

plowed. As his own production continues unabated,<sup>11</sup> and the activities of his students and sympathizers pick up steam, it is a duty and a privilege to show gratitude for his initiative and inspiration.

<sup>11</sup>The bibliography in Rabbi Breuer's two volume Festschrift also lists his remarkable achievements in the study of the MT and the cantillation tradition (*taamei ha-mikra*). This work has implications for Breuer's approach to the issues belonging to the "lower criticism" of the biblical text, which are not discussed in the present volume. As an admirer of Rabbi Breuer I am pleased to note that, by the time the Festschrift appeared in print, his bibliography had already outstripped the one there compiled.

## 7

## The Study of Bible and the Primacy of the Fear of Heaven: Compatibility or Contradiction?

Mordechai Breuer

The topic assigned to me implies a possible contradiction between the study of Bible and *yirat shamayim* (fear of heaven). The God-fearing student of the Bible must confront this presumed contradiction and seek to resolve it. Failing to do so, his wisdom will take precedence over his piety; even worse: as the result of psychological conflict, the scholar in him will undermine his piety and as one who is God-fearing he will reject his scholarship.

To address the alleged contradiction we must first define the concepts involved, the study of Bible, on the one hand, and *yirat shamayim* on the other hand. Then we shall see whether a real conflict exists and if it has a resolution. "Study of Bible," in our context, does not refer to the type of Bible study familiar to the Jewish people from the day the Torah was given. It is inconceivable that such Bible study could detract from one's *yirat shamayim*. To the contrary: not only is Torah study valuable because it leads to moral and religious action, but a strong grounding in

all the areas of Jewish study, Bible, Mishnah, Jewish Law and Midrash, is essential to sustain the fear of God. The kind of study under scrutiny is that which has appeared in recent centuries, beginning with Jean Astruc, maintaining that the Torah is composed of distinct documents, each written in its own style, whose contents are in conflict. This paper will deal exclusively with the implications of this method of studying the Torah, by which I mean the Five Books of Moses (the *Humash*).

This hypothesis led to a new method of studying the Bible, known as "critical study of the Bible." This science, developed mainly by gentile scholars, achieved impressive results. The critics persuasively described the nature of the documents that, in their opinion, make up the Torah. Holding that the authorship of these documents by one person, as natural authorship is understood, is impossible, whether in Moses' generation or in any other, they inferred that several authors, differing among themselves in world outlook and literary style, wrote the Torah.

As we shall see below, when we look at the critical analysis of Genesis chapters 1 and 2, the author, called J, is distinguished by a sensitive, poetic soul. Another, dubbed P, was a man of law and order, of scientific mind-set, whose writing, exact and concise, lacks feeling and poetic flourish. The critics also characterized the other primary writers of the Torah, naming them E and D. These authors inhabit different spiritual worlds and different times and places. J came first, living in Judah at the height of the monarchy. Shortly afterward came E, who resided in Ephraim. Subsequent to and close to in spirit to E came D, who lived at the time of the prophet Jeremiah. P, the final writer, who had the most profound influence on the Jewish religion, lived either during the period preceding the destruction of the first temple or during the subsequent exile. Hundreds of years separate the first and last authors of the Bible. Yet these writers did not create their texts alone; they summarized and refined ancient traditions that reached them either through oral transmission or as written documents.

The transformation and development that made these sources into the Torah is often apparent between the lines. The editors exercised exquisite craftsmanship on centuries of tradition. The final stage of the Torah's composition is due to the redactor, R, who made an integrated text of these documents, which until then were distinct literary creations. When the redactor transcribed earlier documents without addition or

subtraction, the strata are easily identified. When, however, he combined material from two or three documents, additions and deletions were necessary to avoid contradiction or repetition. Often the editor's patchwork does not disguise the gap between the original documents and the redactor's version.

The power of these inferences, based on solid argument and internally consistent premises, will not be denied by intellectually honest persons. One cannot deny the evidence before one's eyes. As committed believers, we cannot ignore what human reason points to with confidence; we cannot pretend that falsehood is truth. Therefore we cannot regard God's Torah as the unified composition of *one human author in one generation*. Willy-nilly, the Torah contains several documents, which, viewed as *natural products of human culture*, must have been written by different people over the course of many generations before their final redaction. It is the implications for *yirat shamayim* of the study of the Torah based on this method that we must investigate. But this requires that we define what is meant by *yirat shamayim*.

