

**HEBREW תַּבָּה: A KOMPOSITIONS- UND
REDAKTIONSGESCHICHTE**

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ABSTRACT

תַּבָּה, the term designated for the vessels of Noah (Gn 6-9*) and Moses (Ex 2*), has been a conundrum for biblical scholarship on several levels, namely the identification of the source language and its definition, and translation variation amongst daughter versions. After these aforementioned issues are surveyed and expounded, a redactional construction is proffered which attempts to legitimise the majority consensus that תַּבָּה is Egyptian in origin and explicate why this term is present in the flood and foundling narratives. Thus it is argued that the non-P redactor, at the time of the Persian period, edited the vessel terminology in the flood from P's אֲרוֹן to תַּבָּה for polemical – and political/theological – reasons portending to new life, not death (*db3.t*).

INTRODUCTION

The so-called ark of Noah in the flood narrative of Genesis 6-9* and the so-called basket of Moses in the foundling narrative of Exodus 2* is the same word in Hebrew: תַּבָּה; further, this term is not used in any other context in the Hebrew Bible, not for the Ark of the Covenant or any other receptacle. This phenomenon would seem to indicate that תַּבָּה is a technical term. Though Noah's and Moses' vessels are far more dissimilar in size, design, and content(s) than similar in context and milieu, the lexical linkage nevertheless must be an intentional one since it still stands after an untold amount of redactional activity. Though beyond the scope of this paper, it should be

registered that the Septuagint, among many of the daughter translation versions, attests a lexical disparity in the vessels of Noah and Moses, κιβωτός and θιβίς respectively.¹ Moreover, תבה is a loanword, not native to the Hebrew language. Thus there must be some meaningful reason for this nexus, probably of the theological nature, which has hereto not been fully developed. Indeed, there is a dearth in biblical scholarship when it comes to the תבה problem.²

In this paper, the תבה phenomenon shall be examined and amplified. Initially, the most pertinent research centred on identification of the donor language and defining the term shall be surveyed and analysed. Subsequently, composition/redaction criticism exegesis shall be performed, and thence a solution proffered concerning the תבה problem. It is through the lens of *Kompositions- und Redaktionsgeschichte*, further, that writer(s) and/or compositor/redactor(s) are identified and their theological motivations for the lexical nexus of תבה in the flood and foundling narratives are pinpointed.

SURVEY OF SCHOLARSHIP

As already intimated תבה is a loanword, but from whence has it been borrowed? Since Israel lay at the crossroads of the Levant, it is logical to consider the two predominant kingdoms and cultures to either side of them: Babylon and Egypt. In an important article, Chayim Cohen (1972:37-51) examines both the Babylonian and Egyptian languages as potential donors of the word. Concerning Babylonian, Cohen (1972:42) writes,

A literary connection between the receptacle mentioned in the Legend of Sargon and the boat of the Akkadian flood story has never been noted, but should such a connection exist, it might help explain why תבה was used in both the biblical flood story and the story of Moses' birth.

¹ See Harl (1987:15-43). Cf. also Loewe (2001:113-145).

² That is, of course, except for the obligatory corollary referencing by commentators.

In fact, the Akkadian vessels are not referred to identically. Utnapishtim's ark is an *elippu*, "ship, boat,"³ while Sargon's ark is a *quppu*, "a wicker basket or wooden chest."⁴ Notwithstanding, some of the compositional elements have identical terminology; for example, both have a *bābu*, "hatch",⁵ are sealed with *iṭṭim*, "bitumen,"⁶ and are constructed in whole or in part with "reeds" (*kikkišu* / *šá šu-ri*).⁷ Regarding *elippu*, a common linguistic construction in Babylonian is *elippu ṭēbitu*, "dive boat",⁸ and this is persuasive enough for Zimmern (1915:45) to see Akkadian as the origin of the loanword תבה.⁹

