

THE PENTATEUCH QUOTED INTACT: EVIDENCE FROM EZEKIEL AND PSALMS

BEN ZION KATZ

EZEKIEL

In an oft-quoted paper¹ written over a decade ago,² William Propp summarized the arguments pro and con as to whether the postulated Priestly source (P) might ever have existed as an independent work. According to the Documentary Hypothesis, P is one of the ancient documents that would later, along with other documents by other authors, be combined by a redactor to form the Torah we have today. Two of the stronger arguments for the position that there was once a separate P document are the presence of inconsistencies and doublets in the Torah as well as the claim that the reconstructed P narrative reads quite well, at least at certain junctures.³ In an attempt to bolster the claim that P existed as an independent source, Propp endeavored to show that "a fragment of the intact Priestly source can be excavated out of the book of Ezekiel."⁴ . . . In this paper, I will show, as Burrows first did nearly a century ago,⁵ that, in contrast, the author of Ezekiel was familiar with the entire Pentateuch, as were other biblical writers, such as the author of Psalm 106.

The gist of Propp's argument is as follows: (a) Exodus 2:23b-25 is attributed to P. (b) The Septuagint *vorlage* of Exodus 2:25 is posited to have read *va-yivada alei hem* ("He made Himself known to them")⁶ instead of the masoretic reading *va-yeda Elohim* ("and God knew"). (c) The next text in Exodus assigned to P is Exodus 6:2-9.⁷ (d) Ezekiel 20:5-9 (especially verses 5 and 9) resembles both Exodus 2:25 and 6:2-9: The phrase *va-ivada la hem* in Ezekiel 20:5 resembles the Septuagint *vorlage* of Exodus 2:25, *va-yivada alei hem*, and the *nodati alei hem* in Ezekiel 20:9 resembles the *nodati la hem* in Exodus 6:4. (e) Therefore, Propp argued, Exodus 2:25 "originally flowed into Exodus 6:2" in the purported P document.⁸

Ben Zion Katz is Professor of Pediatrics at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and an Attending Physician at Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago. He taught at the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School Institute (JCC Chicago) and is author of A Journey Through Torah: A Critique of the Documentary Hypothesis (Urim 2012).

Aside from the fact that one of the arguments required the use of a reconstructed *vorlage*, there are several themes in Ezekiel 20:5-9 that are not found in Exodus 2:23b-25 or 6:2-9. Nowhere in Exodus 2:23b-25 or 6:2-9 do we find the concepts of taking the Israelites out of Egypt to a land flowing with milk and honey (Ezek. 20:6), that the Israelites needed to cast off the abominations of Egypt (Ezek. 20:7), nor the idea that the Israelites did not heed God, but that He rescued them from Egypt anyway for the sake of His Name (Ezek. 20:8-9). In contrast, the Exodus text has a completely different idea, that of God rescuing the Israelites because of His covenant with the patriarchs (Ex. 2:24; 6:3-5, 8).

M. Burrows, in his book on Ezekiel, cited two strong arguments that the author of Ezekiel was familiar with the entire Torah,⁹ which Propp attempted to refute.¹⁰ The first example is from Ezekiel 27, which lists, according to my count, eleven nations exclusively from the section of Genesis 10 (the Table of Nations) ascribed to P¹¹ by both Friedman and Propp,¹² and three nations exclusively from the section of Genesis 10¹³ assigned to the postulated J source.¹⁴ Burrows' second major argument compares Ezekiel 8:4 with passages from Exodus 24:10-18, where verses 10-15a are ascribed to E and verses 15b-18 are ascribed to P.¹⁵ Burrows argues that the author of Ezekiel uses expressions from the text of Exodus 24.¹⁶ At the end of the paper, Propp is willing to concede "that Ezekiel may have known both the composite Torah and the separate P and non-P sources."¹⁷ However, I maintain that if the author of Ezekiel was familiar with the composite Pentateuch, it would be historically less likely that in another passage Ezekiel would just quote and preserve the text of P. Similarly, R. L. Kohn recently demonstrated that "the language and content of Ezekiel bear striking resemblance to that of the Priestly Source (P) of the Torah" and also that "the book of Ezekiel contains language and concepts associated with the book of Deuteronomy ([postulated source] D)."¹⁸ She does this using examples of shared terminology,¹⁹ as well as passages that reflect both sources,²⁰ although she concludes that because Ezekiel did not know the whole Torah, he must have anticipated the Torah's production rather than quoted from it.²¹

