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At the Intersection of Scribal Training and Theological Profundity: Chiasm as an Editorial Technique in the Primeval History and Deuteronomy

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Abstract: Bernard M. Levinson, "At the Intersection of Scribal Training and Theological Profundity: Chiasm as an Editorial Technique in the Primeval History and Deuteronomy," argues that ancient Israelite scribes were gifted writers who "were well-trained in a wide range of technical devices associated with the composition, copying, transmission, editing, collation, revision, reworking, and interpretation of texts." Such individuals were not only scribes; they were also to some degree editors and authors who reworked texts using a number of literary techniques and strategies, including the figure of chiasm. To emphasize the scribes' abilities to transform ancient traditions and earlier texts, Levinson presents four case studies: "1: Narrative Complexity in the Primeval History (Genesis 1 and 6)"; "2: Integrating Law and Narrative (Deuteronomy 11:32 and 12:1)"; "3: Deuteronomy's Renewal and Transformation of Israelite Religion (Deut 12)"; and "4: Reimagining the Nature of Divine Justice (Deuteronomy 7:9–10)." Rather than examining chiasms merely in static or aesthetic terms, Levinson explores these literary figures to determine what they "can tell us about the compositional history of a text: how it came to be written or edited." He sums up, "The chiasm thus is more than simply a technical scribal device; in the skilled hands of the editors of ancient Israelite literature, the device was also an agent of the theological imagination, literary and religious creativity, and cultural change."

At the Intersection of Scribal Training and Theological Profundity

Chiasm as an Editorial Technique in the Primeval History and Deuteronomy

Bernard M. Levinson

Introduction

There can be little doubt that ancient Near Eastern scribes, including those in ancient Israel, were well-trained in a wide range of technical devices associated with the composition, copying, transmission, editing, collation, revision, reworking, and interpretation of texts.[1] My focus in the present study will be on one of the most interesting of these devices, the literary chiasm, in which textual content is ordered in an ABC::C′B′A′ chiastic, or "x-shaped," pattern. In many cases, once this pattern is recognized within a chapter or literary unit, an ostensibly haphazard or difficult to follow textual sequence gains a sense of order, as a logical structure emerges from the text. As such, recognition of the chiasm provides an intellectual and religious gain for the reader. Moreover, a study of chiasmus can provide a window into how scribes and editors worked with texts in antiquity.

My research focus is less on the chiasm as an isolated literary device than on what the chiasm can tell us about the compositional history of a text: how it came to be written or edited. My primary interest is in the legal, literary, and religious history of ancient Israel. I have investigated the full range of literary devices that were employed in the editing, copying, transmission, revision, and interpretation of texts, using the controls of cuneiform literature in Akkadian and Ugaritic, as well as the reception of the biblical text in Second Temple Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The ways in which some scholars have made use of chiasms raise two major concerns. First, the criteria for constructing the chiasm in a number of cases can often become, to use the technical term, "wobbly." These criteria can shift between thematic correspondence and lexical coherence, and they sometimes work much better in English than in the original Hebrew. In some cases, they overlook repetitions of the same words in other structural components of the chiasm that could throw off the neat symmetry if they were taken into account.[2]

Second, too often there is a prevailing assumption that chiasm always points to the work of an original ancient author and therefore provides evidence for the antiquity and literary coherence of an ancient text. When this happens, the chiasm—which is more accurately viewed as a neutral device having a range of uses and a diversity of functions—gets taken up into something like a scholarly culture war. Such controversies have frequently arisen in the analysis of chiasm by some religiously conservative scholars, both Christian and Jewish, who use the chiasm as an argument against the standard tools of historical criticism and source criticism. That approach is methodologically problematic, because it is too narrow and inconsistent with the historical evidence. Ancient scribes were much more gifted, both as composers and as editors, than we often give them credit for. They worked within a scribal curriculum, they were literate and well-trained, and they could use the same tool for multiple functions. These functions included creating literary elegance, plot complication, bold rethinking of religious and cultural conventions, critical engagement with the past, and imagining new religious, legal, ethical possibilities. The focus of this study will be on this more dynamic and complex role of the chiasm in the Hebrew Bible. The goal is to highlight the versatility of chiasm by presenting a series of cases that demonstrate how chiasm points to the role of editors reworking traditions, responding to earlier texts, and transforming them.

Case Study 1: Narrative Complexity in the Primeval History (Genesis 1 and 6)

The first case study focuses on the role of chiasm in plot development and the creation of narrative complexity in the account of the Great Flood in Gen 6–9. In the story, after discovering, to his chagrin, that the humanity he has made devotes itself only to evil, God repents—this is one of the most extraordinary lines in the Bible—that he has made humans (Gen 6:6) and sets out to destroy all life.[3] "Yahweh said, '*I will*

blot out [אמחה] from the earth humankind whom I have created—from humans, to cattle, to creeping things, to birds of the sky; for I regret that I made them'" (Gen 6:7; cf. 7:23).[4] The divine intent signaled by the verb מחה is to transform the earth into a *tabula rasa*: to wipe the slate clean.[5] In order to emphasize this point, the divine announcement of doom repeats the account of God's creation of life, as told in Gen 1, in precise reverse order:[6]

Exhibit 1: The Chiastic Relationship between the Creation Account (Genesis 1) and the Flood Narrative (Genesis 6)

Creation Story: Days 5 and 6

God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures,
and *birds* [עוף] that fly above the earth . . ." (Gen 1:20). A

God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature:
cattle [בהמה], *creeping things* [רמש], and wild beasts of every kind . . ."
(Gen 1:24). B

And God said, "Let us make *humans* [אדם] in our image . . ." (Gen 1:26). C

Flood Narrative

"Yahweh said, 'I will blot out [אמחה] from the earth humankind
whom I have created—from *humans* [אדם], C′

to *cattle* [בהמה], to *creeping things* [רמש], B′

to *birds* [עוף] of the sky; A′

for I regret that I made them'" (Gen 6:7)

The telling sequence of the life-forms listed in Gen 6:7 thus ominously concretizes the verbal action of מחה in that verse. As exhibit 1 demonstrates, God cites in chiastic order (ABC::C′B′A′) the series of creative acts he undertook on days five ("birds") and six ("cattle and creeping things" as a pair,[7] and "humankind") of the creation of the world. The as yet unspecified form of destruction is thereby presented as a step-by-step reversal and undoing of the creation of life.