Regarding Egyptian as a possible source for Hebrew תבה, Cohen (1972:39) remarks:

The Egyptian cognates usually given as evidence for the alleged Egyptian origin of תבה are db̄t and tb̄t which are translated 'Palast o.a; Schrein, Sarg,' and 'Kasten' respectively. However, never are either of these words used in Egyptian texts for boats.¹⁰

Yahuda (1933:205 n.2), for one, contends that Egyptian is the source of תבה. He sees *dp.t*, which means ship, as "very plausible" for the "real prototype of תבה ... on the assumption that both *dp.t* and *db̄z.t* were originally derived from the older form with the basic meaning 'box, chest';¹¹ for, *db̄.t*, a vernacular form of *db̄z.t*, is

³ CAD (IV:90). Though once (XI 95) it is poetically called an *ekallu*, "royal palace" (CAD IV:52).

⁴ CAD (XIII:307). Interestingly, *quppatu* also means "box, basket" (CAD XIII:307).

⁵ Translations of *bābu* vary: "hatch" (Lewis 1980:24; Cohen 1972:43), "door" (Speiser, *ANET*, 119 n.3), or "gate" (cf. Zimmern 1915:30).

⁶ Black, George, and Postgate (2000:137). *GE* lists two terms (bitumen and asphalt) of sealant (XI 65-66[67]) as does Ex 2:3 (bitumen and pitch).

⁷ The terms are different here but the meaning is the same; see Parpola (1997) and Lewis (1980:24). *Šuri* denotes a reed bundle; *qanû* connotes a single reed.

⁸ Cf. CAD (XIX:67). An adjectival usage renders "sunken boat."

⁹ Yahuda (1933:114 n.2) disagrees: it "must be rejected on phonetic grounds alone as *ṭēbitu* is from טבע 'to sink' ... the stress is on 'diving' and not on 'ship.'" See טבע in Ex 15:4.

¹⁰ The underlining is original emphasis. Cf. Erman and Grapow (1971:261, 561). Westermann (1994:420) thinks "תבה is a loan word from Egyptian where *tb̄.t* means a box or chest" and as such is a suitable equivalent for ark (*arca*); cf. Erman and Grapow (1971:561) for *tb̄.t*.

¹¹ Cf. Erman and Grapow (1971:446) for *dp.t*.

orthographically similar to *dp.t*, and because *db.t* (“ship”) is the etymological *Vorlage* of *db̄z.t* (“coffin, coffer”), *db̄z.t* is thus a legitimate cognate to convey a type of caïque.

Ultimately, Cohen (1972:44-45) is not content with either Babylonian or Egyptian for a concrete etymological or philological adjudication to be made for the source of תבה.¹² Cohen’s (1972:44) deferment is based on not being able to find a satisfactory loanword which means ship or boat: “*db̄t*...never has anything to do with boats, and therefore, can not [sic] be compared.” However, this deduction precludes other legitimate possibilities.

What if the writer(s)/redactor(s) of the flood and foundling stories did not actually want a word for ship/boat? Indeed, it seems that the writer(s)/redactor(s) conspicuously appropriated a term other than the typical one for precisely an alternate purpose. Had the biblical writer(s)/redactor(s) wanted to utilise a word that was more appropriate for a water-faring craft, a few were at their disposal, for example, צי (Nm 24:24; Is 33:21) or אגיה (Gn 49:13; Jn 1:3) for Gn 6-9*, or אגיות אבה (Job 9:26) or כליי (Is 18:2) for Ex 2*. Is it possible, then, that Egyptian *db̄z.t* (“coffin, coffer”) could be functioning in a polemical manner which has theological portents?¹³ This question shall be returned to later.