In addition to the author of Ezekiel, the poet responsible for Psalm 106 was also clearly familiar with the entire Pentateuch. The authorship and dating of Psalms is complicated, not least because different Psalms reflect different eras (e.g., the introduction to Psalm 30 speaks of the dedication of the First Temple, a pre-exilic event, while the introduction to Psalm 137 refers to the Babylonian exile). Much scholarship tends to favor relatively later rather than earlier dating for many Psalms, based in part on linguistic evidence.²² The latest date given by scholars for at least certain Psalms (e.g., Psalm 79)²³ is generally the Maccabean era, the same date assigned by Burrows to Ezekiel.²⁴ These data, coupled with how frequently Psalms is quoted in Qumran and the New Testament, and its citations in I and II Maccabees, favor the notion that the Psalter was canonized no later than c. 100 BCE.²⁵

Psalms 105 and 106 both review biblical history (as does Psalm 78). This makes these particular Psalms amenable to comparison with the narrative portions of the Torah that they retell. Psalm 106 does so from the perspective of cataloging Israel's misdeeds. Because of this emphasis on sin, many scholars date this Psalm to after the period of the Babylonian exile (i.e., after 586 BCE)²⁶ but before the Book of Chronicles, because the latter quotes selections from Psalms 105 and 106 almost verbatim (I Chron. 16:8-22 = Ps. 105:1-15 and I Chron. 16:35-36 = Ps. 106:46-47).²⁷

The first five verses of Psalm 106 are introductory praises of God. Beginning in verse 6, the Psalmist lashes out at the Israelites for sinning, as if to say that they repaid God's kindness with sinfulness.²⁸ Verses 6-12 describe the perfidy of the Israelites at the splitting of the sea (probably referring to Ex. 14:11-12), verses 13-15 refer to the Israelites' lust for meat (Num. 11:4-22), verses 16-18 the desert rebellion against Moses and Aaron (Num. 16), verses 19-23 the sin of the golden calf (Ex. 32), verses 24-27 the sin of the scouts (Num. 13-14), verses 28-31 the sin at Baal Peor (Num. 25:1-15), verses 32-33 the dissent at Meribah (Num. 20:1-13), and finally verses 34-44, disobedience after the Israelites enter Canaan. The psalm concludes with God remembering His covenant (verses 45-46) and a prayer (verse 47). The final verse (48) of Psalm 106 is a doxology which is the concluding verse of Book IV of Psalms and likely unrelated to Psalm 106 proper.²⁹

When the language of Psalm 106 is analyzed, it becomes apparent that the author borrowed freely from various incidents as they appeared throughout

the entire Pentateuch. In the examples that follow I will not cite every point of contact, only those that are strong enough to convince us of the Psalmist's familiarity with the Torah passages. Many of these points have been noted by the standard commentators,³⁰ although the thrust of my argument and some of the linguistic points are original.

(i) When describing the Israelites' craving for meat, at the beginning of verse 14, the Psalmist uses the words *va-yitavu ta'avah* ("lustily lusted"), a phrase very close to the words *hitavu ta'avah* used in Numbers 11:4, assigned to E or J/E.³¹

(ii) The two verbs in verse 17 describing the punishment of the desert rebels (*va-tivla* [swallowed] and *va-tekhas* [covered]) are exactly the same as those used in Numbers 16:32 and 33, assigned to J or J/E.³²

(iii) The verb *ma'as* ("loathe") used to describe the Israelites rejecting the desirable land in verse 24 is the same verb used in the account of the scouts in Numbers 14:31 assigned to P.³³ Note that this is the only such use of this expression (rejecting the land) in the Torah; the other four times *ma'as* occurs in the Pentateuch is in the context of Israel rejecting God or His laws, or of God in turn rejecting Israel (Lev. 26:15, 43-44 and Num. 11:20).

(iv) The unusual root *ragan* ("grumbled") in the account of the scouts (verse 25) only appears one other time in the Torah (Deut. 1:27), where the same event is recounted. Moreover, the expressions used are nearly identical, *va-yeragnu ve-oholeihem* in Psalm 106:25 and *va-teragnu ve-oholeikhem* in Deuteronomy 1:27).

(v) Retelling the Baal Peor incident, verse 28 begins *va-yitzamdu* [they attached themselves] *le-Va'al Pe'or*, which is close to the story's phrasing in Numbers 25:3: *va-yitzamed Yisra'el le-Va'al Pe'or*, assigned to J or J/E.³⁴ The root *tzamad* in this sense of "being attached" appears once more in the Baal Peor story (Num. 25:5) and only twice more in the entire Hebrew Bible, in unrelated contexts (II Sam. 20:8 and Ps. 50:19). Two verses later, recalling how the plague "was checked", verse 30 reproduces the expression (*va-te'atzer ha-maggefah*) used by the Torah at the end of the Baal Peor story (Num. 25:8), which is assigned to P.³⁵ Note that the only other use of this phrase in the Pentateuch (Num. 17:13) is also assigned to P.³⁶

(vi) Finally, another unusual root, *hanaf* ("polluted"), used in verse 38, occurs only once in the Pentateuch, in a similar context of the land becoming

polluted (Num. 35:33 [*bis*]), assigned to P.³⁷ In both loci this verb is also associated with blood (*dam*) and bloodguilt.