There are two main points to stress about the chiasm in this text. First, the chiasm here is much more than just a formal marker of scribal activity. It also creates a major narrative pivot. In effect, within the world of the narrative, the chiasm acquires ontological status. It serves as the theological key of the plot at this point, presenting the flood as anti-creation, as an exact reversal of God's creative acts in Gen 1. God announces his plan to pull the plug, both literally and metaphorically, on creation. There the story would abruptly end—not only leaving the

scholar without a Bible to discuss but more seriously leaving the reader embarrassed by a Yahweh who, however omnipotent, patently lacks divine omniscience—if not for the omniscient narrator's qualification, "But Noah found favor with Yahweh" (Gen 6:8). From this point onward in the story, Noah will become the basis for an experiment in divine eugenics: by means of Noah, Yahweh hopes to create a new human stock from a righteous root, after extirpating the wicked rest of humanity. God renews the covenant he had made with Adam, now with Noah.

Second, this is a case where the chiasm pushes the boundaries of our own scholarly understanding of the historical composition of the Pentateuch. The creation story in Genesis 1 is traditionally attributed to the Priestly source. Genesis 6:7, on the other hand, is not generally thought to be part of the Priestly source. In fact, it is conventionally assigned to the Yahwist source. Therefore, in Genesis 6:7, we have a case where it appears that a non-Priestly text, a Yahwistic text, cites a Priestly text. That reverses the conventional model of source criticism, according to which the Yahwist source would be older than the Priestly source. The entire question of citation and reversal thus raises questions about the literary history of the Pentateuch. It is impossible in the confines of this short study to address all of the issues here, but it appears that this text points in the direction of a non-Priestly text in this case being post-Priestly—and drawing upon Priestly material as a source—in effect making an exegetical bridge between the divergent literary traditions of the Pentateuch.[8]

Case Study 2: Integrating Law and Narrative (Deuteronomy 11:32 and 12:1)

The second example to be examined demonstrates how chiasm was used as a structuring device for creating a single, coherent text out of diverse material. This case study, as well as the two that follow it below, derives from the text of Deuteronomy. The materials now assembled in the book of Deuteronomy have a complex literary history and very likely arose from several different sociological contexts within ancient Israel. They represent diverse literary genres, they contain different kinds of Hebrew linguistic expressions and rhetoric, and they draw upon earlier texts, both Israelite and Near Eastern. In some cases, later layers may disagree with and modify earlier layers to express a new religious understanding of the covenant and of God's will.

One obvious example of the diversity of materials in Deuteronomy is the way the collection of laws in chapters 12–26 has been embedded in a narrative frame consisting of chapters 1–11 and 29–34. This kind of composition has an historical precedent. The famous Hammurabi's Code, discovered in 1901 and dating to 1755 BCE, has a similar composite literary structure: the legal corpus, consisting of 280 casuistic laws, was embedded into a mytho-poetic frame, consisting of a prologue and an epilogue. The literary frame differs from the laws in dialect, grammar, imagery, and point of view (first person versus third person discourse). The available evidence suggests that this literary frame and the legal collection originally circulated independently yet were combined together by scribes to make a powerful statement about the monarch's commitment to justice.[9]

Deuteronomy presents a similar case. Despite the diversity of materials contained within it, Deuteronomy is clearly a well-structured book whose editors worked carefully to integrate the different literary genres of their sources. They provided editorial transitions at key literary seams, much like a mechanical engineer would use a gusset plate to create the strongest possible joint between the beams and girders of a bridge and the bridge's columns. One of the primary devices for making such transitions was, in fact, the chiasm.

A case in point is the connection between Deuteronomy's narrative introduction in chapters 1–11 and its legal corpus in chapters 12–26. As exhibit 2 (on the next page) demonstrates, the editors crafted a superscription introducing the legal corpus (in 12:1) that elegantly repeats in chiastic order the four key elements from the very end of the narrative introduction in chapter 11: (A) possess; (B) the land that the Lord is giving; (C) the admonition to take care to observe; and (D) the metareference to the laws and rules.

This kind of chiasm represents the handiwork of a skilled editor, or redactor, seeking to weave together the warp and woof of diverse literary genres to create an integrated composition that goes beyond the sum of its parts to make a new theological statement about the history and the terms of Israel's covenant with God. The well-trained scribe is both a creative theologian and a skilled editor who worked within a literary tradition.

Exhibit 2: The Chiastic Bridge between Deuteronomy 11 and 12

[31] For you are about to cross the Jordan to enter and possess (לרשׁת) A
the land that the Lord your God is giving to you
(את־הארץ אשׁר־יהוה אלהיכם נתן לכם). B
When you have occupied it and are settled in it,
[32] take care to observe (ושׁמרתם לעשׂות) all the C
laws and rules (כל־החקים ואת־המשׁפטים) that I have set before D
you this day (Deut 11:31–32).

[1] These are the laws and rules (החקים והמשׁפטים) D′
that you must carefully observe (תשׁמרון לעשׂות) C′
in the land that the Lord, God of your fathers, is giving to you B′
(בארץ אשׁר נתן יהוה אלהי אבתיך לך)
to possess (לרשׁתה), as long as you live on the land (Deut 12:1). A′

Case Study 3: Deuteronomy's Renewal and Transformation of Israelite Religion (Deuteronomy 12)

The third case study examines Deut 12 as a whole and provides another example of chiasm used in editorial attempts to unify diverse materials. The text retains the full history of the various attempts to come to terms with and justify the religious innovations Deuteronomy introduces in this chapter.[10] The text mandates two major reforms of Israelite religion, technically described as cultic centralization and cultic purification. First, it prohibits all sacrifice at the local altars prevalent throughout the countryside and requires the complete destruction of all such altars. The chapter stipulates repeatedly that all sacrifice should instead take place exclusively at a single site: "the place that Yahweh shall choose," Deuteronomy's circumlocution for Jerusalem and its temple. Second, although prohibiting in the strongest possible terms the local *sacrifice* of domestic animals for purposes of worship, it grants permission for local secular *slaughter* of these animals for food. With that concession, the chapter forges, for the first time in Israelite religion, a distinction between the cultic sacrifice of animals at an altar and their secular slaughter, not at an altar.

