

## Introduction to “Priests, Scribes, and Interpreters”

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This special issue of the *Journal of Ancient Judaism* offers distinctive approaches and innovative assessments of texts associated with a historical season often designated the second temple period. Five articles explore the engagement of priests, scribes, and interpreters with Torah and sacred texts, though they employ diverse methodologies in taking up this common theme. Readers of this issue will learn about ancient Judaism from the vantage of: (1) the history of scholarship on textual traditions that are ripe for reevaluation; (2) paleographic study and its import for understanding scribal transmission; (3) reconstructions of texts and new conceptional examinations; and (4) intertextuality and interpretations within texts labeled pseudepigraphal.

The articles in this issue were first presented at “Studies in Second Temple Judaism: A Global Enterprise,” an international conference sponsored by the Enoch Seminar and the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan, held on January 10–13, 2022. This conference was dedicated to exploring contemporary methodologies that illumine ancient Judaism from an intentionally global scope, an aim facilitated by the meeting's online modality. While it goes without saying that scholarship is a global enterprise, too often our scholarly communities are isolated or divided by geography, language, tradition, and other boundaries artificially imposed. As to the latter, one thinks of heuristic labels that often divide our discipline artificially. Texts classified, for example, as belonging to the “Hebrew Bible” or the “New Testament” are, in fact, early Jewish texts that could as easily be examined alongside contemporaneous writings not included in a canon. Our categorizations lead to our scholarship being siloed. If undertaken from an isolated vantage, though, the study of ancient Judaism would be impoverished, reflecting a narrow slice of methodologies, perspectives, and voices.

The organizers of the meeting sought to remedy such a scenario by reaching out to scholars of ancient Judaism from around the world to present their work and engage in a conversation about the status and prospects of the field. Scholars from all hemispheres – from, for example, Argentina, Australia, Brazil,

Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ethiopia, France, Israel, Myanmar, and South Africa – participated in the meeting. It became clear as well that many scholars are citizens of the world, studying, teaching, or engaging professionally in diverse contexts and not bound to one geographical region. The Founding Director of the Enoch Seminar, Gabriele Boccaccini, astutely proposed the purview of the meeting, which was organized by Kelley Coblentz Bautch, Rodney Caruthers, and Shayna Sheinfeld, with the assistance of the Meeting Secretary, Joshua Scott. Much of the planning occurred as the seminar's chairs, Sheinfeld, Caruthers, and Coblentz Bautch, served as Fellows at the University of Michigan's Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. Boccaccini served as the Head Fellow that year and led the discussion of the year's theme: *Second Temple Judaism – The Challenge of Diversity*. The Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and the 2021–2022 cohort of Frankel Fellows facilitated a rich context for examining ancient Judaism and contemporary scholarship.

As was noted by many participants, the conference reflected a spirit of collaboration and teamwork, and the conference would not have been possible without the efforts of everyone. The conference organizers put a premium on inclusivity and on removing barriers that would impede collegiality or academic discourse. Thus, the meeting was organized in such a way as to be intentionally inclusive, to foster conversation on ancient Judaism across methodological perspectives, and to allow for intergenerational exchanges. For example, each session, chaired by scholars of diverse backgrounds, included presentations with distinctive foci. Thereafter, two respondents, scholars at various stages of their career, from the most seasoned to those in doctoral studies, served as discussants. Each morning would include a recapitulation of sessions from the day prior involving scholars who were not already presenting and finally there was a concluding session that permitted all attendees to offer insights and perspectives as well on our theme. While many beyond the presenters had a direct role in the meeting as presiders, discussants, and participants in recap and concluding sessions, there were others representing a range of countries and language families who attended. As many as 350 people attended the conference remotely, further realizing the global scope of the meeting. It is now a privilege of the organizers to facilitate dissemination of the important scholarship generously shared at “Studies in Second Temple Judaism: A Global Enterprise” through a variety of juried publications, with this special issue of *JAJ* providing a first publication to emerge from this meeting. As guest-editor for this issue, I am especially indebted to Angela Kim Harkins and Jonathan Klawans, Editors-in-Chief, for publishing a special theme issue of several contributions from the meeting. This special issue allows us to reach

an even broader audience. On behalf of the authors, I appreciate their guidance and pain-staking labor in the timely publication of these articles.