KOMPOSITIONS- UND REDAKTIONSKRITIK

Kompositionskritik

According to Fohrer et al. (1989), the identification of authorial strata in any given

¹² Later Dahood (1982:1-24) proposed Eblaite as the donor language citing the following inscription for substantiation: “*tēbā*, ‘ark,’...appears as plural *ti-ba-ti il-il*, ‘arks of the gods,’...*ti-ba-ū^{KI} / tibā-hū*, ‘he is the Ark’...and *la-ti-ba^{KI}*, ‘Ya is the Ark’” (1982:21-22). However, Dahood’s predilection to solve all issues of rare terms Hebrew with Ugaritic, and here the cousin language Eblaite, is, at this point in scholarship, a dubious solution.

¹³ This is an Early Egyptian noun. The same cognate (*db̄z*) in Middle and Late Egyptian (as well as Demotic) is a verb meaning “to replace” or “substitute” (see e.g., Allen 2010:472; Junge 2001:360 [cf. Jasnow 1992:48, 63]). Since the Hebrew Bible uses the term as a noun, it may be surmised that its source is Early Egyptian. Nonetheless, the dead being “replaced” or “substituted” by the living in *db̄z.t* may have been in the writer’s/redactor’s (polemic) thinking.

biblical text is not to be done under the auspice of literary, or source, criticism (*Literarkritik*),¹⁴ but rather within composition criticism (*Kompositionskritik*). Consequently, at this juncture both the authorial stands of the flood and foundling narratives shall be described and the redactional activity behind the final-form of the texts will be scrutinised.

The flood narrative has long been a parade example of composite authorship. Indeed, there are two hands at work throughout Genesis 6-9*: P(riestly) and what has been traditionally called J(ahwist). Notwithstanding, source criticism has evolved substantially over the last century or so.¹⁵ Generally the current assessment is that the Elohist is moribund¹⁶ and the Yahwist has undergone demise,¹⁷ thus yielding a non-P stratum in lieu of the former two sigla, E and J;¹⁸ also, P has grown younger.¹⁹ Therefore, “we are left, in fact, with three literary sources or documents, KD = J or non-P, KP = P, and D” (van Seters 1999:77). Our stance is that P is a complete, independent written source,²⁰ and non-P is not an independent source.²¹ Non-P is, rather, an editorial/redactional layer supplementing P.²² Consequently, P is earlier than non-P.²³

In the flood narrative (Gn 6-9*), the deity is called YHWH whenever there is mention of mankind’s evil (עָרָא=6:5; 8:21), the act of wiping out (√מָחָה=6:7, 7:4, 23), humanity (אָדָם=6:5, 6, 7^{x2}; 7:23; 8:21^{x2}),²⁴ ground (אֲדָמָה=[5:29; 6:1] 6:7; 7:4, 8, 23; 8:8, 13b, 21 [9:20]),²⁵ clean and unclean animals (טָהוֹר[ה]=7:2, 8; 8:20), existence

¹⁴ E.g., Habel (1971).

¹⁵ See Nicholson (1998).

¹⁶ De Pury and Römer (2002:46); Römer (2007:16[n.24]), (2006:9-28).

¹⁷ Gertz, Schmid, and Witte (2002); Schmid (1976); Dozeman and Schmid (2006).

¹⁸ Cf. Seebass (2002:199-214).

¹⁹ Wenham (1999:240-258); Hildebrand (1986:129-138).

²⁰ Weimar (2009:3); Koch (1987:446-467, esp.452); Blenkinsopp (1992:78); De Pury (2007:105[n.20]).

²¹ Ska (2009:3, 20); Wenham (1999:252); Blenkinsopp (2002:49, 53).

²² De Pury (2007:114). Contra Baden (2009:202).

²³ Ska (2009:20); Wenham (1999:240-258); Guillaume (2009:5).

²⁴ Though the same is also present in P in Gn 7:21; 9:5^{x2}, 6^{x2}.

²⁵ Bracketed references are those outside the flood narrative, but nonetheless relevant. Also, Gn 6:20 and 9:2 are exceptions.

