis, there are here, too, reworkings of the sources of revelation. With respect to oracles, however, the issue is more extreme: reinterpretation is necessary precisely because the original oracle-revelation was not yet—or not conclusively—actualized. For example, referring to an unfulfilled oracle, Isaiah states: “This is the word which YHWH spoke against Moab previously (*mē’āz*), and now (*wē’attā*) YHWH has spoken as follows. . . (16:13–14)”: similarly, Ezekiel refers to the failure of an earlier oracle before presenting a new divine word (29:17–20). In both cases God reapplies His own words to

<sup>12</sup>The daring declaration: “blessed by my people, Egypt” (v 25) was renationalized in the Targum and LXX.

a new situation. The initial oracle retains its authoritative status as a divine word—but requires redirection, respecification, revivification.

The issue of the fulfillment of prophetic revelations came particularly to the fore in the exilic and postexilic periods. In his remonstrations with the exiles, Deutero-Isaiah emphasized that the realization of preexilic doom oracles was proof positive of the power of YHWH to fulfill the oracles of deliverance offered to His weary and trust-less people (cf. 41:21–24; 42:5–9; 43:5–10, 16–20; 44:6–9, 24–26; 45:8–13, 18–23; 46:8–11; 47:12–13; 48:3–5). The predominant mentality regarding divine predictions which underlies these texts is stated pithily in Isa 45:23, “I swear by Myself that an oracle of salvation has come from My mouth which shall not fail (*yāšūb*);” indeed, as rain falls and does not return (*yāšūb*) to heaven, says YHWH, “so will the word which comes from My mouth not return (*yāšūb*) to Me empty—but will do My will and fulfill my command” (Isa 55:10–11). This mentality, moreover, may serve to clarify the redactional inspiration which connected Isa 1–39 to 40–66; for apart from numerous stylistic similarities in both books, many later prophecies appear to be literal reapplications of earlier Isaianic hopes and promises (especially compare Isa 60:1–2, 17–18 with 9:1,3; 60:1,5,9,14,17 with 2:3,5,7,10; and 62:10–12 with 11:9).

The characteristic postexilic emphasis on oracles and their fulfillment—one which led to frequent reapplications of earlier prophetic revelations—had a notable effect on other texts, as well. In fact, divine words which had long since assumed an authoritative status, and which were originally without any predictive character, were reinterpreted in the postexilic period as unfulfilled oracles bearing on the present situation. For example, when the prophet in Isa 58:14 tells the Israelites that if they would but obey the Sabbath: *’āz tit’annag ’al-YHWH wēhirkabūkā ’al-bāmātē ’areš wēha’ākaltūkā nahālat ya’āqōb ’ābūkā* (“then you will rejoice with YHWH, and I shall lead you over the highlands and sustain you with the inheritance of Jacob, your father”), he is clearly invoking Deut 32:13, 9, respectively,<sup>13</sup> This reapplication of ancient words is especially clear from the fact that the promise concludes with the ascription: “YHWH Himself has spoken it.”<sup>14</sup> Clearly, then, the descriptive words of Moses’ song have been reinterpreted as a promise and also modulated exegetically: for it is not the

<sup>13</sup>See A. Kaminka, “Mosaic Phraseology and Verses from the Psalms in Isaiah,” *Leshonenu* 1 (1928/29) 40–41 (Hebrew).

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Kaminka, “Mosaic Phraseology.” Motivation to reapply Deuteronomy 32 may derive from the fact that Moses introduces his poem (in 31:29) as a preview of rebellions to occur *bē’ahārū hayyāmīm*—a phrase which had come to connote the eschatological future by the exilic period. In a similar way, the use of this expression at the outset of Jacob’s blessing undoubtedly helped sponsor later reapplications of its words, as when Zech 9:9 reapplies Gen 49:10–11.

people Israel which is God's inheritance in Isa 58:14, but rather the land which is presented as the inheritance of the people. Such an exegetical revision of Deut 32:9,13 fully accords with the pervasive postexilic concern with restoration to the land of Zion, and further attests to a developed canonical attitude toward received pentateuchal sources by this time.

