



Concepts of Truth

I. ISRAEL'S CONTROVERSY

Today, twenty-first century theology tends to make religion a belief based upon faith rather than a belief of faith based upon fact. History, science, and conflicting Scriptures are all too often dismissed when they conflict with accepted creeds or dogma. Most Judeo-Christians are taught there are certain areas of their religion they should not question, causing the phrase “it is a matter of faith” to be well-worn and overused.

Scripture encourages individuals to question their idea of God. The prophet Isaiah indicates God's desire for man to seek truth, evidence, and facts when determining personal beliefs. He encouraged the ancient Israelites to see if their God was righteous and true, exhorting, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isa 1:18). The act of “reasoning” involves discussions that analyze facts and consider various arguments before arriving at a conclusion of truth and validity or falsehood. The Psalmist David also placed value on a truth that conforms to facts, saying,

You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part you shall make me to know wisdom. (Ps 51:6)

If a belief is based on facts, then the study of truth established by facts is paramount when a person is determining a belief founded in truth.

Many men in Scripture questioned God's judgments so that they could understand righteousness. After his calamity, Job questioned YHWH's judgment against him. He did not simply accept the Creator's judgment but reasoned and debated with his friends and with God to discover his punishment's cause. YHWH did not condemn Job's questions but desired that Job know the reason for his misfortune. Abraham likewise reasoned with God,

questioning the Creator's righteousness in destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. YHWH was not angry with Abraham's pleas for the salvation of the righteous who might live in the city (Gen 18:22–33) but desired Abraham to know and to understand his plans (Gen 18:17–18).

No prophet represents God's desire for man to question, analyze facts, and consider various arguments more than Micah. At the writing of his testimony (c. 800 BCE), ancient Israel had rebelled against her Creator's covenant, at the same time accusing YHWH, his way, and his Law of being unequal and unjust.¹

The Creator challenged these allegations, desiring his people to exonerate him.

(2) Hear you, O mountains, YHWH's controversy, and you strong foundations of the earth: for YHWH has a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. (3) O my people, what have I done to you? and wherein have I wearied you? *testify against me*. (4) For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of servants; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. (5) O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim to Gilgal; that you may know the righteousness of YHWH (Mic 6:2–5; see also Numbers 23).

YHWH desires humanity to seek evidence in search of truth. To this end, he has put himself on trial, requesting his accusers to produce their witnesses. He solicits Israel to produce evidence proving he—his way, and his Law—has wearied her; or, to see if, in fact, he caused her to be free. In his own defense, YHWH offers his pleadings with the nation through his servants who prepared his way before the nation (v. 4) and revealed his truth. God's greatest rebuttal to Israel's charges is the reply that Balaam (son of Beor) gave to Balak (v. 5). YHWH indicates that Balaam's prophecy holds the key to his exoneration!

About three hundred years after Micah first introduced YHWH's controversy, we find the Israelies continuing their unrelenting accusations against YHWH's covenantal Law and his judgments. The Children of Israel criticized YHWH, telling the prophet Ezekiel that the Creator's Law, his way of life, and Yah's judgments of their rebellion were unfair. Ezekiel responded to the nation's complaint, referring to YHWH's age-old controversy.

Yet you say, The way of the lord is not equal. Hear now, O House of Israel; Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal? . . . Yet said the House of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O House of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O House of Israel, every one according to his ways, said Adonai YHWH. *Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.* (Ezek 18:25, 29–30. See the entire context in Ezekiel 18 and 33)

The Children of Israel perpetually saw YHWH's way of life and his Law as unrighteous and unfair. In modern times, many if not most denominations inadvertently continue

ancient Israel's polemic against Israel's God—the Father of the Old Testament—by viewing this Law and the way of life he prescribed for the ancient nation to be too difficult for humanity to observe or follow. In most Christian circles, the Father is seen as a harsh, judgmental, and exacting God from whose Law they desire to be delivered (Rom 7:1, 6). His Law and his requirements are seen as arbitrarily unfair, a way of life by which no one can be justified, be righteous, or be restored to a true relationship with God.² In many ways, YHWH's controversy with his people is still viable today.

If YHWH's case were tried, would we find his dealings with Israel righteous? Or, would we find him harsh, unmerciful, exacting, tyrannical, and unrighteous? Could we find that YHWH has been righteous in his dealings with humankind in general? Does it matter if the Creator has kept his word to Israel? Or, can he change his word at any time?

It is my purpose herein to reopen YHWH's controversy and try a case that has yet to be solved.³ Does YHWH exist? If he does exist, is he righteous and true? Does it matter if the words of his prophets come true or if they fail to come to pass? The prophet Isaiah heralded a day wherein humanity would retry this case and finally judge their Creator righteous.

Keep you judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and *my righteousness to be revealed*. (Isa 56:1)

Can our investigation fulfill this ancient prophecy? Can we uncover the clue to Balaam's words,⁴ which hold the key for revealing YHWH's righteousness today?

II. THE FOUNDATION

A. *Philosophy of Truth*

Modern philosophy holds many differing views of truth varying from Realism to Existentialism. The model against which we will try YHWH's case follows Bertrand Russell's correspondence theory of truth. The two basic elements of this view embrace that both truth and falsehood exist. A belief's truth or falsehood always depends on something that lies outside the belief itself.⁵ In other words, truth consists in some form of correlation between belief and fact. Our goal for this investigation is to show whether or not YHWH's word provides enough facts in which people can base their beliefs so that falsehood can be eliminated, and the Creator can be exonerated from ancient Israel's allegations.