Deuteronomy 12 is generally regarded by historical-critical scholars as composite and characterized by redundancy:

Exhibit 3: Thematic Structure of the Four Centralization Laws in Deuteronomy 12[11]

Centralization Formula	Law no.	Unit	Addressee	Theme
Deut 12:5	1	12:2–7	plural	Cultic unity against Canaanite plurality of altars
Deut 12:11	2	12:8–12	plural	Condition for inauguration of centralization
Deut 12:14	3	12:13–19	singular	Requirement for centralization
Deut 12:15	"		singular	Concession for secular slaughter
Deut 12:21	4	12:20–28	singular	Condition for inauguration of secular slaughter
Deut 12:26	"		singular	Blood protocol

Exhibit 3 summarizes the conventional division of the chapter into four originally independent laws, each concerned with cultic centralization (vv. 2–7, 8–12, 13–19, 20–28). These laws are followed by a concluding paragraph concerned with cultic purity (vv. 29–31).[12] The formulaic command for the centralization of sacrifice occurs six different times, with some slight variations (Deut 12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26). The concession for secular slaughter recurs twice (Deut 12:15, 21). The accompanying stipulation that the blood, in cases of secular slaughter, should not be consumed but rather "poured out upon the earth like water" also recurs twice (Deut 12:16, 23–24). The rationale for centralization is in each case different, and there is no obvious attempt to integrate the various repetitions into a coherent whole in substantive legal terms. Grammatical anomalies increase the sense that the chapter is disjointed. The second person addressee of the laws shifts without explanation from primarily second person plural (Deut 12:1–12) to singular (Deut 12:13–21), although neither section is entirely internally consistent.

The editors responsible for the final form of the legal corpus were well aware of this diversity of materials and took steps to provide transitions. Exhibit 4 shows how the previously mentioned superscription provides the key to the editors' organization of the four centralization laws. Geographical location and historical duration become criteria for legal adherence. The laws that follow, the superscription affirms, apply *geographically* in the promised land of Canaan and are *historically* valid while Israel inhabits that land: "These are the statutes and the laws that you shall take

care to observe *in the land that Yahweh, the God of thine ancestors, has given thee to possess*—all the days that you live upon the earth" (Deut 12:1).[13] Within this superscription a shift occurs in the grammatical number of the addressee: from second person plural at the beginning and end to second person singular in the land donation formula in the middle.[14] This number shift in the superscription represents a further editorial device to prepare the reader for the number change in the laws that follow.

Exhibit 4: Redactional Framework of Deuteronomy 12

Law no.	Unit	Number of Addressee	Theme
	Deut 12:1	singular/ plural	Superscription: *Geography and Time*
1	Deut 12:2–7	plural	Cultic purification and centralization
2	Deut 12:8–12	plural	*Temporal condition* for centralization
3	Deut 12:13–19	singular	Centralization and secular slaughter
4	Deut 12:20–28	singular	*Geographical condition* for slaughter
5	Deut 12:29–31	singular	Conclusion: Cultic purification

In the final redaction of this chapter, the laws are arranged in a chiastic structure (AB::C::B′A′).[15] Laws 1 and 5 each address issues of cultic purification and polemicize against syncretism with Canaanite practices. Laws 2 and 4 each present the conditions, whether historical or geographic, for the inception of centralization and secular slaughter. Thereby doubly framed and functioning as the focus of the chapter is law 3, which commands centralization and local secular slaughter. Law 5, which makes no reference to cult centralization, was most likely added by a late editor. Nonetheless, as shown in exhibit 5 (on the next page), by means of the fifth law's focus on cultic purity (Deut 12:29–31), the editor establishes multiple points of contact with law 1 (Deut 12:2–7) and thereby provides the chapter with an elegant chiastic frame.[16]

As a result of such editorial design, the chapter appears simultaneously composite, redacted from five originally independent paragraphs, and cohesive, with the five paragraphs integrated into an ordered structure:

Exhibit 5: Chiastic Frame of Deuteronomy 12

(3)	ואשׂריהם תשׂרפון באשׁ	You *shall burn* their sacred posts *by fire*	A
(4)	לא־תעשׂון כן ליהוה אלהיכם	You *shall not do thus for Yahweh your God*	B
(5)	תדרשׁו	You *shall seek*	C
(30)	תדרשׁ	Lest *thou seek*	C′
(31)	לא־תעשׂה כן ליהוה אלהיך	Thou *shall not do thus for Yahweh thy God*	B′
(31)	את־בניהם ואת־בנתיהם ישׂרפו באשׁ	They *burn* their sons and daughters *by fire*	A′

This double nature of the chapter has engendered a double approach to its scholarly interpretation. The dominant approach in source-critical scholarship is to attempt, by means of diachronic analysis, to isolate its earliest stratum, deemed variously Deuteronomic or pre-Deuteronomic, and then to assign the other paragraphs to successive, later editors. The most recent monograph, for example, finds two pre-exilic, one early exilic, and one late exilic stratum.[17] Such confident precision raises more questions than it answers, since the criteria for distinguishing two pre-exilic Deuteronomic strata from one another, when each is Josianic and presupposes centralization—yet neither of which is Deuteronomistic—are never made clear, either linguistically or legal-historically. The problem with many such approaches is that, while properly emphasizing the composite nature of the chapter, they overlook both the evidence for the secondary imposition of a chiastic editorial structure and the difficulties that such deliberate redactional reworking pose for reconstructing literary history in the first place.[18]

Conversely, a number of scholars have taken the opposite approach. Denying that the repetitions in the chapter are signs of redundancy and composite origin, these scholars reject diachronic analysis altogether. They strive for synchronic solutions, using this chiastic structure to argue for the unity of the text and explaining the repetitions away as deliberate rhetorical emphasis.[19] However, almost all proponents of this synchronic approach fail to do justice to the degree of philological difficulty in the chapter. They restrict the difficulty to mere repetition alone, as if that problem did not interlock with the number change of the addressee. Rhetorical emphasis might account for the former problem, but not the latter, let alone both together. Moreover, proponents of

this synchronic method frequently commit a logical error. They move from the claim of rhetorical or literary structure to that of *compositional* coherence, without taking into account that such structures may, with equal justification, represent secondary editorial attempts to impose coherence upon originally composite material.

Even if a chiasm can legitimately be identified in a text, it does not follow automatically that the whole text represents the original composition of a single author.[20] After all, that an editor has obscured textual seams *does not mean that there are no seams,* no matter how adroitly the disparate material may have been integrated through the use of redactional bridges.[21] The very structures, in other words, that suggest compositional unity to some scholars may actually lead to the opposite conclusion once the full degree of philological complexity of a text is recognized. Each approach, both the diachronic and the synchronic, contributes to the discussion, but neither is in itself sufficient to account for the text. A shift in perspective is necessary.

As I demonstrated in *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation,* the key to the composition of Deut 12 is the way it engages and transforms prior Israelite literary history.[22] Deut 12 is exegetical: not in the sense of a passive explication of the meaning of a text but rather, more profoundly, in using textual interpretation in order to sanction a major transformation of legal, cultic, and literary history by means of literary reworking—and by ascribing the departure from convention to the authoritative tradition.