The accepted meaning of *yirat shamayim* is fear of sin. One who fears God is diligent in obeying His commandments, as meticulous in fulfilling the "lighter as the more grave," rigorously adhering to all that the halakhic literature determines as law. He wholeheartedly believes this law to be God's word, that God is concerned with the "four cubits of *halakhah*," that defiance of God's will is inconceivable. This is what Jews mean by *yirat shamayim*. This definition engenders no conflict between the study of Bible and *yirat shamayim*, provided that the person who accepts the tenets of Bible Criticism truly fears God and scrupulously executes the obligations of Jewish law, dreading sin and joyful in the performance of the *mitzvot*. We might draw an analogy from Rav Kook's comments regarding the debate over the date of the composition of the Mishnah:

The sanctity of the basic measures of the Torah is the same, whether these units were transmitted to Moses at Sinai or decrees of a court of law, because it is the nation's acceptance that is significant, and it is due to their commitment that we fulfill in purity even matters that are only decrees of later generations, such as the decrees of R. Gershom. Likewise there should be no difference in our wholehearted loyalty to the oral law, whether it was completed earlier or later. (*Iggerot HaRe'iyah* I 194)

These comments about the Oral Law might be applied to the written Torah. We can imagine an individual who holds that it makes no difference to our attitude toward the sanctity of the written Torah whether Moses wrote the Torah or whether an editor at the time of Ezra compiled the text. The essential point, in the view of such an individual, is the commitment of the nation to accept as binding the words of the Torah in its present form. What obligates us is our tradition; our ancestors and sages declare that God commands us to follow the teachings of the Sages even when there is no clear source for this in the written Torah. And just as the Jewish people have always fulfilled the Sages' teachings, the individual we are considering is prepared to accept the demands of the Torah even though, for him, its authority is based on the Sages' affirmation.

From the perspective of this individual, there is no possible conflict between critical study and *yirat shamayim*: at worst, he will continue to observe the entire Torah faithfully based on the authority of the Sages. The Torah's power to obligate us is undiminished; it derives from God, who commanded us to abide by the Sages' decrees. This is enough to provide *yirat shamayim*. Just as the God-fearer would never mock the law of the *Shulhan Arukh*, the Jewish Code of Law, even when it encodes later decrees, just as, for example, he eschews leavened bread that had been owned by a Jew during the Passover as carefully as he avoids bread on Passover itself, just as he joyfully celebrates the second festival day of the Diaspora as he fulfilled the obligations on the previous day—so he will treat with sanctity the Torah whose origin, in his opinion, derives from a post-Mosaic redactor.

The previous discussion is not merely hypothetical. Quite a few scholars, and their students, identify with the findings of biblical scholarship, yet faithfully and reverently observe the full scope of *halakhah*, meaning that they adopt halakhic minutiae as determined by recognized rabbinic authority, even as they harbor no doubt about the late authorship of the Torah. This is because they see the acceptance by the Jewish people as the essential factor and they are committed to obeying the word of God, the *halakhah*, as transmitted by tradition.

If this position is true, then the contradiction implied by the title is nonexistent. But I do not accept it. The problem is not that of faithful observance, but rather of belief. And for this reason I cannot claim that the difficulties regarding critical study of Bible can be removed in this way.

## II

## The Liberal Solution

Belief is certainly no less important for Judaism than the network of laws and commandments. The framework of faith specifically includes belief in *Torah min ha-shamayim*, "the divinity of the Torah." At first glance it seems that this belief is compromised, if not totally destroyed, by the critical study of Bible. It is this contradiction between the scientific study of Bible and the belief in a heavenly Torah that must be addressed. For this purpose we must define the character of this belief. The observant scholars we are discussing might try to solve the problem by giving the divinity of Torah a relatively flexible, liberal, rationalistic interpretation. Divinity would then mean that the Torah derives from prophetic inspiration rather than human intellect. The author was not transcribing his own thoughts but acting as a "man of God," who saw divine images and heard God's speech. This Torah, we declare, is divine because a person who experienced the divine inscribed the heavenly directives.

This view does not, indeed cannot, assert that Moses alone wrote the Torah, as a human author composes a book. For even a prophet writing under divine inspiration retains his personality and style. The style of his prophecy manifests the depths of his soul; he hears God's word, but absorbs according to the nature of his soul. Nothing is revealed to him by God that his nature is incapable of comprehending. Moreover, when a prophet formulates what he heard and saw in his prophetic experience, he speaks in his own language, limited by his personality. Therefore Hosea could not have heard what was spoken to Isaiah, and Zephaniah would not utter the words of Jeremiah; it is inconceivable that Ezekiel's prophecy would have been transmitted to Amos or that Micah would speak Zephaniah's words. By this logic Moses could not have composed all the documents included in the Torah since, as suggested above, their content and style indicate different authors at different times. If Moses is the author of the Torah, as we normally think of an author, it is all the more difficult to believe that he would contradict himself so frequently, as the documents appear to do. To view Moses himself as the editor of the Torah borders on absurdity: having composed conflicting accounts, he then, on this scheme, labored strenuously to disguise the discrepan-

cies. Biblical scholarship has argued convincingly, according to the view we are discussing, that no individual person, neither Moses nor any other prophet, could have composed the Torah. Yet, according to that approach, this in no way affects Jewish faith.