Since we will be conducting our investigation as a court trial, it is important to have clear, concise definitions on which to weigh this case. The Objectivist philosopher Ayn Rand points out modern philosophy's pitfall of "forgetting the existence of dictionaries and grammar primers" for defining basic ideas and concepts.⁶ This aversion to concise definitions leads many modern philosophers to absurd vagueness and ambiguity regarding the most basic terms and ideas⁷ (i.e., philosophies' query if a kitchen table really exists or if anything is real). Recent scholars have also validated the need for dictionaries to convey ideas accurately. Danish Egyptologist Kim Ryholt in his masterpiece on Egypt's Second Intermediate

Period has recently used a dictionary to convey and clarify the word *intermediate* in regard to Egyptian history.⁸

Our initial approach will establish a standard that YHWH's word must meet in order for it to be deemed both valid and good for humanity. Since definitions grant the ability to establish that standard, we will seek to define accurately the concepts governing this standard.⁹ Although a dictionary may not be the preferable method in some researches, its ability to concisely define terms and its ease of accessibility for the reader serve the purpose of this discussion quite well.

B. Does Science Exclude Theology?

Mary Joan Leith (Stonehill College) has recently drawn attention to the difference between *Religious Studies* and *Theology*.

The study of Religion has historically allied itself with science and reason and an interdisciplinary field using the methodologies of History, Linguistics, Anthropology—including Archaeology—and other university disciplines . . . as a neutral observer and reporter with no religious agenda (even if we know no one can be fully impartial). . . . By contrast, a Theologian studies her own religion as a believer . . . seeking to reconcile [discoveries] within an existing belief.¹⁰

While science and theology maintain a distinction, they naturally overlap. Scientific studies call for the scholar's assessment of the material at hand. This naturally leads to some judgment about God, the authority of his word, or the ideas that Scripture advances.

Leith challenges both disciplines to draw on each other in such a manner that critical biblical scholarship can respectfully engage the public by addressing theological perspectives. It is my hope that this present work successfully navigates both disciplines.

C. What Is Truth?

In the introduction, I mentioned my quandary when I realized that competing churches claimed that their set of beliefs or traditions embraced God's truth. This often occurs because one denomination discerns certain Scripture verses, texts, and passages as more important and others less important. Another denomination views these same subordinate passages as more important, basing their doctrine (i.e., divorce) on them while developing a dogma that totally contradicts that of the first group by reversing the importance of the same Scriptural texts.

Usually church denominations employ little rhyme or lucid reasoning in developing their doctrine because it is based on its own set of standards. Unfortunately, intellectual honesty and the standards of logic that we apply to all other areas of scientific learning and discipline all too often succumb to circular reasoning and arbitrary justifications where our beliefs are concerned. The very intellectual methods that have served humanity so well in regard to understanding physics, science, disease, medicine, history, and other academic disciplines are too often dismissed in order to support a denomination's particular set of beliefs of truth.

The circular reasoning that all too often pervades modern religious ideals is not at all what the prophet Isaiah intended when he pleaded for ancient Israel to “learn” (Isa 1:17) so that God and people could “reason together” (Isa 1:18). As many believers have experienced, little progress can be achieved in reasoning with a believer of a different denomination if the standard on which he or she bases his or her faith is different (which is of course why each of us can hold our differing beliefs). This is why it appears that Isaiah clarifies the ideals of reasoning together by stating that precept should be in line with precept and Scripture with Scripture (Isa 28:9–10).¹¹ Isaiah teaches us that it is not just the text that matters but also the philosophies or principles underlying the text.

In other words, the philosophies and ideals in one passage should be honestly and intellectually considered in light of other philosophies or doctrines conveyed in other texts of YHWH’s written word. This is why Isaiah urges that integrity (which calls for adherence to a code of moral or artistic values) and honesty be applied to the basis of our Scriptural ideals. For modern humanity to find truth in YHWH’s ancient Scriptures, our precepts or philosophies will need to be intellectually honest. We must ask tough questions in order to see if our modern *nonstandard* and arbitrary beliefs conflict with God’s written word or if they measure up to the standards by which God judges truth. Further, we need to see if the standard by which God judges truth is righteous or unfair.

For these reasons, it is essential to define bedrock concepts on which this case will be tried. Without proper definitions, YHWH’s case lacks credence and intellectual honesty and can be easily swayed or succumb to circular reasoning. To be intellectually honest, we must adhere to the standards of logic proven to work well in the real world of academic discipline. Scripture will also need to endorse and uphold these logical standards.¹² Only then can our discussion of doctrine progress out of the sphere of arbitrary personal interpretation into the light of truth (if such truth exists).

Concepts of truth must be the first foundation of this case. Without this standard, nothing can be proved or disproved. Today, most Judeo-Christians acquaint the word *truth* with vague ideals embodied in the terms “word of God” or “Scripture,” often overlooking the practical definition of the word *truth*. What exactly does truth mean? Merriam-Webster defines truth as:

Truth: FIDELITY, CONSTANCY; the state of being the case: FACT; the body of real things, events, and facts: ACTUALITY; the property (as of a statement) of being in accord with fact or reality.

YHWH’s word must be founded on fidelity and constancy. This is our first conceptual standard on which this case will be tried. If this foundation is not solid, then there can be no exoneration of the nation’s God. *YHWH’s word must show evidence of being fact and a body of real things and real events.* Truth must be tried against the written word of the prophets in conjunction with archaeological and historical evidence. If YHWH’s word is true, it must meet the test of “real things,” “real events,” and “real facts.”

Noted scholar Joachim Rehork remarks:

There is no lack of scholars—among them historians, theologians, philologists and archaeologists—who after conscientious examination of the biblical tradition have come to the conclusion that fundamentally it is of secondary importance whether the facts reported in the Bible are correct or not. According to them, the Bible is primarily ‘prophecy.’¹³

Indeed, this is the trend of current theology and academic historiography, which place Scriptural accounts in the realm of Jewish tradition and folklore. But, if the accounts contained in Scripture are historically *invalid*, then how accurate can Scripture’s prophecy be? Historicity is especially relevant considering that Israel’s historical accounts are so intertwined with the prophets’ testimonies that it could be questioned whether or not “prophecy” actually occurred, given Scripture’s “redacted” accounts. In order for Scripture to be deemed true, it must meet the test of *real things* and *real events* as in Merriam Webster’s definition of *truth*.

