This collection gathers together Professor Shemaryahu Talmon’s contributions to the literary study of the Bible, and complements his acclaimed *Literary Studies in the Hebrew Bible: Form and Content: Collected Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes; Leiden: Brill, 1993). The appearance of the current volume is a cause for great pride and satisfaction for the many of us who viewed Shemaryahu as a teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend. While he was involved in the early stages of this project, he unfortunately did not live to see its final publication. Nevertheless, this book and his numerous other scholarly contributions will endure as a זיכרון, a monumental memory to this individual, who taught and touched so many scholars and students.

The articles included herein span a broad range of topics, closely and comprehensively assessing fundamental themes and stylistic conceits present in biblical literature. Each study picks up one of these motifs or patterns, and traces its meaning and usage throughout the entire Bible. In Talmon’s estimation, these literary markers transcend all strata of the Bible, and despite diachronic developments, they retain their basic meanings and connotations throughout, even when employed by different authors over a span of hundreds of years. He demonstrates this convincingly by marshaling dozens of examples, each of which is valuable in its own right, and when taken all together, these building-blocks form a solid edifice that validate his approach. He judiciously employs this synchronic method throughout, frequently invoking the principle of נביעה של יד ויד, “his friend will tell of him,” according to which one biblical verse can be employed to interpret the other, if they are found in similar contexts and with overlapping formulation. To use an expression that he coined elsewhere, his hermeneutical method can be described first and foremost as “The World of the Bible from Within.” Throughout the articles that appear in this volume, one is repeatedly struck by his sensitivity to the language and style of the biblical authors. He was blessed with a rich literary intuition, and shares with his readers his ability to see, hear, and understand the rhythms and poetics of biblical literature.

Talmon’s approach was not limited, however, to a formal literary analysis of the texts under discussion; rather, he insisted on digging deeper, and attempted to reveal the ideas and worldview of Biblical Israel embedded in
these motifs and rhetorical techniques. As he notes frequently in these essays, biblical authors did not methodically delineate their beliefs or ideas, but these can nevertheless be recovered, at least in schematic terms, through analysis of recurring words, expressions, motifs, and patterns. Thus, for example, he demonstrates that the terms ‘400 years’, ‘4 generations’, and שנים, inform us of the ‘realistic’ historical conceptions of these authors; the use of specific agricultural metaphors based upon realia helps us understand the message of biblical prophets; and the imagery of ‘mountain’ and ‘desert’ serve to impart fundamental conceptions about the religious experience of the Israelites and their relationship with God. His quest to uncover these larger ideas within the corpus extends to notions that are of foundational significance for the study of religions, including the biblical view on the meaning of ‘life’, creation, שמים, and Jerusalem, and thus will be of interest to scholars from a broad range of disciplines.

The synchronic approach described above did not prevent Talmon from uncovering diachronic development in the Bible where it is present. In particular, he was fascinated by the sociological and historical implications of the Babylonian Exile and the Restoration during the Persian period. His foundational article on ‘Exile and Restoration’ reprinted in this volume investigates the changing roles of kings, priests, and prophets from the First to Second Temple eras, and uncovers the tensions and debates between the different groups during this transitional period. His interests in the Second Temple period did not end with Jewish literature of the Persian era, but as is well-known to the scholarly community, he made extensive contributions to the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in all of its facets. One of the final essays in this volume, an attempt to find echoes of Esther in the literature of the Community of the Renewed Covenant, combines exactly these two interests.

While the many studies presented here were each composed and published on their own, reading them together in this volume provides a complete picture of Shemaryahu Talmon’s worldview of the “Bible from within”. It is our hope that this collection will further expose scholars and students alike to his method, learning, and erudition, and will firmly establish his contributions in the field of literary studies of the Bible for future generations.
The eighteen studies published here initially appeared over a period of about thirty years, and give expression to the development of Professor Talmon’s approach to the literary study of the Bible. He selected the articles himself and lightly revised most of them in the process of preparing the present volume. The article entitled “The Topped Triad in the Hebrew Bible and the Ascending Numerical Pattern” was more significantly revised. Following his death, we refrained as much as possible from inserting additional changes, unless they were necessary for the republished version.

In such a collection of essays, there is naturally overlap and duplication between the various articles, especially with respect to the examples and prooftexts adduced in support of arguments. Despite these redundancies, the articles are presented as close as possible in form to the original, in order to also allow for each one to be read independently. All of the articles have been newly typeset, and no effort was spared to correct errors and typographical mistakes. Three of the articles, which were originally published in German, appear here in English for the first time. These translations were reviewed and edited by Professor Talmon.

Professor Talmon selected and approved the working order of the articles. This included dividing the article originally entitled “Literary Motifs and Speculative Thought in the Hebrew Bible” into two parts: the first half, which retains the same title, serves as the introduction to this volume; the second was expanded and is published here as “The Barren Wife Motif and its Speculative Signification”. He also placed “Conceptual Patterns of History in the Hebrew Bible” as the first essay in section A (“Conceptual Motifs Relating to History, Time and Chronology”), since it serves as an overview of many of the issues and topics presented in the subsequent articles.

Many people need to be thanked for their efforts in the production of the present collection. Shemaryahu’s wife, Dr. Penina Morag-Talmon, and daughters, Efrat Livny, Tamar Elad, Noga Morag-Levine and Tamar Morag-Pinto were determined after his death to ensure that this volume appeared in a timely fashion. They can be assured that this collection is a fitting tribute to his memory. Professor Talmon’s two dedicated research assistants, Shira Golani and Ariel Kopilovitz, were responsible for all aspects of the republication of the articles, including checking references, preparing indices and bibliography, proofreading, and coordinating the publishing of the book. Dr. Noam Mizrahi expertly brought the entire volume to press,
and was involved in some editorial aspects of the book. Without their unceasing, intensive efforts, this volume would never have appeared. Their personal devotion to Professor Talmon and his academic legacy is deserving of admiration.

Thanks are due for those responsible for editing and translating. Dr. Ruth Clements was responsible for editing the English throughout. The German articles were translated by Ms. Dina Herz (“Four Hundred Years”) and Dr. Christian Stadel (“Life”; “Ezra and Nehemiah”; he generously rendered assistance with German language issues in other articles as well).

Additional members of the Hebrew University Bible Project contributed their efforts towards publication of this volume, honoring the memory of Shemaryahu Talmon, who served as Editor at HUBP for fifty years. Professor David Weisert and Shraga Assif, two longtime researchers at HUBP, both generously assisted with linguistic queries regarding Greek and Latin, and Syriac and Aramaic, respectively. Dr. Rafael Zer, Editorial Coordinator of the Bible Project, helped in coordination of this project and solving bureaucratic issues. Professor Alexander Rofé assisted in obtaining publication rights for one of the articles. Assaf Rosen-Zvi, Aharon Glatzer and David Knoll all helped locate and identify references and literature quoted throughout the articles.

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