Paradigmatic of the postexilic reinterpretations of prophetic revelations is the diverse applications made of Jer 25:9–12, an oracle which predicts a 70-year period of devastation for Israel and her land, to be followed by a reversal of fates for Israel and her oppressor, Babylon. The first of these reapplications is, significantly, found in the MT itself. In Jer 25:9, 11–12 the northern enemy is specifically identified with Babylon and her kind. These identifications are missing in the LXX account which, accordingly, undoubtedly witnesses to an older textual stratum. Beyond this, the hopeful conclusion to the oracle, regarding the eventual suppression of the enemy (25:12), was itself taken up and reworked in a letter sent soon thereafter by Jeremiah to the Judean exiles. The older (preexilic) emphasis in Jer 25:12, that God would "visit" (*'epqōd*) punishment upon the oppressor of Israel, was deftly reformulated in 29:10 to express a more conciliatory (postexilic) concern: God would "remember" (*'epqōd*) His exiled people in 70-years time and restore them to their homeland.

Although the proclamation of the original oracle was redactionally dated to 605 B. C. E. (Jer 25:1), it would presumably not have been deemed operative until the onset of the exile of 597 or of 587/6. Nevertheless, it would appear that some Judeans may have regarded Cyrus' decree (538) to be a sign that the period of doom was over. Whether reflecting an earlier perspective, or his own, the Chronicler nonetheless pointedly considers this event the fulfillment of the Jeremiah oracle (2 Chron 36:21–23). Insofar as he also incorporated Lev 26:34–35 into his citation of the Jeremian oracle (v 21), he further expressed his understanding that the 70 years of exile were recompense for unobserved sabbatical years. The Chronicler's text-blend further suggests that he considered Jer 25:9–12 to be a prophecy based on the covenantal warning found in Lev 26:32–35.

The 70-year oracle is also referred to twice in the prophecies of Zechariah: once in 1:7 (datable to 520), when an angel challenged God that the time for restoration had come (cf. v 12); and, again, in 7:1 (datable to 518), wherein God referred to the Israelite fast-days memorializing the destruction of Judea (cf. v 5). As the prophet also spoke of the rebuilding of the temple during this period (1:16; 4:9; cf. Ezra 6:14), and as it was completed soon thereafter (in 516; cf. Ezra 6:15), it is conceivable that the anticipated fulfillment of an oracle believed to be effective from the second Judean exile in 587/6 may have fuelled national energies toward the restoration of the temple (in 516). In any

event, both the Chronicler and Zechariah attempted to apply the Jeremian oracle quite literally: 70-years meant 70-years—the alternate attempts to date the onset of the oracle to the contrary notwithstanding—and the restoration envisioned was twofold: Judea and the temple would be rebuilt, and the people in exile would return to their ancestral homeland.

The several reinterpretations of this Jeremian prophecy, like the reapplication of divine oracles generally, imply two religious postures: one, trust in the basic inerrancy of predictive revelations; and its corollary, an acute sense of divine involvement in Israel's historical destiny. The result is a paradox: just the tensions elicited by oracular expectations—particularly when intensified by dissonance between prediction and reality—were transcended by the oracles themselves. As these latter were believed to be God's words, and so testified to divine involvement in history, failed expectations were not abandoned but rather reinterpreted.

Where the gap between promise and fulfillment widened, however, the paradox of God's historical concern was increasingly resolved on a more mysterious plane. Once the direct nexus between the words of an oracle and their apparent historical reference was broken through successive reapplications, it was not long before their true signification seemed totally inaccessible to human understanding. Only God could divine the real meaning of His words. Living, spoken prophetic oracles gave way, increasingly, to revealed interpretations of them as fixed and past promises. All this broached a profound change in the nature of biblical prophecy.