Rehork continues his observation:

For the majority of Bible readers, on the other hand, as well as for a large number of biblical scholars, a great deal still depends on the question whether statements in the Bible can be proved. The Dominican father, Roland de Vaux, for example, one of the most prominent figures in the history of biblical antiquity, regarded the capacity to survive the Jewish and Christian faith as dependent upon the agreement between ‘religious’ and ‘objective’ history. He stated his opinion thus: ‘if Israel’s historical faith does not have its roots in history, then it is wrong and the same is true of our faith.’ The no less distinguished American biblical archaeologist George Ernest Wright expressed the opinion that in biblical belief everything depends on whether the main events actually took place.¹⁴

Israel’s history forms the basis of most Western theologies. If YHWH never physically spoke the “word of God” to Israel’s patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), the nation of Israel under Moses, or kings such as David, it would be senseless to believe in Israel’s foundational history or theology. All stories would be man-made. Either the events recorded in the Old Testament actually occurred, or they did not. If YHWH is to be vindicated as a righteous God in this controversy, then establishing a faith based upon *real events* and *real facts* is imperative. Therefore, the *second step* of this investigation must seek to answer the question: Did Israel’s history, as recorded in Scripture, actually occur?

D. Traits of Truth: Constancy, Fidelity, and Faithfulness

The second concept that will serve as a foundation in the case *Israel v. YHWH* is constancy—another concept of truth.¹⁵ Merriam Webster defines *constancy* as:

Constancy: steadfastness of mind under duress: FORTITUDE; FIDELITY, LOYALTY; *freedom from change*.

To qualify as “truth,” YHWH’s word must exhibit attributes of steadfastness, even during times when Israel causes duress to YHWH by her idolatry and disobedience. Even during these times, YHWH must follow his covenantal word. Scripture must demonstrate fidelity and freedom from change. YHWH must not change his own word (recantation)! This last definition is paramount. Even if Israel has rebelled, God cannot change his word. *If YHWH can change his word and rescind agreements¹⁶ that he has previously made, then he cannot meet the definition of truth.*

Fidelity: the quality of state of being *faithful*; accuracy in details: EXACTNESS.

The third foundation of truth on which Scripture must be built is detailed evidence and exactness. The word of YHWH must be faithful, witnessing exactness to the words written therein. If there are specific prophecies of events to occur, then their exact fulfillment should be demonstrated through history and/or Scripture.

Another bedrock of this case is *faithfulness*, a concept embodied in the definition of fidelity:

Faithful: steadfast in affection or allegiance: LOYAL; *firm in adherence to promises or in observance of duty*: CONSCIENTIOUS.

If YHWH is to be exonerated, he must show a “firm adherence to promises made.” There can be no wavering. *Even if Israel is disobedient and walks in idolatry, YHWH’s word cannot be revoked or rescinded.* The actions of Jacob’s seed cannot annul the promises or covenants given to the nation or her patriarchs.¹⁷ Even if it is to the Creator’s own harm (Ps 15:4), he must uphold his promises to the ancient nation of Israel and keep his word!

E. Righteousness

One concept that has direct bearing on YHWH’s trial is his *righteousness*. If we could establish that a particular truth did exist in the words of man’s Creator, it would do little good if the Creator did not obey his own truth when he dealt with humanity. When Micah exhorted Israel to examine God, he indicated that the nation had charged her Creator with being unrighteous (Mic 6:3). In the prophet Ezekiel’s days, Israel continued this accusation, saying that the way of YHWH was unfair (Ezek 18:25, 29; 33:17–20). So *if* Israel’s God is to be exonerated from these allegations, then his word, his actions, and his judgments of humanity must meet the test of being righteous.

Webster defines *righteousness* as:

Righteous: *Acting in accord with divine or moral law*: free from guilt or sin.

For YHWH to be exonerated in this case, the Creator's words, actions, and judgments must demonstrate that he acts in accord with his own divine and moral law and that he is free from guilt or sin. This is the most pivotal point of our entire trial. Throughout the Old Testament, YHWH and his prophets claim that he is righteous.¹⁸ God's perfection (2 Sam 22:31; Deut 32:4) and his freedom from sin and guilt are what separate "God" from mortals. If righteousness is an arbitrary idea that only God himself can understand or attain, how can we grow in his image to reflect his character in our lives? A standard must exist by which to define God's character as righteous.

The question of the Creator's righteousness has direct implications for humanity today. Each of us has a different belief of what truth is. Families, friends, and nations are often separated over doctrinal differences. If the Creator exists, he knows truth. Has he been righteous to withhold knowledge of truth from us? Or, is the Creator righteous to require man to seek out knowledge of truth for himself?

F. Righteousness Is Not Arbitrary

To ensure that the criterion on which we weigh evidence is both direct and specific, we must also define concepts that are contrary to our investigation. In other words, we need to know what concepts are excluded from the ideal of righteousness. The most helpful description of what is *not* righteous appears in the word *arbitrary*:

Arbitrary: depending on individual discretion (as of judge) and *not fixed by law*; marked by or resulting from unrestrained and often tyrannical exercise of power; based on or determined by *individual preference or convenience rather than by necessity or the intrinsic nature of something*; existing or coming about seemingly at random or by chance or as the capricious and unreasonable act of will.

In order for the Creator to be righteous, he must obey his own divine Law. His judgments and words of truth given to Israel and her patriarchs must be constant, as opposed to being arbitrary. YHWH cannot use "individual discretion" or demonstrate an "unrestrained" or "tyrannical" exercise of power, *nor may he use favoritism* in his dealings with (or choice of) the nation of Israel. There must be clear-cut reasons for his judgments that manifest whether he has obeyed his own divine law.