Deuteronomy 12 does not simply represent "centralization law," as if that were some immediate positive legal requirement intended directly to act upon society. Instead, what is at stake is something broader, both theoretical and practical: not simply the innovation of centralization but also its careful justification and defense in light of previous Israelite literary history.[23] This hermeneutical issue helps to explain the problematic structure of much of the chapter. Deuteronomy 12, to a large extent, represents an anthology of repeated attempts not simply to command but also to justify the innovation of centralization. The editors were conservative and retained the multiple previous attempts to explain centralization without obscuring the differences between them or eliminating the previous layers of tradition, much as a Supreme Court ruling will retain judicial dissents. This approach helps account for the chapter's redundancy and provides a new perspective for understanding its literary structure and hermeneutical dynamics.

Case Study 4: Reimagining the Nature of Divine Justice (Deuteronomy 7:9–10)

The final case study to be presented explores Deut 7:9–10, a text in which the chiasm points to the intentional literary and theological structure of the unit. Most European scholars have failed to recognize this structure, as they divide the passage up into separate literary layers.[24] Examination of this case equally points to textual coherence as a complex idea, since the text is the product of a skilled scribe commenting upon and reacting to an earlier layer of tradition. Deut 7:9–10 thus confirms the power of chiasm to allow us to recover the remarkable ability of ancient Israelite scribes and editors to overturn established notions of divine justice and to imagine new possibilities that focus on individual responsibility.

The Decalogue provides the point of departure for examining this passage.[25] The second commandment prohibits the worship of deities other than God and offers the following rationale for the prohibition:

Exhibit 6: Second Commandment of the Decalogue (Exodus 20:5b–6 = Deuteronomy 5:9b–10)

5 לֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם וְלֹא תָעָבְדֵם כִּי אָנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קַנָּא פֹּקֵד עֲוֹן אָבֹת עַל־בָּנִים עַל־שִׁלֵּשִׁים
וְעַל־רִבֵּעִים לְשֹׂנְאָי: 6 וְעֹשֶׂה חֶסֶד לַאֲלָפִים לְאֹהֲבַי וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָי:

[For I, Yahweh, your God,[26] am an impassioned God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.]

The Hebrew participles translated "those who love" (לְאֹהֲבַי) and "those who reject" (לְשֹׂנְאָי) are not simply emotional but legal terms. Reflecting the terminology of ancient Near Eastern state treaties, "love" designates political loyalty to the suzerain while "reject" denotes acts of treason.[27] Israelite authors took over this secular treaty terminology, together with the concept of a binding legal tie, in order to conceptualize the nation's relationship with its God as a covenant.[28] These ancient Near Eastern treaties were understood as being made in perpetuity. They were therefore binding not only upon those immediately signatory to them but also upon succeeding generations. The punishment for violating the treaty, therefore, applied not just to those who originally swore their agreement to it, but also to their progeny: that is, to their children and their grandchildren. That principle underlies God's threat

in the Decalogue that he will visit his rage upon the third and fourth generation of those guilty of breaking the covenant.[29]

The Decalogue thus formulates a doctrine of the transgenerational consequences of sin. Although it is my parent who wrongs God, I and my children and my grandchildren are punished for the parent's wrongdoing, independent of any particular wrongdoing on our part. The text is remarkably silent about whether the actual sinner is punished for his or her own offense or whether the expected punishment might be completely displaced onto the progeny.[30] Here there emerges a fundamental ethical and theological problem: Is it not *odious* for God to punish innocent persons, merely for being the progeny of sinners?

A remarkable transformation of this Decalogue doctrine can be found just two chapters later within the legal corpus of Deuteronomy, as shown in exhibit 7. The text presents itself as an address by Moses to the nation of Israel, given on the eve of the nation's entry into the promised land of Canaan, forty years after God originally delivered the law to the people at Mount Sinai (Deut 1:1–3). According to the editorial superscription in the biblical text, Moses here explicates the laws that God had earlier proclaimed (Deut 1:5) and exhorts the nation to obedience. In this new literary setting, Moses, while reviewing the past, ostensibly quotes the Decalogue (Deut 5:9–10 = Exod 20:5–6) and then preaches to the nation concerning it. Moses thus expounds upon divine justice.

Exhibit 7: Mosaic Homily on Divine Justice (Deuteronomy 7:9–10)

[9] וְיָדַעְתָּ כִּי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים הָאֵל הַנֶּאֱמָן שֹׁמֵר הַבְּרִית וְהַחֶסֶד לְאֹהֲבָיו וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו
לְאֶלֶף דּוֹר׃ [10] וּמְשַׁלֵּם לְשֹׂנְאָיו אֶל־פָּנָיו לְהַאֲבִידוֹ לֹא יְאַחֵר לְשֹׂנְאוֹ אֶל־פָּנָיו יְשַׁלֶּם־לוֹ׃

[Know, therefore, that only Yahweh your God is God, the steadfast God who keeps his gracious covenant to the thousandth generation of those who love him and keep his commandments, but who requites those who reject him—to their face, by destroying them. He does not delay with anyone who rejects him—to his face he requites him.]

The vocabulary of this passage makes it clear that the Mosaic speaker alludes specifically to the Decalogue, which he has previously quoted (Deut 5). This reuse of the Decalogue is marked by a chiastic citation.[31] The first person sequence of the Decalogue—(A) "those who reject me" (לְשֹׂנְאָי) and (B) "those who love me and keep my commandments" (לְאֹהֲבַי וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָי; Deut 5:9–10)—is inverted. In the new context in Deut 7, it is recast as a third person report and the order of the elements is reversed: (B′) "those who love him and keep his commandments" (לְאֹהֲבָיו וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו) and (A′) "those who reject him" (לְשֹׂנְאָיו [Qere]).

The Mosaic speaker purports to provide a homiletic paraphrase of the formula for divine justice in the Decalogue. But a closer look reveals that the homily so fundamentally transforms the original as to revoke it. The speaker has strategically deleted references to the transgenerational consequences of sin and instead asserts the *immediate* punishment of the sinner. By implication, divine punishment for sin is restricted to the sinner alone. In contrast to the Decalogue, the progeny, who are *here strikingly unmentioned,* are not explicitly visited with divine punishment.