(היקום=7:4, 23),²⁶ 40 days (7:4^{x2}, 12^{x2}, 17a; 8:6) of rain (גשם=7:12; 8:2b), and the charting of seven day increments (7:4, 10; 8:10, 12). Alternatively, the deity’s designation is Elohim when mention is made of covenant (ברית=6:18; 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17), termination (גועל= 6:17; 7:21), corruption (שחת=6:11, 12^{x2}, 13, 17; 9:11, 15), all flesh (כל־בשר=Gn 6:12, 13, 17; 7:21; 9:11, 15, 17), abyss (תהום=7:11; 8:2a), and the mapping of 150 day increments (7:24; 8:3b).²⁷

The two textual layers of Gn 6:5-9:17 can be parsed out as follows:²⁸

nP	6:5-8	7:1-10,12	7:16b-17a	7:22-23	8:2b-3a	8:6-12,13b	8:20-22
P	6:9-22	7:11,13-16a	7:17b-21	7:24-8.2a	8:3b-5	8:13a,14-19	9:1-17

Concerning the composition of the foundling narrative (Exodus 2*), the scope must widen to include Ex 1-2 in order to view both authorial hands at work thereby better evaluating the Ex 2:1-10 pericope.²⁹

The Priestly stratum is readily detectable with its preferential and distinctive terminology, its conceptual motifs, and other such theological concerns.³⁰ In Ex 1-2 these phenomena comprise the following: [1] an abridged genealogy in Ex 1:1-5 (cf. Gn 5*, 10-11*, etc.) which mirrors P’s predilection for large-scale chronicling and ordering;³¹ [2] the lexemes שרץ, “swarm” (cf. Gn 1:20^{x2}, 21; 7:21^{x2}; 8:17; 9:7), מלא, “fill” (Gn 1:22, 28; 6:11, 12; 9:1), and פרה and רבה, “fruitful” and “increase” (Gn

²⁶ The only other attestation is Dt 11:6 “where it is also a question of the destruction of a whole (a clan)” (Westermann 1994:429).

²⁷ There are a few key terms which are common between the authorial strands, which seem to be a text unifying (*Einheitlichkeit*) factor; for example, מבוֹל is found four times in *Elohim* passages (6:17; 9:11^{x2}, 15) and four times in *YHWH* textual units (7:6, 7, 10, 17a), and תבה is well dispersed throughout the story.

²⁸ The collection of textual units represented is our postulation, and made in concert with the following scholars: Hiebert (2008:163-164); Carr (1996:52-53); Guillaume (2009:193) Wenham (1987:167); von Rad (1961:118, 125, 130); Speiser (2007:47-50); Gunkel (1997:60, 138); Westermann (1994:395-396). See further Ska (2009).

²⁹ Though only the divine appellation Elohim is present in Exodus 1-2 (Ex 1:17, 20, 21; 2:23, 24^{x2}, 25^{x2}) this does not necessarily indicate textual unity.

³⁰ See, e.g., Carr (1996:118-120); Bauks (2001:337-340).

³¹ Cf. Sparks (2010:81-82); Coats (1999:23); cf. also Weimar (2009:30).

1:22, 28; 8:17; 9:1, 7; 17:20)³² in Ex 1:7 – all of which mimics creation verbiage,³³ also, the phrase **במאד מאד** is Priestly (cf. Gn 17:2, 6, 20 [Ez 9:9; 16:13]);³⁴ [3] the legally loaded word **פָּרַח**, “severity, ruthless,” in Ex 1:13, 14 which is only elsewhere used in Lv 25 (vv.43, 46, 53) and Ez 34:4; plus, the verbal form **עָבַד** is employed only here in Ex 1:13, 14 to refer to labour or slavery,³⁵ yet it is used in the sense of cultic worship as well (Ex 3:12; 4:23; *et passim*); [4] the recollection (**זָכַר**) of **בְּרִית**, in Ex 2:24, which finds antecedent with the Noahic (Gn 6:18; 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16) and Abrahamic (Gn 17:2, 4, 7^{x2}, 9, 10, 11, 13^{x2}, 14, 19^{x2}, 21) covenants.³⁶