That is because the view we are discussing accepts *Torah min ha-shamayim* as a belief that the Torah was transmitted through prophecy, not that Moses was the unique prophet who received the Torah from heaven. If Moses is to be viewed as the "author" of the Torah, in the conventional sense of the term, he should have written "And God spoke to me saying," like other prophets who wrote their own prophecies. The view we are now discussing would argue that only one passage in the Oral Law explicitly asserts that "Moses wrote his book" (*Bava Batra* 14b), and that it is nowhere stated that one who denies Moses' composition of the Torah loses his share in the next world as is the case with one who denies the divinity of the Torah (*Sanhedrin* 90a). Many of the greatest scholars in the medieval and early modern periods deviated, on occasion, from a rabbinic dictum, when it flew in the face of the text's simple meaning. Using their example as precedent, one might take the liberty of disregarding the view expressed in *Bava Batra*, insofar as a reading of the biblical text does not support the view that Moses wrote the Torah in the manner of a conventional human composition.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Rashbam's introduction to the Torah; Ibn Ezra's introduction to the Torah; Abravanel's introduction to the Prophets; Or haHayyim's introduction to the Torah *inter alia*.

<sup>2</sup>This principle can also be applied to historical assertions that conflict with the text's plain meaning. Of the talmudic discussion (*Rosh Hashanah* 3b) that assumes "Cyrus is Darius is Artaxerxes," Rabbi Zerahia Ba'al ha-Maor observes that the biblical text plainly regards Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes as three different people. This approach has also been applied to the talmudic passage immediately following the statement "Moses wrote his book." The Talmud in *Bava Batra* goes on to say that "Joshua wrote his book," and Abravanel (in his general introduction to early prophets) infers, from several verses in Joshua, that Joshua could not have authored his book. Similarly the author of *Shaagat Aryeh* posits, in opposition to the implication of another part of the talmudic statement in *Bava Batra*, that Ezra the scribe did not write the book of Chronicles himself but compiled documents of previous authors: he edited the book but did not write it. (See my article "The Documentary Theory of the *Shaagat Aryeh*," *Megadim* 2 [Fall 5747 (1986)]: 9–22.) Using such reasoning, the scholars we

The position we are discussing concedes that the Torah comprises several documents, written by different prophets in various eras. The documents are *min ha-shamayim*, because they are the words of the living God. There is an infinite gap between God, the source of the Torah, whose heavenly abode transcends space and time, and man, the recipient of prophecy, created from earth, who lives within the confines of space and time. The human intellect is limited; man cannot grasp or utter contradictory ideas. God is not bound by this constraint. Hence the one God reveals Himself in the world by exhibiting manifold traits and contradictory actions—like an old man seated at rest and a young man at war—with the attribute of justice and the attribute of mercy.<sup>3</sup> The unity of God is disclosed through the encompassing of opposing aspects and actions. The one God who embraces justice and mercy can communicate seemingly contradictory prophecies, corresponding to these aspects of divinity.

The prophecies given to individual prophets at different times thus reveal paradoxical elements. One prophet, oriented to justice and whose generation is particularly suited to hear the providential perspective of justice, received and transcribed the prophecy of judgment. Another, oriented to mercy and whose generation is particularly suited to hear of a world guided by mercy, will receive and transcribe the prophecy characterized by kindness. The diversity of these two prophecies reflects different authorship; yet both emanate from one source and from one shepherd. The view we are examining treats the composition of the Torah like the handing down of prophecy just described. The editor of the Torah had before him the various sources. But the Torah is not limited, as would be the prophecy of the individual prophet, to the perspectives of law (*din*) or mercy (*rahamim*); rather the Torah expresses the quality of harmony (*tiferet*), combining law and mercy. By God's instruction, the editor

are discussing might propose that Moses only wrote the part of "his book" that the Torah explicitly attributes to him (Deuteronomy 31:9). The rest of the Torah, however, could derive from other men of God, living at other times. These documents, redacted by a prophet who added and subtracted according to God's will, form one book, one *torah*, in which there is not one letter belonging to the human intellect, being wholly *Torah min ha-shamayim*, from the first word to the last.

<sup>3</sup>See Maimonides *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 1:9.

inscribed the Torah, and this quality of *tiferet* governs the Torah as a whole. We shall have more to say about this further in this discussion. Now, however, we are still occupied with the liberal approach.

Except for its significant omission of the specific role of Moses, an issue to which we will return, the ideas already outlined avoid any conflict between the modern study of Bible and *yirat shamayim*. The scholars identify the documents that comprise the Torah and try to explain the centuries of development behind them, prior to the coming of the prophet who consolidated the sources. The religious student, for his part, recognizes the hand of God in combining the various aspects of His revelation.