Righteousness is not an arbitrary act. For YHWH to be righteous (and truthful), he cannot dismiss his own law and use random selection or chance to justify his actions with Israel or with humanity. For YHWH to be exonerated in this controversy, Scripture must evidence that the Creator acts in accord with his own divine law and written word. If YHWH's words are to meet the definitions of truth, they must corroborate scientific and historical evidence that they may be declared a word of faith based on facts rather than a faith that is based on subjective, personal criteria. Scripture must be objectively accurate rather than subjectively mystical.

These concepts of truth will serve as the structure for our examination of YHWH's controversy. However, before we can embark on our investigation, we need to see if Scripture supports the definitions of truth that we have profiled. This trial would be senseless if the premises on which this case are built were not upheld by Scripture. Does Scripture uphold Webster's concepts of truth and righteousness? Are there examples demonstrating that YHWH and his prophets upheld the same concepts of truth as outlined in the foundation of this case?

III. DOES SCRIPTURE UPHOLD THIS CASE'S CONCEPTS OF TRUTH?

A. *Constancy*

When the Moabites hired Balaam to prophesy against Israel's future, he said,

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: shall he say and not perform? Shall he speak and not keep to his word? And he said, "Blessed be YHWH God for behold, I have received command to bless: I will bless and not turn back." (Num 23:19, 20, rendered from the AKJV and the LXX)

Before Balaam's birth YHWH promised to bless Abraham and "his seed after him" (Gen 26:3). As a prophet, Balaam knew he could not change YHWH's word. Balaam understood YHWH's attribute of constancy, recognizing it as one of the Creator's greatest qualities. YHWH is *constant* and does not *turn back* on his word. If he does turn back on his word (i.e., recants), then both YHWH and his word are *not* true.

After Saul became Israel's first king, he rebelled against YHWH. The prophet Samuel upheld Balaam's parable when he prophesied against King Saul: "YHWH has rent the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, that is better than you. And also *the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent*" (1 Sam 15:28–29). Samuel indicates that YHWH's command to strip Saul's kingdom could not be "rescinded." The Creator did not repent of what he had purposed to do. Rather, he followed through, keeping his own word as removing the kingdom from Saul's hand.

Scripture's constancy concept can be corroborated again with the account of a prophet who prophesied against Jeroboam's altar. YHWH commanded the Judean prophet to "eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that he came" (1 Kgs 13:9). After the Judean prophet departed from Jeroboam, an older prophet *lied*, telling the younger prophet that YHWH had changed his word, so he could "turn again by the same way that he came." The younger Judean prophet disobeyed YHWH's instructions and returned to eat and drink in the older prophet's home. Consequently, YHWH sent a lion to kill the young rebellious prophet for failing this test.

The Judean prophet failed to understand the fundamental attribute of his Creator: YHWH does not change his word. Instead, the younger prophet disbelieved his God and listened to another person's lying words. Although the Judahite prophet was slain, the word that YHWH commanded him to speak against Jeroboam's altar *still came true* (2 Kgs 23:14–16). Why? Because according to the Hebrew Scriptures, YHWH does not waver or change his word (Ps 102:27). His previous statements stand firm, coming to pass regardless of man's rebellious and arbitrary actions.

The prophet Isaiah also upholds this ideal of constancy and firmness to YHWH's written and spoken word:

And the glory of YHWH shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of YHWH has spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness of it is as the flower of the field: The grass withers, the flower fades: because the spirit of YHWH blows upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades: but *the word of our God shall stand forever*. (Isa 40:5–8)

Isaiah extols the ideal of truth; though seasons change like humanity's ideas of truth, YHWH's word is unchanging. Humanity's thoughts and beliefs—like grass (Isa 40:7)—come and go, but the word of YHWH is constant, unswerving, and unchanging. He is faithful to his written word. Notice too, Isaiah indicates that when YHWH's glory is revealed all flesh will see that YHWH's word *does* indeed unchangingly *stand* forever!

B. Fidelity

In the Book of Psalms, King David describes traits of righteousness, upholding the concept of fidelity, explaining: “In whose eyes a vile person is condemned; but he honors them that fear YHWH. *He that swears to his own hurt, and changes not*” (Ps 15:4). David champions the concepts of constancy and fidelity—the word of YHWH does not change. If the Creator is to be righteous, he cannot change what he has sworn to do. During a time of duress, *a righteous man* will keep his sworn word even if hurts him (Num 30:2). David's words support the fact that even the details of YHWH's word are unchanging.

This concept of constancy is witnessed once again when YHWH issues a covenant to David. “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips” (Ps 89:34). YHWH indicates that once he has given his word he will not break his word or change what he has promised to do. Scripture must evidence this constancy and fidelity. It cannot deviate to the right or the left in what YHWH has stated he will do (Deut 5:32). It must maintain exactness and detail, demonstrating fulfillment of prophecies in later Scripture and/or history. If YHWH has deviated, then Israel's Creator, the God of the Old Testament, cannot be exonerated in his controversy with Israel.

C. Faithfulness

Faithfulness is another concept of truth with which Scripture concurs. Moses certifies the definition of *faithfulness* as an attribute of YHWH: "Know therefore that YHWH your God, he is God, the faithful *God*, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deut 7:9). If Israel's God is faithful, then Scripture must demonstrate that he adheres to the promises he made to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He must fulfill the promises that he offered to the nation and her forefathers.

D. Righteousness Is Not Arbitrary

Our investigation into YHWH's controversy hinges on his righteousness. Israel's allegations condemned the Creator as an unjust and arbitrary God. She claimed his standards were too lofty to be observed (Ezek 18:25, 29). Only God himself was capable of observing his Law. Ancient Israel charged that not only was the Creator's Law harshly unrighteous, but he arbitrarily and erratically observed his own Law when judging humanity.