Consequently, biblical scholarship is pervasively consistent with noting the P strand accordingly: Exodus 1:1-5, 7, 13-14; 2:23aβ-25.³⁷ Therefore Exodus 1:6, 8-12, 15–2:23aα is not P, hence non-P.³⁸ Indeed, the non-P portions of Exodus 1-2 can be seen to display its own sense of common thematic concerns, synthetic vocabulary, and overall literary cohesiveness.³⁹ The two textual layers of Exodus 1-2 can thus be schematized as follows:

nP	1:6,8-12	1:15-22	2:1-10	2:11-2.23aα
P	1:1-5,7	1:13-14		2:23aβ-25

Redaktionskritik

At this point, we turn to the role of redaction in each of the narratives. Since P is the *Grundschrift*, P cannot consequently be a redactor; thus a later non-P editor functioned as redactor. Now, the non-P compositor of the flood narrative is likely to

³² These are the cases there the two words occur together. Individual (P) occurrences include: **פָּרַח** (Gn 17:6) and **רָבָה** (Gn 7:17, 18; 17:2).

³³ See Koch (1987:458); Lohfink (1994:166-167).

³⁴ See Schmid (2006:34).

³⁵ Cf. the noun form **עֲבָדָה** in 1:14^{x3}; 2:23^{x2}.

³⁶ Cf. Propp (1996:467-468, 470-471, 476).

³⁷ So Lohfink (1988:213-253); Carr (1996:121, 127); contra Propp (1999:125-127) who sees 1:7, 13-14 as P, yet 1:1-5a as R (126); cf. Propp (1996:463, 477) where he includes v.7 as R. Alternatively, some lump v.6 in with P: e.g., Hiebert (2008:167); Coats (1999:22). Cf. Schmid (2006:44); Gertz (2006:83, 87).

³⁸ Dozeman (2009:61); Childs (1974:2, 7, 28); Boorer (2010:111-113); Davies (2010:62-64). Cf. Weimar (1996:177-208); Coats (1999:26).

³⁹ Unfortunately space delimits these elucidations.

be the same as the redactor;⁴⁰ but, the non-P redactor of the foundling narrative is in all likelihood not the same as the non-P compositor, for it appears that Exodus 2:1-10 was written earlier than the Persian period based on, among other factors, form-critical analysis.⁴¹ Further, it is maintained that the non-P redactor of the Flood and the Foundling narratives are one and the same. This hypothesis shall be bore out while simultaneously exegetically delineating the redactional activity which has produced the final-form of the texts. Ultimately, it is argued that the post/non-P redactor was responsible for the fabrication of תבה in Gn 6-9* and Ex 2*. Another aspect with which *Redaktionskritik* is concerned, moreover, is to “determine which religio-theological factors have had an influence on the compositional and redactional activities”.⁴²

In Genesis 6-9* it is the Priestly account where divine blueprints are given for the construction of the תבה (6:14-16).⁴³ The only other time in the Hebrew Bible where the construction of an object is commanded by God according to specifications is the tabernacle and the contents therein in the latter part of Exodus,⁴⁴ which is also from the Priestly corpora (P^G+P^S).⁴⁵ The most sacred item of the tabernacle is the Ark (אֲרוֹן) of the Covenant. It is probable that since P was the first to craft the flood story and the non-Priestly elements are compositional and redactional confections, P would

⁴⁰ Ska (2009:20): “The ‘J’ story in Gen 6-9 turns out to be ... more a series of late fragments than an independent story, complete and older than the Priestly Writer.” So de Pury (2007:114).