The author of Psalm 106 (like the author of Ezekiel, as shown by Burrows and Kohn) demonstrates a clear familiarity with all of the purported major sources of the Torah (J/E, P and D).³⁸ The strongest argument is (v) above, where the Psalmist's rendition of the Baal Peor story quoted sequentially from the text of Numbers 25:1-19 (where verses 1-5 are assigned to J and verses 6-19 to P), using similar expressions in the same order. This indicates that the author of the Psalm was not just familiar with both traditions, but with both traditions as they already appear in the Torah. This argument can either be used to push back the dating of the combination of sources that became the Torah, or it can be used by those "unsympathetic to the entire documentary" enterprise.³⁹

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank Marc Brettler for helpful discussions and references.

NOTES

1. See, for example, R. E. Friedman, *The Bible With Sources Revealed: A New View Into The Five Books Of Moses* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003) p. 13, note 5.
2. W. H. C. Propp, "The priestly source recovered intact?", *Vetus Testamentum* 46 (1996) pp. 458-78.
3. Probably the best example of this phenomenon is from Genesis 26:35 to Genesis 27:46, quoted by Propp, *ibid.*, p. 463, and by E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (New York: Doubleday, 1964) pp. xxv, 202, and 215-6.
4. Propp, *op. cit.*, p. 467.
5. M. Burrows, *The Literary Relations of Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1925) pp. 51-67.
6. This is the reading adopted in Propp, *Exodus 1-18* (New York: Random House) p. 178.
7. Both Propp (1996), p. 477 and Friedman, *op. cit.*, p. 128, assign Exodus 6:2-9 to P.
8. Propp (1996), pp. 473-4.
9. See above, note 5.
10. See appendix 2 (Propp, 1996, pp. 477-8).
11. The 11 nations are: *Kittim* (Ezek. 27:6 and Gen. 10:4), *Lud* (Ezek. 27:10 and Gen. 10:22), *Put* (Ezek. 27:10 and Gen. 10:6), *Tarshish* (Ezek. 27:12 and Gen. 10:4), *Javan* (Ezek. 27:13 and Gen. 10:2,4), *Tubal* (Ezek. 27:13 and Gen. 10:2), *Meshech* (Ezek. 27:13 and Gen. 10:2), *Togarmah* (Ezek. 27:14 and Gen. 10: 3), *Dedan* (Ezek. 27:15 and Gen. 10:7), *Aram* (Ezek. 27:16 and Gen. 10:22), and *Raamah* (Ezek. 27:22 and Gen. 10:7).
12. Cf. Propp (1996), p. 477, and Friedman, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-8.
13. The 3 nations are: *Asshur* (Ezek. 27:23 and Gen. 10:11), *Sidon* (Ezek. 27:8 and Gen. 10:15, 19), and *Arvad* (Ezek. 27:8, 11 and Gen. 10:18).

14. Friedman, op. cit., pp. 47-8.
15. Burrows, *ibid.*; Propp (1996), p. 477; and Friedman, op. cit., p. 161.
16. Burrows cites the following words from Ezekiel 8:4: *kevod* (cf. Ex. 24:16 and 17), *Elohei Yisra'el* (cf. Ex. 24:10), *mareh* (cf. Ex. 24:17) and *ru'ah* (cf. Ex. 24:10).
17. Propp (1996), p. 478.
18. R. L. Kohn, *New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) pp. 2-3.
19. Kohn, op. cit., chapters 3 and 4.
20. *Ibid.*, chapter 5.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
22. See, for example, A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902) pp. xxxv-l; W. O. E. Oesterley, *A Fresh Approach to the Book of Psalms* (New York: Ivor, Nicholson and Watson, 1937) pp. 36-57; W. S. McCullough, "Introduction," in G. A. Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. IV (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955) pp. 10-11; A. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (New York: Old Testament Library, 1962) pp. 91-5; M. Dahood, *Psalms 1-50* (New York: Doubleday, 1966) pp. xxix-xxx; J. W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay, *Psalms 101-150* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) pp. 3-6, 40-41; and J. Day, *Psalms* (New York: JSOT Press, 1990) pp. 58-60.
23. See, for example, the discussion in J. A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees* (New York: Doubleday, 1976) pp. 332-6, and K. Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms*, trans. R. G. Dunphy (New York: T & T Clark, 1990) p. 28.
24. Burrows, op. cit., p. v.
25. Seybold, op. cit., pp. 6, 8, 10, 11 and 28.
26. For example, Dahood, op. cit., p. 67, and Rogerson and McKay, op. cit., p. 41, although Weiser, op. cit., p. 680 expresses doubt.
27. *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. IV, p. 565; Dahood, op. cit., p. 67; and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary On The Psalms*, vol. III (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, n.d.) p. 124.
28. Note that there are incidents out of chronological order in Psalm 106, as well as discrepancies in detail of how the incidents are presented in the Pentateuch, which can be attributed to poetic license. For example, in the Torah passage regarding Baal Peor (Num. 25:1-15) the plague appears out of nowhere in 25:8, while in Psalm 106 it is first introduced in verse 29. *Zivhei me-tim* ("sacrifices to the dead") in verse 28 is probably a paraphrase of *zivhei eloheihen* ("sacrifices for their god") in Numbers 25:2, and "the dead" could be a derogatory term for foreign idols. See D. Kinder, *Psalms 73-150: A Commentary on Books III-V of the Psalms* (New York: InterVarsity Press, 1975) pp. 380-1; and cf. "sacrificed to lifeless idols" in Rogerson and McKay, op. cit., p. 47. Korah is not mentioned in the desert rebellion episode as recounted in Psalm 106, perhaps to avoid insulting the Sons of Korah Psalms guild (who authored Psalms 42 [and 43 if Ps. 42 and 43 are really one psalm], 44-49, 84-85 and 87-88. See M. Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150* [New York: Doubleday, 1970] p. 71); not because only "the account of J/E is used, not that of P": T. K. Cheyne, *The Book of Psalms: Translated from a Revised Text with Notes and Introduction*, vol. II (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1904), p. 133, but because P is actually cited, as detailed in arguments iii, v (esp.) and vi, below. The central position of the golden calf episode in Psalm 106 may be due to the grave sin of idolatry; see K. Schaefer, *Psalms* (New York: The Liturgical Press, 2001) p. 263. Finally, the Meribah episode might have been presented in Psalm