So far we have described the discoveries of *Biblical Criticism*, not the beliefs of *biblical critics*. Our adoption of the discoveries of biblical scholarship does not, by any means, imply assent to the beliefs of the scholars. We must know that an iron curtain separates, not faith and scholarship, but many men of scholarship and men of faith. While the scholars view the Torah as a grand literary creation, composed by human beings, we believe that the Torah is from heaven. This is not a debate between faith and science but rather a confrontation of faith and heresy. Science can only investigate what reason apprehends. The human intellect cannot comprehend God and is therefore unable to certify prophecy. Scholarly study of the Torah postulates the biblical text as the product of human agency, and as the product of human activity the Torah must reflect multiple sources. But this presupposition of the scientific approach, which enables the human mind to proceed, is not subject to confirmation or refutation. Scholars cannot prove that the Torah is a human product, because that is the assumption that underlies the entire enterprise. At the same time it would be impossible to demonstrate that the Torah is divine, based on the assumptions of scholarship, because that belief contradicts the axioms with which the proof must be consistent; in any event, it would be an attempt to demonstrate something beyond the capacity of human reason. Whether the Torah is a human or divine creation cannot be decided by scientific reason, which has no authority over the domain that transcends reason. Where the intellect falls short faith responds confidently. Faith knows with certainty "the foundation of wisdom, to know that there is a first cause" (Rambam *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 1:1) and it is a basic religious truth that God reveals Himself to man. An honest scholar acknowledges that this judgment is beyond his competence as a man of science.

In fact, scholars frequently reiterate their conviction that the Torah is a merely human composition, in no way different from other literary creations. But this claim already abandons the realm of science and enters that of faith. With this pronouncement they become spokesmen for a "faith," and its content is heretical. We who believe wholeheartedly in the divinity of the Torah must oppose them. But the debate about that which lies beyond science cannot be judged from within science. Only a heavenly voice acknowledged by all can resolve this conflict authoritatively.

Before addressing the role of Moses, let us summarize our conclusions so far. The position we are now describing is prepared to accept without reservation the views of scholarship so long as the scholars have not ventured beyond the limits of scientific method, which include the demarcation of the various documents in the Torah, the development that preceded them, and the editorial process that followed. Only when scholars deviate from the scientific framework and introduce heretical beliefs about the Torah's human composition must we reject their assertions and hold fast to our tradition. This traditional belief suffuses our personal lives. The Torah we study day and night is not a Torah propounded by human authors, but a divine Torah received by prophets who inscribed a vision revealed to them by God.

### III

#### The Traditional Alternative

Everything we have articulated up to this point is compatible with the liberal definition of *Torah min ha-shamayim*, which ignores the specific role of Moses in transmitting the Torah. In reality, however, this definition of *Torah min ha-shamayim* does not prevail in Jewish thought. From antiquity, our Sages have never considered equating the Five Books of Moses with other prophecy. They regarded the equation, not as proper faith, but as utter heresy. The status of Moses is inherently different from that of all other prophets. The latter saw God in a vision, through a glass darkly; they heard His voice as a riddle that required clarification and interpretation. When they subsequently transmitted God's message to the people, when they wrote it down, they could not convey literally what they had seen and heard. Instead each adopted his own style and lan-

Abravanel's distinction between the Torah and the book of Joshua is not a random imposition of dogma, but goes together with our entire conception of the Torah. Why shouldn't the arguments for post-Joshua authorship apply to the Torah as well? Many verses in the Torah are indeed incompatible with Moses' particular historical and personal situatedness. Hence Moses, *viewed as a flesh and blood author*, could not have written such a Torah. But this point is totally unremarkable: our Sages did not teach that Moses wrote the Torah in the same way that other prophets wrote their books. Since Moses inscribed the words of God, no conventional argument about authorship can undermine his role. God is beyond space and time, His writing is not subject to natural limitation; hence conventional scientific debate cannot determine the nature of the Authorship.

#### IV

##### The Point of Divergence

Let us review the salient positions of Biblical Criticism, as applied to the Torah. First, there is the thesis that the Torah contains discrete documents integrated by an editor whose work is evident throughout the Torah. We too must acknowledge these arguments because we too assert that God's Torah, in its plain sense, speaks "the language of human beings." When read by the rules that govern human speech, the Torah is consonant with the scholarly evaluation of the text.

In addition, the scholars assert that the Torah is a human composition, similar to other literary works. This view, as we have noted, presupposes itself. A human author is limited by his specific time and place, unable to grasp the conflicting aspects in one idea, unable to employ strategies of authorial multiplicity, unable to dispense with generations of development. If the Torah is a human document, the conclusion is inescapable that it was composed piecemeal in the manner that the critics imagine. Thus, the religious believer can reject the assumption about the source of the text without denying the literary analysis the scholars have proposed.

This is the position that we have staked out. God, who is beyond the limitations of time and space, prepared the Torah, declaring in one

utterance what man can comprehend only as a combination of differing sources. Before the world was created, God redacted one document characterized by justice and one characterized by mercy, and synthesized them with the quality of harmony. After a thousand generations this Torah, "black fire on white fire," descended to earth. Moses, the faithful shepherd, was summoned to the upper realm, and brought it down to the terrestrial sphere.