⁴¹ Herodotus’ *Cyrus the Mede*, Sophocles’ *Oedipus*, Pindar’s *Olympian Ode VI*, and Euripedes’ *Ion* all date to the fifth century B.C.E. while *Legend of Sargon* has a *terminus ad quem* of 627 B.C.E.; see Lewis (1980:157-160, 273). Exodus 2:1-10 was probably composed somewhere in between the abovementioned dates, due in part to its greatest resemblance mirroring the *Sargon legend*.

⁴² Jonker (1996:111); see also Steck (1998:53).

⁴³ Previously it was opined that J’s construction episode was jettisoned because P was the redactor; but now, with the reverse consensus, we are dealing with a non-P compositor/redactor, and in this case no such alternate account ever existed.

⁴⁴ Pola (1995:367) has tabulated the linguistic similarities between God’s command to build the תבה in Genesis and the tabernacle in Exodus: Gn 6:13, 14, 15 (17-20, 21), 22; 7:6 || Ex 25:1, 8a, 9 (29:45f.); 40:16, 17a. See also Blenkinsopp (1976:277, 283, 286); Carr (1996:131).

⁴⁵ Childs (1974:529) states, “There has been a consensus for well over a hundred years in assigning chs.25-31 to the Priestly source.” More recently, Knohl (2007:63-66).

have called the harmoniously revealed structures by congruous terminology.⁴⁶ Thus, the vessel of Noah was most likely originally designated by P as ארון before post/non-Priestly redactional activity; hence, most probably, it was the non-P redactor who switched out ארון for תבה in the flood story.

The above briefly delineated composition/redaction activity comports well into recent Enneateuchal formulation theories, as has been expounded chiefly by Konrad Schmid (1999/2010). Schmid has proposed that Genesis and Exodus were two different and competing histories of Israel which in the end have both been adopted and juxtaposed in the final-form of the Hebrew Bible. Schmid argues that Genesis and Exodus-Kings are hardly even integrated, save for three passages for which the post/non-Priestly compositor/redactor is responsible in tying together the two histories; these texts are Gn 15, Ex 3-4, and Gn 50-Ex 1.⁴⁷

The presence of תבה in Gn 6-9* and Ex 2* is plausibly another one of the few links by which the non/post-Priestly redactor has attached the Gn and Ex-Kgs literary blocks together.⁴⁸ If P is the so-called *Grundschrift* of Gn-Lv,⁴⁹ then it is natural to conclude P gave identical terminology to the Genesis ark and Ark of the Covenant of the tabernacle which were both divinely blueprinted: ארון. As for the other stratum, non-P composited the Ex 2:1-10 account (as a part of the Ex 1-14/15* complex) and coined Moses' vessel תבה based on an interplay with its literary environs; on the redacting level, the non-P editor, in tying the Gn-Ex-Kgs complexes together (in addition to Gn 15, Ex 3-4, and Gn 50-Ex 1) edited out P's term ארון in Gn 6-9* and replacing it with תבה.⁵⁰ Therefore, if this argument has merit as the most feasible

⁴⁶ Schüle (2009:123-124). Cf. Bosshard-Nepustil (2005:127-130); Harl (1987:17-24, 37-40). Sparks (2007:638) makes Mesopotamian correlations of the same.

⁴⁷ See also Schmid (2006:29-50), (2007:35-45). Schmid is certainly not alone in this perspective; see, e.g., Gertz (2006:73-88), Blum (2006:89-106).

⁴⁸ Carr (2001:283n.35) recognizes תבה as "another possible example of connection" between Gn and Ex (and following), though cautions that only "a single word is a slender bridge on which to build such a theory".

⁴⁹ The end of P's stratum is debated, though it is generally accepted to span from Gn 1 through Lv 9 or 16 at least. See Sheckman and Baden (2009).

⁵⁰ Schmid (2010:255) views the synthesizing redaction of traditions to have occurred between 500-450 B.C.E. It should also be specified that the non-P compositor of Ex-Nm is different from the non-P redactor/compositor of Genesis.

explanation of תבה in two source strata and literary blocks (Gn and Ex-Kgs), then the non-Priestly redactor is responsible for the linking of the analogous life preserving receptacles in the Flood and Foundling stories.