106 as the climactic desert sin, because Moses (as related in Num. 20:9-13) also disobeyed the Lord there (Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p. 631).

29. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p. 634; Cheyne, op. cit., p. 133; *Interpreter's Bible*, vol. IV, p. 571; Weiser, op. cit., pp. 682-3; Dahood, *Psalms III* (1970), p. 77; Rogerson and McKay, op. cit., p. 48; and Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 133.

30. For example, Kirkpatrick, op. cit., pp. 624-34; Cheyne, op. cit., pp. 133-4; *Interpreter's Bible*, vol. IV, pp. 564-71; Weiser, op. cit., pp. 680-83; Dahood, op. cit., pp. 64-77; Kinder, op. cit., pp. 380-81; Rogerson and McKay, op. cit., pp. 40-48; Delitzsch, op. cit., pp. 121-33; and R. Alter, *The Book of Psalms* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007) pp. 375-82. For other, weaker points of contact, see the following note.

31. See, for example, Friedman, op. cit., p. 258, and B. A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20* (New York: Doubleday, 1993) p. 311. There is only one other unrelated biblical usage of this doubled root (Prov. 21:26).

32. See Friedman, op. cit., p. 270, Levine, op. cit., p. 405. While the verb *kissah* is very common, *bala* is not, and the close proximity of these two verbs is probably a unique occurrence. Roots such as *hishmid* ("destroy") and *hishhit* ("annihilate") in verse 23, corresponding to Deuteronomy 9:25-26, I have not quoted as examples because they are both too frequent. Other, non-exclusive points of contact between Psalm 106 and the Pentateuch are *harav* in verse 9 and Exodus 14:21, *va-ya'aminu* in verse 12 and Exodus 14:31, *kadosh* in verse 16 and Numbers 16:3, 5 and 7, *le-happil* in verse 26 corresponding to *yiplu* in Numbers 14:29 and 32, and *mei Merivah* in verse 32 and Numbers 20:13.

33. See, for example, Friedman, op. cit., p. 265; Propp (1996), p. 477; and Levine, op. cit., p. 348.

34. See Friedman, op. cit., p. 287; B. A. Levine, *Numbers 21-36* (New York: Doubleday, 2000) p. 279.

35. See Friedman, op. cit., p. 288; Propp (1996), p. 477; and Levine (2000), p. 280.

36. See Friedman, op. cit., p. 271; Propp, *ibid.*; and Levine (1993), p. 405.

37. See Friedman, op. cit., p. 307; Propp, *ibid.*; and Levine (2000), p. 547.

38. For arguments showing the affinity between Ezekiel and D, see Burrows, op. cit., pp. 20-25, and Kohn, op. cit., chapters 3-6.

39. Cf. G. Rendsburg, "Late Biblical Hebrew and the date of P", *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*, 12 (1980) p. 78, note 58. Rogerson and McKay, op. cit., come close to making this point, but they are not consistent. On p. 41 they state, "It is possible, although not certain, that the presentation of the selected events from Israel's history derives from a knowledge of the Pentateuch in its completed form" (p. 41), but they then go on to state (p. 47) that "this psalm stems from priestly circles."