Earlier we mentioned the relationship between the creation of the world and the Torah. This parallel is also relevant to the relationship between faith and science. Faith informs us that the world came into being in six days; science claims convincingly that the world was slowly formed over millions of years. Yet here it is commonly recognized that the conflict is imaginary. The scientific evidence assumes that the world coalesced spontaneously. But this very supposition, if it is not self-evident, is unprovable. For this reason men of faith can set this assumption aside and declare that God's free act created the world and that this untrammelled freedom is perfectly consistent with His creation of the world in six days through divine utterance. It is because of a division of domains of this sort that intelligent people today are rarely troubled by conflict between faith and the natural sciences.

Inexplicably, the truce between faith and science has not penetrated the discipline of biblical scholarship. Instead the emphasis is put on the contradiction between faith and science. Unable to withstand the contradiction, most men of faith consciously avoid biblical scholarship in order to safeguard their traditional belief. Few faithful Jews are prepared to risk their souls in order to resolve the tension. The truth is, however, that this conflict is illusory, the product of unsophisticated thinking. It arises because both men of faith and scientists have strayed from their disciplines and entered foreign areas. The scholars believe they have indisputably proven that Moses did not write the Torah, oblivious to the fact that this entire argument depends on their heretical assumptions. The believers, on the other hand, wearing the mantle of the "scientist," attack the scientific arguments of their interlocutors, instead of opposing their heretical presuppositions.

How did this situation come about? Why do so many believing Jews see a conflict in the area of Bible study? Possibly the historical context of the discussion is responsible, as much of early Biblical Criticism was nurtured in an ambience of antipathy to Judaism. But it seems that a

more significant reason for this situation is confusion about the meaning of *Torah min ha-shamayim*. It is likely that many believing Jews have difficulty with *Torah min ha-shamayim* in its traditional connotation. Consciously or unconsciously they equate *Torah min ha-shamayim* with the divine origin of the other prophetic works, written by the prophet himself, in his own language, based on his transcendental experience. They naively think that their belief in the divinity of the Torah is intact and that the Mishnah's stricture against one who denies the Torah's divine origin does not refer to them. They also know well that the Sages throughout history wholeheartedly affirmed that Moses wrote the entire Torah, and that this belief is so fundamental to Judaism that one who rejects it undermines the entire Torah. Yet they fail to recognize that the traditional position regarding Mosaic composition of the Torah is a corollary of the *primary belief* that God created the Torah. As a result of this misstep, they are content to treat the Torah as Moses' composition, like other prophetic books. But we have claimed that the scholars are right: Moses, as a human individual, could not have composed the Torah, and this is precisely what the *unique* status of Moses is all about. Unfortunately, these believers hold tightly to Jewish faith as they understand it, combining belief in Mosaic authorship with a failure to recognize the unique role of Moses. Consequently, they must wage war against science, attempting to refute scientifically all that scholars and scholarship have proven. The battle is lost from the start. The naïve believer is at a distinct disadvantage because the fight is neither between faith and heresy nor between faith and science, but rather between faith and ignorance, speaking in the name of a mistaken conception of faith. Science gets the better of ignorance, undermining their imagined faith.

Even among people who do not tend to obliterate the distinction between Torah and the Prophets, another factor is at work. They reject the position proposed in this chapter because they view it as impossible that the one God who created the Torah could possibly produce apparently inconsistent documents. In effect they are applying what is true of secular literature to the holy. A secular author who contradicts himself testifies to thoughtlessness and a lack of intellectual and spiritual integrity. The Torah, they argue, must be unified and uniform without contradictions and internal "flaws," like God Himself.

This position is correct in its definition of *Torah min ha-shamayim* but seriously mistaken about the content of *Torah min ha-shamayim*. It displays a kinship with the pagan attitude that moves from an awareness of

the manifold nature of Divine actions to the assertion of divine multiplicity. God declared at Mount Sinai: "I am the Lord your God. I-in Egypt, I-at the Sea, I-at Sinai, I am past and I am future, I am for this world and I am for the next." For Jewish faith God's unity in the world is made manifest when He reveals His many aspects in what appear to be conflicting actions. This conception of God underlies the unity of the Torah. It is the pagan mentality that infers from contradictory aspects of God's activity, reflected in the multiple literary aspects of the Torah, the existence of multiple deities, and, correspondingly, multiple authors of the Torah. This wrongheaded approach leads one to think that conflicting documents in the Torah are irreconcilable with a unified Torah from God. Hence the strained denial that the discrepancies exist, and the compulsion to adduce scientific refutations of dubious cogency. Hence the attempt to persuade themselves and us that all biblical scholars, including the great minds among them, are deluded and deluding, motivated by wickedness, folly, or hatred of Jews.

The principle emerging from all of this is that there is no real tension between faith and science so long as the conception of faith is free of distortion. One who adopts the inferior (liberal) concept of *Torah min ha-shamayim* as no different from the other prophetic books is in danger of concluding that the Torah was not written by Moses at all. He is distinguished from the outright heretic only by his belief in the divinity of the Torah, as he understands it. The heretical scholars deem the Torah's writers and editors mere mortals, while the believer who adopts the liberal concept of *Torah min ha-shamayim* maintains that the Torah, like other prophetic works, was written and edited by men of God based on revelation.