KOMPOSITIONS- UND REDAKTIONSGESCHICHTE⁵¹

While the Septuagint (and the majority of translations following) has divergent terms for the vessel of Noah (κιβωτός) and Moses (θιβίς), the תבה link in Gn and Ex does have a longevous tradition of its own. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, תבה features 14 times.⁵² Most occurrences are in contexts of Noah and the flood (4Q252-254 = 4QcommGen^{a-b, d}; 4Q422 = 4QparaGen-Exod),⁵³ but twice תבה is transcribed in the events of Ex 2* (4QGen-Exod^a; 4QExod^b).⁵⁴ Therefore, the lexical mirroring tradition persists: תבה in Gn 6-9* and Ex 2*.

The political and/or theological motivations of non-P in redactional activity must now be established; and here non-P's milieu must be kept in mind. P likely wrote at the earliest in the late-sixth century B.C.E. around the time Cyrus released the Jews, sending them to their land and commissioning and financing the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple.⁵⁵ The non-P compositor/redactor was hence later, probably editing in the late-sixth century B.C.E. at the earliest.⁵⁶ And it was the late-sixth century when

⁵¹ Stein (1969:48-49) defines that "redaktionsgeschichte is primarily concerned with what the individual writers...did with the material (both oral and written available to them." More specifically, "[r]edaktionsgeschichte...attempt[s] to ascertain the unique theological purpose or purposes, views, and emphases which the [writers] have imposed upon the materials available to them" (1969:53).

⁵² Zobel (2006:550) also reports 14 occurrences; however, he claims one is in CD (Zobel 2006:552), but this cannot be found.

⁵³ Brooke et. al. (1996:194, 210, 234-235); Attridge et al. (1994:427). One fragment (of 4QparaGen-Exod) is too small to know exactly; it merely reads "אל התבה]." But as Attridge et al. (1994:427) notes: "This phrase appears five times in Genesis 7 (vv 1, 7, 9, 13, 15)."

⁵⁴ Ulrich & Cross (1994:19, 87). Contra Zobel (2006:552) who erroneously states that all תבה occurrences in the DSS are attributed to Gn 6-9.

⁵⁵ So de Pury (2007:127-128); cf. Guillaume (2009:182-183); Albertz (2003:371-383).

⁵⁶ So Winnett (1965:5). Cf. van Seters (1972:459); Carr (1996:327-331); Blenkinsopp (2002:50-52).

Egypt fell to the Persian Empire as it expanded across and conquered the known world.

Zlotnick-Sivan (2004:191) has argued that the biblical foundling story most resembles Herodotus' *Cyrus the Mede* than, for example, the *Legend of Sargon*, and that Ex 2.1-10 was cast in such a Persian light because "[t]he conquest of Egypt in 525 was ... the most momentous event in Persia's imperial history" (2004:200). Thus Zlotnick-Sivan (2004:193-194) maintains, "the redactor(s) of Ex 1f. appear(s) to have contemplated an Egypt that has just been defeated and humiliated."⁵⁷ "Against this setting," Zlotnick-Sivan (2004:203-204) concludes, "the conquest of Egypt by Persia in the time of the narrative's redaction echoed the divine demand to set the Hebrews free from their Egyptian bondage." Consequently, Moses in the light of Cyrus is both a political irony when comparing Cambyses' campaign with the exodus event,⁵⁸ and a biblical congruity – for, in Exodus and Deutero-Isaiah Moses and Cyrus are both referred to as shepherds (רעה; Is 44.28 + Ex 3.1) and saviours (ישע; Is 45.1/ישע; Ex 2.17b).⁵⁹ How this narrative setting comports the redactional activity is provocative. Though the form and content of the flood and foundling stories resemble the Akkadian-Babylonian equivalents, some of the key terms in each narrative⁶⁰ – תבה notwithstanding – are Egyptian. Beyond demonstrating the Levant influence, what the terminological utilization and placement probably meant for the non-P redactor was polemical in nature.