The processes just noted may be exemplified by Daniel 9, where Daniel inquires into prophetic books in the hope of discerning the correct application of Jeremiah's 70-year oracle concerning the period of Jerusalem's desolation (v 2). To be sure, the historical fiction of the book is that Daniel was a Judean exiled to Babylon ca. 606/5 (1:1-6). Added to this fiction is the presumption evoked by the date-line in Dan 9:1-2—to the effect that the fulfillment of the Jeremian oracle had been expected with the fall of Babylon. Delay necessitated revision. Seeking and receiving divine clarification, Daniel reports that the oracle was reinterpreted to embrace a longer historical period—70 sabbatical cycles or 10 Jubilees (9:24-27). This interpretation was presumably stimulated by 2 Chron 36:21 which, owing to its incorporation of Lev 26:34-35, seems to have understood the 70 years of Jeremiah's oracle as ten sabbatical cycles. Another influence on Dan 9:24-27 was undoubtedly the Jubilee computation of Lev 25:1-24 as a whole, wherein a Jubilee of 49 years marks the maximal period of servitude. It is quite striking that Dan 9:25 apportioned an entire Jubilee to the period from the effective onset of the Jeremian oracle to the end of the exile and Cyrus' decree. This period marks the first stage of the first of the 10

Jubilees, and so the first stage of release from foreign hegemony.<sup>15</sup> In short, the first period of Jerusalem's servitude is one of 49 years duration, so that its subsequent restoration to Israelite ownership is a *děrôr*, or return of an ancestral patrimony to the rightful heir (cf. Lev 25:10). It is further intriguing to suppose that the references in Isa 61:1 to the post-exilic restoration as a release of prisoners and a *děrôr* may reflect an even earlier exegetical application of Lev 25:1–24.<sup>16</sup>

The span of 490 years, or 70 sabbatical cycles, involved in the reinterpreted Jeremian oracle of Dan 9:24–27 bridges ancient Israelite history down to the year 165 B. C. E., on the assumption that the calculation was effective from the year 605 (the date of the oracle according to Jer 25:1). It may be confidently assumed, however, that some such proximate calculation underpins Dan 9:24–27. Not only did the period 168–165 B. C. E. begin with the Seleucid desecration of the Jerusalem Temple, it also saw the Maccabean uprising which began in 166/5.<sup>17</sup> Whether an inspired reinterpretation of the Jeremian oracle gave hope that the foreign domination and abominations perpetrated in Jerusalem were almost over, and so served to stimulate the patriotic fervor of Mattathias and his followers, or whether this application of the Jeremian oracle is rather a reflex of *ex eventu* historiography cannot now be determined. What can be asserted, however, is that the reinterpreted Jeremian oracle retained a compelling vitality during this period; and, indeed it was yet further revised when new events forced the adjustment of older expectations (cf. Dan 12:7, 11–12). Such a phenomenon, coupled with the reinterpretation and reapplication on many other ancient oracles in Dan 9–12, underscores the pervasive role played by older prophecies at this time and their collective impact in heightening the expectation of a providential moment.<sup>18</sup> This phenomenon of reinterpreted oracles also attests to the fact that the

<sup>15</sup>B. Z. Wacholder ("Chronomessianism," *HUCA* 46 [1975] 205–6) incorporates the first Jubilee cycle within the initial 62-week period—thereby requiring a third stage of another 49 years *after* the temple restoration. It seems simpler and neater to interpret Dan 9:25 to mean that the first Jubilee was distinct from the next 9—so that the decree of Cyrus would conclude the first stage of redemption and the restoration of Jerusalem (v 27) would conclude the Jeremian oracle.

<sup>16</sup>It is quite striking that Isa 61:1, and possibly also Dan 9:24–25, are cited in the apocalyptic speculations in 11QMelch 3 II (cf. 11. 6–9, 18). For the text of this *pesher* fragment, see. J. T. Milik, "Milkî-šedek et Milkî-reša' dans les anciens écrits juifs et chrétiens," *JJS* 23 (1972) 97–99.