In contrast to this, the superior (traditional) concept of *Torah min ha-shamayim* implies necessarily that only Moses could be its author. He accepts the results of the critical method, insofar as God's Torah was written in the language of human beings. The scholarly arguments, which rely on linguistic principles of human communication, are significant for him too, and require neither refutation nor opposition. But he rejects every word of what the scholars maintain with respect to the writing and editing of the Torah, because he is committed to God's authorship, and regards as heresy the view that the Torah is man-made.

Let us contrast the three views we have discussed. The secular scholarly position views the Torah as a collection of documents, written by J, E, P, and D, edited by R. The liberal religious view accepts this hypo-

thesis, but ascribes the documents to authentic prophets of God. The traditional belief, which we advocate, holds that the Torah is directly authored by God. Since we acknowledge the phenomena uncovered by the scholars, this means that God provided J, E, P, D, and R the editorial layers. Our belief differs inherently from the first two, because those approaches see the Torah as the work of man. If, however, we consider, not the question of authorship but the nature of Torah study, the essential distinction is between the first view and the latter two. According to the first perspective the Torah presents a merely human understanding; according to both of the "religious" views the Torah manifests the supreme divine intellect. The scholar who adopts the first position studies Torah with the measure of detachment appropriate to other literary study. The believer, by contrast, learns Torah with holy trepidation and reverence, in the awareness that he is studying the word of God. This reverence is possible even if one believes that the Torah was formulated by prophets who heard God's word rather than by God Himself; either way it is the divine word. In fact, Jews cultivate this sense of awe toward all the biblical books: no one would think of distinguishing between the Torah, on the one hand, and the book of Isaiah for example, on the other hand. The Jew studies both with the same degree of assiduity, respect, and dignity due to the word of God.

## V

### Example: Genesis, Chapters 1 and 2

We have alluded to the many contradictions between passages in the Torah. For earlier generations these contradictions attracted exegetical attention, as each exegete strove to resolve the difficulties. The Documentary Hypothesis altered the situation. The contradictions now serve as markers for the various documents: questions of exegetical conflict now become questions about the accounts of different authors. The scholar aims to diagnose the personal and historical factors responsible for the conflicting versions of the documents.

Let us take one example: the well-known discrepancy between the first two chapters of the Torah. According to the scholarly consensus, P wrote the first chapter. P looked at the world like a natural scientist.

Therefore the order of creation follows the natural development of species: vegetation and animate beings precede man. The fundamental purpose of nature, in this account, is to preserve the created species. Hence one would not imagine man being created alone. God created him male and female; for only thus is his existence perpetuated. No doubt, the scholar concludes, this account bespeaks a late date, for it presupposes a highly developed consciousness of natural law.

The second chapter expresses a totally different perspective. J, its author, is a sensitive poetic soul who saw the world through the eyes of a poet. His world cannot be portrayed as alienated, governed by the mechanical forces of nature; its only goal, survival. Self-preservation in the biological sense is not enough; a spiritual end must be imported, a meaning beyond brute existence, one that radiates nobility, beauty, and love. Only man endows the world with meaning and only through him can a purpose be conceived. For this reason God formed him first. Vegetation and animal life are recounted afterwards: their significance is tied to their human meaning. Man, in this account, had to precede woman. Only thus could man experience the pain of being alone. When woman is subsequently created he rejoices over her like a groom over a bride. With the gifts of joy and love, the creation process is complete. This description, the critic might claim, befits the nation's early stages: a world full of song and imagination, consciousness of the mechanical nature still undeveloped.

The critic links the portrayals in the two documents to the distinct personal and historical backgrounds of their authors. The editor's achievement was to accept both portrayals and combine them into one book, thus embracing the truth that both express. Indeed the Torah articulates complementary aspects of the created world. In the wild forests, for example, vegetation sprouts without man's help; in settled regions grass grows only after man tills the earth. From one perspective God created male and female together to perpetuate the species. From another, He created the two sexes separately so that woman's creation would mark the entry of happiness, joy, and love into a lonely world. The critic does not believe that these respective interpretations were intended by the authors of the two documents. Each document presents the monochromatic outlook of its author. Only the editor, by distilling the partial truth in each version, uncovered the broad perspective which permitted him to embrace several true texts within one Torah. When tradi-



tional rabbinic commentaries reconcile the conflicting views, they are explaining the *peshat* of the redactor's final product.

When we, who believe in the divinity of the Torah, adopt the critical division of sources, we do not assign the contradictory portrayals of creation in the Torah to different human authors and redactors. Instead, we refer the distinctions to the different qualities of God. In chapter 1, God is identified with the quality of justice implied in the name *Elohim*, and creates a world governed by law. In chapter 2, the quality of mercy, associated with the Tetragrammaton, engenders a world of mercy. The internal differences between these worlds include discrepancies in the order of creation (vegetation, living things, and man), and in the way man and woman were created. The believer knows that God contains all variation within Himself as surely as His rainbow contains the spectrum of colors. He encompasses justice and mercy; He can therefore juxtapose conflicting accounts reflecting these conflicting qualities. The critics claim that J preceded P chronologically, in line with their presuppositions. We would say instead that, within human culture, the spiritual conception of the world precedes perception in terms of natural order. The Creator, who is beyond time and space, not subject to the laws of historical development, presents these two conflicting perspectives simultaneously.