Exhibit 8: Legal Reworking in Support of Individual Responsibility (Deuteronomy 7:10)

	A	who requites	וּמְשַׁלֵּם
	B	those who reject him—*to their face,*	לְשֹׂנְאָיו אֶל־פָּנָיו
X		*by destroying them.*	לְהַאֲבִידוֹ
X		*He does not delay*	לֹא יְאַחֵר
	B′	with anyone who rejects him—*to his face*	לְשֹׂנְאוֹ אֶל־פָּנָיו
	A′	he requites him.	יְשַׁלֶּם־לוֹ

In form, this passage demonstrates two types of chiasm. In addition to the chiastic citation of the Decalogue already noted, Deut 7:10 is structured as a chiasm. In the diagram of this verse in exhibit 8, the underlining shows how a key term from the originally problematic text is cited: the retribution due "those who reject him," which alludes to "those who reject me" in the Decalogue. Once cited, however, the same term receives a new continuation: the new teaching of individual responsibility (as the *italicized* text shows). The double annotation stipulates that God requites the sinner, literally, "to his face" (אֶל־פָּנָיו).[32] As the medieval Jewish commentator Rashi (1040–1105 CE) accurately saw, the phrase means "in his lifetime" (בְּחַיָּיו).[33] The annotations redefine divine punishment and restrict it so that it no longer extends across generations.[34] The paraphrase of the source thus abrogates the source, which now propounds the doctrine of individual responsibility. The chiastic pattern of the textual reworking, as shown in the diagram (ABX::XB′A′), frames and thus highlights Deuteronomy's ethical innovation (marked by X): the introduction of the notion that God "does not delay" (לֹא יְאַחֵר) retributive justice, that is, that punishment no longer occurs transgenerationally. The doctrinal innovation is accomplished by means of textual reformulation.

The doctrine of individual retribution is not presented in Deut 7 as a departure from the *status quo*. Instead, the new teaching is presented as consistent with the very doctrine that it rejects: as an authoritatively

taught "re-citation" of the original *theologoumenon* or "divine proclamation." The author of this text marshals the very words of the formula for transgenerational punishment against itself. Its key terms are redeployed so as to abrogate transgenerational punishment and mandate individual retribution instead. The evidence of Deut 7 thus requires a reassessment of the standard conception of the literary chiasm. The standard debate about whether it should be seen primarily in synchronic terms, as a compositional device, or rather in diachronic terms, as an editorial device, does not do justice to its use here. In this case, it subsumes characteristics associated with both editing and composition. Critical is the insight that the use of the device, while marking exegetical reinterpretation of a lemma, does not constitute a secondary redactional layer. The writer of this text reworks and reinterprets older law so as to make an original statement. In doing so, that writer emerges as both author and editor.[35]

Conclusions

The primary goal of this essay has been to demonstrate the richness and range of uses of the chiasm as a scribal device in antiquity. As the case studies above show, chiasm could serve to provide narrative suspense and plot complexity, and as a way for editors to integrate law and narrative. The texts presented also exemplify how editors used the device to integrate a range of material from originally independent or diverse backgrounds, including texts that do not appear to agree with one another and that express divergent viewpoints, to provide bridges and transitions for the reader, while still preserving the diversity of perspectives and viewpoints. Finally, the examples demonstrate how editors could rework traditions and earlier texts to make powerful new theological statements about the nature of divine justice.

It is thus too reductive to see the chiasm simply as a marker of compositional unity or of alleged antiquity. It could equally result from redactional layering or exegetical reworking. Nor should chiasm be regarded merely in aesthetic or formal terms as marking elegance. It can equally point to sites of profound religious creativity and mark the transformation of tradition with the infusion of new insight. In other words, the chiasm was more than simply a technical scribal device. In the skilled hands of the editors of ancient Israelite literature, the device was also an agent of the theological imagination, of literary and religious creativity, and of cultural change.

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Notes

1. In my previous work, I have identified a range of devices, in addition to chiasm, that are prevalent in the literature of the ancient Near East. These include:

1. Seidel's Law, in which the author cites an earlier text by reversing the elements of that source text. As such, the quotation is marked chiastically, with the original text AB often cited as B′A′.
2. Repetitive resumption (*Wiederaufnahme*), in which the composer brackets a digression or interpolation by framing it with a repetition, much as a flashback in a film is often correspondingly framed, introduced by a fade-out and concluded with a fade-in. In the case of the repetitive resumption, one or two clauses from the material preceding the interruption are repeated after it to mark the resumption of the original text. As such, there is a sequence of original material ABC, then the contextually disruptive X, followed by the repetition, C′, after which the original sequence, DEF, resumes: ABC::X::C′DEF. The repetition in question need not be verbatim. More often it is approximate and may abridge the earlier unit. In addition, the repetition may reverse the elements of the original, in conformity with Seidel's law.
3. Lemmatic citation and reformulation, in which an author selectively quotes words and phrases from an earlier text in order to transform the meaning of the source text to suit the author's purposes.
4. Textual voicing, which includes pseudepigraphy, in which the author attributes authorship of the text to an earlier, authoritative figure, such as Moses. Other examples of textual voicing include theonymy, in which the author attributes the text directly to God, and the use of an omniscient narrator.

For additional discussion of these literary techniques, see Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17–20, 34–38, 47–48, 97.

2. For an invaluable study of potential errors in the identification of chiastic structures, see David P. Wright, "The Fallacies of Chiasmus: A Critique of Structures Proposed for the Covenant Collection (Exodus 20:23–23:19)," *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische*

und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte 10 (2004): 143–68. In a later reconsideration, Wright conceded the use of symmetrical structures as a compositional tool by ancient scribes in defined circumstances: David P. Wright, "Chiasmus in the Covenant Code Reconsidered: The Final Apodictic Laws," in *"Gerechtigkeit und Recht zu üben" (Gen 18,19): Studien zur altorientalischen und biblischen Rechtsgeschichte, zur Religionsgeschichte Israels und zur Religionssoziologie. Festschrift für Eckart Otto zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Reinhard Achenbach and Martin Arneth, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift f*ür* Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte 13; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000), 171–81.

3. Jean-Pierre Sonnet examines this concept of God repenting in "God's Repentance and 'False Starts' in Biblical History (Genesis 6–9; Exodus 32–34; 1 Samuel 15 and 2 Samuel 7)," in *Congress Volume: Ljubljana 2007* (ed. André Lemaire; Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 133; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 469–94. Sonnet's future volume devotes a chapter to the narrative poetics of God's changing his mind in the flood story; see Jean-Pierre Sonnet, *Dramatis Persona: God as a Narrative Character in the Hebrew Bible* (forthcoming).

4. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. It is worth noting that translations of these passages may make it difficult to identify similarities in their respective content. For example, the New Jewish Publication Society translation of בהמה in Gen 6:7 as "beasts" obscures the important allusion to the identical Hebrew word in Gen 1:24, where NJPS had translated it as "cattle." In the narrative implementation of the divine announcement (Gen 6:7) that appears in 7:23, however, the word is correctly translated as "cattle." See the NJPS reprint in A. Berlin and M. Z. Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (2d ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

5. The imagery inherent in the Hebrew verb is specifically that of erasure, in the first instance, textual (Num 5:23; Exod 32:32), but also more general wiping (2 Kgs 21:13). For further discussion of the verb, see U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (trans. Israel Abrahams; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961–64), 1:304–5. This motif of God's re-beginning from a *tabula rasa,* an enforced *ex nihilo* in response to human iniquity, is frequent in the Bible. It recurs in the debates between Moses and God following the episodes of the golden calf (Exod 32:10) and the spies (Num 14:11–12) and in the conception of the devastation of the autochthonous peoples of Canaan in order to create a new moral community bound by God's law (Lev 18:24–30; 20:22–26). So characteristic is this motif of God's ominous duality as destroyer and creator that the early midrash retrojects it into the prehistory of creation, positing a succession of other worlds as having been created and destroyed by God before he was, finally, content with this one: see *Genesis Rabbah* 3:7 in the edition of J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1965, 2d printing), 1:23.

6. It is important to note that the two texts analyzed here are likely from different sources: Gen 1 derives from the Priestly source (P), and Gen 6:7 from a non-Priestly source (non-P). Nevertheless, the parallels in language between the two texts are striking. In describing the animals to be placed on the ark in Gen 7:2–3, non-P is interested only in "cattle" [בהמה] and "birds" [עוף]. Yet "creeping things" [רמש], a term characteristic of both P's creation account and its flood narrative, appears in the non-P catalogs of creatures to be destroyed in 6:7 and 7:23. Moreover, the order of the creature terms in 6:7 and 7:23 is consistent with P's compositional practice. When all three terms appear together, "cattle" and "creeping things" are generally kept together, while "birds" can appear either before or after the other two terms. There are two exceptions to this principle: (1) in Gen 7:21, רמש appears at the head of the list of animals and is used to refer to creaturely life in general,

while "beasts" [חיה] takes the usual place of רמש, following בהמה in the list; and (2) in Lev 11:46, רמש appears after בהמה and עוף, respectively. In this case, however, רמש refers specifically to aquatic life [נפש החיה הרמשת במים], whereas in other P verses in which cattle and creeping things appear together, רמש is either unmodified, or it is modified by a term for "land" [ארץ or אדמה] (cf. Gen 1:21, in which aquatic life is paired with birds in P's order of creation). (Note: The focus of this analysis is the P source; therefore, it does not take into account Lev 20:25, a verse from the Holiness source that does not follow the same ordering system as that used by P.)

Scholars have long noted the presence of P-like language in Gen 6:7 and have offered a variety of theories of redaction or textual dependence to resolve the problem. For example, David Carr sees the redactor's hand in the animal lists of 6:7aβ and 7:23aβ, inserting vocabulary from P into a non-P text in order to broaden non-P's original focus on the destruction of humanity (in 6:7aα and 7:23aα) to include animals as well. David M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis*: *Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 57. On the other hand, J. L. Ska explains the P-like terminology in 6:7 and 7:23 by arguing that the non-P flood material does not comprise a complete, independent account, but rather was composed as a supplement to the P narrative. In other words, in the flood narrative, non-P is post-priestly and dependent on P. See Jean-Louis Ska, "The Story of the Flood: A Priestly Writer and Some Later Editorial Fragments," in *Exegesis of the Pentateuch: Exegetical Studies and Basic Questions* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 66; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 1–22. A systematic analysis of the arguments about these non-P animal lists is beyond the scope of this essay, whose focus is Gen 7:8–9. Nevertheless, the symmetry between the P and non-P animal terminology in Gen 6–9 does suggest that the chiastic relationship between P's account of the creation of life in Gen 1:20–26 and the animal lists in Gen 6:7 and 7:23 is not coincidental.

7. The citation from Gen 1:24 is, to be sure, not comprehensive but preserves in fixed order the only two substantives without the additional modifier, "of every kind."

8. For a fuller investigation, see Bernard M. Levinson, "A Post-Priestly Harmonization in the Flood Narrative," in *The Post-Priestly Pentateuch: New Perspectives on Its Redactional Development and Theological Profiles* (ed. Federico Giuntoli and Konrad Schmid; Forschungen zum Alten Testament 101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 113–23.

9. Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, *Inu Anum ṣīrum: Literary Structures in the Non-Juridical Sections of Codex Hammurabi* (Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 15; Philadelphia: University Museum, 1994).

10. For a valuable analysis of the redactional development of Deut 12, see Simeon Chavel, "The Literary Development of Deuteronomy 12: Between Religious Ideal and Social Reality," in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research* (ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch Schwartz; Forschungen zum Alten Testament 78; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 303–26.

11. This table is based in part on one provided by Norbert Lohfink, "Opfer und Säkularisierung im Deuteronomium," in *Studien zu Opfer und Kult im Alten Testament* (ed. Adrian Schenker; Forschungen zum Alten Testament 3 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992), 26.

12. See, for example, Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 89; and A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy* (New Century Bible Commentary; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1979), 222.

13. This is my translation of the Hebrew, intentionally using an older English style in order to show the distinction between the singular (thee, thine) and the plural (you) form of the second person pronoun, which has been lost in modern English. On the geographical restriction of the superscription, see Norbert Lohfink, *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur II* (Stuttgarter biblische Aufsatzbände 12; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991), 229–56; repr. from Norbert Lohfink, "Die *ḥuqqîm ûmišpāṭîm* im Buch Deuteronomium und ihre Neubegrenzung durch Dtn 12,1," *Biblica* 70 (1989): 1–29. See also Norbert Lohfink, "Dtn 12,1 und Gen 15,18: Das dem Samen Abrahams geschenkte Land als der Geltungsbereich der deuteronomischen Gesetze"; and Norbert Lohfink, "Zum rabbinischen Verständnis von Dtn 12,1," both reprinted in the same volume (pp. 257–85, 287–92).

