

## PREFACE

The studies collected in this volume have appeared previously in various journals, Festschriften and co-authored volumes. Their republication in this collection is meant to make them more readily accessible to the interested reader.

While the individual essays each concern a specific topic, they all pertain to social issues and problems which confront the student of ancient Israel. Viewed together they reflect my endeavor to achieve a comprehensive understanding of biblical man and his society *from within*, by extracting pertinent evidence first and foremost from the Hebrew Scriptures themselves. With this aim in mind, the texts are investigated by a variety of techniques and methods which inform biblical scholarship. They range from the textual analysis of passages which come under scrutiny, the discernment of literary patterns or motifs and contextual structures, to the elucidation of societal mechanisms and their ideonic underpinnings. Whenever appropriate, the field of investigation is widened, so as to bring into play congruous extra-biblical information derived from ancient Near Eastern sources, and post-biblical writings, such as the Qumran finds and rabbinic literature, which shed indirect light on the issues under discussion. However, in attempting to elucidate pivotal aspects of the ancient Israelites' conceptual universe, pride of place is given to the Hebrew Scriptures, in full agreement with Henri Frankfort's dictum: "the borrowed features in Hebrew culture, and those which have foreign analogies, are least significant."

I have applied the very same approach also in the analytical study of biblical literary concepts, motifs and structuring techniques in another series of essays to be published shortly in a forthcoming volume.

The selected studies included in the present collection were written over a period of some three decades. Accordingly, they bear the imprint of the state of research at the time when each one was put to paper. Viewed in conjunction, they reflect my own thoughts on characteristics of the biblical society as they developed over the years.

No attempt was made to bring the studies up-to-date, but rather they were republished in their original form. Obvious mistakes and typographical errors were emended to the limited degree to which such emendations can be

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accommodated in a photographic reproduction. However, I have utilized the wider latitude for adaptations and rephrasing in the here-presented English version of studies which were translated from a Hebrew or German original.

Because of these circumstances, and since the essays were first published in conformity with varying editorial requirements, no unity could be achieved in the present edition with respect to the system of quotations, references, sigla, etc.

The preparation of this collection of studies for republication was in part carried out while I was a Fellow in the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I am indebted to the Director of the Institute and the entire staff for providing excellent research facilities in a congenial atmosphere.

Several of my students assisted me at various stages in the preparatory work and in proofreading. My thanks are due to Mr. E. Arad, Dr. P. Cowe, Dr. W. Fields, and especially to Miss D. Josef who also took care of the indexes.

I wish to thank the Academic Committee of The Magnes Press and its chairman, Prof. H. Beinart, for their resolution to publish this volume of my selected essays, and three more which are in various stages of being processed for publication. The staff of the Magnes Press and foremost its director, Mr. B.Z. Yehoshua, supervised with great care the somewhat complicated production of this volume.

My thanks are due to all of them, and to the editors and publishers of the original versions of these studies who willingly granted permission to have them republished in this collection.

I dedicate this volume to the memory of my late wife, Yonina Talmon-Garber, Professor of Sociology at the Hebrew University, whose scholarly acumen and sociological perception were a source of unfailing support and left and imprint on my work beyond her untimely death.