God formed the world neither according to pure justice or pure mercy, but rather justice tempered by mercy and mercy limited by justice. The two qualities were not expressed in their pure form, but were synthesized. This offers a partial expression of the qualities of justice and mercy, but a complete realization of a creation manifesting both of these qualities. Man, who is unable to comprehend polar opposites, perceives contradiction. The divine narrative, however, integrates both versions and their philosophical perspectives. This integration takes place by means of the "redaction," which reflects the attribute of *tiferet*, "harmony." Neither source is to be read literally, as presenting one-dimensional aspects of justice or mercy. They should be understood, rather, in the light of the received text where the Almighty interwove these two aspects.

Unlike the secular scholar, for whom each document represents no more than the subjective perspective of a human author, the religious individual knows that each document expresses a partial truth, a divine truth, an articulation of His holy attributes. Each creation story, taken in itself, reveals how a world created exclusively according to one of these characteristics would have appeared. The textual components of the

Torah, like the Torah as a whole, are true. Israel was commanded to love truth and peace (i.e., the reconciliation of opposites) which derive from the God of Israel whose seal is truth and whose name is peace. Thus the study of Bible by the religious individual fortifies the bond between the Holy One, Israel, and the Holy Torah.

## VI

### Torah Lishmah and Intellectual Integrity

We have seen that the believer and the scientist differ most, not in their recognition of phenomena, but in their evaluation of the phenomena. This is eminently true of their respective attitudes toward the study of Torah. The scientist relates to the Torah as he does to all literary works. Having examined its content, and applied to it the critical method, he will accept it or reject it. The Torah, for him, does not speak in the name of a higher authority, compelling his submission. This is especially the case when it comes to the Torah's legal portions. The scholar will find some laws pleasing and progressive, others unseemly and inane. This attitude implies a lack of reverence even for *mitzvot* he chooses to fulfill. He adopts these laws not because of the Torah's normative demands but as the outcome of subjective attraction. Hence he never fulfills God's will but his own.

The believer, by contrast, does not subject the laws to his critical review: he declares, from the outset, *naaseh ve-nishma*, "we will follow and then understand"—whether he finds them attractive or not. He does not merely *study* Torah but *learns* from it. When he opens the Torah he enters the house of God, he brings himself before God for guidance.

Acceptance of the Torah's supreme authority does not, to be sure, relieve the believer from religious struggle. No individual can deny the truth in his heart, and God does not expect His children to suppress their inner sense of ethics and justice in the face of what is written in the Torah. Therefore the religious individual is allowed, and in fact is obligated, to wage the Torah's battle *within* the world of Torah itself. You ought not encourage falsity in your heart by negating your own truth as falsehood. God chastised Job's friends for their false justification of God. The tormented struggle between the heart's truth and what is written in the Torah is often a most difficult one. Yet the believer will never consider

the secular student's judgment that some laws are acceptable and others are not. When he finds himself unreceptive to the Torah's truth he will put its words "on his heart," faithfully awaiting the hour when his closed heart will open and embrace the Torah's words. There is no way to know when this miraculous event will occur. Yet one may assume from the outset that it will never be demanded of him to abandon the truth of the heart. Eventually it will become clear that there never was a real contradiction between that truth and the Torah's. It was only his insufficient readiness for the Torah's truth that engendered the apparent conflict. His certainty in the triumph of truth supports him during the struggle of the conflict.

## VII

### The "Intention" of the Author

Our theological conception of *Torah min ha-shamayim*, distinguishing between the Torah given to Moses and the words of the prophet sent by God, has practical halakhic ramifications: no man or prophet has the authority to abrogate anything God has written in his Torah. Moreover this conception of *Torah min ha-shamayim* affects the study and interpretation of the Torah. This point requires an elaboration of our position on literary interpretation in general.

It used to be taken for granted that literary criticism meant understanding the author's intention. To ignore the author's meaning was to impose the critic's own meaning on the text. According to this approach the ideal commentator is the author himself. But the author is often an unreliable guide to his own work: the intentions informing the work may have been forgotten or unconscious, their imprint apparent though he fails to recognize it. Thus the critic, who can read between the lines and determine the author's conscious and subconscious intentions, becomes the superior authority. The critic can locate internal contradictions that the author missed, since these are due to conflicting attitudes the author has not acknowledged. Nowadays literary criticism is not preoccupied with the author's intention. Once the literary work has left his hands it occupies its own place, defining a world of its own. It is our possession to interpret as we understand it.