Scripture, however, does not support the charge of Israel's citizenry. Moses saw YHWH as a God of truth, whose judgments are full of justice, perfection, and without the stain of wickedness.

He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and *without iniquity*, just and right is he. (Deut 32:4)

The Hebrew word translated "just" is *tsaddiyq*, which means to be 'righteous, upright, correct, or just,' and is often translated "lawful" by the King James Version.¹⁹ *Tsaddiyq* is derived from *tsadaq*, a root word that means 'to be right.'²⁰ Thus, to be righteous means to be just and equitable in accordance with divine Law. If YHWH is just and upright, if all his ways are perfect (2 Sam 22:31), and if he is a God without iniquity, then he does right and consistently obeys his own divine Law.

King Jehoshaphat's exhortation to Israel's judges confirms this interpretation. When Jehoshaphat appointed judges over Israel's land, he explained that the judgments of humanity's ultimate judge were neither biased nor arbitrary: YHWH did not show favor to someone just because he or she brought gifts to him; rather, he judged according to his own Law.²¹ Therefore there was no iniquity (perversity) in Israel's God. "Let the fear of YHWH be on you; take heed and do it: *for there is no iniquity with YHWH our God*, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts" (2 Chr 19:7).

King David also proclaims that YHWH's righteousness stems from obeying the truth found in the doctrine of his own Law:

Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and *your law is the truth*. (Ps 119:142)

The Hebrew Scriptures validate the precepts and philosophies that universally define and govern ideals of truth. This congruity allows our case to proceed. Now comes the test of seeing whose words will stand: Israel's or YHWH's. The prophet Micah has asked us to call our witnesses to see if Israel's charge is valid, or if YHWH can be vindicated as a righteous God. All of this matters little if Israel's God does not even exist. So our case must seek reasonable cause for Israel's allegations and discover if evidence can be uncovered for YHWH's existence. One key test this investigation must pass: Does external proof outside Israel's Scriptures exist to corroborate or lend credibility to Scriptural accounts?

IV. INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY?

Ancient Israel accused God of being unrighteous and unfair in his dealings with the nation: his way was "unequal." Today, most court cases follow the concept of presumed innocence until guilt is found (*Ei incumbit probatio qui dicit, non qui negat*). The trend of scholars over the last 30 years, however, is to blindly disregard this equitable principle.²² More often than not, scholars require that the burden of proof should rest, *not* on the skeptical scholar, but on the scholar who accepts the statements in his source credible.²³

Egyptologist James Hoffmeier has pointed out that

many historians and biblical scholars now maintain that a text's claims must be corroborated before they can be considered historical. This expectation is the opposite of the Western legal tradition of "innocent until proven guilty." . . . In shifting the burden of proof to the ancient document and demanding that the maximalist historian "prove" the historicity of the text's claim, the minimalist historian commits a methodological fallacy. Historian David Hackett Fischer labels this practice the "fallacy of presumptive proof," which consists in advancing a proposition and shifting the burden of proof or disproof to others. Additionally, the minimalist approaches an ancient text as "guilty until proven innocent," whereas the maximalist accepts what appears to be a historical statement unless there is evidence to prove the contrary.²⁴

Maximalists are those historians who *give the benefit of the doubt* to any ancient text, albeit Greek, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, or the Hebrew Scriptures. Minimalists are those historians who *reject an ancient text* unless it is corroborated by archaeological evidence. For instance, most minimalists rejected the historicity of the Davidic monarchy until discovery of a broken inscription from a Damascus king was excavated in an ancient city (Tel el-Qadi or Tel Dan). Now, most minimalists will accept that the Davidic monarchy actually existed.²⁵ Even the reknowned minimalist Israel Finkelstein has admitted that the David monarchy is historical.²⁶

In his seminal work, *The First Historians*, Baruch Halpern justifies this method of investigation. "Historical knowledge is based upon evidence in just the way the deliberations of a jury are."²⁷ For this reason, this trial will avoid the error of presumptive proof. We will follow the procedure of presumptive innocence until guilt is found. This means that we will

seek conclusive evidence to demonstrate YHWH's innocence in the face of Israel's charges against him.

To summarize, our purpose is to try ancient Israel's allegations against the concepts of truth and righteousness to see if the allegations can be substantiated or not. We will grant the standard legal rights that are afforded to most defendants: presumed innocence until guilt is found. We will assume that YHWH is righteous until evidence demonstrates Israel's God has either violated the objectives set forth in the *concepts of truth* or that, he has indeed validated them. It may be remembered that according to the principles of presumed innocence, the burden of proof rests on the accuser. Therefore, the evidence recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures (presumably) by ancient scribes will be used as evidence to support Israel's allegations against her God. I will present considerable evidence so that our trial is complete. You, the reader, may draw your own conclusions about whether the extensive evidence brought forth is beyond reasonable doubt or still leaves YHWH's existence or righteousness imputed.²⁸

For YHWH to be a God of truth without iniquity, he must obey his own divine Law: he cannot be above it. If YHWH is indeed a God without iniquity, his actions, his judgments of Israel, and of humankind in general should reveal his righteous adherence to his own divine Law so that he may be exonerated from Israel's allegations of unrighteousness.

V. SOURCES

Over the course of time, translations of ancient sources sometimes vary due to a translator's interpretations or biases. Geza Vermes, one leading authority on the Dead Sea Scrolls, terms this disparity "scribal creative freedom" when referring to a Qumran scroll's divergent translations.²⁹ If Scripture does uphold one particular set of doctrines, it stands to reason that the most ancient sources should better preserve the Creator's original words since subsequent manuscripts offer occasion for more creative freedom in translation.

Language itself is also affected by the passage of time. Languages lose idioms, as the meaning of words become lost within a language.³⁰ This requires a later scribe to interpret antiquated words into modern idiom that his audience will understand. One good example is 1 Sam 9:9, where the word *seer* had fallen out of use so Scripture's transcriber (or editor) needed to clarify that a seer was a prophet.