14. Lohfink, "Dtn 12,1 und Gen 15,18," 259, 265, establishes both the coherence of the superscription on juridical grounds and its text-critical originality as the *lectio difficilior* in contrast to the Septuagint, which levels the plural throughout the verse. This frequent number change (*Numeruswechsel*) in the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy, which occurs both in the legal corpus and in the narrative frame, still awaits satisfactory explanation. For more detailed studies, see Norbert Lohfink, *Das Hauptgebot: Eine Untersuchung literarischer Einleitungs-fragen zu Dtn 5–11* (Analecta Biblica 20; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), 239–57; Christopher T. Begg, "The Significance of the *Numeruswechsel* in Deuteronomy—the 'Prehistory' of the Question," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 55 (1979): 116–24; Christopher T. Begg, "Contributions to the Elucidation of the Composition of Deuteronomy with Special Attention to the Significance of the *Numeruswechsel*" (PhD diss., University of Louvain, 1987); and Yoshihide Suzuki, "The '*Numeruswechsel*' in Deuteronomy" (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1982).

15. See the fine analysis by Georg Braulik, *Die deuteronomischen Gesetze und der Dekalog: Studien zum Aufbau von Deuteronomium 12–26* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 145; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991), 23–30.

16. Note the additional parallel between "where the nations worshipped their gods" (Deut 12:2) and "how did these nations worship their gods" (Deut 12:30).

17. As a prime example of this approach, and providing extensive further bibliography, see Eleonore Reuter, *Kultzentralisation: Entstehung und Theologie von Dtn 12* (BBB 87; Frankfurt: Anton Hain, 1993), 109–14.

18. Despite all such attempts, there is no direct access to a hypothetically reconstructed earliest centralization law: even the law conventionally deemed the earliest, Deut 12:13–19, has already been reworked in light of the final stage of the redaction. Norbert Lohfink, *Lectures on Deuteronomy 12–14* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1983), 101, 105. Professor Lohfink kindly made available to me these transcribed lectures, originally given at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, which contain a wealth of research. See also Norbert Lohfink, "Zur deuteronomischen Zentralisationsformel," *Biblica* 65 (1984): 297–328; reprinted in and cited according to Lohfink, *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur II,* 164.

19. Several analyses of Deuteronomy reason from literary design to single authorship without considering an alternative interpretation of the evidence. Stressing chiastic structures as well as syllable counting as signs of compositional unity, see Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9* (rev. ed.; WBC 6A; Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 240, 242, 263. For an example of chiastic analysis carried out without addressing

philological issues, such as grammatical number change, which is then used to defend a claim of compositional unity, see J. G. McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy* (JSOTSup 33; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 67. For a critical analysis, see Bernard M. Levinson, "McConville's *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*," *Jewish quarterly review* 80, no. 3/4 (January–April 1990): 396–404. On the synchronic approaches of Harold M. Wiener, Calum M. Carmichael, Stephen A. Kaufman, and J. G. McConville, see Bernard M. Levinson, "Calum M. Carmichael's Approach to the Laws of Deuteronomy," *Harvard Theological Review* 83, no. 3 (July 1990): 227–57; and Bernard M. Levinson, *The Hermeneutics of Innovation: The Impact of Centralization upon the Structure, Sequence, and Reformulation of Legal Material in Deuteronomy* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1991), 14–60.

20. See the due cautions of James Kugel, "On the Bible and Literary Criticism," *Prooftexts* 1, no. 3 (September 1981): 217–36.

21. See the interesting discussion of "the disappearing redactor" by John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 56–58.

22. Levinson, *Deuteronomy,* 23–52.

23. Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (2d ed.; London: SCM, 1987), broke important ground in arguing that Deut 12:8–12 represents a later exegetical harmonization between noncentralization law (Exod 20:24) and centralization law (Deut 12:4–7). In contrast to his model, however, the claim here is that the very initial formulation of the centralization law is already exegetical and intertextual. Moreover, he does not indicate why he considers Deut 12:4–7 to represent the earliest formulation of centralization.

24. For a recent analysis, see Timo Veijola, *Das fünfte Buch Mose, Deuteronomium: Kapitel 1,1–16,17* (Das Alte Testament Deutsch 8.1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 206–8. See also the earlier work by Reinhard Achenbach, *Israel zwischen Verheißung und Gebot: Literarkritische Untersuchungen zu Deuteronomium 5–11* (Europäische Hochschulschriften 422; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1991), 227.

25. This point of departure should be seen more in heuristic than in historical terms. It is difficult to place the Decalogue in its present form at the beginning of the history of Israelite religion or to consider it ancient. This difficulty besets the otherwise excellent exegetical treatment by Moshe Weinfeld, "The Decalogue: Its Significance, Uniqueness, and Place in Israel's Tradition," in *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives* (ed. Edwin B. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John W. Welch; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 3–47. His approach, which regards the Decalogue as ancient and Mosaic in origin, should be supplemented by the evidence for a late, Deuteronomistic redaction of the Sinai pericope. See, for example, Reinhard G. Kratz, "Der Dekalog im Exodusbuch," *VT* 44 (1994): 205–38; Erich Zenger, "Wie und wozu die Tora zum Sinai kam: Literarische und theologische Beobachtungen zu Exodus 19–34," in *Studies in the Book of Exodus: Redaction-Reception-Interpretation* (ed. Marc Vervenne; BETL 126; Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1996), 265–88; idem, "Der Stand der Dekalogforschung," in *Recht und Ethik im Alten Testament* (ed. Bernard M. Levinson and Eckart Otto, with assistance from Walter Dietrich; Altes Testament und Moderne 13; Münster/London: LIT Verlag, 2004), 57–65; and Matthias Köckert, "Wie kam das Gesetz an den Sinai?" in *Vergegenwärtigung des Alten Testaments: Beiträge zur biblischen Hermeneutik für Rudolf Smend zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. Christoph Bultmann, Walter

Dietrich, and Christoph Levin; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 13–27. For a different approach, see Christoph Levin, "Der Dekalog am Sinai," in idem, *Fortschreibungen: Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (BZAW 316; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 60–80.

26. The Israelite god is referred to by two main names in the Bible: Yahweh and God.

27. William L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 25 (1963): 77–87; repr. in William L. Moran, *The Most Magic Word: Essays on Babylonian and Biblical Literature* (ed. Ronald S. Hendel, CBQMS 35 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 2002), 170–81. See also Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972; repr., Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 81–91; and Udo Rüterswörden, "Die Liebe zu Gott im Deuteronomium," in *Die deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke: Redaktions- und religionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven zur 'Deuteronomismus'-Diskussion in Tora und Vorderen Propheten* (ed. Markus Witte et al.; BZAW 365; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 229–38.