The תבה in the biblical accounts is not a coffin but a *contra*-coffin: preserving the life/lives therein. In Gn 6-9* all other humans and animals without the תבה perish while those within survive; in Ex 2* the text implies that all other Hebrew male babies

⁵⁷ In this interpretive framework God's ten plagues, for example, are analogous to Persia's invasion into and overthrow of Egypt (Zlotnick-Sivan 2004:201).

⁵⁸ Zlotnick-Sivan (2004:193) notes how "the conquest of Egypt was the apogee of Persian achievements, contemplated probably by Cyrus himself and accomplished by his son Cambyses barely five years after Cyrus' death. With the Achaemenid annexation of Egypt the mighty history of Pharaonic Egypt came to a sudden and hitherto inconceivable end."

⁵⁹ Cf. Zlotnick-Sivan (2004:191, 193).

⁶⁰ Other Egyptian lexemes, according to Yahuda (1933:206-216, 265), in Gn 6-9* are קנים, צהר, מבוּל, מְחָה, מְבֹל, גֶּשֶׁם, גִּשְׁת, and in Ex 2* these include: סוף = *swf*, גִּמָּא = *kmz*, and יֵאֵר = *itrw* (*itrw*).

drowned (Ex 1:22) whereas Moses remains alive in the תבה.⁶¹ Thus, those survivors experience an extension of life – remain alive – because of the תבה which serves an ironic, satiric purpose.⁶²

Therefore, the post/non-P redactor used תבה polemically and ironically in Genesis and Exodus to theologically convey *contra-coffin*. Yet, this editorial device was also equally barbed politically, since Egypt was Israel's nemesis. Non-P took one of the Egyptian's own words and inserted it into two key biblical stories about survival against all odds by the providence of God, thereby polemicising it to communicate that they, the Hebrew people, were not dead (*db3.t*) but very much alive (תבה). Just as Egypt was overthrown by Cambyses, an extension of God's messiah Cyrus (Is 45:1), so also had God once before, in the cradle of their national formation and identity, overthrown Egypt to deliver them to new life,⁶³ similarly, just as God liberated the Hebrews out of Egypt by the agency of Moses, so too again via Cyrus from Babylonian captivity. Therefore, the non-P redactor projects retrospectively the current milieu to poignantly signify Egypt's downfall – something seldom accomplished (according to the Bible) prior to the Persian Empire.

CONCLUSION

It has been argued that the non-P redactor created the תבה link we now have in MT; that the P *Grundschrift* originally wrote the term ארון for Noah's ark – since Noah's ark and the Ark of the Covenant, both Priestly material, are the only two structures divinely blueprinted in the Hebrew Bible; that non-P edited ארון in the flood narrative for תבה and made it coincide with the vessel's term in Ex 2*; that non-P performed

⁶¹ Zlotnick-Sivan (2004:195) states “the story is implicitly replete with corpses of dead children, first of Hebrew baby males who had not been rescued and then of Egyptian first born whose demise ushers the deliverance of the Hebrew slaves.”

⁶² Cf. Clements (2010:277-299).

⁶³ Whether or not the exodus was an actual historical event, it was nevertheless an active part of the imagination and formation of the Israelite identity having been incorporated into their sacred scriptures; further, themes of liberation reverberate throughout much of the Hebrew Bible and are all re-castings of that archetypal liberation event.

this redactional linking in order to polemically communicate that the Hebrew people are alive, not dead as with an actual coffin; that this redactional motive mirrors non-P's milieu, namely having been granted religious freedom by the Persian Empire who conquered the Babylonian and Egyptian dynasties – both of which had been oppressors of the Israelites in their past.

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