The Old Testament is preserved in two ancient sources. The first is the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT). Modern scholars attribute the MT's formation to the time of Rabbi Aqiba, c. 100 CE.³¹ The discovery of the "Dead Sea Scrolls has not only substantially confirmed this hypothesis, but is widely held to establish the existence of this text as ante-dating in essentials the Christian Era."³² The King James Bible, JPS, and Artscroll Tanach rely on the MT.

The second ancient Old Testament source is the Greek Septuagint, usually designated "LXX," the Roman numeral for 70. The Septuagint was translated from the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek around 285 BCE.³³ While scholars once readily admitted that the Septuagint was a more corrupted version of the MT, they now find that many formerly assumed corruptions are in actuality preservations of an original text.³⁴

Understanding events that transpired in Jerusalem following 220 BCE may also cause speculation regarding the traditionally held Masoretic Text.³⁵ The Essenes were a strict religious community that emerged around the third century BCE and appear to have used scribal creative freedom when it came to translating passages that supported their theologies.³⁶ It is unknown how greatly the Essene movement affected translations of prior manuscripts in Judea during this era. The Septuagint was translated before their movement and may preserve truth where the MT has failed.

It is reasonable to suppose that, if God has preserved the words of his prophets (so that humanity may seek and find truth), the Septuagint should demonstrate accuracy where the MT fails, and the MT should demonstrate accuracy where the Septuagint fails. If we compare one text against the other when a particular verse is in question, the truth should bear out. Our primary source for the Masoretic will be the King James Bible (Americanized).³⁷ When clarity is warranted, we will turn to the Septuagint.

VI. METHOD

Our forensics approach will examine what the word of YHWH actually states to ensure that we have an accurate context. We must put aside our emotions and preconceived ideas as we base concepts on YHWH's written word. We cannot add to or take away from the actual texts (Deut 12:32). If truth does exist in the Creator's words, then we should expect to find evidence of harmony in the Hebrew Scripture's doctrine (i.e., the Old Testament), demonstrating an underlying (normative) ethics-based system governing the ideas of right and wrong.

We have formulated the foundation of our case. Next emerges the task of collecting data through history and archaeology: testing the Word of YHWH to see if it demonstrates validity.³⁸ In his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn argued that advances in a field are rarely the product of new data. Instead, Kuhn proposes that advances are the product of new questions and paradigms' being applied to data that already exist.³⁹ This case will examine evidence to see if Scriptural data already exists for the elusive element we call truth.

The exoneration of Israel's Creator must begin with Genesis, the beginning of YHWH's written word. As our journey of discovery progresses, we will uncover many hidden prophecies, seeing their fulfillment in history for the first time. We will try Israel's case to see if her God was unjust or if YHWH's righteousness can still be revealed!

VII. THE WAY

Our first procedure in this trial will use a sample to verify that the criteria allows us to work within the perimeters of this case. The words and actions of Israel's patriarchs and other persons whom Scripture deems godly should demonstrate affinity with YHWH's teachings and doctrines. This consistency would merit greater validity. If, however, the patriarch's words and actions conflict with Torah's values,⁴⁰ we can conclude that all is subjective: no

one body of doctrine exists. If, on the other hand, the patriarchs' actions, words, and lives do prove to harmonize with the Creator's teachings, they support the fact that God embraces a particular way of life or *doctrine*.

A. Love Your Neighbor

One of the basic commands found in Torah is for humanity "to love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18). YHWH established the Jubilee year on this precept.

And if you sell anything to your neighbor, or buy anything of your neighbor's hand, *you shall not oppress one another*. . . . but you shall fear your God: for I am YHWH your God. You shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and you shall dwell in the land in safety. (Lev 25:14, 17–18; see also Exod 22:21; 23:9.)

The Creator's statutes and judgments teach individuals not to oppress their fellowman. Abraham's obedience to this command is evidenced in his interaction with his nephew Lot. When Abraham and Lot's servants quarreled over grazing land, Abraham did not attempt to control Lot's decision, nor did he try to manipulate the situation. He gave Lot freedom to choose the best, saying, "Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself, I pray you, from me: if you will take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left" (Gen 13:9). As an older man in authority, Abraham did not selfishly dictate to his nephew. Abraham pursued peace between himself and Lot, obeying the Law's command that he should not oppress another.

B. Bribes

Abraham's purchase of Machpelah is another instance of Abraham's knowledge of YHWH's way and his obedience to the Law in his personal life. Let us compare a law found in the Israelite Covenant with Abraham's transaction.

And you shall take no *gift*: for the *gift* blinds the wise, and perverts the words of the righteous. (Exod 23:8)

Shacad is the Hebrew for "gift." It literally means 'a donation or bribe.'⁴¹ A bribe involves giving in order to receive a biased or favorable judgment. Another text in Deuteronomy reiterates this command for justice: "You shall not decline judgment; you shall not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift does blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous" (Deut 16:19).

When Sarah died, Abraham approached the Hittites for a family cemetery. He asked to buy the cave Machpelah at the end of Ephron's field. By this time, YHWH had made Abraham a mighty prince in Canaan (Gen 23:6), and Ephron had *regard* for Abraham's power and might, offering both the burial cave and field to Abraham as a donation. Abraham

refused the “gift,” insisting that he would pay a fair price for the field and its cave. He weighed 400 shekels of silver, and the field of Ephron was transferred to Abraham as a permanent possession.⁴² Centuries later, King David conquered the Jebusites and faced the same situation; David reiterated this concept of rejecting gifts. “I will surely buy *it* of you at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings to YHWH my God of *that which does cost me nothing*” (2 Sam 24:24). Abraham obeyed the law regarding bribes when he did not accept something for nothing.⁴³ His actions demonstrate that he observed the Creator’s *way* as ordained in the later Israelite Law. Abraham’s action qualifies as evidence supporting the constancy of Israel’s God.⁴⁴