<sup>17</sup>The fact that the phrase *šiqqûš mēšômmēm* in Dan 9:27 (and 11:31; 12:11) is also found in 1 Mac 1:54, with reference to the temple desecration, further points to the period of Antiochus IV for the interpreted oracle. Nestle long ago suggested that this phrase is a euphemistic correction for *ba'al šāmēm*; cf. his "Zu Daniel," *ZAW* 4 (1884) 284.

<sup>18</sup>Old pentateuchal and Isaian oracles are reapplied in Dan 11–12; see, simply, the texts referred to in H. L. Ginzberg, "The Oldest Interpretation of the Suffering Servant," *VT* 3 (1953) 400–404.

exoteric dimension of earlier prophecy has been decisively altered and has entered a new phase. Prophetic words are no longer predominantly living speech, but rather inscribed and inscrutable data whose true meanings are an esoteric mystery revealed by God to a special circle of the faithful (cf. Dan 9:22–23; 10:14–21; 11:33–35; 12:9–10).<sup>19</sup>

The reworking of oracles and their supplementation by divine exegesis thus complement tendencies observable in biblical laws. With oracles as with law, the meanings of original revelations were dependent upon, and mediated by, exegesis. However, as suggested at the outset of this section, the reinterpretation of prophecy produces a sharper religious tension than does legal exegesis. The reason for this lies in the separate structures of the two phenomena. Whereas legal traditions may be perceived as special applications of, or supplements to, an already realized revelation, unfulfilled prophecies raise the more unsettling question of the very realizability of predictive revelations. Even the projection of these oracles into an eschatological moment, and their transformation into codes to be deciphered by God, could not diminish this fundamental tension. To the contrary, such a tension helped open an abyss in the religious imagination whose ultimate expression was apocalyptic consciousness. With this development, the face of prophetic predictions has turned fatefully heavenward, leaving the individual powerless to envisage their meaning without divine intervention. This trust that a God-given solution will come to pass is the hope of hopelessness as sponsored by unfulfilled prophecies.<sup>20</sup>

#### IV

The foregoing discussion has sought to provide some sense of the range of inner-biblical exegesis, its diverse modalities, and the legal, homiletic and prophetic matrices through which it was brought to articulation. Several final considerations bearing on the inner-biblical dialectics of revelation and tradition now follow.

(1) The striking reuse of older legal texts instead of composing new ones, or the reapplication of earlier oracles instead of their nullification, indicate that these older deposits of revelation had already achieved an *authoritative status*—thus suggesting a *canonical consciousness*.

<sup>19</sup>The appearance in Dan 9 of a revelation based on an ancient text, together with those based on dreams and omens, reflect what A. M. J. Festugière called the “literary fictions” of revelations in the Hellenistic world; see *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste, Vol. 1: L’Astrologie et les Sciences Occultes* (Paris: Gabalda, 1950) 312–27.

<sup>20</sup>The importance of the fulfillment of older prophecies in the development of apocalyptic eschatology was given emphatic early emphasis by J. Wellhausen, “Zur apokalyptischen Literatur,” *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten* 6 (1899) 225–34. He uses the felicitous phrase “elasticity of hope” to characterize the mode of consciousness involved.

ness of sorts, insofar as such authoritative texts would constitute a precanonical canon. A central result of this process of innovation and renovation is that the image of the ancient divine revelations as comprehensively and permanently authoritative was carefully safeguarded. From this perspective, exegetical tradition extends the authority of older materials—be these laws, theological or narrative dicta, or prophecies.

Inverted, the lines of this argument delineate another aspect of the dialectics of revelation and tradition in the Hebrew Bible, concerning which revelations are either neutralized or neglected in the course of time. Under such circumstances these revelations lose their effective immediacy and form part of the background tradition. To the extent, however, that a measure of their erstwhile authority still adheres to these revelations, or simply due to the unfactorable fact of their presence in the cultural (textual?) canon, exegetical tradition may confront these latent traditions and, through exegetical renegotiation, regenerate them as authoritative revelations.