Taken without qualification, this approach would make literary study an exercise in anarchy, without rules or standards. One could comment as freely as he pleases, so long as the interpretation maintained some connection to the text. It would be impossible to discriminate between correct and incorrect interpretations; the only criterion would be plausibility to the reader. Any literary work could thus be approached with all the interpretive methods used to analyze the Torah: *peshat*, *derash*, *remez* and *sod*, *atbash* and *gematriya*. This is illegitimate. I would maintain that a literary critic's primary responsibility is to the author's conscious or unconscious intention, explicit or implicit in the work. The critic has every right to broach various ideas that emerge from the text, whether directly or indirectly. He may assert that these are implications of the work, although the author never intended them, and that the author's failure to say what the critic is saying is due to the limitations of his time and environment. Such an interpretation would artfully and effectively explicate the literary work without claiming to provide an accurate account of the writer's intention.

What I have proposed regarding a secular literary work surely applies to sacred scripture as well. The student of Bible must first understand what the writer intended to convey. The obligation to study Torah requires more than this. It includes the text's implications for future generations, especially its relevance for the reader's situation. Although the writer did not intend this specific meaning of the text it exists nonetheless. The Torah is "deeper than the sea," its possible ramifications are unlimited, and those who search will always uncover new features. Every idea found in the Torah engenders others, whether directly or indirectly. The full range of interpretations, derivations, and derivations of derivations pertaining to the Torah is pregnant with truth.

But this general principle regarding authorial intention does not apply to the Torah in the same manner that it pertains to other biblical books. The student of the prophets (and the same would go for the Torah according to the liberal understanding of *Torah min ha-shamayim* that we reject) can readily distinguish between the author's intention and the implicit intentions of the text. The prophet is rooted in a specific time and place. Hence his interpretation of his own prophecy is affected by his context and capabilities. Later readers may adduce new ideas from his prophecy, which were hidden from the prophet because their time had not yet come. This cannot be the case with respect to the Torah.

The Author's intention is not limited by the time of the writing since the Author—God—transcends time and His writing preceded creation. Nonetheless, we may suggest that when God transmitted the Torah, He directed it to a specific generation, that of the Exodus and the desert, that would receive it, and to later generations that would study the text.

This last point is pertinent to the scientific study of the Bible. When the biblical critics match a particular passage to the time period that suits its style of writing and content they have identified the generation that the passage addresses at the primary literary and historical level. Genesis, chapter 1, for example, may directly address those whose understanding of the world is suited to that version; that group would constitute the primary audience. There is, of course, a secondary audience, to whom the Torah is also transmitted. Although, when speaking of God as the Author, a distinction between the writer's intention and that which is written is inconceivable, one must distinguish between two different authorial intentions, one to the primary audience and one to other readers, the secondary audience.

The first level of intention in the Torah corresponds to the author's intention in the other books. This includes what is normally understood by the primary recipient generation. The second level of intention in the Torah parallels the implicit levels of the text in other prophetic works. What comprises the deeper meaning of other biblical texts is part of the Author's intended meaning in the divine Torah. Both levels become available to later students, though the primary audience may penetrate only the first level.

Thus the significant distinctions between the various definitions of *Torah min ha-shamayim*, which are central to our theological judgment about the compatibility of source division and Jewish piety, bear implications for the practice of Torah study as well. If one believes that the Torah was written by man, albeit with prophetic inspiration, his sense of the relationship between his understanding and the author's intention must be tenuous. The matter is entirely different for one who believes he studies God's Torah. This individual will attempt to seek undiscovered nuances in the Torah's meaning that will excite his heart and satiate his soul. Yet he will be confident that these novel interpretations are included in the Torah's design. He will bless God who has taught him Torah, who commanded him to immerse himself in the study of Torah, and who has made His words pleasant, generously endowing him with wisdom to understand the content of His creation.

## 8

## Response to Rabbi Breuer

Shnayer Z. Leiman

1. Orthodoxy owes a genuine debt of gratitude to Rabbi Breuer for agreeing to address a very sensitive issue, namely the documentary hypothesis. He walks bravely where angels fear to tread. It is particularly refreshing to see an Orthodox rabbi who recognizes that the documentary hypothesis is alive and well, not dead and buried. Some well-meaning Orthodox defenders of the faith delight in repeating the canard that through the heroic efforts of Rabbis David Hoffmann and Hayyim Heller, the death knell was sounded for the documentary hypothesis decades ago—and it need no longer be taken seriously. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that the critical study of the Bible, largely but hardly exclusively a Protestant enterprise, has long since penetrated the academic world. Wherever Bible is taught critically, that is, at Harvard, Yale, Oxford, and the Hebrew University, it is accompanied by the documentary hypothesis even as the twentieth century draws to its close. The first step toward the solution of a problem is the recognition that the problem exists. Those who cavalierly deny that the problem exists unwittingly enable others to fall prey to the very problem they wish to negate.

2. At the outset, it seems to me that the topic assigned to Rabbi Breuer, "The Study of the Bible and the Primacy of the Fear of Heaven: Compatibility or Contradiction?" needs to be carefully circumscribed.