C. The Way of Life?



SEEK AND YOU SHALL FIND

1. James Dobson, *Bringing Up Boys* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001) 199; emphasis is Dr. Dobson's.
2. See also Matt 6:33; John 8:32; and 1 Cor 5:8.
3. Ps 146:8; Isa 42:18; 29:18; 35:5; and Matt 15:14.
4. 2 Cor 13:5; 2 Pet 2:1; and 1 John 4:1.
5. Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed* (New York: Free Press, 2001) 275–95; Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2001) 108–16; J. D. Levenson, “Who Inserted the Book of the Torah,” *HTR* 68 (1977) 203–33; R. D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 18; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981); S. L. McKenzie, *The Chronicler's Use of the Deuteronomistic History* (HSM 33; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1983); and John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983).
6. Ps 71:22; Eph 4:14; John 4:23; 8:23; 17:17; 2 Tim 2:15; 2 Cor 13:5; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 Jn 4:1; Josh 24:14; 1 Sam 12:24; Ps 51:6; 25:10; 33:4; 40:11; 60:4; 85:10–13; 89:14; 96:13; 98:3; 100:5; 145:18; Isa 26:2; 65:16; and Jer 5:1; 33:6.

ON GOD'S NAME

1. Deut 4:7–8; 2 Sam 7:23–24; Ps 119:142, 151; 73:1; 147:19–20; Isa 26:2; and Zech 8:3.
2. Exod 20:3; 10:7; 23:33; Deut 7:16; 8:19; 11:16; 30:17; Judgs 2:3; 8:27; 1 Kgs 9:6; 2 Chr 7:9; Ps 97:7; 106:36; Jer 13:10; 25:6; Deut 6:4; 32:39; Isa 43:10, 15; 44:24; 46:5.
3. The word “nation” is a modern term. In Hebrew, this idea is termed *goy* or *gôyim*. These Hebrew terms, however, have modern connotations that are alien to the Scriptural text. The most important being that modern Judaism terms any non-Jew a *goy*; when in fact the Scriptural text applies the term to any group of people, even Israelites (Gen 12:2; 18:18; 21:18; 35:11; 46:3; Exod 19:6; 32:10; 33:13; Lev 18:26; Deut 4:6, 34; 9:14; 26:5; 32:28; 1 Chr 17:21; Ps 33:12; 83:4; Isa 26:2, 15; 51:4; Jer 31:36; 48:2; Ezek 37:22). In order to avoid confusion for the reader, I will use the word ‘nation’ to express the ancient concept of *goy* or *gôyim*.
4. Exod 23:13; Zech 13:2; and *JFB*, 768.

5. *UBD*, 413, plural—*Baalim* (*SEC* 1168; *BDB*, 127).
6. *GDSAM*, 128; and Kurt G. Jung, “Baal,” *ISBE* (vol. 1) 377–78.
7. Ze’ev Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012) 109; see also Hershel Shanks, “The Persisting Uncertainties of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud,” *BAR* 38/6 (2013) 29–37, 76.
8. John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 68; emphasis added.
9. See also Exod 23:13; Zech 13:2; and Isa 52:5–6.
10. *SEC* 376; *BDB* 35; and *TWOT* (vol. 1) 38–39. *Baalim* is the plural form of the word *Baal* or *Bali*.
11. See also Ezek 39:25.
12. *SEC* 3068–69; *BDB*, 217–18; *TWOT* (vol. 1) 210–12.
13. *SEC* 1961; *BDB*, 226; Day, *Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 14, 20. For other discussions on the name, see William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994) 168–72.
14. Robert J. Wyatt, “Names of God,” *ISBE* (vol. 2) 507.
15. Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988) 141. See also Day, *Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 14, 20.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Mic 6:3; Ezek 18:25, 29; 33:17–20.
2. Acts 13:39; Rom 3:19–20; 4:15; 7:1, 6; Gal 2:16, 21; 3:10–11; Heb 7:19; and Jas 2:10.
3. The present study differentiates between scientific “proof” and legal “evidence.”
4. We will look at Balaam’s prophecy in Part 2 of this volume.
5. Louis P. Pojman, *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1989) 152; A. N. Prior, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (vol. 2; ed. Paul Edwards; New York: Macmillan and The Free Press, 1962) 223–232; Robert Nola and Howard Sankey, *Theories of Scientific Method* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007).
6. Ayn Rand, *Philosophy: Who Needs It?* (New York: Signet, 1982) 70–71.
7. *Ibid.*, 71.
8. Kim Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1997) 311–12.
9. To the best of my ability, I have ordered this investigative case based on the principles set forth in Robert Nola and Howard Sankey’s, *Theories of Scientific Method*. Reflective equilibrium can be seen to deal with the chasm between (moral) law and those value judgments society actually follows. It does not call for justification but seeks to find the equilibrium between the two (*Ibid.*, 91–98). I will not seek to justify the chasm. Rather I will employ a principle-based approach to a scientific set of “concept controls” that will allow us to test the Hebrew Scriptures (YHWH) to see if they support (i.e., meet our criteria) or if they fail. I have tried to avoid establishing controls that “maximize expected utility,” opting instead for well-defined, empirical, logical set of ideals, which underlie a “concept of truth theorem.” To achieve the aim of this research, we will appeal to value-based principles of confirmation. While these concepts, or principles, may not be conclusive, they should at least establish a foundation for a conceptual and ideological hypothesis to test the “concepts of truth” to see if ideological contradictions exist in Scripture.
10. Mary Joan Leith, “The Bible Divide,” *BAR* 38/2 (March/April, 2012) 24, 66.
11. George Mendenhall, “Biblical History in Transition,” in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (ed. George Earnest Wright; Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1965) 42.
12. If the Hebrew Scriptures appeal to mysticism in lieu of the principles of scholarship, then this study would be pointless.