Per the global nature of January's conference, readers of this issue will find contributions of scholars with ties to Belarus, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Italy, and the United States of America. This issue contains articles that explore the torah (as Divine instruction), Pentateuch, and priestly tradition, as well as the role of scribes and interpreters, but each with a different methodological perspective.

Liane Feldman ("Rethinking the Place of the Pentateuch in Late Persian and Hellenistic-era 'Priestly' Literature") challenges facile assumptions about the stability of the Pentateuch and how ancient Jews engaged priestly traditions therein. Chronicles, the Letter of Aristeas, and the Aramaic Levi Document reveal, according to Feldman, complex relationships to priestly traditions that do not allow one to posit simple dependence upon Pentateuchal traditions familiar in contemporary times. Rather, Feldman demonstrates that there was no one way that the Torah or Pentateuch was received during the Hellenistic period.

In her contribution, Hila Dayfani ("The Scope of the Transmission of the Pentateuch in the Second Temple Period") examines the text of the Pentateuch and its transmission through paleographical analysis. Dayfani investigates the interchange of letters resembling one another; the resemblance resulted in variant readings in the Masoretic text and Samaritan Pentateuch, providing several examples of such interchanges. For Dayfani, the evidence from this study points to the growing importance of the Pentateuch in the late second temple period. Further, this investigation leads Dayfani to contemplate the emerging scripturalization of the Pentateuch at the time of the Hasmoneans.

Shlomi Efrati ("Law and Order: Priests, Commandments, and Cosmic Mysteries in the Qumran Composition Instruction") takes up the *raz nihyeh*, which is presented alongside mundane matters in the Qumran text known as Instruction (Musar LaMebin). Efrati considers the relationship of commandments that concern agriculture, priests, and priestly dues to esoteric subjects associated with *raz nihyeh*; the elusive expression is found within certain of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Contending that Musar LaMebin alludes to commandments of Torah and assumes the latter's content and authority, Efrati describes *raz nihyeh* as both mystery and as the hidden order reflected in all of creation.

Also exploring the Pentateuch in the history of tradition, Mirjam J. Bokhorst ("The Lord of the Sheep and His House: An Intertextual Reading of the Animal Apocalypse [1 En. 85–90] with the Pentateuch") investigates a fascinating puzzle. Why does the Divine, referred to by the distinctive expression "Lord of

the Sheep”, appear in this metaphorical Enochic work as a protagonist for the first time only as Moses constructs the Tent of Meeting? Bokhorst detects similarities between the narratives of the Pentateuch and the second-century BCE Animal Apocalypse, noting the key role of the Exodus as a constituent event for Israel in both. The desert sanctuary, argues Bokhorst, reflects an idealized moment in the relationship of the Divine and the people of Israel that proves integral to the theologies of the Pentateuch and Animal Apocalypse.

Similar to the contribution of Bokhorst, Patrick Pouchelle (“Comment différencier les justes des pécheurs ? La réponse nuancée et scripturaire des Psaumes de Salomon”) offers an intertextual study of sacred texts and how interpretative traditions are engaged in ancient Jewish pseudepigraphal texts. Pouchelle explores a theological conundrum: how the apparent prosperity of sinners and suffering of righteous ones could be reconciled in ancient Judaism. The first-century collection known as the Psalms of Solomon addresses the perplexing prospect by connecting two distinctive sacred texts. Psalms of Solomon 13 draws on selections from Deuteronomy and Malachi in answering the theological challenge and, in so doing, includes messianic speculation as well.

These articles all advance the study of ancient Judaism with methodologically fresh examinations of priestly traditions, torah as divine instruction, Torah as Pentateuch, and receptions of literature that would be considered scriptural today. This special issue of *JAJ* also includes an article by Fiodar Litvinau, “A Study of the Background of the Divine Title the ‘Lord of Spirits’ in the Parables of Enoch.” Litvinau’s work was not presented at the meeting on “Studies in Second Temple Judaism: A Global Enterprise,” as the others were that are featured in this issue. His essay revisits a unique and enigmatic designation for the Divine found in the Enochic Book of Parables, challenging conventional thinking about the expression “Lord of Spirits.” May the reader enjoy!