A query—perhaps insoluble, but nonetheless inescapable—imposes itself at this point: What would revelation have meant to the tradents, redrafters, or reformulators of older laws—that is, those who adjusted legal revelations to new ends? Is the projection of an incipient belief in the plenitude of meanings of a revelation, or the fluidity of context of diverse revelations, valid for this early stage of biblical exegesis? If so, then the exegete would have understood his task as one which merely unpacks that which is latent, or recombines that which is manifest, in “Scripture.”

(2) Related to the emergence of a canonical consciousness is the emergence of an *exegetical consciousness*. This point was brought out with particular force in the discussion of how Ps 119 transforms language dealing with the immediacy of the divine presence into language which treats of Torah study and its interpretation. But the burdens and implications of such an exegetical consciousness bear delineation, as well; for the emergence of an exegetical consciousness reflects a profound cultural shift. This shift is from the living word of God to the living word of man; or, as seen in connection with prophecy, a shift from the living, to the increasingly exegetical, word of God.

It may thus be observed—to the extent that one emphasizes, for example, the words of exegesis secondarily appended to the laws—that the exegetical tradition re-authorizes (i.e., it both rewrites and accords new authority to) older revelations. From this perspective, exegetical tradition depends upon revelations. But conversely, particularly with respect to homilies and prophecies, it is also true that the formulation of new exegetical revelations depends upon, or is conditioned by, the language of authoritative traditions. In these circumstances, it may be

suggested, the exegetical consciousness of the recipient of a divine revelation would bear—and bear decisively—on the role such a one's knowledge of authoritative tradition plays in the formulation and mode of articulation of a new divine message. Differently put, the language of a new revelation may, as warp to woof, weave a verbal pattern around a segment of the inherited tradition and extend or transform it. When it does so, the rhetorical force of such a new revelation substantively depends on the hearer's awareness of the exegetical interface between it and the received language of tradition.

It may be further stated that an exegetical consciousness is, simultaneously, a constructive and deconstructive consciousness; for it both asserts and denies the authority of the text in question. The very cognition of the insufficiency of a textual authority—i.e., its lack, failure, or irrelevance to a present moment—is profoundly and dialectically bound up with a reassertion of its sufficiency, insofar as the revision is not presented as self-validating but rather finds its authority in the text-unit which elicited the exegetical response in the first place. The theological and cultural abyss opened when an exegetical consciousness perceives the historical contingencies of various divine utterances, together with the simultaneous awareness—also sponsored by such a consciousness—of the human role in the ongoing construction of cultural reality, is thus concealed by the very processes of exegetical tradition itself.

(3) The preceding points lead to a final observation. In the Hebrew Bible, exegetical tradition is not presented as an authority parallel to that of revelation; nor does it visibly cast out, neutralize, or otherwise displace revelation. To the contrary; in the Hebrew Bible, exegetical tradition is the handmaiden of revelation—and so conceals its own paradoxical processes. By concealing its capacity to construct new worlds of meaning in older materials, it thereby preserves the viability of ancient revelations. Indeed, it uses these revelations as theological and literary fictions to obscure its own innovations.

Now, to be sure, human exegetical tradition is more visible in the post-exilic period. But, for all that, it remains concealed behind the veil of revelation. It remained for the closure of the canon in its several parts to change this situation of concealment— as it had to. The canon, which was closed by tradition, put a formal seal on the revelations which it contained. From that point on, exegetical tradition was fatefully and publicly disclosed as the vital cultural form it always was.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup>A comprehensive study of types and cases of inner-biblical exegesis is near completion. I wish to thank the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture for grants-in-aid and Prof. Tzvi Abusch for sharing observations on an earlier version of this paper.