13. Joachim Rehork, postscript in *The Bible as History*, by Werner Keller (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981) 387. See also, Edwin Yamauchi, "The Current State of Old Testament Historiography," *FTH*, 5–7.
14. *Ibid.*, 387–88.
15. See definition of *truth* in the previous section.
16. Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16–50* (vol. 2; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1994) 29.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Exod 9:27; Deut 4:8; Judg 5:11; 1 Sam 12:7; 2 Chr 12:6; Ezra 9:15; Neh 9:8; Ps 7:9; 7:17; 9:8; 11:7; 19:9; 22:31; 35:24, 28; 36:6, 10; 40:10; 50:6; 51:14; 71:2, 15–16, 19, 24; 72:2; 88:12; 89:16; 97:6; 98:2, 9; 99:4; 103:6; 111:3; 116:5; 119:7, 40, 62, 106, 123, 137–38, 142–4, 160, 164, 172; 129:4; 143:1, 11; 145:7, 17; Isa 5:16; 11:4–5; 41:10; 42:21; 45:19, 23; 46:13; 51:5–6, 8; 56:1; 59:16–17; Jer 12:1; Lam 1:18; Dan 9:7, 14, 16; Mic 6:5; and Zech 8:8.
19. *SEC* 6662; *BDB*, 843; and *TWOT* (vol. 2) 754–55.
20. *SEC* 6663; *BDB*, 842.
21. Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: 1–17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 273.
22. James Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 10–11; and Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1988) xix–xxiii.
23. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 10.
24. *Ibid.* See also Halpern, *The First Historians*, 5.
25. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 13.
26. Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher-Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed* (New York: Freedom Press, 2001) 129.
27. Halpern, *First Historians*, 13.
28. The information that I am presenting in this trial is based on 12 years of research. Although I have already drawn my conclusions, I am presenting the evidence for the reader to see if ancient Israel's allegations have merit or if they fail. If you find I am being too lenient on Israel's God, please reserve judgment until volume II of this trial.
29. Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin, 1962) 23; Joel Hoffman, *In the Beginning: A Short History of the Hebrew Language* (New York: New York University Press, 2004) 142; James VanderKam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (San Francisco: Harper, 2002) 103–152.
30. W. F. Bolton, *A Living Language* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982) 23–30, 77–94, 204–16; and Hoffman, *In the Beginning*, 142–62.
31. Sidney Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993) 319; and VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 88–90.
32. Jellicoe, *Septuagint and Modern Study*, 319. See also VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 142–43.
33. Jellicoe, *Septuagint and Modern Study*, 29–35; *JHRE*, 4–6; and Sven K. Soderlund, "Septuagint," *ISBE* (vol. 4) 400–408.
34. Jellicoe, *Septuagint and Modern Study*, 318–19; Hoffman, *In the Beginning*, 146; and VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 142–43.
35. Jellicoe, *Septuagint and Modern Study*, 277; Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 16; and Hoffman, *In the Beginning*, 146.
36. Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 23–24; and VanderKam and Flint, *Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 142–43.
37. The basis for my choice are threefold. First, to use a text that most people are familiar with or that they can easily access. Second, we will be examining many texts and do not want to be restricted in use of the textual evidence due to copyright or other legal limitations. Third, most research tools are based on the traditional KJV. My goal is to make the information readily accessible for others to check and verify or research further. I have chosen the American KJV version, which is easier to read since most of the outdated language has been updated to modern English.

38. Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).
39. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).
40. The word *Torah* designates the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. I will use *Torah* and *Pentateuch* interchangeably when referring to the books of the Law.
41. SEC 7810; BDB, 1005; and TWOT (vol. 2) 914.
42. Throughout the ancient Near East, arable lands such as Ephron's field were customarily inherited by the owner's children or near kin. The only way to gain permanent ownership of properties in the rural countryside and to avoid the heirs' claim was by paying full market value (Raymond Westbrook and Bruce Wells, *Everyday Law* [Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2009] 109–10). Had Abram or David (2 Sam 24:22–24) paid a lesser amount for their properties the transfer would have been a temporary possession, which would revert to the estate's heirs upon the seller's death (see the 13th century contract no. 15.119 in Nougayrol 199, op cite: *ibid.*). Israel's Law forbid actual sale of the countryside by her citizenry even when full market price had been realized. Instead, YHWH opted for lease-only contracts (Lev 25:23). Other nations such as the Hittites did not follow this inalienable statute regarding land and therefore transferred permanent ownership to Abraham and his heirs if the full price of the field was met. Abraham's transaction not only obtained a permanent possession, but he also refused a less-permanent altruistic gift. See also, Raymond Westbrook, *Property and the Family in Biblical Law* (JSOTSup 113; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 24–35.
43. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 127–29.
44. Wenham (*ibid.*) also points out that the political realities in accepting a gift naturally obligates the receiver to the donor.
45. SEC 1870; BDB, 202; TWOT (vol. 1) 196–97; and Victor Hamilton, *Genesis:18–50* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 194.
46. Moshe Weinfeld, "Covenant of Grant," in *Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. Frederick Greenspahn, New York: New York University Press, 1991) 70; and Hamilton, *Genesis:18–50*, 194.
47. YHWH's nonarbitrary selection is seen again in his covenant with David, where the Creator states that he chose David "because he kept my commandments and my statutes" (1 Kgs 11:34).
48. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 29.
49. YHWH promised King David that Israel's monarchy (under a United Kingdom) would always descend through David's line. Likewise, YHWH promised Phinehas that the priesthood would always descend through his sons (Numbers 25). Jeremiah refers to these covenants in Jer 33:20–26.
50. Deut 28:15–68; and Roland K. Harrison, "Curse," *ISBE* (vol.1) 837–38.
51. See also Robert Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977) 161.
52. Edward Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958) 125. See also, A. R. Millard, J. K. Hoffmeier, and D. W. Baker, *Faith Tradition and History* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994).