28. The importance of the Near Eastern treaty model for covenantal theology has long been recognized. For a useful overview, see Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969). Despite the Exodus narrative's ancient setting at the beginning of the nation's history, the key theological idea of the covenant actually represents a late development, which was then read back into Israel's origins. See Lothar Perlitt, *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament* (WMANT 36; Neukirchen Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969). For an attempt, in part, to rehabilitate and rethink the covenant in light of the theological issues raised by Perlitt's dating, see Ernest W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986). See also Eckart Otto, "Die Ursprünge der Bundestheologie im Alten Testament und im Alten Orient," *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 4 (1998): 1–84. For a recent overview of the issues, see *Covenant as Context: Essays in Honour of E. W. Nicholson* (ed. A. D. H. Mayes and R. B. Salters; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

29. Note the thorough study by Meir Weiss, "Some Problems in the Biblical Doctrine of Retribution," *Tarbiz* 31 (1961–62): 236–63; 32 (1962–63): 1–18 (Hebrew); repr. in *Likkutei Tarbiz: A Biblical Studies Reader* (ed. Moshe Weinfeld; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979), 71–98, 99–116 (Hebrew). His argument, however, that "third and fourth" simply means "a large number of generations," and is thus equivalent to "the thousandth generation," does not take into account the parallels to the Neo-Assyrian treaties.

30. Arguing that the delay in exacting punishment was intended as an expression of divine mercy towards the penitent wrongdoer, see Yochanan Muffs, *Love & Joy: Law, Language and Religion in Ancient Israel* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 19. His hypothesis, however, begs the question of whether in each case the sinner is in fact penitent and deserving of such divine mercy. In that way, his argument becomes circular.

31. The principle of inverted citation is named after its discoverer: Moshe Seidel, "Parallels between Isaiah and Psalms," *Sinai* 38 (1955–56): 150; reprinted in Moshe Seidel, *Ḥiqrei Miqra* (Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1978), 1–97 (Hebrew). Seidel's claims are often insufficiently controlled by criteria for establishing the direction of dependence. More controlled uses include those of Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Textual Study of the Bible—a New Outlook," in *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text* (ed. Frank Moore Cross and Shemaryahu Talmon; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 362–63; Pancratius C. Beentjes, "Inverted Quotations in the Bible: A Neglected Stylistic Pattern," *Biblica* 63 (1982):

506–23; and Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 35 and 219nn11–12. On this and related editorial markers, see Levinson, *Deuteronomy,* 17–20.

32. Contrary to several modern translations, the phrase cannot mean "immediately" or "instantly." There is no evidence in the Bible for instantaneous divine retribution for wrongdoing. Thus missing the point are the translations offered by Theophile Meek ("immediately"); see "Deuteronomy" in *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* (ed. J. M. Powis Smith et al.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 165; and by the new Jewish Publication Society Version ("instantly"); see *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 286. The *Tanakh* translation must derive from Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Mikra ki-Pheschuto* (3 vols.; Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1899–1901), 1:323.

33. Rashi frequently embeds classical rabbinic exegesis, particularly *midrash halakha*, in his commentary on the Pentateuch. In this case, his annotation directly reflects the Aramaic Targum Onkelos. The latter does not strictly translate the lemma of Deut 7:10 but rather amplifies it midrashically, to argue that God "requites the good deeds *of those who reject him in their lifetime* (בְּחַיֵּיהוֹן), *so as to cause them to perish*." Ironically, the correct insight into the literal meaning of the specific phrase in the lemma—the recognition that "to his face" means "in his life"—actually comes in the service of a midrashic transformation of the verse. The verse is reinterpreted to forestall the inevitable question of theodicy raised by the verse in its literal meaning: How is it, if God truly rewards the righteous and punishes the guilty, that the experience of life suggests the contrary: that the wicked seem to prosper in the world while the righteous suffer? The midrashic solution to the problem is to extend the analysis into the afterlife. The wicked receive reward for their good deeds only in this life, whereas they are requited for their iniquity by being denied a share in the world to come. The righteous, conversely, suffer only in this life for any iniquities they may have committed, whereas they are rewarded for their good deeds with the assurance of a place in the world to come. That extension of the time span of the verse into a putative afterlife, however, completely contradicts the radical claim for divine justice within history made by Deut 7:10. These issues are overlooked in the untenable claim concerning the Targum: "The Aramaic paraphrase is a reasonable interpretation of the verse's *peshat* [literal sense]." Israel Drazin, *Targum Onkelos to Deuteronomy: An English Translation of the Text with Analysis and Commentary (Based on A. Sperber's Edition)* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1982), 115. In its rendering of Deut 7:10, Onkelos corresponds closely to the Palestinian Targumic tradition, which has a well-known proclivity for extensive haggadic expansions. See the rendering of Deut 7:10 in Michael L. Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch According to Their Extant Sources* (2 vols.; AnBib 76; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 1:213, 2:171. For the social and theological context of these additions, see Avigdor Shinan, *The Aggadah in the Aramaic Targums to the Pentateuch* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Makor, 1979), 2:301 (Hebrew). The best edition of Rashi's Commentary on the Pentateuch, citing his classical sources (here noting the correspondence with Targum Onkelos) is Charles Ber [Ḥayim Dov] Chavel, ed., *Perushe Rashi ʿal ha-Torah* (3d ed.; Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1985–86), 532 (Hebrew). The latter does not address the exegetical issues discussed here. For the standard English translation, see Morris Rosenbaum and Abraham Maurice Silbermann, trans., *Pentateuch with Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth, and Rashi's Commentary* (5 vols.; London: Shapiro Valentine, 1929–34; repr., Jerusalem: Silbermann, 1973), 5:42.

34. A member of the Spanish school of medieval rabbinic exegesis, Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1164 CE), rejected Rashi's midrashic approach. Ibn Ezra recognized that the issue in Deut 7:10 is not an opposition between this world and the afterlife but between individual responsibility and vicarious punishment. He correctly, if quietly, saw that the verse contradicts the Decalogue doctrine by restricting judgment to the agent "himself" (לְעַצְמוֹ). See Abraham ibn Ezra, *Commentary on the Torah* (ed. A. Weiser; 3 vols.; Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1977), 3:238 (Hebrew). Ironically, ibn Ezra's rendering is almost identical to that of the modern New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Making allowance for the NRSV's commitment to gender-neutral language, its correct translation ("in their own person") precisely corresponds to that earlier proposed by ibn Ezra.

35. For an expanded study of the reworking and reinterpretation of the Decalogue's doctrine of transgenerational punishment in a variety of texts, see Bernard M. Levinson, *Legal Revision and Religious Renewal in Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).